

Unit 5/Week 4

Title: Elena¹

Suggested Time: 4 days (30 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.5.1, RL.5.2, RL.5.4, RL.5.10; RF.5.4; W.5.2, W.5.4, W.5.9; SL.5.1, SL.5.6; L.5.1, L.5.2, L.5.4, L.5.5, L.5.6

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

When difficult things happen in your life you can learn to be brave. Being brave means you demonstrate courageous decisions and actions that will affect you and those around you for years to come.

Synopsis

During the Mexican Revolution, a heroic mother, Elena, struggles to protect her family after her husband dies from an accident. She feels powerless to act until she encounters Pancho Villa and his soldiers at her door. Then she knows she has

¹ This story is a “duplicate.” (It is found in other basals, as well.) This particular revision was completed by a teacher who uses a different basal, so the page numbers have been removed. This may require you to make some adjustments/add page numbers to some of the questions.

to find the courage to find safety for her family. Elena decides to leave Mexico in order to find a safe place for her family as well as to provide them with an education, so her family can prosper. She takes her family to California. Elena's courage and determination lead her to make a new successful life for herself and a new life filled with opportunities for her children.

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. (Note: this is a rather complex piece with demanding vocabulary. It is likely at least some of your students many need the teacher to read this aloud first as they follow along to build fluency and to get a chance to comprehend. 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	Answers
Why does the narrator say that "It was nothing unusual" when she describes the father needing to go to Guadalajara? Why does the mother tell him to be careful this time?	The father has traveled to Guadalajara once or twice a year for business. This trip is different because the author is introducing the concept of a revolution and there would be dangerous men, perhaps soldiers, on the rough roads.
The doctor comes and dresses Father's wounds. It says, that "As he was leaving, we asked the doctor; 'Will he live?' He shrugged his shoulders. 'Who can tell?' he said. 'Perhaps Pablo	The syntax in these sentences may be difficult for some students to follow. Direct instruction on the dialogue and may be important.

<p>knows. It is a gift some Indians have.” Who is the doctor referring to when he says “Perhaps Pablo knows.”? Who is mother referring to when she says “Husband?”</p>	<p>They are all referencing the father in the story. The doctor calls him Pablo. Elena calls him husband.</p>
<p>Why does father say that the mother and the children will need to leave their home? Why did he say this to his wife?</p>	<p>Father knows that the revolution will bring a war and that the family will not be safe in their town.</p>
<p>The author says, “...that the <i>chispa</i>..., went out.” What does <i>chispa</i> mean and how do you know? How does the author show that the family is grieving the loss of their father? What evidence does the author use to help you know that mother has lost her <i>chispa</i>?</p>	<p><i>Chispa</i> is the bright, pleasant, nature that Elena (Mother) lost when she experienced the death of her husband. Grief or discouragement and despair replaced her “<i>chispa</i>.” Mother weeps, swings a stick around, knocks over flowers, and lets the birds out of their cages before she grows quiet. The narrator keeps expecting her father to walk through the door and “make everything good again.”</p>
<p>Mocking someone is when you make fun of him/her. Why did the author use the following phrase, “It was as if nature was mocking us?”</p>	<p>The author was showing the contrast between what the family was feeling at the loss of their father, and the weather outside which was sunny with blue skies. Because the family is grieving and feeling sad, it shouldn’t be sunny and bright outside.</p>
<p>Why is mother concerned about the “notorious,” Pancho Villa? How does the author let you know what <i>notorious</i> means? The teacher may need to provide direct instruction on this section of the text. This is a little piece of history with rich vocabulary that might need some explanation.</p>	<p>Notorious means to be known for something bad. Pancho Villa “...was fighting to help free Mexico from the Dictator Porfirio Diaz and that he wanted to give back to the campesinos the land that had been stolen from them.” He “...was on his way to becoming a genuine folk hero, the Robin Hood of Mexico.” “But it was also known that he had once been a bandit and that his men were as bad as the government soldiers.” “Wherever they went, they stole from the people, killed anyone who challenged them, and left burned villages in their wake.” Mother is concerned about Pancho Villa because of the terrible things he is known to have done.</p>
<p>The author says that Mother came to a realization. What</p>	<p>“The books she had read, the hard numbers she had</p>

