Title: *Fireflies* by Julie Brinckloe

Suggested Time to Spend: 5 Days

Common Core grade-level ELA/Literacy Standards: RL.2.1, RL.2.2, RL.2.3, RL.2.4, RL.2.7; W.2.2, W.2.8; SL.2.1, SL.2.2, SL.2.6; L.2.1, L.2.2, L.2.4

Lesson Objective:

Students will listen to an illustrated story read aloud and use literacy skills (reading, writing, discussion, and listening) to understand the story’s central message.

Teacher Instructions

**Before the Lesson**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis below. **Please do not read this to the students**. This is a description to help you prepare to teach the book and be clear about what you want your children to take away from the work.

Big Ideas

Making the right choice can be difficult. It can also be rewarding, especially when you realize how your actions affect others. Sometimes, what makes you happy hurts others.

Synopsis

A boy catches fireflies in a jar. He wants to keep them, but soon realizes that they will die in the jar. Though it makes him very sad, he lets them go. When he sees that they are able to fly and shine bright again, he smiles. He realizes it makes him happy to see them free.

1. Go to the last page of the lesson and review “What Makes this Read-Aloud Complex.” This was created for you as part of the lesson and will give you guidance about what the lesson writers saw as the sources of complexity or key access points for this book. You will of course evaluate text complexity with your own students in mind, and make adjustments to the lesson pacing and even the suggested activities and questions.
2. Read the entire book, adding your own insights to the understandings identified. Also note the stopping points for the text-inspired questions and activities. *Hint: you may want to copy the questions vocabulary words and activities over onto sticky notes so they can be stuck to the right pages for each day’s questions and vocabulary work.*
3. Consider pairing this series of lessons on *Fireflies* with a text set to increase student knowledge and familiarity with the topic. A custom text set can be found[here](https://achievethecore.org/page/2819/fireflies-with-companion-text-set)[.](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B66A6Ds77LpiU3dIZVFxMFFkLUk) *Note: This is particularly supportive of ELL students.*

*Note to teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs): Read Aloud Project Lessons are designed for children who cannot read yet for themselves. They are highly interactive and have many scaffolds built into the brief daily lessons to support reading comprehension. Because of this, they are filled with scaffolds that are appropriate for English Language Learners who, by definition, are developing language and learning to read (English). This read aloud text includes complex features which offer many opportunities for learning, but at the same time includes supports and structures to make the text accessible to even the youngest students.*

*This lesson includes features that align to best practices for supporting English Language Learners. Some of the supports you may see built into this, and /or other Read Aloud Project lessons, assist non-native speakers in the following ways:*

* *These lessons include embedded vocabulary scaffolds that help students acquire new vocabulary in the context of reading. They feature multi-modal ways of learning new words, including prompts for where to use visual representations, the inclusion of student-friendly definitions, built-in opportunities to use newly acquired vocabulary through discussion or activities, and featured academic vocabulary for deeper study.*
* *These lessons also include embedded scaffolds to help students make meaning of the text itself. It calls out opportunities for paired or small group discussion, includes recommendations for ways in which visuals, videos, and/or graphic organizers could aid in understanding, provides a mix of questions (both factual and inferential) to guide students gradually toward deeper understanding, and offers recommendations for supplementary texts to build background knowledge supporting the content in the anchor text.*
* *These lessons feature embedded supports to aid students in developing their overall language and communication skills by featuring scaffolds such as sentence frames for discussion and written work (more guidance available* [here](https://achievethecore.org/page/3159/ell-supports-for-writing-and-discussion)*) as well as writing opportunities (and the inclusion of graphic organizers to scaffold the writing process). These supports help students develop and use newly acquired vocabulary and text-based content knowledge.*

