Story Elements Workbook

Student Activity: In this printable activity, students read the story and take notes on the characters, setting, the problem or conflict in the story, and the solution. Then write down the main theme of the story.

It also includes pages for vocabulary, short answer questions, multiple choice questions, and a discussion worksheet for open-ended prompts.

How to share with students: These pages are sized for printing or can be assigned digitally using an LMS (like Google Classroom), where students can work on their own slide decks via "Make a Copy for Each Student." Each slide is set up with text boxes for students to type in.

Please Note: Because Diffit resources can vary in length, be sure to check the formatting on each slide.

Suggested Lesson Flow:
1. Students record what they notice and what they wonder about the image.
2. Have students read the passage and complete the First, Then, Finally notes.
3. Students complete the Story Elements graphic organizer.
4. Students answer the questions and explain their thinking.
5. Students write answers to the short answer questions.
6. Have students complete the Open Ended Questions and discuss with partners or groups.

Feel free to edit, remix, and use this resource however works best for you and your students! **Find editing tips here!**

Learn More: Please reach out with any questions or feedback. You can also learn more on our FAQ page, or get more resources at Diffit.me!

Image Analysis: Notice & Wonder

Instructions: Look at the image and write down 2-3 things you notice (key details, main ideas, themes) and then write down 2-3 things you wonder (questions you have because of the image, things you are curious about when you look at the image.)

What do you notice?	

What do you wonder?	

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Read & Summarize

Instructions: Read the passage below. Then determine what happened first in the reading, what happened next, and what happened at the end of the passage. Use complete sentences when completing the boxes.

FLACO'S JOURNEY by Kathleen Conklin

Prologue

High up on a bumpy, gray cliff, there was a nest with an egg inside. When the sun came up, the egg started to crack softly. Inside the egg, a baby owl could smell the air and lifted its head.

He didn't know that his life would make millions of people feel happy and excited 13 years later.

When he opened his eyes, he could see everything around him. There were tall pine trees and sunny, golden fields. The air smelled like pine. Far away, he could see a big, blue body of water.

His mother came back with food and fed him until he was full. Then he snuggled into the nest to sleep. Everything was perfect.

Every day, he got stronger, and his wings got bigger. One day, his mother showed him how to fly. He was so excited! He loved the feeling of the air under his wings. He felt so alive!

Every night, his mother went hunting. She would fly high above the forest and quickly swoop down to catch food in the fields below. He wanted to hunt on his own someday, and he hoped it would be soon. But someone else had different plans.

One day, he woke up to strange noises. Two-legged animals were climbing up the cliff toward the nest. He looked at his mother. She had seen these animals before and wasn't worried.

She didn't know what they were going to do until it was too late. They came out of nowhere. She spread her big wings to look bigger, but they didn't come for her.

She made a loud screeching noise and flapped her wings, but one of the animals held her back while the other one threw a net over her baby.

The two-legged animals ran down the mountain with the baby owl. The owl's mother tried to stop them with her wings and claws, but they got to their van, put the owl in a cage, and drove away.

A few hours later, the van stopped. The two-legged creatures put his cage into a big truck with cages of other eagle owls. Right away, he started asking them

First...

Then...

Finally...

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back.

The baby owl missed his mother. He remembered how happy they were when they flew together. He was afraid he would never feel that way again. He got food, but it wasn't the kind he liked. Instead, he got dry seeds that didn't taste good. He got more worried every day.

The next day, the truck stopped at a place that looked very different from his home. He saw huge buildings that were taller than any pine tree. As they took his cage from the truck, he wondered if any other owls were coming with him. Would they be able to live near each other so they could hunt, sleep, and find friends? And most importantly, would he ever fly again? Would he ever feel that amazing feeling of flying with his strong wings? He felt a little bit of hope.

The two-legged animals talked and laughed, and they passed green papers back and forth.

Then, he was put in a bigger cage.

He was now the first and only Eurasian Eagle Owl in the Central Park Zoo in New York City. The other eagle owls went to other zoos. The people who worked at the zoo called him Flaco, which means "skinny" in Spanish, because he was the smallest one.

The Central Park Zoo

Even though he missed his mother a lot, he tried to get used to his new home. But the cage wasn't big enough for him to fly. He wondered why the two-legged animals got to decide where he lived. This wasn't his home. There were no pine trees, no ocean, and no way to fly high above the trees. All he could do was hop onto fake branches that looked like a tree.

He had lots of visitors. Some would make owl noises, hoping he would do it back. They waved at him and called out "Flacoooooo!" They took pictures. But he was awake at night, so he wanted to sleep during the day. He could hear other birds nearby, but none of them were eagle owls. It made him sad. Every day, he dreamed of escaping, but he didn't know how.

