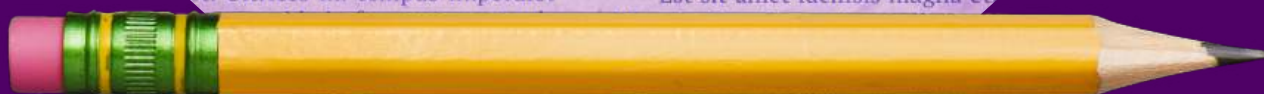
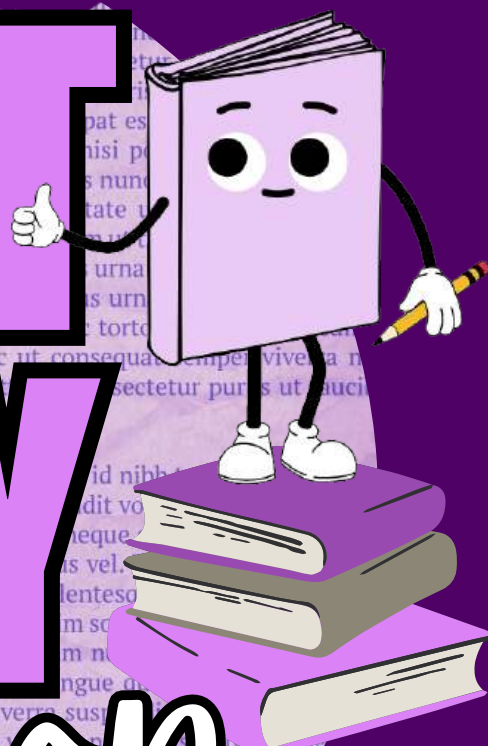


SHORT STORY Collection



From the Word Nerd



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Writing Rubric ... page 5-6

Gem & Opportunity Feedback Sheets ... page 7-8

Learn How to Annotate ... page 9

Short Stories (including teacher page, printable student text, extension activities and answer keys)

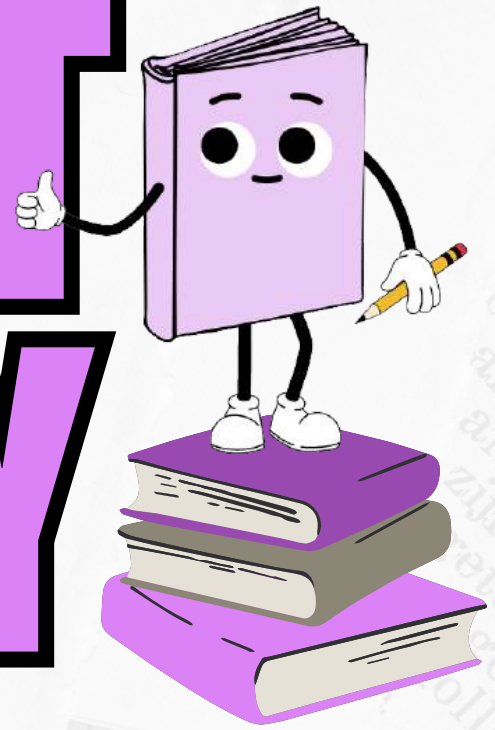
**** Stories appear in order of reading level difficulty. Remember, with these stories we are assessing students skills with GRADE LEVEL STANDARDS, thus it is okay to use text at lower grade levels.**

- **A Sky Full of Maybe (Level 4.7) ... page 10**
- **Digging in the Dirt (Level 4.7) ... page 17**
- **Who Will Save the Day (Level 4.8) ... page 22**
- **Spoonfuls of Peanut Butter (Level 4.9) ... page 28**
- **Winter is Coming (Level 5.2) ... page 33**
- **Fishy Business (Level 6.7) ... page 38**



SHORT STORY

genre



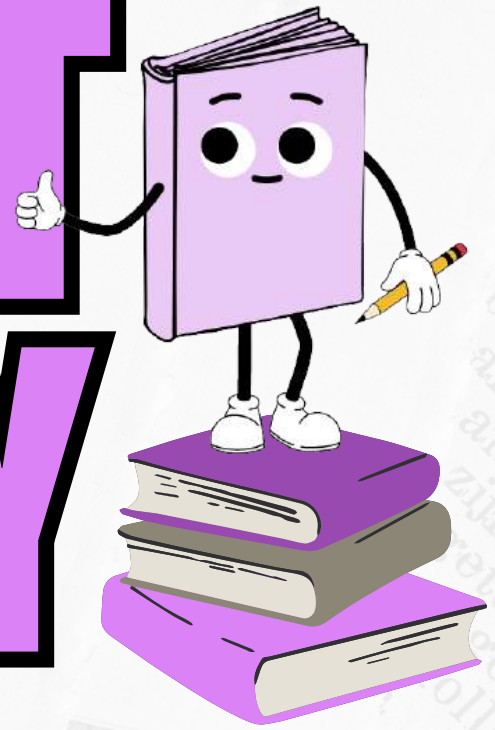
A short story is a work of fiction that typically focuses on a single incident or event and is limited in length. It usually develops a single plot, has a limited number of characters, and is concise and tightly written. A short story can be written in a variety of genres, such as science fiction, horror, romance, or mystery.



Key characteristics include:

- **In media res** - the story often starts in the middle of the action, to grab the reader's attention and generate interest
- **Limited time frame** - some short stories take place in a matter of minutes, others can be hours, but they don't usually cover extended lengths of time
- **Single point of view** - the story is usually narrated from one consistent point of view, unlike novels which can switch between different perspectives
- **Limited number of characters** - often includes a protagonist, an antagonist (although not necessarily another person) and one or two minor characters
- **Surprise ending or twist** - often there's a revelation that upends the reader's expectations and adds an additional layer of interest to the story.

SHORT genre STORY



This Resource Includes

- 6 Short Stories covering a variety of genres
- Audio Read Aloud Videos for each story
- Extension Activities for each story
- Answer Keys/Rubrics for each extension activity
- A teacher guide with story and standard information for each story.



Every short story in this collection will cover the below standards.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.10

By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Additionally, each story will have focus standards. After reading, students will get the opportunity to practice these focus standards with extension activities.



Use this rubric to first communicate your writing expectations to students and then to evaluate the writing products they create. Students and/or peers can also use this rubric to self/peer score/evaluate the pieces of writing. There is a space for you to write in and assess each short story's focal standard.

I assign 2 points if the task was completed and done well, 1 if the task was attempted but not mastered, and 0 if the task was not attempted at all.

On the next page there are 2 rubrics to print and cut for use with these or other writing tasks.

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			
Focus standard, CCSS ELA _____ shows mastery/progress (circle one)			

Total Points = ____/12

Additional Feedback:

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			
Focus standard, CCSS ELA _____ shows mastery/progress (circle one)			

Total Points = ____/12

Additional Feedback:

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			
Focus standard, CCSS ELA _____ shows mastery/progress (circle one)			

Total Points = ____/12

Additional Feedback:



GEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES



My Name:

Name of classmate I am reviewing:

Date:

Title of Piece/Date Written



GEMS

LIST SEVERAL THINGS THE
WRITERS DOES WELL

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OPPORTUNITIES

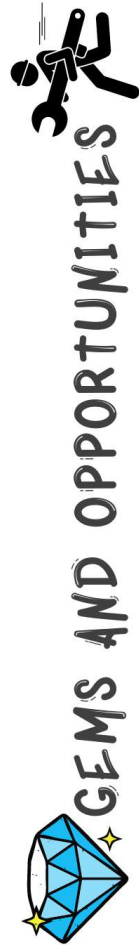


LIST OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE
WRITER TO IMPROVE

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FINAL COMMENTS

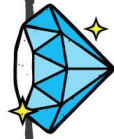
WRITE ANY FINAL COMMENTS OR FEEDBACK HERE:



GEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

My Name:
Name of classmate I am reviewing:
Date:

Title of Piece/Date Written



GEMS

LIST SEVERAL THINGS THE WRITERS DOES WELL

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OPPORTUNITIES

LIST OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE WRITER TO IMPROVE

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FINAL COMMENTS

WRITE ANY FINAL COMMENTS OR FEEDBACK HERE:



GEMS

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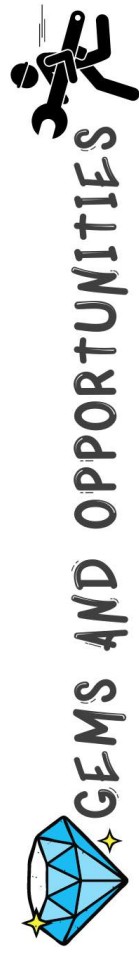
OPPORTUNITIES

LIST OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE WRITER TO IMPROVE

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FINAL COMMENTS

WRITE ANY FINAL COMMENTS OR FEEDBACK HERE:



GEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

My Name:
Name of classmate I am reviewing:
Date:

Title of Piece/Date Written

LEARN to Annotate



Annotating is a fancy word that means taking what you are thinking about in your brain while you are reading and putting it down on the page. You don't want this to take too long and pull you out of the flow, so jot down these symbols or a quick note and then keep reading!

