Unit 3

Title: from “Ellis Island and I” by Isaac Asimov

Suggested Time: 2 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RI.8.1, RI.8.4, RI.8.5, RI.8.6; W.8.2, W.8.4, W.8.7, 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

Following your dreams is not without obstacles, but it is worth the work.

Synopsis

In this personal essay by Isaac Asimov, the author relates his journey of becoming a science fiction writer. Asimov explains discovering science fiction through magazines despite his father’s objections. He also recounts publishing his first science fiction story at the age of eighteen and the challenges of being an immigrant.

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** |
| This passage is a from a nonfiction personal essay. What are some clues from the text that help illuminate this to the reader? (p. 354) | This passage is nonfiction, personal essay. The author uses first person (I) when writing. The passage states, “I wanted to read the magazines and my father was unalterably opposed.” I know it is nonfiction/personal essay because author explains his journey of becoming a science fiction writer. |
| How did Asimov’s father feel about his interest in reading science fiction magazines? What evidence from the passage supports this? (p. 354) | Asimov’s father felt that he would be “reading trash and contaminating” his “first-class mind.” This tells the reader of the text that his father did not approve of science fiction magazine as a reading source. |
| What does the word *surreptitious* mean? How do you know? Why do you suppose Asimov chose to use this word rather than a more simple word? (p. 354) | SURREPTITIOUS means sneaky, clever, or sly. Asimov writes “I took *surreptitious* peeks while my father was taking his afternoon nap.” The author may have chosen this word because it emphasizes that he had to be really careful when reading his magazines. This word also has a stronger meaning than if he had used the word sneaky or another synonym. |
| How did Asimov’s father’s feelings about Isaac reading the magazines change? Provide two reasons from the text to explain your answer. (p. 354) | Isaac found one magazine called *Science Wonder Stories.* He “pointed out to [his] father that the stories were about science, they were bound to be educational.”  Also, Isaac’s mother was pregnant and his “father was feeling as though he had a lot more on his mind than questions over whether [he] could read magazines or not. He gave in.” |
| Why did Isaac Asimov decide to begin writing science fiction stories instead of just reading them? (p. 354) | Isaac began his career as a writer in order to fulfill his desire to read science fiction, as a limited amount of stories were made available to him. According to the passage, by the time Isaac was eleven, “I felt that I just could not get enough science fiction from the magazines (there were only three, and they came out just once a month), and it struck me that I might write my own.” |
| Using evidence from the text, create a timeline of events that led to Asimov publishing his first science fiction story. You must include at least three events from the passage. (p. 354) | Student answers will vary, but should include at least three of the following:   * Asimov immigrated to the United States from Russia at the age of three. (From the *Reading for Information* section above text). * Isaac Asimov began reading science fiction magazines. “That started me, at the age of nine, on my career as a science-fiction reader.” * Asimov decides to begin writing science fiction. “By the time I was eleven … it struck me that I might write my own.” * Asimov begins writing science fiction. “I didn’t quite write science fiction at first, but I managed to get to it when I was fifteen.” * Asimov publishes his first science fiction story. “[A]nd by the time I was eighteen I sold a story to one of the magazines and was off and running.” |
| In the last two paragraphs of this passage, Asimov reflects on his journey to become a science fiction writer. What sort of challenges and obstacles did Asimov face in fulfilling his dream? Does he seem regret facing any of these challenges? Use evidence from the text to support your response. (p. 354) | Asimov faced many challenges and obstacles to fulfilling his dream of becoming a science fiction writer. As an immigrant, he was not a native English-language speaker, but desired “to succeed at reading and writing.” Even when his father disagreed with his choice of reading material, Isaac found a way to convince him that reading science fiction was “bound to be educational.” Isaac made the decision to become a writer at a young age (11), and managed to write his first science fiction story at the age of 15. Asimov sold his first science fiction story when he was only 18.  Asimov doesn’t seem to regret facing any of the challenges and obstacles in his path. Rather, he seems to have used those challenges and obstacles as a push to succeed. He states, “Still, as a I think about it, it seems to me I needed something to rise above”, and “Life might have been too easy for me if my ancestors had beat me to the punch and come here on the Mayflower.” |

