Unit 1

Title: “Broken Chain”

Suggested Time: 3-5 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.7.4, 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

Characters have complicated motivations behind their actions; these motivations and actions are often tied to a character’s sense of identity.

Synopsis

In “Broken Chain,” Alfonso, a seventh grader, dislikes his appearance. He meets a girl named Sandra, whom he admires, and asks her to go biking with him. Sandra’s bicycle has a flat tire, so he offers to borrow the bicycle of his older brother, Ernie. Jealous because Alfonso might have a girlfriend, Ernie complicates Alfonso’s plans by refusing to lend him his bike. The situation worsens when Alfonso’s bicycle chain breaks. Ernie eventually changes his mind, however, and Alfonso and Sandra happily share Ernie’s bicycle.

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** |
| Why does Alfonso try “to push his crooked teeth to where he thought they belonged” and do “fifty sit-ups a day” (p. 17)? What do these actions reveal about his character? | Alfonso “hated the way he looked.” “He wanted ‘cuts’ like those he had seen on a calendar of an Aztec warrior…” (p. 17) His actions and thoughts show that Alfonso is discovering his sexuality. For example, he is obsessed with muscles so that “girls in cut-offs would notice” and he notices the cuts of the girl in the calendar in her thin dress (p. 17). Most importantly, he is determined to be “better looking than average” and becomes self-conscious about his teeth to the point of infatuation. |
| On page 18, explain one internal conflict and one external conflict that Alfonso faces. How are these conflicts significant to Alfonso’s identity? | External: Father and son with haircut (There is a generational gap between Alfonso and his father who is “puro Mexicano.”) and mother and son with braces. Both of these conflicts illuminate Alfonso’s differences in priorities between Alfonso as a developing teenager versus his parents’ more conservative views and concerns.  Internal: Alfonso is concerned about his appearance and wants to change how he looks. This shows that Alfonso wants to be noticed and attractive in a conventional way and be recognized by both male and female peers. This is shown in the quote, “to burn those already apparent ripples on his stomach to even deeper ripples, so…girls in cutoffs would notice. And the guys would think he was tough…(p. 17).” |
| When Alfonso asks his mother if he can have braces, why does the author state, “he asked at the wrong time”? (page 18) | Alfonso’s mother “glared at him” and gives him snide response that “money grows on trees.” Prior to her reaction, she was licking the envelope for the house payment, and the narrator reveals that she “clipped coupons,” “kept a vegetable garden,” and “ate a lot frijoles.” These details reveal that she is frugal and concerned about finances; therefore, braces are a luxury that they cannot afford. |
| Why does the author include brand names such as “Penney’s, Kmart” and “Montgomery Ward,” and specific cultures such as “Aztec,” “Chinese,” “Gypsies,” and “Chicanas” in the text? (pages 18-19) | These specific details show Alfonso’s budding understanding and dissection of what identity might be which includes economic, social, and cultural factors. |
| Explain the relationship between Alfonso’s treatment of his bike and his teeth (pages 18-19). | The use of the verb “flossed” to describe how Alfonso cleans the spokes is commonly associated with teeth and then he immediately goes back to pressing his teeth. Both the care and cleanliness of his bike and pursuit for perfection with his appearance show that Alfonso is very concerned about presentation. |
| Why is Ernie stepping on ants that come to close to him, and why does Alfonso start stepping on ants also? What does this tell you about each character? (page 19) | Ernie is mad about the girls not showing up. The text says, “when Ernie looked mad.” In this instance, frustration leads to a desire to dominate *something*. This also ties into Ernie’s maturation level in that more mature people may not lash out at others like this.  Alfonso joins in “smearing ants with their floppy high tops” because he looks up to his brother and wants to be like him. A possible response might include that Alfonso recognizes that Ernie likes to dominate things and wants to avoid being the next target. As the narrator says, “Alfonso knew better than to say anything when Ernie looked mad” (p. 19). This shows Alfonso’s maturity in that he recognizes the importance of laying low when his brother is upset.  (These ideas reflect the big idea that characters’ actions have complex motivations behind them.) |
| Why does the author include Alfonso’s thought about the “dirty trick”? How does this detail relate to Alfonso’s identity and/or later developments in the text? (p. 19) | The author wants the reader to see that Alfonso is slightly empathetic, but also mischievous with the sentence, “Alfonso thought it was a pretty dirty trick but sort of funny too. He would have to try that someday.” This shows that he’s still working out what kind of person he wants to be as well as what’s proper for a gentleman. This ties in with the later event that Alfonso could have cut out on his date with Sandra but did not. |
