

Thematic Unit: Survival

Book: My Side of the Mountain

Grade: 5th

Justification of Theme:

In a world where it seems like there are no answers to global problems that plague every country, it seems as no surprise that students today must be skilled in problem solving cognitive training. Reading novels, which highlight themes of survival, will help our students relate to the universal feeling of overcoming adversity in any context. It is with this understanding that I chose survival for a theme for our unit.

Overview of Thematic Unit

This core thematic unit of survival aimed at fifth grade is based on the book, *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George. The objectives of the lessons focus are on the following topics: Reading, the writing process, and elements of a story. Throughout the unit, the students will be reading the core book and independent selections, which all contain the theme of survival in some form. The goal of reading is to build fluency and comprehension by continued participation and practice. By joining the students in groups and listening, the teacher will check for fluency. The students will frequently respond in their reading journals where the teacher will check for comprehension along with questions asked as she/he joins each group. The focus of the writing will be mostly on the process of writing a research paper. Each element of the writing process will be introduced and modeled through a mini-lesson. The lessons will focus on the writing process along with conducting research, putting information into own words, and giving credit to sources. Along with the writing lessons, the students will also learn about writing a friend letter, writing dialogue,

and personification. Another focus of the lesson will be on the elements of a story. The students through mini lessons and modeling will learn how to identify different elements of a story and how each influence the other elements. By responding to various activities in their writing journal, the teacher will check for understanding and ability to identify the elements.

To assist in assessment and organization of all ongoing lessons and practice, the students will keep their work as follows. The reading response questions and elements of story responses will be kept in their Reading Response Journal. All of the writing assignments, research, and all phases writing will be kept in their writing folders. One last journal that will be kept is a word journal. By keeping a word journal of unknown words, the students will practice looking up words in a dictionary and identifying the usage of the words as used in the context of the story. This activity helps build vocabulary and word recognition.

Michigan Content Standards and Draft Benchmarks:

Content Standard 2: Benchmarks 1, 3, and 4

Content standard 3: Benchmarks 5 and 6

Content Standard 5: Benchmark 1

Content Standard 7: Benchmarks 1 and 2

Content Standard 8: Benchmarks 2 and 4

Content Standard 9: Benchmark 2

Content Standard 11: Benchmark 2

Objectives

Language Arts Learning Objectives:

After this unit, students will be familiar with and be able to:

- create and publish multiple texts
- demonstrate the pre-writing and predicting activities of brainstorming and concept maps
- choose and research a topic using computers and reference materials
- create multiple drafts of texts that they have proof read, edited, and revised for grammatical errors, style, and audience continuity
- read aloud fluently
- be able to identify a character's role—main or supporting
- be able to discern and demonstrate visually the development of the main character
- identify conflicts and conflict resolutions
- identify settings and create a visual work that shows setting progression
- verbally, textually, and visually compare and contrast characters and different forms of media
- find the meaning of unknown words using context clues, prior knowledge, and the dictionary
- identify a theme and use examples from the text to support their choice
- use personification in writing
- write creative dialogue in proper format
- share ideas and work with classmates

Unit Activities

Day 1:

To begin the Thematic Unit the teacher will introduce the core book: *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George and introduce the theme for the unit as survival. To help draw the students

into the theme and story, the teacher will read the Author's Preface aloud to the whole group. This will also introduce the author and give background of the book. After reading, identify the book's genre as realistic fiction and discuss what realistic fiction is. (10 min)

Before beginning to read past the Author's Preface, draw on the student's prior knowledge. As a whole group, brainstorm and create a concept map of what the students would expect to find in a mountain wilderness. Collect these ideas on the board. (10 min)

In the Reading Journals, the students should answer the following question: Based on our concept map of what we might expect to find in a mountain wilderness, what would you take with you if you were to run away to a mountain wilderness? You can take anything with you as long as you can carry it on you. (15 min)

Begin reading "My Side of the Mountain"

As a whole group read pages 3 – 9 and then independently or with a partner read pages 9 – 24. (35 min)

Discuss the characters so far in the book: (main and supporting)

Discuss how we can identify main or supporting characters.

Discuss how characters will grow, mature, or develop through events and conflict (define conflict) in the story. Introduce the storyboards that the students will be creating each day that they read the story, tracking the development of the main character, Sam. Gather ideas for the first one frame of the storyboard on the board and create the first frame together.

