Unit 1

Title: “Overdoing It”

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.6.1, RL.6.2, RL.6.3, RL.6.4; W.6.1, W.6.4, W.6.9; SL.6.1; L.6.1, L.6.2, L.6.4, L.6.5

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

Fear is an emotion that brings out varied reactions and behaviors in people. Sometimes, those reactions and behaviors can produce unexpected consequences of more concern than the perceived threat.

Synopsis

When the land surveyor, Gleb Smirnov, arrives in the Gnilushka train station, he hires a peasant to take him to the estate that he must survey. It is twilight when they begin the journey, and the surveyor is afraid of being alone with Klim, the peasant, in the deserted countryside. To mask his fears Smirnov exaggerates his physical strength and says that he has three revolvers. Gleb continues to boast and lie about his abilities and resources. Eventually, Klim fears for his life and runs off into the forest, leaving the surveyor alone in the carriage. The surveyor calls for Klim for nearly two hours, and finally Klim returns. Smirnov assures Klim that there are no revolvers. Klim feels that Gleb almost made him “die of fright” and wishes he had not agreed to take Smirnov to the estate. This story shows how the reactions of one character, due to his fear, can lead to unexpected consequences and have a direct impact on the actions of the other character(s).

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** |
| What words and phrases does the author use to describe the characters in the beginning of the story? What does this information tell you about them? | Gleb describes Klim: “…husky peasant, glum pockmarked, dressed in a tattered gray coarse wool coat and bast-bark shoes,”  Klim is a peasant who drives a wagon.    Klim calls the surveyor, Gleb: “your lordship.”  Gleb is going to survey an estate.  Klim is a peasant and Gleb appears to be a person who is in a higher social status. |
| What figurative language example is used in the sentence, “The wagon suddenly creaked, squeaked, shook, and, as though against its will, turned left”? Why do you think the author used figurative language to describe the wagon? | Personification: To give human qualities to inanimate objects.  Possible Answers:  1. The author wants to clearly paint a picture in the reader’s mind of the setting.  2. The author wants us to feel the “drabness” of the setting adding to the theme of fear. |
| How is the man in the illustration similar to Klim, the peasant, in the story, *Overdoing It*? | Possible answers include: He appears to have had a hard life; his weathered face suggests he’s worked outdoors. His wrinkles suggest that he is older. His clothes look worn from hard work. The colors of the clothes suggest a simple life and simple labor. |
| In the opening, the author states, “The land surveyor, Gleb Smirnov, got off the train at Gnilushka. The station was some twenty miles from the estate he came to survey, and he had to cover that distance in a horse-drawn vehicle of some sort.” What words give clues that this story takes place in a foreign country and in a different time period?  What words and phrases does the author use to describe the environment? Why does he use these words and phrases? | Answers include: “Gleb Smirnov”, “Gnilushka” and “horse-drawn vehicle.”  “…dark, frozen plain-broad and endless.” “Try to cross it and you’ll come to the end of the world.” “…darkening space, loomed oddly shaped mounds.” The author wants the reader to feel the barren, gloominess, and unfamiliarity of the setting. These words help describe the somber tone of the text. |
| How does Gleb refer to the surroundings in the first paragraph and how do they make him “feel”? | Gleb thinks, “What a God-Forsaken place this is!” He thinks, “Not a man or beast in sight!,” “Who knows what could happen in a place like this-they can attack you and rob you and no one will be the wiser for it.” The author wants us to know Gleb is becoming fearful. |
| Identify ways that Gleb Smirnov’s words show his fear through his exaggerated lies. | Gleb states, “. . . I’m acquainted with every district judge and police inspector.” Further, he states, “Once three highway men threw themselves upon me.” and “I brought along three revolvers.” |
| What words and phrases from the text show how Gleb is feeling about the peasant driver? What do these words or phrases demonstrate? | “…he’s not reassuring,” He’s got a husky back. “…he has the mug of a beast.” These phrases demonstrate why Gleb is fearful of the driver. |
| What words and phrases does Gleb use to “over do” or exaggerate his abilities? Why does he feel the need to “lie” about his stature and support? | “…to play it safe, I brought along three revolvers.” “And with a gun, as you know, it’s bad business to joke. I can handle ten cutthroats with them!” “I’m a civil servant…an important one at that.” “Behind the bushes over there, are deputized village police inspectors.” “Four pals of mine are joining me. They are tough fellows, thick-set…each one is armed with a pistol.” Gleb is trying to “sell” the fact that he is important and has many people ready to come to his defense. He may be afraid of who or what (robbers) is in the countryside, but he is also trying to intimidate Klim. The size, face, and unassuring manner of the peasant have him worried about this driver. |
| What evidence is there regarding the driver’s behavior that reveals his frustration and fear? | 1. At first, he responds to Gleb Smirnov’s urging to speed the horse up. Klim’s response is almost defiant as he refuses to make the horse go faster.  2. Klim, “suddenly rolled off the wagon…” |
