



For book *The Black Stones*, Levels T, W, Z

Script Levels: Grade 3 (Upper), Grade 4 (Upper), Grade 5 (Upper)

Word Count: 2,446

Script Summary:

The Black Stones tells the story of eleven-year-old twins who learn how to put aside their differences and get along with each other. Tala finds two obsidian stones and wants to learn more about how they were formed from a scientific viewpoint. Her brother, Paco, isn't interested in science and wants to find out if the stones are lucky or magical. Their mother forces them to work together to find the answers. The twins are surprised to find out that they like working together.

Objectives and Assessment

Monitor students to determine if they can:

- consistently read their lines with appropriate rate and accuracy
- consistently read their lines with appropriate expression, including pause, inflection, and intonation
- follow along silently and listen for spoken cues

Using the Scripts:

- Each role is assigned a reading level according to the syntactic and semantic difficulty encountered. Feel free to divide roles further to include more readers in a group.
- Discuss vocabulary and encourage readers to practice their lines to promote fluent delivery of the script.
- Have readers highlight their lines on the scripts, and encourage them to follow along as everyone reads.

Vocabulary:

Story words: Apache, bicker, confront, frenzied, hypotheses, intrigued, obsidian, outrageous, perspectives, pestering, pilgrimage, preoccupied, quarreling, scouring, scurries, sibling, subconscious, talisman, theories, tolerate, translucent

Cast of Characters:

Grade 3 (Upper)	Grade 4 (Upper)	Grade 5 (Upper)
Mrs. Yates	Narrator 1	Tala
	Narrator 2	Paco

Cast of Characters:

Parts		
Mrs. Yates	Narrator 1	Tala
	Narrator 2	Paco

Narrator 1

Tala glances around nervously at the two small black stones near the riverbank at the base of **Apache Leap Mountain**.

Tala *(to herself)*

If Paco is watching, he'll want the stones for himself, and I have no intention of surrendering them to him. I discovered them; they are my personal property now.

Narrator 2

Paco seems **preoccupied** and is tossing pebbles into the swift-flowing river, so Tala kneels down and plucks the shimmering black stones out of the water.

Narrator 1

The jet-black stones are as dark as a starless night and as smooth as glass, but this glass was forged through natural processes, a result of the rapid cooling of lava. When Tala raises the **translucent** stones up to the sun, the light glitters through them faintly.

Narrator 2

Paco gazes at the movements of the currents, trying to memorize the complex patterns revealed on the surface.

Paco (*to himself*)

Each **pilgrimage** to the riverbank offers new opportunities to observe interesting details for my landscape paintings. The river whispers secrets to my **subconscious** mind, and I hope to reveal those secrets through my painting.

Narrator 1

Paco is also **scouring** the riverbank for a good-luck piece, a **talisman**, possibly an arrowhead or a pebble of unusual coloring. A quail is his guide; whenever she stops and pecks at the earth, he searches for his talisman in that location.

Narrator 2

If something catches his eye, he examines it, then lobs it into the river if it is not perfect. At one point, he glances up and sees his sister holding something up to the sun.

Paco

Hey, Tala, what did you find?

Tala (*hiding something*)

Nothing at all.

Paco

Let me see!

Tala *(to herself)*

If I'm quick enough, I might be able to conceal the stones from my annoying twin.

Narrator 1

She hugs her knees and listens to her brother's footsteps as he **scurries** from rock to rock, moving closer and closer.

Narrator 2

As he draws nearer, her heart pounds loudly in her chest.

Tala *(to herself)*

He's so irritating, and I know he's going to behave like a bloodsucking leech, the way he always does.

Narrator 1

When Paco is behind her, she rises suddenly and walks away without a backward glance.

Paco

Show me what's in your hand!

Tala (to herself)

If I reveal the stones to Paco, he's going beg and plead with me to give them to him until I become furious or give in to his **outrageous** demands.

Narrator 2

Tala spins around to **confront** him.

Tala

These stones are mine! I found them, and I'm keeping them, no matter what you say.

Paco

Just show them to me!

Narrator 1

Paco darts forward and grabs her fist, then tries to pry it open.

Tala

Mom! Mom! Paco's **pestering** me again.

Narrator 2

Mrs. Yates sighs and hurriedly raises herself from the flat rock where she has been sitting quietly for the last half hour, thinking about how challenging her life has become.

Narrator 1

The death of her husband three years ago has been difficult to deal with, but seeing their children take the anger and resentment they feel over it and turn it against each other is becoming unbearable.

Mrs. Yates (to herself)

I know I need to find a way to bring Tala and Paco together, but nothing has worked. If only they could learn to get along—if only they could be friends.

Narrator 2

She runs toward her **quarreling** children, whose yelling is growing more **frenzied** as they struggle with something in Tala's hand.

Narrator 1

At the riverbank, she pulls her twins apart and sits them down on a boulder.