(30 min)

Introduce the independent reading books: Have students select a book to read during independent reading time. Any time the students are finished with an activity they can read from the

independent reading library and during Independent Reading-Book of Choice. Inform the students that each of these books contain the theme of survival.

Day: 2

Introduce:

The students are to keep a word journal (dictionary) of words that are unfamiliar that they find as they read and write them down in a journal. As they find the words, the students are to use a dictionary to find the definition. In the word journal, include the word, page where you found the word, the sentence, the definition that fits usage in the sentence, and part of speech. Provide the students with examples and walk them through the process of creating their word journal. Review the parts of speech as the procedure is modeled.

Everyday we will select a found word from the class to include on our word wall.

Discuss how these words can be used in their writing. (15 min)

Read pages 24 – 40 independently (45 min). Remember to keep word journal. Create a frame for your storyboard on the main character. While the students read play softly in background, *Echoes of Nature: The Natural Sounds of the Wilderness* (1993) for aesthetic listening.

Mini lesson on setting (10 min))

What is setting?

What is the setting of “My Side of the Mountain?”

Two main parts of setting for this book: Time and Place: Discuss

After mini-lesson with discuss have the students create a chart in Reading Journal of the setting so far in the book. Start the students out by first creating the chart on the board and brainstorming a few together. (20 min)

Time Animals Plants Weather/Climate

Word Journaling: Right at end of session share words in Word Journal: Select one that seemed to be a common word or one that you think would be beneficial to include word wall for the students to use.

Day 3

Read aloud to the whole group - 1 selection from the book *Worst Case Scenario*. (10 min)

Introduce Main Activity: Research project on survival and creation of “Survival Guide”

Discuss expectations of project and goals of the project. This is a research paper and must contain facts based on research. Each student will contribute a chapter to the classroom’s Survival Guide. The students will first brainstorm together ideas for topics of survival that could be included in the class “Survival Guide.” This topic can be anything as long as it is about survival in any situation and as long as it is appropriate for school. Next, they will conduct research from the internet and reference materials. They will have to make a first draft, peer edit, self-edit, revise, edit, proofread, and final draft ready for publishing. All stages should be kept in their writing folder, which will be turned in to the teacher upon completion of project. They need to have at least two pages that include illustrations or pictures. Have a sample ready to show the students what their final published paper should include along with a rubric to help guide their work. (15 min)

On the board, begin brainstorming topics for Survival Guide. From the brainstormed topics, select one to model brainstorming and organizing ideas about the topic. The students should then select a topic that was brainstormed together or a new one of their own. Once a topic is selected, they are to begin brainstorming ideas and organizing ideas to include in their

Survival Guide chapter. Students will begin brainstorming, selecting topic, brainstorming ideas, and organizing ideas. (45 min)

Independent reading – Book of Choice (30 min)

Play the CD, *Echoes of Nature: American Wilds* (1993) quietly in the background for aesthetic listening.

Day 4:

Read: pages 41 – 58 (quietly with a partner) Remember to keep word journal. Create a frame for your storyboard on the main character. (45 min)

Respond in reading journal to the following question: (10 min)

1. How did Sam prepare himself to care for a falcon?
2. “Do you think Sam had the right to snatch the baby falcon from its mother’s nest? Why or why not? (making judgments)” (Innovations 1990 pg 5)
3. So far, in the reading, who are the supporting characters? What part do they play in supporting or influencing the main character?

Mini lesson: Friendly letter: Discuss the purpose and voice of a friendly letter. Discuss the format used and the important elements of the letter by modeling on the overhead. During modeling write to Sam’s parents asking them about how they feel with Sam gone. (15 min)

Have students write letter to Sam Gridley (main character in book) about his adventures so far, living in the wilderness or any other topic related to the story so far. After writing, the letters have students exchange letters with partners and answer the letter as if they were Sam. (30 min)

Right at end of session share words in Word Journal: Select one that seemed to be a common word:
or one that you think would be beneficial to include word wall for the students to use.

Day 5

Read aloud to the whole group - 1 selection from the book *Worst Case Scenario*. (10 min)

Mini lesson on Research: This lesson is to remind students that copying information word for word and using the words as your own is not allowed. If they want to use some words exactly as they found them, then they have to use quotation marks and refer to who said it. Model how to take notes and write things in own words. Model how to make reference to where the information was found. Pass out instructions on how to do this for the students to keep in their writing folder. Demonstrate how to use the various resources (20 min)

Survival Guide: Continue to gather ideas and organize ideas for Survival, Begin research using on-line sources, encyclopedias, classroom library. (Reserve Laptop cart) (45 min)

Independent reading – Book of Choice (30 min)

Play the CD, *Echoes of Nature: Frog Chorus* (1993) quietly in the background for aesthetic listening.

