Unit 2/Week 8

Title: Balto, The Dog Who Saved Nome

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.3.1, RL.3.3, RL.3.4, RL.3.5, RL.3.7, RL.3.10; RF. 3.3, RF. 3.4; W.3.2, W.3.4; SL.3.1, SL.3.6; L.3.1, L.3.2, L.3.4, 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

Extreme circumstances require teamwork, leadership and perseverance.

Synopsis

Diphtheria has broken out in Nome, Alaska. Teams of sled dogs carry medicine 800 miles over snow and ice to prevent an epidemic. Everyone was brave but one dog, Balto, made the difference between failure and success, even though Gunnar Kasson was the human leader of the pack.

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** | **Answers** |
| List all the ways the setting impacts the problem. | A deadly sickness has broken out in Nome called diphtheria. They have no medicine to treat it and keep it from spreading. Nome is 800 miles away from the medicine in Anchorage and  there is a major snowstorm. Airplanes and trains can’t get through the storm. The sea is frozen so boats cannot travel. The road from the south is completely blocked by deep drifts of snow. |
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| Why did the author use and repeat the words “Click-click-clack”? | Click-click-clack imitates the sounds of the telegraph key. |
| What can we learn from the map and the text? After looking at the map, how do things look for the people of Nome? | The medicine will be carried by railroad. You can tell because the map shows railroad tracks between two cities. The map also shows that the railroad will not carry the medicine very far and that the dog sleds will have to complete most of the trip. Dog sleds will be slow and the storm will slow them even more. |
| How do the people plan to get the medicine to Nome? | They plan to take it by train as far as the train can go, and then have different dogsled teams take turns carrying it the rest of the way. |
| Why is it necessary to use several dog teams instead of just one? | It was more than 600 miles from Nome. Six hundred miles is too far for one dog team to run. It is tiring for a dog team to pull a sled through a snow storm. |
| How do you know that the plan to get medicine to Nome is working so far? | The train has carried the medicine part of the way, and the first two dogsled teams have reached their goals. |
| On page 191, how do things look for Gunnar Kasson’s team? | Things do not look good. The wind was screaming. The snow was piling up deeper and deeper on the ground. It was thirty degrees below zero and the temperature was falling fast. |
| Why does Gunnar Kasson decide to ignore Olsen’s advice and continue on with the journey? | Gunnar realizes the importance of the medicine to the people of Nome. He believes his part of the trip is short and that he has Balto to lead the way? |
| What does the author tell us about Balto? Why is he telling us this now? | Balto is not an ordinary dog. He is half wolf. He is kind and intelligent. Gunnar is willing to go out in the storm because he believes Balto will lead the team safely to the next stop. |
| What makes this part of the journey more difficult? | It is snowing so hard that Gunnar Kasson cannot see the trail. This part of the trail crosses sea ice, which is bucking up and down because of the storm. |
| How does the author describe the icy trail? | The ice was moving as they traveled along. The author said the ice seemed to be ‘alive” and it was like being on a roller coaster. |
| Earlier in the text the author told us that Balto could “ think for himself.” Give examples of this “thinking” from this part of the text. | Balto waited patiently each time Gunnar had to pick up the sled. His calmness settled the other dogs. He knew the ice was breaking and led the team around the ice. He was always searching for the trail to Nome and found it after their detour around the cracked ice. |
| Compare the land journey to the sea journey. | The sea journey was difficult because the ice was inconsistent. It moved, and bumped the dogs along. In other parts it was slippery and the dogs struggled to stay on their feet. The ice was dangerous because it cracked and Balto had to change directions. The land journey brought more wind and ice. The team encountered snowdrifts up to their heads and it was impossible to see. The dogs were tired and they missed the next stop. |
| How do things look for the team? | Things are not going well. They missed the next stop. The storm is not getting any better and the dogs are tired. If they stop they will die. They have no choice but to continue all the way to Nome. |
| At the end of this true story, the author tell us how Gunnar pulled long ice splinters out of Balto’s paws? What was the purpose of this detail? | This helps us understand that Gunnar wants people to recognize that Balto is a hero. He saved the people of Nome by leading Gunnar’s team through the ice and snow. His own pain and discomfort did not distract Balto from completing this important journey and bringing his team to safety. |

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 | Telegraph, diphtheria, drifts, dogsled  Staggered  Trail  Drifts | Managed, hitched  Postcards |
| **STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING**  sufficient context clues are provided in the text | Guided | Signal, operator  Mixed-breed, tame  Sure-footed, skidded  Limped  Splinters |

Culminating Task

* Re-Read, Think, Discuss, Write

*Write a newspaper article about Balto and how he saved Nome, Alaska, using information form the text.*

Answer: Balto kept the team calm and safe; he solved problems; he did not give up or let the other dogs give up.

Additional Tasks

* *How do the illustrations add to your understanding of how difficult it was for the people and the dogs, and how they felt about each other?*

Answer: The map shows how far north and how close those towns are to the ocean. The illustrations show that the weather was stormy.

* *Write what a guide would tell visiting students about the statue of Balto in Central Park? Students must include details of Balto’s actions that made him so special.*
* *Gunnar Kasson and his dogs finally arrived in Nome after twenty hours on the trail. Write a message that Kasson might have written on a postcard to his family.*

Teacher Notes

* Students will need additional instruction on how newspaper articles are constructed and organized. Teacher should model writing a newspaper article to the students. Students can also review local newspapers to get authentic examples of newspaper articles.