# Table of Contents

**Terms of Use**
2

**Table of Contents**
3

**List of Activities, Difficulty Levels, and Common Core Alignment**
4

**Digital Components/Google Classroom Guide**
5

**Teaching Guide, Rationale, Lesson Plans, and Procedures: EVERYTHING**
6-11

**Activity 1: Story Devices Interactive Notebook Lesson**
12-14

**Activity 2: Story Devices Practice w/Key**
15-18

**Activity 3: Hitchhiker Play Prep Instructions & Role Sheet**
19-20

**Activity 6: Annotation Guide (Story Devices)**
21-23

**Activity 7: Basic Comprehension Quiz (Recall Facts and Details) w Key**
24-25

**Activity 9: Audio Analysis Guide w/Key**
26-27

**Activity 10: Find Evidence That… Text-Dependent Questions Activity w/Key**
28-29

**Activity 11: Diagramming a Story Organizer w/Answer Key**
30-31

**Activity 12: Plot Diagram Quiz w/Key**
32-33

**Activity 13: Vocabulary Guide – Standardized Test Vocabulary Practice w/Key**
34-37

**Activity 14: Story Analysis: Plot Development Questions w/Key**
38-39

**Activity 15: The Hitchhiker Video Analysis w/Key**
40-47

**Activity 16: Comprehension Skills Test**
48-53

**Activity 17: Write a Narrative Ending Prewriting Organizer & Rubric**
54-55

**Activity 18: Nonfiction Paired Text: “Why Is Fear Fun?”**
56

**Activity 19: Nonfiction Skills Analysis Activity**
57-60

**Activity 20: Essential Question (Putting It All Together)**
61-62

**TEKS Alignment**
63
# Short Story of the Month

"The Hitchhiker" by Lucille Fletcher

## Activities, Difficulty Levels, and Common Core Alignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Activities &amp; Standards</th>
<th>Difficulty Level:</th>
<th><em>Easy</em></th>
<th><strong>Moderate</strong></th>
<th><em><strong>Challenge</strong></em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1: Story Devices Lesson**</td>
<td></td>
<td>RL.6.3, RL.6.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2: Story Devices Practice**</td>
<td>RL.6.3, RL.6.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3: Hitchhiker Play Prep*</td>
<td>SL.6.1, SL.6.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 4: Journal Activity*</td>
<td>SL.6.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 5: First Read: Play Performance**</td>
<td>SL.6.1, SL.6.2, SL.6.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 6: Annotation Guide (Story Devices)**</td>
<td>RL.6.1, RL.6.3, RL.6.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity 7: Comprehension Quiz</strong>*</td>
<td>RL.6.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 8: Radio Play Audio Performance*</td>
<td>SL.6.2, RL.6.1, RL.6.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 9: Audio Analysis Guide**</td>
<td>RL.6.7, RL.6.5, RL.6.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 11: Plot Diagram Graphic Organizer**</td>
<td>RL.6.1, RL.6.3, RL.6.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 12: Plot Diagram Quiz**</td>
<td>RL.6.1, RL.6.3, RL.6.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 13: Vocabulary Guide – Standardized Pract.**</td>
<td>RL.6.4, RL.6.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 14: Story Analysis: Plot Development***</td>
<td>RL.6.5, RL.6.1, RL.6.3, SL.6.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 15: The Hitchhiker Video Analysis***</td>
<td>RL.6.7, RL.6.1, RL.6.5, SL.6.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity 16: Comprehension Skills Test</strong>*</td>
<td>RL.6.1, RL.6.3, RL.6.5, RL.6.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 17: Write a Narrative Ending***</td>
<td>W.6.3, W.6.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 18: Nonfiction Article **</td>
<td>RI.6.1, RI.6.2, RI.6.3, RI.6.4, RI.6.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 20: Essential Question (Putting It All Together)***</td>
<td>RI.6.1, RI.6.3, RI.6.5, RI.6.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instructions for Google Classroom Digital Components

All student activities are available in digital format compatible with Google Classroom. They are available in two formats: Google Slides and Google Forms.

