Title/Author: *The Great Kapok Tree* by Lynne Cherry

Suggested Time to Spend: 5 Days (Recommendation: one session per day, approximately 30 minutes per day)

Common Core grade-level ELA/Literacy Standards: RL.2.1, RL.2.2, RL.2.3, RL.2.6, 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 a book read aloud and use literacy skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) to answer questions and complete activities.

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/Key Understandings/Focusing Question

Why do living things need the rain forest? One key takeaway is that living things depend on the rain forest for shelter, food, and protection.

Synopsis

A man walks into a lush rainforest and starts chopping down a huge kapok tree. Lulled by the heat, he sits down and soon falls asleep. The forest dwellers approach him, each pleading in his ear a reason to keep the tree standing. Suddenly, the man wakes up, and for the first time notices the beauty all around him.

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 *The Great Kapok Tree* 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/2579/the-great-kapok-tree-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:**  Show students the beginning pages with the world map of the tropical rain forests. 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: Pages 1-9**  In the introduction to the story, the author stated “This is the story of a community of animals that live in one such tree (Kapok) in the rain forest.” What does community mean? How might members of a community depend on one another?  For the second reading tell students that we will be keeping track of the animals and their reasons NOT to chop down the tree.  Create a “T Chart” to gather information about the animals and their dependence on the rain forest.  Update this chart with the introduction of each new animal.  Page 1  How was the forest alive?  Teacher provides definitions for squawking and howling.  Why were the creatures suddenly quiet?  Page 3  Go back a page and ask, “what do we now know that tells us why the other man pointed to the tree?”  Have students pretend they are whacking and chopping at a tree.  What caused the man to fall asleep?  Write the word “slithered” for students to see. Have them repeat the word after you. Show students the picture on page. Have students explain what the word slithered means using words and motions.  Fill in the chart with why the boa constrictor doesn’t want the man to chop down the tree.  Discuss what “...generations of my ancestors…” means.  Page 6  What does pollinate mean?  Fill in the chart with why the bees need the trees.  Page 8  Explain that a troupe is a group of performers. Have students give other examples of collective nouns. For example, a bunch of flowers, a school of fish, a set of tools, a class of children.  Looking at the illustrations, what does scampered mean?  Have students use it in a sentence.  Explain the canopy and the layers of the rain forest. Refer to the preface of the book.  How do the roots of the trees help the earth?  Fill in the chart with the monkeys. | A community is a group that lives together and depends on one another. The animals depend on each other and the rain forest for shelter and food.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | Animals | Reasons not to chop down the tree. | |  |  |   The forest had been alive with the sound of squawking birds and howling monkeys.  The creatures were suddenly quiet because they were watching the two men who walked into the rain forest and were wondering why they had come.  The man pointed to the tree because he wanted to chop it down.  The heat and the hum of the forest had lulled him to sleep.  Slithered means to move like a snake, wiggling from side to side.  The boa constrictor did not want the man to chop down the tree because it was a tree of miracles. It was his home and the home where generations of his ancestors have lived.  Older, (now dead) members of his family lived in that tree for many, many years.  When an insect travels from tree to tree, flower to flower, collecting pollen.  All living things like the bees and snakes need each other in order to survive. Living things need each other for food and shelter in order to survive.  Scampered means to run nimbly.  The canopy is the tops of the trees in the rain forest.  The roots of the trees help the earth by holding it in place.  When heavy rains come, without the roots, the soil will be washed away. |
| **THIRD READING: Pages 10-15**  Page 10  Fill in the chart with why the toucan believes the tree should not be cut down.  What does the author mean by, “Where once there was life and beauty only black and smoldering ruins remains,”?  If students are confused remind them of what happens when a candle or match is put out (smoke but no flame), so they can make the connections.  Page 12  Fill in the chart with why the frogs do not want the Kapok tree chopped down.  Page 14  Why did no one notice the jaguar?  Fill in the chart with why the jaguar does not want the man to chop down the tree. | Before man settled in the rain forest there was beauty and now there is ruin.  A ruined rain forest means ruined lives, many ruined lives. The frogs will be homeless.  The jaguar’s spotted coat blended into the dappled light and shadows of the understory. |
| **FOURTH READING: Pages 16-21**  Fill in the chart with what the porcupines reminded the man.  What do trees produce? And why is this important?  Page 18  Fill in the chart with the message from the anteaters.  Have students visualize a world without trees.  Page 20  Read the first two sentences. Did the sloth climb quickly or slowly?  Explain what plodded means. Have students role play the sloth. Remind students to modify their voice to mimic the way the sloth spoke (in a deep, lazy voice).  Fill in the chart with what the sloth meant by “. . .how much is  beauty worth?” | Animals and humans need oxygen to live.  Trees produce oxygen. We need oxygen to breathe.  You are chopping down the tree with no thought for the future.  The sloth climbed slowly because it took a while for him to reach the ground.  She means if you destroy the beauty of the rain forest, there will be nothing to look at. You cannot put a price on beauty. |
| **FIFTH READING: Pages 22-30**  Page 22  Show appropriate pictures of the Yanomamo tribe.  What does the child mean when he asks the man to “look upon us all with new eyes?”  How is that different from the way the man viewed the tree in the beginning of the story? (You may need to review pages 1-3 with the students.)  Page 24  Why were all the animals and the rain forest child staring at the man when he woke up?  Page 26  How did the man’s view of the forest change from what he had learned?  Page 30  Why did the man change his mind and drop his ax and walk out of the rain forest?  What was the author’s purpose for writing the book? | He wants the man to show what he has learned from all of the animals in the forest who spoke to him in his sleep. He wants the man to see the value of the rain forest, and its inhabitants and not chop the tree down.  The man entered the rain forest ready to chop the tree down.  The animals and child were staring at the man because they were waiting to see if he was going to chop down the Kapok tree.  He saw the sun steaming through the canopy.  Spots of bright light glowed like jewels amidst the dark green forest.  Strange and beautiful plants seemed to dangle in the air, suspended from the great Kapok tree.  He saw the beauty of the rain forest.  He no longer wanted to chop down the tree.  Lynne Cherry wrote the book so the reader can have a deeper appreciation of the rain forest and its creatures. Also, to bring awareness to the destruction of the rain forests. |

