Unit 6/Week 1

Title: The Grizzly Bear Family Book

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RI.5.1, RI.5.2, RI.5.3, RI.5.4, RI.5.8; RF.5.3, RF.5.4; W.5.1, W.5.2, W.5.4, W.5.10; SL.5.1; L.5.1, L.5.2, L.5.4

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

There is beauty in nature that needs to be preserved and respected by humans.

Synopsis

In this non-fiction piece, the author shares what he learned about the way of life of grizzly bears after spending a full year in Alaska photographing and studying them. He describes, using anecdotes and photos, how bears behave and interact with their environment and how Grizzlies and other plants and animals depend upon one another for their survival. This close up look at Grizzlies is meant to give the reader an appreciation for nature.

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** |
| Why does the author begin this text describing “chance encounters” with a grizzly bear? | He wants the reader to understand that seeing this bear up close made him realize that he wanted to spend one full year in Alaska photographing bears. This is the story he is going to tell. |
| The author used the word “**harsh**” to describe Alaska’s winter. What evidence from the text supports this idea? | Temperatures drop to 50 degrees below zero, bears sleep in underground dens, and the entrance to the den is covered by a blanket of snow. Wildflowers must “possess tremendous strength” to bloom through the snow and ice. |
| How and why does the author compare mother bears and human mothers? | “In early spring, grizzly bears also enjoy life to its fullest.” In early spring the cubs and mother bears emerge from the dens. The mother plays with her cub, holds it in her arms and hugs it. She nurses her cub. She shows it affection, love and tenderness. This made the author laugh. He wants to challenge the opinion that bears are creatures to be feared. He wants us to understand that bears are gentle, caring animals. |
| Describe the different plants and animals the bears depend on as a food source. According to the text, what are **sedges** and why are they so important to grizzly bears? | The **carcass** of a moose or caribou, **beached** whales or dead sea lions and walruses. As the snow melts, bears eat roots, grasses and **sedges**. They also catch squirrels and fish. Sedges are a species of grass that is very high in protein and help them gain weight lost after hibernating all winter |
| Why does the author tell us that “all living things, including humans, depend on other lives for their existence?” | After hearing the story of the mother moose and her calves, we see the bear again as a feared hunter. The author wants us to know the fact that bears eat other animals and see this as natural, not mean. He included the humans as another reference to compare bears and humans. |
| How would you describe summer in Alaska? | The daylight hours lengthen quickly until the nights are completely gone. The sun always stays above the horizon (meaning it never sets). Without a watch, it is hard to know when one day ends and another begins. |
| Explain how the bears’ interaction changes during salmon season using examples from the text. | June salmon season brings the bears “shoulder to shoulder along the streams” in a “temporary community” while most of the year they avoid other bears. Dominance must be established with the “most aggressive male bears” commanding the choice spots and once a bear has lost, or shown subservience, it will always defer to the **victor**. Mother bears “are tolerant of the cubs of others” and will even adopt “strays or orphans”. Bears can be **selective** when the salmon are plentiful and cubs as young as two are taught to fish by imitating their mothers. When the salmon season is done the bears return to their mountain **territories**. |
| Why does the author describe autumn as being “**announced**” across Alaska? | The sounds, the animals growing coats, the changing colors and the full berry bushes are all easy for an observer to witness. They are obvious signs. The **bugling** of sandhill cranes, animals grow thick, lovely winter coats, moose and caribou antlers grow very large. Aspen and birch trees’ leaves turn golden and the tundra blazes red. Blueberry, cranberry and crowberry bushes are ready to be harvested. |
| How do bears and berries depend on each other for their existence? | Berries are high in sugar and the help bears put on a large store of fat to take them through the winter. Bear droppings consist mainly of berry seeds which will grow into new berry bushes in the spring. |
| How does this bear encounter compare with all the other bear encounters described in this text? | The author’s encounter with the two bears in the Brooks Range was the first he’d described in which he felt threatened. In his other experiences, the author had been a distant observer; this time the bears had been coming towards him and he had to command them to stop. He admitted being frightened and the bears being startled. |
| “Here people share the land with bears. There is a certain wariness between people and bears. And that **wariness** forces upon us a valuable sense of ***humility***.” What does *humility* mean and why does the author think *humility* is valuable? | Because humans share the land with bears, there is a sense of wariness, or respectful caution, (or humility) they show towards bears. The author notes how few places remain where people demonstrate this respect, this instinctive fear, as in Alaskan wilderness. This feeling is rare and precious, in comparison to so much of the world that has been ‘tamed and subjugated.’ |
| What is the author’s opinion of hunting? What language does the author use to express this opinion? | The author does not approve of hunting. The way he describes the hunter’s actions is sarcastic, “trophy hunters”, they “smile” with the dead bear “with its fangs bared as if he were attacking the heroic hunter”. He says “In reality he was killed… peacefully eating berries.” He portrays the bear as an innocent victim and says would rather bears and people were on “equal footing”. |
| How does the author conclude “The Grizzly Bear Family Book”? | It is back to winter and the mother bear and cubs are returning to the den. The snow continues to fall, erasing their footprints and “Alaska, the great land, settles down for a quiet winter sleep.” He infers that this look he has shared with the reader is just a glimpse of a long cycle. |

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 | Possess, tremendous  Sedges  Existence  Dominance  Critical  Pursuing | Subservience  Tundra  Loping, startling  Subjugate, instinctive |
| **STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING**  sufficient context clues are provided in the text | Encounter, record  Harsh  Carcass  Abundant, aggressive  Tolerant  Imitating  Consume  Wariness, humility | Clumped  Comical, furiously, wilderness  Devour, selective  Engrossed |

Culminating Tasks

* Re-Read, Think, Discuss, Write

1. *Using facts gathered from reading this book, describe how grizzly bears are suited for the “harsh” climate of the Alaskan Tundra.*

Answer: Bears sleep through the midwinter temperatures that may fall fifty degrees below zero; they eat enough berries, salmon, game, roots and plants to last through their hibernation. When food is scarce (when they first emerge from winter dens), they are not picky in what they eat, at times eating the carcass of a moose or caribou. Bears tend to stay away from each other, avoiding fighting each other in the difficult Alaskan climate; occasional struggles for dominance do arise around prime fishing areas, but are resolved. While wary of other adult grizzlies, mother bears go so far as to adopt stray or orphan cubs.

1. *Why do you think the author wrote this book? Use evidence from the text to support your thinking.*

Answer: The author enjoyed the year he spent in the Alaskan wild; he admires the bears and the way they live in their environment. He uses phrases “I am moved … living their lives to the fullest extent.” He tries to dispel “fearful images” of bears by telling stories of their playfulness and comparing “tender, loving” mother bears to human mothers. He also teaches the reader about bears, what they eat and how they live through the seasons. He even tries the soapberries the bears like best and reports, “It didn’t taste very good to me, but then I don’t like fish heads either.” The author indicates that he values the wariness between people and bears and that only “when we visit the few remaining scraps of wilderness…precious that feeling is.” Through the text, he shows how the bears offer so many opportunities to learn how different species of plants and animals interact with each other. It is through witnessing this interaction, that humans will gain a respect for the beauty and value of nature.

Additional Tasks

* *Using evidence from the text, write about how similar mother bears are to human mothers in the way that they take care of their cubs.*

Answer: They are similar because they play with their children/cubs, hold them in their arms and hug them. They provide food, shelter and protection for their children/cub. They show affection, love and tenderness. They teach them how to hunt and fish.

Note to Teacher

* Students may enjoy researching other types of bears and/or the aurora borealis