Title/Author: *The Memory String* By: Eve Bunting

Suggested Time to Spend: 5 Days (Recommendation: 1 per day; at least 20 minutes total daily)

Common Core grade-level ELA/Literacy Standards: RL.1.2, RL.1.3, RL.1.4, RL.1.7; 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

Lesson Objective:

Students will listen to a narrative story read aloud and apply their learned literacy skills through the utilization of key details and asking and answering questions from the text to analyze how a character’s feelings change over time.

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

Honor the past; embrace the future.

Laura struggles to establish a balance with honoring the memory of her mother and moving forward to build a relationship with her stepmother and father.

Synopsis

This narrative text addresses a young girl’s experience with processing the death of her mother while trying to accept the challenges of a change in family dynamics. At first, Laura does not like her stepmother, Jane, and perceives her as if she were trying to replace her mother. Laura honors her mother’s existence through the use of a memory string, which includes buttons from significant life events. When the buttons are lost on the memory string Laura learns to appreciate Jane when she sees what her true intentions are by helping to search for the lost beads.

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 sources 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.*

*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

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| **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 will be confused.Activity – Text to Self ConnectionIllustrate a significant life event shared with your parents that you want to always remember. Write at least one sentence explaining your illustration. | The goal here is for students to enjoy the book, both writing and pictures, and to experience it as a whole. This will give them some context and sense of completion before they dive into examining the parts of the book more carefully.Example- Students will draw an illustration and write about a memory with their parents, such as an exciting family vacation.  |
| SECOND READING: Character Development/AnalysisReread page 7 without stopping modeling fluent reading(Display on a document camera or projector, if possible.)Questions:* How do you think Laura feels towards her stepmother?
* What does the text say or do the illustrations show that makes you feel this way?

Reread page 8 without stopping modeling fluent readingQuestions:* Listen to this sentence, “This was my great-grandmother’s memory string,” Laura told Whiskers in a loud voice. Why do you think Laura is talking to her cat, especially using a loud voice?
* Look at this sentence: “I *am* doing something important,” Laura said. What is different about the word, am in this sentence? Why do you think the author made the word appear this way?

Reread page 11 without stopping by modeling appropriate fluency. Activity – Create an anchor chart with students that display the connection between feelings and character traits/attitudes/actions.Explain that readers need to locate clues to identify character traits by paying attention to what a character sees, thinks, says and feels. Readers also look for how the character changes from the beginning of the story to the end. Tell them that these things will help to brainstorm character traits and understand the characters better in stories. You can begin listing feelings/indicators not mentioned in *The Memory String* to lead into other examples specific to the story. | Laura feels isolated by her father and left out because of his relationship with her stepmother. Her body language (shaking her head when spoken to, rather than responding orally to her stepmother; “her shoulders were stiff” indicates that she is tense), picture clues indicate her mood is somber and her father and stepmother appear happy even without her. Laura is talking to her cat in a loud voice so that her stepmother will overhear what she is saying. It emphasizes that she is bitter, lonely, and spiteful. The word ‘*am’* is written in italics. It appears that way to emphasize Laura’s tone is abrupt and angry towards her stepmother.Teacher will generate an anchor chart with student input on different types of feelings that connect to character traits and understanding character motivations. Students’ responses can also include physical indicators from the text that align with these feelings, such as Laura’s body language and dialogue. See sample charts below.

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| **Character Feelings/Traits** | **Indicators**  |
| Sad | * Crying
* Putting their head down
 |
| Lonely | * Sitting by themselves

under a tree |
| Angry | * Mumbling under your breath
* Talking loudly
 |

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| THIRD READING: Vocabulary and Language AnalysisExplain that today you will continue to explore *The Memory String*. Reread up to page 12 without stopping modeling fluent reading. Then, call on a few students to briefly retell what you have read. * The author uses the phrase "to peer". If students do not know this word right away, reference the text so that they can use context clues to determine the meaning of this unfamiliar word. Ask the students to show what it looks like to peer.
* Laura tells Whiskers to stop squirming. Show me what it means to squirm?
* In the second paragraph it says, “It hurt to hear them happy like that.” Why do you think the author tells us this?

Reread page 14 without stopping modeling fluent reading.Questions:* Show the students the text on a document camera. Who can find a word that appears different on this page? The author tells us that Laura does not hate Jane. Why then does the author place the word in italics to place emphasis on it?
* “Dad stood in front of her, bare ankles, old torn tennis. Laura…” What does the “…” mean? What clues are in the text that make you think that?

Reread pages 17-21 without stopping modeling fluent reading.Questions:* Listen to me read this sentence (from page 21), “The one from Dad’s uniform. It was Mom’s favorite, because…because…” The other ellipses indicate an interruption made by Laura, what does the ellipse indicate here? Why is this significant to the story?
* What clues from the text let the reader know that Laura still does not like Jane?