Google Slides
First, I have made all student pages (excluding assessments) in Google Slides format. Students can simply add text boxes to any area they wish to type on. To access the Google Slides for *The Hitchhiker*, copy and paste the link below into your browser. *Note that you’ll need to make a copy of the folder or slide before you can use it.* (available in full version only)

[Google Slides screenshot]

Google Forms
I have made the assessments available in Google Forms. Here, they are self-grading, and I have set them all up with answer keys so they are ready to go for you. You’ll need to find these two files in your download folder to use Google Forms. The first file contains the links to the Forms, and the second file is explicit instructions for use. Look inside the Google Forms folder.

[Google Forms screenshot]
Teaching Guide, Rationale, Lesson Plans, and Procedures

I have also discussed here how I use each activity and included hints and links to help you, too. I went ahead and mapped out the days for you. Feel free to take or leave what you like. Even if you don’t plan to follow this schedule, I still recommend reading through this section to get the most out of these activities.

These lessons and activities were designed to meet the needs of sixth graders during the first half the school year. The stories, activities, questions, and assessments will become increasingly rigorous and challenging as we progress through the year.

Day 1

1. **Activity 1: 15-25 minutes**
   Mini-lesson on Story Devices (suspense, foreshadowing, and flashback) – This is a modified version of the Advanced Plot Techniques foldable found in my All New Interactive Reading Literature Notebook, Volume 2. See complete lesson instructions (with ALL NEW optional video clips) and assembly directions within activity pages.

2. **Activity 2: 15-30 minutes**
   Story Devices Practice – this is a modified version of Level B Practice Printables, as I have removed cliffhanger as an option along with items that included cliffhanger examples. Students can probably complete this activity independently or as homework. Consider using the first page for guided practice and second page for independent practice if students have never been introduced to story devices or for remedial students. Additional practice items and a matching test can be found in Reading Literature Practice & Assess Grade 6 available on TpT.

3. **Activity 3: 15 minutes**
   Prepare for Hitchhiker Play. See these pages for everything you need:
   Preparation Instructions for Teacher
   Role Sheet
Day 2

1. Activity 4: 5-10 minutes

2. Activity 5: 35-45 minutes
   FIRST READ – Students perform play while remaining students (audience) watches/listens. See Activity 3 for explicit instructions and role sheet.
   Download selection: https://goo.gl/muQn9u

Day 3

1. Activity 6: 35-45 minutes
   SECOND READ – Annotate for story devices – color code suspense, foreshadowing, and flashback. See Annotation Guide. Don’t have a magnifying glass? Sorry about that. Check the download folder for another folder titled “Annotation Guide Scans” for the original high resolution files and a full-pages PDF.

2. Activity 7: 20 minutes
   Comprehension Quiz – Basic Comprehension (Recall Facts)
   This quiz checks for basic comprehension and recall of the story. There are no higher order thinking questions on this quiz, no inferring, no analyzing, no drawing conclusions, etc. so I do not recommend that students use a copy of the story for this quiz unless they need that as a testing accommodation.
Day 4

1. Activity 8: 35-45 minutes
THIRD READ – Listen to the radio play performed version of The Hitchhiker by Orson Welles – consider reviewing/discussing audio guide before listening (see Activity 9). Radio Play link: https://goo.gl/jz8sJP
Download audio file: https://goo.gl/eUt5ua
The actual radio play begins at 3:30, but you may wish to listen to the beginning and after the story to capture the whole experience. Preview and decide. There are some minor discrepancies between the script and radio play, such as the word crazy being used in place of the word mad. Some students may become super distracted by this if you ask them to follow along, but the discrepancies are so minor that it shouldn’t prevent students from being able to do so if you wish.

Please note that question 12 from the Comprehension Skills Test requires that students have listened to the radio play and/or watched the video clips from the Twilight Zone episode.

2. Activity 9: 20 minutes
Audio Analysis – after listening to audio version, students complete audio analysis. This guide is centered around elements of suspense present in the script vs those present in the audio version of the radio play.