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** | Page 354 – immigrant | Page354 – unalterably  Page354 – opposed  Page354 – surreptitious  Page354 – bound  Page354 – struck  Page354 – circumstances |
| **Meaning needs to be provided** |  | Page354 – “on deaf-ears”  Page354 – contaminating |

Culminating Writing Task

* Prompt
  + *In the excerpt from “Ellis Island and I”, Isaac Asimov describes his journey to becoming a science fiction writer. In a multi-paragraph explanatory essay, use textual evidence (including direct quotes and page numbers) to identify and describe two character traits that you think Asimov possesses.*
* 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*** | ***Page number*** | ***Elaboration/Explanation of how evidence supports the ideas or arguments*** |
| “For a while all my arguments fell on deaf ears, and then I discovered science-fiction magazines, which I took surreptitious peeks at while my father was taking his afternoon nap.” “I pointed out to my father that since the stories were about science, they were bound to be educational. | p. 354 | This statement shows that Asimov was determined. He was willing to read the magazines even if his father disapproved. However, he was able to make a valid point to his father defending his cause |
| “That started me, at the age of nine, on my career as a science fiction reader. By the time I was eleven, I felt that I could not get enough science fiction from magazines.” | p. 354 | Asimov was determined because he read all the science fiction he could get his hands on. |
| “it struck me that I should write my own.” “I managed to get into it by the time I was fifteen, and by the time I was eighteen I sold a story to one of the magazines and was off and running. | p. 354 | Asimov was confident in his ability to write. He started writing at 15 and by the time he was 18 he had already sold a story. |

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/ OR http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/ thesis\_statement.shtml.
2. 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).
3. Students complete final draft.

Sample Answer:

In order to become successful, people must be willing to strive for and work for their dreams. In from “Ellis Island and I”, Isaac Asimov displayed certain character traits that eventually led to his success as a science fiction writer.

One character trait obviously possessed by Asimov was his determination. The text states, “For a while all my arguments fell on deaf ears, and then I discovered science-fiction magazines, which I took surreptitious peeks at while my father was taking his afternoon nap.” This showed he was willing to read the magazines even if his father disapproved. His determination was displayed when he said, “I pointed out to my father that since the stories were about science, they were bound to be educational.” He was able to make a valid point to his father defending his cause.

Asimov was also very confident. He read all the science fiction he could get his hands on and when he ran out of things to read he wrote his own. The text states, “That started me, at the age of nine, on my career as a science fiction reader. By the time I was eleven, I felt that I could not get enough science fiction from magazines. It struck me that I should write my own. I managed to get into it by the time I was fifteen, and by the time I was eighteen I sold a story to one of the magazines and was off and running.” Most teenagers do not view themselves as published authors, but Asimov was determined and confident that he could be successful doing what he loved.

Overall Asimov was determined and confident, two character traits that helped him on his way to becoming an outstanding science fiction writer.