<p>realization does Mother come to when the army suddenly appears?</p>	<p>conquered, the battle she had won over her marriage.” She has no father or husband to help her. She suddenly realizes how everything in her life has prepared her for this danger and that she really is strong enough to prevail.</p>
<p>The author says that the mother “has, instead, great courage and determination.” What understanding do the children see ripple across her face?</p>	<p>The understanding that there have always been wars and brave men and women who have faced terrible dangers. “She could do it, too – God had put it into her heart.”</p>
<p>Explain how and why the kitchen has become a “hiding place.” Who or what was hidden there?</p> <p>What does this help us understand about Elena? (Teacher may need to lead students to make this inference.)</p>	<p>The family is worried that the soldiers will take their brother (and son), Esteban, and force him into the army so they hide him in the cupboard. Mother also thinks the soldiers will not steal the horses if they think they are already gone so she hides them in the kitchen.</p> <p>Inferences may include: Elena is courageous because the soldiers are notoriously bad and the consequences could be terrible if they found out who and what she was hiding in the kitchen.</p>
<p>When people express their condolences it means they are sharing their sorrow or concern. When Pancho Villa asks mother to accept his condolences, is that what he really means? Why or why not?</p>	<p>Pancho Villa asks about the famous maker of the sombreros, Pablo, their father. When mother says she is his widow - that is when he says she should accept his condolences.</p> <p>Evidence for: Pancho Villa gives his condolences, bows slightly, shyly asks about the hats and pays for it. As a rebel leader he could have just taken it. (“They stole from the people, killed anyone who challenged them, and left burned villages in their wake,”)</p> <p>Evidence against: Pancho Villa just wanted the hats – that’s why he went to the house in the first place. He was delighted to have the hat, paid her for it, and posted a guard outside their house for protection.</p>
<p>How does the author show you that mother makes wise</p>	<p>Mother brings Pancho Villa a sombrero and says it is the last</p>

<p>choices? What is the result of her wisdom?</p>	<p>one, rather than keeping it for the family. By choosing to give up the last hat, she and her family received protection from Pancho Villa. Despite this, she remembers that her husband said there would be soldiers and that the family should leave. Even with protection, she decides to take the family and leave.</p>
<p>What does the family prepare to take on their journey and what will they leave behind? Why do some people tell mother not to leave? How does mother respond? What experiences impact her explanation?</p>	<p>They take necessities (food, clothes, money) and leave behind their family, friends, and their home. People say it is not “proper” or right for a woman to travel alone and unprotected. Mother says the world is changing and so is she. The revolution and the death of her husband have helped her realize that she will need to be courageous and leave their home and family.</p>
<p>Was the train ride what the narrator expected it to be? How do you know?</p>	<p>The train station is frantic. They have to push the little children through the window. There aren’t enough seats. Soot, dust, and flies come through the open windows. The beautiful, white, lacy dress the narrator wore for the trip is damp with sweat and covered with dirt. (She wouldn’t have worn this beautiful dress had she known how dirty she was going to get.)</p>
<p>The family eventually settles in Santa Ana, why?</p>	<p>They couldn’t find Trinidad, their cousin, in San Francisco and it was damp and cold there. The weather in Los Angeles was warmer, but the city was much bigger than their “lovely little village” in Mexico. Santa Ana had lemon and orange trees and good schools.</p>
<p>The author describes the responsibilities the family takes on in their new life in America. Describe each person’s role and responsibility.</p>	<p>Esteban got a job picking fruit to earn money for the family. He is often gone and when he returns he is tired and doesn’t play as much as before. Mother cooks, cleans, and does laundry, while also taking care of the boarders in their boardinghouse. Maria and the narrator help with laundry and dishes. They also take care of Luis, and go to school, which the mother calls their real job.</p>

