

## Unit 1/Week 1

Title: Mrs. Frisby and the Crow

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.3, RL.4.4; RF.4.3, RF.4.4; W.4.2, W.4.4; W4.9; SL.4.1, SL4.6; L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.3, L4.4

### Teacher Instructions

*Refer to the Introduction for further details.*

#### **Before Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers, about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task.

#### Big Ideas and Key Understandings

There are times when we must take a risk to help others. Sometimes our own risks endanger others.

#### Synopsis

In this fantasy story, Mrs. Frisby is a mouse that lives with her children in a country garden. When her son, Timothy, becomes ill, she makes a long, treacherous journey to get him medicine. On her way home with the medicine, she risks her life to save a young crow, who has found himself tangled in a shiny ribbon, from the ferocious farm cat.

2. Read entire main selection text, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
3. Re-read the main selection text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Vocabulary.

#### **During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire main selection text independently.

2. Teacher reads the main selection text aloud with students following along. (Depending on how complex the text is and the amount of support needed by students, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2.)
3. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions and returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e.: whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

### Text Dependent Questions

Text Dependent Questions	Answers
Why is Mrs. Frisby taking this treacherous or very dangerous journey?	Her son is ill and needs medicine.
Which route did Mrs. Frisby decide to take to get home? Why did she choose this route?	She decided to take the second choice – the path across the farmyard between the barn and the house, going not too close to the house but cutting the path by half.
Using specific details from the text, describe the biggest danger Mrs. Frisby’s faces on this second route home.	The biggest danger to Mrs. Frisby is the cat: the Dragon. He was a fierce cat. He was enormous with a broad head and a large mouth full of curving, sharp teeth. He had seven claws on each foot and long whiskers which lashed angrily from side to side. In color he was black and white, with glaring yellow eyes; and when he roared, he gave a high, strangled scream that froze the hearts of those they stood.
What evidence does the author provide to show that Timothy is a good mouse?	Timothy’s eyes often shone with merriment and he told up small jokes, which was frequently. He was a good mouse to his sister. Timothy never made fun of her. When she was sick, he sat by her side for hours, and entertained her with stories.
Why is the crow acting so strangely? Why is it so important for him to get untangled?	pp.73-76 He was tied to the fence with a piece of string that looked like wire, but was actually a length of soft string. He needs to get untangled, because he was scared of predators.

<p>What does Mrs. Frisby decide to do about the crow? Why?</p>	<p>p.76 She decides to try to free him, because he will be killed by the cat.</p>
<p>What is the message behind Mrs. Frisby's husband saying, "The size of the brain is no measure of its capacity?"</p>	<p>p.76 He was saying that you should not judge things by their size.</p>
<p>The author writes, "She was already at work with her sharp teeth, gnawing at the string." What does gnawing mean? How was Mrs. Frisby trying to free the crow from the string?</p>	<p>To gnaw means to bite at something repeatedly. Mrs. Frisby was using her teeth to bite through the string.</p>
<p>Using details from the story and illustration on page ____, describe how seeing the cat coming towards them makes the mouse and the bird feel.</p>	<p>It makes them extremely nervous. The reaction to the mean look on the cat's face, in addition to the crow keeps looking at the cat describing how he is moving towards them. (Ex. He's moving this way. Mrs. Frisby is trying to figure out what I'm doing.) Although Mrs. Frisby is nervous, Mrs. Frisby understands the importance of staying calm. If they do not, they will not be able to get away safely.</p>
<p>How does the crow help Mrs. Frisby?</p>	<p>The crow had Mrs. Frisby climb onto its back and fly out the yard from her front door, away from the cat.</p>
<p>At one point, Mrs. Frisby thinks to herself that if it had not been for the crow's foolishness, she would not have been in such a scrape or bad situation. Why doesn't she say this to the crow?</p>	<p>She didn't think it was a good idea considering the crow was carrying her on his back. He could easily drop her off if she upset him.</p>
<p>The crow tells Mrs. Frisby he is in "debt" to her. What does he mean by this?</p>	<p>He means he wants to help her the way she has always ever needs the help. He states, "I am in debt to you. The time ever comes when I can help you, I hope." He also stated, "Your life wouldn't have been so bad if it had not been for me-me and my piece of string."</p>

Vocabulary

	KEY WORDS ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTANDING	WORDS WORTH KNOWING General teaching suggestions are provided
<p><b>TEACHER PROVIDES DEFINITION</b> not enough contextual clues provided in the text</p>	<p>treacherous scrape</p>	<p>undertake, roundabout, prospect, stalked broad, lash merriment, invariably, pasture perch ineffectively capacity dubiously, authoritative previous surge, circumstances, alarmingly</p>
<p><b>STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING</b> sufficient context clues are provided in the text</p>	<p>gnawing</p>	<p>route shone, firm tangle embarrassed, recall scarcely</p>

Culminating Task

- Re-Read, Think, Discuss, Write

*Using specific details from the text, explain how Mrs. Frisby showed that sometimes we must take risks to help others, even when those other individuals have put us in a dangerous situation.*

Answer:

In the story “Mrs. Frisby and the Crow,” Mrs. Frisby showed that sometimes we must take risks in order to help others, even when others may put us in danger. First, her son, Timothy became quite ill, and Mrs. Frisby had to take incredible risks in order to get his medicine. She had to journey home across the farmyard that involved an enormous, dangerous cat named Dragon. In addition to this risk, she decided to help a crow that was stuck in a cattle wire fence. In helping this crow get out of the fence, the crow put Mrs. Frisby and itself in danger of being hurt by Dragon. However, even when she knew the cat was getting closer, Mrs. Frisby did not abandon the crow. Rather, she showed that she was determined to help him, regardless of the risk to herself and ultimately her son, whose medicine she was carrying. These two situations showed that Mrs. Frisby wanted to help others out of dangerous situations, despite the fact that it also put her life in danger.

### Additional Tasks

- Many of the paragraphs in “Mrs. Frisby and the Crow” contain long sentences with punctuation that students might be unfamiliar with, such as dashes, semicolons, and colons. Explain to students what each of these punctuation marks mean and that the author purposely chose to use each one. Model fluency by reading page 71 aloud to students. Then, have them work in pairs to practice reading aloud the remainder of the selection.
- Review the elements of fantasy. Ask students to find examples of these elements in the story.  
Answer: The animals have human traits (e.g. the mouse and crow talk to each other), the name Mrs. Frisby suggests that mice get married, etc.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**“Mrs. Frisby and the Crow”**

1. Why is Mrs. Frisby taking this treacherous or very dangerous journey?
2. Which route did Mrs. Frisby decide to take to get home? Why did she choose this route?
3. Using specific details from the text, describe the biggest danger Mrs. Frisby’s faces on this second route home.
4. What evidence does the author provide to show that Timothy is a good mouse?
5. Why is the crow acting so strangely? Why is it so important for him to get untangled?



12. The crow tells Mrs. Frisby he is in “debt” to her. What does he mean by this?