The Lesson – Questions, Activities, and Tasks

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| **Questions/Activities/Vocabulary/Tasks** | **Expected Outcome or Response (for each)** |
| **FIRST READING:**Read aloud the entire book with minimal interruptions. Stop to provide word meanings or clarify only when you know the majority of your students will be confused. | The goal here is for students to enjoy the book, both writing and pictures, and to experience it as a whole. This will give them some context and sense of completion before they dive into examining the parts of the book more carefully. |
| **SECOND READING:**Reread pages 1- 3. What does “flickered” mean? What clues are there in the words or pictures that help you understand what it means? Look at how the author wrote the word, *Fireflies!* on page 3. Why do you think she wrote the word in italics?Reread pages 4-7. What is the evidence that the author uses to show you how excited he is?What is a “cellar”? Tell the students that a cellar is a room, under a house, usually used for storage. On page 6, the boy says, “The jars were dusty, and I polished one clean on my shirt.” What does “polished” mean?What evidence does the author give that he was not supposed to use his mother’s scissors? Tell students the meaning of dulling. Reread pages 8-9. How do you know the boy and his friends have done this before?Reread pages 10-11. Ask the students to visualize what that would look like:“Blinking on, blinking off, dipping low, soaring high above my head, making white patterns in the dark. We ran like crazy, barefoot in the grass. “Catch them, catch them!” we cried, grasping at the lights. “ What does “grasping” mean?Have the students mimic the flight of the firefly with their fingers. | Flickered means to produce an unsteady light or flame, and to appear briefly. The author means that the light of the firefly shows up and then it is gone. To show that he is excited to see them. He is excited and wants to catch them. He watched them outside as he was eating dinner. He was eating fast, and then asked if he could go out. He ran to the cellar to get a jar to catch them. He poked holes in the jar with his mother’s scissors, even though he knew he wasn’t supposed to use them. He then ran from the house, allowing the screen door to bang behind him.A cellar is a room under a house, usually used for storage…like a basement. Polished means to wipe it off and make it clean and shiny. He did it as quietly as he could so she wouldn’t catch him dulling them. Dulling them would mean that they were not as sharp and would not be able to cut as well. They all met in the streets with polished jars to catch fireflies. They knew they needed jars and they knew how to catch them. Grasping means grabbing at, getting a hold of. |
| **THIRD READING:**Reread pages 12-13. The boy catches a firefly. How does he feel about it? The book says, “I thrust my hand into the jar and spread it open. The jar glowed like moonlight and I held it in my hands. I felt a tremble of joy and shouted, “I can catch hundreds.” How else is the boy feeling? What is he thinking?What does it means when it says he “thrust his hand into the jar”? Why did he do that? What does it mean when it says he “felt a tremble of joy”? What is a “tremble”? Why would he tremble with joy?Reread pages 14-18. Why do you think he and his friends all took jars of fireflies home? Reread pages 18-21. The author uses the phrase, “and the jar glowed like moonlight.” Tell them that glow means to shine or light up. Why does she use that phrase? Why was it not the same? Students compare the two illustrations and discuss the differences and what they mean. "How does the author use the illustrations on these two pages to help us understand what the boy might be thinking and feeling? Look at the two illustrations. How are they different? How are the jars of fireflies different?Reread page 22. Why did it feel like something in his throat would not go down? Talk about what it feels like to have a lump in your throat when you are about to cry. Why does he feel that way?Reread page 23. Now the light gets dimmer, green. The jar looks “like moonlight under water.” What does that mean? | He is excited and happy that he caught one. He does not want to lose it. Now he thinks he can catch a lot more. The boy is feeling proud of himself that he was able to catch one. He is feeling confident that he can catch hundreds. It makes him happy to think he could catch that many.Thrust means to forcefully and quickly push something. He thrust his hand into the jar because he didn’t want the firefly to get away. Tremble means to shake a little bit, involuntarily, in reaction to something (emotion, cold, etc). He trembled with joy because he was so happy to catch one, he couldn’t help but tremble. They wanted to keep them glowing in the jars in their rooms like he did. The jar lit up the dark room like moonlight does. It was not the same because the fireflies are not glowing the same way in the jar as they were before. They are falling to the bottom and not flying around anymore. In the first picture, the fireflies are flying around the jar and the whole jar is lit up. The boy is watching them. In the second picture, the fireflies are more toward the bottom of the jar and the top of the jar is not as lit up. He is about to cry because he can tell that the fireflies are not happy and healthy in the jar. It is even less bright and is not shining as much. They are dying.He couldn't swallow.Because he thinks something might be wrong with the fireflies.The light is getting softer like you can hardly see it. |
| **FOURTH AND BEYOND:**Reread page 24. How is the boy feeling? How do you know? How can you tell he is changing his mind about keeping them?Reread page25-end of the book. Discuss/review cause and effect. What was the cause of the fireflies losing their light? What was the effect of letting them go? What made the boy change his mind and let them go?What does it mean to aim the jar at the stars? How does the author use language to help us understand that the fireflies are okay? Why is the boy crying and smiling at the same time? Why is he feeling this way? How do you know? | He pulled the pillow over his head because he doesn't want to see them die. He is afraid they will die. The cause of the fireflies losing their light was putting them in the jar. The effect of letting them go was that they started glowing and flying again. He couldn't stand to see them die.He pointed them right at the stars.They looked like they did before he caught them. The author uses the same language as at the beginning. They looked like stars dancing because they were moving all around, shining in the sky.He is sad that he is now holding an empty jar. He is happy they didn't die. He wishes he could have kept them but he knows they would have died if he did. He is feeling sad and happy at the same time. |

FINAL DAY WITH THE BOOK - Culminating Task

Put on chart paper: Why was making the choice to let the fireflies go so difficult for the boy in this story? Use evidence from the story in your answer.

