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## **"The Firefly Summer" Lesson Plan Guide**

*by Morgan Matson*

### **Unit Overview**

**Duration:** 3-4 weeks

**Grade Level:** 6-8

**Subject Integration:** ELA, Social Studies, Geography, Art

**Essential Question:** How do family stories and connections shape our identity and sense of belonging?

### **Learning Objectives**

**Students will be able to:**

- Analyze character development and motivation through internal and external conflicts
- Examine themes of family, belonging, identity, and healing in literature
- Make text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections
- Understand how setting influences character development and plot
- Explore the concept of family legacy and its impact on individuals
- Express understanding through multiple formats (writing, discussion, creative projects)

### **Standards Alignment**

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3:** Describe how plot developments reveal aspects of character
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2:** Determine theme and analyze its development throughout the text
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.6:** Explain how author develops point of view
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1:** Engage effectively in collaborative discussions
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1:** Write arguments supporting claims with clear reasons and evidence

### **WEEK 1: Setting the Stage and Early Chapters**

#### **Day 1: Pre-Reading and Context Building**

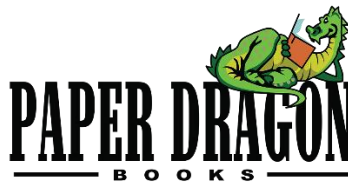
**Objective:** Activate prior knowledge about family dynamics and summer experiences

**Materials:** Map of Pennsylvania/Poconos, summer camp images, family tree template

#### **Opening (10 minutes)**

- Quick-write: "Describe a time you visited family members you didn't know well"
- Partner share responses

#### **Main Activity (30 minutes)**



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**1. Setting Exploration (15 minutes)**

- Locate the Poconos on a map
- View images of summer camps and lake settings
- Discuss: How might setting influence a character's experience?

**2. Family Dynamics Preview (15 minutes)**

- Introduce vocabulary: estranged, legacy, reconciliation, belonging
- Create basic family tree template
- Discuss different types of family structures and relationships

**Closing (5 minutes)**

- Preview reading assignment: Chapters 1-2
- Set purpose: "As you read, think about why Ryanna decides to accept her grandparents' invitation"

**Assessment:** Family tree completion, participation in discussion

**Day 2: Meeting Ryanna**

**Objective:** Analyze protagonist's initial situation and motivations

**Materials:** Character analysis chart, text evidence worksheet

**Opening (10 minutes)**

- Think-pair-share: "What surprised you about Ryanna's decision?"

**Main Activity (30 minutes)**

**1. Character Foundation (20 minutes)**

- Complete character analysis chart for Ryanna
- Focus questions:
  - What does Ryanna want most?
  - What fears or concerns does she have?
  - What motivates her to take this risk?
- Find text evidence for each trait identified

**2. Prediction and Purpose Setting (10 minutes)**

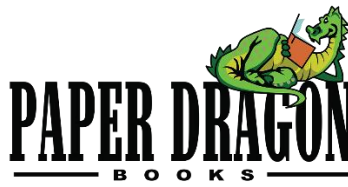
- Students predict what Ryanna hopes to discover
- Create "Questions Ryanna Might Want Answered" list

**Closing (5 minutes)**

- Exit ticket: "What would you most want to learn about a parent you didn't remember?"

**Homework:** Read Chapters 3-4

**Assessment:** Character chart accuracy, quality of text evidence



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### **Day 3: Arrival at Camp**

**Objective:** Analyze how setting affects character emotions and development

**Materials:** Setting analysis worksheet, colored pencils

#### **Opening (5 minutes)**

- Quick discussion: "How did Ryanna's expectations compare to reality?"

#### **Main Activity (35 minutes)**

1. **Setting Impact Analysis (20 minutes)**
  - Create visual map of the camp setting
  - Identify how different locations affect Ryanna's mood/discoveries
  - Compare urban vs. rural/camp settings
2. **Family Introduction Tracking (15 minutes)**
  - Begin chart of family members Ryanna meets
  - Record what each person shares about her mother
  - Discuss: How do these stories help Ryanna?

#### **Closing (5 minutes)**

- Gallery walk of camp maps
- Assign reading: Chapters 5-6

**Assessment:** Setting analysis depth, family member tracking accuracy

### **Days 4-5: Building Connections**

**Objective:** Track relationship development and family history revelation

**Materials:** Relationship web worksheet, family story tracker

#### **Structure for Each Day:**

- **Opening (10 min):** Reading journal share
- **Main Activity (30 min):** Literature circles with rotating roles (Discussion Leader, Memory Keeper, Connection Maker, Questioner)
- **Closing (5 min):** Key insights sharing

**Reading Assignments:** Continue through early-middle chapters **Assessment:** Literature circle role sheets, reading journal quality

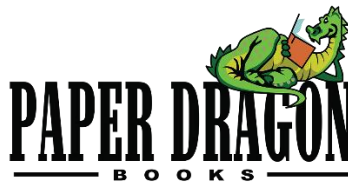
### **WEEK 2: Deepening Understanding and Mystery Development**

#### **Day 6: The Treasure Map Discovery**

**Objective:** Analyze symbolism and multiple layers of meaning

**Materials:** Symbol analysis worksheet, treasure map template

#### **Opening (10 minutes)**



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- Partner discussion: "Why do you think the author included a literal treasure map?"

