Title/Author: Thunder Cake by Patricia Polacco

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

Common Core grade-level ELA/Literacy Standards:

RL.K.1, RL.K.2, RL.K.3, RL.K.4, RL.K.7, RL.K.10; W.K.2; SL.K.1, SL.K.2, SL.K.6; L.K.4

Lesson Objective:

Students will listen to an illustrated picture book read aloud and use literacy skills (reading, writing, discussion and listening) to understand the characters’ lesson in the story.

Teacher Instructions

**Before the Lesson**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis below. **Please do not read this to the students**. This is a description to help you prepare to teach the book and be clear about what you want your children to take away from the work.

Big Ideas/Key Understandings:

Patricia realizes that she is able to overcome her fears with support of others and by being brave.

Focusing Question:

What did Patricia learn about herself?

Patricia learned that she is a brave person because she faced fears and completed difficult tasks despite being scared.

Synopsis

Thunder Cake is the story of how Patricia Polacco conquered her childhood fear of Michigan thunderstorms with the assistance of her grandmother. By encouraging the young Patricia to ignore the approaching storm, the two wander outside to gather the ingredients for Thunder Cake, the perfect recipe for a rainy day. After the cake is in the oven, Grandma recounts the day’s events, convincing Patricia that only a "brave" girl would climb out from her hiding spot to collect eggs and tomatoes, milk the cow, and venture through Tangleweed Woods to the dry shed. Realizing that her grandma is right, Patricia welcomes the storm and a warm slice of Thunder Cake, never again to fear the "voice of thunder."

1. Go to the last page of the lesson and review “What Makes this Read-Aloud Complex.” This was created for you as part of the lesson and will give you guidance about what the lesson writers saw as the sources of complexity or key access points for this book. You will of course evaluate text complexity with your own students in mind, and make adjustments to the lesson pacing and even the suggested activities and questions.
2. Read the entire book, adding your own insights to the understandings identified. Also note the stopping points for the text-inspired questions and activities. *Hint: you may want to copy the questions, vocabulary words and activities onto sticky notes so they can be stuck to the right pages for each day’s questions and vocabulary work.*