Day 5

1. Activity 10: 20-30 minutes
Text Evidence Questions – Find Evidence That – more practice citing text evidence in this format, same format as Just Once unit. Students are asked to quote from the story to provide evidence of a statement. There is also a separate section that asks them to explain their quote and how to proves the statement. This is a pre-requisite skill to using the ACE method in an upcoming unit.

2. Activity 11: 30-40 minutes
Complete Plot Diagram – Review from Just Once unit where this was introduced. For remedial students or if your students are still struggling, you may wish to annotate first as we did in the Just Once unit. Quiz coming – Activity 12.
Day 6

1. **Activity 12: 30-35 minutes**
   Plot Diagram Quiz – use for a grade or simply to see how your students are coming along with identifying which events go where in the plot diagram. This quiz is multiple choice which makes it considerably easier than simply having them complete the plot diagram, especially when they’ve already completed one with you or checked it with yours.

2. **Activity 13: 20 minutes**
   Vocabulary Guide – Standardized Test-Style Practice Questions. Going over time here, but this one is totally appropriate for homework. Not appropriate as an assessment unless your students have been practicing on these types of questions. Meant to get your students thinking about the vocabulary in the story, this guide is meant to be completed after students have read and discussed the story.

Day 7

1. **Activity 14: 20-30 minutes**
   Story Analysis: Plot Development. This additional practice builds on the RL.6.5 Questioning Guides and Story Analysis from the Just Once unit. Students practice explaining how a particular event contributes to the development of the plot.

   **Alternate Instructions:** If your students did not complete the Questioning Guides from the Just Once unit, then simply review the instructions and thinking help with them before completion. Answer Event 1 with them, coaxing them to formulate the correct answer and writing it out together so that they have an example to use. Then, challenge them to complete the others on their own.

2. **Activity 15: 30-45 minutes**
   The Hitchhiker Video Clips vs. Radio Play Script
   I created this activity because I wanted for students to be able to analyze, compare, and contrast the Twilight Zone episode with the other versions, but I didn't want to present students with the entire episode and overwhelm them. Students simply read scene one, watch a clip of scene one, and answer questions about it, then do the same routine for scene two. Here are those video clips:
   
   Scene 1: [https://goo.gl/W1yYRv](https://goo.gl/W1yYRv)  
   Scene 2: [https://goo.gl/CuWhvE](https://goo.gl/CuWhvE)
Day 8

1. **Activity 16: Comprehension Skills Test**
   Comprehension Analysis Test
   This comprehension test is designed to be taken with access to the story. You may choose to give your students a non-annotated version of the story. Allowing use of the version a student annotated may be a testing accommodation. I always let my students use the story here because I want to know if they can analyze a story, not memorize details from it (we did that for the basic quiz).

   **A Note About Constructed Response Items #11 & 12:** Are you tempted to leave off the last page or skip it because your students do poorly? Don’t! It’s coming on the state test. While it’s true I put it at the end in case you wanted to do just that, consider one of these options instead.

   1. Give students the questions in advance, such as the day before the test, to allow them to consider the questions and have an idea of how they can answer. Still, have them formulate and write out their actual answers during the administration of the test.
   2. Give the students the last page of the test as a homework assignment and grade it as part of the test when they return it OR as a completely separate grade. Even if you don’t grade it for accuracy, PROVIDE FEEDBACK FOR YOUR STUDENTS on their answers.
   3. If your students have been doing poorly on the final questions, ask yourself this. Have you been showing them what an exemplar answer looks like when you return their test or after they’ve taken the test? If not, how will they ever improve? A great way to do this is to use the Google Forms version of the test. No matter what their answer, once they submit (or once you choose to SEND their results), they’ll see the same answer you see on the answer key.

   **My favorite TIP** for improving constructed responses: REAL LIFE ERROR ANALYSIS. Have students put their names on the BACK of the page. Use a document camera (or scan them in) to project anonymous student papers. Have students as a class and with discussion and debate analyze whether or not the answer is correct AND complete, and if it is not, how to correct or improve it.
Day 9

1. **Activity 17: 60-90 minutes**
   Write a Narrative Ending – Students write an ending that provides the reader with a satisfactory resolution. Complete instructions, prewriting graphic organizer with prompts, and final grading rubric are included.

