Unit 1/Week 1

Title: Stray

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.6.1, RL.6.2, RL.6.3, W.6.1, W.6.4, W.6.9, SL.6.1; L.6.1, L.6.2

Teacher Instructions

**Preparing for 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

Doing what is right sometimes requires overcoming obstacles or challenges.

Synopsis

Mr. and Mrs. Lacey and their daughter, Doris, are stranded at home following a severe winter storm. Doris notices an abandoned puppy on the snowy road and brings it indoors. She knows and is reminded by her parents that the family cannot afford a pet. They tell her that she can keep the puppy only until the roads clear up enough for Mr. Lacy to drive it to the pound. Doris forms a bond with the puppy and is heartbroken when the time comes for her father to take it away. To Doris’ surprise, Mr. Lacey could not stand the conditions of the pound and returned the dog home to his daughter.

1. Read the entire selection, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
2. Re-read the text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Tier II/academic vocabulary.

**During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire selection independently.
2. Teacher reads the text aloud while students follow along or students take turns reading aloud to each other. Depending on the text length and student need, the teacher may choose to read the full text or a passage aloud. For a particularly complex text, 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, continually 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** |
| Cite evidence from the text which tells how Doris discovered the new dog. | Doris was shoveling snow off the house’s steps and saw a puppy on the road. She calls the puppy to her, “Hey, Come on!” and “Come on, Pooch.” She then brought the dog inside the house. |
| What does Mr. Lacey mean when he says, “I don’t know where it came from…but I know for sure where it’s going”?  Why is Mr. Lacey unable to follow through with his threat? | Mr. Lacey is referring to taking the dog to the pound. Two sentences later, the narrator states, “Because the roads would be too bad for travel for many days, Mr. Lacey couldn’t get out to take the puppy to the pound in the city right away. |
| What was the agreement about keeping the puppy? | Mr. Lacey “…agreed to let it sleep in the basement while Mr. Lacey grudgingly let Doris feed it table scraps. The dog could stay as long as it was snowing. When the weather permitted, Mr. Lacey was going to take the dog to the pound. |
| Is life easy or difficult for the Lacey family? Find 3 statements that help the reader understand the family’s financial situation. | Life is difficult for the Lacey family. Three statements that support this fact are:   * “…Mrs. Lacey grudgingly let Doris feed it table scraps.” Mrs. Lacey was sensitive about throwing out food because she didn’t like to waste food. * “She knew her parents wouldn’t let her keep it, that her father made so little money any pets were out of the question.” * “You know we can’t afford a dog, Doris.” |
| What kind of pet would the puppy be? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer. | According to the text, I think the puppy would make a good pet. It states that the puppy “…did not complain,” …“never cried in the night or howled at the wind,” “…didn’t tear up everything in the basement,” and he “wouldn’t even follow Doris up the basement steps unless it was invited.”  Also, the puppy was friendly. For example, “…it always wagged its tail.” |
| What kind of person is Doris? Find 2 to 3 pieces of evidence to support your inference. | Doris is a friendly person. She was very friendly to the puppy when she first saw it. She greeted him, “Hey! Come on!”, and “Come on, Pooch!” She was a very caring person, she fed the dog table scraps.” Also, Doris has feelings. When the dog was taken to the pound, “She cried herself to sleep.” |
| How do you know that Mr. and Mrs. Lacey are not going to let Doris keep the puppy? | They ignored her when she tried to tell them how good the dog was. They did not respond. |
| How does the weather affect the plot of the story? Include evidence to support your answer. | The plot is dependent on the setting. There has just been a snow storm. Because of this, Doris found the dog wandering outside her house. The dog stayed with the family only until the snow let up enough so Mr. Lacey could take the puppy to the pound. That was enough time for not only Doris to become attached to the dog, but her father also. Therefore, at the end of the story, the father did not want to leave the puppy to die at the pound. “They give an animal six days to live. Then they kill it with some kind of a shot.” He states, “I wouldn’t leave an ant in that place…So I brought the dog back.” |
| What is Doris’ emotional state towards the beginning of the story? Choose 2 to 3 pieces of evidence that support your claim. | At this point in the story, Doris feels very sad and hopeless. As her father drives the puppy to the pound, “Doris was sitting alone in the living room, hugging a pillow and rocking back and forth on the edge of a chair. She was trying not to cry, but she was not strong enough. Her face was wet and red, her eyes full of distress.” After her father left with the puppy, “She cried herself to sleep, and her dreams were full of searching for things lost.” Furthermore, Doris wondered if “…she would ever in her life have anything.” |
| What did Doris not want to do and why? | The text states, “She wanted to not go past the basement door. She wanted not to face her parents.” Doris did not want to go past the basement door and face her parents because she was drained of emotion. She just had woken up from crying herself to sleep. I think she missed the puppy terribly and just needed some space from her parents who wouldn’t let her keep the dog. |
| According to Mr. Lacey, what was the pound like? | He states, “Worst looking place I’ve ever seen. Ten dogs to a cage. Smell was enough to knock you down. And they give an animal six days to live. Then they kill it with some kind of a shot.” |
| Why does Mr. Lacey change his mind and bring the puppy back home? What does this tell the reader about his character? Cite evidence from the story to support your response. | Mr. Lacey found the conditions at the shelter unacceptable. He knew that the stray dog was most likely going to be killed Mr. Lacey says, “I wouldn’t leave an ant in that place…So I brought the dog back. Whereas, at first Mr. Lacey seemed strict and uncaring, at the end of the story he changes to having compassion for the puppy. |
| How does Mr. Lacey’s change of heart demonstrate that the plot of the story can be dependent on the setting? | Mr. Lacey’s change of heart demonstrates that the plot of the story can be dependent on the setting. At first, Mr. Lacey was determined to get rid of the puppy by taking it to the pound. However, once he saw the awful conditions at the pound, he had a change of heart and brought the dog home. The setting of the pound affected Mr. Lacey’s feelings and actions. |

