

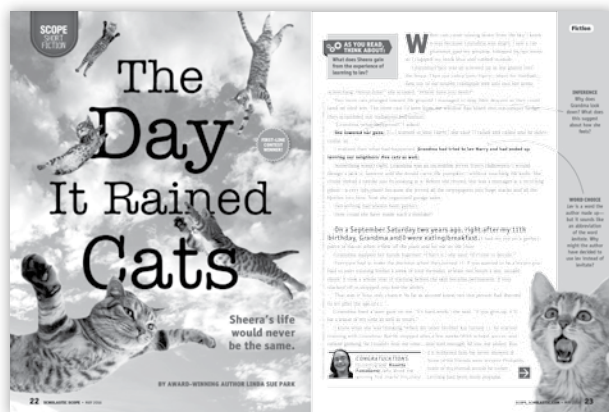
The Day It Rained Cats

A story of love, loss, and levitation

Preview: Sheera must decide whether to follow in her grandma's footsteps and learn to “lev” (levitate objects with her mind). As Sheera will discover, learning to lev requires significant sacrifices—but brings significant rewards.

Learning Objective: to identify a common theme in a fiction story and a personal essay

Key Skills: inference, word choice, character, foreshadowing, key ideas, plot, symbolism, tone



Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1 Preparing to Read

Preview the story and questions. (5 minutes)

Give students a few minutes to look over the story and skim the **close-reading questions** in the margins.

Set a purpose for reading. (5 minutes)

Read aloud the “As You Read” box. Let students know that they will find out what levving is in the story.

2 Reading and Discussing

“The Day It Rained Cats”

(25 minutes)

- Read the story once through as a class.
- Break students into groups to read the story again, pausing to discuss the close-reading questions. Have students write their answers in the margins.

Answers to Close-Reading Questions

Inference (p. 23) *Grandma's looking down suggests that she feels ashamed.*

Word Choice (p. 23) *The author has created a fictional world in which people have the ability to levitate objects; perhaps she imagined that a word for this ability would exist in this world that doesn't exist in ours. Maybe she was thinking of “lev” as a shortened version of “levitate,” similar to how we say “text” instead of “send a text message to.”*

Character (p. 24) *This line reveals that Grandma is a bit quirky; she says odd things and perhaps has her own way of doing things. It also suggest that she often has opinions about what other people should do.*

Foreshadowing (p. 24) *This line suggests that later, Sheera will let Grandma down. Sheera probably wouldn't mention that “at that moment” she really meant it unless at some other moment she found it hard to live up to her promise.*

Character (p. 24) *You can conclude that Grandma is a tough but fair teacher. She doesn't give out praise easily and has high expectations.*

► **Inference** (p. 25) *Kai is referring to when he tried to learn to lev and abandoned the effort.*

► **Word Choice** (p. 25) *“Barreling” tells you that the SUV was going dangerously fast.*

► **Character** (p. 26) *Earlier, Sheera tells us that levving requires intense concentration. In this moment, the situation is critical. As a result, her focus is no doubt incredibly strong.*

► **Character** (p. 26) *You can infer that the experience with Liam taught Sheera something about levving; it helped her find strength in herself.*

► **Plot** (p. 26) *Grandma is losing control of her levving ability. Her family wants her to stop levving because she might hurt herself or someone else.*

► **Inference** (p. 27) *Answers will vary. Students may say that Grandma is talking about Sheera’s life in general. Sheera is responsible for what she does with her life, and what she gets out of her life (what she harvests from her “garden”) will depend on what she puts into it.*

► **Symbolism** (p. 27) *Butterflies often symbolize freedom, change, growth, hope, new beginnings, joy, etc. The flying card might symbolize the big changes that have recently occurred in Sheera’s life—her learning to lev and the loss of her grandmother. The card could also symbolize Grandma living on through Sheera’s memories and Sheera’s levving.*

“The Chance to Learn From My Dad”

(25 minutes)

- Read “The Chance to Learn From My Dad” aloud as students follow along in their magazines.
- As a class, discuss the following questions.

Close-Reading Questions

(5 minutes, activity sheet online)

► **What is the tone of Christy Damio’s essay? Explain.** (tone) *The tone is regretful. Damio uses the phrases “I had missed my chance” and “I regret” as she looks back on her decision not to study guitar with her dad.*

► **Damio refers to her “missed opportunity.” In your own words, explain what opportunity Damio believes she missed.** (key ideas) *She is referring to the opportunity to learn guitar from her dad and in doing so, spend time with him and get to know more about him.*

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What makes a skill or tradition worth carrying on?
.....

What is a legacy?
.....

What kind of sacrifices are worth making?

Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes, activity sheet online)

► **How does Linda Sue Park establish Grandma’s character? What makes Grandma memorable?** *Grandma’s personality is revealed through her quirky expressions (“It’s your shower curtain”), her strong organizational skills, her ability as a levver, her aversion to hugging, her demanding teaching style, and her resilience and grace (she accepts that she can’t lev anymore).*

► **Is the ability to lev worth the sacrifices that Sheera makes? Why or why not?** *Answers will vary. Students might say no, because levving is an outdated skill. Others might say yes, because levving can still be very useful and even save someone’s life. Plus, it was only a year that Sheera had to spend in intense training. Students could also point to Damio’s essay and say that if Sheera hadn’t learned to lev, she might have regretted it later.*

► **Damio writes that if she could go back, she would have “taken Sheera’s path.” What does Damio mean?** *Damio means that she wishes that she had made a commitment to studying with her dad the way Sheera made a commitment to studying with her grandma. Damio believes that if she had, she would have enjoyed spending time with her dad, gotten to know him better, and learned more from him—not just about playing the guitar but about life in general.*

3 Skill Building

Featured Skill: Theme

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

Distribute the activity sheet **What Is Special?** It will prepare students for the writing prompt on page 27.

Differentiation

For Struggling Readers

In a well-organized paragraph, explain how Sheera changes over the course of the story. Use text evidence to support your ideas.

For Advanced Readers

Imagine that Sheera has a younger cousin who will soon have to decide whether to learn to lev. Write a letter from Sheera to her cousin, offering advice on which path to choose. Include details from Sheera's experiences.

Complexity Factors

See how these texts will challenge your students.

Levels of Meaning/Purpose: In this unusual coming-of-age story, the author explores themes of sacrifice and commitment, loss, family, and legacy.

Structure: The text begins with a flash forward to the story's climax. The story also includes foreshadowing and requires readers to make numerous inferences about character motivation and setting. The essay contains compare/contrast structures.

Language Conventionality and Clarity:

- **Vocabulary:** some higher academic vocabulary (e.g., *plummet*, *indignant*, *bristled*, *subtleties*), as well as the created words *lev*, *levving*, and *levver*.
- **Figurative language:** metaphors, onomatopoeia, irony, alliteration

Knowledge Demands: Familiarity with the fantasy genre will be helpful in reading the story; students must understand that this story takes place in an imaginary world. The essay refers to civil rights.

Lexile: 710L (story); 930L (essay)

Literature Connections

Texts that explore the bond between generations:

- "The Grandfather" by Gary Soto (short story)
- "Two Kinds" by Amy Tan (short story)
- "The Wise Old Woman" retold by Yoshiko Uchida (Japanese folktale)

ONLINE RESOURCES

ACTIVITIES TO PRINT OR PROJECT:

- Close-Reading and Critical-Thinking Questions*
- What Is Special?*
- Literary Elements
- Quiz (two levels)
- DIY Vocabulary
- Contest Entry Form

*Supports the lesson plan

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