Additional Tasks

* *Read “Hallucination” by Isaac Asimov found on page 334 in the McDougal Littel Literature book. After reading the selection, answer the following question: What characteristics do Asimov and Sam Chase from “Hallucination” share? How does each of the young men reach their purpose?*
  + Sample Answer: The young Asimov, like Sam Chase, was inquisitive and confident. Sam realized his purpose by investigating a problem related to neurophysiology. Asimov read all the science fiction he could get his hands on, starting writing his own stories, and at age 18 sold a story to a science fiction magazine.
* *Research Ellis Island and immigration into the United States in the early 1900s, then answer the following questions: Why is the title “Ellis Island and I” appropriate? Write a one-paragraph essay explaining your analysis and include evidence from the text supports your analysis and response.* 
  + Sample Answer: As an immigrant to the United States, Isaac Asimov had to pass through the Ellis Island Processing Center. Many challenges faced immigrants to the United States in the early 1900s. Ellis Island opened in 1892 as a federal immigration station, a purpose it served for more than 60 years (it closed in 1954). Millions of newly arrived immigrants passed through the station; in fact, it has been estimated that close to forty percent of all current U.S. citizens can trace at least one of their ancestors to Ellis Island. These immigrants faced many challenges when they entered into the United States in the early 1900s. Isaac states, “I cannot say how things would have been for me had I not come into the United States as an immigrant.” “Still, as I think about it, it seems to me I needed something to rise above.” He also states, “I’m glad I came here---and I’m glad I had to come here. Life might have been too easy for me if my ancestors had beat me to the punch and had come here on the Mayflower.” Therefore the title, “Ellis Island and I,” is fitting because it highlights his connections with Ellis Island and how it helped shape his life.

Note to Teacher

* Teachers can use the different sentence structures used in the writing to teach complex and compound complex sentences along with the different types of clauses.
* Responses to questions will vary, as each student may select different evidence to support their conclusions.
* A note on evidence sheets and instruction: in order to fulfill SL.8.1, as well as to facilitate collaborative learning, text-dependent questions should be asked, DISCUSSED, and answered using a variety of techniques (whole group, small group, etc.). The evidence sheet is simply for students to track their responses (and can also be used to scaffold proper grammar and format for constructed responses), not as an independent worksheet.

Supports for English Language Learners (ELLs) to use with Anthology Alignment Lessons

When teaching any lesson, it is important to make sure you are including supports to help all students. We have prepared some examples of different types of supports that you can use in conjunction with our Anthology Alignment Lessons to ensure ELLs can engage fully with the lesson. While these supports reflect research in how to support ELLs, these activities can help ALL students engage more deeply with these lessons. Note that some strategies should be used at multiple points within a lesson; we’ll point these out. It is also important to understand that these scaffolds represent options for teachers to select based on students’ needs; it is not the intention that teachers should do *all* of these things at every lesson.

**Before reading:**

* Read passages, watch videos, view photographs, discuss topics (e.g., using the [four corners strategy](http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/four-corners)), or research topics that help provide context for what your students will be reading. This is especially true if the setting (e.g., 18th Century England) or topic (e.g., boats) is one that is unfamiliar to the students.
* Provide explicit instruction, using multiple modalities, on selected vocabulary words that are *central to understanding the text*. When looking at the lesson plan, you should note the Tier 2 words, particularly those words with high conceptual complexity (i.e., they are difficult to visualize, learn from context clues, and are abstract), and consider introducing them ahead of reading. For more information on selecting such words, go [here](https://achievethecore.org/page/3167/selecting-and-using-academic-vocabulary-in-instruction). **You should plan to continue to reinforce these words, and additional vocabulary, in the context of reading and working with the text. (See additional activities in the During Reading and After Reading sections.)**

**Examples of Activities:**

* Provide students with the definition of the words and then have students work together to create [Frayer models](http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/frayer-model) or other kinds of word maps for the words.
* When a word contains a prefix or suffix that has been introduced before, highlight how the word part can be used to help determine word meaning.
* Keep a word wall or word bank where these new words can be added and that students can access later.
* Have students create visual glossaries for whenever they encounter new words. Then have your students add these words to their visual glossaries.
* Create pictures using the word. These can even be added to your word wall!
* Create lists of synonyms and antonyms for the word.
* Have students practice using the words in conversation. For newcomers, consider providing them with [sentence frames](https://achievethecore.org/page/3159/ell-supports-for-writing-and-discussion) to ensure they can participate in the conversation.
* Use graphic organizers to help introduce content.

