Unit 1

Title: Three Skeleton Key

Suggested Time: 4-5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.7.1, RL.7.2, RL.7.3, RL.7.6; W.7.2, W.7.3, W.7.4, W.7.9; SL.7.1; L.7.1, L.7.2

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

One’s outlook and approaches to challenges often determine the outcome.

Synopsis

(From textbook) This horror story begins when three lighthouse keepers realize that a derelict ship heading for their tiny island is filled with thousands of giant rats. The ship runs aground and sinks; the famished rats scramble onto the island, and, in time, they break into the lighthouse. The besieged men struggle to stay alive. To draw the attention of people on the mainland, they do not light their lamp. Rescue ships come but are at first driven away by the human-eating rats. Later, the rescuers devise another plan. They load a barge with meat and tow it near the island. The rats swim out to the barge, the barge is set on fire, and the rats are burned or eaten by sharks. The three keepers are rescued, but one goes insane, the second dies from his infected wounds, and only the narrator is left alive to resume his service on the island of Three Skeleton Key.

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 are Le Gleo’s and Itchoua’s reactions to the mysterious ship? What do their reactions tell you about the men? | Le Gleo becomes excited and frightened and easily jumps to conclusions, asking, “What’s wrong with her crew? Are they all drunk or insane?” and later jumps straight to the possibility that it’s the ghost ship, The Flying Dutchman. Itchoua remains cool and logical, as noted when he laughed at Le Gleo’s absurdity and said that he just meant that she was a derelict. This shows us that Itchoua remains more cool headed while Le Gleo is more excitable and is quick to jump to conclusions.  |
| Early in the story, the narrator explained how Three Skeleton Key got its name. How does this information about the setting shape how the plot develops throughout the text? | The deaths of the three escaped convicts show the difficulty of surviving on the isolated island; The setting helps shape the plot as it relates to the difficulty of surviving on the island. The author describes the island as, “a small rock twenty miles or so from the mainland,” “a small, bare piece of stone, about one hundred fifty feet long, perhaps forty wide,” and “the waters about our island swarmed with huge sharks”. This foreshadows what happens later.  |
| On page \_\_\_, how does the author convey the scene of the rats swarming the lighthouse? What effect does the description have on the reader? | The author includes a description of the scene including language utilizing the four of the five senses. Sight – swarmed, covered, filling, piling, gleaming, beady eyes, sharp claws and teeth, horde. Sound – scraped, grated. Smell – poisoned our lungs, rasped our nostrils, pestilential, nauseating smell. Touch – furry mantle, sharp claws and teeth, sealed alive. The effect is that it creates a sense of horror and dread for the reader.  |
| What would cause the island’s name to be changed to Six Skeleton Key, as suggested by Itchoua on page \_\_\_? | The island was named Three Skeleton Key because three escaped prisoners died there. Three more people (the keepers) could die because of their new situation with the rats. |
| What did Itchoua’s actions on page \_\_\_ reveal about his character? Include evidence from the text to support your analysis.  | Even when wounded, he thinks to use the light to send a signal in Morse code. This shows that he is quick-thinking and remains calm in difficult situations.  |
| At what point within the text does the reader know that the narrator will survive the rat attack? How does this evidence clue in the reader about the narrator’s survival? Use evidence to support your response. | Possible responses: The reader might know once the rescue ship arrived and the crew realized the men were trapped; the reader knew once the barge filled with meat was on the scene because it would draw the rats away and the men would be safe; the reader knew once the barge was drenched with gasoline because the rats would not survive the fire; the reader knew at the very beginning when the narrator is recalling this event that occurred because dead men don’t tell tales.  |
| How did Le Gleo’s initial reaction to the derelict ship begin to build the reader’s impression of his character? How did future events continue to contribute to his characterization?  | His reaction showed that he is easily frightened. He is prone to jump to conclusions and become emotional rather than remain rational. The text describes Le Gleo as throwing his head back and howling, a trickle of saliva running from the corners of his mouth. This shows that he’s not thinking clearly and beginning to fall into insanity, which matches his earlier emotional response when we was easily frightened. |
| How does Le Gleo’s character impact his outcome in the story? Provide evidence from the text to support.  | He starts out as easily frightened, prone to jump to conclusions, and emotional. He therefore can’t think clearly and continues to act irrationally, such as when he sits on the floor, babbling about skeletons, leading to him to become insane and having to be locked up in an asylum. |
| What type of person is the narrator? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.  | The narrator is reliable, not easily influenced, thinks rationally, and is dependable and responsible. He wants to save up money before marriage. He didn’t give warnings of “old-timers” a second thought. He was reliable and committed to people he was with, such as when he problem-solved and rescued Itchuoa from the rats. |
| How did the narrator’s character make it more likely that he would survive and even return to work in the Lights? | His ability to think rationally helped with problem-solving and keeping his mind intact. His reliability and responsibility (and lack of being easily influenced by stories or events) leads him to go back to work to fulfill his duty to his family and to himself. |
| What is a theme of this story? Use evidence to support your response.  | A possible theme is that one’s outlook and approach to challenges determines the outcome. The paragraphs describing the three outcomes ties back to the theme because their attitudes and behavior led to those different outcomes (even Itchuoa, who thought more for others than himself and was older, may have contributed to his own demise). Responses may vary.  |