FINAL DAY WITH THE BOOK - Culminating Task

* Using details from the text and the chart, explain what the man learned from the animals. Why are rainforests important?
  + The man in the story learned about how the rain forest creatures depend on one another and the forest for shelter, food and protection. The Kapok tree was home to many generations of boa constrictors as well as bees who pollinated many plants and trees, and built hives in them. Without the trees’ roots, the ground will wash away and fires set will ruin the land. Also, trees produce oxygen that is essential to life. Animals like the jaguar prey on other animals in the forest. The rain forest is important because it is a source of life for the many creatures that depend on one another for survival. It also holds much beauty, which is priceless.

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 1: Kapok Tree- a large, deciduous, tropical tree that is native to tropical America, Africa, and the East Indies.  Page 4: ancestors- one from whom an individual is descended  Page 6: pollinate- the carrying of pollen to fertilize the seed  Page 8: scampered- run nimbly  Page 16: oxygen- gaseous chemical element essential for life  Page 22: Yanomamo tribe- tribe of people who live in the rain forest | Page 1: squawking- harsh, loud crying  Page 1: howling-to utter a loud, prolonged, mournful cry, as that of a dog or wolf.  Page 3: lulled- make or become quiet  Page 4: slithered- glide along like a snake  Page 4: gash- deep long cut  Page 8: troupe- a group of stage performers  Page 10: smoldering- burn and smoke without flame  Page 12: piped- to speak in a high-pitched or piercing tone.  Page 14: dappled- mark with colored spots  Page 14: padded- to walk so that one's footsteps make a dull, muffled sound  Page 20: feast- to look at  Page 20: plodding- walk heavily or slowly |

Extension learning activities for this book and other useful resources

1. Show a video of the story read aloud: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gw0arFtHeVw>

2. Have the students act out the story in Reader’s Theater. *Note: This is particularly supportive of English Language Learners.*

<http://www.timelessteacherstuff.com/readerstheater/GreatKapokTree.pdf>

3. Research different rain forest animals. Create animals using clay: <http://www.wikihow.com/Create-Clay-Animals>

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| Animals | Reasons not to chop down the tree |
| Boa Constrictor | This is a tree of miracles, home where generations of ancestors live. |
| Bees | Their hives are in the tree. Bees pollinate the rain forest. |
| Monkeys | The roots of the tree will wither and die, nothing will be left to hold the earth in place. |
| Birds | Men will set fire to clear the land and ruins will remain. |
| Frogs | The frogs will be homeless. |
| Jaguar | The trees are home to birds and animals, they will have no food. |
| Porcupines | Trees produce oxygen. We need oxygen to breathe. |
| Anteaters | What happens tomorrow depends on what you do today. |
| Sloth | Beauty is priceless. |

Note to Teacher

This book does not have any page numbers. Please number the pages yourself starting with, “Two men walked…” Also, please refer to the author’s letter and summary prior to the copyright page as well as the author’s information at the end of the book.

**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

\_\_670L\_\_\_\_\_\_

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.

The story’s message is that all living things are dependent on each other to survive. “ A ruined rain forest means ruined lives . . . many ruined lives.”

Text (i. e .different animals speaking to the sleeping man in his dreams) is written on one page and the illustrations supporting the text is on the other page.

The entire text is replete with rich vocabulary (e.g. slithered, ancestors, wither, shouldering, and fragrant as well as domain specific words (canopy, underbrush).

Students will need to build background knowledge about the elements of the rainforest for example canopy, and understory.

**Structure**

**Meaning/Purpose**

**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?

The domain specific vocabulary will be a challenge for the students. Supports will include repeated

readings, three dimensional examples, and videos on the rain forest. Opportunities to draw

illustrations to show understanding of the rain forest will be provided.

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

Through exploration of this text students will build content knowledge about the rain forest.

Additionally, they will learn about the interdependence between living things which they can transfer

to other areas of their lives.

1. **Grade level**

What grade does this book best belong in?

Grade 2

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