| Identify the type of figurative language used when  Gleb states, “… I have the strength of a bull”. In addition to meaning that he’s “strong,” what else is implied  about the character’s true feelings? | Gleb is using hyperbole to exaggerate his “strength” to protect himself and hide his fear and paranoia. |
| What is Gleb thinking and saying at the top of page 463 that demonstrates how fearful he is becoming? | “And I got scared.” “I must not show my fear.” “Why is he looking around at me so much? He’s probably planning something…” “Why are you hurrying your horse this way?” “You’re lying.” |
| It says, “Why do you keep looking around and fidgeting as if you were on *pins and needles?*” How does the use of this idiom describe how Gleb truly feels? | Possible Answers:  1. He’s fearful and obsessing about his environment.  2. Gleb’s fears are being projected onto Klim as though they  were Klim’s actions and fears, however, in reality Gleb is seeing his own fears. |
| The author states, “And then something unexpected, something that he did not foresee in all his cowardice, happened.” What happened that surprises Gleb? Why does this happen? | “Klim suddenly rolled off the wagon and almost on all fours rushed into a thicket.” “Help!” He wailed. “Help! Take the horse and the wagon, but don’t kill me! Help!”  Gleb’s boasting, lies, and questions have led Klim to believe that his life is in danger and he runs away. |
| Throughout the story, the surveyor shows his fears through his actions, through his abusive words toward Klim, and through his exaggerated lies. What have his behaviors, due to his fear, brought about? | Gleb’s exaggerated lies have pushed Klim to the point of fearing for his life. Klim suddenly and unexpectedly flees the wagon into the forest, leaving Gleb alone in the wagon and frightened. |
| Near the end of the story, Gleb calls out, “Klimushka! ... My dear man! Where are you?” Why does he now call the peasant a “good man”? | Gleb needs Klim to come back and drive him to his destination. He may also be afraid of being accused of stealing the horse or being left in the forest. He is trying to persuade him to come back. |
| What words and phrases does the author use to convince Klim to get back into the wagon?  How does Klim feel about this? | Gleb uses a gentler voice to reassure Klim, including the words and phrases: “dear man,” “just joking,” “I lied because I was scared!”  Klim comes to the realization that Gleb was not a true “cutthroat,” and is very angry. He does not want anything further to do with Gleb. |
| Does the surveyor benefit from his own exaggerations and bragging? | Gleb’s boasting and lies almost backfire on him because the driver might not have returned and he would have been left in the dark forest, fearful of what might come his way. |
| The last few sentences say that, “…the surveyor covered his ears with his collar, and meditated. The road and Klim no longer seemed to him threatening.” What might he be meditating upon? What could Gleb have done to ensure a more positive ride from the start? Use evidence from the text in your answer. | Different Perspectives:  Perspective #1 (He felt remorse.)  1. He’s meditating about the effect his actions and word choices had on Klim (e.g., causing Klim to fear for his life)  2. He’s reflecting upon his actions and how he could “control” his fear in the future to avoid a repeat of this mishap.  Perspective #2: (He didn’t feel remorse.)  1. Gleb is thinking that Klim overreacted because instead of a sincere apology, Gleb chooses to scold Klim by saying, “What was there to get scared about, you fool?”  2. “The road and Klim no longer seemed to him threatening.” He is thinking of himself and doesn’t mention Klim’s fear or acknowledge his own.  Things Gleb could have done:  He should have paid more attention to Klim’s behavior (e.g., hurrying the horse along). He should not have exaggerated, “I brought three revolvers,” Being prone to perceived threats in his environment, he could have planned to arrive earlier (e.g., not arriving at dusk). With all of these factors, it’s not a surprise when he states, “…yes, it’s all very frightening.” |
| What can you infer about how Chekhov’s word choice changes the tone or mood of the story? | For example: In the beginning paragraphs of *Overdoing It* Checkhov uses adjectives to describe the setting and one of the main characters, Klim (e.g., “pockmarked”, “tattered”). In the last paragraph, the adjectives become darker (e.g. “darkening space”, “loomed,” oddly”). Additionally, in the beginning the dialogue is between the two characters. At the end, the dialogue is internal within Gleb’s mind, accentuating the dark change in tone. |

Tier II/ 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** | surveyor, peasant, tattered, pockmarked  acquainted, transit, revolver, husky | advise, reign |
| **Meaning needs to be provided** | splayed, emaciated, loomed, merely  obstructed  emerged, meditated | prolonged, accursed  wry  resigned |

Culminating Writing Task

* Prompt:

Explore Gleb’s fear in the short story, *Overdoing It*. Determine how his fear is expressed throughout the story through his statements, reactions, and behaviors. What effect does this have on him, his situation, and the other character in the story? Cite specific and relevant evidence from the text in your thinking. Be sure to include direct quotes and page numbers in your response.