Day 6:

Read pages 58 – 85 (independently or with a partner) remember to keep word journal. Create a frame for your storyboard on the main character. (45 min)

In reading response journal answer: “In which ways are Sam and Bando similar? How are they different? (Comparing and contrasting/Interpreting Character traits) (Innovations 1990 pg 13) (10 min)

Mini lesson on Plot development and character development through the plot:

The plot in fiction is a series of events that affect the main character. As these events occur and the main character responds, the reader forms a deeper understanding and connection to the main character. Discuss the plot so far in the book and the plot brings out character traits of Sam.

On a chart created in Reading Journal, have students share an event in the plot for each of the following traits:

Character Trait	Event in Plot
Imagination	
Cleverness	
Curiosity	
Bravery	
Persistence	

(Innovations 1990 pg 12) (30 min)

Word Journaling: Right at end of session share words in Word Journal: Select one that seemed to be a common word: or one that you think would be beneficial to include word wall for the students to use.

Day 7:

Read aloud to the whole group - 1 selection from the book *Worst Case Scenario*. (10 min)

Mini lesson on Drafting: Explain the process of drafting and how this is not the final product. To model for the students drafting, provide ten facts prepared on a topic of research. With the

students, organize the ten facts into groups of related information on the overhead. From the organized facts, create a first draft for one paragraph. (15 min)

Continue research if needed Have students begin drafting their Survival Guide. Drafts must be hand written. (Reserve laptop cart for research only) (45min)

Independent reading – Book of Choice (30 min)

Play the CD, *Echoes of Nature: American Wilds* (1993) quietly in the background for aesthetic listening.

Day 8:

Read pages 85 - 115 (independently or with a partner). Remember to keep word journal. Create a frame for your storyboard on the main character. (45 min)

Mini lesson on theme: Define a theme as the underlying message, truth about life, which the author wants to communicate to his/her audience. The theme holds a book together and guides the author's writing. The author develops the theme through events in the story and the character. Provide an example by reading a children's short story and discuss what the theme is and how the events and characters developed the theme. Besides the theme of survival, are there other themes in *My Side of the Mountain*? Discuss what other probable themes are in the book so far: Make a list on the board. (20 min)

In reading journal: Have the students select one of the themes listed and write a paragraph as to the events and characters that have contributed to this theme. (25 min)

Word Journals: Right at end of session, share words in Word Journal: Select one that seemed to be a common word: or one that you think would be beneficial to include word wall.

Day 9

Read aloud to the whole group - 1 selection from the book *Worst Case Scenario*. (10 min)

Mini lesson on editing/revising: Provide students with expectations to help focus the students'

editing and revising. The focus for this paper is on organization, logical order of information. On overhead, provide sample of a paragraph that needs to be revised. Together, work through editing and revising this paragraph. Provide students with a peer/self editing checklist. (20 min)

Research should be done and should have draft started. Start editing and revising. (45 min)

Independent reading – Book of Choice (30 min)

Play the CD, *Echoes of Nature: The Natural Sounds of the Wilderness* (1993) quietly in the background for aesthetic listening.

Day 10:

Read pages 116 - 148 (independently or with a partner) remember to keep word journal. Create a frame for your storyboard on the main character. (45 min)

Respond in Reading Journal: (15 min)

1. "In what ways did Bando prove to be a good friend to Sam on his second visit?"
2. What kind of father is Mr. Gribley?
3. What actions of his led you to your conclusion?"

(Innovations 1990 pg 16)

Mini lesson about writing dialogue and personification: Define personification. Define dialogue.

On overhead, model how to write dialogue with correct punctuation and indentation by modeling the students' assignment as described in the following. With a partner select two of Sam's animal guests to write a dialogue between as they discuss the Halloween party and their reactions to the Halloween party. Each student is to write for one animal. Model this assignment on the overhead between yourself and the students. Start out writing dialogue from one animal about the party. Select a student to come up and write the other animal's response to your dialogue. Continue for a few exchanges. (15 min)

Have the students write the dialogue with personification of animals.

Share the dialogues with each partner playing the part of one of the animals. (30 min)

Day 11

Read aloud to the whole group - 1 selection from the book *Worst Case Scenario*. (10 min)

Continue to revise and edit Survival Guide chapters. (50 min)

Independent reading – Book of Choice (30 min)

Play the CD, *Echoes of Nature: The Natural Sounds of the Wilderness* (1993) quietly in the background for aesthetic listening.

