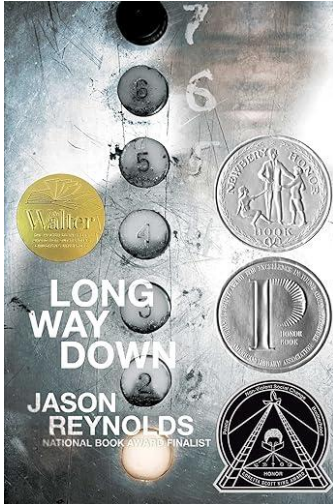




Unit Overview:

Long Way Down by Jason Reynolds

Introduction



In this unit, students will explore themes of grief and loss, morality and revenge, gun violence and the relationship between an individual and societal pressures. Through learning about one young man's inner conflict with grief and revenge, students will recognize the ways humans are impacted by loss, while appreciating the individual power one has in the face of pressures to conform.

Jason Reynolds' award-winning novel in verse, *Long Way Down*, tells the story of Will, a 15-year-old who is immobilized by grief over the murder of his beloved older brother. Spanning 1 minute and 7 seconds, *Long Way Down* details the course of Will's elevator journey down the seven floors of his building as he grapples with the decision of whether to murder the guy who killed his brother. At each stop on the way down, a different ghost enters the elevator and offers insight and advice to Will. As each ghost reveals a missing piece of the puzzle, Will's beliefs, assumptions and truths he holds on to are all called into question. Will he decide to seek revenge and avenge his brother's death, or is he open to other possible outcomes?

This unit is designed to push students to dissect the rich figurative language of *Long Way Down*, while grappling with the tension between what is right and wrong and what it takes to resist norms imposed on an individual. When reading the novel, students will consider the deeper meaning behind figurative and descriptive language, gain experience analyzing poetic devices such as line breaks and blank space, infer an author's criticisms and beliefs about our world and parse out how individual plot devices influence our protagonist and the overall plot of the novel.

In addition to following Will's story, students will engage in a daily word or world knowledge building routine. This routine introduces students to key vocabulary and content knowledge that will help them better understand gun violence, toxic masculinity and cycles of revenge. Throughout the summer, students will get daily practice exploring, analyzing and practicing strong argumentative writing in order to be able to articulate their ideas and understanding of the novel.

Standards of Focus

- [NY-7.R.1](#)
- [NY-7.R.2](#)
- [NY-7.R.3](#)
- [NY.7.R.4](#)
- [NY.7.R.5](#)
- [NY.7.W.1](#)

Learning Goals

Essential Question

- When should we break rules?

Enduring Understandings

- We should break rules when we can collectively benefit as a larger community, even if there may be a cost to the individual.
- We should break rules that don't serve us well or that cause more harm than good if we follow them.
- When rules are in direct conflict with our moral and ethical codes, we should consider breaking them.

Writing Skills

This unit's lessons are designed to develop students' writing skills, helping them confidently express ideas about the text. Each day, teachers will present a focused Mini-lesson on a key writing concept, which students will then apply in their Independent Writing about the day's text.

Key Points

- A full paragraph includes a claim, context, two pieces of evidence and analysis that explains how the evidence supports the claim.
- A claim must answer all parts of the question.
- Evidence is relevant and sufficient if it fully supports the claim.
- Strong analysis needs to do more than restate the claim or evidence. It needs to explain how/why the evidence proves the overall argument of your paragraph.
- When writing your context, include what happened right before the evidence. Do not include what is happening in the evidence.
- It can be really effective to show cause and effect in your analysis by using words like "since" or "because."
- It can be really effective to use phrases like "instead of" or "rather than" in your analysis to show the contrast between what happened and what could have happened.

Learning Output

Informal Written Assessments

- Students will have an opportunity to write a short response paragraph daily in response to the Deeper Meaning Discussions about the text.

End-of-Unit Assessment

- Students will take the pre- and post-assessment at the start and end of the unit.
- Students will engage in a discourse-based and written Essential Question reflection on the last day of the unit.

Optional Project

- Students will write their own collection of poetry, using many of the techniques studied in *Long Way Down*, to bring to life a moment when they had to make a challenging decision.
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Unit At a Glance