<p>Mother says “And what is so bad about work?” What does she mean? How does this show her wisdom?</p>	<p>The narrator feels bad and says that Mother works too hard. Mother says that work is how she takes care of her family, how she keeps busy, and how she is useful. Mother realizes that work is an important part of making a good life. She is letting her children know that she feels alright about working so hard to keep her family together and them safe and free.</p>
<p>What does the narrator say that helped her realize, “Americans weren’t ‘they’ anymore?” What does she mean by that statement?</p>	<p>In school they studied about American history (leaders – Washington and Jefferson, essays on war – American Revolution, American Civil War). Through that study she realized that America had suffered through wars like she had. The family wore American clothes, read American books, sang American songs, and ate American candy. They had become real Americans – except for Mama.</p>
<p>What does the narrator mean when she says “and not long after that, I realized that Americans weren’t “they” anymore? What evidence does she provide for why this is so? Who in the family hasn’t become a real American?</p>	<p>The author says that part of her (mama) was still back in Mexico. She talks about the good old days – her sisters, her little house, her husband – the happy memories. She talks of them because she no longer has them and misses the “good old days.” (inference).</p>
<p>Mother tells many stories about the “good old days,” and Father. “Those stories gave him back to me.” What does the author mean by this phrase?</p>	<p>The narrator was very young when her father died and she could barely remember him. Mother’s stories helped her to remember him.</p>
<p>What did Elena’s children come to understand about her?</p>	<p>Much later, “...when they are strong and full of hope” they learn that their town is gone, burned to the ground. They hear of all the people who had died. When Mother took them away many years before, she truly saved their lives from the destruction of their town.</p>

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	campesinos, ravine chispa condolences	'on business', revolution, armed, rough, proper, bandoleras, 'gave way', 'dressed wounds' absence, brilliant, notorious, mocking, transformed, genuine, conquered, dictator, 'respected the law' terrible, ripple, urgently, stout, drooping, sincere, rebel, slightly proper, address
STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING sufficient context clues are provided in the text	revolution unprotected, frantic, managed, proper, <i>mamacita</i> , <i>villistas</i> , plaza, <i>barrio</i> good spirit evening, impossible, daring	rugged, plunged grief, weeping, determination, gathered seized, hesitated frantic, urged, boarding house, boarders, bustling, suffered, essays scarcely, courage

Culminating Task

- Re-Read, Think, Discuss, Write

In this story, a brave mother overcomes many challenges and makes courageous decisions to save her family. Using three significant details from the text, describe how her decisions not only help the family live a safe and productive life, but actually save their lives as well.

Answer: At the beginning of the text when the father dies, the mother realizes she is strong and can make plans to move the family out of Mexico (hides the son and horses, sells Pancho Villa a sombrero, packs up their necessities and takes her family on the train to San Francisco). She works hard to help the family create a good life in Santa Ana. For example, Esteban gets a job, she opens a boardinghouse, and the girls get an education. Most of the family realized that Americans have struggled just as they did in Mexico and that they are Americans, too. Mother struggles with leaving Mexico (she tells stories about growing up there and about their father). By the end of the story when they are grown, strong, and hopeful, they learn that their home, friends, and family in Mexico were destroyed by the war. Their mother truly saved their lives through her bravery and courage.

Additional Tasks

- Do you think the mother in the story should have left their village in Mexico? Why or why not? Support your view with evidence from the story.
- How did the mother in this story teach her family that they could be brave and courageous? Use evidence from the text in your answer.

- We all demonstrate our bravery and courage at some point. Describe a time when you were brave and courageous and how it affected you and others around you.

Note to Teacher

- This is a challenging story with lots of good history in it. There is also geography built into it.
- The questions are carefully designed to not only guide students through the story sequentially, but also to build up to the culminating activity.
- There is also a stunning amount of high-value vocabulary used in this passage. Try to talk to your students about as many of these high-value words as you possibly can during the week. These are all words they will encounter over and over again in their education.