Annotation Symbols



Emojis - Note how do you feel while reading with an emoji. Also note, how does the character feel?



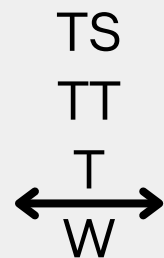
Hearts and Stars - mark your favorite or important parts with a heart or star, so you can easily find these sections again.



Exclamation points - if you find a part that shocks or surprises you, mark it with a !! Or a short phrase like WOW or HOLY COW!



Questions - when you have a question, write down a ?? or write out your full question.



Connections - note when you connect to the text or when it connects with another story or the real world

Underlining and circling important text/words are still more ways you can annotate.

Mark up the text so that when you come back to it, you can jog your memory to remember what you've already read without having to reread the entire text.

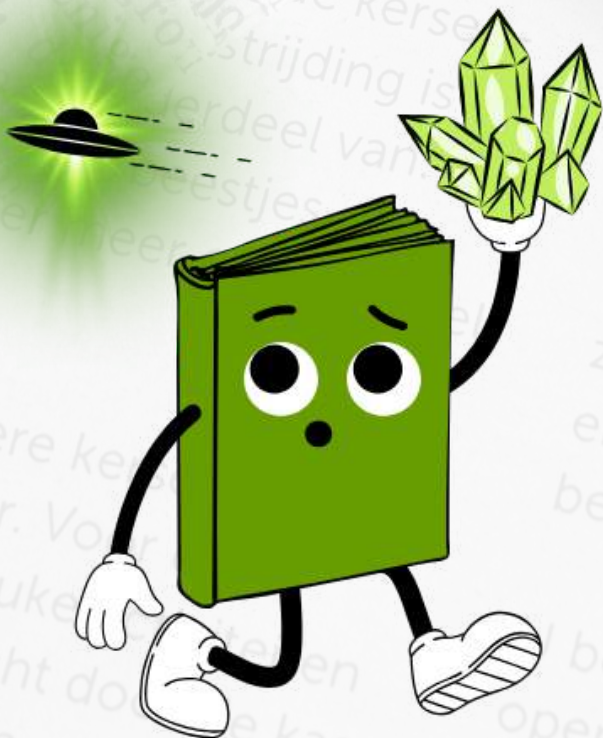
If you aren't thinking about anything while you are reading, that's your clue to STOP, go back and read again. Think of it like seeing the words play out like a movie in your brain. If you aren't seeing anything in your head, that's your sign to find a place free of distractions and try reading again.

A SKY

Full of Maybe

Jacey is no ordinary girl—she's a reluctant survivor stranded on a desolate planet, torn from her vibrant home among two glorious moons. Seven years of grit and working in the crystal mines have turned her dreams of escape into flickering hopes. When a mysterious flash of green light streaks across the sky, Jacey dares to believe it might be her chance for rescue.

Join Jacey on a night when hope, fear, and the unbreakable bond of home combine to create a story that will ignite your imagination and spark your longing for the stars.

**Word Count:**

346 words

Grade Level:

ATOS: 4.7

Genre:

Science Fiction

StandardsCC.6.L.6 Vocabulary

Acquisition and Use:

Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Listen
to the story here:



Name: _____



A SKY FULL OF MAYBE

Jacey is no ordinary girl—she's a reluctant survivor stranded on a desolate planet, torn from her vibrant home among two glorious moons. Seven years of grit and working in the crystal mines have turned her dreams of escape into flickering hopes. When a mysterious flash of green light streaks across the sky, Jacey dares to believe it might be her chance for rescue. Join Jacey on a night when hope, fear, and the unbreakable bond of home combine to create a story that will ignite your imagination and spark your longing for the stars.



TEXT ANNOTATIONS

It flashed through the sky and then was gone. Jacey was sure she had seen... something. Something larger than a shooting star. Maybe they would find her. Maybe she could finally leave this putrid planet. Maybe it was just wishful thinking, but maybe? Maybe.

Jacey came here seven years ago. Well, "came here" implies willingness, which there was none of. Forced. Coerced. Abducted. Those words would have been more accurate.

As she watched the brilliant green light of the "maybe spacecraft" fade, her hopes sank, physically pulling her to her knees and then the ground. The gravel cut into her knees and the hot wind blew across her face. She hated everything about this planet. She hated the relentless scorching sun. She hated the terrible flesh-eating creatures. She hated the unquenchable thirst that was always with her.

She wanted to go home. She missed the cool purple skies of her planet. She missed the two glorious moons and the way water sounded as it flowed ceaselessly over rocks in the river. Mostly,



A SKY FULL OF MAYBE

TEXT ANNOTATIONS

she missed her people. She wondered if they missed her too.

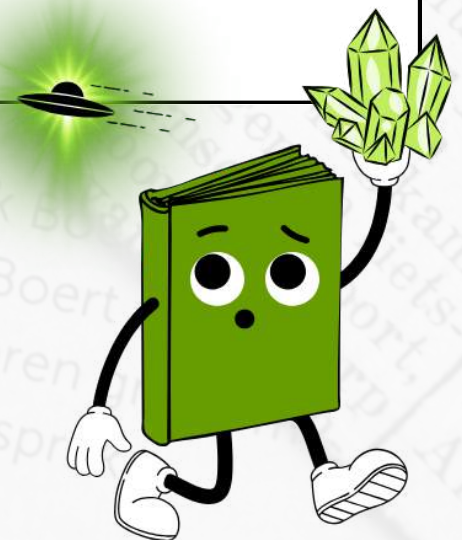
Jacey tipped her head up to the sky, so far back that the inky darkness filled her entire field of vision. Her back and neck hurt from her long day working in the crystal mines, but the chance of seeing another rescue drone was worth the pain. Minutes passed and then an hour. Jacey refused to give up her vigil and lay flat on her back, allowing her numb knees and kinked neck a much needed break. The shift came at a price, however. In this more comfortable position, sleep tried to claim her. Her eyes watered with the effort of trying to keep them open. Her blinks became longer until she lost the battle and fell into a rabbit hole of sleep.

The sound of crunching gravel woke her. She sat up with a start, her heart and mind racing to catch up with what she had missed.

"Jacey," a booming voice called through the night.

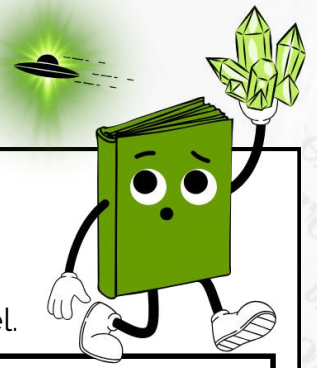
"About time we found you."

**DO YOU THINK JACEY WAS
FOUND BY SOMEONE
FRIENDLY OR UNFRIENDLY?**



Name: _____

A SKY FULL OF MAYBE EXTENSION ACTIVITIES



Activity #1 - Vocabulary Acquisition

Choose a word from the list and complete the chart below. Use context clues, a dictionary and/or a thesaurus to help you understand this word on a deeper level.

Word List

- Coerced
- Relentless
- Unquenchable
- Vigil

MY WORD:

Use this word in a
sentence:

Definition	Synonym	Antonym
Person	Situation	Visual

Activity #2 - Genre Identification and Exploration

What clues tell you this book belongs in the genre of science fiction?

Use these ideas to design/draw a book cover for A Sky Full of Maybe. Be sure to include a title, the author, and several genre specific elements. If you are struggling with idea, look in your library for other science fiction books and study their covers for similarities.

A SKY FULL OF MAYBE

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES ANSWER KEY



Activity #1 - Vocabulary Acquisition

Choose a word from the list and complete the chart below. Use context clues, a dictionary and/or a thesaurus to help you understand this word on a deeper level.

Word List


- Coerced
- Relentless
- Unquenchable
- Vigil

MY WORD:

Coerced

Use this word in a sentence:

My Aunt Sophia coerced me into doing the dishes by bribing me with extra desert.