Tier II/Academic Vocabulary

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|  | **These words require less time to learn**  (They are concrete or describe an object/event/  process/characteristic that is familiar to students) | **These words require more time to learn**  (They are abstract, have multiple meanings, are a part  of a word family, or are likely to appear again in future texts) |
| **Meaning can be learned from context** | timidly, figured  exhausted | Abandoned  trudged  ignore  distress  starvation |
| **Meaning needs to be provided** | pound | grudgingly  sensitive |

Culminating Writing Task

* Prompt
  + *In “Stray” by Cynthia Rylant a young girl takes in a stray puppy against her parents’ wishes. She knows she will have to give up the dog eventually. Describe Doris’ journey of having the dog, giving it up and the story’s surprise ending. Ultimately, did Mr. Lacey make the right decision? Defend your answer with evidence from the text anticipating a counterargument.*
* Teacher Instructions

1. Students identify their writing task from the prompt provided.
2. Students complete an evidence chart as a pre-writing activity. Teachers should guide students in gathering and using any relevant notes they compiled while reading and answering the text-dependent questions earlier. Some students will need a good deal of help gathering this evidence, especially when this process is new and/or the text is challenging!

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| ***Evidence***  ***Quote or paraphrase*** | ***Elaboration / explanation of how this evidence supports ideas or argument*** |
| “The puppy had been abandoned…its ears tucked, its tail between its legs, shivering.” | Doris probably wanted the dog because of the way it looked. |
| “I don’t know where it came from…but I know for sure where it’s going.” | Doris is going to face resistance from her parents in keeping the dog. |
| “Did not complain,” “never cried in the night or howled at the wind,” “didn’t tear up everything in the basement,” “wouldn’t even follow Doris up the basement steps unless it was invited.  Stretched itself out on the top basement step because “it had wanted some company and that it had lain against the door.” “It always wagged its tail.” | This dog would make such a good pet for Doris. |
| They ignored her when she tried to tell them how good the dog was. They did not respond. | Doris attempted to convince her parents to let her keep the dog. |
| “Doris was sitting alone in the living room, hugging a pillow and rocking back and forth on the edge of a chair. She was trying not to cry but she was not strong enough. Her face was wet and red, her eyes full of distress.  The text states, ”She cried herself to sleep, and her dreams were full of searching and searching for things lost.” | Doris was devastated when the dog was taken to the pound. |
| According to the author, “…she wondered if she would ever in her life have anything…” | Doris felt hopeless. |
| He states, “Worst looking place I’ve ever seen. Ten dogs to a cage. Smell was enough to knock you down. And they give an animal six days to live. Then they kill it with some kind of a shot.” | Why Mr. Lacey did not take the dog to the pound. |

1. Once students have completed the evidence chart, they should look back at the writing prompt in order to remind themselves what kind of response they are writing (i.e. expository, analytical, argumentative) and think about the evidence they found. (Depending on the grade level, teachers may want to review students’ evidence charts in some way to ensure accuracy.) From here, students should develop a specific thesis statement. This could be done independently, with a partner, small group, or the entire class. Consider directing students to the following sites to learn more about thesis statements: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/

http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis\_statement.shtml.