| What detail(s) from page 19 indicate what Alfonso’s priorities are? Why are these details important to Alfonso’s identity and/or later developments in the text? | Possible answers include:  “He [Alfonso] compared their two bikes: His gleamed like a handful of dimes, while Ernie’s looked dirty.” This could show how Alfonso’s and Ernie’s priorities differ. Also this detail continues to establish Alfonso’s quest for identity… his infatuation about appearance.  The author includes the detail, “His [Alfonso’s] portable radio was on, but not loud enough to make Mr. Rojas come down the steps and wave his cane at him.” This might show that Alfonso is aware of a generational gap or the limits imposed upon him by adults and that he is able to respect boundaries.  When Alfonso punches himself in the stomach, and “growled ‘Cuts.’ Then he patted his butch and whispered, ‘Fresh,” he might be doing this as a way of reinforcing his efforts to fit in and look good. |
| How do Alfonso and Sandra feel about each other? Use evidence from the text on pages 20 and 21. | On page 20, every time that Sandra looks at him, he looks away. This shows that he likes her and he doesn’t want to be obvious. Sandra plays with her ponytail and crosses one leg over the other to show that she is being flirtatious/nervous. This shows that she is interested in Alfonso. |
| Why won’t Ernie let Alfonso borrow his bike (page 22)? | On page 22, the text says, “Secretly, however, Ernie was jealous that his brother, two years younger than himself, might have found a girlfriend.” Ernie’s remark that the same girl from Halloween might be Sandra could be part of his reasoning. (Discussion could address whether Ernie truly believed that this is the same girl or if he is lashing out at his brother because the girl is out of his control (go back to the discussion about stepping on ants).) |
| How do Alfonso and Ernie act after Ernie refuses to let Alfonso borrow the bike? Why? | Alfonso and Ernie are fighting: “Ernie punched Alfonso in the arm, and Alfonso, his eyes wide with anger, punched back” (p. 22). They also fight over the tortilla. Also, the detail that “On Monday morning, they hurried to school on their bikes, neither saying a word, though they rode side by side,” shows an awkwardness in their now-strained relationship.  Alfonso is upset because Ernie refused to lend Ernie the bike (p. 21) while Ernie is upset because he thinks his younger brother might have found a girlfriend before him (he was stood up, p. 19). Moreover, Alfonso is upset because he doesn’t have a bike for Sandra (p. 22). |
| Describe Alfonso’s reaction to his bike chain breaking on page 22. Why does Alfonso react the way he does to the bike chain? | “The chain snapped in another place and hit him when it popped up, slicing his hand like a snake’s fang.” Alfonso overreacts by throwing the chain twice. He is on the verge of tears, and he curses himself and yells at his bike.  Alfonso is frustrated by things that are out of his control and lashes out at things that are within his control. The quotes which show this include: “He cursed himself for being stupid, yelled at his bike for being cheap, and slammed the chain…” and “Frustrated and on the verge of tears, he flung the chain as far as he could.”  Some students might connect that this is similar to how Ernie acts toward Alfonso when he asks to borrow Ernie’s bike. |
| Why does the author include the anecdote about the baseball mitt? (page 24) | The author wants to show that Alfonso is upset with himself for messing things up and he doesn’t blame Ernie. In the anecdote, the situation is resolved when his mother fixes the glove. This anecdote reveals Alfonso’s maturation toward adulthood. He doesn’t go to his mother to fix the problem with Sandra, he doesn’t blame Ernie, and he owns his mistake by going to Sandra instead of standing her up. \*Note: earlier in the story, Alfonso thought it would be funny to stand up a girl. |
| Ernie has a change of heart and decides to loan Alfonso the bike. What does this change of heart reveal about Ernie? (page 24) | First Ernie says,” we got the frogs,” which would lead the reader to assume that since he no longer needed the bike and felt bad for Alfonso on page 23, he gave it to him. After this, Ernie says, “She’s not the one who messed with Frostie and me.” Ernie might have given Alfonso the bike because he was concerned about Sandra being the same as the girl from Halloween. However, his attempt to conceal his identity by looking through the hedge and the fact that he showed up at all, reveals that he knew it was not the same girl all along and just says, “She’s not the one . . .” to save face. |
| At the end of the story, how have Alfonso’s priorities changed? Has he gotten everything he wanted? (page 24) | Alfonso is no longer as concerned about his appearance because this small, brief relationship with Sandra makes it less important.  From the teacher’s guide: “Alfonso does not look any different from the way he does at the beginning of the story; however, Sandra rides with him on Ernie’s bike and holds his hand and this make him forget that he does not like the way he looks. In a way he does get everything that he wants.” |