Definition to forcefully convince someone to do something.	Synonym intimidate obligated Convince	Antonym encourage release unrestricted
Person bully	Situation Peer Pressure	Visual 

Activity #1 - Vocabulary Acquisition

Choose a word from the list and complete the chart below. Use context clues, a dictionary and/or a thesaurus to help you understand this word on a deeper level.

Word List

- Coerced
- Relentless
- Unquenchable
- Vigil

MY WORD:

relentless

Use this word in a sentence:

Toby was relentless when he played fetch. If you don't want to throw sticks for an hour, don't pick up the stick in the first place.

Definition to keep at it, never stopping	Synonym uncompromising single-minded	Antonym flexible surrendering
Person professional athlete	Situation toddler throwing a fit	Visual 

A SKY FULL OF MAYBE

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES ANSWER KEY



Activity #1 - Vocabulary Acquisition

Choose a word from the list and complete the chart below. Use context clues, a dictionary and/or a thesaurus to help you understand this word on a deeper level.

Word List


- Coerced
- Relentless
- Unquenchable
- Vigil

MY WORD:

unquenchable

Use this word in a sentence:

Rodney's ambition to become president of the card collecting club was unquenchable.

Definition	Synonym	Antonym
always wanting more, never enough	insatiable urgent never ending	enough satisfied fulfilled
Person	Situation	Visual
someone walking through the desert someone desperate to achieve their goal	thirsty, needing water	

Activity #1 - Vocabulary Acquisition

Choose a word from the list and complete the chart below. Use context clues, a dictionary and/or a thesaurus to help you understand this word on a deeper level.

Word List


- Coerced
- Relentless
- Unquenchable
- Vigil

MY WORD:

vigil

Use this word in a sentence:

Alayna kept vigil over the fresh batch of cupcakes, determined to be the first to eat one when they were cool.

Definition	Synonym	Antonym
to watch carefully, for a long time	patrol observe	ignore disregard
Person	Situation	Visual
Detective on a stakeout	Nurse taking care of a patient	

A SKY FULL OF MAYBE EXTENSION ACTIVITIES ANSWER KEY

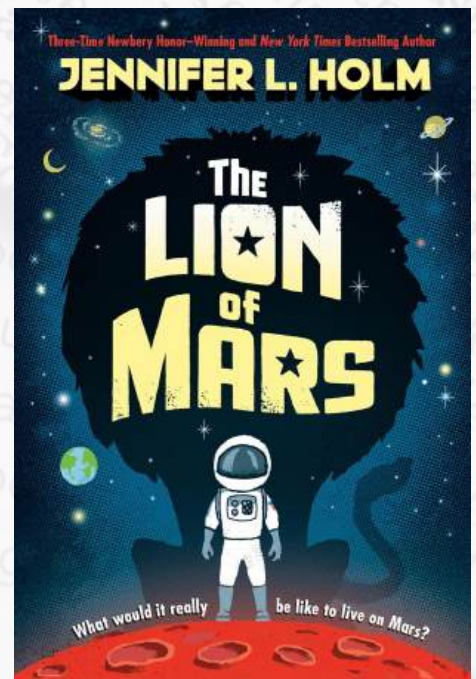
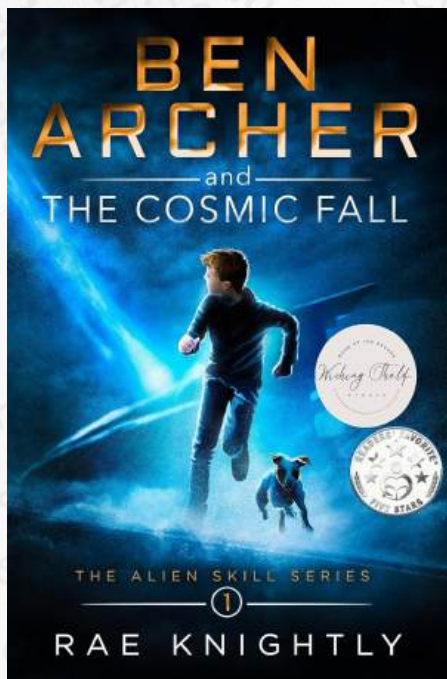
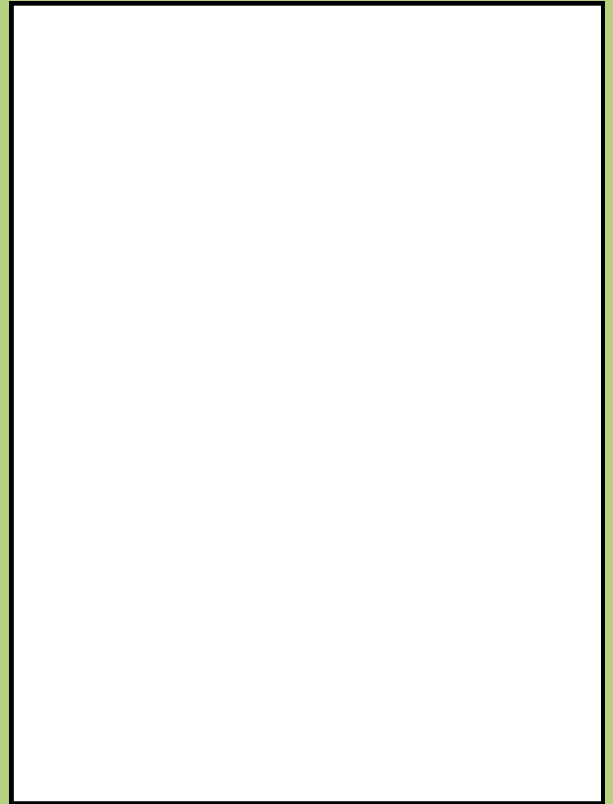


Book cover images will vary, but look to see that science fiction elements are included as well as the title and author. Below you will see a few genre specific book covers to give you comparisons and ideas.

Activity #2 - Genre Identification and Exploration

What clues tell you this book belongs in the genre of science fiction?

Use these ideas to design/draw a book cover for A Sky Full of Maybe. Be sure to include a title, the author, and several genre specific elements. If you are struggling with idea, look in your library for other science fiction books and study their covers for similarities.



DIGGING

in the Dirt

Mya can't believe she's actually at archaeology camp! It's what she's been dreaming of forever! But now that she's here, things are quite what she imagined. Instead of discovering ancient artifacts, she's found nothing but dirt for three days. While her fellow campers dig up exciting discoveries, Mya feels frustrated and unsure if she has what it takes to be an archaeologist. Can she stay positive and persist long enough to reignite her passion for what she thought was her dream career? Or will she pack it up and go home early? Join Mya on her journey of exploration and self-discovery, where she learns that sometimes the best finds are the ones you didn't expect—and a little bit of humor can make the journey worthwhile!

**Word Count:**

359 words

Grade Level:

ATOS: 4.7

Genre:

Realistic Fiction

StandardsCCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

Listen
to the story here:



Name: _____

DIGGING IN THE DIRT



Mya can't believe she's actually at archaeology camp! It's what she's been dreaming of forever! But now that she's here, things are quite what she imagined. Instead of discovering ancient artifacts, she's found nothing but dirt for three days. While her fellow campers dig up exciting discoveries, Mya feels frustrated and unsure if she has what it takes to be an archaeologist. Can she stay positive and persist long enough to reignite her passion for what she thought was her dream career? Or will she pack it up and go home early? Join Mya on her journey of exploration and self-discovery, where she learns that sometimes the best finds are the ones you didn't expect—and a little bit of humor can make the journey worthwhile!

Listen
to the story here:



TEXT ANNOTATIONS

Mya dug in the dirt. Frustrated, she threw down her hand shovel and sat back on her heels. She had been looking forward to archeology camp all summer. Now here she was, and it stunk. She had been digging at this site for three days and found nothing.

Other campers had found animal bones and pottery shards, but not her.

"Sometimes archeologists dig for weeks or months or even years at a site before they make a find. If you can't be patient, maybe archeology isn't for you," Professor Dearing said.

But Mya really did want to be an archaeologist. At least, she thought she did. Mya closed her eyes and pictured her bedroom and all the books stacked up on her desk at home. Ancient Egyptian pyramids, dinosaur bones, the terracotta army, the Rosetta stone, mummies. There were so many exciting discoveries, and yet, Mya believed there were more out there, just waiting. Waiting for her.



DIGGING IN THE DIRT

TEXT ANNOTATIONS

Mya looked around the dry landscape that surrounded her. It was perfect for preserving history. Who knew? She could be sitting on top of an ancient artifact right now. Mya picked up her shovel.

