Unit 3/Week 1

Title: The Stranger

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards

RL 4.1, RL4.2, RL 4.3, RL 4.7, RF4.4, SL 4.1, SL 4.3, SL 4.4, W4.1, W4.9, L4.4, L4.5

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

What is the identity of the stranger and how is it related to the natural occurrence of the seasonal change from summer to fall? The author has intended for the readers to come to their own conclusion as to the identity of the stranger. The pictures play an important part in telling the story and making inferences about the characters.

Synopsis:

This story uses a mixture of pictures and words to explore the idea of the changes of the seasons and the expected natural events that occur with it; colder weather, leaves changing color, Jack Frost and migration. Chris Van Allsburg walks a fine line between reality and fantasy to create a mystery about the identity of the stranger who will represent the seasonal change from summer to fall. The Houghton Mifflin authors identify the story’s theme as an allegory for autumn and the use of personification to make the association.

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** |
| Describe the setting of the story in your own words. | Farmer Bailey is driving along with “a cool breeze” blowing across his face as he drives his truck. Summer is turning to fall. |
| What does it mean when it says Farmer Brown was “fearing the worst”? Use evidence from the text to describe the stranger's actions after being hit by the car. | Farmer Bailey fears that he has killed the man but when the stranger opens his eyes, he looks up in terror and jumps to his feet. He tries to run off but loses his balance and falls again. |
| Why does the doctor say the thermometer is broken? Could there be another reason why the mercury is at the bottom of the thermometer? | The mercury is the liquid inside the thermometer that measures temperature. The mercury is at the bottom because the stranger has a very low temperature. It is not broken; the doctor does not realize his temperature could be so low. |
| What does it mean to lose your memory? What details make you think the stranger is mysterious or odd? | You don’t know who you are. He dresses in odd rough clothing, he does not talk, he has a very low temperature |
| Many clues are given about the strange behavior of “The Stranger”. List the clues that could help solve the identity of the stranger.  The author uses the word *fascinated*, “The steam that rose from the hot food fascinated him.” Why is this choice of words important to figuring out who the stranger is? | Confused by buttons and button holes, fascinated by steam, when he blew on the soup there is a cold draft, rabbits run toward him and let him stroke them and then expect him to follow, works without tiring or sweating, could not take his eyes off the geese.  The word "fascinated" helps us understand that the steam is something he has not seen before. |
| Why does Farmer Bailey say the weather has been “peculiar”? What does the stranger notice and how does he feel about it? | He is noticing that summer is not changing to fall, as if “the seasons couldn’t change.” The pumpkins are getting huge, the leaves on the trees, “as green as they’d been three weeks before.” The stranger is puzzled by the fact that the trees to the north are “bright red and orange,” while to the south they are “drab and ugly” green, like the Bailey’s. He feels it would be “better…if all trees could be red and orange.” |
| What clues do the pictures give us that the words do not? What do you think happened to the leaf and the stranger after “he blew on the leaf with all his might?” | The leaf was green in the text but it is orange in the picture, showing that he can change it by blowing on it. His expression shows his realization about his identity. |
| How does the stranger communicate with the Baileys without using words? How does this affirm the stranger’s identity? | The stranger puts on his old clothes (father nature); he hugs them once (Last bit of summer), and disappears so quickly that the Baileys can’t see him (quick change of season). The weather turns suddenly cold. |
| How is the change of season at the Bailey’s farm different from the other farms? | Their trees always stay green a week longer and then become the brightest color. There is always a message on the window written in frost for them to see. “See you next fall” |
| The word "etched" is important to the understanding of the identity of the stranger. What does the word "etched" mean in this sentence: “Etched in frost are the words, “See You Next Year”’ | Etched means scratched, like someone took their finger and scratched in the frost. If the student thinks that he is Jack Frost this is a clue that helps confirm that definition. |

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 |
| mercury  Fascinated  etched | Draft  Timid  frost |
| Hermit  Hypnotized  Autumn | Jammed  Stroked  Peculiar  drab  terror  occasionally |

Culminating Task

* Re-Read, Think, Discuss, Write

*Develop a theory about the identity of the stranger and use evidence from the story to support your answer.*

Answer: The author purposely allows the reader to decide but the overall theme would be Jack Frost, Father Nature, fall or autumn. Students should be careful to choose evidence that support their choice of identity as autumn, fall, Jack Frost, or Father Nature.

Additional Tasks

Tie the illustration clues to the text clues. How does the author use illustrations to further the reader’s understanding of the story? Use evidence from the text and evidence from the pictures to support your answer.

Answer: The stranger noticing the change of seasons and the illustration helps clarify the difference between the Bailey farm and the other farms. The reader should infer from the illustration: that the stranger now understands who he is and what he must do.

Note to Teacher

* Do not have students read the Get Set to Read story in advance of reading *The Stranger* as many of the vocabulary words can be learned from the story context.