Every day, he would jump from his fake branch and try to fly, but he would hit the top of the cage and fall to the ground. There just wasn't enough room. He dreamed of flying fast through the air. He wanted that back. If he couldn't go back to his home, he just wanted to fly away, out of his cage, over the tall buildings,

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and all the way to the blue ocean.

Night Visitors

Roy

Roy was a big man. Even though he was old, he looked strong with his wide shoulders, long arms, and big hands.

He had lived in Maine his whole life. He loved to watch the animals. He loved all the amazing hawks and eagles and could tell what kind they were by the sounds they made.

He loved watching the bald eagles fly over the river and swoop down to catch fish for dinner.

The old man was sick. His family wanted him to come home to New York City so they could take care of him. He thought he would stay for two weeks to make them happy, and then he would go back home. He just wanted to go back to his old home.

So, he went to the only place that reminded him of home: Central Park. Going to the zoo at Central Park made him happy. It calmed him down to be with the birds. But Maine was his home, and he wanted to go back.

He found a bench near the eagle owl's cage.

Roy had heard that the eagle owl was at least 13 years old. That was a long life for a bird. Most big birds like eagle owls only live for six or seven years. But because he had lived in a cage with no animals trying to hurt him and always had food, Flaco had lived much longer than normal.

So the cage gave the bird a long life. But was it a good life? Roy was sad that no one had made the bird cages big enough. Flaco kept trying to fly, but he kept hitting the cage.

The old man knew how he felt. He wanted to escape too.

Jenny

Every day before the zoo closed, a young woman came to visit Flaco. She sat on a bench nearby for about an hour. Roy looked at her a few times, wondering why she was there.

The next day, Roy was sitting on his bench, and the young woman came and sat down next to him. "Hi! I'm Jenny. Nice to meet you!"

Roy took his hat and said his name. When she took off her hat, he saw that she didn't have any hair either. It seemed like they had more in common than just the bench and

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Flaco.

One afternoon, Jenny came and sat down next to Roy. She said, "I used to work in there. When I got sick, they let me go." She shrugged. "They don't take very good care of their birds or their workers."

"But why are you here, then?" Roy asked.

"It's Flaco," she said. "I'm worried about him."

"I am too," Roy said. "He's not trying to fly anymore. He's just hopping from one branch to another."

"He doesn't have any energy, like he's lost all hope," Jenny added.

For the next few days, they talked about Flaco. Roy told her about the birds he had seen in Maine. Jenny was amazed at how much he knew about them! She understood why Roy loved watching birds in the wild instead of in a zoo.

Roy said he could see why Flaco would be unhappy. He knew that Flaco might have lost his hope to fly. He also couldn't do things since he got sick. But he didn't tell Jenny that, because he didn't want her to lose hope in getting better. He was old and had enjoyed his life. She hadn't had one yet.

"What can we do for him?" she asked. "He's lost his will to live!"

Roy pointed at the cage. "He's a bird! He wants to fly."

The Plan

The next day, they were sitting quietly when Roy said, "Jenny, I don't want to lose you, but I'm leaving after this weekend."

She sighed. "I'm going to miss you, Roy," she said.

Then, after a few minutes, she said, "I've been thinking about something, but I don't know how to ask."

Roy nodded. "Okay," he said. "Tell me."

Jenny said, "I want to ask you to do me a favor before you go. I know you're good with tools. I was hoping you'd... well, I want us to give Flaco his freedom. I'm too

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said.

"Come on, Roy," she said, raising her eyebrows.

He smiled. "It would be pretty easy. I'd love to help give Flaco his freedom back!"

The next day, Roy went to buy supplies. He bought a strong rope and a wire cutter to cut through the cage. Back at the bench, he and Jenny talked about their plan.

The zoo closed at 5:00 p.m. Jenny would buy a ticket 30 minutes before and then go to the Tropical Section. There were security cameras in the zoo, but Jenny knew where they all were. And the Tropical Section was the best place to hide because there were plants to hide behind. They would try to do it at 8:00 p.m. that night.

Jenny bought her ticket, went to the tropical area, and found her spot. After all the zoo workers had gone home, she used her phone light to find the wall near Flaco's cage. "Roy?" she whispered. For a scary minute, she didn't hear anything. Then, she heard, "Over here."

He threw the rope over the high stone wall, and she grabbed it. Before Roy threw it, he had tied it to the tree that they usually sat under. They would climb out using the rope and pull it back over the wall after they were done.

As Roy used the rope to climb over the wall, Flaco started to hoot. Jenny hurried to his cage, hoping to calm him down. She took a deep breath and sang a song her mom used to sing to her. She wanted Flaco to feel safe. In the dark, his orange eyes looked very bright.