"I can be patient," she told herself. "And persistent and positive. I am positive I am going to find something."

"Hang in there Mya," the professor said.

Mya squinted her eyes at the sectioned off dig site in front of her, consulted her map, and then continued to dig. After she removed two more layers of soil, Mya saw a change in the dirt. She switched to a brush. Dusting away the layers of earth revealed a long thin shape. She continued to patiently remove sand and tiny pieces of debris. Slowly a shape emerged. She kept at it. Even when the other students took a break for lunch, Mya continued to work until finally, she had uncovered the whole object. A pole with a curved stone plate attached to the end.

"Hey! Professor Dearing! I found something!" Mya called.

"Good work Mya. I knew you would find something if you were patient."

"Yeah," Mya laughed. "I went to archeology camp, and all I found was a shovel!"





DIGGING IN THE DIRT EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Name: _____

Comprehension Questions.

Using complete sentences, answer the questions below about the story, Digging in the Dirt.

1. What challenges does Mya face at archaeology camp?

2. If you were at archaeology camp, what discovery would you hope to make while digging in the dirt?

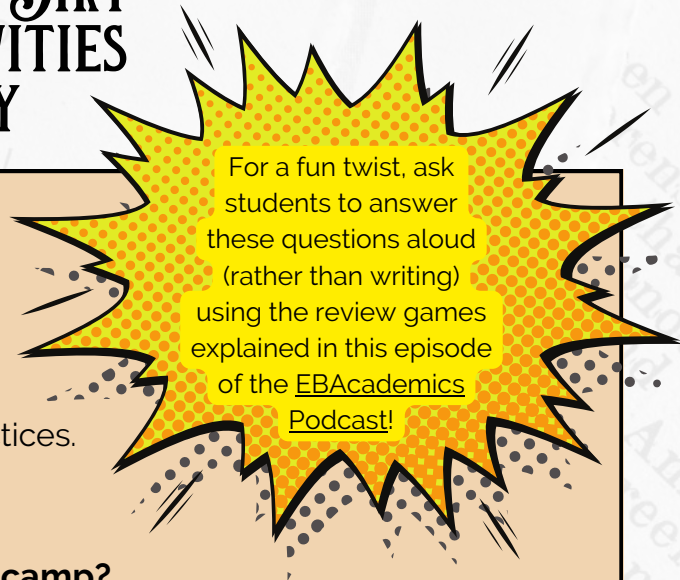
3. It was Mya's dream to go to archaeology camp. If you could go to any kind of camp, which would you choose and why?

4. Persistence is a theme throughout this story. Find and share two pieces of evidence that show proof of this theme.

5. Tell about a time when you needed to be persistent as well as the results of your efforts.



DIGGING IN THE DIRT EXTENSION ACTIVITIES ANSWER KEY



For a fun twist, ask students to answer these questions aloud (rather than writing) using the review games explained in this episode of the [EBAcademics Podcast!](#)

Comprehension Questions.

Using complete sentences, answer the questions below about the story, Digging in the Dirt. Give points for completion, correctness, and/or spelling/grammar as you see fit and aligns with your classroom grading practices.

1. What challenges does Mya face at archaeology camp?

Mya must battle her own feelings of frustration and disappointment. She really thought she was going to love camp and now that she is not finding anything is questioning her dreams as well as not having a fun time at camp - something she was very much looking forward to.

2. If you were at archaeology camp, what discovery would you hope to make while digging in the dirt?

Answers will vary, but a few ideas might include artifacts from ancient civilizations, dinosaur or animal bones, buried treasure or a sarcophagus (like King Tut).

3. It was Mya's dream to go to archaeology camp. If you could go to any kind of camp, which would you choose and why?

Answers will vary, but a few ideas might include art camp, music camp, sports camp, animal camp, etc.

4. Persistence is a theme throughout this story. Find and share two pieces of evidence that show proof of this theme.

Mya did not go home early, even when the professor suggested that not all people were well suited for archaeology. Mya gave herself a pep talk and kept digging. She continued to work until she made a discovery.

5. Tell about a time when you needed to be persistent as well as the results of your efforts.

Answers will vary, but a few ideas might be accomplishing a big chore, achieving an athletic accomplishment, earning money, training a pet or any number of things. Remind students that this is a 2 part question and to remember to answer both parts. (Good test prep!!)

WHO

Will Save the Day?

Gabe is tired of living in the shadow of his perfect brother, Luke, the Eagle Scout and honor student. On their first weekend of summer, Gabe would rather be at the amusement park than camping in the woods. When Luke discovers a dark cave and jumps in, Gabe reluctantly follows, but danger follows too. Can Gabe rise to the challenge and prove he can be a hero too? Join the brothers on an adventure where courage and brotherhood are put to the test!

Listen

to the story here:



Word Count:

609 words

Grade Level:

ATOS: 4.8

Genre:

Realistic Fiction &
Survival Story

Standards

CCSS.ELA-

Literacy.RL.6.3

Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

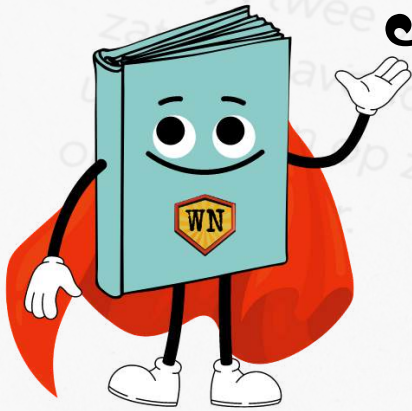
CCSS.ELA-

Literacy.RL.6.5

Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

Name: _____

WHO WILL SAVE THE DAY?



Gabe is tired of living in the shadow of his perfect brother, Luke, the Eagle Scout and honor student. On their first weekend of summer, Gabe would rather be at the amusement park than camping in the woods. When Luke discovers a dark cave and jumps in, Gabe reluctantly follows, but danger follows too. Can Gabe rise to the challenge and prove he can be a hero too? Join the brothers on an adventure where courage and brotherhood are put to the test!

Listen
to the story here:



TEXT ANNOTATIONS

"C'mon! Over here!"

Gabe trudged in the direction of his brother's voice. His brother, the Eagle Scout. His brother, the honor student. His oh-so-much-better brother. It wasn't that Gabe disliked his brother. It was that, just once, he wanted to be the hero, but it wasn't likely to happen this weekend on their camping trip.

Gabe sighed, "Coming!"

"Look, look here!" Luke pointed enthusiastically to a dark hole. "I think it's a cave."

Luke did exactly what Gabe didn't want him to do. He plunged inside that deep, dark hole. Gabe inspected the outer edge of the rocks for bats and then ducked in after his brother.

Luke ran ahead whooping and hollering in the dark damp space. Echoes bounced off the rock walls and crashed against Gabe's ears. Gabe moved slowly, shuffling one foot in front of the other. As he walked, he let his fingers trail against the rock wall, ready to catch himself if his feet failed him, as they often did.



WHO WILL SAVE THE DAY?

TEXT ANNOTATIONS

Gabe would have rather spent their first weekend of summer at the amusement park, riding the go-carts, playing mini golf, and taking swings in the batting cages. It wasn't that he was a total wuss, he just preferred the predictability of civilization. Being out here in the wilderness where anything could happen made him nervous. What if something went wrong? What if he didn't know what to do in a crisis? Luke seemed to thrive off of those situations, but not Gabe.

"Hey Luke, I think we should-" Gabe's request was cut off by a sharp cry from Luke ahead. Immediately Gabe took off running. He ran with his head low and his arms up. "Luke! Luke!"

The cave was slanting downward and the air was getting colder with every step. Gabe wished he'd brought his flashlight, but it was back at the campsite in the tent. Suddenly Gabe tripped and then skidded to a stop, gravel cutting into his palms and knees. He turned behind him to see what caused him to fall and saw Luke, laying on the ground and clutching his ankle.

What were they going to do now? This was exactly the kind of thing Gabe was trying to avoid. Gabe took a moment to let his eyes adjust to the dim light of the cavern and then looked to his brother. Luke would likely know what to do. He was an Eagle Scout after all. But one look at Luke's face contorted with pain and Gabe knew his brother was in no condition to continue leading this expedition.





WHO WILL SAVE THE DAY?

TEXT ANNOTATIONS

"Gabe," Luke almost whispered. "What are we going to do?"

Gabe scanned their surroundings, taking in as many details as possible, trying to ignore the panic creeping into his chest. He closed his eyes. If he looked at his brother, he wouldn't be able to hide his own fear. Behind his eyelids Gabe was surprised to see a memory flashing. More like pieces of memories. Memories from Luke's boy scout troop meeting Gabe had been forced to attend. He'd been doodling in his social studies notebook more than he was listening, but maybe a bigger part of him had been listening than he knew. Because right now, he knew what to do.

