Unit 3/Week 4

Title: A Symphony of Whales

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.3.1, RL.3.2, RL.3.3, RL.3.4; W.3.2, W.3.4; SL.3.1, SL.3.2; L.3.1, L.3.2, L.3.5

Teacher Instructions

*Refer to the Introduction for further details.*

**Before Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers, about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task.

Big Ideas and Key Understandings

A mutual respect shared between animals and humans has a vast impact on both species. This mutual respect can cause individuals to come together as a team for a greater cause.

Synopsis

Glashka uses her innate connection as well as intuition with nature to help bring together the community in hopes of trying to save the lives of the trapped Beluga whales, who have swam into the freezing channel.

1. Read entire main selection text, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
2. Re-read the main selection text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Vocabulary.

**During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire main selection text independently.
2. Teacher reads the main selection text aloud with students following along. (Depending on how complex the text is and the amount of support needed by students, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2.)
3. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions and returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e.: whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

Text Dependent Questions

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| **Text-dependent Questions** | **Evidence-based Answers** |
| What can you conclude about the climate and conditions of Glashka’s homeland or village? | The text states, “During long, dark winters, blizzards sometimes lasted for days.” Her family would have to stay indoors close to the small fire to stay warm. Which means it was cold and the climate was harsh and maybe even dangerous for her family to go outside for long periods of time. |
| Bore down means to weigh or press down on something. The text states, “For three days a blizzard bore down on the village.” What synonym could be used to replace the phrase bore down? And what can you conclude from the type of blizzard this may have been? | A synonym would be weighed or continuously poured out of the sky. The blizzard was harsh and continuous, weighing down. |
| The author writes, “The sea gave life to Glashka’s village.” Provide evidence from the text as to what “sea gave life” means. | The seals gave meat and warm furs to protect against the winters cold. In summer, the people caught salmon and other fish. These animals are all indigenous to the sea and its surrounding area. Because of these animals the villagers were able to sustain their lives through the meals they were able to prepare from the animals of the sea. |
| In the beginning of the story, the old ones refer to Narna as a longtime friend. What have the villagers received from Narna? | “And from Narna the whale, the people received food for themselves and their sled dogs, waterproof skins for their parkas and boots, and oil for their lamps in the long winter darkness.” |
| Why did the villagers need to salt the salmon? | The villagers salted the salmon so the salmon would keep instead of spoiling. Villagers would catch the fish in the summer and then have to salt it so it would keep throughout the winter when food would become scarce. |
| Authors often use imagery (sensory words) in their writings to help readers see, hear, and feel what they are writing about, thus allowing the readers to visualize the story. Describe two examples of imagery or sensory words that the author uses and the images they create for you or feelings they give you. | Winters are described as long, dark and cold; small fire; songs calling out of the darkness; voice of the wind; blizzards bore down; strange men; sealskin blanket; waterproof skins  \_ surrounded on all sides by ice and snow  \_ water seemed to be heaving and boiling; choked with white whales; the cries of the whales rose and fell on the wind |
| Figurative language is language that uses words or expressions with a meaning that is different from the literal interpretation. Figurative language often uses exaggerations or alterations to make the story more interesting. The author describes the appearance of the sea as if it were choked with white whales. What point was the author trying to make through this figurative language? | The author uses this figurative language to better help the readers understand the vast amount of whales that were trapped, not swimming freely, but trapped, as if a piece of food gets trap in ones throat. |
| What evidence can you site to support the claim that Glashka cared deeply for her sled dogs? | “Glashka checked the dogs’ feet for cuts. She rubbed their ears and necks.” |
| Foreshadowing is a representation of an event or situation in a story before it happens. Using the text, explain how the author uses Glashka’s dream to foreshadow her events. | “In her dream, Glashka drove the dogsled. But the dogs did not follow her commands. Instead they led her to ***open water surrounded by ice***. Glashka heard the singing of Narna, louder than she had ever heard it before.”  “They set off across the snow. “ “Suddenly the sled dogs broke from the trail. Their keen ears could pick up high pitched notes that most humans could not hear.” “They stopped short. They were right at the edge of a great bay of ***open water, surrounded*** on all sides ***by ice*** and snow.” |
