A Chair for My Mother

Author: Vera B. Williams
Publisher: Harper Collins Publishing

**Book Description:** After a fire destroys their home and possessions, Rosa, her mother, and grandmother save and save until they can afford to buy one big, comfortable chair.

**Learning Objectives:**

**Reading Task:** The students will listen to the teacher read the text aloud in its entirety at least one time. Students will then, with teacher guidance, revisit chunks of the text to clarify meaning. The teacher will ask questions and solicit student’s ideas and thoughts to guide them through purposeful interaction with the text. The questions will focus on Key Ideas (RL.2.1 and RL.2.3), Craft and Structure (RL.2.4, RL.2.5, RL.2.6), and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (RL.2.7) with both fiction and non-fiction texts.

**Discussion Task:** Through the use of text-dependent questions and then participating in whole class discussion, the students will engage in collaborative conversations that will deepen their understanding of key ideas (SL.2.1) that were presented in the text.

**Vocabulary and Syntax Task:** Most of the meanings of the words in the text can be discovered from careful reading of the context or use of illustrations in the text. Teacher will read and discuss selected words from the story and model how to figure out a word based on surrounding text and other strategies (RL.2.4). Teachers will also engage in discussion through various sections of the text paying careful attention to adjectives and verb tense. (L.2.1.e) Syntax and language structure will be closely examined through text discussion and analysis of content.

**Writing Task:** Students will use writing to summarize and extend learning. Writing tasks will vary depending on the choice of culminating activity.
Close Reading Read Aloud

Common Core Standards Addressed: Second Grade

Reading: Literature
CCLA.2.RL.1 – Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when why and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
CCLA.2.RL.2 – Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.
CCLA.2.RL.3 – Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.
CCLA.2.RL.4 – Describe how words and phrases (e.g. regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem, or song.
CCLA.2.RL.7 – Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its character s, setting, or plot.

Language:
CCLA.2.L.1 – Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
CCLA.2.L.1a – Use collective nouns (e.g. group)
CCLA.2.L.1c – Use reflexive pronouns (e.g. myself, ourselves)
CCLA.2.L.1e – Use adjectives and adverbs, and choose between them depending on what is to be modified.
CCLA.2.L.2 – Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
CCLA.2.L.3 – Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading or listening.
CCLA.2.L.4a – Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
CCLA.2.L.5a – Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g. describe foods that are spicy or juicy)
CCLA.2.L.5b – Distinguish shades of meaning among closely related verbs (e.g. toss, throw, hurl) and closely related adjectives (e.g. thin, slender, skinny, scrawny)
CCLA.2.L.6 – Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using adjectives and adverbs to describe (e.g. When other kids are happy that makes me happy.)

Math:
MA.2.MD.8 - Solve word problems involving dollar bills, quarters, dimes, nickels, and pennies, using dollar and cents symbols appropriately. Example: If you have 2 dimes and 3 pennies, how many cents do you have?

Social Studies: Next Generation Sunshine State Standards
SS.2.E.1.1 – Recognize that people make choices because of limited resources.
SS.2.E.1.4 – Explain the personal benefits and costs involved in saving and spending.
Close Reading Read Aloud

Vocabulary List:
Vocabulary in the story is critical to the students’ understanding of the text although the amount of focus on each word should vary. Tier 2 words are more abstract, likely to be encountered in a variety of situations and could have different meanings depending on the context. These words deserve more attention in the context and in daily vocabulary instruction and use. Tier 3 words in the text are more meaning of the context and text. They do not need extensive focus. The student-friendly definitions for the words below were found at www.wordsmyth.net.