Gabe opened his eyes. "Don't worry, Luke," he said. "I've got this."

An hour later the brothers returned to the campsite bruised and bloody. Luke's arm was draped over Gabe's shoulder as they hobbled to the picnic table. Together they sank onto the wooden plank bench, completely out of breath.

"What happened?" their mother cried.

"Gabe saved me," Luke explained.

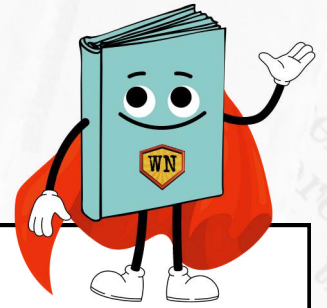
Gabe smiled. "He's right, I did."



Written by Amanda Zieba for the Word Nerd Collaborative

WHO WILL SAVE THE DAY EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Name: _____



Activity #1 - Character Development Chart

Complete this chart, showcasing character traits and details from the story. Use both concrete facts from the story and your own implied conclusions.

GABE	LUKE

Initial Traits: Describe how is this character introduced in the story.

Challenges Faced: List the main challenges each character faces.

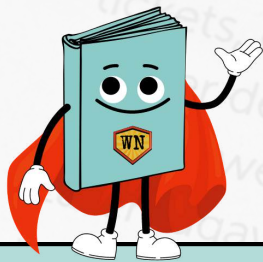
Responses to Challenges: Explain how each character responds to their challenges.

Growth and Change: Describe how Gabe and Luke change by the end of the story. What do they learn about themselves and each other?

Theme Connection: How did each characters' experiences relate to the themes of courage and brotherhood.

Activity #2 Diary Entry

Write a short diary entry from the perspective of either Gabe or Luke after their adventure. They should reflect on what they learned and how they feel about their brotherly relationship. Use the space below to brainstorm a few key elements and then write your diary entry on a separate piece of paper or new computer document.



WHO WILL SAVE THE DAY?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES - ANSWER KEY

Activity #1 - Character Development Chart

Complete this chart, showcasing character traits and details from the story. Use both concrete facts from the story and your own implied conclusions.

	GABE	LUKE
Initial Traits: Describe how is this character introduced in the story.	Gabe is nervous to be in the outdoors and feels inferior to this brother Luke. Gabe doubts his own abilities.	Luke is a good student and a capable Eagle Scout. We do not know much about how he treats his brother, only that his brother looks up to him.
Challenges Faced: List the main challenges each character faces.	Gabe battles his nervousness in the wilderness while camping. Gabe follows his brother into the cave even though he is afraid. Gabe must rely on himself instead of his brother when Luke gets injured.	Luke falls in the cave and injures his ankle.
Responses to Challenges: Explain how each character responds to their challenges.	When Luke is injured and asks Gabe for help, Gabe takes note of his surroundings and then closes his eyes to try and get calm. Once he has an idea, he puts it into action.	When Luke is injured, he asks for help.
Growth and Change: Describe how Gabe and Luke change by the end of the story. What do they learn about themselves and each other?	I think that Gabe grows in confidence. He has shown himself, his brother and his mother that he can handle a crisis-type situation. Perhaps he will be less nervous and more confident moving forward. He may also see that his brother is not perfect and think more kindly toward him.	We do not really know how Luke changes in this story because we aren't inside his head. Maybe he will be more careful? We also don't know how he treated Gabe before the accident, but we know that afterward he is grateful and gives Gabe the credit.
Theme Connection: How did each characters' experiences relate to the themes of courage and brotherhood.	Gabe found the courage both to follow his brother and also to step up and help him when he was in need. Even though he was often jealous of his brother, Gabe helped him when he was in trouble. This shows both courage and brotherhood.	Again, we are not in Luke's head so it is difficult to know what he was thinking, but his facial expressions showed that when he fell in the cave he was scared. He showed courage by asking for help, something that is sometimes hard to do. He also trusted Gabe to help him, when Gabe didn't even trust himself. These actions show a strong sense of brotherhood.

Activity #2 Diary Entry

Answers will vary, but should showcase a chronological replay of the events of the day and character emotions/thoughts. Using the character chart as a prewriting activity, you could also look for themes of brotherhood and courage.

GRADING:

Answers will vary. Use the basic writing rubric included in this resources to assess if students met writing objectives.

SPOONFULS of Peanut Butter

Owen can't resist the creamy goodness of peanut butter, especially on a day when he just wants to feel good. As he dips his spoon into the jar again and again, he finds comfort in the rich taste and sweet memories of his mother, who also loved indulging in the same treat during tough times. Join Owen on a heartfelt journey of nostalgia and comfort food, where every scoop brings back memories that nourish his spirit, reminding him that love can always be found in the simplest things.

**Word Count:**

272 words

Grade Level:

ATOS: 4.9

Genre:

Realistic Fiction

Trigger Topic:

This story is about parental sickness and grief. If you have a student experiencing these struggles, please use your discretion.

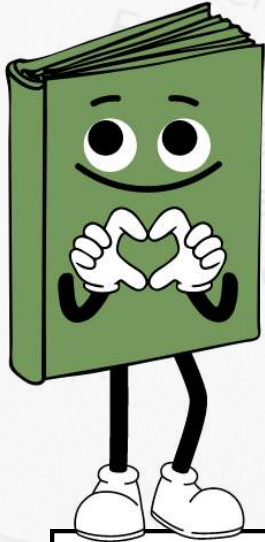
StandardsCCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

Listen
to the story here:



Name: _____



SPOONFULS OF PEANUT BUTTER

Owen can't resist the creamy goodness of peanut butter, especially on a day when he just wants to feel good. As he dips his spoon into the jar again and again, he finds comfort in the rich taste and sweet memories of his mother, who also loved indulging in the same treat during tough times. Join Owen on a heartfelt journey of nostalgia and comfort food, where every scoop brings back memories that nourish his spirit, reminding him that love can always be found in the simplest things.

Listen
to the story here:



TEXT ANNOTATIONS

Owen dipped the spoon into the jar for a fourth time, or maybe it was the fifth. He'd lost count. He'd only ever eaten the whole jar once before, but maybe today would be the second.

Six spoonfuls. It tasted so good. Rich and creamy. He rubbed his tongue on the top of his mouth, relishing the way the peanut butter slid down his throat so easily.

Seven spoonfuls. He didn't think that at this moment, he loved anything more than he loved peanut butter.

Eight spoonfuls. He remembered his mother doing the same thing. When some mothers had a tough day, they'd drink a glass of wine, or scarf a whole bowl of ice cream. Not his mother. Owen had seen her once or twice when he was really young, savoring a spoonful within the depths of her closet. When she got really sick, she didn't hide her guilty pleasure. She'd sit curled up on the couch, shoveling spoonful after spoonful into her awaiting mouth. When her husband eyed her quizzically she'd respond with, "What? The doctors said I need to gain weight."

SPOONFULS OF PEANUT BUTTER

TEXT ANNOTATIONS

Nine spoonfuls. One day Owen gathered his courage and a spoon from the kitchen. He crawled up next to her, a question plainly written on his ten year old face. His mother had smiled at him indulgently and passed the jar.

Ten spoonfuls. Each time he ate peanut butter he thought of her. Her memory, plus the sugar high and comfort of a full belly, got him through whatever was bothering him.

Eleven spoonfuls. Owen scraped the bottom of the jar, licked the spoon clean, and sighed contentedly.



Name: _____

SPOONFULS OF PEANUT BUTTER EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Activity #1 - Memory Mapping

In the space to the right, create a memory mind map about a favorite food or meal. Include as many of the below pieces of information as possible.

- **Food:** What food do you want to write about?
- **Memory:** Describe a specific memory associated with this food.
- **Feelings:** What emotions do you feel when you think about this memory?
- **Details:** List descriptive details that capture the scene (who was there, what it looked like, sounds, smells, etc.).



Activity #2 - Writing Narrative

Using their Memory Mapping Worksheet, have students write a narrative about their chosen food and the memories it evokes. Use the space below to jot down some ideas and brainstorm plot actions. Then write your story on a separate sheet of paper or a computer document.

Please include:

- A clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Descriptive language to paint a vivid picture of their experience.
- Emotions that convey how the food and memory make them feel.

