

## Unit 6/Week 4

Title: When Shlemiel Went to Warsaw

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.5.1, RL.5.2, RL.5.3, RL.5.4, RL.5.9;  
W.5.2, W.5.4, W.5.9; SL.5.1; L.5.1, L.5.2, L.5.4, L.5.5

### Teacher Instructions

*Refer to the Introduction for further details.*

#### **Before Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers, about the big ideas and key understandings that students should take away **after** completing this task.

#### Big Ideas and Key Understandings

People do not appreciate what they have until they lose it; people are often gullible and quick to accept foolish ideas; happiness depends more on your attitude and perspective than on what you have in your life

#### Synopsis

Shlemiel is a poor, lazy peasant who lives with his wife and children in Chelm, a small town in Poland. He is unhappy and often dreams of traveling. Shlemiel embarks on a trip to Warsaw, but is easily tricked into retracing his path and unwittingly walks back to his own house. Instead of realizing he made a mistake, he is convinced that he has discovered a “second Chelm” that parallels the one he left. He even believes that two sets of family members, neighbors and town leaders exist in both towns. He eventually convinces his wife and the townspeople of his theory. His wife and children appreciate him more than they did before he left. Consequently, Shlemiel becomes more responsible and loving towards them. The townspeople are surprised the “first Shlemiel” never returns to Chelm, but embrace the “new Shlemiel” by offering to pay

him to take care of his own children. In the end, Shlemiel is content and no longer plans to travel.

2. Read entire main selection text, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
3. Reread the main selection text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Vocabulary.

### **During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire main selection text independently.
2. Teacher reads the main selection text aloud with students following along. (Depending on how complex the text is and the amount of support needed by students, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2.)
3. Students and teacher reread the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions and returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e.: whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

## Text Dependent Questions

### **Text Dependent Questions**

Reread the first paragraph on page 566. What character traits can be used to describe Shlemiel?

In the first paragraph, Mrs. Shlemiel does not want her husband to travel. What reasons does she give? (Pg. 566)

Motivation is the reason that a character does or says something. At the bottom of page 567, Shlemiel says, "What do I do in Chelm? Nothing." How does this statement help the reader understand Shlemiel's motivation to travel?

What evidence on page 567 and 568 shows that Shlemiel is poor?

### **Answers**

Shlemiel was lazy (sleepyhead, lazybones, wh a daydreamer (always daydreamed of taking adventuresome (he must see this great city f

She said, "Long journeys are not for a Shlemi he should take care of the children so that sh market and sell her vegetables.

He feels that he does nothing of importance spending time in a different place may make doing something more important.

"He had nothing but the old clothes he wore "He took a few slices of bread, an onion, and garlic...and started for Warsaw on foot." (56 "He walked slowly because the soles of his b through." (568)

On page 568, Shlemiel dreams while he naps. How are his dreams different from the life he really lives?

In the dream, he works as a baker, baking on for his family. Later, he dreams he is a king and his wife is part of his royal family. They are wealthy and travel with jam before traveling to faraway places. Shlemiel does not have any special abilities or responsibilities, and his family does not travel.

On page 569, the blacksmith plays a prank. How does the blacksmith play a prank on Shlemiel? What is the effect of this prank?

The blacksmith turns Shlemiel's shoes in the wrong direction so they will be facing his own town of Chelm in Warsaw. As a result, Shlemiel awoke from his nap on his route back to Chelm.

Reread page 570. Shlemiel is astonished to learn that he has arrived at a town named Chelm? What does he conclude about Chelm? What are his reasons for this conclusion?

He believes there are two separate towns named Chelm. He thinks the towns are almost identical. He doesn't believe there are two towns because he doesn't consider the possibility that he simply walked the wrong way and returned to his hometown. He believes there are two identical towns because of the Talmudic saying, "The earth is the same everywhere." This means that two of the same towns exist on earth.

Find the word *berated* on page 572. In your own words, describe how Mrs. Shlemiel berated her husband.

She yells curses at him.

Reread page 573. Why does Shlemiel think the *second Mrs. Shlemiel* is a "good woman"? How does the reader know he did not think the *first Mrs. Shlemiel* was as good?

The *second Mrs. Shlemiel* gave food to a stranger to make her a good woman. Shlemiel says, "My wife is a stranger. It would seem that there is some difference between the two Chelms."

A simile is a figure of speech that compares two unlike things using the word *like* or *as*.

It means that the "first" Shlemiel family looks like a king in front of him. His younger children laugh (because it is an idea to consider) and his older children cry (because they are frightened that their father would say something like that).

On page 573, Shlemiel says, "...she is like your mother as two peas are like each other. My children resemble you as drops of water resemble one another." What does this simile mean and how did Shlemiel's children react to his description?

The last paragraph on page 573 tells about another one of Shlemiel's dreams. What happens in this dream that is similar to what happened just before he went to bed?

