Title/Author: *The Tortilla Factory* by Gary Paulsen with paintings by Ruth Wright Paulsen

Suggested Time to Spend: 4 Days (Recommendation: one session per day, at least 20 minutes per day)

Common Core grade-level ELA/Literacy Standards: RI.K.1, RI.K.2, RI.K.3, RI.K.4, RI.K.7, RI.K.10; W.K.2, W.K.8; SL.K.1, SL.K.2, SL.K.5; L.K.1, L.K.4

Lesson Objective:

Students will listen to a literary non-fiction text read aloud and use literacy skills (reading, writing, discussion, and listening) to better understand the big idea.

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

There is a cycle from farm to table that is connected to the seasons.

Synopsis

In this example of literary non-fiction, Gary Paulsen honors migrant farmworkers using eloquent language and rich vocabulary in a poetic, cyclical structure. He describes the life cycle of a corn seed as it goes from farm to table and nourishes the hands that plant the seeds.

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 Tortilla Factory* 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/2583/the-tortilla-factory-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:  This reading emphasizes the language of the text, specifically the figurative language. During this reading students see how the author uses language and punctuation (ellipses) to create a cyclical structure.  Using the illustration on pages 6-7, what does the author mean when he says, “The black earth sleeps in winter”? How does the earth sleep? Turn and talk to a partner. As students partner talk, teacher should listen for acceptable responses.  You could have students use the following sentence frame to begin their discussion:  The illustration tells me \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  Discuss responses as a group.  Think about the sounds you hear when soft wind blows plants and leaves. On page 13, the author says the green plants are rustling in the soft wind. What would you see and hear when green plants are rustling in soft wind? Use your body to show me how a rustling plant might look and sound.  Sometimes the word ‘ground’ means something you walk on. On page 15, the author uses the word ‘ground’ in a different way. The author says corn is ground into flour. He means that the corn gets dried and crushed into a powder. Teacher model a crushing motion and have students mimic.  Page 19  What is meant by clank-clunking machinery?  Page 21  What are the action words the author uses to describe what happens to the dough? (You can even demonstrate the actions with your hands).  Page 23  What are perfect disks?  Page 27  What part of the story is repeated?  Page 31  The … at the end are called ellipses. An author uses these when he/she omits or leaves out something. What do the ellipses tell us?  The teacher may choose to ask the following question to further discuss the text and the cyclical structure of the text:  Why is ‘THE BLACK EARTH’ on page 7 capitalized? | Acceptable responses:   * The illustration tells me that nothing is happening. * The illustration tells me that nothing is growing. * The illustration tells me the earth is asleep and calm. * The illustration tells me that the black earth is soil. (If students do not address the definition of the earth in this text as soil, be sure to explicitly tell them).   Students should sway gently while making a rustling noise.  Students mimic the meaning of the word ‘ground’.  Loud machines  Push, squeeze, and flatten.  A flat round shape.  The author repeats these phrases:   * black earth, * brown hands, * yellow seeds, and * make golden corn to dry in hot sun and be ground into flour.   On page 27, the author uses the phrase ‘the black earth’ which is also used at the beginning of the story.  The story (cycle) will repeat.  The author is placing emphasis because it’s the beginning and we’re coming back to it. |
| THIRD READING:  In this reading the two cycles will be emphasized – the seasons and the farm to table (corn cycle).  Ask students, “What is a cycle?” Explain the relationship of a cycle to a circle. Demonstrate this using a circle to show the seasons.  The first five lines describe the seasons. Have students find evidence of each season.  Each year, the seasons repeat: winter, spring, summer, fall. The farmers’ planting and harvesting follows the seasons. The crops follow a cycle.  Complete a graphic that shows the seasons and the planting cycle:  There is another cycle that is a part of this story – ask students to listen for the farm - to - table cycle as you continue to read. What happens to the flour?  You can have students create notes with pictures or you can provide simple pictures representing the words below that you have them place in order.  These “notes” will help students with their project.  Sample pictures are attached.  Corn > Flour > Dough > Disks > Dinner > Nourishment > Planting > Corn | Winter: Page 7, “The black earth sleeps in winter.” The illustration appears dark and gloomy.  Spring: Pages 9 and 11, “But in the spring the black earth is worked by brown hands that plant yellow seeds,”  Summer Page 13, “which **become green plants** rustling in soft wind”. The word ‘become’ signifies the growing of the plants.  Fall: “Make golden corn to dry in hot sun and be ground into flour” The harvesting of corn signifies the end of summer. |

FINAL DAY WITH THE BOOK - Culminating Task

* Provide students with a ‘perfect disk’. With a partner, have students use words and pictures to show how the author uses *The Tortilla Factory* to describe the farm to table cycle of corn and tortillas. The cycle should resemble the following:

Corn > Flour > Dough > Disks > Dinner > Nourishment > Planting > Corn

 

 

 



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) |
| These words can be described as ‘tell’ words. Quickly define the following words while reading:  Page 9 - **worked** – soil is being prepared for use  Page 15 - **golden** – color  Page 15 - **flour –** powder used for baking  Page 17 - **factory –** a building where goods are made  Page 19 - **machinery** – a machine  Page 19 - **dough –** the result of adding a liquid to flour  Page 23 - **package –** a container used to hold goods | These words can be described as ‘teach’ words and are explicitly taught in the lesson.  Page 7 - **earth** – soil  Page 13 - **rustling** – sound  Page 15 - **ground –** turn into a powder  Page 23 - **disks –** a flat figure in a rounded shape |

Extension learning activities for this book and other useful resources

* Use *The Seasons of Arnold’s Apple Tree* by Gail Gibbons to describe the life cycle of an apple tree as the seasons change. Relate this to *The Tortilla Factory* by Gary Paulsen. *Note: This is particularly supportive of English Language Learners.*
* Take a tour of a tortilla factory using this link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2BC9jS8_PU>.
* A slideshow of *The Tortilla Factory* by Gary Paulsen can be found at <http://vimeo.com/51170648>.
* Consider other cycles that can be related to *The Tortilla Factory* (ex: water cycle, rock cycle, calendar, recycling).
* Watch the video *From Seed to Plant.* The video can be found using the following link: <http://www.watchknowlearn.org/Video.aspx?VideoID=36335&CategoryID=10502>. Stop the video after Step 4 (47 seconds).

**What Makes this Text Complex?**

1. **Quantitative Measure**

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

2-3 band 420-820L

4-5 band 740-1010L

6-8 band 925-1185L

9-10 band 1050-1335L

11-CCR band 1185-1385L

510L

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.

In this text, the farm to table cycle is illustrated by showing corn made into tortillas. It can be related to other cycles such as seasons, the water cycle, rock cycle, and a yearly calendar.

This literary nonfiction text has many poetic features. It consists of one long sentence and uses figurative language. Special attention may need to be given to the use of commas and ellipses. The only period in the story occurs on the first page while the last page ends in ellipses indicating the cycle will repeat.

Some words will need to be explicitly taught while students can obtain meaning from other words using context clues highlighted by the teacher.

Students will need to have general knowledge of farmers and their role in the community.

**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?

Students will be challenged to gain in-depth meaning from the text given its complex cyclical structure. Support will be provided through the sequencing of text dependent questions, modeling, partner talk, and visual representations.

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

Students will gain knowledge of life cycles as it is represented by the life cycle of a tortilla in this story. This can be translated to other types of life cycles. Student will also have collaborative conversations with partners to further their understanding of the content while also building communication skills.

1. **Grade level**

What grade does this book best belong in? Kindergarten

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