Unit 6

Title: Oranges[[1]](#footnote-1)

Suggested Time: 2 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.4, RL.8.5; W.8.1, W.8.3, W.8.4, W.8.9; SL.8.1; L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.4, L.8.5

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

The recollection of an innocent first love can warm the heart and burn bright in one’s memory.

Synopsis

The poem “Oranges” by Gary Soto is about the bittersweet experience of a first date. As the boy walks to the girl’s house, with a nickel and two oranges in his pocket, his breath is visible in the December chill. A dog barks at him until the girl appears. They walk together to the drug store. The girl picks a chocolate that costs a dime. The boy offers to pay for the candy with his nickel and an orange. The saleslady understands and accepts the barter. Back on the street again, the boy takes the girl’s hand for two blocks and then releases it so she can unwrap her chocolate, and he can peel his orange. In the darkness of the winter day, the orange burns bright light a fire, much like the love in his heart.

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 poem independently.
2. Students take turns reading aloud to each other.
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** |
| How do the sentence structure, sentence length, and word choice reflect the maturity of the poem’s speaker? | The simplicity of vocabulary and sentence structure illustrates uncomplicated aspects of youthful love. Most sentences are conversational in nature, but also contain short, choppy incomplete sentences to emphasize mood and emotion (e.g. “Cold, and weighted down with two oranges in my pocket; December. Frost cracking beneath my steps, my breath before me, then gone”.) |
| How has the boy’s regard for the girl changed over the course of the date? Use evidence from the text to show this change.  | Initially, he refers to the girl as simply “a girl” and his feelings for her are weighing on him (Cold and weighted down) Later, he develops confidence (“led her down the street”) Finally, he thinks of her as his partner as they walk hand in hand (“I took my girls hand in mine”.) |
| Explain the author’s use of the phrase “light in her eyes”? Why did the author choose to include this phrase? | The connotation of “light in her eyes” relates to the animated look often seen in someone who is experiencing delight. The author uses this phrase to contrast the dullness of gray December day to the cheerful feelings of young love. |
| How does the author use the images of light vs. dark and warm vs. cold to develop the theme? Cite specific images and the lines on which you find them. | The growing feeling of love and warmth is sharply contrasted with the dreariness of a December day.* “Cold and weighted down” – Before the date begins, the boy is feeling nervous and burdened.
* December. Frost crackling beneath my feet, my breath before me” – The author creates strong images of the setting.
* “Porch light burned yellow, night and day, in any weather” – The porch light is a symbol of welcoming. Its color and brightness suggests that the girl will accept the boy’s friendship, which is at first, hidden by the dimness of winter.
* “face bright with rouge” – The bright color of make-up mirrors the bright color of the oranges.
* “Light in her eyes” – The girl is enjoying the experience.
* “Fog hanging like old coats between the trees” - The vision of hanging old coats may foreshadow a long-lived relationship.
* I peeled my orange that was gray against the gray of December…I was making a fire in my hands.” This image evokes the growing feeling of love between the young couple.
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| In the last line of the poem Gary Soto wrote, “I was making a fire in my hands.” How does this statement relate to the theme of the poem? | The final image of the poem reflects the theme in several ways. Fire produces heat, grows, and burns leaving a lasting reminder of its existence. Young love, too, warms the heart, develops hopefully over time, and can burn bright in one’s memory. |
| Read the summary at the end of the text? Does it provide an objective summary for the poem? Explain your answer. | The summary provides an outline of the major events of the poem; however some details are unnecessary. The clause, “which is all the money he has” can be removed because the contents of his pockets were already outlined. The lingering of the saleslady’s gaze is also unneeded. The last line is not objective and does not belong in a summary. ‘The brightness of the moment will live in his memory like a flame” is related to the theme but relies on interpretation, and therefore should not be included. |

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** | tiered fingered |  |
| **Meaning needs to be provided** | rougehissing |  |

Culminating Writing Task A

* Prompt

*Using Gary Soto’s poem, “Oranges,” as the basis for a narrative, transform the poem into a short story. Use narrative techniques such as dialogue, description, and reflection to develop the experiences of the characters. Your narrative must include specific phrases or descriptions from the poem, but should expand the details from the poem.*

* Teacher Instructions
1. Have students identify the evidence they will use to outline their story using the chart below. An example is provided.
2. Then, have the students write their short story using the images selected.