### **Main Activity (30 minutes)**

1. **Symbolism Exploration** (20 minutes)
  - Identify what the treasure map represents beyond literal treasure
  - Create chart: "Types of Treasure Ryanna Discovers"
  - Categories: Family memories, relationships, self-knowledge, physical items
2. **Mystery Element Analysis** (10 minutes)
  - Track clues about family estrangement
  - Predict what Ryanna will ultimately discover
  - Discuss how mystery elements engage readers

### **Closing (5 minutes)**

- Share one "treasure" from personal family experiences

**Assessment:** Symbol analysis depth, prediction quality with reasoning

## **Day 7: Family Legacy Focus**

**Objective:** Examine how family history shapes identity

**Materials:** Legacy web graphic organizer, discussion question cards

### **Opening (5 minutes)**

- Quick-write: "What family trait or story defines who you are?"

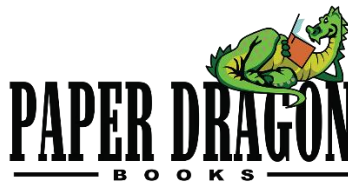
### **Main Activity (35 minutes)**

1. **Legacy Mapping** (25 minutes)
  - Create visual web showing how Ryanna's mother's legacy appears in:
    - Stories relatives tell
    - Physical objects/places
    - Personality traits Ryanna recognizes in herself
    - Family traditions or values
2. **Discussion Circles** (10 minutes)
  - Rotating small groups discuss:
    - How do family stories shape our identity?
    - What's the difference between knowing about someone and knowing them?
    - Why might parents sometimes not share family history?

### **Closing (5 minutes)**

- Whole group share: One insight about family legacy

**Homework:** Interview a family member about a relative's story



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**Assessment:** Legacy web completion, quality of discussion contributions

### **Day 8: Relationship Dynamics**

**Objective:** Analyze complex family relationships and conflicts

**Materials:** Relationship analysis chart, conflict tracking sheet

#### **Opening (10 minutes)**

- Share highlights from family member interviews

#### **Main Activity (30 minutes)**

1. **Relationship Analysis (20 minutes)**
  - Chart relationships between: Ryanna, her father, grandparents, extended family
  - Identify sources of conflict and connection
  - Analyze how Ryanna's presence affects family dynamics
2. **Perspective Taking (10 minutes)**
  - Students write brief diary entries from different characters' perspectives
  - Focus on the family estrangement from multiple viewpoints

#### **Closing (5 minutes)**

- Exit ticket: "What's one thing you understand better about family relationships?"

**Assessment:** Relationship analysis accuracy, perspective-taking quality

### **Days 9-10: Character Growth and Resolution Approach**

**Objective:** Track character development and predict resolution

**Follow structure from Days 4-5 with focus on:**

- How Ryanna changes throughout her summer
- Evidence of growing family connections
- Resolution of the family mystery
- Preparation for story conclusion

### **WEEK 3: Resolution and Synthesis**

#### **Day 11: Story Resolution Discussion**

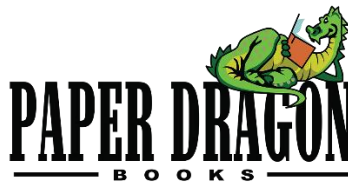
**Objective:** Analyze story conclusion and character transformation

**Materials:** Before/after character chart, theme analysis worksheet

#### **Opening (10 minutes)**

- Complete final reading independently or in pairs
- Initial reaction sharing

#### **Main Activity (30 minutes)**



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1. **Transformation Analysis** (20 minutes)
  - Complete before/after charts for Ryanna
  - Identify key moments that led to change
  - Discuss: What does "belonging" mean to Ryanna now?
2. **Theme Synthesis** (10 minutes)
  - Identify major themes and supporting evidence
  - Create theme statements with text support
  - Connect themes to universal human experiences

**Closing (5 minutes)**

- Quick-write: "What's the most important thing Ryanna learned this summer?"

