Title/Author: *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen

Suggested Time to Spend: 5 days (at least 20 minutes per day)

Common Core grade-level ELA/Literacy Standards: RL.1.1, RL.1.2, RL.1.7, RL.1.10; W.1.2, W.1.8; SL.1.1, SL.1.2, SL.1.5, SL.1.6; L.1.1, L.1.2, L.1.4, L.1.5

Lesson Objective:

Students will listen to a Caldecott Award-winning illustrated book read aloud and use literacy skills (reading, writing, language, speaking, and listening), with attention to figurative language and vocabulary, to understand the central message of this picture book.

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/Focusing Question

Why is owling a special time for the girl and her father? One key takeaway is that she must wait and work hard to enjoy this reward.

What is this story trying to teach us? One key takeaway is that if we show patience and perseverance, we may enjoy some of life’s most valuable and unique experiences.

Synopsis

*Owl Moon* is a 1987 children’s picture book by Jane Yolen. The book has won many awards, most notably being the Caldecott Medal. This picture book is described as a family story about a girl and her father who go owling for the first time on a cold winter’s night. Along the way they encounter a Great Horned Owl. It is gentle yet adventurous, quiet yet full of sound. The book teaches students about patience and appreciation for nature.

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 source 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 over onto sticky notes so they can be stuck to the right pages for each day’s questions and vocabulary work.*
3. Consider pairing this series of lessons on *Owl Moon* with a text set to increase student knowledge and familiarity with the topic. A custom text set can be found[here](https://achievethecore.org/page/2426/owl-moon-with-companion-text-set)[.](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B66A6Ds77LpiU3dIZVFxMFFkLUk) *Note: This is particularly supportive of ELL students.*

*Note to teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs): Read Aloud Project Lessons are designed for children who cannot read yet for themselves. They are highly interactive and have many scaffolds built into the brief daily lessons to support reading comprehension. Because of this, they are filled with scaffolds that are appropriate for English Language Learners who, by definition, are developing language and learning to read (English). This read aloud text includes complex features which offer many opportunities for learning, but at the same time includes supports and structures to make the text accessible to even the youngest students.*

*This lesson includes features that align to best practices for supporting English Language Learners. Some of the supports you may see built into this, and /or other Read Aloud Project lessons, assist non-native speakers in the following ways:*

* *These lessons include embedded vocabulary scaffolds that help students acquire new vocabulary in the context of reading. They feature multi-modal ways of learning new words, including prompts for where to use visual representations, the inclusion of student-friendly definitions, built-in opportunities to use newly acquired vocabulary through discussion or activities, and featured academic vocabulary for deeper study.*
* *These lessons also include embedded scaffolds to help students make meaning of the text itself. It calls out opportunities for paired or small group discussion, includes recommendations for ways in which visuals, videos, and/or graphic organizers could aid in understanding, provides a mix of questions (both factual and inferential) to guide students gradually toward deeper understanding, and offers recommendations for supplementary texts to build background knowledge supporting the content in the anchor text.*
* *These lessons feature embedded supports to aid students in developing their overall language and communication skills by featuring scaffolds such as sentence frames for discussion and written work (more guidance available* [here](https://achievethecore.org/page/3159/ell-supports-for-writing-and-discussion)*) as well as writing opportunities (and the inclusion of graphic organizers to scaffold the writing process). These supports help students develop and use newly acquired vocabulary and text-based content knowledge.*

