Unit 4/Week 3

Title: Rocks in His Head

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

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

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

Don’t allow the opinions of others to sway you from following your heart’s unique interests.

Synopsis

As a child, the author’s father was fascinated by rocks. This interest consumed the young boy as he collected them in all of his spare time. People told him that he had rocks in his pockets and in his head. But he never allowed their criticism to detour him. Year after year, he continued building and displaying his collection. Even after the Great Depression forced him to sell his business and home, his rock fixation was steadfast. When no work was available, he would travel to the science museum and compare their collection with his own. This led to a job offer because the director of the museum knew a man with “rocks in his head” was just what they needed.

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** |
| Why did people tell the author’s father that he had rocks in his pockets and rocks in his head? | “When he wasn’t doing chores at home or learning at school, he (the author’s father) would walk along stone walls and around old quarries, looking for rocks.” |
| An idiom is an expression whose meaning is not predictable based on the literal meaning of the words included in the phrase. For example, if someone tells you that you have ants in your pants, they don’t literally mean that insects are crawling around in your pants. Instead, they are mean that you are not sitting still. Find an idiom and explain why it is an idiom. | “People said he had **rocks** in his pockets and **in his head**.” “Rocks in his head” is an idiom because a man can’t literally have rocks in his head. |
| The author mentions that her dad usually forgets to lock the cash drawer in his desk. What does this say about the character of her father? Find another example on this page that illustrates her father’s character. | This statement gives the reader a clue about her father’s character. “Forgets to lock the cash drawer” lets the reader know that he is not a greedy man. Earlier on that same page, the reader gets another glimpse into the author’s father’s character when he responds “probably not”. This shows that he doesn’t get upset by what people say. |
| Label means, “to attach an identifying or descriptive marker to an object.” Why did the author’s father carefully label each rock? | “He carefully labeled each rock to show what kind it was and where it had come from.” |
| Compare and contrast the author’s father’s life before and after the stock market fell. | Before the stock market fell, the author’s father was very busy running his filling station. He was pumping gas, changing tires, and fixing Model T’s. After the stock market fell, though, people couldn’t afford to buy new cars or fix their old ones. When business was slow, he’d play chess with some of his customers. When it was very slow, the author’s grandfather would mind the filling station, and let her father take the kids hunting for rocks. |
| Even though the author’s family did not lose money when the stock market fell, why did its crash have such an impact on their family? | “People couldn’t afford to buy new cars or fix their old ones.” So, this lets me know that their family was greatly impacted because their business depended on people having money to spend on cars and car repairs. When people lost their money, they could no longer afford cars and car repairs. |
| What evidence does the author provide that her father gave special attention to caring for his rock collection? | He **built shelves** in the filling station for his rocks. “Then, **one by one**, he placed his rocks and minerals on the shelves. He **carefully labeled** each rock to show what kind it was and where it had come from.”  “He took down **each mineral**, **wrapped it** **in newspaper,** and **carefully** placed it in a **wooden** box.” The author said the chess set was packed in a big box, but the minerals were placed in a wooden box. The fact that he used a specific type of box reinforces the fact that he showed great concern for his collection. Also, he **built more shelves** for his rocks before doing anything else when they moved. |
| The author describes the shelves her father built as “narrow”. Narrow means “not wide”. What words did the author choose to use when describing the new shelves her father built? Was the second set of shelves similar to the first set? Use evidence from the text to explain your answer. | Tiny and little  Yes, the second set of shelves was similar to the first set, and I know this because of the adjectives (narrow and little) the author used to describe each set. |
| Why did the author go to the science museum on days when he couldn’t find work? | “They had a whole room full of glass cases containing many rocks.”  He said, “I’m looking for rocks that are better than mine.” |
| The story states that Mrs. Johnson smiled for multiple reasons. Was there a difference in the reason she was smiling each time? | When Mrs. Johnson smiles once because she is doing so sarcastically. I know this because she goes on to tell him that he does have rocks in his head. But when she smiles again because she is genuinely impressed with his knowledge and work ethic. |
| Although the author’s father never formally studied rocks in college, what had he done to qualify himself for a position at the museum? | Beyond collecting and searching for rocks throughout his life, he had qualified himself by talking and trading with other collectors, and by spending a lot of time reading about rocks. |
| While the author’s dad was a janitor at the museum, did he go above and beyond his job description? Provide evidence from the text to explain your answer. | Yes, he did go above and beyond what he was expected to do. I know this because Mrs. Johnson asked him what he was doing when he was correctly labeling a mislabeled rock one morning. |

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 | Label  Stock Market  Curator | Chores, quarries  Garnets, slag pile, and “the lift” |
| **STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING**  sufficient context clues are provided in the text | Minerals  Museum  Mineralogist | Narrow, automobiles, spare, and Model T  Folks  Afford  Attic  Sparkled |

Culminating Task

* Re-Read, Think, Discuss, Write

*Take a few moments to consider the title of this selection, “Rocks in His Head”. Why did the author choose this idiom for the title? Locate at least six instances where it is used in the story. Then, in a detailed paragraph, you should address ideas about the different meanings behind this statement as it is used throughout the selection. Finally, focus on what Mrs. Johnson meant when she said it at the end of the story and how this was different than any other time it was stated previously. Be sure your paragraph has at least 4 details or examples from the story.*

Answer: It is clear that the author chose this title because it describes the main character of this selection in his entirety. Throughout his life, he was told he had “rocks in his head” on numerous occasions. For example, people said he had rocks in his head, and the meaning implied is that rocks are all the man ever thought about. The meaning implied by this same statement is different. Here, when the people say he has “rocks in his head”, they are suggesting that he is crazy. Finally, by the end of the story, Mrs. Johnson puts a positive spin on it, and it is clear that although this man may have seemed foolish, he was anything but unwise. For choosing to follow the true unique interests of his heart proved to be a valuable decision.