Unit 6/Week 2

Title: Why the Waves Have Whitecaps

Suggested Time: 3 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.6, W.8.2, W.8.4, W.8.9; SL.8.1, L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3

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

Written to explain the natural phenomenon of whitecaps, this myth also demonstrates the unfortunate effects bragging and jealousy can have on human relationships.

Synopsis

The wind and water are personified as two women talking about their children. Mrs. Wind brags about her children, which annoys Mrs. Water who drowns Mrs. Wind’s children when they come to her for a drink. As Mrs. Wind calls for her children, white feathers come to the top of the water, causing whitecaps.

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. Teach/reengage the idea of myths and mythology with your students. Also introduce or reengage the idea of dialect and its connection to culture.
2. Students read the entire selection independently; give them a guide or something to look for: difficult vocabulary, identifying images, or sensory detail, etc.
3. Teacher reads the text aloud while students follow along or students take turns reading aloud to each other.
4. 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** |
| Describe the relationship of the two main characters at the beginning of the story. | The two main characters are Mrs. Wind and Mrs. Water. At the beginning of the story they liked to sit and talk to each other. They were friends who enjoyed each other’s company. |
| What are some examples of dialect used in the story? What effect does the use of dialect have on the story? | Some examples of dialect are the words “de”, “useter” and “chillun.” The African-American dialect in this story helps to create a sense of setting and place. The dialect helps the reader infer that this story has been passed down from generation to generation of storytellers who would have used similar dialect. |
| Why is Mrs. Water proud of her children? To what natural phenomena is Mrs. Water referring? | Mrs. Water is proud of her children because they are the biggest and littlest in the world. This means that her children are as big as the ocean and as small as a single drop of water. |
| What does Mrs. Wind say about her children? To what natural phenomena is Mrs. Wind referring? | Mrs. Wind says of her children: “they flies, they walks, they swims, they sings, they talks, they cries. They got all de colors from de sun.” She is referring to how different the wind can be, either soft or strong. Also she is describing how the noise of the wind can change as well. |
| What happens to the relationship between Mrs. Wind and Mrs. Water and why? | Their relationship changes when Mrs. Water gets tired of hearing Mrs. Wind brag about her children and begins to hate the children. |
| What happens to Mrs. Wind’s children? What does this event reveal about Mrs. Water? | When Mrs. Wind sends her children to Mrs. Water to get a drink, Mrs. Water drowns them. This shows just how much Mrs. Water has come to resent Mrs. Wind’s bragging about her children. |
| According to this myth, what is the explanation for why there are whitecaps? | According to this myth, whitecaps are caused when Mrs. Wind calls for her children, “white feathers would come up on top of de water.” This is what we see whenever wind passes over the ocean. |
| At the end, how does the myth explain why there are sometimes storms over the water? | The myth explains that storms are caused by the wind and water fighting over those children. |

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** | crochet  passle | whitecaps |
| **Meaning needs to be provided** | Examples of Dialect:  De  useter  chillum  sho  ‘taint  kin  squinch  dat |  |

Culminating Writing Task

* Prompt
  + “Why the Waves Have Whitecaps” was written to explain the natural phenomenon of whitecaps, but also contains a human lesson or moral. How does the myth connect a natural phenomenon with human behavior? Write a paragraph and provide evidence from the text to support your answer. Make sure to edit your writing for grammar and spelling.
* Teacher Instructions

1. Students identify their writing task from the prompt provided.
2. Students will 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 if this process is new.

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| ***Evidence***  ***Quote or paraphrase*** | ***Elaboration / explanation of how this evidence supports ideas or argument*** |
| “they flies, they walks, they swims, they sings, they talks, they cries. They got all de colors form de sun.” | Mrs. Wind brags about her children, trying to show how they are better than Mrs. Water’s children. This causes the whole fight between them. |
| “so she got so she hated ‘em.” | Mrs. Water got so tired of hearing about Mrs. Wind’s children that she wanted to kill them. |
| “every time she call de white feathers would come up on top of de water.” | After Mrs. Wind’s children died, Mrs. Wind keeps trying to find them. This is what causes whitecaps. |
| “when de wind woman calls her lost babies.” | Mrs. Wind keeps trying to find her lost children, feeling sad that they are gone. |
| Mrs. Wind “bragged louder.” | This shows that Mrs. Wind and Mrs. Water act like real human beings. |
| “when you see a storm on de water, it’s de wind and de water fightin’ over dem chillum.” | This is the explanation for why there are storms at sea. Mrs. Wind and Mrs. Water act like humans who can’t stop fighting. |

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/reading 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
  + While giving a mythic explanation of a natural phenomenon, “Why the Waves Have Whitecaps” also shows common human interactions and conflicts. In this story, Mrs. Wind and Mrs. Water used to be good friends. However, when they begin to brag about their children. Mrs. Wind tells Mrs. Water that her children “ flies, they walks, they swims, they sings, they talks, they cries. They got all de colors form de sun.” Mrs. Water gets tired of hearing about Mrs. Wind’s children, “so she got so she hated ‘em.” She hated them so much that she “grabbed ‘e all and drowned ‘em.” When Mrs. Wind comes calling for her children, “every time she call de white feathers would come up on top of de water.” This myth offers the explanation that whitecaps occur “when de wind woman calls her lost babies.” The myth connects humans need to be best at everything. When Mrs. Water brags about her children, Mrs. Wind “bragged louder.” Then Mrs. Water got so angry, she took revenge just as a real human might do. In the end, the wind and water still act like humans, neither of them wanting to give in. Instead they continue their fight forever so that “when you see a storm on de water, it’s de wind and de water fightin’ over dem chillum.”

Additional Tasks

* Zora Neale Hurston recorded many African-American myths and stories in her book, *Mules and Men.* Choose one of the myths below and write a paragraph analyzing the myth. How does the myth connect a natural phenomenon with human behavior? Write a paragraph and provide evidence from the text to support your answer. Make sure to edit your writing for grammar and spelling.
* Why the Porpoise Has His Tail on Crossways http: //xroads.virginia.edu/~ma01/grand-jean/hurston/chapters/Chapter10.html#1
* How the Woodpecker Nearly Drowned the Whole World: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma01/grand-jean/hurston/chapters/Chapter6.html#5>
* How the Possum Lost the Hair Off His Tail: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma01/grand-jean/hurston/chapters/Chapter6.html#6>
* Why the East Coast Has Mosquitos and Storms: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma01/grand-jean/hurston/chapters/Chapter10.html#5>

Sample response

* In the myth, “Why the Porpoise Has His Tail on Crossways,” explains why porpoises have tails different from other fish. In this story, the porpoise races around the world with the sun. God got upset because the porpoise was so fast that he beat the sun.