Shlemiel is a king and his wife makes a delicious blintze. He has all he can eat and the blintzes are "drowning" him. Just as his dream is filled with abundance, Shlemiel has all that he needs: his wife fixes one of his favorite blintzes and makes him a fresh bed. He feels like a king in his own home.

On the bottom of page 577, beginning with "Mrs. Shlemiel wept bitterly...." Shlemiel says, "It looks to me as if Chelm Two is actually better than Chelm One." What caused Shlemiel to feel this way?

In Chelm One, Shlemiel felt like his children and wife were against to him and his wife scolded him. In Chelm Two, his children are crying at the thought of losing him.

Reread the last paragraph on page 577 and all of page 578. What does Gronam suggest the townspeople pay Shlemiel for? What is Gronam Ox's solution to finding a place for the *second Shlemiel* and the children while Mrs. Shlemiel takes their vacation to live while waiting for *the first Shlemiel* to return from his journey?

Reread the first five paragraphs on page 579. What do Shlemiel and his wife say to show they are happy with Gronam Ox's solution?

Mrs. Shlemiel: "What a pity you didn't decide to leave ten years ago."

Shlemiel: "Don't you ever miss your husband?"

Mrs. Shlemiel: "...Don't you miss your wife? I can't admit they were quite happy with matters as they are."

The name *Shlemiel* means *fool* in Yiddish. What do you notice about the names of the other Elders that suggest these characters may also have foolish ideas?

Last names such as "Donkey" and "Ox" are names of animals that typically do what they are told without question. Numskull and Dopey are slang expressions that refer to someone who does foolish things.

Choose one of the Elder's foolish explanations for Shlemiel's disappearance, and explain why it seems foolish.

Zeinvel Ninny: Shlemiel had been eaten by a cat.

Dopey Lekisch: Shlemiel had been forced to marry a princess.

Shmendrick Numskull: Shlemiel fell off of the roof.

On the last two paragraphs on page 580, Shlemiel thinks about his life. What causes Shlemiel to give up his plans to travel?

He thought that if he tried to go somewhere else, he would end up in Chelm. "All the world is one big Chelm."

## Vocabulary

	KEY WORDS ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTANDING	WORDS WORTH KNOWING General teaching suggestions are provided.
TEACHER PROVIDES DEFINITION	Page 570 - scold Page 572 - pitied Page 578 - dilemma	Page 573 - resemble, coaxing Page 577 - bitterly Page 578 - bewildered Page 580 - impose
not enough contextual clues provided in the text		

<b>STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING</b> suffi cient context clues are provide d in the text	Page 572 - berate Page 574 - deserted Page 580 - theories, ponder	Page 568 - weary Page 571 - proclaimed Page 572 - remedy Page 576 - inquired
--	---	---

### Culminating Task

- *At the end of the story, Shlemiel still believes he is living in a different town with a different family than he lived with at the beginning of the story. Even though he may never see his original wife and children again, he chooses to remain in Chelm Two and gives up his plans to travel. Use textual support to explain the reasons Shlemiel prefers his life in Chelm Two. Tell how his life has changed since his attempt to visit Warsaw.*

Answer:

Shlemiel thinks his life has changed in many ways. In some ways his life really has changed.

- He thinks the second Mrs. Shlemiel is nicer because she is willing to cook dinner for a stranger. (577)
- His family treats him better. “How strange. My own wife always scolded me. My children talked back to me. And here a strange woman and strange children want me to live with them. It looks to me as if Chelm Two is actually better than Chelm One.” (577)
- In the beginning, Shlemiel does not have work. He states, “What do I do in Chelm? Nothing.” (567), but now he gets paid five groschen a day to take care of “Mrs. Shlemiel’s children” until the “real Shlemiel comes home.” (578).

In other ways, Shlemiel thinks differently about his life, showing a change in his attitudes and beliefs.

- o Shlemiel gets joy and satisfaction from his new belief that the world has two identical Chelms. “The discovery gave Shemiel great satisfaction.” (570)
- o Shlemiel’s wife likes the new situation, so both Mr. and Mrs. Shlemiel are happier. ““And what about you? Don’t you miss your wife?’ Mrs. Shlemiel would ask. And both would admit that they were quite happy with matters as they stood.” (579)
- o Shlemiel no longer plans to travel because he thinks that his travels will take him back to the same place. He thinks, “What was the point in going on a trip if it led to nowhere?” Shemiel hums to himself, “All roads lead to Chelm. All the world is one big Chelm.” (page 580)