The Lesson – Questions, Activities, and Tasks

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Questions/Activities/Vocabulary/Tasks** | **Expected Outcome or Response (for each)** |
| FIRST READING:  Pull students together or use a document camera so that all can enjoy the illustrations. Read aloud the entire book with minimal interruptions. | The goal here is for students to enjoy the book, both writing and pictures, and to experience it as a whole. This will give them some context and a sense of the entire story before they dive into examining parts of the book more carefully. |
| SECOND READING:  As you read this time, you are going to focus on close reading and responding to Text Dependent questions to build meaning and knowledge about thunderstorms and what is happening to Patricia and grandma in the story.  **Reread page 2:** (display on a document camera if possible)  **Question**:  Reread the last line, “This is the story of how my grandma…” and ask students who is telling the story.  **Question**:  Patricia says she fears the sound of thunderstorms. What about thunderstorms makes her scared?  **Reread page 3:** *(While reading, model how grandma drew a breath.)*  **Questions:**  Using clues from the pictures and text, what do you think horizon means? Why do you think Grandma drew a deep breath when she looked at the horizon?  **Reread page 8:**  **Questions:**  What does Grandma do to tell how a storm is getting closer? Why does she say Patricia need to know how far away the storm is?  **Reread page 9:**  **Question:**  What does survey mean? Why is Grandma surveying black clouds? | Students will likely say “a girl” and about her grandma.  Draw the students’ attention to the dedication on p. 1 and the front cover for additional clues. Guide students to understand that the author, Patricia Polacco, is telling the story about when she was a girl.  Students will likely say that thunder makes a loud noise. You will want to reread the fourth sentence “The clouds glow…” to have them pull from that sentence that the “glow” and “crackling light” are the lighting, the shudder in the panes, and the roaring and the tumbling refer to the thunder.  Students will explain that horizon means where the sky meets the land because grandma is looking towards the storm is and says that the storm is coming. She draws a breath because she knows the storm is coming. [The teacher could elect to linger on the multiple meanings of the word, “draw.”]  Grandma begins counting when she sees lightening and stops when she hears thunder. The number tells her how many miles the storm is. Patricia needs to know this to see how long they have to make their thunder cake. (This will be explained more concretely through the activity at the end of the lesson.)  Surveying means to look closely. She is looking closely at the black clouds to see how far away the storm is. Some students may note that Babushka is trying to see if they have time to make the cake and get it in the oven before the storm comes. |
| **Activity:**  Establish the following pattern of activities to help students build knowledge about thunderstorms  **Activity:**  After the second read you will return to the text to focus students on building their understanding of thunderstorms and the craft moves the author makes to show that the storm is moving closer and closer to the farm. You will build their understanding by rereading pages 11-16 and allowing students to pantomime what is occurring. Students or groups of students can be assigned to the roles of lightning, thunder and Patricia. As you read have students act out what is happening, for instance, when thunder is mentioned in the book students can stomp, clap or repeat the sounds of thunder from the book. Students assigned to be lightening can step forward and hold up a prop (i.e. flashlight, lightening rod cutout) when lightening is mentioned in the book and students acting out Patricia’s role can count out loud to show how far away the thunder is.  Chart down what is happening as the pages progress so students can see the correlation between the number Patricia is counting to and what is happening with the storm. | See sample graphic organizer in Teacher Notes. Possible responses for pg 14-16:   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Pg # | Thunder | Lightning | Patricia | | 11 | ROARED! | flashed  flashed | 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10  1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9 | | 12 | BAROOOOOOM! | ZIP | 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8 | | 13 | BOOOOM-BA-BOOOOOOOM | slit the sky | 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 |   Help students understand how the storm gets bigger and louder by asking the class to give suggestions about the actor’s body language and expression.  Have students describe that as a thunderstorm gets closer the storm gets louder and stronger and Patricia’s count becomes shorter and shorter. Have students explain how Patricia is monitoring how far the storm is away by counting. |
| **THIRD READING:**  Explain that today you will re-read the text again focusing on how Patricia overcame her fear of thunderstorms.  **Reread page 2**  **Question:**  Patricia says that Babushka helped her overcome her fear of thunderstorms. What do you think overcome means?  **Reread page 8**  Then reread the sentence; “Thunder Cake?” I stammered…  **Question:**  What do you think stammered means? Why do you think Patricia was stammering and hugging her grandma?  **Reread page 11**  **Question:**  Patricia said, “I was scared. I knew she would try to peck me.” Why do you think she got the eggs anyway?  **Reread page 20**  **Question:**  Why do you think grandma used a steady (calm, firm) voice when talking to Patricia? | To overcome a must mean to fix a problem you are having. In the story it said her Babushka helped her overcome her fear so that must mean she helped her not to be afraid anymore.  She is really nervous so I think stammer must mean to talk in a scared or shaky voice. She was stammering and hugging her grandma because she was afraid of the thunder.  Patricia got the eggs because her grandma said, “I’m here, she won’t hurt you.” She got the eggs because grandma was helping her to feel safe. She also got the eggs because she knew she needed them to make the Thunder Cake.  Grandma talked to Patricia in a steady voice because she wanted to help her to feel safe. Patricia was scared when she was climbing the trellis but her grandma was helping her to be brave by letting her know she would be ok. |
| **Activity:**  Establish the following pattern of activities to help students answer the question: How did Patricia overcome her fear of thunderstorms.   1. Stop at each of the following pages to chart evidence from the illustrations and text to describe evidence of Patricia’s feeling, Grandma’s actions and Patricia’s actions. Allow scholars to pantomime what is happening with Patricia and Grandma on each page. 2. Pg. 6 3. Pg. 8 4. Pg 11 5. Pg 17 6. Pg 20 7. Pg 21 8. Have scholars explain what happened throughout the story by answering the following questions and providing evidence. 9. How did Patricia feel throughout the story? 10. Why was grandma saying/doing these things throughout the story? 11. How did Patricia’s actions change from the beginning to the end?   4. Culminating Task:  **TDQ**:  How did Patricia overcome her fear of the thunder?  **Optional Activity**-Explain, act out or write a response to the following: Based on how Patricia learned to overcome her fear of thunderstorms, what advice would you give someone who is afraid. | See sample graphic organizer in Teacher Notes. Possible responses for pg 6-11:   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Pg # | Patricia’s Feelings | Grandma’s Actions | Patricia’s Actions | | 6 | Scared-hiding under bed | “.. come out from under that bed. It’s only thunder you’re hearing” | -Hiding | | 8 | Scared-stammering | -Taught her how to count to see how far storm was. | -Came out from under bed.  -Hugged grandma | | 11 | Scared- “I was scared. I knew she would peck me.” | “I’m here she won’t hurt you.” | -Got the eggs |   a) In the beginning of the story Patricia was really scared. She hid under the bed and was shaking. By the end she wasn’t scared. Even when the thunder rumbled and crashed she was smiling and baking the Thunder Cake.  b) Grandma was saying and doing things to make Patricia feel safe like, “It’s only thunder you’re hearing.” She also taught her how to count to see how far the storm was. This helped her understand thunder more so she was less afraid of it. She also taught her how to make Thunder Cake. This helped her to keep her mind on making the cake and not on the thunder.  In the beginning she hid under the bed from the storm. By the end she was out doing things to make the Thunder Cake even though she was scared.   * **TDQ**: Patricia overcame her fear of thunderstorms because she went out and faced her fear of thunder as she went through the steps of making the Thunder Cake, even though she was afraid. She was also able to overcome her fear because she had the support of her grandmother throughout the story. * **Optional Activity**: Have scholars explain, act out or write how someone would face their fears of flying by facing their fear and having someone there for support. |
| FOURTH AND BEYOND:  Explain that today you will re-read the end of the text, guide a discussion on what Patricia learned about herself throughout the story.  **Reread page 23:**  Reread sentence and write on easel- “Why, you aren’t afraid of thunder.”  **Question:**  Is this a question? How do you know? What do you think grandma meant by this then?  **Reread**- “I’m not brave, Grandma”…to the end of the page. | This is not a question because it does not have a question mark, but does have a comma. Grandma is telling her that she is not afraid of thunder. |
| **Activity:**  Establish the following pattern of activities to help students answer the question: What did Patricia learn about herself.   1. Ask students to list things grandma said Patricia did that proved she was brave. List them in first column. 2. Refer back to the pages where Patricia demonstrated the action. 3. Hold up a cutout of a thought bubble. Have scholars act out/ say what they think Patricia might be thinking. Add ideas to the thought column.   Have scholars synthesize information from the table  Question: How is Patricia feeling when she is doing these things? Why do you think grandma says she is brave for doing these things? | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Action | Thought/Feelings | | Got eggs from Nellie | “I am so scared! She might peck me!” | | Got milk from Kick Cow | “Kick cow looks mean!” “I am scared!” | | Went throught Tangleweed Woods | “It is dark and scary!” “The thunder is making loud noises!” | | Climbed the trellis | “I am so high up! This is scary! I hope I don’t fall!” |   Patricia is really scared when she is doing all of these things.  Grandma thinks she is brave though because she keeps doing all the things to make the Thunder Cake even though she is afraid. |