Mrs. Yates

I'm going to sit squarely between you two until you calm down. Is either of you going to apologize?

Narrator 1

Paco shifts restlessly, and Tala jabs the toe of her shoe into the dirt repeatedly, but neither says a word.

Mrs. Yates

The landscape seems infected with your anger. Look, the river is becoming agitated, the sky is darkening, and two Harris hawks are shrieking and circling in the sky.

Narrator 2

Tala clutches her stones tightly and thinks about how the river has smoothed and polished them, gradually eroding the rough edges over countless lifetimes. These thoughts distract her from her anger—but just for a moment.

Tala

I found the stones. Paco tried to steal them from me, the way he tries to take everything of mine. This argument is his fault. I didn't do anything.

Paco

Yes, you did! You wouldn't let me see them—not even for a second! Why wouldn't you let me see what they looked like? I didn't want to take them from you. I just wanted to look at them.

Tala

They're mine!

Paco

Everything is yours! It just seems like I'm always trying to take things from you because you never want to share anything.

Tala

Oh yeah, right. Name a single thing I own that you haven't wanted to use or keep for yourself.

Narrator 1

Paco fumes silently.

Narrator 2

Mrs. Yates closes her eyes to gather her thoughts and to block the sight of her children's angry faces.

Mrs. Yates

Your fighting exhausts me, and my heart feels heavy. Your constant arguing makes me very unhappy. You are brother and sister—twins! You could be best friends for your entire lives if you would only try to get along or, failing that, at least **tolerate** each other. Will you please try?

Narrator 1

Tala and Paco stare silently at the river.

Mrs. Yates

I can tell by the way your jaws tighten and your backs tense that you have no intention of even trying to get along—now or ever. You're more alike than you realize, both tight knots of stubbornness, no matter what I do. Stubborn like your father. At least you share that. Give me the stones, Tala.

Tala

But it's not fair!

Narrator 2

Tala is furious, but she knows she'll cave in if she looks her mother in the eyes, and she isn't ready to surrender her anger—it is justified.

Tala

I found them, not Paco. They're mine.

Narrator 1

Mrs. Yates waits. Tala's lips are rigid with anger, but she drops the shiny black stones onto her mother's palm.

Mrs. Yates

It's okay to be angry. Sometimes life seems very unfair. Sometimes the things we love get taken away from us, and there's nothing we can do about it. That is why we must treasure our friends and family. They are more important than the material things we find in the world.

Narrator 2

Tala folds her arms and feels her whole body stiffen.

Tala (to herself)

Is it such a crime that I want to keep something I found on my own? I don't have anything special to myself, not even my own birthday. Paco could discover his own treasures. Why does it always feel like he needs to take mine?

Mrs. Yates

Hold out your hands.

Narrator 1

Mrs. Yates drops one stone onto each child's outstretched palm. She expects each **sibling** to complain that the other has received the better stone, but the twins are silent.

Narrator 2

The silence continues as she leads both of her children back up the trail to the car, and no one says a word during the drive home.

Tala (to audience)

Paco and I may be twins, but our **perspectives** on life are very different. I look at the world as a scientist, which means that everything is a question with answers that lead to interesting **hypotheses** and **theories**. I want to know why the sky turns orange at sunset, how a seashell produces a sound when I hold it to my ear, and what creates lightning. I wish my brother could see the beauty of reality instead of always creating fanciful explanations for everything.

Paco (to audience)

I wish my sister could see that beauty is something worth appreciating for its own sake. There is more to life than scientific explanations for everything. I see the world as a magical place filled with poems waiting to be written. I marvel at the beauty of an orange sunset, the mystery of a seashell's echo, the frightening yet exciting power of lightning. I wonder if my stone is a portal into magical worlds. Maybe if I rub it three times a genie will appear, or perhaps it's a good-luck charm that will protect me all my life. Maybe these stones are part of the secret the river was trying to communicate to me.

Tala (to audience)

I wonder how long the stones had been there. How old are they? Were they formed by hot lava spewing out of a volcano?

Narrator 1

The twins argue about what the stones are and what they aren't, and who is right and who is wrong, until Mrs. Yates yells:

Mrs. Yates

Stop it! I can't stand to listen to you two **bicker** for another minute.

Tala

But it's a volcanic glass rock. It erupted from inside the earth, and was cooled, and—

Paco

You're wrong! It's a magical good-luck stone.

Mrs. Yates

Come on. We're going to look up some information on the computer.

Paco

We need to visit a website about talismans.

Tala

That will take forever, and we won't find anything about these particular stones. We need to start with geology, with a site about volcanoes—

Paco

That is so boring—

Tala

They're my stones, so—

Mrs. Yates

Hey! May I ask the two of you for a favor? I would like you to do an experiment. As a gift to me, I would like you both to research your stones without arguing, just this once. I'll work with you to search for the answers, but no fighting. Life is much more enjoyable if you cooperate to solve your problems. Okay?