* 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 remind students to use any relevant notes they compiled while reading and answering the text-dependent

questions.

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| ***Evidence***  ***Quote or paraphrase*** | ***Elaboration / explanation of how this evidence supports ideas or argument*** |
| “What a God-forsaken place this is!” thought the surveyor. . . “ “Not a man or beast in sight!” | The reader begins to see Gleb’s fear as he considers the environment—it’s nightfall, it’s cold, he’s unfamiliar with his surroundings and the driver is unassuring. |
| “Who knows what could happen in a place like this—they can attack you and rob you and no one will be the wiser for it.”. . . And this driver—he’s not very reassuring. . . “ | This reveals that Gleb does not trust anyone. |
| “And this driver, --he’s not very reassuring. . . Some husky back he’s got! And he has the mug of a beast. . . yes, it’s all very frightening.” | Gleb over-exaggerates Klim’s physical traits which is intensifying his fear. |
| “I like to fight off cutthroats. In appearance, I’m thin, sickly looking, but I have the strength of a bull.” “I’m acquainted with every district judge and police inspector.” | To cope with his fear and paranoia, Gleb exaggerates lies and projects this as “reality.” |
| “The thought that he might have to spend the night sitting there in the cold dark forest, hearing only the wolves, their echo, and the neighing of the emaciated mare, sent shivers up and down the surveyor’s spine, as though it were being scraped by a cold file.” | The author’s use of imagery such as, “scraped by a cold file,” and the use of descriptive word choice (e.g., shivers) illustrates to the reader Gleb’s fear. |

3. 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 with three specific claims as listed on their Five Paragraph Graphic Organizer. ***Teacher should review sample essay and graphic organizer prior to students writing.***

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

4. 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).

5. Students complete final draft.

* Sample Essay:

“No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear.” (Burke) Fear can manifest itself in people through their actions, speech, and thoughts and can make them become a “different person.” Such is true in Anton Chekhov’s short story, *Overdoing It*, where the main character’s fear was triggered by both his environment and his perception of others. This caused him to create and tell exaggerated lies. Fear was expressed throughout this story. This was shown when Gleb, the main character, became fearful of his environment, when he became suspicious of the driver’s intentions, and when he was left alone by himself.

One’s environment can often be terrifying. However, it can be even more terrifying when one finds him or herself in unusual and different surroundings. Gleb found this to be true. For example, after he boarded the wagon at the train station, headed for his destination, he stated, “What a God forsaken place this is!” He continued to think to himself, “Who knows what could happen in a place like this—they can attack you and rob you and no one will be the wiser for it.” One’s inner emotions can manifest when a person finds oneself in unfamiliar or seemingly “threatening” environments. There may have been nothing to fear, nonetheless, Gleb projected his fear because of his unfamiliar environment. Not only did Gleb show fear with his surroundings, he also showed distrust of others.

As Gleb was riding in the wagon to his destination, he became distrustful and ultimately, fearful of Klim, the driver. Gleb allowed his thoughts to jump, which exemplified his fearfulness-- “And this driver—he’s not very reassuring…Some husky back he’s got! And he has the mug of a beast…yes, it’s all very frightening.” One can conclude that this experience caused Gleb fear. As a result, he began to exaggerate his importance and his connections. He boasted, “I like to fight off cutthroats. In appearance I’m thin, sickly looking, but I have the strength of a bull!” He further boasted, “I’m acquainted with every district judge and police inspector.” His suspiciousness of Klim was evident when he thought the horses were being hurried because Klim had ill intentions towards him, “… why are you hurrying the horses?” As a result of this fear, he begins to lie, “… because four pals of mine are joining me here… from the station. We must let them catch up with us.” Consequently, Gleb resorts to exaggerating, even lying to cover up his fear. His true test of fear came when he was left alone.

One’s true character is often tested when one is left alone. In *Overdoing It,* this happened to Gleb, the main character. For example, Gleb showed his most fear at the end of the story when he thought, “He ran off. . . got scared the fool! What’ll I do now? I can’t go on by myself because I don’t know the way, and also, I might be suspected of stealing his horse. . . What had I better do?” This suggests that Gleb truly detested being left on his own. Another example in which he reveals his fear is from the omniscient point of view: “The thought that he might have to spend the night sitting there in the cold dark forest, hearing the wolves, their echo, and the neighing of the emaciated mare, sent shivers up and down the surveyor’s spine, as though it were being scraped with a file.” To review, this illustrates that Gleb’s greatest fear presented itself when he was forced to be left alone.

