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English Language Arts

A Fishy Christmas

Lesson 2 & 3

Objective

RL4.2: In this lesson, students will practice summarizing a story and identifying a theme.

[1] Walter's eyes were fixed on the glow-in-the-dark frogs and lizards stuck to his ceiling. He sighed. If only he could fall asleep! But his mind was on the big box that had arrived that day from his grandmother in America: Christmas presents, he was sure.

[2] This was Walter's second Christmas on the tropical island of Zanzibar. When his parents had moved the family there over two years ago to study dolphins, Walter had been unprepared for his first tropical Christmas. Sure, it was awesome to go out in the powerboat every day to search for dolphin pods with his parents, but that first holiday had been strange....

[3] Most of the islanders were Muslim,[1] so they didn't celebrate Christmas. December 25 was just another day to them. There were no holiday parties like the ones at home in America. Even the family's Christmas tree — a

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young coconut palm tree decorated with strings of shells and seaweed — had been a shock to Walter.

[4] But that had been the first Christmas. Tomorrow would be his second, and he was looking forward to the different — but still exciting and fun — celebration[2] with his family.

[5] Walter tiptoed over to the open window. It was a moonless night, but a tiny row of lights flickered on the horizon.[3] "It's the fishermen," Walter whispered, "searching for the big fish that surface because of the lantern lights. At least someone else is awake besides me...."

[6] The father of Walter's friend Hamisi was a fisherman. He slept all morning, repaired nets in the afternoon, and, when the sun set, he went out in his fishing boat. He didn't return until the sun rose again.

[7] *Clonk, clonk.* Walter woke up to the sound of small rocks hitting the wooden shutters[4] on his window. "Walter! Come to the door!" whispered a voice.

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[8] Hamisi? Walter thought. What was he doing here? Hamisi didn't celebrate Christmas.

[9] "Coming." Walter yawned as he jumped out of bed and padded to the door.

[10] Hamisi was breathing hard. "My father is not back yet. My mother is so worried. We do not know what has happened to him. My mother told me to run here and ask your fa — " Hamisi didn't have the chance to finish his sentence.

[11] "Mom! Dad!" Walter called, racing to their bedroom. "Wake up!" He bumped into his mother as she opened the bedroom door.

[12] "Merry Christmas, Walter," his mother said, raising her eyebrows. "And Hamisi! How are you?"

[13] "Morning," Walter's dad said, coming to the door. "Did you check to see if Santa's sleigh managed to fly all the way to Zanzibar?"

[14] Walter ignored the question. "Dad, we need your help!"

[15] "Baba Walter," Hamisi said, "my father is in trouble. His boat didn't return this morning with the others. Your powerboat is much faster than the fishing boats. My mother wonders if you will help us look for him...." Tears glistened in Hamisi's eyes.

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[16] Walter's father immediately began getting dressed. "We need people and a strong rope. Hamisi, tell your family and any others you can find to get down to the beach right away."

[17] Hamisi sprinted[5] off.

[18] "Walter, get the rope from the storeroom. We might need to pull the boat when we find it."

[19] Walter nodded.

[20] A search-and-rescue team gathered at the beach and was ready when Walter's family arrived. Last year, a fishing boat had gone missing, too. In the end, the news hadn't been good. But this time it was Christmas morning, Walter reminded himself. They *had* to find Hamisi's father.

[21] The tide was out, so the rescue team had to carry the powerboat until the water reached their knees. No one spoke. Everybody scouted for signs of Hamisi's father's *ngalawa*, the traditional[6] wooden boat with one sail.

[22] Walter's father started up the engine and headed out to sea. "What are the fishermen catching these days?" he asked Hamisi. The bigger the catch, the farther out the boats would fish. Even Walter had learned that.

[23] "Tuna and red snapper," Hamisi quickly replied.

[24] The sun burned overhead like fire. They searched for several hours, but there was still no sign of the boat. Walter watched his friend grow quieter and quieter, his forehead bunched up with worry.

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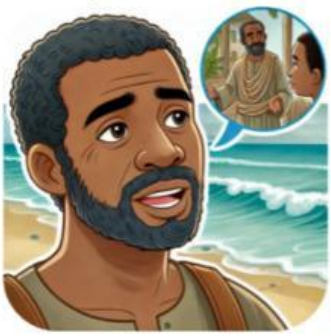
[25] Suddenly Hamisi shouted, "Look! That's our boat! Father!"

[26] Walter's father slowed the powerboat. As they neared the *ngalawa*, they could see Hamisi's father lying down. He was waving one arm.

[27] Walter's father tied the rope to the *ngalawa* and leaped aboard. Hamisi's father was exhausted[7] and was so thirsty he could barely speak, but other than that, he seemed fine. Hamisi climbed into the *ngalawa* and held his father's hand as they were slowly and steadily towed back to shore.

[28] It took five grownups to carry Hamisi's father's catch onto the beach. Everyone admired the huge fish: a black marlin longer than Walter's father was tall.



[29] Hamisi's father sipped some water while he told them his story. "Only small fishes had gotten caught in my net, and I knew they would bring no money for us," he said, shaking his head. "So I decided to move the boat, just a little, and before I knew it, something big was pulling on my line. The *ngalawa* leaned over and took in some water."

[30] Hamisi's father rubbed his eyebrows, shaking his head again. "I knew this beast would make much money for our family, so I couldn't let it go. I held the line until my arms screamed in pain... and yet I held on even longer." He rubbed his arms. "I fought the fish for hours, but I won. With my last bit of strength, I pulled it into the boat. Then I must've fallen asleep. I was so tired! It was the sound of your powerboat that woke me up." Hamisi's father laughed.

[31] After the rescue, Walter suddenly remembered it was Christmas Day. He still had to empty his Christmas stocking and open the huge box from Grandma. And as for Christmas dinner, Walter and his family were having grilled black marlin fish... and coconut ice cream for dessert.

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Practice

Recall the story content and do the tasks

Paragraph 4

Task 1 Which sentence is the best summary of paragraphs 1-4?

A. Walter is angry that his family is visiting Zanzibar during Christmas, which is very different from America.

B. Walter is excited to celebrate his second Christmas in Zanzibar, which is very different from where he lived in America.

Paragraph 19

Task 2 In 1-2 sentences, summarize what happens when Hamisi comes to Walter's house in the middle of the night.

Paragraph 24

Task 3 In 1-2 sentences, summarize what happens during the search for Hamisi's dad.

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Paragraph 28

Task 4 Summarize what happens when the rescue team finds Hamisi's father.

Paragraph 30

Task 5 Summarize what happens to Hamisi's father while he is missing.

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