	Text	Deeper Meaning Question for Discussion and Writing	Materials		
Day 1	Unit Launch	Pre-assessment Pre-assessment Scoring Guide	Lesson 1 Daily Overview	Lesson 1 Student Work	Lesson 1 Slides
Day 2	p. 1-13	What is the purpose of the white space that Jason Reynolds includes in his poems? (NY-7.R.5)	Lesson 2 Daily Overview	Lesson 2 Student Work	Lesson 2 Slides
Day 3	p. 14-26	What does Will think about the gun violence in his neighborhood, and how does Reynolds develop this perspective? (NY-7.R.4)	Lesson 3 Daily Overview	Lesson 3 Student Work	Lesson 3 Slides
Day 4	p. 27-39	How do “The Rules” impact Will? (NY-7.R.3)	Lesson 4 Daily Overview	Lesson 4 Student Work	Lesson 4 Slides
Day 5	p. 40-54	Why does Will feel so strongly about seeking revenge for Shawn’s murder? (NY-7.R.2)	Lesson 5 Daily Overview	Lesson 5 Student Work	Lesson 5 Slides
Day 6	p. 55-70	Evaluate Will’s plan of killing Riggs to avenge Shawn’s murder. (NY-7.R.1)	Lesson 6 Daily Overview	Lesson 6 Student Work	Lesson 6 Slides
Day 7	p. 73-88	What techniques does Reynolds use to reinforce Will’s shifting state of mind? (NY-7.R.5)	Lesson 7 Daily Overview	Lesson 7 Student Work	Lesson 7 Slides
Day 8	p. 89-106	What is Reynolds trying to convey about masculinity through the interactions between Will and Buck? (NY-7.R.2)	Lesson 8 Daily Overview	Lesson 8 Student Work	Lesson 8 Slides
Day 9	p. 109-123	What implicit rules has Will been taught about how to treat women, and how has he learned them? (NY-7.R.2)	Lesson 9 Daily Overview	Lesson 9 Student Work	Lesson 9 Slides
Day 10	p. 124-133	How does Reynolds’ use of juxtaposition convey a key idea about gun violence? (NY-7.R.2; NY-7.R.4)	Lesson 10 Daily Overview	Lesson 10 Student Work	Lesson 10 Slides
Day 11	p. 134-146	How does the introduction of Dani’s character initiate a shift in how Will views The Rules? (NY-7.R.3)	Lesson 11 Daily Overview	Lesson 11 Student Work	Lesson 11 Slides
Day 12	p. 149-165	Do Uncle Mark and Will have a loving relationship? (NY-7.R.6)	Lesson 12 Daily Overview	Lesson 12 Student Work	Lesson 12 Slides
Day 13	p. 166-179	How does Will react when Uncle Mark challenges his plan to follow The Rules? (NY-7.R.3)	Lesson 13 Daily Overview	Lesson 13 Student Work	Lesson 13 Slides
Day 14	p. 180-192	How does Jason Reynolds create suspense? (NY-7.R.4)	Lesson 14 Daily Overview	Lesson 14 Student Work	Lesson 14 Slides
Day 15	p. 195-209	The reunion of Will and his father is positive. Agree or disagree. (NY-7.R.1)	Lesson 15 Daily Overview	Lesson 15 Student Work	Lesson 15 Slides
Day 16	p. 210-222	Will calls his final poem a “Random Thought.” Explain why this poem isn’t just random, using other details from today’s reading. (NY-7.R.4)	Lesson 16 Daily Overview	Lesson 16 Student Work	Lesson 16 Slides
Day 17	p. 223-234	How does Pop’s presence influence Will? (NY-7.R.5)	Lesson 17 Daily Overview	Lesson 17 Student Work	Lesson 17 Slides
Day 18	p. 237-247	How do the ghosts respond to the elevator rules, and why does this matter? (NY-7.R.3)	Lesson 18 Daily Overview	Lesson 18 Student Work	Lesson 18 Slides

Unit At-a-Glance- Condensed Lessons

Day 19	p. 249-259	Discuss Will's dramatic attitude shift and how The Rules might have contributed to this shift. (NY-7.R.6)		p. 260-271	How does Frick's point of view force Will to confront difficult truths? (NY-7.R.6)			
		Lesson 19 Daily Overview	Lesson 19 Student Work	Lesson 19 Slides	Lesson 20 Daily Overview	Lesson 20 Student Work	Lesson 20 Slides	
Day 20	p. 272-282	Reynolds plays with language and symbols in three key ways. Explain what each reveals about Will's feelings. (NY-7.R.4)		p. 283-296	How does Shawn's silence affect Will? (NY-7.R.3)			
		Lesson 21 Daily Overview	Lesson 21 Student Work	Lesson 21 Slides	Lesson 22 Daily Overview	Lesson 22 Student Work	Lesson 22 Slides	
Day 21	p. 297-306		Post-assessment Post-assessment Scoring Guide					
					Lesson 23 Daily Overview	Lesson 23 Student Work	Lesson 23 Slides	
Day 22	End-of-Unit Wrap-Up: Essential Question reflection							
					Lesson 24 Daily Overview	Lesson 24 Student Work	Lesson 24 Slides	
Differentiated Materials					Differentiated Student Work			
					Spanish Translated Student Work			

