

The Sayings Ben and Jack Share

TIME	30 minutes full · 15 minutes short
PRIMARY SKILL	Work out the meaning of sayings in context
OBJECTIVE	Collect recurring sayings, use the book's explanations and surrounding events to determine what they mean, and explain why the sayings matter to the characters.
STUDENT EVIDENCE	A three-row saying table: saying, meaning here, evidence for the meaning, plus one sentence on why the sayings matter.
ESSENTIAL QUESTION	How do you work out a saying when its meaning is not simply the words it contains?

Before teaching

Read or play the complete book before the timed lesson. Keep the book available so claims and evidence can be checked against the text. Book-specific targets: Collect the three recurring/shared sayings used by Ben and Jack; the book explicitly explains two and leaves the third to be inferred from use.

Materials:	the book, Student Evidence page, pencil.
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Lesson sequence

TIME	TEACHING MOVE
4 min	Collect the sayings Record each recurring phrase exactly enough to identify it.
6 min	Use stated explanations first Find where the book directly explains the sayings it defines.
7 min	Infer the unexplained one Use the surrounding event and the other sayings as context.
8 min	Check later uses Confirm that the proposed meaning still fits when the saying appears again.
5 min	Explain why it matters Connect the sayings to the relationship or memory they carry in the book.

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Access routes

SOLO	Use the book independently to complete the evidence page. Require book-based support for the reasoning.
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SUPPORTED	Pause at the key evidence moments. Rephrase the task orally, then have students point to or record evidence before explaining.
LISTENING	Use narration and illustrations. Ask the same book-specific questions orally and accept pointing, choosing between evidence already visible in the book, drawing, or an oral explanation. Do not require teacher-invented answer choices.
EXTEND	Apply the same reasoning move to a second moment in the book or ask students to explain why a tempting alternative is weaker.

Teacher guidance

Keep two questions separate: what does the saying mean here, and why does this particular character care about it? Both need text evidence.

Book-specific answer anchors

- 'Inventors invent inventions' is Ben and Jack's deliberately silly repeated phrase; they like saying the three forms of invent together until it becomes a shared joke.
- 'Fire-bellied toads' means something like absolutely perfect/excellent in their private language. Ben uses it to approve Jack's idea, and Jack uses it when he agrees to Plan B.
- 'Stupendous Contraption' is their proud name for the machine they build. The shared expressions matter because Jack is Ben's holiday friend and their private sayings/games mark that friendship; Ben later realizes a new friendship does not erase the old one.

Assessment

- Meanings come from stated explanation or contextual evidence.
- The inferred saying is checked against another use when available.
- The student explains the saying's importance using evidence from the text.

Short route · 15 minutes

3 min - name/model the skill. 8 min - gather the minimum evidence required on the student page. 4 min - explain the answer and verify it against the book.

Watch for

Explaining only the literal words of the saying or inventing a general proverb meaning that does not fit its uses in the book.

Source note

Extracted and audited as a standalone from the ELA unit The Words They Use. No regional standards are attached to this standalone skill lesson.

STUDENT EVIDENCE · GRADES 2-3

Ben the Inventor

The Sayings Ben and Jack Share

Name _____ Date _____ A three-row saying table: saying, meaning here, evidence for the meaning, plus one sentence on why the sayings matter.

SAYING 1 / MEANING / EVIDENCE

SAYING 2 / MEANING / EVIDENCE

SAYING 3 / MEANING / EVIDENCE

A LATER USE THAT FITS

WHY THE SAYINGS MATTER

EXIT CHECK

How do you work out a saying when its meaning is not simply the words it contains?

TEACHER KEY · GRADES 2-3

Ben the Inventor

The Sayings Ben and Jack Share

Book-specific answer anchors

- 'Inventors invent inventions' is Ben and Jack's deliberately silly repeated phrase; they like saying the three forms of invent together until it becomes a shared joke.
- 'Fire-bellied toads' means something like absolutely perfect/excellent in their private language. Ben uses it to approve Jack's idea, and Jack uses it when he agrees to Plan B.
- 'Stupendous Contraption' is their proud name for the machine they build. The shared expressions matter because Jack is Ben's holiday friend and their private sayings/games mark that friendship; Ben later realizes a new friendship does not erase the old one.

Expected student evidence

- Meanings come from stated explanation or contextual evidence.
- The inferred saying is checked against another use when available.
- The student explains the saying's importance using evidence from the text.

Watch for

Explaining only the literal words of the saying or inventing a general proverb meaning that does not fit its uses in the book.

Independent success

The student completes the required evidence product, uses the named book-specific evidence above, and can explain the reasoning move without relying only on recall or a teacher-supplied answer.

Unit source

The Words They Use · Ben the Inventor by Robin Stevenson