The Lesson – Questions, Activities, and Tasks

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Questions/Activities/Vocabulary/Tasks** | **Expected Outcome or Response (for each)** |
| **FIRST READING:**  Read aloud the entire book with minimal interruptions. Stop to provide word meanings or clarify only when you know the majority of your students are confused about the gist of what is happening in the story. | The goal during the first read is for students to enjoy the book, taking in both the beautiful storytelling and the illustrations. This will give them some context and sense of the whole before they dive into examining parts of the book more closely during later reads. |
| **SECOND READING:**  During this reading of the book, you will help students to understand any challenging vocabulary. In addition, you will build understanding of the theme. You may want to post the words and the student-friendly definitions for reference. See Activity 1 handout for the vocabulary word cards. In addition, notice when the little girl uses “you” in the text, as she is talking to the reader. This will be further developed in the fourth read.  Note: Page numbers referred to in this lesson begin with the illustration of the farm in a snowy landscape as page 1.  Read pages 1-6.  When did the daughter and father go owling?  How were they able to see in the forest?  What does it mean to go “**owling**?” How do you know? Ask students to turn to a shoulder partner and talk about owling before choosing a few to share whole group.)  How do the words or the pictures on pages 5 and 6 help us to know what **snow** is like?  What part of the text helps us understand what **footprints** are?  The author says, “Pa made a long shadow, but mine was short and round.” What is a “shadow”?  Read pages 7-10.  Does the little girl know what to expect the first night when she goes owling with her father? How do you know?  What does the little girl say you have to do if you go owling? Why?  The author says that, “Pa shrugged and I shrugged.” **Shrugging** means to quickly pull your shoulders up and then release them or put them back down. Can you show me shrugging?  How are Pa and the girl feeling? Why do you think they would shrug?  Read pages 11-14.  On page 13, the author says the shadows “stained” the snow? What does this mean? Is the snow really stained?  Read pages 15-18.  The author says an “echo” came threading its way back through the trees. What is an “echo”?  Let’s pretend you’re the echo. I will make a noise and you can echo it back to me.  Read pages 19-22.  What is a “meadow”? Are there clues in the text to help us?  Read page 30.  What does the little girl say at the end of the story?  Why might she repeat some of the words from earlier in the story?  Activity 1: After reading the vocabulary in context and asking questions to clarify the word meanings, students will act out the vocabulary words for each other. See word cards attached. | The text says it was late at night and “long past my bedtime.”  The “moon was so bright” and “the sky seemed to shine.”  Owling” is taking a walk in the forest to try and find owls. In the story the girl says, “if you go owling…”  Students can use the words “feet crunched” or “crisp” or “white” to describe snow. They should also refer to the illustrations and the way that Pa and the girl are dressed in winter coats, hats, and scarfs.  The girl and her Pa are making footprints in the snow when they walk. The illustrations show us what a footprint looks like.  A “shadow” is a shape that appears when a person or thing blocks the sun or a source of light.  (If students have trouble understanding how shadows work, bring a flashlight to class and demonstrate by turning off the lights and shining a flashlight behind a child’s back. Talk with students about how a bigger person makes a bigger shadow and how a smaller person makes a smaller shadow. Then put white butcher paper down on the floor to act as snow. Notice how the shadows are darker when they are on the white paper.)  The first night she knows they are hoping to see an owl, but her brothers have told her it might not happen on the first try.  She says, “If you go owling you have to be quiet, that’s what Pa always says.” You need to be quiet so you don’t scare away the owls.  Have students shrug their shoulders.  Pa and the girl are not disappointed that they didn’t see an owl yet. The girl knows it might take a long time to see one. They shrugged to show it’s okay.  It means the snow had a dark mark on it. The snow looks like someone spilled something on it. No, it’s the shadow, and when they move the stain will move.  An “echo” is when there is noise that goes out and then comes back, sounding like it happens again. This can sometimes happen when you’re in a quiet place outside.  Students should use the picture to see that the meadow is a big open space in the forest. The text says the owl’s call came from high in the trees on the edge of the meadow.  She says, “When you go owling, you don’t need words or warm or anything but hope. That’s what Pa says, the kind of hope that flies on silent wings under a shining Owl Moon.”  Sometimes when an author wants to be sure we understood something, they might repeat it several times. |
| **THIRD READING:**  Reread the picture book *Owl Moon,* stopping on specific pages described below to draw attention to the language of the book that the author uses to tell us about the winter weather. You may want to place sticky notes in your book to assist with text-based questions.  Read page 2.  Reread this page and ask the students, “What does the author mean when she says, “the trees stood still as giant statues?”  Read Page 4.  What does the author mean when she writes, “And when their voices faced away it was as quiet as a dream?”  Was there a dream happening on this page?  Read page 8.  What does the author mean when she writes, “The moon made his face into a silver mask.”?  Read page 16.  The author says, “…the snow was whiter than the milk in a cereal bowl.” What can we tell about the snow because of the author’s words?  Read page 18.  Remember we learned that an echo is a noise that you make that comes back to you. What does the author mean by “an echo came threading its way through the trees.”?  Activity 2: Work with students to complete the attached Activity 2. Explain to students that writers use figurative language to help us paint a picture of what’s happening in the story. Model for students the first two examples and then have students complete the final example and draw a picture of what they mean by their sentence. | Statues don’t move or make noise. The author is comparing the trees to statues because they are not moving or making any noise.  Dreams can be quiet and peaceful so the author is saying that when they stopped talking, and stood still, the sounds of the forest were very, very quiet.  No, this is the way the author using words to describe the quietness.  When you’re out late at night in the forest and it’s very dark, the moon is the only light. The reflection of the moon lights up Pa’s face. The moon makes Pa’s face look like a silver mask.  The light from the moon is reflecting off the white snow making it seem whiter than milk.  The author means that the girl and her Pa can hear the owl answering with “Whoo-whoo-who-who-whoooo.” You hear the owl call coming through the trees but threading might mean the sound wasn’t very loud then.  If students are still grappling with the vocabulary word threading, show them with a needle and thread.  Activity 2: Have students complete the last example on their own and draw a picture of their sentence.   1. The snow was as white as the milk in a cereal bowl. 2. The moon made its face into a silver mask. 3. The trees stood as still as giant statues. |
| **FOURTH READING:**  Reread the entire text, stopping on specific pages to focus on the theme of this story. Use the attached Activity 3 sheet to draw attention to times in the story when the little girl speaks to the reader to bring attention to something she has learned. These questions have been marked with an asterisk (\*). After each of these questions, students will draw pictures and annotate four parts of the story, the beginning, the early middle, the later middle, and the ending of the story.  Read page 6.  \*What does Pa say you have to do if you go owling?\*  Read page 11.  Based on this page and what you have learned so far in the text, what makes owling hard work for the little girl?  What does it mean to “make your own heat?  \*What do you have to do if you go owling?\* Why?  Read pages 13 and 14.  \*What do you have to do when you go owling?\*  Why?  Read page 26.  How long did the text say that the owl and the girl stare at each other? Was it really 100 minutes?  Read page 30.  \*What do you need when you go owling?\*  Why does the girl say, “When you go owling, you don’t need words or warm or anything but hope.”? | “When you go owling you have to be quiet, that’s what Pa always says.” Direct students to write the quotation into the Activity 3 worksheet.  Teacher think aloud: “When I read this sentence, I notice that suddenly the girl isn’t just telling a story. She’s stopped using the word “I” and started talking directly to us, the readers, when she says you”  She’s been waiting a long time and it’s cold when you go owling. She had to run to keep up with her Pa. It might take a long time to see an owl and you must be quiet.  Make your own heat means you have to keep yourself warm the best you can by wearing the appropriate clothes, moving, etc. There isn’t a heater or a fire to keep you warm.  “You have to be quiet and make your own heat.” Direct students to complete the cloze sentence in Activity 3.  “When you go owling, you have to be brave.” It’s dark and could be scary and you’re in a forest with big trees and hidden animals. Direct students to fill in the appropriate line on Activity 3.  “For one minute, three minutes, maybe even one hundred minutes...” No, but when you’re trying hard to be patient, and you’re excited, a few minutes can seem like a really long time.  Hope. Direct students to complete the cloze sentence in Activity 3.  The important thing was that she still had hope about getting to see the owl. It was okay that she had to wait and be cold.  Answers for Activity 3  1 – “When you go owling, you have to be quiet.”  2 – “When you go owling, you have to be quiet and make your own heat.”  3 – “When you go owling, you have to be brave.”  4 – “When you go owling, you don’t need words or warm or anything but hope.” |