1. Students compose a rough draft. With regard to grade level and student ability, teachers should decide how much scaffolding they will provide during this process (i.e. modeling, showing example pieces, sharing work as students go).
2. Students complete final draft.

* Sample Answer

In “Stray” by Cynthia Rylant, Doris takes in a stray puppy against her parents’ wishes. She knows she will have to give up the dog eventually. This story is about Doris’s struggle, which actually has a surprise ending where the father does let his daughter keep the dog. I will argue against his decision.

The story begins with Doris finding an abandoned dog while she is sweeping the front stairs of her house. “The puppy had been abandoned…its ears tucked, its tail between its legs, shivering.” Doris knows her parents don’t want her to keep it. Her father states, “I don’t know where it came from…but I know for sure where it’s going.” He means he is going to take it to the pound. Doris falls in love with the dog. According to the text, there are so many good things about it: It “…did not complain,” it “…never cried in the night or howled at the wind,” it “…didn’t tear up everything in the basement,” it “…wouldn’t even follow Doris up the basement steps unless it was invited, and “it always wagged its tail” Doris attempted to convince her parents to let her keep the dog, but they ignored her when she tried to tell them how good the dog was. They did not respond.

In the middle of the story, Doris must face the fact that her father is going to take the dog to the pound. Doris was devastated when the dog was taken to the pound. The text states, “Doris was sitting alone in the living room, hugging a pillow and rocking back and forth on the edge of a chair. She was trying not to cry but she was not strong enough. Her face was wet and red, her eyes full of distress. Furthermore, ”She cried herself to sleep, and her dreams were full of searching and searching for things lost.”

At the end of the story, Mr. Lacey decides to not take the puppy to the pound. He states, “Worst looking place I’ve ever seen. Ten dogs to a cage. Smell was enough to knock you down. And they give an animal six days to live. Then they kill it with some kind of a shot.” Although, this decision obviously makes Doris happy, I do not feel it is the best one for the family. One might say that it is better to make Doris happy, but I disagree. Ultimately, Mr. Lacey did not make the right decision. I feel that the family cannot afford to keep the dog. Their finances are so bad that they have to be concerned about every scrap of food they have. Therefore, they should not waste precious resources on a pet.

Additional Tasks

* Doris’ family could not afford to keep a puppy. Research the responsibilities and costs of raising a puppy, and write an essay which discusses what is required to raise a puppy.
  + Websites: [https://www.petfinder.com/ped.../dog/annual-dog-care costs/](https://www.petfinder.com/ped.../dog/annual-dog-care%20costs/) ; [www.peteducatio0nl.com/article.cpm?c](http://www.peteducatio0nl.com/article.cpm?c) :

[www.aspca.org](http://www.aspca.org)

* + Sample Answer:

In Stray by Cynthia Rylant, her family could not afford to keep the puppy she found. I have wanted a puppy for a long time, and this got me to wondering what the actual responsibilities are of owning a dog and whether or not my family could actually afford to have a dog or not. I have done some research, and the results were very interesting.

First of all, there are responsibilities which do not cost anything, but do require a big commitment. For example, a dog would need to be walked twice a day –before school and afterschool. A dog needs to be trained. And, very importantly, the dog droppings would have to be cleaned regularly. If I were to have a dog, I would make a commitment to follow through and perform these tasks whenever required. Second is the matter of finances. According to the research I have done, owning a dog is very expensive. The following are annual expenses to having a dog: 1. Food – $120 to 500, 2. Nutritional Supplies – $0 to 500, 3. Treats - $20 to 200, 4. Dental - $20-200, 5. Routine Vet Exams - $45 – 200, 6. Vaccinations - $60 to 150, 7. Flea and Tic Prevention - $200 – 500, 8. Spay-Neuter - $35-200 (one time), 9. Collar $7 to 10 (One time), 10. Leash - $10 to 50, 11. Toys $10 to 200. The grand annual total of owning a dog can run from $527 to 2305.

This sum seems very expensive to me, and I would feel very bad to ask my mother for so much money so I could have a dog. Although I would like to have a dog, I see where this will have to be put off until the future. Perhaps if I plan my life the right way, I could have a dog when I am an adult. That way, my children would be able to enjoy having a dog.