**Examples of Activities:**

* Complete a [Know, Want to Learn, Learned (KWL) graphic organizer](http://www.nea.org/tools/k-w-l-know-want-to-know-learned.html) about the text.
* Have students research the setting or topic and fill in a chart about it. You could even have students work in groups where each group is assigned part of the topic.
* Fill in a bubble map where they write down anything that they find interesting about the topic while watching a video or reading a passage about the topic. Then students can discuss why they picked the information.

**During reading:**

* Allow ELLs to collaborate in their home languages to process content before participating in whole class discussions in English. Consider giving them the discussion questions to look over in advance (perhaps during the first read) and having them work with a partner to prepare.
* Allow ELLs to use English language that is still under development. Students should not be scored lower because of incorrect spelling or grammar (unless the goal of the assignment is to assess spelling or grammar skills specifically). When grading, be sure to focus on scoring your students only for that objective.
* Scaffold questions for discussions so that questioning sequences include a mix of factual and inferential questions and a mix of shorter and more extended responses. Questions should build on each other and toward inferential and higher order thinking questions. There are not many factual questions already listed in the lesson instructions, so you will need to build some in as you see fit. More information on this strategy can be found [here](https://achievethecore.org/aligned/creating-sequencing-text-dependent-questions-support-english-language-learners/).
* Provide explicit instruction, using multiple modalities, on selected vocabulary words (e.g., 5–8 for a given text) that are central to understanding the text. During reading, you should continue to draw attention to and discuss the words that you taught before the reading.

**Examples of Activities:**

* Have students include the example from the text in a student-created glossary.
* Create pictures that represent how the word was used in the passage.
* Create sentences using the word in the way it was used in the passage.
* Have students discuss the author’s word choice.
* Examine important sentences in the text that contribute to the overall meaning of the text.
* Examine sentence structure of a particular sentence. Break down the sentence to determine its meaning. Then determine how this sentence contributes to the overall meaning of the passage. Determine if there is any figurative language in the sentence and have students use context clues to determine the meaning of the figurative language.
* Use graphic organizers to help organize content and thinking.

**Examples of Activities:**

* While reading the text, have students fill in a story map to help summarize what has happened.
* Have students fill in an evidence chart while they read to use with the culminating writing activity. Make sure to model with the students how to fill in the evidence chart by filling in the first couple of rows together as a class. Go over the prompt that the evidence should support, making sure to break down what the prompt means before having the students get to work. If some of your students frequently struggle to understand directions, have the students explain the directions back to you.
* Provide somewhere for students to store new words that they encounter. Students could use a chart to keep track of these new words and their meanings as they read.
* If you had students start a KWL before reading, have them fill in the “L” section as they read the passage.

**After reading:**

* Reinforce new vocabulary using multiple modalities.

**Examples of activities:**

* Using the words that you had students work with before the reading, require students to include the words in the culminating writing task.
* Create Frayer models with the words. Then cut up the Frayer models and have the students put the Frayer models back together by matching the pieces for each word.
* After reading the passage, continue to examine important sentences (1–2) in the text that contribute to the overall meaning of the text. Guide students to break apart these sentences, analyze different elements, and determine meaning. More information on how to do this, including models of sentence deconstruction, can be found [here](https://achievethecore.org/page/3160/juicy-sentence-protocol).
* When completing the writing assignments after reading, consider using these scaffolds to support students depending on their English proficiency.

**Examples of Activities:**

* For all students, go over the prompt in detail making sure to break down what the prompt means before having the students get to work. Then have the students explain the directions back to you.
* Have students create an evidence tracking chart during reading, then direct them to look back over their evidence chart and work with a group to see if their evidence matches what the rest of the class wrote down. If some of the chart does not match, students should have a discussion about why.
* For students who need more support, model the proper writing format for your students and provide them with a properly formatted example for reference.
* For newcomers, you may consider creating sentence or paragraph frames to help them to write out their ideas.