Standards Covered this Week

- **LAFS.6.L.3.4.a:** Determine the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- **LAFS.6.L.3.4.d:** Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).
- **LAFS.6.RL.1.2:** 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.
- **LAFS.6.RI.2.6:** Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

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A Note to Parents

This week, we are continuing our unit entitled “Embracing Our Differences,” revisiting the short story “Fish Cheeks,” and are reading an excerpted memoir titled “Unusual Normality” by Ishmael Beah. Your student will be considering the themes of identity, friendship, and being different with this text and will be focusing on the skills of determining theme and how an author develops his or her point of view.

Here are some optional online resources to support or extend your student’s thinking:

- Online version of “Unusual Normality” [https://www.commonlit.org/en/texts/fyc-unusual-normality](https://www.commonlit.org/en/texts/fyc-unusual-normality) (Your student can also access this text through their CommonLit account on ClassLink and can even have access to an audio version or translation tool for the text.)
- Information about the author along with several video interviews about his past experiences and his book [https://us.macmillan.com/author/ishmaelbeah/](https://us.macmillan.com/author/ishmaelbeah/)
Day 1: Activity 1: Vocabulary

Based on the context sentence and the photo, write down your best prediction for the definition of each word.

1. **Conduct** (kuh-nuh-duhkt)
   The mom told her son she hopes he will conduct himself well while sitting in church.

   **to behave**

   **Definition prediction:**
   I guessed “behavior” because the tigers are fighting (bad behavior) and kids sometimes get in trouble for not behaving in church.

   **Correct definition:**
   to behave

2. **Predict** (pri-dikt)
   Since Carlos does the same thing everyday, you can predict where he will be at any given time.

   **Definition prediction:**
   
   **Correct definition:**

3. **Survival** (ser-vahy-vuh l)
   Food, shelter, and clean water are necessary for survival.

   **Definition prediction:**
   
   **Correct definition:**

Below are the dictionary definitions for the above vocabulary words. Fill in corresponding definitions. Were your predictions close?

Day 1, Activity 2: Unit Skills

**Mini-Lesson: Determining Theme in “Fish Cheeks”**

You’ll need the text from last week to complete this activity.

**Skills Focus:** In Week 5’s fable entitled “The Farmer and the Viper,” the theme of the story was stated as the last sentence of the story. However, very few other texts actually state their theme as a sentence in the story. Today, you’ll be learning more about determining theme in a normal short story, and you will practice by using the short story from Week 6, “Fish Cheeks.”

- The **theme** is the message an author expresses throughout a text.
  - A theme is **universal**; it can apply to real life and to multiple other texts.
  - A theme does **not** include references to a text’s characters or plot.
- The word cloud to the right represents frequently addressed big ideas.
- The table below lists the steps for determining a theme as well as shows an example of determining a theme using one of the big ideas that is addressed in “Fish Cheeks.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determining Theme</th>
<th>Notice how this response:</th>
<th>Notice how this response:</th>
<th>Notice that this theme statement:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identify a big idea in the text. To do this, think about the important characters, conflicts, and events.</td>
<td>Summarizes examples from the story that connect to the big idea of “identity.”</td>
<td>States the author’s message in a general way, without naming specific characters or events from the story.</td>
<td>Uses the word “identity,” because it’s based on that big idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ask ourselves:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is universal. It can apply to real life and to other texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Where does this big idea show up in the text?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Can be supported by evidence from “Fish Cheeks,” but it doesn’t refer to specific characters or events from the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Amy, the narrator, is ashamed of her family and identity at the beginning of the story. In the end, she appreciates what her mother tries to tell her about being proud of who she is.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What is the author saying about this big idea?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I think the author is trying to say that it is important to be proud of your identity, even when it makes you different from other people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Use a prompt to draft a theme statement:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “[Big idea] can...”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “It’s right/wrong to... / “You should...”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- “It’s difficult to...”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “If..., then...”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should be proud of your unique identity, even when it makes you different from other people.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Independent Practice:** Complete each step in the table below using one of the following big ideas to determine another theme for “Fish Cheeks.” Big Idea Options: FAMILY or DIFFERENCES & DIVERSITY

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**“Fish Cheeks”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Identify a big idea in the text. To do this, think about the characters, conflicts, and events.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Ask yourself:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Where does this big idea show up in the text?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What is the author trying to say about this big idea?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Use a prompt to draft a theme statement.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- “[Big idea] can ...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “It’s right / wrong to ...” / “You should ...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “It’s difficult to ...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “If ..., then ...”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Day 2, Activity 1: Fill-in-the-Blank Scenario

Fill in the blanks using the correct vocabulary word to complete each scenario. Then, explain why the vocabulary word best fits based on context clues provided in the scenario. You may have to change the form of the word (ex: go, going, gone).