SPOONFULS OF PEANUT BUTTER EXTENSION ACTIVITIES - ANSWER KEY

Activity #1 - Memory Mapping

In the space to the right, create a memory mind map about a favorite food or meal. Include as many of the below pieces of information as possible.

- **Food:** What food do you want to write about?
- **Memory:** Describe a specific memory associated with this food.
- **Feelings:** What emotions do you feel when you think about this memory?
- **Details:** List descriptive details that capture the scene (who was there, what it looked like, sounds, smells, etc.).

GRADING:

Because they are a visual representation of the way students think, the mind maps they produce will vary greatly. Typically I assign points for completing the activity and including the suggested items, in this case: food, memory, feelings and details.

Activity #2 - Writing Narrative

Using their Memory Mapping Worksheet, have students write a narrative about their chosen food and the memories it evokes.

Encourage them to include:

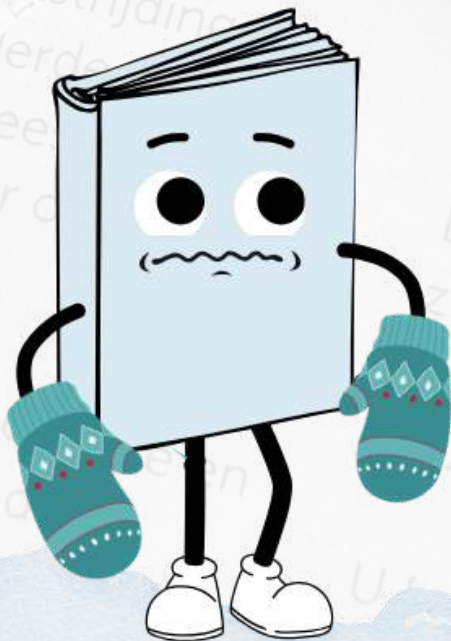
- A clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Descriptive language to paint a vivid picture of their experience.
- Emotions that convey how the food and memory make them feel.

GRADING:

Answers will vary. Use the basic writing rubric included in this resources to assess if students met writing objectives.

WINTER is Coming...

In a world where winter brings not just cold, but dangerous creatures, Kalea gets ready for the coming blizzards and their hidden beasts. As the first snowflake falls, she and her brother, Otto, remember the fear from last year. While they work together to prepare their home, a sense of worry grows with each chilly breeze. This story shows how Kalea fights not only the beasts outside but also her own fears. Will she be ready when the snowstorm arrives? Get ready for an exciting adventure filled with courage and the unknown!

**Word Count:**

363 words

Grade Level:

ATOS: 5.2

Genre:

Fantasy

Standards:CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.4

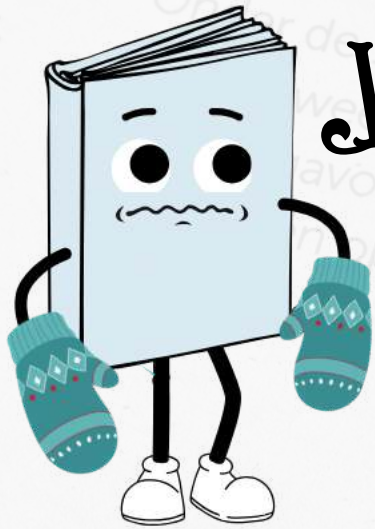
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

Specifically, figurative language in the form of ALLITERATION will be utilized and practiced with this short story.

Listen
to the story here:



Name: _____



WINTER IS COMING...

In a world where winter brings not just cold, but dangerous creatures, Kalea gets ready for the coming blizzards and their hidden beasts. As the first snowflake falls, she and her brother, Otto, remember the fear from last year. While they work together to prepare their home, a sense of worry grows with each chilly breeze. This story shows how Kalea fights not only the beasts outside but also her own fears. Will she be ready when the snowstorm arrives? Get ready for an exciting adventure filled with courage and the unknown!



Listen
to the story here:



TEXT ANNOTATIONS

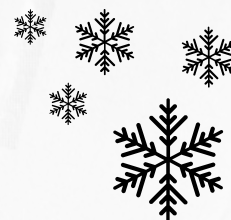
The wind whispered through the dark, empty trees like a warning in a foreign language. Kalea snapped her head up from her small garden and stared at the slate gray sky, scanning it for the first signs. But even without visual proof, she knew what was coming. Winter was coming, and with winter, came the blizzards. And with the blizzards came the beasts.

The beasts were nearly impossible to see. They blended in with the flurry and fury of the flying flakes, their translucent skin and white fur camouflaging their presence. The puffs of hot air from their strong and steady lungs shrouded them in a fog that further hid them from view. They traveled in packs and cornered their victims. Once you were surrounded, the most you could pray for was a quick death.

She saw it then. Kalea shuddered in fear as a single snowflake, the first of the season, fell and landed on her nose. Winter. Blizzards. Beasts. They were all coming. Kalea stooped to pick up her basket overflowing with the last of the garden's harvest and quickly walked inside.



WINTER IS COMING...



TEXT ANNOTATIONS

"The first flake fell," she announced to her brother Otto as she entered the kitchen. She hung up her coat in the mudroom and deposited the vegetables on the counter, leaving them only long enough to wash her hands. There was so much to be done.

She looked up from the sink to see her brother's eyes wide with fear.

"It will be okay," she told him.

"But last year - " Otto started to protest.

"It won't happen again," Kalea said, hoping to cut off the thought, the memory.

"But,"

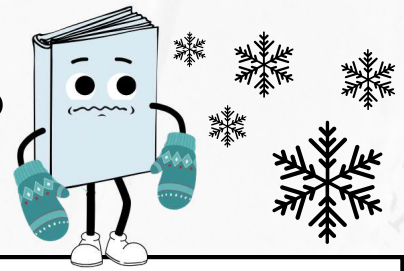
"No buts." Kalea stopped peeling and locked her eyes on his. "It won't."

Otto nodded and then came to help. Together they cleaned, and cooked, and canned the vegetables. Then they turned to tackle the rest of their winter preparations.

Even though the beasts were near impossible to see and closing the curtains would have kept the house a bit warmer, Kalea refused to be caught unaware a second time. She sat huddled on the couch under a mountain of blankets while she watched and waited. Winter was coming. Soon.



WINTER IS COMING EXTENSION ACTIVITIES



Name: _____

Activity #1 - Alliterative Phrases

Alliteration is the repetition of the same sound at the start of a series of words in succession whose purpose is to provide an audible pulse that gives a piece of writing a lulling, lyrical, and/or emotive effect.

There are several alliterative phrases in this story. Find and record two below. Then share how they impact or improve the story.

Activity #2 Creative Writing

This story happens during a brief moment in time. There is a lot that happened before this scene and likely a lot that will happen afterward. Choose - Write what happened last winter or write what happens next. Attempt to include a few of your own alliterative phrases. Use the space below to jot down some ideas and brainstorm plot actions. Then write your story on a separate sheet of paper or a computer document.



WINTER IS COMING

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES - ANSWER KEY

Activity #1 - Alliterative Phrases

Alliteration is the repetition of the same sound at the start of a series of words in succession whose purpose is to provide an audible pulse that gives a piece of writing a lulling, lyrical, and/or emotive effect.

There are several alliterative phrases in this story. Find and record two below. Then share how they impact or improve the story.

Alliterative Phrases:

- Kalea snapped her head up from her small garden and stared at the slate gray sky, scanning it for the first signs.
- They blended in with the flurry and fury of the flying flakes, their translucent skin and white fur camouflaging their presence.
- She saw it then. Kalea shuddered in fear as a single snowflake, the first of the season, fell and landed on her nose.
- She sat huddled on the couch under a mountain of blankets while she watched and waited. Winter was coming.

These sentences containing figurative language impact the story positively by making the language sound interesting when it is read aloud by adding to the rhythm or lyrical quality of the piece. They also help the reader create more vivid images in their mind while reading.

Activity #2 Creative Writing

This story happens during a brief moment in time. There is a lot that happened before this scene and likely a lot that will happen afterward. Choose - Write what happened last winter or write what happens next. Attempt to include a few of your own alliterative phrases. Use the space below to jot down some ideas and brainstorm plot actions. Then write your story on a separate sheet of paper or a computer document.

Answers will vary. Use the basic writing rubric included in this resources to assess if students met writing objectives.

GRADING:

Answers will vary. Use the basic writing rubric included in this resources to assess if students met writing objectives.

