Unit 6/Week 3

Title: Skylark

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.3, RL.4.4, RL.4.7; RF4.3, RF.4.4; W.4.2, W.4.4, W.4.9; SL.4.1, SL.4.2, SL.4.6; L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.4, L.4.5

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

A family’s love for one another can persevere even through times of great hardship.

Synopsis

In this story, a family struggles on a prairie farm during a drought. They are forced to make a painful choice when their water soon runs out.

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** |
| Who is telling the story and how do you know? How is the narrator related to the other main characters? | Sarah, Jacob, and Caleb are all named, leaving Anna as the first person narrator. Anna is the daughter of Jacob and the stepdaughter of Sarah. Caleb is Anna’s younger brother. |
| A **drought** is a long period of little or no rain. Find details that describe the drought conditions. | “The air was thick with the heat, and there was no breeze.” Sarah and Anna are remembering days when the flowers grew. Finally, the coyote is drinking from the pail. |
| “Sarah slumped to the ground…” Why does the author use "slumped" instead of "fell" or "knelt"? What other evidence shows how the characters are feeling during this scene? | "Slumped" is a better word choice because it better shows the despair Sarah is feeling. She is also crying. Anna says, “I knew nothing was all right,” and she saw fear in Papa’s eyes. This is evidence that they are all scared and worried about the drought. |
| What is Sarah talking about when she asks, “What is this?” What is “this” referring to? | Sarah notices that everyone is dressed up and sees the wagons coming. She hears Caleb and Anna talking about making her happy. |
| “Sarah smiled at the sight of them, everyone washed and clean as if the prairie winds had stopped covering us all with dust.” Explain what this simile means. | On the literal level, the guests have washed and dressed in their best clothing. The simile suggests that that the drought, alluded to as the dry, dusty winds, has been temporarily forgotten, or washed away, because the party is a happy occasion. |
| How does the author show that Sarah loves music? | The first clue is at the beginning of the story when Anna asks Sarah about remembering singing. In this section, Sarah “stared” as if surprised, then smiled when the phonograph began to play. As she danced, she was happy. |
| How does Anna feel about Sarah? How do you know? | Anna has come to love Sarah. In the book she wrote for Sarah, Anna refers to her as “mother,” and writes about how the family loves her. Anna also shows empathy when she understands that Sarah is not happy on the prairie. |
| Anna writes, “She tries, but she can’t help remembering what she knew first.” What does Anna mean by this? | Anna means that because Sarah comes from Maine, it is hard for her to get used to or love the prairie. The introduction describes the prairie as a “sea of grass” and says it is very different from Maine. |
| Why did Matthew and Maggie have to leave? | The text says they had to leave because their well went dry. That means that they had no more water on their farm. |
| What is the meaning of Anna’s dream? What is the purpose of describing it in the story? | Anna is remembering how times were before the drought. It means that she misses those times terribly and wishes the drought were over so they can be happy again. The purpose is to show how the drought has changed their lives, and to show again her strong desire to see Sarah happy again. |
| What details does the author use to describe the fire scene? How does the illustration support the text in creating drama? | Everyone is shouting and running. Sarah and Papa are beating the flames. Caleb is trembling. Sarah screams when the barn catches fire. This is all in stark contrast to the quiet whispers and calmness of the story prior to this. The illustration shows the bright orange flames against the darkness as the barn is being destroyed. The postures of the characters suggest they are devastated. |
| What sentence helps you figure out why Papa stopped fighting the fire and let the barn burn? | “It was the last barrel.” Papa realized there was no more water to fight the fire, so there was nothing to do but let it burn. |
| You know water can be held in a barrel. What other meaning of barrel is used? | It is part of a rifle. Barrel is a multiple meaning word. |
| How did Anna know they would have to go away? How does each of the characters feel about the decision? | Anna sees the results of the fire and notices the animals “looking for green grass” that is not there, both a result of the drought. She sees Papa and Sarah disagreeing about something. Sarah appears to be very unhappy about the decision. Papa hugs her, apparently to comfort her. Anna knows there is no more water and the family cannot continue living on the farm. |

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 |  |  |
| **STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING**  sufficient context clues are provided in the text | phonograph  drought  prairie  slumped  well  trembling | barrel  narrowed  corral |

Culminating Task

* Re-Read, Think, Discuss, Write

*Four times in the story, the author writes about Caleb’s glass – in the introduction on page 690, at the bottom of page 692, the bottom of page 696, and finally in Anna’s dream on page 699. Re-read these sections. Write a paragraph to explain the significance of the glass. In your paragraph, identify what the glass represents and use details from the story to support your reasoning.*

Answer: The glass represents hope. In the Introduction, the author states the glass is placed on the fencepost to wait for the rain that does not come. The next sentence says all the family can do is hope. The glass is next mentioned when Anna notices it is missing from the fencepost. This is after Sarah breaks down when Papa threatens to shoot the coyote. The family is in despair - Anna knowing “nothing was all right,” and Papa having fear in his eyes. Because of this despair, the family appears to have lost hope - thus the missing glass. After the party, when the family is feeling happy and again hopeful, Sarah asks Papa to replace the glass, as “It should be there when it rains.” Finally, the glass is mentioned in Anna’s dream where she is remembering happy times and wishing they would return.

Additional Tasks

* With a partner or small group, choose a scene from the story to perform as Reader’s Theater, paying special attention to putting feeling into the words.