FINAL DAY WITH THE BOOK - Culminating Task

* *What did Patricia learn about herself?* 
  + To provide guidance for students in completing the culminating task consider engaging in shared writing to respond to the question. Go back to the book and have students provide evidence from the text to confirm their position. Students can then independently respond to the question by writing from the point of view of Patricia to explain what she learned about herself.
  + If students are not yet capable of expressing themselves through written response they can respond through drawing. While students are drawing you can confer with students individually and allow them to give an oral explanation to the question.

Sample Response: I learned that even though I was very scared I am a brave person. I am brave because even though the thunder was booming and the lightning was flashing in the sky I still got out from under the bed and went to the dry shed and got the ingredients for the cake. Brave people, like me, do things that they want or need to do even when they are scared.

Vocabulary

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| --- | --- |
| **These words merit less time and attention**  (They are concrete and easy to explain, or describe events/  processes/ideas/concepts/experiences that are familiar to your students ) | **These words merit more time and attention**  (They are abstract, have multiple meanings, and/or are a part  of a large family of words with related meanings. These words are likely to describe events, ideas, processes or experiences that most of your student will be unfamiliar with) |
| Page 2- sultry – hot, humid, muggy  damp- wet, humid, muggy  shudder-shake  Babushka- Russian word for grandmother  Page 3- drew (as in drew a deep breath)- took, breathed in  Page 8-rattled- shook  stammer-stutter  Page 9- survey- look closely at  strode- walked  crowed- to cry out happily  creased- wrinkled  penned-wrote down  scurried- walk quickly  Page 11- peck- poke with beak  Page 13- croaked- to say in a rough, low voice  dry shed- a place to keep dry foods  Page 16- slit-to make a line through  Page 17- jagged- pointy  bellowed-make a loud sound  Page 20- trellis- something that holds up a plant on a wall  Page 21- churned-stirred  Page 26- rumbled- make a deep sound | Page 2- overcome- beat, conquer  Page 3- horizon- where the land meets the sky  Page 8- mile- a way to measure distance |

Fun Extension Activities for this book and other useful Resources

* Write about a time you learned the same lesson about yourself as Patricia did. Explain how you came to learn this about yourself.
* Bake Thunder Cake with your class using the recipe at the end. Ask students- If we are afraid of thunder, will this cake cure our fear? If Patricia didn’t eat this cake at the end would she still be scared of thunder? Why not? Discuss how the preparation of the cake helped her face her fears, not the cake itself.
* Go to **National Severe Storms Laboratory Links** to learn more about severe weather and thunderstorms. [http://www.nssl.noaa.gov/](http://www.nssl.noaa.gov/" \t "_blank). Print copies of ["Bill, Maria and the Thunderstorm"](http://www.nssl.noaa.gov/edu/bm/bm02_title.html" \t "_blank) for students. Have scholars act what they should do to stay safe in a thunderstorm.
* Have students describe the difference between how Grandma and Patricia make a cake and how students and their families would make a cake. Discuss how city and country life differ.