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** | Page 17 - apparent  Page 18 - sullen  Page 18 - swaggered  Page 18 - leafed  Page 19 - flossed  Page 20 - winced  Page 21- pampered  Page 21 - pestered  Page 21 - knot up  Page 22- snarled  Page 22 - stunt Page 22 - wadded  Page 22 - gritty  Page 23 - desperation; sparrow  Page 24 - stingy; gritting | Page 18 - puro Mexicano  Page 23 - trudging  Page 24 - emerged |
| **Meaning needs to be provided** | Page 16 - “cuts”  Page 18 - butched  Page 18 - ¿Que paso?  Page 18 - herd  Page 19 - steel wool; Chicanas; abuelitas  Page 22 - spooked; retrieved  Page 23 - menso  Page 24 - hedge | Page 19 - Gypsies  Page 22 - clincher; impulse |

Culminating Writing Task

* Prompt

*Dynamic characters such as Alfonso, who develop and change throughout a text, experience conflicts that shape their behavior and identity. Write an explanatory essay in which you identify various conflicts or situations that Alfonso experiences and explain how Alfonso’s reactions to these conflicts develop his identity. Cite evidence from the text to support your response.*

* Teacher Instructions

1. Students identify their writing task from the prompt provided.
2. Students 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 when this process is new and/or the text is challenging!