For example: Every single day, Bryan wakes up at 5 o’clock in the morning to take a 10-mile jog. Then, he goes to the gym to lift weights. Afterwards, he does 20 laps in the pool. And this is before he goes to practice with the team every afternoon! Bryan is relentless about training because he is extremely dedicated and exercises all the time. He runs 10 miles, lifts weights, swims, and attends practice every day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conduct</th>
<th>Predictable</th>
<th>Survival</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. For the spring semester, Justin has art first period. He has math second period. He has American history third period. He has biology fourth period. This will be his schedule everyday of this semester.</td>
<td>Justin’s schedule is</td>
<td>because</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. The principal was disappointed in the way the two students were talking to each other in the hallway. She reminded the students of the proper way to behave when walking and talking in the hallway.

The students did not  | themselves well because |

3. Laney somehow got separated from the group on the hike. She was lost and it was getting dark. She hadn’t packed any water or snacks since it was only supposed to be a one hour hike. She didn’t know how she would live through the night.

In order to  | , Laney needs to |

Day 2, Activity 2: Quick Write

How do you think war affects a child? Try to be detailed in your answer.
Day 3 & 4: “Unusual Normality”

Now, you’re going to read an excerpt of a memoir titled “Unusual Normality” written by Ishmael Beah, a former child soldier from Sierra Leone. In 1991, the Sierra Leone civil war started. Rebels invaded Beah’s hometown. He was eventually forced to be a child soldier for three years before being rescued by United Nations Children’s Fund.

During reading, you will analyze how the author develops his point of view.

“Unusual Normality” by Ishmael Beah

[1] I came to New York City in 1998. I was seventeen.

[2] I entered the United States with just a passport in my hand, because somehow the baggage that I’d checked when I boarded the flight from Ivory Coast (which was tattered in ways unimaginable) didn’t make it.

[3] I stood there at the luggage rack watching all these huge bags go by, and mine didn’t come. This bag held all my possessions at this point: two pairs of pants and two shirts—one long-sleeved and one short. So I just started laughing, and I didn’t even bother going to the lost-baggage section to claim it.

[4] I just walked right out to meet my new adoptive mother, who was standing there with a beaming smile, waiting for me. And I explained to her what had happened, and we laughed some more.

[5] We left and went into Manhattan, and that evening we went to Kmart. (After we had had Chinese food and a fortune cookie that said, “You’re about to have new clothes.”

[6] And I thought to myself, What a great omen.1 Fresh new start to everything.

[7] I was coming from a country called Sierra Leone. At age eleven, a war had started in my country. At twelve I had become an orphan, because my mother, father, and two brothers had been killed in that war. At thirteen I was fighting as a soldier in that same war. At sixteen, after three years of war, I’d been removed from all that and had gone through rehabilitation,2 where I began learning how to deal with the memories of the war.

[8] So from this experience, I had come to the United States. To have a new home, and to live with a mother who was willing to take me into her life when most people at the time were afraid of somebody like me.

[9] It was a chance at living again, because all I had come to know, since I was eleven, was how to survive. I didn’t know how to live. All I knew, really, up until this point in my life, was struggle. This was what I had come to expect from life, and I didn’t trust in happiness or any kind of normality at all.

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1 Omen (noun): a sign of what will happen in the future
2 Rehabilitation (noun): a process of becoming healthy and active after a bad experience
Paragraph 11
Write: What was especially challenging about enrolling in school?

Paragraphs 13-18
Find Evidence: Underline or highlight two reasons why many principals did not admit him to their schools.

Paragraphs 21-29
List two details about the author that made his classmates view him as unusual.
A. Write: What is the author’s attitude on sharing his background?

B. Find Evidence: Underline or highlight two details that reveal his attitude toward sharing his background.

Paragraph 33
Write: Who thought the kids were “tough”?

Paragraph 40
Write: What does the author mean that his friends “glorified” violence “because they’d never actually experienced it”?
A. Find Evidence: Underline at least two lines where the author has a chance but chooses not to share his background with his friends.

B. Write: Why do you think the author chooses not to reveal his past to his friends?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraphs 66-71</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Write: What does the author understand about war that his friends do not?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraphs 72-78</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Find Evidence: Underline or highlight two pieces of evidence that reveal the author's dishonesty.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POINT OF VIEW: Paragraphs 71-81</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Write: How does this section develop the author’s point of view about sharing his background? Have your thoughts changed about why he is not revealing the truth?  