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** | p. – monotonous, provisions, treacherously p. ­– maritime, hordesp. – fathomp. – tusslesp. – raving mad  | p. – sufficep. – incendiary |
| **Meaning needs to be provided** | p. – recedingp. – fetidp. – morose, maniacalp. – writhedp. – shrapnel, fumigated | *(WP indicates a word selected for morphology)*p. – unceasingly WP; derelictp. – riveted, clannish, uncannyp. – ravening, innumerable WP, rasped, pestilentialp. – incessantly WPp. – derisive, predominating WP |

Culminating Writing Task

* Prompt

*Each of the characters in the story responds differently to the rat attack. Select one character from the story and explain how his outlook and approaches to challenges led to his particular outcome. Using details from the story, compose an essay that is roughly one page in length. Provide details from the story, including direct quotes and page numbers, which support your response.*

* Teacher Instructions
1. Students should have a clear grasp of the theme and how the characters caused the outcomes for themselves.
2. Students identify their writing task from the prompt provided.
3. 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.

*Sample evidence and responses are based upon the narrator as the selected character, but students may also choose Itchoua or Le Gleo.*

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| ***Evidence******Quote or paraphrase*** | ***Page number*** | ***Elaboration / explanation of how this evidence supports ideas or argument*** |
| “The pay was high, so in order to reach the sum I had set out to save before I married, I volunteered for service in the new light.” |  | This quote supports the argument that the narrator is determined. The reader first sees that the narrator has a goal and wants to achieve that goal. Later, the reader will see that this quality influenced the narrator’s outcome because he would not give up and was determined to help protect him and others from the rat attack.  |
| “…there were many such stories and I did not give the warnings of the old-timers…a second thought.” |  | Again, this quote highlights the narrator’s determinedness. Despite the stories that the narrator had heard about the lighthouse, the narrator had a financial goal that he wanted to meet before he got married and was determined to meet that goal. This quote also supports the idea that the narrator is not easily scared and willing to face a challenge head on. |
| “…I saw the wooden framework of my window, eaten away from the outside, sagging inwards. I called my comrades and the three of us fastened a sheet of tin in the opening, sealing it tightly.” |  | The narrator is responsive when faced with a challenge which directly influences his outcome because had he not been responsive, he would not have survived the rat attack.  |
| As Le Gleo was howling with his head thrown back, the narrator smacks Le Gleo across his face to shut him up.  |  | Though the narrator had been bitten multiple times by the rats, he recognizes that Le Gleo’s reaction is making the situation worse and one must remain calm when faced with a challenge. The narrator’s ability to remain calm contributes to survival being his outcome.  |
| “I resumed my service there [the lighthouse]…no reason why such an incident should keep me from finishing out my service there, is there?” |  | The narrator is reliable and responsible as supported by this quote. When he commits to something, he is going to see it through. He is also committed to meeting his financial goal and since this island post pays well, he believes it’s worth returning to. |

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 (analytical) and think about the evidence they found. (It is recommended that teachers 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

If one’s outlook and approach to challenges determines their outcome, then one can easily understand why the narrator in the story Three Skeleton Key survived the rat attack despite the multiple barriers he encountered. His determinedness, ability to remain calm and responsive, as well as being reliable and responsible all contribute to why the narrator survived the attack.

The reader first gets a glimpse of the narrator’s determinedness on page \_\_\_, “The pay was high, so in order to reach the sum I had set out to save before I married, I volunteered for service in the new light.” Initially, the narrator’s determinedness is fueled by his financial goal. He has a particular goal in mind and is determined to meet it. Later, the reader will see that this quality influenced the narrator’s outcome because he would not give up and was determined to help protect himself and others from the rat attack. Additionally, one could argue that this quote supports the idea that the narrator is reliable and responsible because he is planning ahead to ensure that his wife and the life they build together are financially taken care of.