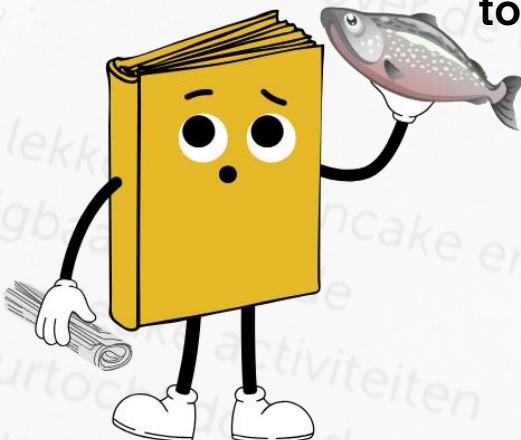
FISHY

Business



In the busy heart of Seattle's Pike Place Market, reporter Becca Davenport sniffs out a story that stinks—literally. Tasked with uncovering a silver smuggling ring, she's led to the market by a cryptic tip about a fishy connection to upscale restaurants and the Italian mafia. As Becca navigates the chaotic stalls, she can't shake the feeling that beneath the surface of fresh seafood lies a world of deception. But in a city where secrets swim just below the surface, will she be able to hook the story of a lifetime—or will she become the next catch in a murky underworld?

Listen
to the story here:



Word Count:

621 words

Grade Level

ATOS: 6.7

Genre

Realistic Fiction and
Mystery

Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.1

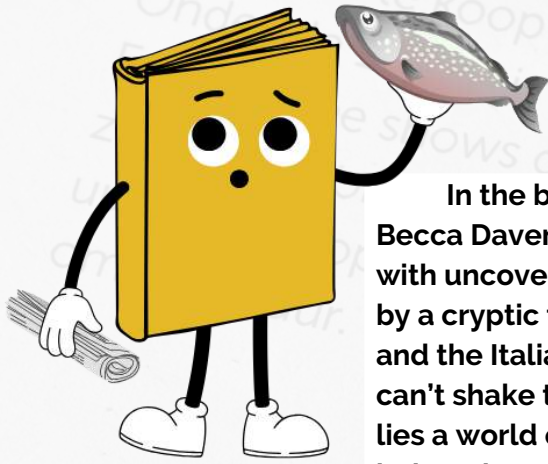
Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

Specifically, PUNS will be utilized and practiced with this short story.

Name: _____



FISHY BUSINESS

In the busy heart of Seattle's Pike Place Market, reporter Becca Davenport sniffs out a story that stinks—literally. Tasked with uncovering a silver smuggling ring, she's led to the market by a cryptic tip about a fishy connection to upscale restaurants and the Italian mafia. As Becca navigates the chaotic stalls, she can't shake the feeling that beneath the surface of fresh seafood lies a world of deception. But in a city where secrets swim just below the surface, will she be able to hook the story of a lifetime—or will she become the next catch in a murky underworld?

Listen
to the story here:



A **pun** is a joke that leans into the different possible meanings of a word or the fact that there are words which sound alike but have different meanings.

There are several puns in this short story. When you find one, underline it!

Hint! There are 3!

TEXT ANNOTATIONS

Reporters are trained to develop a sixth sense for when a story smells fishy. And something about this one wasn't right. First of all, there was the actual fish smell.

Becca hadn't spent much time down at the famous Pike Place Market since moving to Seattle, but now that she was here, she could definitely say it was a smell that didn't appeal to her. She watched the fishmongers in black t-shirts and orange coveralls ably toss fish from the display case to the clerk to be wrapped and paid for. She had to give them credit. Throwing thirty-five pounds of slippery, wiggly flesh couldn't be easy. Catching it, she thought, had to be darn near impossible.

Becca sighed, resolved to breathe only through her mouth, and walked closer to the counter to have a better look. Rebecca Davenport, reporter for the Seattle Times, was not a quitter, no matter how fishy the situation got. The story she was working on was already pretty fishy. Someone in town was running a silver smuggling ring, but no one could figure out who was involved nor how it operated. Many local authorities were placing bets on a notorious

FISHY BUSINESS

TEXT ANNOTATIONS

network of upscale seafood restaurants in town, more than one of which had supposed connections to the Italian mafia.

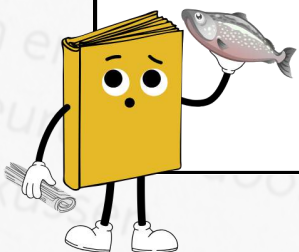
Her source had told her to start here at the fish market, and that if she looked closely, the whole story was laid out for all to see in the plain light of day. They also let it slip that if she found what she was looking for and wanted to “place an order”, to say it was for Mr. Stevenson. She assumed that was a code name, a nod to the author of *Treasure Island*... Long John Silver and all that. But it wasn't a whole lot to go on. Typically, Becca preferred that her sources just spill what they knew, all of what they knew. But rarely was it ever that easy.

Becca shook her hands at her sides, trying to dispel the nervous energy pooling in her gut, and stepped up to the closest display, pretending to inspect the day's catch. Her eyes wandered over the shimmering scales, gaping mouths, and beady eyes. Walleye, halibut, salmon, grouper.

“What could you possibly have to do with a smuggling operation?” Becca asked the cold, dead fish.

“Looking at the silver, aye?” a burly fishmonger asked.

“What?” Becca said, her hand flying to her chest. “Oh! You startled me. What did you say?”



FISHY BUSINESS

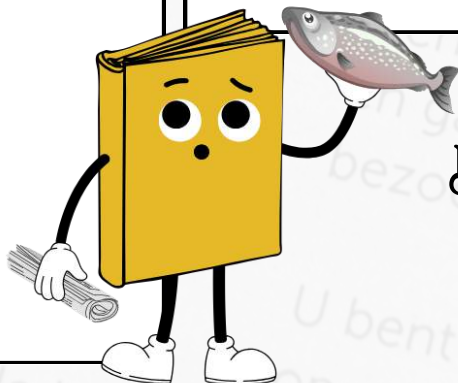
TEXT ANNOTATIONS

"The silver snapper," he said and pointed. "A nice meaty fish. Want me to wrap one up for ya?"

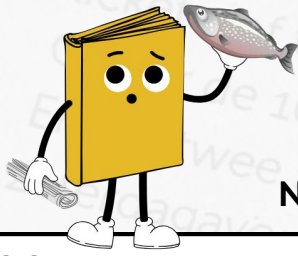
Becca was more of a steak and potatoes kind of girl, but all of a sudden, she wanted that fish more than anything else in the entire market. She had absolutely no intention of eating the fish, but was feeling more confident with every passing second that she had found exactly what her source had sent her to find.

"Yes, please," Becca said, trying to remain calm. "The order isn't for me though. I'm doing a grocery pick up run for a friend. Mr. Stevenson."

The fishmonger picked up the heavy fish, threw her a wink, and then went to wrap up what was surely going to be tomorrow morning's headline. As Becca carried her bag away from the market, much heavier than she thought a single fish should weigh, Becca began to allow herself to daydream about a promotion at the newspaper. All she had to do was be brave enough to sift through the innards of a smelly fish to find proof for the theory she was building in her head. Well, brave enough to do that and to tell the truth.



**DO YOU KNOW HOW THE SILVER
IS GETTING TRANSPORTED
AROUND THE CITY?**



FISHY BUSINESS EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Name: _____

Activity #1 - Newspaper Article

Write a newspaper article as if you were Rebecca Davenport using what you just learned about the silver smuggling. Feel free to fill in additional made up details. Begin by listing important pieces of the story below. Then write your story on a separate sheet of paper or a computer document.

Who:

What:

Where:

When:

Why:

How:

Activity #2 Text Features

Using a real life newspaper, go on a scavenger hunt to find the following text features. After listing each required piece of information, add why that feature is important and/or helpful to the reader's understanding.

Title:

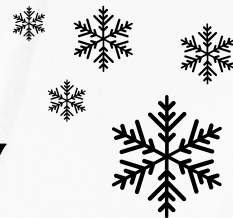
Subtitle/Subheading:

Author/by line:

Publication Name and Date:

Graphs/Infographic/Diagram/Map/other visuals:

Photo Caption:



FISHY BUSINESS

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES - ANSWER KEY

Activity #1 - Newspaper Article

Write a newspaper article as if you were Rebecca Davenport using what you just learned about the silver smuggling. Feel free to fill in additional made up details. Begin by listing important pieces of the story below. Then write your story on a separate sheet of paper or a computer document.

Who: fishmongers

What: silver smuggling ring

Where: fish market in Seattle

When: open business hours of the market

Why: to pass the silver around undetected

How: sneaking silver into fish

GRADING:

Articles written by students will vary. Use the basic writing rubric included in this resources to assess if students met writing objectives.

