Unit 3/Week 5

Title: Zathura

Suggested Time: 5 days

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.5.1, RL.5.2, RL.5.3, RL.5.4; W.5.2, W.5.4, W.5.9; SL.5.1; L.5.1, L.5.2, L.5.4, L.5.5

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

Working together is a great way to solve problems.

Synopsis

Danny and Walter Budwing are two brothers who don't get along. When their parents go out for the evening, small arguments escalate until finally Walter, the elder, chases his little brother out of the house and into the park, where he tackles him to the ground. As they wrestle they catch sight of a board game called “Zathura”. The boys decide to play the game. During the game, Zathura transports the Budwing home into outer space, where the strange events the game produces become delightfully bizarre.

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** |
| The story begins with a commotion between Walter and his brother Danny. Using specific quotes from the story, tell what caused the problem between the two boys.  | The walkie-talkie antenna was dangling by a wire. Walter says that he (Danny) breaks everything. |
| What kind of person is Danny? Use specific details about the way he relates to Walter to answer this question. | Danny is a mischievous person. He kept trying to get his brother to play catch even though Walter was mad at him. He threw Walter his hat, but Walter ignored him. Then Danny tossed him a baseball, and beaned him on the head.  |
| A simile is a comparison of two unlike things, using the words *like* or *as*. How does the author use of this simile help you to understand what is taking place in Danny and Walter’s house?  | The simile is “The noise grew louder, like a thousand gold balls bouncing off the roof.” The simile helps the reader understand how loud the sound is and how forceful the meteors were when they hit the house.  |
| Explain why Danny thinks that they are in outer space.  | On page 366, the author tells us that there were meteors. “Through the hole, Walter could see what was left of his parent’s bedroom and beyond that, a black, star-filled sky.” Danny states, “It’s not night, it’s outer space” |
| Polarity is defined as a pull towards a certain direction. Danny read the following message on the game card: “The polarity on your gravity belt has been reversed.” Using specific details from the text, explain how polarity affected Walter.  | If Walter’s gravity belt is reversed, he would still be on the ground. Polarity pulls you down, which is the normal direction on Earth. Walter is pulled towards the ceiling. |
| A gyroscope is a piece of equipment consisting of a rotating wheel so mounted that its axis can turn freely in certain or all directions. What purpose does a gyroscope serve on a spaceship? List specific events from the text.  | Danny’s card says that the gyroscope is malfunctioning which means it’s not working the way it should. The evidence from the text suggests that the gyroscope is a piece of equipment that helps a spaceship head in the right the direction and stay on course. The illustration also shows the house suddenly tilts, showing that it is off course or not on the right path. |
| How do the boys change their circumstances while playing the game? Find details to support your answer. | The boys can change their circumstances by rolling the dice. Walter rolled and got his gravity back. Walter also told Danny he “better hurry up and roll before (the robot) makes it in here.” When Danny rolled and got a card that read“…gravity greatly increased,” he started getting shorter and wider until he was the shape of a beach ball.  |
| Use the text to explain what *trembled* means.  | The text states that Walter’s hand *trembled* when he read that the Zorgon pirate ship was launching an attack. Being attacked is a scary event, and being scared may cause your hand to shake. Therefore, *tremble* might mean to shake. |
| What eventually saved the boys from the Zorgon pirate and how did it save them? Find the details to support your answer. | The robot came back to life and repeated, “Alien life form, must destroy” only this time it was after the Zorgon. The boys helped it up and the robot lifted one of it’s claws and “snapped it sharply around the creature’s tail.” The Zorgon took off through the hole again. |
| What was Walter going to tell Danny before the black hole swallowed him? What words or phrases in the text lead you to your answer? | Walter was probably going to tell Danny that he loves him. Walter said Danny’s name softly, which also means he said it with feeling. Walter says he’s going to tell Danny something he’s never told him before. Given how much they argue and fight, he might be about to tell Danny he loves him, something you don’t always say to a brother or sister you don’t get along with. |
| Although Zathura contained no instructions, Danny and Walter learned the rules as they played. Cite specific details to identify and list some of the rules of the game.  | Each player has a turn and must roll the dice to determine where to move their token. Once you land on a spot, a card will appear. Whatever the card says will come true from the player who rolled the dice, but it will be undone on the next turn when the token is moved to a new place. Danny gets a meteor shower when he pulls his card. This is reversed when Walter pulls a polarity card. The game ends when the player returns to Earth from Zathura. |
| Search the text and record the elements of science fiction that are evident? Cite specific details from the text in your answer.  | The story describes imaginary events based on science such as strange life forms, space ships, gravity belts, destructive robots, photon attacks and the house floating through a meteor storm in outer space. |