Appendix

Standards of Focus

Standard	Description	Students Should Know	Students Should Be Able to Do
NY-7.R.1	Cite textual evidence to support an analysis of what the text says explicitly/implicitly and make logical inferences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good readers understand how details presented in a text can support our own ideas.• Good readers know how to make inferences about a text.• Good readers know that multiple pieces of evidence are needed to support an idea.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good readers identify details that support their idea or opinion about a text.• Good readers connect details from a text and our own understanding about the way the world works to make educated guesses.• Good readers use multiple pieces of evidence to suppose an idea.
NY-7.R.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; summarize a text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good readers know that writers always have a deeper idea or message they want to impart through their work.• Good readers know that authors use a title to give clues about their messages and criticism.• Good readers know that authors can develop key ideas by crafting characters with differing opinions and perspectives.• Good readers know that all stories have conflicts and resolutions, and that authors communicate their message through both conflict and resolution.• Good readers know that authors develop larger ideas and themes throughout different places in a text.• Good readers know that authors reveal their beliefs by writing about how individual characters are affected by their surroundings, other characters and major conflicts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good readers recognize a topic of a text first before thinking about an author's message or criticism about the world.• Good readers recognize patterns when authors repeat key ideas, topics and ideas in order to understand a larger theme of a text.• Good readers examine how an idea is represented at the beginning, middle and end of a text section.• Good readers look closely at major conflicts and how they are resolved in order to understand an author's larger theme or central idea.• Good readers look closely at major conflicts and how they impact individual characters.• Good readers look closely at how a character relates to their surroundings, including other characters, their living environment, their community and society as a whole.

<p>NY-7.R.3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good readers know that authors create dynamic characters that change and evolve throughout a text in both positive and negative ways. Good readers know that all characters have motivations and goals that influence the way they talk, think and act. Good readers know that characters are influenced by the people and culture around them, in both positive and negative ways. Good readers know that authors include character dialogue and actions in order to communicate their unique characteristics. Good readers know that characters respond differently to key moments and plot points. Good readers know that characters are not always perfect or reliable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good readers think critically about protagonists by noticing how other characters act around them and looking closely at what other characters say and think about them. When characters make big decisions, good readers know to look back to determine how other characters and key plot points influenced their choices. Good readers examine how characters are impacted by the world around them, including individuals, their community and society at large. Good readers look closely at how characters, like people, change in reaction to the people around them. Good readers question and evaluate character decisions because they know that a character's actions and inner thoughts are not always reliable. Good readers look at a character's dialogue, actions and inner thoughts to make inferences about who they are as a person.
<p>NY-7.R.4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings. Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning, tone, and mood, including words with multiple meanings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good readers know that writers use similes and metaphors to illustrate complex character emotions. Good readers know that authors use specific words and images to establish different moods so we can have a compelling reading experience. Good readers know that the words authors choose often have multiple meanings, both literal and deeper. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good readers pay careful attention to comparisons made in the text (like similes and metaphors) and always ask themselves: What does this tell me about the character's emotions? Good readers pay careful attention to how individual words and images in the text make them feel. Good readers pay careful attention to both what a speaker says and how they say it in order to identify the speaker's tone. Good readers zoom in on keywords that an author uses to consider both the literal meaning and any other associations or feelings the word has.
<p>NY-7.R.5</p>	<p>In literary texts, analyze how structure, including genre-specific features, contributes to the development of themes and central ideas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good readers know that poets make intentional choices about where to make a line break to establish rhythm and mood. Good readers know that a poem's title can provide clues as to what the meaning and deeper meaning of a poem might be about. Good readers know that poets use blank space to help a reader know how to read a poem and when to pause. They also use blank space to emphasize a poem's mood or a speaker's mindset. Good readers know that the length of a poem or a line offers insight into the speaker's mindset and emotional experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good readers recognize intentional line breaks and break down their significance in terms of mood, rhythm and inferences about the speaker. Good readers make predictions about the meaning of a poem based on its title and interpret the significance of poem titles. Good readers recognize and analyze the significance of blank space and ask themselves: What idea or key point is being emphasized? Good readers recognize patterns in poem or line length and analyze how they contribute to the development of a speaker or mood.

NY-7.W.1

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

- Good writers know that an opinion is the personal thoughts and understandings of the reader of the text or topic.
- Good writers know that strong opinion pieces include a claim that is an original thought.
- Good writers know that adding details and evidence from the text supports the opinion.
- Good writers know that linking words help the reader make connections between the author's thoughts and ideas.
- Good writers know that opinion writing includes analysis that connects evidence and claim.
- Good writers identify the topic or claim of their opinion and make it clear.
- Good writers use details and evidence from relevant sources to prove their claim or topic sentence.
- Good writers further prove their evidence by including rationale that connects evidence and the claim/topic sentence.