### Additional Tasks

- *Reread the story to identify thoughts and conversations that are funny or humorous. Cite a humorous part from the story, and explain why it is funny.*
- o When Shlemiel was traveling to Warshaw some neighbors asked him what he was going to do in Warsaw. He replied, “What do I do in Chelm? Nothing.” This is funny and a little sad. He is traveling to another city to do the same thing he does at home and that thing is – nothing. (page 567)
- o Shlemiel came back into town and recognized houses and saw people he seemed to know. When he asked someone the name of the town they said, “Chelm.” He was astonished and later decided, “There were two Chelms and he had reached the second one.” This is funny because why would there be two towns with the same name. (page 569-570)
- o Mrs. Shlemiel states to the Elders, “I don’t need two Shlemiels. One is more than enough.” She also says, “Besides I want a husband even if Shlemiel is better than no husband at all.” She does not really care for her husband and really does not want two of them. (page 577)

- *Retell the story from another character's point of view (Mrs. Shlemiel, one of their children, or the blacksmith).*

*Mrs. Shlemiel:*

- *My husband was lazy and didn't have a job, so I had to do all the work.*
- *My husband always talked about going to other places, making me think our lives weren't good enough to keep him at home.*
- *My husband left to see Warsaw, but a new Shlemiel came who got a job taking care of our children.*
- *I like my new husband better than the first husband, wishing the first husband had left for Warsaw sooner.*

*Child:*

- *My parents did not get along.*
- *My father only helped the family by watching us children while my mother sold vegetables at the market.*
- *My father left to see Warsaw, but when he came back, he scared us by acting like we weren't really his children.*
- *The elders offered to pay my father to take care of us.*
- *Now that my father brings money into the home, both of my parents seem happier.*

*Blacksmith:*

- *I saw a man who wanted to take a nap, but had to point his shoes in the direction he was going to remember which way to go when he woke up.*
- *I could tell the man was foolish, so I decided to play a prank on him by turning his shoes the other way while he was sleeping.*
- *I laughed when I saw the foolish man wake up and return in the direction from which he had come because his shoes were pointing that way.*

*Read another story from When Shlemeil Went to Warsaw (a collection of eight stories by Isaac Bashevis Singer). Compare and contrast the stories.*

*Similarities between "Zlateh the Goat" and "Shlemiel Goes to Warsaw":*

- *Take place in rural Poland.*
- *The main character goes on journey.*
- *Tell events that could happen, but are unlikely.*
- *Refer to eating/drinking often.*
- *Have happy endings.*

*Differences between "Zlateh the Goat" and "Shlemiel Goes to Warsaw":*

- *"Shlemiel Goes to Warsaw" includes many examples of humor.*
- *"Shlemiel Goes to Warsaw" is about an adult who is unhappy with his life, while "Zlateh the Goat" is about a child who needs his goat to survive a snowstorm.*
- *Shlemeil wants to get away from his home while Zlateh wants to return home.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **“When Shlemiel Went to Warsaw”**

1. Reread the first paragraph on page 566. What character traits can be used to describe Shlemiel?
2. In the first paragraph, Mrs. Shlemiel does not want her husband to travel. What reasons does she give? (Pg. 566)
3. Motivation is the reason that a character does or says something. At the bottom of page 567, Shlemiel says, “What do I do in Chelm? Nothing.” How does this statement help the reader understand Shlemiel’s motivation to travel?
4. What evidence on page 567 and 568 shows that Shlemiel is poor?

5. On page 568, Shlemiel dreams while he naps. How are his dreams different from the life he really lives?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. On page 569, the blacksmith plays a prank. How does the blacksmith play a prank on Shlemiel? What is the effect of this prank?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Reread page 570. Shlemiel is astonished to learn that he has arrived at a town named Chelm? What does he conclude about Chelm? What are his reasons for this conclusion?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Find the word *berated* on page 572. In your own words, describe how Mrs. Shlemiel berated her husband.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Reread page 573. Why does Shlemiel think the *second Mrs. Shlemiel* is a “good woman”? How does the reader know he did not think the *first Mrs. Shlemiel* was as good?

10. A simile is a figure of speech that compares two unlike things using the word *like* or *as*. On page 573, Shlemiel says, “. . .she is like your mother as two peas are like each other. My children resemble you as drops of water resemble one another.” What does this simile mean and how did Shlemiel’s children react to his description?
11. The last paragraph on page 573 tells about another one of Shlemiel’s dreams. What happens in this dream that is similar to what happened just before he went to bed?
12. On the bottom of page 577, beginning with “Mrs. Shlemiel wept bitterly...” Shlemiel says, “It looks to me as if Chelm Two is actually better than Chelm One.” What caused Shlemiel to feel this way?
13. Reread the last paragraph on page 577 and all of page 578. What is Gronam Ox’s solution to finding a place for the *second Shlemiel* to live while waiting for *the first Shlemiel* to return from his journey?

14. The name *Shlemiel* means *fool* in Yiddish. What do you notice about the names of the other Elders that suggest these characters may also have foolish ideas? Choose one of the Elder's foolish explanations for Shlemiel's disappearance, and explain why it seems foolish.
15. On the last two paragraphs on page 580, Shlemiel thinks about his life. What causes Shlemiel to give up his plans to travel?