Day 12:

Mini lesson on conflict and resolution: Define conflict and resolution. Conflict is a problem that arises between characters in a story is against another element in the story. The conflicts can be between characters, between a character and nature, or within a character himself.

Discuss Sam's various conflicts throughout the book. Brainstorm together Sam's various

conflicts with animals, with weather, and environment and those conflicts resolutions.

Explain that through the book, Sam has had many conflicts but the one central conflict is between Sam and the outside world, the world that he will return to once his year in the wilderness ends. This conflict will not be resolved until the end of the book. (20 min)

Have the students discuss for a minute in small groups what they would like to happen to Sam as his year ends and then discuss what events would have to happen for the story to end this way.

Have the students write a paragraph explaining how they would like Sam's conflict to be resolved. The answer should be based on the characters and events so far in the book. This should be written in their reading journals. (Innovations, p19) (25 min)

Read pages 148 - 177 (independently or with a partner) remember to keep word journal. Create a frame for your storyboard on the main character. (45 min)

Reading Journal: Write your response to the end of the book. How do you feel about the ending?
How did the book ending compared to your ending that you designed? (10 min)

Right at end of session share words in Word Journal: Select one that seemed to be a common word: or one that you think would be beneficial to include word wall.

Day 13

Read aloud to the whole group - 1 selection from the book *Worst Case Scenario*. (10 min)

Mini lesson on Proofreading: Explain that proofreading is correcting not the content, what the story is about, but correcting how the sentences are constructed. In proofreading, you and/or partner look for and correct errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence structure. Provide the students with a checklist to guide proofreading and instruct them to

perform each on the checklist one at a time. Have a paragraph for the overhead to model proofreading with the checklist. (15 min)

The students should be finished with editing and revising Survival Guides and should begin to proofread (30 min)

Independent reading – Book of Choice (30 min)

Play the CD, *Echoes of Nature: Frog Chorus* (1993) quietly in the background for aesthetic listening.

Day 14:

Mini lesson on Publishing: Final drafts of writing can be published in different ways. Final drafts are the polished finished products that are ready to share with others. For example, sometimes, you read your stories aloud to others in the author's chair and at other times, your writing will be hung on the wall. Discuss different forms of publishing that can be chosen at different times. For our Survival Guide, we will be collectively binding all of our writings into one book. The final copy should be in your best handwriting or typed and printed. Show the students again your sample of the finished product for their reference. After the book is created, each student will share his or her topic and two important details about surviving. Explain and demonstrate to the students how to give a presentation by speaking loud enough for all to hear, by speaking clearly, and by facing their audience. (15 min)

Editing and revising should be finished, continue to proofread, and when finished begin to create final draft for publishing Survival Guides (Reserve laptop cart) (45 min)

Begin to view "My side of the Mountain" Paramount Pictures (1969) (60 min)

Day 15:

Finish Survival Guides in Published format ready to be included in Classroom Survival Guide.

(Reserve laptop cart) (40 min)

Finish watching “My Side of the Mountain” Paramount Pictures (1969) (40 min)

Have a discussion comparing and contrasting movie to text by making a Venn Diagram comparing the beginning of the story. Begin by explaining how a Venn diagram works. The outer parts of the two circles where the circles do not overlap are for only what pertains to the one, the movie, or the book. These areas show what is contrasting, different, about the two medias. Where the two circles overlap, include what is the same for both the movie and the book. This area shows what is comparing, the same about the two medias. For final response journal: have students create a Venn diagram comparing the ending of the story. (30 min)

Day 16

Next, Review the character development throughout the story. As a whole class, create a character development storyboard. Have students get out theirs and discuss each reading day’s development of the character. As a class come to a consensus about Sam and draw on large storyboard. (25 min)

Share the Survival Guides: Have each student show their contribution to the Survival Guide, share their topic for survival, and share two important details in their chapter. (45 min)

Assessments of the activities:

Reading: The teacher will make rounds during reading time and join the students listening for fluency while they read.

Comprehension: While joining students, ask questions at appropriate times during the reading to check for comprehension. Collect Reading Journals once a week to check comprehension responses.

Storyboards: Check periodically throughout unit to keep students on track. Collect completed storyboards at the end of the unit to assess if students were able to identify changes, development, of the main character through the plot.