The narrator’s determinedness is also highlighted later on page \_\_\_, “…there were many such stories and I did not give the warnings of the old-timers…a second thought.” Again, the reader is provided insight into the narrator’s motivation for working at this particular post and how determined he is to meet his financial goal despite the stories he has heard from others. The reader also sees that the narrator is not easily scared and willing to face a challenge head on. These qualities lead to the narrator’s ability to be responsive and remain calm. Had the narrator been easily frightened and/or shied away from the challenge, the likelihood of him having the outcome he did and surviving the attack is slim.

The narrator continues to show his responsiveness on page \_\_\_, “…I saw the wooden framework of my window, eaten away from the outside, sagging inwards. I called my comrades and the three of us fastened a sheet of tin in the opening, sealing it tightly.” The narrator responds quickly to the potential threat of the rats getting through the wooden framework and was able to problem solve efficiently.

Likewise, the narrator’s ability to remain calm and see the importance of being calm in a challenging situation is highlighted on page 47 when he smacks Le Gleo across the face to stop him from howling with his head thrown back as if Le Gleo was going crazy despite the narrator having multiple rat bites and he and Itchoua bleeding significantly from their wounds.

Lastly, the reader is again reminded of the narrator’s ability to be reliable and responsible towards the end of the story. On page \_\_\_ it reads, “I resumed my service there [the lighthouse]…no reason why such an incident should keep me from finishing out my service there, is there?” It is evident that when the narrator commits to something, he is going to see it through. There may be challenges ahead but he is willing to face those challenges in order to fulfill his duty. This quote also demonstrates the narrator’s commitment to meeting his financial goal and the life that he and his future bride are about to embark on.

Everyone approaches a challenge differently based on their abilities and that approach is what determines their outcome. The narrator’s natural ability to remain calm, be responsive, determined, and reliable are the reason why he survived the rat attack. Had the narrator chosen to give up or not demonstrate these qualities, his outcome would not have been the same.

Additional Tasks

* *In a personal narrative, discuss a time where your actions and/or character created an outcome that you didn’t expect.*

*(Optional: have students then create a Venn Diagram or Thinking Map comparing their scenario to that of a character in the story.)*

Answers will vary. See rubric for narrative expectations.



* *George T. Toudouze used rich vocabulary and imagery to paint vivid images in the reader’s mind. Select a number of such words and phrases to create a “found poem” (*[*http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Found\_poetry*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Found_poetry)*). The topic of the found poem does not need to relate to the original story, but the mood and tone should be similar to what the reader gets from the entire passage.*

Sample answer:

One must be careful

One misstep

And down you would fall

Falling

Like a ripe fruit from a tree

Weeping softly, like a child

Eyes of jungle beasts

Mad with hunger

Guardians

The gloom, our prison

Swarmed with huge sharks

An eternal patrol

One must be careful

Down you fall

Cut down with one blow

Of some gigantic sickle

When my time came

I almost wept

Note to Teacher

* The lighthouse tenders repeatedly refer to the derelict ship in the feminine (she, her beauty, etc.). You may wish to discuss how this is a standard bit of personification when referring to ships (and also cars or other vehicles).
* Other words that may need to be addressed depending on students’ background knowledge: swarmed, eternal, immense, successively, peculiarities, swarming, devoured, maneuver, diminution, and writhed.
* The estimated time may be expanded to discuss topics such as thesis statements and good organization. Additionally, depending on student skills and responsibly, the culminating task may be written in class or at home.
* Students tend to enjoy this text because of its gruesome nature. You may want to encourage them to find other texts within this genre to build that love of literature. Consider Stephen King, Clive Barker, Edgar Allan Poe, “The Monkey’s Paw,” or the *Cirque du Freak* series.
* Regarding the final question in the text-dependent questions: Though our students should be able to determine theme, we know sometimes they have room for growth. Because theme is so important to the culminating task, the last question may be scaffolded students’ understanding of the theme.

**Three Skeleton Key Personal Narrative Rubric (Additional Task)**

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| Engage and orient the reader by establishing the context of a time in which actions and/or character created an unexpected outcome. | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically. | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters. | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another. | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events. | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events. | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |

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.