Theme 2/Lesson 9

Title: Weaving a California Tradition

Suggested Time: 3 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RI.4.1, RI.4.2, RI.4.3, RI.4.4, RI.4.10; RF.4.3, RF.4.4; W.4.2, W.4.9, W4.10; SL.4.4; L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.3, 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 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

An American Indian family living in California preserves a tribal tradition of basketmaking.

Synopsis

The entire Tex family is involved in the hard work of basket making, preserving a tribal tradition. They gather materials from various locations, prepare them to weave into baskets, and attend the annual California Indian Basket Weavers Gathering.

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** | **Answers** |
| We read that Carly Tex and her family “come from a long line of Western Mono basketweavers.” How is basketweaving important to this California Indian tribe? | To the Tex family, basketweaving is more important than “a craft or a beautiful art form;” it is a family tradition that has been passed down the generations. |
| We read that each tribal group has its own unique style of basketmaking. What influences this unique style? | The geography and climate of an area determine the kinds of plants that grow. The plants determine the unique style. |
| The California Indians once burned fields of grasses every year so there were “fewer insects in the area to infest plants.” What does “infest” mean? What were other benefits of the fires? How is this method of burning fields a problem today? | Infest means to live in and destroy. The California Indians burned the fields to kill the insects and to promote better growth of deergrass and redbud. It is against the law to set fires now, so good basketweaving materials are harder to find. |
| The text says “Weavers take care of the plants…” What are some ways that weavers take care of the plants? | Weavers are careful not to take too many from one place; their cutting, trimming, and thinning benefits the plants – the plants can spread out and grow healthy new shoots, and fewer insects are attracted to the plants. |
| As they prepare for the weaving, Carly and her family are passing on a tradition that may otherwise be forgotten. Using the information tell how they are keeping their tradition alive. | Carly and her family use the same methods that the family has used for generations: they gather the materials, dry them out, scrape and peel the stalks to remove the bark. This takes “practice, patience, and a delicate touch.” Carly and her family sometimes gather and prepare the materials by themselves, but other times work they share the work with other people who are just learning. |
| Carly says, “Making the cradleboard was easier…but the sumaya was more challenging…” Using the information tell why the sumaya was difficult to weave. | Carly had to gather and prepare enough redbud, including young redbud shoots without any nubs. She needed a chapparal stick long enough to curve around the whole edge for the rim. She needed to use her math skills to figure out when to add new sticks to the frame and she needed to know how to shape it. She had to be patient as she wove this basket. |
| The author states, “the weavers all share a common bond.” What does this mean? | The weavers were very different (beginners, experienced, young, old, different tribal groups), but they came together to share their weaving skills and their love of baskets. |
| What does the author mean when the “families and friends spend time together away from the public eye”? How does this help them to pass on traditions? What might this tell us about what most motivated the California Indians to weave their baskets? | The Indians were not where the baskets were displayed and where visitors came. They were able to get together to teach one another more about the traditional skills of basketweaving that were passed down from generation to generation. This shows that they were most motivated by preserving the tribal tradition amongst themselves, not by getting public recognition for their work while visitors were there. |
| “Still, people like Mandy try to preserve old ways.” Give an example how Mandy preserved old ways. | Instead of using yarn purchased from a store, Mandy made a string from the silvery fibers from the stem of a milkweed plant. She wove the fibers to make a sash for the cradleboard. |
| What does the variety of baskets tell about how California Indians used baskets? Use examples from the text to support your answer. How are the baskets used today? | The baskets were once used in their everyday lives - cradleboards were used to carry infants; sifting baskets to sift flour; baskets to store food, trap fish. Today California Indians make them to keep the tradition alive, but they don’t need them. They are considered art, artifacts, and displays. |

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 | tribe/tribal  cradleboard | annual, bond  preserve |
| **STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING**  sufficient context clues are provided in the text | traditions  coiling, twining | infest, sprout (verb), shoots (noun), intervals  delicate  nubs  flexible  inspires  sash |

Culminating Task

* *The title of this passage is “Weaving a California Tradition.” Use evidence from the text to explain the title. (Hint: What does it mean to weave? Think about what it means to weave a basket. What might it mean to “weave a tradition”?)*

Answer: To weave means to bring separate things together to make something new. These California Indians weave baskets by bringing different plants together, working together through the lengthy process of gathering and preparing materials. They “weave a tradition” by coming together every year at the annual basketweavers gathering, continuing the craft of their ancestors and passing the tradition down to future generations. Carly says, “I want to keep learning and teach my own children so it can keep going through the generations.” In this way these families create and continue a California tradition.

Additional Tasks

* *Read “Wonder Weaver”. Complete a Venn diagram comparing Carly and Patrick.*

Answer: Both use natural materials; both like to weave; Carly makes traditional baskets; Patrick makes buildings big enough to play in.

* *Research a Native American tribe in your local area. Tell a partner about that tribe and its traditions in a pair-share activity.*

Answer: Will vary with location.

Note to Teacher

* This text is Lexile 960 (lexile range for 4th -5th grade is 740-1010).
* The text doesn’t provide enough information for a student to visualize a cradleboard, but it is mentioned as being more difficult to make than the sumaya. You may want to show students a visual.