Unit 1/Week 1

Title: Hatchet

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.6.1-5; W.6.2, W.6.4, W.6.9; SL.6.1; L.6.1

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

To survive in nature, bravery and persistence must prevail.

Synopsis

In this excerpt, thirteen-year-old Brian Robeson overcomes the initial hurdles of survival in the Canadian wilderness. As he wards off fears from his earlier encounter with a bear, Brian faces off with a porcupine in the dark of night. He was left to remove eight porcupine quills from his leg. Realizing that self-pity would get him nowhere, Brian figures out how to use his hatchet and natural materials to start a fire. The fire offered his first hope of survival.

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** |
| In the opening paragraphs, as Brian sat in a shelter he had built by a lake in the Canadian wilderness, what did he experience? How did this show what he was feeling? | He hears the wind in the pine trees (though thought it was a growl); hears slithering. He smelled rot/musty, that made him think of graves/cobwebs/dust/old death. He could see nothing because it was so dark/ clouds covered the stars. He is nervous & afraid. [The teacher may guide students to understand that the author, Gary Paulson, uses Brian’s sensory experience to paint a picture.] |
| Pain can be both physical and emotional. What was Brian feeling as he pulled the quills from his leg? | Pain, that moved from a “pointed injury pain to spreading in a hot smear up his leg”; self-pity, as he was alone in the dark with his hurt leg and mosquitos finding him; lonely—“I can’t take it this way, alone with no fire and in the dark” |
| What did Brian discover about the most important rule of survival? How did he discover this? | Feeling sorry for yourself didn’t work because nothing changes when you are alone and self-pity accomplished nothing. He was no further along by crying in the corner for who knows how long. While he knew that it was considered wrong to do/ incorrect, he had figured out why. This allowed him to keep trying to survive instead of giving up. |
| Why was Brian frustrated with his dream about his dad and Terry? How does this help you understand what “frustration” means? | Brian felt frustration when he was unable to understand what his father and Terry were trying to communicate with him in his dream. Brian’s dad was trying to tell him something—his lips were moving, but there was no sound. Brian wanted to understand but he couldn’t. Terry kept pointing to the fire, but Brian could not understand what he meant. Frustration is being discouraged or upset at not being able to do something or achieve a goal. |
| How is Brian feeling when he wakes up? What does he do? | His hurt leg is stiff “like wood”; he was thirsty and hungry;  He winced a bit from his leg; sore leg and stiff back. His self-pity is gone. He eats some berries then picks up his hatchet. He begins to think “he should not have thrown it” when a thought came that he couldn’t “pin down.” |
| “The hatchet was the key to it all.” What clues helped Brian realize the hatchet would help him start a fire? | He stood up outside of the shelter and the morning sun hit the hatchet, flashing a brilliant gold (like fire). When he had thrown the hatchet at the porcupine, it showered sparks. In his dreams, Terry was pointing to the fire; his dad was trying to tell him about fire. |
| How did Brian make use of the resources he had to “get fire from the hatchet”? | First, he stuck the rock wall “a glancing blow” with his hatchet. This gave him sparks. A “sliding blow” gave him more sparks. Brian finds the $20 bill is worthless, so he tears it up to use it in the fire. He also finds the paper-like bark of the birch trees—he peels the “paper” off but must cut it in “thin slivers” which took hours. The fire was “starved” like him for the last fuel he needed – oxygen. When he blew gently on the fire the “red ball burst into flame.” He did the “painstaking” work to get the fire started. |
| How does the author conclude this selection? | The author ends this selection with Brian succeeding in building a fire. Brian now has “a friend… a hungry friend but a good one.” He is grateful it will keep him warm. He is no longer lonely. It is key to his survival. |

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 | Accomplished  Glancing blow  Ignite  Gratified  Rasping  Apparent  Gestures, gesturing  Skittered  Haunches |  |
| **STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING**  sufficient context clues are provided in the text | Hatchet  Quills  Survival  Self Pity  Wince  Nick, nicked  Tinder, kindling  Consuming  Slithering  Hammered  Straining  Expression |  |

Culminating Task

* Re-Read, Think, Discuss, Write
* *In this selection, how does Brian respond to the challenges he faces? What does he learn?*

Answer: Brian faced many challenges in the Canadian wilderness and was able to overcome them by being brave and persevering. First, Brian had to overcome his fear of the dark and his pain from the encounter with the porcupine. But ultimately he had to learn the “most important rule of survival” and overcome his self-pity over being alone, without anything, in the Canadian wilderness. Brian had to overcome his own frustration and persevere. Brian was very focused in starting the fire. He had to find the kindling, strike the hatchet to create sparks, and blow on the fire with oxygen. Once it started, Brian knew the fire would be critical for his survival. He is learning that he can make a fire, take care of himself and perhaps survive.

Additional Tasks

* Several times Brian was frustrated by his inability to use all of his senses. Using examples from the story, show how his senses began to adapt to the wilderness and how he depends on them to survive.

Answer: Brian’s senses are changing, enabling him to take care of himself and survive. Opening paragraphs, he desperately wanted to *see*—but couldn’t—showed (through seeing/hearing/touching/smelling), the fear that he was feeling; in his dream, he desperately wanted to *hear* his father—but couldn’t. His seeing the “flash of metal” drew his thoughts back to his hatchet and when it “caught the first rays of the morning sun” it unlocked what his father had been trying to tell him – fire. Brian also knows, “his patterns were changing and the sleep was light… with small sounds awakening him…”