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| ***Evidence***  ***Quote or paraphrase*** | ***Page number*** | ***Elaboration / explanation of how this evidence supports ideas or argument*** |
| “Alfonso sat on the porch trying to push his crooked teeth to where he thought they belonged. He hated the way he looked. Last week he did fifty sit-ups a day…” | 17 | This shows Alfonso’s obsession with his appearance and his inability to accept himself the way he is. |
| “Alfonso studied the magazine pictures of rock stars for a hairstyle…. One day he had it butched on the top, like in the magazines.” | 18 | This shows his attempt to mainstream himself into mass culture and his desire to stand out. |
| “He grew depressed and turned away from the mirror.” | 18 | Again, this shows that he is very concerned about his appearance. This isn’t just something he wants; it’s affecting him emotionally. |
| “Alfonso didn’t want to be the handsomest kid at school, but he was determined to be better looking than average.” | 18 | Alfonso wants to go a bit beyond fitting in, wanting to be one of the better looking people, but not necessarily the best looking. He is realistic with his goals. |
| “He spent hours in front of the mirror trying to herd his teeth into place with his thumb.” | 18 | This is an ongoing obsession, not just a temporary concern. His goals are focused. |
| “After breakfast that Saturday he went to his room… and pushed for three hours straight.” | 18 | Same as above. |
| “He turned his bike over, balancing it on the handlebars and seat, and flossed the spokes with the sock.” | 19 | His obsession with appearance goes beyond his physical appearance. He wants everything that represents him to look good. He wants to be thought of by others as being well put together.” |
| “Alfonso thought that was a pretty dirty trick but sort of funny too. He would have to try that someday.” | 19 | This shows his immaturity, as he actually considers standing girls up for a laugh. |
| “Alfonso looked over her shoulder for a long time, trying to muster enough nerve…. Shyly, he asked, ‘You wanna go bike riding?’” | 21 | This is the first rite of passage. Despite his wavering confidence, he rises to the occasion; he is maturing and taking on the role of a man. |
| “Alfonso took off as fast as he could on his bike, jumped the curb, and, cool as he could be, raced away with his hands stuffed in his pockets.” | 21 | He’s still a bit concerned about perception, and though some confidence is there, he still wants to show off as being a man. |
| “’You better not touch her,’ Alfonso snarled, throwing a wadded Kleenex at him. ‘I’ll run you over with my bike.’” | 21-22 | This shows that, despite Ernie’s part as a role model, Alfonso is choosing to stand up against his older brother and protect her. This contrasts with his earlier consideration of standing someone up for a laugh and illustrates Alfonso finding his independent path to manhood. |
| “In first period, Alfonso worried himself sick. How would he borrow a bike for her? …. Between history and math, Alfonso saw Sandra and her girlfriend huddling at their lockers. He hurried by without being seen.” | 22 | He’s aware of his problem and is trying to work it out, and even though Sandra is unaware of the issue, he is too embarrassed to even say hello to her. This shows his immaturity and present inability to completely deal with his own problems. |
| “On an impulse, he removed the chain to wipe off the gritty oil. But while he was unhooking it from the back sprocket, it snapped….Frustrated and on the verge of tears, he flung the chain as far as he could.” | 22 | This shows that Alfonso acts and reacts before he thinks. Rather than thinking about ways to solve the new problem, he lashes out. |
| “he went to the bedroom to plead with Ernie, who was changing to his after-school clothes.” | 22-23 | Alfonso is still reaching out to other people to solve his problems. |
| “Why did he have to take the chain off? He scolded himself. He always messed things up when he tried to take them apart, like the time he tried to repad his baseball mitt…. When he showed the mess to his mother…she scolded him but put it back together…” | 24 | Here, he is reflecting on the fact that when he messes things up, other people are fixing things for him. It shows him reflecting on his childish behavior and recognizing that there is an alternative. |
| “Now he had to face Sandra and say, ‘I broke my bike, and my stingy brother took off on his.’” | 24 | Here, Alfonso is clearly planning to own up to the situation and meet Sandra despite his lack of bikes. (Contrast with his earlier consideration of standing up a date.) However, he’s still blaming his brother for at least part of the problem. |
| “…Alfonso emerged from behind the hedge with Ernie’s bike, which was mud-splashed but better than nothing.” | 24 | He’s letting go with his obsession over appearance and is starting to accept the things he has instead of worrying over perfection. This shows increasing maturity. |
| “Alfonso told her his bike was broken and asked if she wanted to ride with him.” | 24 | Here, Alfonso is accepting responsibility without trying to blame anyone else (such as his brother’s stinginess). |
| “He started off slowly, gritting his teeth, because she was heavier than he thought. But once he got going, it got easier…” | 24 | Here we see Alfonso’s determination, not giving up when things are difficult, and realizing that things get easier after the initial obstacle is surmounted. |
| “…it felt like love.” | 24 | The fact that this “feels like” instead of “is” love shows that Alfonso realizes that this may be the first of many situations. He sees that this is one girl, possibly of many. This shows a mature, realistic view of relationships. |

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 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

In the ending paragraph of *Broken Chain*, the narrator offers “But once he got going, it got easier” as a commentary on the movement of Alfonso’s bike. While written literally to indicate that the maneuvering of his bicycle with Sandra on top was difficult, this line is also a synopsis of Alfonso’s journey into adulthood where he realizes that responsibility and maturity are about tolerating those things that one cannot change and that becoming a man involves accepting the consequences of his actions. Throughout his journey, Alfonso is placed in situations in which he must rise to the occasion to fix his own messes. In these struggles, Alfonso learns what it is that separates men from boys and enters his own journey into budding adulthood.