The students will write their own ideas in their reading response journal. They will discuss with other students and come back to the group for discussion and charting. Discuss the idea of having mixed feelings, or something being bittersweet. Lead them to understand that making the right choice can be difficult. It can also be rewarding, especially when we realize how our actions affect others. Sometimes what makes us happy hurts others. It feels good to do the right thing even when it’s hard. It doesn’t feel good or make us happy to hurt others.

Sample student response:

The boy was sad because he really wanted to keep the fireflies. However, he knew that if he kept them in the jar, that they would die. He knew this because they had gone dim in the jar and had fallen to the bottom. He was happy because the fireflies were happier when he let them go. They would be able to live. We know this because when he let them go, they began blinking on and off and making circles around the moon like stars dancing.

Vocabulary

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| **These words merit less time and attention** (They are concrete and easy to explain, or describe events/processes/ideas/concepts/experiences that are familiar to your students )  | **These words merit more time and attention**(They are abstract, have multiple meanings, and/or are a part of a large family of words with related meanings. These words are likely to describe events, ideas, processes or experiences that most of your student will be unfamiliar with) |
| Page 5 - cellar – a room, under a house, usually used for storagePage 6 - polished – to wipe it off and make it clean and shiny Page 7-dulling-to make something not as sharp as it wasPage 20-glowed-to shine or light upPage 25-aimed-to point directly at or toward something | Page3 - flickered – to produce an unsteady light or flame, and to appear brieflyPage 11-grasping-to grab at or get a hold ofPage 13 and 15-thrust-to forcefully push something quicklyPage 13-tremble- to shake a little bit, involuntarily, in reaction to something (emotion, cold, etc) |

Extension learning activities for this book and other useful resources

* Watch the following video about the “light show” put on by the fireflies and learn more about them: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCWkzQqO7Ro> *Note: This is particularly supportive of English Language Learners.*
* Students will get a sheet of black construction paper and a yellow crayon. They will draw a representation of the fireflies based on their visualization.
* Give students another sheet of black construction paper and crayon. Have them divide the paper in three sections. They will draw what the jar looks like full of fireflies in the first section. Students will draw how the jar changes in the second and third section of their paper.

**What Makes This Read-Aloud Complex?**

1. **Quantitative Measure**

Go to <http://www.lexile.com/> and enter the title of your read-aloud in the Quick Book Search in the upper right of home page. Most texts will have a Lexile measure in this database.

Most of the texts that we read aloud in K-2 should be in the 2-3 or 4-5 band, more complex than the students can read themselves.

2-3 band 420-820L

4-5 band 740-1010L

AD 630L

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1. **Qualitative Features**

Consider the four dimensions of text complexity below. For each dimension\*, note specific examples from the text that make it more or less complex.

What makes us happy can hurt others.

Sometimes making the right choice is hard.

What animals need to survive

Fireflies need to fly to shine.

Takes the form of a personal narrative.

The character’s feelings change during the story.

Figurative language-(glowed like moonlight, like stars dancing, etc.)

Vocabulary

A firefly is an insect that flies and lights up at night.

**Meaning/Purpose**

**Structure**

**Language**

**Knowledge Demands**

\*For more information on the qualitative dimensions of text complexity, visit <http://www.achievethecore.org/content/upload/Companion_to_Qualitative_Scale_Features_Explained.pdf>

1. **Reader and Task Considerations**

What will challenge my students most in this text? What supports can I provide?

* How the character’s emotions affect his choices, vocabulary, figurative language
* Provide discussion, explanations, connect to real world experiences.

How will this text help my students build knowledge about the world?

* It will help them understand what motivates characters in stories, what it means to be good stewards of our environment. It will also build upon the idea that our actions affect others and that we should make safe choices for others.
1. **Grade level**

What grade does this book best belong in? Grade 2 as a read-aloud

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