Word Journals: Collect and check once a week. Make sure the students are able to identify the words entered with correct part of speech for how the word is used in the book. Check to see if students are properly using a dictionary for looking up words by observing the students.

Story Elements: Collect Reading Journals Weekly to check for the following when appropriate:

Characters: Main and supporting: Were students able to identify main and supporting characters and explain the roles of each.

Setting: Were students able to identify setting by looking at their setting chart.

Plot: Were students able to identify how events in the plot have affected the main character by assessing the Character trait/ event in plot chart.

Theme: Were able to identify a theme and state how events and characters have contributed to the theme so far in the core book.

Conflict and Resolution: Were students able to identify a conflict. Also, check to see if students were able to identify a resolution for the conflict based on events and characters in the core book

Writing Process: Prewriting, drafting, editing/revising, proofreading, publishing

Collect writing folders weekly and at the end of the unit to assess if the students were able to apply each step of the writing process.

Research: Observe students as they use various texts, computers, and reference materials to assess proper use. Assess from writing proper reference to original text.

Friendly letter – Collect letters. Check to see if students were able to use correct friendly letter format as provided in mini-lesson.

Dialogue and personification: Collect dialogues to check for proper format by identifying each new speaker by indenting and quotation marks. Check for correct usage of personification of animals by giving human qualities.

Comparing and contrasting: When Reading Journals are collected weekly, check to see if the students were able to identify elements of the book and movie that were similar (compare) and different (contrast) by placing statements correctly in the Venn Diagram.

Presentation: Observe the students during presentation for skills that were presented in mini lesson. Observe the student presenting for appropriate volume, clarity, and eye contact.

Reference

Otfinoski, S. (1990). *Innovations: Experiencing literature in the classroom: My side of the mountain* (R. L. Kaufman, Ed.). Scholastic.

My Side of the Mountain” Paramount Pictures (1969)

Literature for Independent Reading

Grade: 5th

Reading level of Books: 4th -6th

Narrative (Fiction)

Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O'Dell, Yearling (1987) **Average**

The River by Gary Paulsen, Yearling (1993) **Upper**

My Side of the Mountain by Jean Craighead George, Puffin (2001) **Average**

The Cay by Theodore Taylor, Yearling (2002) **Lower**

Hatchet by Gary Paulsen, Simon Pulse (1999) **Upper**

Julie of the Wolves by Jean Craighead George, Harper Trophy (2003) **Average**

Abel's Island by William Steig, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux (1985) **Average**

The Swiss Family Robinson by Johann David Wyss, Dover Publications (2001) **Upper**

Poppy by Avi, Harper Collins Publishers (1999) **Average**

The Sign of the Beaver by Elizabeth George Speare, Random House Children's Books (1984)
Average

Brian's Winter by Gary Paulsen, Random House Children's Books (1998) **Upper**

Touching Spirit Bear by Ben Mikaelson, Harper Collins Publishers (2002) **Upper**

Escaping the Giant Wave by Peg Kehret, Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing (2004)
Upper

Expository (Non-fiction)

Worst Case Scenario Survival Handbook by Joshua Piven and David Borgenicht, Chronicle Books (1999) **Average**

Manya's Story: Faith and Survival in Revolutionary Russia by Bettyanne Gray, Runestone Press (1995) **Upper**

Tsunamis and Other Natural Disasters by Mary Pope Osborne and Natalie Pope Boyce, Random House Children's Books (2007) **Average**

Lost on a Mountain in Maine by Joseph Egan, Harper Collins Publishers (1992) **Average**

Dangerous Crossings by Carole Garbany Vogel, Scholastic Library Publishing (2003) **Average**

Stories of Migration by Cynthia Rylant, The Blue Sky Press (2006) **Lower**

Faces of Courage: Young Heroes of World War II by Sally Rogow, Granville Island Publishing (2003) **Upper**

A Dog's Life: The Autobiography of a Stray by Ann M. Martin, Scholastic Inc. (2005) **Average**

Our Strange New Land by Patrica Hermes, Scholastic Inc. (2002) **Lower**

Other Media:

My Side of the Mountain (1969) Paramount Pictures DVD Widescreen 100 min

CD's for aesthetic listening while working:

Echoes of Nature: The Natural Sounds of the Wilderness. (1993) Echoes of Nature (Laserlight Series)

Echoes of Nature: American Wilds (1993) Echoes Of Nature (Laserlight Series)

Echoes of Nature: Frog Chorus (1993) Echoes Of Nature (Laserlight Series)