Tala and Paco

Okay.

Mrs. Yates

What do you think we should search for first?

Paco

I know exactly what we should do. We should . . .

Narrator 2

The look on his mother's face makes him hesitate.

Paco

Maybe there is a better way to approach this experiment.
You can decide, Tala.

Tala

We should search for the name of the stones.

Paco (to himself)

She could have thanked me for letting her start.

Tala

Let's type the words *volcanic glass* into the search engine
and see what websites come up.

Paco

I don't care about volcanoes. Let's type in *good-luck stones*.

Tala

Volcanic glass!

Paco

Good-luck stones!

Narrator 1

Mrs. Yates puts a gentle hand on each of their shoulders, and her firm but loving touch has a soothing effect. When they are quiet, she makes a suggestion.

Mrs. Yates

How about both? And how about we add where you found the stones as well?

Narrator 2

She types the words *volcanic glass good-luck stones Apache Leap Mountain* into the search engine.

Mrs. Yates

The more specific we make our search, the more likely we are to get the results we want.

Narrator 1

When the long list of search results appears, Paco and Tala study them together, reading the website names and brief descriptions. One of the descriptions mentions nearly all of the terms they used in their search.

Tala and Paco

Let's go to that one.

Narrator 2

Paco and Tala look at each other in amazement; they actually agreed on something. Mrs. Yates hides a small smile and clicks on the website link.

Narrator 1

Rrrring! Rrrring!

Mrs. Yates

I have to take this call. You two look at the site. I'll be right back, and no fighting, please.

Narrator 1

The website shows various images of rocks that look similar to the shiny stones Tala had found.

Tala and Paco

That's our stone!

Narrator 2

The twins sit up straight and silently read the words on the monitor together.

Tala

I told you! Our stones came from inside the earth. They are called **obsidian**, and they were ejected from a volcano. So I'm right!

Narrator 1

Paco is too busy reading a different part of the page to listen to his sister.

Paco

I'm right! I told you these stones were good-luck stones.

Tala

See that? The website calls them *volcanic glass*.

Paco

It also says they're *good-luck stones*. It looks as if we were both right.

Tala

Yes. These stones are probably millions of years old. They came from inside the earth, and they have brought luck to countless people.

Paco

Let's read about the legend of the Apache Tears. It doesn't explain much on this page.

Tala

I guess we should do more research.

Narrator 2

The twins go back to the search page, type in *Apache Tears*, and wait as several results come up.

Tala

This website mentions the Pinal Apache, which is a name once given to a band of Apache from near where we live!

Paco

Let's try that site. This is a lot easier when we don't fight over every little thing.

Tala

This webpage shows an illustration of an Apache warrior above a poem called "Apache Tears."

Narrator 1

Tala and Paco read the poem on the webpage slowly and carefully, and after they are finished, they read it again.

Paco (to himself)

Tala keeps rubbing her stone between her fingers as she reads. I wonder if she's making a wish. Tala doesn't usually like legends—she enjoys reading about science—but she must be **intrigued** by this story.

I should read about volcanoes and the various types of rocks, and try to understand how erosion transforms rocks into smooth stones. Maybe in the process, I will learn why these things fascinate Tala so much. Maybe it's my turn to think about sharing.

Tala

Let's write down our own version of the legend so that we will have it to remember.

Paco

This must be the story the river was trying to tell me.

Narrator 1

This is the story they wrote: Long, long ago, before the white people came, the Apaches roamed free. But a time came when white people began to move west in search of land.

Narrator 2

Hoping to protect their lands, Apache warriors came out to meet them, but the white people killed several Apache warriors. Some were driven to the edge of a cliff.

Narrator 1

Rather than be captured, the Apache warriors jumped from the cliff to their deaths. When the Apache women heard of their warriors' deaths, they were filled with pain and despair so profound that the Great Father embedded their tears into the black stones that rested in the river.

Narrator 2

Whoever carries these stones will have good luck always, and whoever keeps these stones close will never again cry tears, for the Apache women have cried tears in their place.

Narrator 1

When the twins' mother returns, they tell her the legend of the Apache Tears, taking turns naturally, without talking over each other. Mrs. Yates is touched to see how the legend has affected her children.

Paco

Can you see the tear of an Apache woman?

Narrator 2

Paco holds his stone up to the light.

Mrs. Yates

I think I do see it. It's a tear for the man she lost, and it's a tear for the mournful children he left behind. It's a tear that says, "I wish my children were happy."

Narrator 1

They understand that their quarreling is only adding to their mom's grief over their dad's death.

Paco

Dad is not coming back, and we need to find a way to live in harmony as a family again.

Tala

We want you to have our stones.

Paco

Yes, you should have them.

Mrs. Yates

I couldn't. They seem so important to you two.

Tala and Paco

They're not as important as you.