Activity:Reference the Anchor Chart created from previous lesson on Character Traits. Reread the chart with students. Ask students if there are any other emotions and/or gestures that need to be added to the chart after today's reading. | Students will retell the text, including how Laura feels about her memory string and her stepmother.Students will demonstrate what peering means by squinting their eyes.Students will demonstrate what squirm means by wiggling their bodies back and forth. The author is noting once again that Jane bothers Laura. It also implies that Laura feels isolated by the relationship between her father and stepmother.*Hate* is emphasized. The author wants us to recognize that Laura feels indifferent toward Jane. The “…” means that Dad was interrupted when Laura said, “This last one fastened the neck of Mom’s nightgown, the one she was wearing when she died.”Laura is hesitant. This shows Laura is about to cry and could not finish her sentence. Her hesitation shows her feelings toward the memory of her mother and how important her mother is to her. It is hard for Laura to think about her mother.Jane’s voice was soft, as Mom’s would have been. But this wasn’t Mom. This was Jane. This tells the reader that she doesn’t Jane is her mother and can’t replace her mother.Add any additional information provided by students to the anchor chart. |
| FOURTH AND BEYOND:Explain that today you will continue to explore *The Memory String*. Reread up to page 18 without stopping modeling fluent reading using appropriate phrasing and pausing for all dialogue. Then, call on a few students and/or have students turn and talk to a buddy to briefly retell what you have read. Reread page 22 – 26 without stopping modeling fluent reading.Questions:* The author says (on page 26) there is a chokiness in Jane’s voice and that Laura also felt choked up. What does it mean to be choked up?
* Why is Jane choked up? How does this impact Laura’s feeling toward Jane?

Reread pages 28-31 without stopping modeling fluent reading.Question:* What words/clues from the text show that Laura’s attitude towards Jane is changing?

Reread page 32 without stopping modeling fluent reading.Question:* What does Laura think or say to Jane that proves to the reader that she has changed her opinion of her?
 | Students will retell the text.Choked up means that they are feeling sad. Jane is choked up because she feels a connection to Laura and knows she is hurting. Laura sees Jane’s intentions towards her and feels a sense of guilt for thinking terribly about Jane.* It’s like a mother.
* Remembering the soft look on Jane’s face.
* That Jane understood the true moments on the string.
* So much to think about. So much.

She thinks about possibly including a button from Jane’s painting blouse on her memory string. She says, “Will you really help me restring them, Jane?” Because she decides to finally ask for and accept Jane’s help, it shows that she is starting to trust Jane and want her in her life. |

FINAL DAY WITH THE BOOK - Culminating Task RL.1.2, W.1.1, W.1.8

*What is the lesson presented by the author in the text? What does the author say and/or what clues are provided that help the reader know this? Write and/or draw your responses and be sure to include specific evidence presented within the text.*

Student sample response:

The lesson of the story is to never forget the past, but to move forward with the future. The author tells us tells how Laura acts towards her stepmother. She acts mean and disrespectful because she misses her mom. The illustrations show that Laura taking care of her memory string and how upset she was when her cat broke it.

Student drawings may include a picture of Laura's memory string breaking with beads scattered all around. It may portray Laura's facial expression being distraught.

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 student will be unfamiliar with) |
| Page 7 porch – *n.* an exterior appendage from a buildingPage 7 twitching – *v.* short movementsPage 8 diaries – *n.* a daily record, usually private, of a person's lifePage 12 - peered – *v.* to look at searchinglyPage 12 - squirming – *v.* to wigglePage 14 glanced – *v.* to look at quicklyPage 17 leapt – *v.* jumpedPage 22 batted – *v.* to strike Page 25 cheat – *v.* dishonest act | Page 7 silvered – *adj.* coated in silverPage 8 sharp – *adj.* thin, cutting edge; piercingPage 12 christening – *n.* ceremony of baptismPage 18 sagging – *v.* to sink downwardPage 21 sifted – *v.* to separatePage 22 murmur – *v.* a mumbled expressionPage 25 replacement – *n.* the act of replacingPage 25 substitute – *n.* replacePage 26 chokiness – *v.* to stop the breath |

Extension learning activities for this book and other useful resources

* Students could begin to create a memory string or a memory box of their own. The buttons (or whatever material used) they put on their string or symbolic items placed in their boxes should be aligned with life events mentioned on their timeline.
* Teachers could incorporate this task into writing workshop. Teachers may choose to focus on lessons and/or provide some instruction on personal narratives prior to introducing this task. Teachers may choose to utilize the student checklist below in their lesson when students are revising and editing alone and/or with a partner. This allows them to work alongside the teacher by knowing the expected outcome. Teacher’s writing rubric used to score student writing should correspond accurately to the student checklist and contain the same basic components. Students will select one of the significant events mentioned on their timeline created from a previous reading and compose a personal narrative that describes a special memory between themselves and a parent. Their writing should include important details about their feelings throughout the entire experience. *Note: This is particularly supportive of English Language Learners.*

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| **Task Title: Small Moment** |  |