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| ***Text Evidence*** |
| The first time I waked with a girl |
| December |
| With two oranges in my jacket |
| As I walked toward her house |
| Her house, the one whose porch light burned yellow |
| She came out pulling at her gloves, face bright with rouge |
| Touched her shoulder |
| led her down the street, across a used car lot, and a line of newly planted trees |
| We entered, the tiny bell bringing a saleslady |
| Down a narrow aisle of goods. I turned to the candies |
| I asked what she wanted-- |
| light in her eyes, a smile starting at the corners of her mouth |
| And when she lifted a chocolate that cost a dime |
| I took the nickel from my pocket, then an orange, and set them quietly on the counter |
| The lady’s eyes met mine and held them |
| Fog hanging like old coats between the trees |
| I took my girl’s hand in mine for two blocks |
| Then released it to let her unwrap her chocolate |
| I peeled my orange that was so bright against the gray of December that, from some distance, someone might have thought I was making a fire in my hands. |

Sample Answer:
On a particularly chilly evening in December, I left my perch next to the fire and put on my hand-me-down winter coat. I was going to brave the cold for a special event. My first date. Nervously, I walked the five blocks to her house with a nickel and two oranges weighing down my worn pockets.

The fog was low, but I could still see her yellow porch light glowing brightly. The sight of her gleaming house bathed in light settled my nerves. It was warm and inviting, just like her. Wanting to impress her, I smoothed my hair and tucked in my shirt. As I looked up, there she was, pulling at her gloves, face bright with rouge. “Hi,” I squeaked, “you look pretty.” She looked at me and smiled and I could feel the butterflies in my stomach flutter. I looked away and sheepishly murmured, “Ready?” She seemed to float off the porch beautifully and effortlessly. I briefly touched her shoulder as we headed down the dark street. We walked in silence past a used car lot and a line of newly planted trees.

“Thanks,” she said as I opened the drugstore’s door for her; the bell delightfully announcing our entrance. Immediately before us was an entire aisle of sweets and goodies. Everything dazzled before our eyes. “What would you like?” I asked. Light in her eyes, a smile starting at the corners of her mouth, she was giddy with delight. She chose a chocolate bar that cost a dime. I didn’t want her to know that I was five cents short, so I silently took the chocolate to the counter while she continued to stroll through the aisles. I took out my nickel then reached back into my pocket for an orange. Anxiously, I set both on the counter, hoping that the saleslady would accept my trade. She looked at me for a long while then smiled and winked and said, “You two lovebirds have a good night.”

When we walked outside, emboldened, I took my girl’s hand in mine. It felt so warm despite the fog hanging like old coats from the trees. After a couple blocks, I let go so she could unwrap her chocolate. At the same time, I peeled my orange that shone so bright against the gray of December that, from some distance, someone might have thought I was making a fire with my hands. A fire I enjoyed infinitely more than the one in my living room.

Culminating Writing Task B

* Prompt

*How does Gary Soto in his poem “Oranges” get across his narrator’s first romantic experience using figurative language, characterization and imagery, including other appeals to the senses? Write an essay, using specific evidence from the text to support your answer.*

* Teacher Instructions
1. Have students identify the evidence for their essay using the chart below. An example is provided.
2. Then, have the students outline their essay and discuss them in a small study group. The group can provide suggestions prior to the students proceeding to drafting their paper.
3. Students write their essay using their outline.

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| ***Text Evidence: Imagery Appealing to the Senses*** |
| Vivid Color: With two oranges in my pocket |
| Vivid Color: I took the nickel from my pocket, then the orange, and set them quietly on the counter. |
| Vivid Color: porch light burned yellow, night and day, in any weather |
| Vivid Color: face bright with rouge |
| Vivid Color: and when she lifted a chocolate |
| Vivid Color: fire in my hands |
| Drab Color: fog hung like old coats between the trees |
| Drab Color: the gray of December |
|  |
| Temperature: |
| Cold: The first time I walked with a girl, was twelve, cold… |
| Cold: December, frost cracking beneath my steps, my breath before me |
| Cold: She came out pulling at her gloves |
| Warmth: my breath before me |
| Warmth: porch light burned |
| Warmth: face bright |
| Warmth: fire in my hands |
|  |
| Age: |
| Young: The first time I walked with a girl, I was twelve. |
| Young: a line of newly planted trees |
| Old: used car lot |
| Old: like old coats |