Definition of the word as used in story:
- bargain – (n) something that is sold or bought at a good price, especially if it is worth more than what was given in exchange. We got a great bargain on plane tickets.
- boost – (v) to raise to a higher position by pushing from below. He boosted the child up so that she could see over the counter.
- boss – (n) a person who gives directions to workers and watches over their work
- bunch – (v) to become a bunch; gather together. The cows bunched together by the gate.
- coin – (n) a piece of metal money that is small, flat, and round. Pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters are all coins.
- diner – (n) a roadside restaurant that serves inexpensive meals at a long counter or booths
- exchanged – (v) to give in return for something else; trade. I exchanged my old car for a new one.
- peeled – (v) to pull, tear, or cut the outer covering from. He always peels his apple before eating it.
- pumps – (n) a simple low women's shoe without buckles, laces, or the like
- spoiled – (v) to damage or ruin; make unable to be used or enjoyed.
- tips – (n) a small gift of money given as a way of thanking someone for a service done. Let's give the waitress a good tip.
- velvet – (adj.) made of, covered with, or wearing velvet. She sat on the velvet couch.
- waitress – (n) a woman who serves or waits on customers in a bar, restaurant, or cafe.
Reminders:

- It is important that the text remains the expert, not the teacher. All answers to questions must be supported with specific text sections or selections. Students must be asked to support their claims by giving specific text sections to justify their answers.

- Collaborative discussion and processing is an important piece of this lesson. Ask students to share with partners their thoughts and ideas, and then ask them to share out their answer. When possible, the teacher should ask a question, allow partners to discuss an answer that they can support with the text, then allow them to answer. Subsequent partners should be allowed to share additional justified answers before the teacher moves to the next question.

- The goal is for deep understanding of text and not rushing through the text. Lessons should be completed over the course of SEVERAL days. Reading a book to a class once is not sufficient to really enjoy the text and to understand the deeper meanings of the text.

- When possible, allow students to see the text during the discussion. If each student cannot have his/her own copy, or even share with a partner, the teacher should display the pages so all the students have exposure to the text during discussions.

- Have the text available to students when it is not being discussed so that they can explore the text independently as their confidence with the text improves and their understanding deepens. You will find students returning for multiple reads of this text independently.

- Do not front-load the text prior to the first read, and do not front-load any assignments. It is important that students discover and develop answers on their own or through collaborative discussion with peers.
Close Reading Read Aloud

Lesson Sequence:
Day 1: Read the story aloud to students straight through with very little discussion. When the story is over, ask the students to turn and talk to their partners about how they liked or disliked the story. Ask students to support their statements with specific examples in the text. After a short time, have students that are willing share their discussion points. (Note: The teacher should not share his/her opinion about the story, as students need to use their own judgment.)

Day 2 and beyond (varies): Revisit specific sections of text for the various lesson points listed below. Student responses and behaviors should be noted so that the discussion activities do not last too long for their age and attention span. Make note which activities were completed each day, so that the other lesson discussions can be complete on subsequent days. (Note: Not all discussion lessons need to be completed. In addition, discussions do not need to follow a specific sequence.)

Final Day: Introduce and complete one of the cumulative writing activities listed below.
1. Tell about something you would like to buy. Tell why you want it and how you would earn money to get it.
2. Hunt through furniture sale ads and find a chair that would be perfect for the student’s entire family. Write to explain why this would be the perfect chair. Cut out the picture of the chair, glue to construction paper and display with writing.

Other Suggested Activities:
Math: MA2.M.D.8
Locate a jar to be used in the classroom. Using play money, give each student “tips” to be placed in the jar. Tip amounts would vary per child. When the jar is full, count the money. Get some paper wrappers from the bank to provide a visual for student. Count out the money and separate into the appropriate amounts for each wrapper. Compare the amounts. Decide how many $10.00 bills the coins would be exchanged for. Develop money math questions based on the level abilities of your students.

Economics: SS2.E.1.1 and SS2.E.1.4
Give each student a weekly allowance of $10.00 to $20.00. Give them a list of fixed expenses and items/activities they may want to purchase. (Note: Teacher will assign all dollar amounts.) Have them create a budget based on needs and wants. Write an explanation justifying their budget.
Example: Fixed Expenses - Rent (student desk), Food (school lunch), School supplies Activities/items – Movie, snacks, treasure box items, free time, computer time

Vocabulary: CCLA.2.L.1e and CCLA.2.L.3
1. Make a chart of present tense (w/ing) and past tense verbs (w/ed). Write present/past tense sentence pairs.
2. Make a list of adjectives found in the story. Use those words when completing writing assignment. Put the words in categories: color, shape, size, etc.
## Close Reading Read Aloud