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1. **Humongous** (adjective): very large  
2. **Terrain** (noun): land  
3. **Paces** (noun): steps  
4. A term that means behaving aggressively or acting overly proud to be a man  
5. **Deliberate** (adjective): done with intention or on purpose
When I returned, I told my mother about this game. And my mother, being a mother, was immediately worried.

She said, “Oh, did that bring up something for you?”

And I said, “No, it didn’t, absolutely.”

Because I know the difference between pretend war and real war.

But it was interesting for me to observe how my friends perceived what war is.

The next day at school, these friends of mine talked about the awesome weekend of paintball we’d had. But they never said how I’d won all the games. And I said nothing at all.

They never invited me back to play paintball with them. And I didn’t ask to be invited back.

I so wanted to talk to them about the war while we were playing the game. I wanted to explain certain things, but I felt that if they knew about my background, they would no longer allow me to be a child. They would see me as an adult, and I was worried that they would fear me.

My silence allowed me to experience things, to participate in my childhood, to do things I hadn’t been able to do as a child.

It was only years later that they learned why I had won the game.

But I wish I had been able to tell them early on, because I wanted them to understand how lucky they were to have a mother, a father, grandparents, siblings. People who annoyed them by caring about them so much and calling them all the time to make sure they were okay.

I wanted to tell them that they were so lucky to have this naïve innocence about the world. I wanted them to understand that it was extremely lucky for them to only play pretend war and never have to do the real thing. And that their naïve innocence about the world was something for which I no longer had the capacity.

Day 4, Activity 2: Application of Vocabulary

Answer each question in 1-2 complete sentences. Make sure that you use the underlined vocabulary word in your answer.

1. How do you think students should conduct themselves when working in groups? Explain or describe.

2. What is one thing you do in the morning in a predictable way? Explain.

3. What is one piece of advice you would give a fifth grader about survival in school? Explain why.
Day 5: Text-Dependent Questions

Step 1

Directions: Answer the multiple choice questions below.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. PART A: What is the author’s point of view about sharing his background? [RI.6]
   A. He believes that sometimes it’s fun to pretend to be a different person.
   B. He believes that a person should always be careful to never share anything with people.
   C. He believes that in order to live the life he wants, he needs to choose what to share with others.
   D. He believes that in order to live the life he wants, he should always share his background with everyone.

2. PART B: Which of the following quotations from the text best reveals the author’s point of view? [RI.1]
   A. “to live with a mother who was willing to take me into her life when most people at the time were afraid of somebody like me” (Paragraph 8)
   B. “Thus began my two years of high school and making other teenagers confused about who I was.” (Paragraph 21)
   C. “The reason I spoke like this was because of my British-African English that I’d learned, which was the only formal English that I knew.” (Paragraph 28)
   D. “I wanted to explain certain things, but I felt that if they knew about my background, they would no longer allow me to be a child.” (Paragraph 91)

3. How does paragraph 74 develop the author’s point of view on sharing his background? [RI.6]
   A. It reveals the author’s belief that by learning paintball the American way, he can properly fit in.
   B. It reveals the author’s belief that by pretending to not know something, he can still seem like a regular teenager.
   C. It reveals the author’s belief that by learning paintball from the other teenagers, he will make friendships that last a lifetime.
   D. It reveals the author’s belief that by pretending to want to learn paintball, he can try out different personalities to see which one people like the most.

4. In paragraph 92, the author discusses silence. How does the author’s silence support his point of view? [RI.6]
   A. It gives him the opportunity to have a normal childhood.
   B. It gives him the opportunity to learn if a person is safe or unsafe.
   C. It gives him an opportunity to process the shame he feels about being a child soldier.
   D. It gives him an opportunity to watch other teenagers and learn how to be an American teenager.
Step 2
Directions: Respond to the Short Response prompt below.

SHORT RESPONSE

What is the author’s point of view on sharing his full identity? Support your answer with evidence that shows how the point of view develops throughout the text. [RI.6]

HELPFUL RESOURCES

SENTENCE PROMPTS FOR INTRODUCING EVIDENCE:

- In the text, / in the story ...
- In [paragraph X], ...
- When [X happens] / When [character Y does / says] ...
- The author illustrates this when ...
- For example, ...

SENTENCE PROMPTS FOR EXPLAINING EVIDENCE:

- This means ...
- This illustrates ...
- This reveals ...
- This highlights ...

PARAGRAPH OUTLINE

Claim:

- Evidence
  - Explanation
- Evidence
  - Explanation
- Evidence
  - Explanation