

Unit 3/Week 4

Title: The Jones Family Express

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.3.1, RL.3.2, RL.3.3, RL.3.7; RF.3.3, RF.3.4; W.3.2, W.3.4; SL.3.1;
L.3.1, L.3.2

Teacher Instructions

Refer to the Introduction for further details.

Before 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

Special relationships in our lives influence our actions. When we desire to please others, we put extra effort into daily tasks, and the results benefit everyone.

Synopsis

This realistic fictional story is about Steven and his Aunt Carolyn. The two have always shared a special bond; each time Aunt Carolyn takes a trip, she sends a special postcard to Steven. Now, Aunt Carolyn is coming for the family block party and Steven wants to find a special gift for her. After looking in many stores and realizing he does not have enough money for a store-bought gift, he crafts something more personal and handmade. Steven creates the “Jones Family Express” a movable

photo album that Aunt Carolyn can take with her on her travels. In the end, Steven receives a wonderful gift too; he receives a postcard that is “good for one trip with Aunt Carolyn”. This story highlights strong family connections and follows a boy’s quest to find a perfect gift for his very special aunt.

2. Read entire main selection text, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
3. Re-read the main selection text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Vocabulary.

During Teaching

1. Students read the entire main selection text independently.
2. Teacher reads the main selection text aloud with students following along. (Depending on how complex the text is and the amount of support needed by students, 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 and 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

Text-dependent Questions	Evidence-based Answers
How does the narrator show that he was interested in traveling with Aunt Carolyn?	The narrator enjoyed hearing tales of how his Aunt Carolyn traveled to different places and wanted to experience these trips for himself. He tried to hide in her suitcase when he was three-years-old and valued the postcards that she sent him from the different places she’s visited. He also said that the postcards made

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	him feel special.
What clues from the story let you know that the narrator was looking forward to the block party?	The narrator states that it was his favorite time of the year because his whole family would be there and there were lots of fun activities, food and music. He was also looking forward to his Aunt Carolyn being present, since she usually traveled through the summer.
Why did the narrator want to purchase a gift for his aunt?	The narrator states that Aunt Carolyn didn't come back often, and that was why he wanted to get her a present. He valued the postcards that she sent when she traveled, and he wanted to get her a gift in return.
Why does the narrator sneak out of the window in his room?	The narrator sneaks out of his window and through his neighbor's garden to go to Nostrand Avenue so that he can find his aunt a present. He didn't want to get stopped by all of his family members on the way out.
Look at the way that Mr. Perkins speaks. What clues from the text describe his voice?	The text states that Mr. Perkins had a screechy voice, and he compared his voice to the sound of nails on a chalkboard. Mr. Perkins also drags out his vowel sounds, which makes his voice more annoying to the narrator, until his head starts to hurt.
The narrator mentions that Ms. Ruby is from Jamaica. How does the dialogue show that she speaks with an accent?	Ms. Ruby states some of her sentences in words in an untraditional way. For example, "How you do?", "You short for true", and she pronounces the word "little" as "likkle", as well as "my love" as "m'love". The text shows that her speech differs from traditional English language.
Steven didn't want to let Uncle Charles know exactly how much money he had. Find evidence that supports why Steven feels this way.	Steven didn't want to let Uncle Charles know about his last seventy-five cents because Uncle Charles would take it all for whatever he was selling to Steven. He states that he doesn't do anything for free, not even for kids!
What do you learn about Aunt Carolyn and Steven from their interactions on this page?	The text shows that Steven and Aunt Carolyn are very close family members and that they really care about each other. I know this because the text shows that when they saw each other, they shared big hugs and kisses. They must have a special bond because

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	Steven is the only person that came to meet Aunt Carolyn.
Aunt Carolyn states, "this is the best present anyone has ever given me." Based on what we know about Aunt Carolyn, why do you think Steven choose a train themed around his family?	Aunt Carolyn loves to travel and is often away from her family. She arrived by train, so a toy train with family pictures on it would be a great gift to have once she continues to travel and wants to see her family.
Aunt Carolyn reveals a surprise of her own! Steven states, "he could not believe his eyes." What does this tell the reader about how he feels about his gift? Use the text to support your inference.	Steven loved his gift! I know this because earlier in the text it is stated that he had been waiting since he was three to go on a trip with Aunt Carolyn. He must have been surprised by the trip because he said he could not believe his eyes, and what he was reading.

Vocabulary

	KEY WORDS ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTANDING	WORDS WORTH KNOWING General teaching suggestions are provided in the Introduction
TEACHER PROVIDES DEFINITION not enough contextual clues provided in the text	Annual block potential bustled block	vestibule expensive
STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING sufficient context clues are provided in the text	heaping rummaging plopped	barely innocent suddenly like nails on a chalkboard

Culminating Task

- Re-Read, Think, Discuss, Write
- *What does this story tell you about Steven's relationship with his Aunt Carolyn? Write an essay using at least three details from the story to explain why and how Steven put so much effort into finding a special gift for his Aunt.*

Answer: Steven is very close to his Aunt Carolyn; when she travels, she sends him a special postcard from the places she visits. Because Aunt Carolyn doesn't visit often, Steven wanted to get something special for her. He visits two stores in his neighborhood and finds some nice things, but he doesn't have enough money to buy them. Paying ten dollars to look in his Uncle Charles' apartment, Steven finds the perfect item: a toy train. Even though it had peeling paint and broken windows, Steven recognized its potential and worked on it for an entire afternoon. He created "The Jones Family Express"; a train filled with pictures of the family that Aunt Carolyn can take with her when she travels. (Student responses may vary.)

Additional Tasks

- In this story, postcards from an aunt make Steven feel special. Ask the students to pretend they are one of Steven's friends and write a postcard message to him. If possible, students could find a picture postcard from their community, town, or state and write their message on it. Once done, all postcards can be put together to make a class photo album.
- Have students write Reader's Theater scripts and act out parts of the story. For example, they might dramatize Steven's search for a gift in Mr. Perkins's drugstore or in Ms. Ruby's shop. This task would support the Speaking and Listening standards listed above.