Roy and Jenny looked at each other nervously. Could they do it? Flaco got even more upset, so Roy took out some raw meat for him. Flaco started eating it right away, and Roy went back to work.

He stepped on a box he had brought and could just reach the top of the cage. It was easy to cut, but he felt angry. How could humans treat animals so badly? He started ripping and tearing at the cage that had kept Flaco locked up for 13 years.

Flaco hopped up on the highest branch and watched. The food had been good! Was he finally going to get his chance to fly? It had been so long since he had flown that he wasn't sure he could. His heart beat faster and faster. He felt more and more

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excited.

Could this really be happening? Roy moved away from the hole he had made. Flaco jumped up and stood outside of his cage for the first time in 13 years. He looked around in wonder. Roy and Jenny quietly hoped that he would try to fly.

Then the wind blew into his face, and he lifted his wings. He FLEW! He flew right out of the cage he had been forced to live in for almost his whole life.

His wings felt weak from not being used. But even though he looked unsure, he felt happy. He flew into the night air.

With every flap of his wings, he found a breeze and flew with excitement. He flew above the buildings and finally saw a bit of blue in the distance.

He had finally found his hope.

Epilogue

Everyone heard about Flaco's escape. People were worried about him. He had never hunted on his own. Would he be able to survive?

Many people started following his travels online, hoping that he would survive.

The zoo workers called the people who had cut the cage "vandals." They wanted them to be punished.

No one told on them.

Roy went back to Maine and died a month later. He was happy because he heard that Flaco was still flying, hunting, and surviving.

Soon after Roy died, Jenny got a letter from his lawyer. Roy had left his house to her. Once she was better, she moved to Maine and became a bird watcher like Roy.

Flaco stayed in the city.

He learned how to fly again, and even though his mother had never taught him to hunt, he learned on his own. In a city with so many people, he found food in many places. He live mostly in Central Park and could often be seen in the tree that was near the bench where Roy and Jenny made their plan to set him free.

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there.

Bird watchers and other people kept track of him and posted pictures online. These posts became more and more popular because people thought his story was inspiring.

As time went on, he flew out of the park and into the city. He even flew over the ocean.

He sometimes landed on windowsills and looked in at people eating dinner.

Photographers took pictures of him on top of a water tower or near a baseball field, hunting for mice.

People went to the park every day to see him sleeping in the sunlight. He became a symbol for the city. He showed hope, determination, and joy, and people admired him for that. The city, and even the whole world, was hoping that he would live and be free.

Flaco died 13 months after he escaped. But he spent that time happy and flying. His death made everyone who had followed his journey sad.

He will not be forgotten.

First...

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Story Elements

Instructions: Read the story and take notes on the characters, setting, the problem or conflict in the story, and the solution. Then write down the main theme of the story.

Summary:

Flaco was a baby owl taken from his nest and put in a zoo

He made friends with Roy and Jenny, who helped him escape

Flaco lived free in New York City for 13 months and made people happy

Characters:

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Setting:

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Problem:

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Solution:

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Theme:

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Answer and Explain

Instructions: For each question, answer the question and then explain why you picked the answer you did using specific evidence from the text.

Question:

1. Which of the following statements best summarizes the main idea and key details of "Flaco's Journey?"

Pick the Answer

A) Roy and Jenny, two kind people, met at the Central Park Zoo and became friends because they both felt sorry for Flaco, a bird who lived in a cage.
B) Flaco was a skinny owl who lived in the Central Park Zoo and liked to eat dry seeds, but he missed his mother and his old home in the forest.
C) Flaco, a Eurasian Eagle Owl, was captured and lived in a zoo, but after being freed, he became a symbol of hope and freedom for the city, even after his death.
D) The Central Park Zoo is a place where people can go to see animals from all over the world, including Eurasian Eagle Owls like Flaco.

Explain: Why did you pick that answer?

Question:

2. How do the details in the epilogue of "Flaco's Journey" best support the main idea that Flaco became a symbol of hope and freedom?

Pick the Answer

A) The details show that people followed Flaco's journey online, admired his determination, and saw him as a symbol for the city, even after his death.
B) The details explain that Roy went back to Maine and died, and Jenny moved to Maine after getting Roy's house, becoming a bird watcher.
C) The details describe how the zookeepers tried to catch Flaco but eventually gave up, showing that they cared about his well-being.
D) The details mention that Flaco learned to hunt on his own and often visited the tree near the bench where Roy and Jenny planned his escape.

Explain: Why did you pick that answer?

Question:

3. Which piece of evidence does the author use to back up the claim that Flaco's escape had a positive impact on the people of the city?

