Unit 1, Week 1

Title: Akiak

Suggested Time: 4 Days (60 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.3, RL.4.4; RF.4.3, RF.4.4; W.4.2, W.4.4, W.4.9; SL.4.1, SL.4.2, L.4.4, L.4.5, L.4.6

Teacher Instructions

*Refer to the Introduction for further details.*

**Before Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and 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

Courage can produce winning; there is more than one way to win.

Synopsis

“Akiak” is the story of a dog that desires to win the Iditarod with her owner, Mick. Akiak, however, is injured and is disqualified from finishing the race. Rather than return home, she follows Mick and the team of dogs to the finish line.

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.)

1. 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 | Answer |
|  | **How is Akiak feeling? What words or phrases help you to understand that feeling?** | * “no dog wanted to be left behind” * “This was her last chance” * “must win now” |
|  | **Reread the first paragraph. Blake writes, “The dogs were ready to break out.” What does it mean to “break out”?** | Students should note that Mick is holding them back. Thus, they should be able to deduce that if Mick is holding them back, then to break out means to catch and pass the lead sled. |
|  | **Akiak is injured and taken out of the race. Was it Mick’s fault that Akiak was injured?** | Mike pushed the dogs into first place, and the team had to “break snow.” If Mick wanted to win the race, then at some point she would have to “break snow” with her team. Thus, Akiak’s injury is a circumstance of participating in this type of race. |
|  | **“Akiak ran while the storm became a blizzard.” What words or phrases help you understand what a blizzard is?** | We know a blizzard must be a powerful storm because   * “the wind took away the scent” * “the snow took away the trail” * “whiteout” * Akiak has to burrow into a snowdrift to escape |
|  | **Akiak “still knew the way.” What evidence is there that Akiak knows the trail so well?** | At the beginning of the story, the author writes that Akiak knew the trail better than anyone. She had run seven races and completed at least three of them having finished in 5th, 3rd, and 2nd. |
|  | **Reread this sentence: “… Akiak padded softly, cautiously, into the checkpoint.” What clues help you understand what cautiously means?** | There are several clues that help the reader understand the word. Akiak “padded softly”; was on “alert”; and she is sniffing the air. |
|  | **Akiak persists in keeping up with Mick and the team of dogs. What allows her to stay close to the team?** | The most obvious answer stems from the help she begins to get from people on the trail. Subtler, however, is that the race trail is now “packed”, and students should infer that this is less stressful on her foot. |
|  | **The author describes the wind as “screaming.” Why did the author choose this word to describe the wind?** | “Screaming winds” describe the ferocity of the wintery conditions. In addition, they help the reader understand that the team has to *fight* through the wind—something they have not had to do before. |
|  | **In your own words, describe how Akiak “won the Iditarod Race.”** | Students should note that Akiak “won” the race because, without the aide of her musher, she persisted and caught up to her team. In turn, this inspired a number of people who cheered her while she finished the race—a win of a certain kind. |

Vocabulary

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|  | **KEY WORDS ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTANDING**  Words addressed with a question or task | **WORDS WORTH KNOWING**  General teaching suggestions are provided in the Introduction |
| **TEACHER PROVIDES DEFINITION**  not enough contextual clues provided in the text | Layover | Snowmobile  Harness |
| **STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING**  sufficient context clues are provided in the text | Musher  Checkpoint  Blizzard  Cautiously |  |

Possible Culminating Task

* Reread, Think, Discuss, Write

*Akiak is described as a courageous dog. Using examples from the text, support the claim that Akiak is a courageous dog.*

Possible examples:

* Akiak finishes the race despite an injury
* She braves the “dangerous descents, icy water and confusing trails”
* Akiak continues despite the blizzard
* She continues despite being hunger
* She runs a good part of the trail alone
* Along the coast, the winds are “bitter cold”