The Big One

On an ice-fishing trip, Joe reaps in a connection with his dad

About the Article

Levels
Lexile Range: 600L-700L
Guided Reading Level: Q
DRA Level: 40

Learning Objectives
Students will discuss the meaning of “the big one” and identify the main idea of the story: that Joe’s big catch is getting his dad to understand his passion for fishing.

Content-Area Connections
Social-Emotional Learning: communication, relationship building

Key Skills
Main idea, vocabulary, interpreting text, tone, inference, figurative language, character, plot, narrative writing

Standards Correlations
This article and lesson support the following Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, W.3, SL.1, L.4, L.5

Audio: Our audio version of this story provides support for struggling readers or works as a read-aloud for your whole class. Important Note! You can find this story read by a Storyworks editor or as a text-to-speech experience. See page T1 for details.

Skill Builders to print or project:
- Vocabulary
- Critical-Thinking Questions
- Main idea
- Core Skills Workout: Plot, Setting, Author’s Craft
- Comprehension Quiz*

*Available on two levels
Step-by-Step Lesson Plan
Close Reading, Critical Thinking, and Skill Building

1. Preparing to Read
Preview Text Features and
Set a Purpose for Reading (5 minutes)
• As a class, look at the illustration on page 10 and read the title and subtitle. Ask students what activity they think the boy is doing and what the weather is like. Draw their attention to the “Knowledge Builder” note at the top of page 12 to help them understand what ice fishing is.
• Call on a volunteer to read aloud the Up Close box on page 11. Invite students to predict what they think Joe really wants in the story, based on what they’ve previewed so far.

Vocabulary (10 minutes, Skill Builder online)
• Distribute our vocabulary Skill Builder to preview five words. Students will also be able to add other unfamiliar words from the story.
• Vocabulary words include official, bait, slumped, reel, and waterlogged.

2. Close Reading
First Read: Get to Know the Text (20 minutes)
• Have students read the story independently or listen to the audio as they follow along.

Second Read: Unpack the Text (30 minutes)
• Read the story again as a class, pausing to discuss the close-reading questions in the margins. Answers follow.
• Discuss the critical-thinking questions.

Answers to Close-Reading Questions
• Interpreting Text (p. 11) The Big One is an impressive fish that you feel good about because such a catch doesn’t happen often. The author makes this seem dramatic by slowing down the action. He uses dots (ellipses) to draw out the sentences and says that catching The Big One happens “once in your life . . . if you’re lucky . . .”.
• Tone (p. 11) Jack grumbles as he says “Beginner’s luck” because he’s bored with fishing and probably jealous that his brother caught a fish and he didn’t.
• Main Idea (p. 11) Joe is different from the rest of his family because he finds fishing exciting and the rest of his family thinks it’s boring. For Joe, there’s something magical about it that only people who fish understand.
• Inference (p. 12) Joe thinks “Uh-oh” because he knows that neither of his parents will want to accompany him on the ice-fishing trip. They don’t like fishing, and it will be freezing cold.
• Figurative Language (p. 12) “Brighter than the sun” shows that the light was glaring, especially since Joe had just woken up. “Smacked in the face” shows how hard the wind was. “Stretched all the way up to the sky” tells you that the trees were very tall.
• Main Idea (p. 13) Joe really wants his dad to have a good time fishing. He doesn’t want to feel like he’s the only kid whose parent isn’t participating or happy with the activity. He wants his dad to understand what makes fishing fun.
• Character (p. 13) Joe loves fishing because it gives you time to talk and connect with people. You can infer that Joe probably likes that it’s a calm, slow activity that lets him appreciate what, or who, is around him.
• Character (p. 13) Joe’s feelings suddenly change because he realizes how cold his dad is. He’s probably worried that since they didn’t catch anything, his dad’s idea that fishing is boring has been confirmed.
• Plot (p. 14) Excitement builds up as Joe is
reeling in whatever is hooked on his line. The reader, along with Joe, his dad, and everyone else on the fishing trip, anxiously wonders what big fish it is. The excitement falls when everyone realizes that Joe has pulled out a soggy stuffed elephant.

- **Write Your Own Question** (p. 14) Answers will vary. Students might ask: How has Joe’s dad’s opinion of fishing changed? or Why is Joe surprised that his dad had a good time?

- **Main Idea** (p. 14) Joe means that getting his dad to like fishing is, for him, “catching The Big One.” His dad was like a hard-to-catch fish, but now Joe no longer feels odd in his family for being the only one who likes fishing.

**Critical-Thinking Questions**

- In the story, Joe says “All fishermen are hopeful people.” Do you think Joe is a hopeful person? (character) Answers will vary. On fishing trips, Joe is constantly hopeful that he will catch something, even though it doesn’t happen very often. He keeps hoping that his family will want to go fishing again after their first trip. But he does not seem hopeful that one of his parents will accompany him on the ice-fishing trip.

- Why do you think Joe wanted his family to understand his love of fishing? Do you think it’s important for family members to enjoy the same activities? Explain your answer. (main idea) Joe probably wanted his family to understand his love of fishing because it would show that they understand him—a person who likes to talk and connect. Answers to the second question will vary.

### 3. Skill Building
**Featured Skill: Main Idea**

- Distribute our main idea Skill Builder and have students complete it in small groups. They will then be prepared to respond to the writing prompt at the bottom of page 14.

**Differentiate and Customize**

**For Struggling Readers**

Have a group discussion about what makes Joe happy at the end of the story. Make a list of students’ ideas. Then invite students to use the list to help them write a note from Joe to his dad, expressing his appreciation for coming on his fishing trips.

**For ELL Students**

This story has several idiomatic expressions that might be difficult for ELLs. Review the meanings of these lines: They just didn’t get it (p. 11); I got the nerve to bring it up (p. 12); made his way straight for the little tent (p. 13); that was a blast (p. 14).

**For Advanced Readers**

Ask students to work in groups to decide what kind of book club they would put this story in; for example, family stories or kids’ passions. Then they can do research to find other books for that club and choose one to read together!

**For Social-Emotional Learning**

In this story, Joe struggles when he has to ask one of his parents to go ice fishing with him. Use this as an opportunity for students to practice reaching out to someone—a friend, a family member, a new kid—to do something together. In pairs, have them practice extending oral invitations.