Note to Teacher

* Below are samples of a completed class chart of “public notes”. In this type of group note taking, the teacher helps the class to decide what to record. Notes may take the form of words, illustrations from the book, drawings, or any combination of the three. Notes may be paraphrased or quoted. Notes can also be added using post-its students draw or wrote on and add to the chart. Refer to your public notes frequently.

**Second Reading:**

Drawing attention to the patterns in the chart will help students build knowledge about thunderstorms.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pg # | Thunder | Lightning | Patricia |
| 11 | ROARED! | flashed  flashed | 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10  1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9 |
| 12 | BAROOOOOOM! | ZIP | 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8 |
| 13 | BOOOOM-BA-BOOOOOOOM | slit the sky | 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 |
| 14 | CRACKLE, CRACKLE, BOOOOM, KA-BOOOOOOM | flashed | 1-2-3-4-5-6 |
| 15 | KA-BANG BOOOOOOOOAROOOM | Lightening again | 1-2-3-4-5 |
| 16 | RRRRRUMBLED  CRASHED | Lit the kitchen | 1-2-3 |

**Third Reading:**

Drawing attention to the patterns in the chart will help students understand that though she was scared, Patricia was able to overcome her fears because she faced her fears and had the support of her grandmother.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pg # | Patricia’s Feelings | Grandma’s Actions | Patricia’s Actions |
| 6 | Scared-hiding under bed | “.. come out from under that bed. It’s only thunder you’re hearing” | -Hiding |
| 8 | Scared-stammering | -Taught her how to count to see how far storm was. | -Came out from under bed.  -Hugged grandma |
| 11 | Scared- “I was scared. I knew she would peck me.” | “I’m here she won’t hurt you.” | -Counted  -Got the eggs |
| 17 | Scared- “crept” “It was dark and I was scared.” | “I’m here child.”  “Hurry now we haven’t got much time. We’ve got everything but the secret ingredient. | -Counted  -Got supplies from the dry shed |
| 20 | “The ground looked a long way down. I was scared.” | “I’m here child.”  Steady voice | -Counted  -Got the tomatoes |
| 21 | Smiling-not scared | -mixed ingredients, poured batter, put in the oven  “Three miles away! We made it!” | -Counted  -churned butter, melted chocolate, poured batter, put in oven |

**What Makes this Text Complex?**

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1. **Quantitative Measure**

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

Most of the texts that we read aloud in K-2 should be in the 2-3 or 4-5 band, more complex than the students can read themselves.

2-3 band 420-820L

4-5 band 740-1010L

630L

1. **Qualitative Features**

Consider the four dimensions of text complexity below. For each dimension\*, note specific examples from the text that make it more or less complex.

In this text students must understand that the purpose of the thunder cake is to distract the main character from her fear of thunderstorms. Students must also understand the relationship of family and the role the grandmother plays in helping the child overcome her fear and also teacher her life skills (i.e over coming fear)

This text has straight forward narrative structure. The story is told in chronological order. There is clear problem introduced by the narrator at the beginning of the story and clear steps the character take to overcome the problem. What makes this text complex is the way the story is told through dialogue between the grandmother and the child.

The language in the story is complex for

this grade band. There is dense tier 2 and tier 3 vocabulary specifically focusing on words that are specific to thunderstorms, farm life, and Russian culture. The syntax of sentences is on the complex side. There is some dialect specific language focusing on the grandmother Russian background.

In order to understand this text students must understand information about

* Storm patterns particularly thunderstorms
* Country and farm life
* Baking
* Some Russian immigrant culture

**Meaning/Purpose**

**Structure**

**Language**

**Knowledge Demands**

1. **Reader and Task Considerations**

What will challenge my students most in this text? What supports can I provide?

The two dimensions of text complexity that will be most demanding are the language and knowledge demands. Students will need to make meaning of the complex sentences and dialogue in the story. They will also need support in understanding some of the vocabulary related to the embedded knowledge demands.

Supports we can provide:

* Spend time crafting questions to clarify word meaning.
* Previewing background knowledge prior to reading (and within reading) to focus on knowledge demands.
* Using illustrations as a support for vocabulary acquisition.
* Dramatic reads of dialogue
* For particularly complex sentences with pronoun references and where dialogue and dialect might be confusion close reading those sentences.

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

* Scholars will be exposed to concepts about weather, farm/country life and some Russian immigrant culture.

1. **Grade level**

What grade does this book best belong in?

Kindergarten

[www.achievethecore.org](http://www.achievethecore.org)