| Why did the dogs whine and paw anxiously at the ice? | The dogs heard the eerie moans and whistles coming from the whales. They saw the numerous Beluga whales trapped in the frozen channel. |
| The author writes, “Some of the people from Glashka’s village started setting up a base camp near the whales.” Why did they do this? | It was going to take the Russian icebreaker named Moskva several weeks and the villagers needed to keep the whales alive until his arrival. |
| Pull details from the text to support the claim that Glashka and her family did everything in their power to help save the distressed whales. | \_raced back to the village; gathered everyone and told them what had happen; emergency radioed a distressed call; began setting up a base camp; alerted the surrounding settlements; chipped back the edges of the ice daily. |
| Find evidence that shows how Glashka and the other villagers displayed compassion for the weak and hungry whales. | “She gave the whales part of her fish from her lunch. “ “The other villagers noticed and began to feed some of their own winter fish to the whales too.” |
| The author states that “The other villagers noticed and began to feed some of their own ***winter fish*** to the whales too.” Find details in the text to explain what the author means by ***winter fish.*** | “In summer the people caught salmon and other fish then salted them to keep for the hard times to come.” Winter is the hard times that the text is referring to, and this is why the fish they prepared were called ***winter fish***. |
| The villagers shared their winter fish with the whales. Why did the villagers do this and what can you infer about what this says about the villagers and their thoughts and feelings about the whales? | The villagers had to share some of their winter fish with the whales because the whales had been trapped in the channel for a while without food and were beginning to get weak. The villagers cared, respected and were very compassionate to the white whales. One is able to conclude such because the text states that the villagers had to make the winter fish last all winter because food was difficult to come by during the harsh winter months. By sharing their limited food supply it shows that the villagers were willing to give up something that they needed to survive in order to help the survival of the whales. |
| In this passage, the captain of the boat played various types of music. Why was the captain doing this? | The captain of the ship was playing different types of music to try to coax the whale out of the channel into safety, because they were not swimming to safety on their own.  Rack and roll – electric guitars, drums boomed: Russian folk music – softer, many voices singing together: Classical music – sweet sounds of violins and violas, deeper notes of cellos and deepest of all, the string basses, and way up high a solo violin |
| Why did the whales begin to sing to the ship and to one another? | The ship began to play classical music. The text states that this music had sweet sounds of violins and violas, deeper notes of cellos and deepest of all, the string basses, and way up high a solo violin. They sang back because they were trying to communicate. |
| Use details from the text to explain why Glashka kept saying, “Such good, good dogs.” | It is because of her sled dogs that the Beluga whales were found. |
| Throughout the text, the author makes reference to a whale, Narna. Using the details from the entire text what can you conclude about Narna? | Narna is a name that the natives use to refer to all whales.  “Long has she been a friend to our people. She was a friend of our grandparents’ grandparents; she was a friend before we saw the boats of strange men from other lands.”  “Narna, the whale, the people received food for themselves and their sled dogs, waterproof skins for their parkas and boots, and oil for their lamps in the long winter darkness.” |
| Glashka’s community depends on whales and dogs for many things. Find details from the text that supports this claim. | The people received food for themselves and their sled dogs, waterproof skins for their parkas and boots, and oil for their lamps in the long winter darkness.”  “drive the sled dogs” used for transportation, carrying of supplies. |

Vocabulary

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|  | **KEY WORDS ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTANDING** | **WORDS WORTH KNOWING**  General teaching suggestions are provided in the Introduction |
| **TEACHER PROVIDES DEFINITION**  not enough contextual clues provided in the text | surrounded  keen  eerie  heaving  channel  gnawed | bore  uncertain  anxiously  barely  beckoned  ancient  gradually  cautiously |
| **STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING**  sufficient context clues are provided in the text | neighboring  distress  melodies  despair  symphony |  |

Culminating Tasks

1. *Make a list of all of the things Glashka’s people depended on the whales for. Make a list of the things the whales depended on Glashka’s people for. A symphony is a type of music with many instruments playing together. Use your lists to write a paragraph explaining how the people and the whales depended on each other and explain how their relationship is like a symphony.*

Answer:

“ And from Narna the whale, the people received food for themselves and their sled dogs, waterproof skins for their parkas and boots, and oil for their lamps in the long winter darkness.”