Sample Answer:

In the poem, “Oranges,” Gary Soto expresses his narrator's experience through imagery that appeals to the senses. A twelve-year-old boy and his new girlfriend walk through a drab, December day to the drugstore, where a sympathetic clerk accepts his offer of a nickel and an orange to pay for a ten-cent chocolate bar for his girlfriend. Soto utilizes contrast of color, temperature, and age, to create a memorable moment in time.

The couple’s first date occurs in “the gray of December” as “fog hung like old coats between the trees.” In contrast, the poet utilizes bright colors to represent youthful love. Hidden in the boy’s jacket pockets are oranges which symbolize their developing, but not yet declared affection. The porch light "burned yellow / Night and day, in any weather” mirroring the growing feelings between the boy and girl. There are other colors, such as the girl's "rouge" and the brown chocolate bar, that the poet contrasts against the dull, foggy surroundings. Colors aren't the only images that Soto uses to establish this contrast. He uses temperature as well.

At the beginning of the poem, the author focuses primarily on the cold. The boy braves a wintery December with “frost crackling beneath my steps, my breath before me” to meet his date. As the poem progresses, images of warmth appear. The “porch light burned” represents the feelings the couple have for one another. The poem ends with the boy peeling an orange that “someone might have thought I was making a fire in my hands.” This recollection demonstrates the intense feelings that the young pair felt.

Age is also contrasted in this poem. Soto has the preteens walk across a used car lot and a line of newly planted trees. The image emphasizes the youthfulness of the couple and the growing feelings they possess as compared to previously driven cars, worn and no longer desired by their previous owners. “Fog hanging like old coats between the trees” adds to the cheerless setting, yet fails to diminish the emotional impact of the encounter.

The smallest contrasts, taken together, can create mood and meaning. Gary Soto’s poem “Oranges” uses contrasts between brightness and dullness, warmth and cold, and young and old, to convey a romantic experience between the narrator and his girlfriend. The poet reminds us that the recollection of an innocent first love can warm the heart and burn bright in one’s memory.

Additional Activities

* Create a PowerPoint montage which presents the images described in the poem. Select a song to use as a sound track that clearly evokes the mood or overall theme of the poem. Insert text boxes on each slide and reference direct quotes from the poem that were used in selecting your images.
* Using Gary Soto’s style and structure in “Oranges”, write a poem depicting the second date for this young couple. Consider the number of stanzas necessary to convey the big ideas of the story. Can you think of an object that can be used as a repeating image in your poem? Are there other symbols that you might include to represent the feelings and mood of the date?

Note to Teacher

* Two options for the culminating writing project are provided. The teacher should select the project most appropriate for meeting the specific needs of his or her students. The first project focuses on narrative writing. It was included to provide an opportunity for students to write a short story using imagery, figurative language, and metaphors. Despite growing emphasis on informative reading and writing, students should also hone their story telling skills. Moreover, writing narratives strengthen reading narrative reading skills. The second option provides an opportunity to write an informative essay about the literary devices used by the author. This option should be used to strengthen the students’ skills for carefully explaining their thinking about figurative language, theme, and characterization.

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**“Oranges”**

1. How do the sentence structure, sentence length, and word choice reflect the maturity of the poem’s speaker?
2. How has the boy’s regard for the girl changed over the course of the date? Use evidence from the text to show this change.
3. Explain the author’s use of the phrase “light in her eyes”? Why did the author choose to include this phrase?
4. How does the author use the images of light vs. dark and warm vs. cold to develop the theme? Cite specific images and the lines on which you find them.
5. In the last line of the poem Gary Soto wrote, “I was making a fire in my hands.” How does this statement relate to the theme of the poem?
6. Read the summary at the end of the text? Does it provide an objective summary for the poem? Explain your answer.
1. *This story is a “duplicate.” (It is found in other anthologies, as well.) This particular revision was completed by a teacher who uses a different anthology than you, so the page numbers have been removed. This may require you to make some adjustments/add page numbers to some of the questions.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)