FINAL DAY WITH THE BOOK – Culminating Task

* What lesson did the little girl learn when she went owling with Pa? Write a sentence that tells one of the lessons the girl learned. Then, give examples from the story that support your thinking.
* *A version of this task with sentence frames is available for extra support at the end of this document.*
* *See the sample answer below:*

**Possible lessons**: One lesson the girl learned is that you have to have hope and patience when you go owling because you might not see an owl right away, or you might not see one at all. Pa had to call the owl two times before it appeared. Another lesson she learned is that when you are trying to see an animal in the wild, you have to be quiet so you can hear them or spot them. The girl learned that sometimes you have to be brave when you’re doing something new or going someplace you’ve never been before (like the dark forest at night) because it gives you a chance to learn that you can do something you hadn’t thought you could do. Another lesson she learned is that if you stick with something, even when it’s hard, you might get an unexpected reward. Even though owling was hard because you had to be quiet, brave, and it was cold outside, she got to see an owl in its natural habitat and spend special time with her father.

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 students will be unfamiliar with) |
| Page 5: **snow** – when it rains but it is very cold the raindrops freeze and turn into light, white flakes that can make piles on the ground.  Page 5: **footprints** - marks left by a shoe or a foot in the ground or the snow.  Page 13: **stained** –being marked or having a dirty spot that cannot be taken off easily.  Page 21: **meadow** – an opening of grass, near the trees and forest. | Page 2: **owling** – to go out into the forest in the middle of the night and make owl calls in hopes of seeing an owl.  Page 5: **shadow** - a dark shape made from something blocking light.  Page 9: **shrugged** – to raise and release the shoulders.  Page 18: **echo** – a sound that goes out and comes back to you.  Page 18: **thread** – to go through or between something |

Extension learning activities for this book and other useful resources

* Author Jane Yolen’s Web site with activities for extending this work: <http://janeyolen.com/works/owl-moon/>.
* To see a YouTube video of a song with motions about the book *Owl Moon:* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvjx03UeLEY>.
* During writing, have students incorporate figurative language into their sentences/paragraphs. Provide examples and sentence frames for similes to help students integrate these ideas. *Note: This is particularly supportive of English Language Learners.*
* Students could play with/trace shadows during lunch, recess, or P.E. to further their understanding of the vocabulary. They could also trace footprints on the sidewalk with chalk.