The story begins with Alfonso’s inner conflict with his physical appearance. At the start of the story, the narrator introduces us to Alfonso’s sense of self with the first line, “Alfonso sat on the porch trying to push his crooked teeth to where he thought they belonged” (pg. 17). At the opening of the story, the reader is introduced to a character who, like a typical teenager, is trying to negotiate where he fits in the world. Examples such as, “He spent hours in front of the mirror trying to herd his teeth into place with his thumb,” and, “After breakfast that Saturday he went to his room . . . and pushed for three hours straight” indicate that his need to fit in is bordering on obsession (pg. 18). Alfonso does not like how crooked his teeth are, so he emulates the pictures that he sees in magazines, and is deeply obsessed with perfection. Further in the reading, we see Alfonso’s fixation with others’ perception of him spill over into all aspects of Alfonso’s life. He “studied the magazine pictures of rock stars for a hairstyle . . . One day he had it butched on the top, like in the magazines,” and is reluctant to listen to his father, “pretending not to hear” when his father expresses concern about his haircut (pg. 18). Alfonso is even concerned with the appearance of his bike. He “flossed the spokes with the sock” and “picked up a wad of steel wool and continued cleaning the spokes” (pg. 19). The narrator tells the reader, “Alfonso didn’t want to be the handsomest kid at school, but he was determined to be better looking than average” (pg. 28). Alfonso’s concern with how others perceive him directs many of his actions.

Alfonso is placed in situations in which he can react as a child by avoidance, placing blame, or looking to others to fix his problems. When Alfonso can rationally respond to difficult situations by looking for solutions and owning up to his mistakes, we begin to see his change from adolescent to adult. The most significant shift in Alfonso’s identity is how he reacts to his date with Sandra. When Ernie relays his story of how he is stood up by the Halloween girl, Alfonso thinks, “that was a pretty dirty trick but sort of funny too. He would have to try that someday” (pg. 19). However, when that someday comes and Alfonso is faced with the reality of owning up to his lack of bicycles or standing Sandra up, he knows that he must face Sandra and shows up to the date he has agreed to. This decision does not come without obstacles. Throughout the few days when Alfonso must decide what to do because his brother refuses to loan him his bike, Alfonso’s emotions are flailing. He is the knight in shining armor when he threatens his brother “you better not touch her” (pg. 21). He is the little boy, “look[ing] over his shoulder for a long time, trying to muster enough nerve,” who is afraid of girls’ cooties when he asks Sandra out. He is the problem-solver who “worried himself sick” (pg. 22). Alfonso even acts a bit rude when he “saw Sandra and her girlfriend huddling at their lockers [and] hurried by without being seen” (pg. 22).

The reactions that Alfonso has prior to his date make his decision to “face Sandra and say, ’I broke my bike, and my stingy brother took off on his” (pg. 24) build his identity. Even up to the moment when he faces Sandra directly, he still considers blaming his brother for his misfortune. When “Alfonso told her his bike was broken and asked if she wanted to ride with him,” we finally see that he has hurdled over his first rite of passage: dating. He accepts responsibility without trying to blame anyone else and he finds that it is well received. Unlike earlier experiences in Alfonso’s life when he reacts with impulse to his bike’s broken chain (pg. 22), or when Alfonso seeks his mother to fix his broken glove (pg. 24), Alfonso rises to the occasion and finds himself in a new and exciting situation in which he is able to overlook flaws with the bike, with the less-than-perfect date, and with himself, and ride off into the sunset realizing that a “mud splashed bike” is “better than nothing” (pg. 24).

Additional Tasks

* *Using a Venn Diagram, Double-Bubble Map, or similar, compare and contrast the story “Broken Chain” with Gary Soto’s poem “Oranges.” In one sentence, summarize Gary Soto as a writer.*

Answer: Gary Soto uses seemingly small events in order to showcase issues in teenagers developing their identities.

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| **Broken Chain** | **Both** | **Oranges** |
| * Emphasizes fitting in * Cultural identity * Family relationships | * Increasing maturity through decisions * Developing love * Showcasing a small moment in time * Concerned with rights of passage * First dates * Spark of a relationship * Reactions to conflict (not just with main characters) | * Sacrifice * It’s not the giving of the money that’s relevant; it’s the silence of the gift * Focus on imagery |

* *Analyze one of the character’s journeys throughout the story. Create a physical map that represents your character’s journey. First, decide on a location for the journey. Use something you know, such a restaurant, a hike, or a baseball field or game. Be creative! This map should include 5 destinations or stops and an explanation for each destination that explains how each destination relates to the journey that one of the characters takes in “Broken Chain.” (assignment idea provided by Corbett Harrison)*

Possible answer: Alfonso’s journey is like a climber climbing Mount Everest (see side picture)

**Destination 1:** Preparation at Base Camp: The base camp of Mount Everest can be compared to the opening in the story when Alfonso is obsessed with his looks and making what he feels are necessary preparations to enter his journey into adulthood. Alfonso begins by examining examples of males to decide how he will best become a man. This is similar to how someone prepares for Mount Everest. Research is done to make sure that the climber understands the risks and enters the journey with the necessary tools and training to be successful. In Alfonso’s case, these “tools” include muscles, straight teeth, and the right hair-cut.