Activity #2 Text Features

Text features found by students will vary article to article. Use this diagram on the next page to help you know if they have identified the text features correctly.

Activity #3 PUNS!

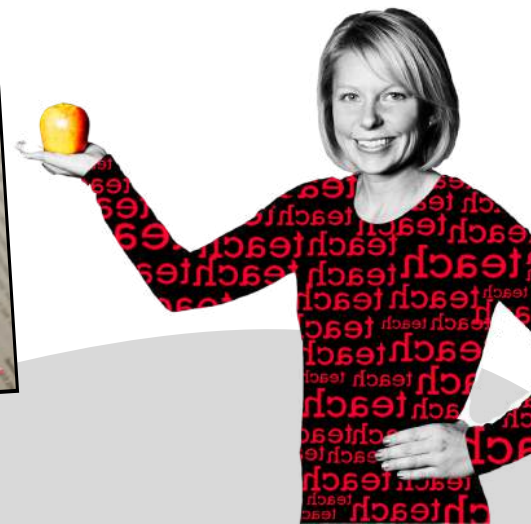
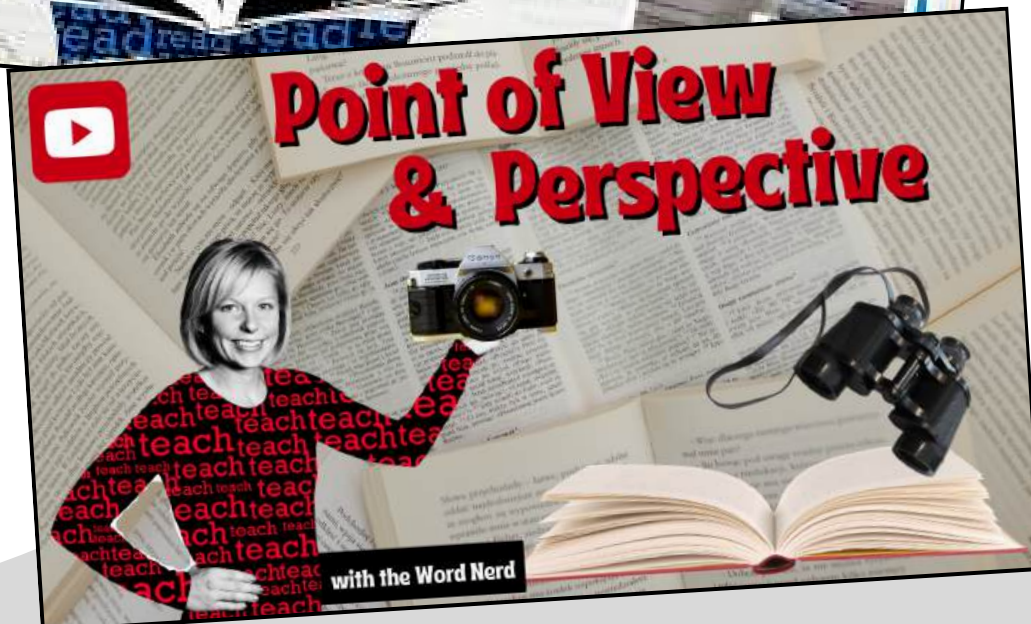
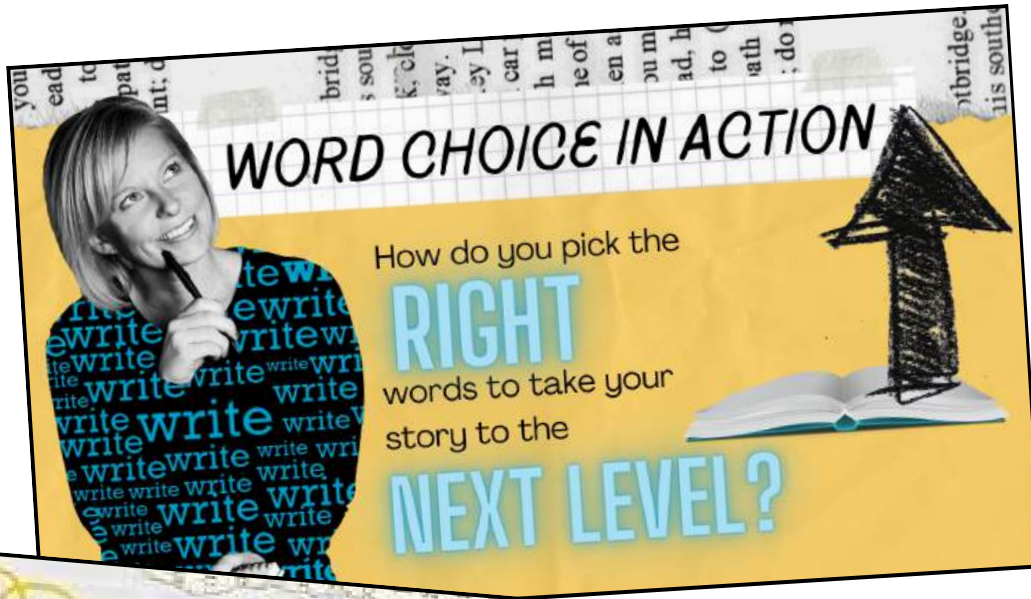
Below is a list of puns found in this short story.

- Rebecca Davenport, reporter for the Seattle Times, was not a quitter, no matter how fishy the situation got.
- She assumed that was a code name, a nod to the author of Treasure Island... Long John Silver and all that.
- The fishmonger picked up the heavy fish, threw her a wink, and then went to wrap up what was surely going to be tomorrow morning's headline.



** Each image linked to YouTube Video **

CHECK OUT THESE DIRECT INSTRUCTION VIDEOS!

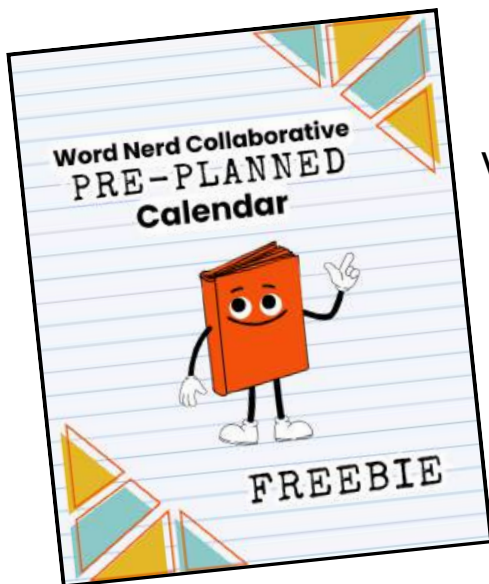




***THANK YOU FOR
DOWNLOADING!***

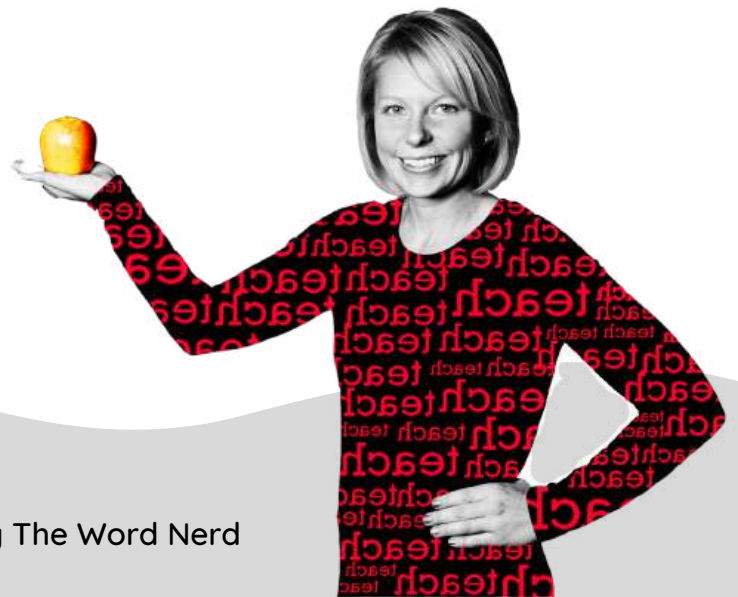
A FEW MORE THINGS...

If this is your first Word Nerd resource, know there are SO MUCH MORE waiting for you! In addition to everything I've got on Teachers Pay Teachers, I fun a membership specifically for middle school ELA teachers. If you are looking for ways to save yourself time and increase your student engagement, try this sample pack of FREE LESSONS and in the process learn more about The Word Nerd Collaborative!



GIVE IT A TRY.

Visit: www.AmandaZieba.com/FreeLessons



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