### Text:

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<th>Text under Discussion</th>
<th>Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students</th>
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| **My mother works as a waitress in the Blue Tile Diner.** After school sometimes I go to meet her there. Then her boss, Josephine, gives me a job too. I wash the salts and peppers and fill the ketchups. One time I peeled all the onions for the onion soup. When I finish, Josephine says, “Good work, honey,” and pays me. And every time, I put half of my money into the jar. | **Vocabulary:** diner, boss, waitress, peeled  
**Questions:**  
What is the job of a waitress? Why does mama work as a waitress?  
What bills would a family have to pay?  
How is a diner different from a restaurant?  
Do you think Josephine would be a good boss to work for? Why or why not?  
Why do onions have to be peeled? Are there other vegetables that have to be peeled? |

| It takes a long time to fill a jar this big. Every day when my mother comes home from work, I take down the jar. My mama empties all her change from tips out of her purse for me to count. Then we push all of the coins into the jar. Sometimes my mama is laughing when she comes home from work. Sometimes she’s so tired she falls asleep while I count the money out into piles. Some days she has lots of tips. Some days she has only a little. Then she looks worried. But each evening every single shiny coin goes into the jar. | **Vocabulary:** tips, coins  
**Questions:**  
Why doesn’t mama get the same tips every day?  
What coins add the most/least value to the jar?  
If the family is putting all the tips in the jar, what money do they use to pay bills?  
Why is mama’s mood different when she comes home from work?  
Why would mama be worried when she doesn’t have many tips? |

| We sit in the kitchen to count the tips. Usually Grandma sits with us too. While we count, she likes to hum. Often she has money in her old leather wallet for us. Whenever she gets a good bargain on tomatoes or bananas or something she buys, she puts by the savings and they go into the jar. | **Syntax:**  
What does it mean “gets a good bargain”?  
What are other items you get a good bargain on?  
Why would grandma “put by the savings”?  
Why would grandma be humming? |
Close Reading Read Aloud

When we can’t get a single other coin into the jar, we are going to take out all the money and go and buy a chair.

**Yes, a chair.** A wonderful, beautiful, fat, soft armchair. We will get one covered in **velvet** with roses all over it. We are going to get the best chair in the whole world.

That is because our old chairs burned up. There was a big fire in our other house. All our chairs burned. So did our sofa and so did everything else. That wasn’t such a long time ago.

My mother and I were coming home from buying new shoes. I had new **sandals**. She had new **pumps**. We were walking to our house from the bus. We were looking at everyone’s tulips. She was saying she liked red tulips and I was saying I liked yellow ones. Then we **came to our block**.

Right outside our house stood two big fire engines. I could see lots of smoke. Tall orange flames came out of the roof. All **the neighbors stood in a bunch** across the street. Mama grabbed my hand and we ran. My uncle Sandy saw us and ran to us. Mama yelled, “Where’s Mother?” I yelled, “Where’s my grandma?” My aunt Ida waved and shouted, “She’s here, she’s here. She’s O.K. Don’t worry.”

Grandma was all right. Our cat was safe too, though it took a while to find her. But **everything else in our whole house was spoiled**.

What was left of the house was **turned to charcoal and ashes**.

We went to stay with my mother’s sister Aunt Ida and Uncle Sandy. Then we were able to move into the apartment downstairs. We painted the walls yellow. The floors were all shiny. But the rooms were very empty.

**Vocabulary:** velvet
**Questions:**
Did you think they would be saving for a chair? What 3 words did the author use to tell you she knew you wouldn’t guess what they were saving for? (Yes, a chair.)
What words are used to describe the chair? Why do they want one covered in velvet? What is velvet? Why does the family think a chair is the most important item to save for? What do you think would be the most important item to save for?

**Vocabulary:** pumps
**Questions:**
Why did the author use the words sandals and pumps instead of shoes? How can you tell what time of year it is?
**Syntax:** What does it mean “came to our block”?

**Vocabulary:** spoiled, bunch
**Syntax:**
Why are the “neighbors be standing in a bunch”? What would make “everything else in the whole house be spoiled”?

What is happening at their house? Why would the characters be worried about grandma? Why do you think it took a while to find the cat? Why do you think the author did not tell us about the fire in the beginning of the story?