Pick the Answer

A) The zookeepers tried to catch Flaco but eventually gave up, showing they didn't care about him.
B) Jenny got a letter from Roy's lawyer, indicating Flaco's escape changed her life.
C) Roy went back to Maine and died a month later, proving Flaco's escape was important to him.
D) People posted pictures of Flaco online, and these posts became popular because people found his story inspiring.
E) People posted pictures of Flaco online, and these posts became popular because people found his story inspiring.

Explain: Why did you pick that answer?

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Answer and Explain

Instructions: For each question, answer the question and then explain why you picked the answer you did using specific evidence from the text.

Question:

4. What reason does the author give to support the idea that being in the zoo was not a good life for Flaco, even though it was long?

Pick the Answer

A) Flaco got dry seeds that didn't taste good, indicating the zoo was not providing proper food.
B) Flaco kept trying to fly but kept hitting the cage, showing he lacked the freedom he desired.
C) Flaco missed his mother and the other eagle owls, showing he was lonely.
D) Flaco kept trying to fly but kept hitting the cage, showing he lacked the freedom he desired.
E) Flaco had lots of visitors who made owl noises, which annoyed him.

Explain: Why did you pick that answer?

Question:

5. The passage describes Flaco as becoming a "symbol for the city." Considering the events in the story, what does this phrase most likely mean?

Pick the Answer

A) Flaco was a mascot for the Central Park Zoo.
B) Flaco was used in advertisements to attract tourists to the city.
C) Flaco was a famous bird that everyone in the city knew personally.
D) Flaco represented hope and freedom for the people of the city.

Explain: Why did you pick that answer?

Question:

6. The author uses the word "vandals" to describe Roy and Jenny. Based on how Roy and Jenny are portrayed in the story, what does the author likely mean by calling them "vandals?"

Pick the Answer

A) The author is showing that Roy and Jenny were truly bad people who wanted to hurt the zoo.
B) The author is showing that Roy and Jenny were trying to steal other animals from the zoo.
C) The author is showing that some people thought Roy and Jenny did something wrong, even if they had good intentions.
D) The author is showing that Roy and Jenny were paid by someone else to let Flaco go.

Explain: Why did you pick that answer?

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Short Answer Questions

Question	1. The author describes how Flaco's escape and freedom impacted the people of the city. What evidence does the author provide to show how Flaco's presence changed the way people felt or acted?

Question	2. The author presents different opinions about Flaco's escape. How does the author support the view that Flaco's freedom, even after a long time in captivity, was ultimately a positive thing?

Question	3. According to the text, what is a direct result of Roy and Jenny's actions to free Flaco from the zoo? Use details from the passage to support your answer.

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Short Answer Questions

Question	4. What evidence from the passage best illustrates the idea that Flaco's life changed significantly after his escape from the zoo?

Question	5. The text describes Flaco's cage as not being big enough for him to fly. How does the phrase "not big enough" help you understand Flaco's feelings about being in the zoo?

Question	6. The author mentions that people called Roy and Jenny "vandals" for cutting Flaco's cage. How does understanding the context of the story help clarify the meaning of "vandals" in this situation?

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Reflect and Discuss

Instructions: Respond to the following question using the reading and your own knowledge and experiences. Be as thorough as possible.

1. Flaco felt trapped in his cage at the zoo. Have you ever felt trapped or like you didn't belong somewhere? What made you feel that way, and what did you do about it?

Write Your Response Here. Be sure to use what you learned in the reading and your own knowledge and experiences to answer the question thoroughly.

Instructions: When instructed, you will share your responses with your group. Take notes on their responses in the boxes below. Be sure to write their names at the top of each box.

Student #1: _____

Student #2: _____

Student #3: _____

Student #4: _____

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Reflect and Discuss

Instructions: Respond to the following question using the reading and your own knowledge and experiences. Be as thorough as possible.

2. Roy and Jenny helped Flaco because they believed he deserved to be free. Is there something you believe is important for everyone to have? Why is it important, and what can you do to help others have it?

Write Your Response Here. Be sure to use what you learned in the reading and your own knowledge and experiences to answer the question thoroughly.

Instructions: When instructed, you will share your responses with your group. Take notes on their responses in the boxes below. Be sure to write their names at the top of each box.

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Reflect and Discuss

Instructions: Respond to the following question using the reading and your own knowledge and experiences. Be as thorough as possible.

3. Even though Flaco died, he spent his last months happy and free, and he inspired many people. How can you make a difference in the world, even in small ways? How do you want to be remembered?

Write Your Response Here. Be sure to use what you learned in the reading and your own knowledge and experiences to answer the question thoroughly.

Instructions: When instructed, you will share your responses with your group. Take notes on their responses in the boxes below. Be sure to write their names at the top of each box.

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