Note to Teacher

* This lesson could also be extended to include informational text about owls, birds, or the moon.
* Scholastic, Inc. also offers many activities for further enjoyment of this piece of literature.
* Throughout the discussion portions of the lesson guide, teachers may want to consider how they can engage all students. For example, when posing a question, the teacher may choose to allow students to engage in partner talk before discussing whole group. The use of sentence frames for accountable partner talk would be useful to both English Language Learners and language impoverished students. For example, after reading the book, a teacher could assign students a partner to engage in student discourse. The teacher would explicitly ask Partner A to tell Partner B, “When you go owling, you have to be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Partner B would have the job of listening for three things you have to do when you go owling, counting to see if three items are shared, and being ready to share whole group.

**Activity 1**

**snow**

**footprints**

**owling**

**meadow**

**shadow**

**shrugged**

**stained**

**echo**

**Activity 2**

Sometimes authors like Jane Yolen use words in an interesting way to help the reader picture the story. (We call this figurative language.)

Directions: Work with students to complete the following cloze activity.

1. The snow was as white as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. The moon made his face into a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
3. The trees stood as still as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
4. Pa raised his face to call out again, but before he could open is mouth an echo came \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Activity 3**

**Directions:**

Each time you stop to discuss what the little girl has learned and what she has to do when she goes owling, write down the words from the book and draw a picture if time permits.

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| --- | --- |
| 1  When you go owling, you have to be  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. | 2  When you go owling, you have to be  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. |
| 3  When you go owling, you have to be  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. | 4  When you go owling, you need  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. |

**Culminating Task**

What lesson did the little girl learn when she went owling with her father? Write a sentence that tells one of the lessons the girl learned and give examples from the text. Draw a picture to show the lesson she learned.

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**Culminating Task**

What lesson did the little girl learn when she went owling with her Pa? Write a sentence that tells one of the lessons the girl learned and give examples from the text. Draw a picture to show the lesson she learned.

One of the lessons the girl learned was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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What Makes This Text Complex?

1. **Quantitative Measure**

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

550L

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

1. **Qualitative Features**

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Themes – perseverance, appreciation of nature  Examples from text: “When you go owling, you don’t  need words or warm, or anything but hope.”  “I had been waiting to go owling with Pa for a long, long time.”  “When you go owling, you have to be brave.”  **Meaning/Purpose** | Text is chronological and written from the girl’s point of view. At times, the girl talks directly to the reader which may be confusing for students.  Example: “If you go owling, you have to be quiet and make your own heat.”  **Structure** |
| **Language**  Piece includes many examples of figurative language.  Examples: “We watched silently with the heat in our mouths, the heat of all those words we had not spoken.”  “…even my eyes got cloudy with the cold.”  “…an echo came threading its way through the snow.”  “…and the snow below it was whiter than the milk in a cereal bowl.”  Vocabulary – includes some vocabulary likely to be unfamiliar to students  Examples: owling, shrugged, meadow  Syntax can be difficult as sometime the sentences are sophisticated (e.g., The subject follows the predicate or is embedded later in the sentence).  Example: “It was late one winter night, long past my bedtime, when Pa and I went owling.” | **Knowledge Demands**  Many students will not have experience with owling. Some students may be unfamiliar with owls or forests. |

\*For more information on the qualitative dimensions of text complexity, visit <http://www.achievethecore.org/content/upload/Companion_to_Qualitative_Scale_Features_Explained.pdf>

1. **Reader and Task Considerations**

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

* Knowledge demands for students who live in the areas of the United States that don’t get snow or forests could be challenging.
* The use of figurative language throughout the book may be difficult for students and warrants additional instruction. The second read lesson plan directly addresses this area of complexity.

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

* Students will learn about parts of the country with snow, including a winter family tradition like owling. As students engage in additional conversations about the figurative language within the text, they will gain experience in and knowledge of imagery and the language of stories. When tied to an informational piece, such as *National Geographic Kids: Bird Guide of North America,* students also have an opportunity to connect to science content and learn more about the great horned owl.

1. **Grade level**

What grade does this book best belong in? With the appropriate supports, this text works well in first grade.