“Glashka’s father got an emergency radio and put out a distress call.”

“Day after day they chipped back the edges of the ice.”

“She gave the whales part of her fish…the other villagers did too.”

Glashka’s people depended on the whale for food, waterproof skins, and oil. They respected the whales because they depended on them to survive. The whales seemed to understand the people were helping them. This is like a symphony because a symphony all the different musical instruments play together and Glaska’s people and the whales lived together.

1. *In the story, Glashka hears the whale’s song (Narna’s song) at different times. Use details from the story to create a timeline that shows when Glashka hears the whale songs and what events occur during or after she hears the song. Note how the villagers reacted to the events that unfolded in the story as you fill out your timeline. Use the timeline to write a paragraph that explains how and why the whale’s song (Narna’s song) changed and how the villagers helped.*

Answer:

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| **Beginning** | **Middle** | **End** |
| “Glashka had heard music inside her head.”  “The old ones of her village said, “That is the voice of Narna, the whale.” | “That night in her dreams, Glashka drove the dogsled. But the dogs did not follow her commands.” “Glashka heard the singing of Narna, louder than she had ever heard it before.”  Glashka and her family where lead to the trapped Beluga whales by their sled dogs.  “Glashka and her parents raced back to their village. They gathered everyone together and told them what had happened.” Glashka’s father made an emergency distressed call for an icebreaker.  Glashka’s village began to set up a base camp near the whales. Others set out by dog sled to alert the surrounding settlements. “Everyone came – young and old, parents, grandparents, and children. Day after day they chipped back the edges of the ice, trying to make more room.” | “as Glashka took her turn chipping back the ice, the song of Narna filled her ears again.”  The villagers noticed that the whales were getting weak and hungry, so they feed them some of their own winter fish.  “That night the song of Narna came to Glashka again.” “Only this time it was different. She heard the music and voices of whales, but she heard other music too..”  Glashka tells the old ones of the songs she heard last night and the old ones go and speak to the captain.  “And do you heard Narna singing now? Her grandmother asked. Yes, Glashka said, but it isn’t just Narna I hear now. It’s something bigger than that…something like a whole symphony of whales!” |

In the beginning of the passage Glashka hears the song of Narna on occasion. The text states that she hears it in her head during the long winter storms when the snow bores down on her village. As the passage unfolds, Glashka begins to have dreams in which she hears the song of Narna. It is apparent in the text that shortly after Glashka hears the song of Narna that events begin to happen. For example, one night Glashka dreams of driving the dog sled, and hears the song of Narna louder than she has ever heard before. Later that day is when her sled dogs led her to the trapped Beluga whales. It seems as if Glashka has a special bond with whales. It is because of her that the villagers bind together to help save the trapped whales. They set up base camps so that they may take turn in chipping the ice back. The villagers even share some of their winter fish with the tired, hungry whales. This act alone shows the importance and respect felt by these villagers towards the whales. In the end of the passage Glashka hears the song of Narna again except this time it is very different. This song has many different sounds and voices. She shares this experience with the old ones of the village who decided it would be best to radio the captain of the ship and share this information with him. The captain then begins to play the melodies of classical music. Slowly the whales begin to follow the ship out of the channel and into the free sea. Glashka now hears the sounds of a symphony. Meaning that it is more than the sounds of Narna that fills her ears.

Additional Tasks

* Students could conduct research and create a report/presentation on whales and their habitat.

Note to Teacher

* One may want to visit this website bestchildrensbooks.org for additional background information.