**Assessment:** Character transformation analysis, theme identification accuracy

**Day 12: Family Stories Project Introduction**

**Objective:** Connect personal experience to literary themes

**Materials:** Project guideline sheets, various supplies

**Project Options:**

1. **Family Story Collection:** Interview relatives and create illustrated anthology
2. **Legacy Timeline:** Visual timeline showing how family history influences present
3. **"Treasure Map" Creation:** Design map showing personal/family "treasures" and their locations
4. **Alternative Ending:** Write different resolution exploring "what if" scenarios
5. **Family Tree Plus:** Expanded family tree with stories, personality traits, and connections

**Structure:**

- **Opening** (10 min): Project explanation and choice
- **Work Time** (30 min): Planning and initial work
- **Closing** (5 min): Partner sharing of project plans

**Assessment:** Project plan quality, connection to themes

**Day 13: Project Work Day**

**Objective:** Develop creative projects demonstrating understanding

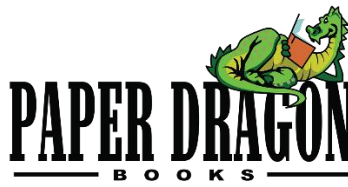
**Materials:** Various art and writing supplies, computers if available

**Opening (5 minutes)**

- Review project expectations and timeline

**Main Activity (35 minutes)**

- Independent or partner project work



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- Teacher conferences with students about progress
- Peer consultation opportunities

**Closing (5 minutes)**

- Progress sharing with accountability partner

**Assessment:** Work progress, effective use of class time

**Day 14: Project Presentations and Unit Reflection**

**Objective:** Share learning and synthesize unit themes

**Materials:** Presentation rubric, reflection prompts

**Opening (5 minutes)**

- Presentation guidelines and audience expectations

**Main Activity (35 minutes)**

- Student presentations (4-5 minutes each)
- Audience provides feedback using "What I learned..." and "What impressed me..." stems

**Closing (5 minutes)**

- Unit reflection writing: "How did this book change your thinking about family or belonging?"

**Assessment:** Presentation quality, unit reflection depth

**Assessment Rubric**

**Reading Comprehension (25%)**

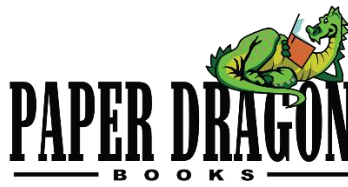
- **Exceeds:** Demonstrates nuanced understanding with sophisticated text analysis
- **Meets:** Shows solid comprehension with appropriate evidence
- **Approaching:** Basic understanding with some support
- **Below:** Limited comprehension evident

**Theme Analysis (25%)**

- **Exceeds:** Identifies and analyzes multiple themes with personal connections
- **Meets:** Recognizes major themes with adequate analysis
- **Approaching:** Identifies basic themes
- **Below:** Minimal theme recognition

**Character Development (25%)**

- **Exceeds:** Insightful analysis of character growth with clear evidence
- **Meets:** Understanding of character change with some support
- **Approaching:** Basic character development recognition
- **Below:** Limited character analysis



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### **Participation and Engagement (25%)**

- **Exceeds:** Consistently contributes meaningfully and helps others learn
- **Meets:** Regular, thoughtful participation
- **Approaching:** Some participation with encouragement
- **Below:** Minimal engagement

### **Differentiation Strategies**

#### **For Struggling Readers:**

- Audio support for challenging sections
- Graphic organizers for complex family relationships
- Partner reading opportunities
- Modified writing with sentence frames

#### **For Advanced Readers:**

- Research projects on family genealogy/oral history
- Independent reading of related contemporary fiction
- Leadership roles in literature circles
- Extended analysis of narrative techniques

#### **For English Language Learners:**

- Visual supports for character relationships
- Cultural connections to family traditions
- Native language discussion opportunities when possible
- Collaborative group work emphasis

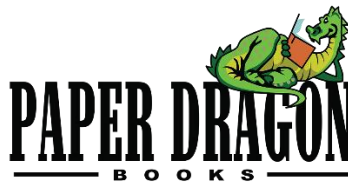
#### **For Students from Complex Family Situations:**

- Flexible family structure examples in discussions
- Alternative "chosen family" perspectives included
- Private check-ins about comfort level with topics
- Options to focus on friendships or community connections

### **Materials List**

- Class set of "The Firefly Summer"
- Maps of Pennsylvania/Poconos region
- Chart paper and markers
- Colored pencils and art supplies
- Index cards for vocabulary and character tracking
- Family tree templates
- Digital presentation tools (optional)





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### **Extension Activities**

#### **Home Connections:**

- Family story interview assignments
- Optional family history research projects
- Parent-child reading discussion guides
- Family "treasure hunt" for meaningful objects/photos

#### **Community Service:**

- Partner with local historical society for oral history project
- Create display about community families and their stories
- Volunteer at community centers that serve families

### **Cross-Curricular Connections:**

#### **Social Studies:**

- Research immigration patterns in your community
- Study how communities preserve family histories
- Explore the role of place in cultural identity

#### **Geography:**

- Map significant family locations
- Study the Poconos region's history and culture
- Explore how geography affects family settlement patterns

#### **Technology Integration:**

- Create digital family trees with multimedia elements
- Use online tools for family history research
- Design virtual "treasure maps" of family stories
- Record oral history interviews with family members