**Syntax:**
What does it mean everything “turned to charcoal and ashes”? What is the difference between a house and an apartment? What do you think the mood is on this page?
Close Reading Read Aloud

The first day we moved in, the neighbors brought pizza and cake and ice cream. And they brought a lot of other things too.

The family across the street brought a table and three kitchen chairs. The very old man next door gave us a bed from when his children were little.

My other grandpa brought us his beautiful rug. My mother’s other sister, Sally, had made us red and white curtains. Mama’s boss, Josephine, brought pots and pans, silverware and dishes. My cousin brought me her own stuffed bear.

Everyone clapped when my grandma made a speech. “You are all the kindest people,” she said, “and we thank you very, very much. It’s lucky we’re young and can start all over.”

That was last year, but we still have no sofa and no big chairs. When Mama comes home, her feet hurt. “There’s no good place for me to take a load off my feet,” she says. When Grandma wants to sit back and hum and cut up potatoes, she has to get as comfortable as she can on a hard kitchen chair.

So that is how come Mama brought home the biggest jar she could find at the diner and all the coins started to go into the jar.

Now the jar is too heavy for me to lift down. Uncle Sandy gave me a quarter. He had to boost me up so I could put it in.

After supper Mama and Grandma and I stood in front of the jar. “Well, I never would have believed it, but I guess it’s full,” Mama said.

My mother brought home little paper wrappers for the nickels and the dimes and the quarters. I counted them all out and wrapped them all up.

On my mother’s day off, we took all the coins to the bank. The bank exchanged them for ten-dollar bills. Then we took the bus downtown to shop for our chair.

Questions:
Why would people bring things to the family? Discuss all the ways the author and illustrator show the mood on these two pages.

Syntax:
Why would grandma say “It’s lucky we’re young and can start all over.”

Who are some of the family members that live in or close to this neighborhood?

Vocabulary: boost
Syntax:
How do you “take a load off your feet”?

How come when you boost someone you go up? How long ago was the fire? How do you know? Why did they save for the chair? Why didn’t mom just use a credit card to buy it?

Vocabulary: exchanged
Syntax:
What is the significance of the “little paper wrappers for the nickels and the dimes and the quarters”?

How come they exchanged the coins for ten dollar bills? Why don’t they take the jar of money to the furniture stores?
We shopped through four furniture stores. We tried out big chairs and smaller ones, high chairs and low chairs, soft chairs and harder ones. **Grandma said she felt like Goldilocks in “The Three Bears”** trying out all the chairs.

Finally we found the chair we were all dreaming of. And the money in the jar was enough to pay for it. We called Aunt Ida and Uncle Sandy. They came right down in their pickup truck to drive the chair home for us. They knew we couldn’t wait for it to be delivered.

I tried out our chair in the back of the truck. Mama wouldn’t let me sit there while we drove. But they let me sit in it while they carried it up to the door.

We set the chair right beside the window with the red and white curtains. Grandma and Mama and I all sat in it while Aunt Ida took our picture.

Now Grandma sits in it and talks with people going by in the daytime. Mama sits down and watches the news on TV when she comes home from her job. After supper, I sit with her and she can reach right up and turn out the light if I fall asleep in her lap.

The End

**Syntax:**
Explain why grandma says “she felt like Goldilocks in The Three Bears”. Why did the whole family go shopping for the chair?

**Questions:**
How did the illustrator let you know which chair the family would buy?
What words did the author use to let you know how excited they were to get the chair?

**Questions:**
Besides smiling how did the illustrator show how much the girl loved the chair?

**Questions:**
What are some of the phrases on this page that set the mood?
What is the chair a metaphor for? (family unit)
Would buying a different piece of furniture mean as much to the family? Explain using information from the text.

**Additional Comprehension Questions:**

**Setting:**
1. What are the settings in the story?
2. When does the story take place?
3. How does the author “shift” the action from the present to the past?
4. Why does the author tell about the fire?

**Plot:**
1. Who is telling the story?
2. How would the story be different if Mamma or Grandma were telling it?
3. What is the problem in the story?

**Mood:**
1. How does the illustrator help us understand the mood of the characters in the story? How can we tell when the mood changes?
2. How do the colors and the borders around the pictures show the mood?