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 | tokenpolarity | evasivereversedmalfunctioningmechanical |
| **STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING**sufficient context clues are provided in the text | antenna, danglingmeteordefective, rotatedstaggered | mumbledbeaned, squealed, bolted, trotted, jammedwound |

Culminating Task

* Re-Read, Think, Discuss, Write
* *Citing at least three details from the text, compare and contrast the changes in the relationship between the brothers, Walter and Danny, as they faced danger and frightening situations while playing the Zathura game.*

Answer: Possible details may include: at the beginning of the story the boys did not get along. Danny was always trying to get Walter’s attention or doing things to annoy him. He broke the antennae on Walter’s walkie-talkie, he nagged Walter about playing baseball and beaned him with a ball. Walter tried to ignore him, but found it difficult. He constantly corrected Danny’s use of “me and you” and ended up tackling Danny in the park. He thought Danny was a fungus, a baby. As the game progressed, the boys began to work together in order to save each other. Danny tied Walter to the sofa as Walter started drifting toward a hole into outer space. When Danny’s gravity reversed and he was shaped like a beach ball, Walter rolled him into the robot to stop the attack. By this time, Walter begins to view his little brother differently. “You were terrific” he says after Danny destroys the robot. The brothers held on to each other during the Zorgon pirate attack. Feeling discouraged when they realized how long it was going to take to finish the game and get back home, Danny reassured Walter that they’d make it home. “Me and you together. We can do it.” When Walter pulled the black hole card and was being slowly sucked in, Danny was very upset. “His chin dropped to his chest and he began to sob.”. When Walter opened his eyes, he found himself in the park fighting with Danny as he had been before they found the game. He realized he’d been given a chance to do it again and this time he made the decision to play with Danny. “Me and you ?” Danny asked. And this time he didn’t even correct his little brother, but put his arm around him and said, “Yeah … Me and you, together.”

Additional Tasks

* *Letters From Space: As you are traveling in deep space, one theory is that time expands. For each day that you experience in space, your friend has experienced 10 years! Write a series of five letters on a space computer to a friend describing what is happening to you and what you assume is happening to that friend on Earth.* Students can work in groups to write the letters to each other. They can also use this activity as a way to peer edit. Students might write about how they are living in space, what foods they eat, and compare school in space versus school on Earth. As an extension, students can deliver letters to friends in other classes or grades.
* *Personal Response: Ask students to write about a game they have played and enjoyed. What did they like about it? In what way was it fun or challenging? Then have them write an alternate ending to the story in which something goes wrong with the game Walter and Danny are playing.* Students can work in groups and take turns writing an alternate ending to the story. Time each student 1 minute and have the students add on to what their peer wrote when it is their time. Have students read what they came up with after the group is complete.
* *Science Fiction Writing: Suppose your family had a robot to do basic household chores. Write about how your family’s daily life from the point of view of the robot. The robot’s point of view should not express emotion. Describe the events as the robot would see them without commenting on them.*

Note to Teacher

* Students may need some instruction on the genre of science fiction. Students can connect “Zathura” to other science fiction books or movies (i.e. “Star Wars”, “E.T.” “Harry Potter”, “Avatar”) that they have read or seen. “Zathura” is also a movie; it may be beneficial to have students compare/contrast the story and the movie.