Fear demands our attention. It alerts us to the fact that our environment and others may be unsafe. On the other hand, fear can just be simply a product of our imagination. Fear is expressed throughout this story and this is shown when the main character became fearful of his environment, suspicious of the driver’s intentions, and was left by himself. “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself” (Roosevelt), a great man once proclaimed. Perhaps Gleb could have gleaned some wisdom from this.

Additional Tasks

* Some people suggest that Gleb felt justified in the attitudes, comments, and threats he directed to Klim because of his social status in relationship to Klim. What evidence in the story suggests that this may be the case? Do you think that Gleb was justified in his treatment of the driver? Why or why not? Use evidence from the text in you answer.

Students will reread the text looking for words and phrases used by the characters to describe each other. Recording phrases on a T-Chart may be a valuable way to compare and contrast these quotes. For example, Gleb describes Klim as pockmarked and wearing tattered clothing. He grumbles when talking to him, criticizes his driving, says he has the mug of a beast, calls him “brother” as he boasts of his strength, and claims that Klim is lying, etc. Klim calls Gleb, “your lordship and master.” He responds with simple answers even when being berated (“What kind of ruffians could there be here?”). He doesn’t respond to Klim’s bragging and boasting. These are examples of how the surveyor feels superior to the peasant driver and feels justified in implying that he might be a ruffian, thief, and a liar. Students would then defend why or why not Gleb’s treatment of Klim may have been appropriate. (Answers might include: typical of the time, morally wrong, etc.)

Answers will vary. Students may want to read additional works of Chekhov, as social status is a common theme in his writing and would provide opportunities to teach author’s purpose, etc. in extending this theme.

* Create a dictionary using the Tier II vocabulary in the text. The dictionary should include the part of speech, definition, and use of each vocabulary word appropriately in a sentence. Optional: have students draw and color a visual representation of each vocabulary word.
* Create a four-paneled graphic organizer citing examples of figurative language from the text. Additionally, students will show their understanding of how figurative language is effectively used to discover the theme (refer to example below). An additional activity is to do an oral presentation of their panels.

Examples of Figurative Language

“Overdoing It” by Anton Chekhov

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| **Onomatopoeia**  “..the wagon creaked..”  Author uses the word “creaked” to create an eerie setting. | **Idiom**  “…as if you were on pins and needles…”  The idiom is used to create the feeling of tension. |
| **Hyperbole**  “die of fright..”  The author uses hyperbole to express the character’s trepidation. | **Imagery**  “..sent shivers up and down the surveyor’s spine, as though it were being scraped with a cold file.”  The author uses imagery to paint a clear picture in the reader’s mind of the character’s fear. |

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**Examples of Figurative Language**

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Text

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| **Onomatopoeia**  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **Example from text with page number.**  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Interpret figurative language meaning. | **Idiom**  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **Example from text with page number.**  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Interpret figurative language meaning. |
| **Hyperbole**  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **Example from text with page number.**  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Interpret figurative language meaning. | **Imagery**  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Example from text with page number.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Interpret figurative language meaning. |

Directions:

1. Students use the text to locate examples of the four types of figurative language on the given worksheet.

2. Students record the page number and an example.

3. Students can add a graphic or picture.

4. Students must interpret the figurative language.

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**“Overdoing It”**

1. What words and phrases does the author use to describe the characters in the beginning of the story? What does this information tell you about them?
2. What figurative language example is used in the sentence, “The wagon suddenly creaked, squeaked, shook, and, as though against its will, turned left”? Why do you think the author used figurative language to describe the wagon?
3. How is the man in the illustration similar to Klim, the peasant, in the story, *Overdoing It*?
4. In the opening, the author states, “The land surveyor, Gleb Smirnov, got off the train at Gnilushka. The station was some twenty miles from the estate he came to survey, and he had to cover that distance in a horse-drawn vehicle of some sort.” What words give clues that this story takes place in a foreign country and in a different time period? What words and phrases does the author use to describe the environment? Why does he use these words and phrases?
5. How does Gleb refer to the surroundings and how do they make him “feel”?
6. Identify ways that Gleb Smirnov’s words show his fear through his exaggerated lies.
7. What words and phrases from the text show how Gleb is feeling about the peasant driver? What do these words or phrases demonstrate?
8. What words and phrases does Gleb use to “over do” or exaggerate his abilities? Why does he feel the need to “lie” about his stature and support?
9. What evidence is there regarding the driver’s behavior that reveals his frustration and fear?

1. Identify the type of figurative language used when Gleb states, “… I have the strength of a bull.” In addition to meaning that he’s “strong,” what else is implied about the character’s true feelings?
2. The last few sentences say that, “…the surveyor covered his ears with his collar, and meditated. The road and Klim no longer seemed to him threatening.” What might he be meditating upon? What could Gleb have done to ensure a more positive ride from the start? Use evidence from the text in your answer.
3. What can you infer about how Chekhov’s word choice changes the tone or mood of the story?