**Destination 2:** Entering the trail after camp 1: Much like when Alfonso meets Sandra and takes the risk to ask her out, there is a lot of apprehension at this point in the Mount Everest Journey. Less experienced climbers do not go beyond this point because they are unable to compensate for the change in air pressure. Alfonso has the choice to avoid the risk of asking out his first girl for fear of failure, but chooses to proceed.

**Destination 3:** North Col/Avalanche Territory: At the West Ridge , the steep walls of North Col often create avalanches– this is where most recorded deaths have been and it was original path taken to ascend Mount Everest in 1921. Alfonso is stuck in a place where he must problem solve to create his success after his brother denies him use of his bike and find an alternate route to get what he wants. He is stuck on what to do and must find a different path to meet Sandra or choose to abandon his journey. When he angers over his broken bicycle, and throws his chain, he is at a standstill and must decide what path to take.

**Destination 4:** South Col/ The trail to success: South Col is a more successful route for climbers. When Alfonso decides that he will meet up with Sandra, regardless of the bike, Alfonso alters his path from earlier in the story when he avoided her, decides that standing up girls is not so funny, and finds that things work out in his favor.

**Destination 5:** The South Summit/ 29,035 feet- Alfonso has reached his destination and is now ready to enter into “manhood.” When he rides on the bike with Sandra, he forgets his obsession with his looks and is content in the moment. It is like he is looking out at the horizon.

(Note: To make this assignment more complex and integrate informational text, students may be asked to research a place for this assignment and include relevant facts.)

Note to Teacher

* Students are sometimes confused at the plot shift between page 19 and 20 when Alfonso is riding on the bike and stops to help the young boy stuck on the fence. The teacher might ask students to retell the events in this passage to ensure plot comprehension.

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“Broken Chain”

1. Why does Alfonso try “to push his crooked teeth to where he thought they belonged” and do “fifty sit-ups a day” (p. 17)? What do these actions reveal about his character?
2. On page 18, explain one internal conflict and one external conflict that Alfonso faces. How are these conflicts significant to Alfonso’s identity?
3. When Alfonso asks his mother if he can have braces, why does the author state, “he asked at the wrong time”? (page 18)
4. Why does the author include brand names such as “Penney’s, Kmart” and “Montgomery Ward,” and specific cultures such as “Aztec,” “Chinese,” “Gypsies,” and “Chicanas” in the text? (pages 18-19)
5. Explain the relationship between Alfonso’s treatment of his bike and his teeth (pages 18-19).
6. Why is Ernie stepping on ants that come to close to him, and why does Alfonso start stepping on ants also? What does this tell you about each character? (page 19)
7. Why does the author include Alfonso’s thought about the “dirty trick”? How does this detail relate to Alfonso’s identity and/or later developments in the text? (page 19)
8. What detail(s) from page 19 indicate what Alfonso’s priorities are? Why are these details important to Alfonso’s identity and/or later developments in the text?
9. How do Alfonso and Sandra feel about each other? Use evidence from the text on pages 20 and 21.
10. Why won’t Ernie let Alfonso borrow his bike? (page 22)
11. How do Alfonso and Ernie act after Ernie refuses to let Alfonso borrow the bike? Why?
12. Describe Alfonso’s reaction to his bike chain breaking on page 22. Why does Alfonso react the way he does to the bike chain?
13. Why does the author include the anecdote about the baseball mitt? (page 24)
14. Ernie has a change of heart and decides to loan Alfonso the bike. What does this change of heart reveal about Ernie? (page 24)
15. At the end of the story, how have Alfonso’s priorities changed? Has he gotten everything he wanted? (page 24)

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.