**Task Description:**  I created a personal narrative booklet between 3-5 pages. (W.1.3)

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|   | **Grade 1** | **Not Yet** | **Starting****To** | **Yes!** |
|  | **Structure** |   |   |   |
| **Overall** | I wrote about one small event in my life. (W.1.3) | c | c | c |
| **Lead** |   | c | c | c |
| **Transitions** | I put my pages in order like my story happened. I used words like FIRST, AND, THEN, and NEXT. (W.1.3) | c | c | c |
| **Ending** | I found a way to end my story. (W.1.3) | c | c | c |
| **Organization** | I wrote a 3-5 page story with at least one complete sentence and a matching picture. (W.1.3) | c | c | c |
|  | **Development** |   |   |   |
| **Elaboration** | I put the picture from my mind onto the page. I have details in the pictures and words. (W.1.3) | c | c | c |
| **Craft** |   | c | c | c |
|  | **Language Conventions** |   |   |   |
| **Spelling** | I wrote letters for the sounds I heard. (L.1.2.e) | c | c | c |
| **Punctuation** |   | c | c | c |

**Note:** Teacher may add to this checklist based on what has been taught in your classroom. Teacher might also add items just for you based on the next steps you are ready to add to your writing.

* Students will reference their illustrations from the activity completed after the first reading. Provide students with a graphic organizer timeline (see below) where they can continue to brainstorm/list, using pictures, words, or symbols, important events shared with their parents in their life.



 Each box on the organizer represents a year in the student’s life. It can be assumed that most students will be around

6-8 years old. Some sample events listed may be the birth of a sibling, family trip, or a team championship game, etc.

* Below is a list of other texts written by Eve Bunting. You could do an author study utilizing the texts referenced below and/or discuss the elements of literature by incorporating the question sets listed that correspond to all texts.

Texts:

* + *Train to Somewhere, The Wednesday Surprise, Jin Wu, How Many Days to America?*

Questions:

* Point out that with the exception of *The Memory String*, all of the texts are written in the first person. Why do you think that *The Memory String* has a third person narrator? Why not the others?
* What language does the author include to give the reader clues that convey feelings? This would be a good time to facilitate a discussion on the variety of adjectives and the sentence structure that Eve Bunting utilizes throughout her texts.
* What happens in the story? Beginning, middle, and end? Guide students to incorporate story vocabulary and details during their retellings/summaries of the stories.
* What is the conflict in the story? How is it resolved?
* Where and when does the story take place? Without looking at the illustrations, what do we know about the setting from the words in the text?
* What are the themes in the book? What message does the author communicate to the readers? What do the pictures and/or words tell us that help us know this?

Other texts with similar topics/ideas:

**Similar themes/lessons:**

* + *Like Jake and Me* by: Mavis Jukes
	+ *Grandpa Green* by Lane Smith
	+ *The Sunsets of Miss Olivia Wiggins* by Lester Laminack
	+ *Wilford Gordon McDonald Partridge* by Mem Fox

**Symbolizing importance:**

* + *The Poppy Lady: Moina Belle Michael and her Tribute to Veterans* by: Barbara Walsh
	+ *American White Table* by Margot Theis Raven
	+ *Fly Away Home* by Eve Bunting
	+ *The Caged Birds of Phnom Penh* by Frederick Lipp

**What Makes This Read-Aloud 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.

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

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*Due to the "AD" (adult directed) Lexile measure, it should be noted that this type of text should be read aloud to students initially, as it may present a challenging reading experience.*

1. **Qualitative Features**

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

**Middle** There are clues leading to the concrete theme of honoring the past and embracing the future presented throughout the text, although guidance may be required as students work to locate indicators from the author.

**Low** This story is easy to retell and organized sequentially to convey how the character’s feelings change over time.

**Middle-Low** The language is fairly literal and should be recognizable to students. There are some compound sentences, but most are simple sentences, including some dialogue. There are a few vocabulary words that may pose a challenge for students, but most should be familiar. The pictures may not always match the intended meaning in the entire story but are not always needed to fully grasp the author’s intended meaning. Most of the pictures directly correlate with the text printed on the page.

**Middle-Low** This narrative text addresses a young girl’s experience with processing the death of her mother while trying to accept the challenges of a change in family dynamics. Students should be familiar with the topic of facing challenges (i.e. adjusting to new sibling, loss of a loved one, divorce, etc.) but may not be able to directly relate to the instances mentioned in the text.

**Meaning/Purpose**

**Structure**

**Language**

**Knowledge Demands**

\*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?

Generating the big idea in the text and narrowing it down to one specific focus; guide students to activating background knowledge and searching for explicit and implicit clues throughout the text to help them arrive at their decision.

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

By pairing it with other narrative texts as well as informational texts, it can help them to learn and understand life lessons presented in society, such as appreciating the importance of family bonds, coping with new situations appropriately, accepting and understanding others differences, etc.

1. **Grade level**

What grade does this book best belong in? 1st

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