   **Activity 17**

Day 10

1. **Activity 18: 10 minutes**
   Read and discuss original nonfiction paired text article, “Why Is Fear Fun?”

2. **Activity 19: 25 minutes**
   Discuss and complete nonfiction skills analysis – students answer a few multiple choice CCSS questions and then complete the graphic organizers with details from the article.

3. **Activity 20: 30-40 minutes**
   Essential Question. Tie it all together. The big SHE-BANG. Boomshakalaka. Hard stuff. Good luck. :)

   **Activity 18**

   **Activity 19**

   **Activity 20**
The Hitchhiker Radio Play vs. Literature/Drama

Before:

1. Read the list of common elements of suspense in a story. Circle all that are used in the story. Then, answer the question that follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Suspense Elements in Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• thick fog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• dark/quiet/eerie night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• an old house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a mysterious character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knocking or tapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• animal sounds at night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• rain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a violent storm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• thunder/lightning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a deserted road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• unexplained phenomenon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• loud wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• unexplained noises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• foreshadowing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After:

2. What elements of suspense were used in the radio play that do not apply to or cannot be used in literature? Explain how the elements created suspense.

________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
5. Read the definition below:
overcome with distress, exhaustion, or illness

Now read the excerpt below and circle the word that most closely matches the definition given.

Mrs. Whitney: Yes. Who is this calling, please? Is this a member of the family?
Adams: What’s she in the hospital for?
Mrs. Whitney: She’s been prostrated for five days – a nervous breakdown. Who is this calling?
Adams: Nervous breakdown? My mother was never nervous.
Mrs. Whitney: It’s all taken place since the death of her oldest son, Ronald.

6. Read the words below. Circle four words that are synonyms for beckon.
   a. summon
   b. sober
   c. deter
   d. lure
   e. coax
   f. produce
   g. delve
   h. transport
   i. call
   j. pass

Now I knew that he was beckoning – beckoning me to my death.

beckon – to make a gesture to invite or encourage someone nearer

7. Read the excerpt below:
Adams: There was a man there I tell ya! A thin, gray man with an overnight bag in his hand. I was trying to run him down.

Girl: Run him down? You mean kill ‘im?
Adams: He’s sort of – phantom. I’m trying to get rid of him – or at least prove he’s real. But you say you didn’t see him back there? You’re sure?
Girl: I didn’t see a soul. And as far as that’s concerned, mister…

7. What is the meaning of the word phantom as it is used in the excerpt above?
   a. a confusing topic
   b. a figment of the imagination
   c. a lie
   d. invisible

8. Which phrase from the excerpt best supports your answer to #7?
   a. “or at least prove he’s real.”
   b. “as far as that’s concerned, mister…”
   c. “I’m trying to get rid of him…”
   d. “You mean kill ‘im?”
Story Analysis: Plot Development

Read and think carefully about the question. Use your questioning guide (from “Just Once” if you have it to help you answer the question for each event.

How does the event contribute to the development of the plot?

Thinking Help: Why is this event important to the story? What does it show, establish, explain, introduce, or lead to? What happens as a result of it being in the story? Are any story devices used?

Event 1: Ronald Adams’ mother expresses her deep concerns about his road trip across the country.

This event is important to the story because it establishes Ronald’s close relationship with his mother that will cause him to call her in the final part of the play, which leads Ronald to discovering the truth about what happened.

Her concern for her son also foreshadows that he will have some type of trouble on his way.

Event 2: Adams sees the hitchhiker for the first time on the Brooklyn Bridge.

This event is of major importance to the story because we find out at the end of the story that the Brooklyn Bridge was the place where Adams was killed in a car accident.

It also introduces the hitchhiker as the mysterious character in the story and describes his appearance to the reader.

Event 3: The mechanic insists that there are never hitchhikers on that part of the road.

This event helps to develop the plot further because it shows the reader that there is definitely something strange or sinister about the hitchhiker’s presence. The main character also seems to realize this, too.

Event 4: Adams’ car stalls out on the railroad tracks.

This event is a key part of the plot because it adds suspense as the reader is anxiously waiting to find out what will happen next. Will Adams escape the train? Or will he be run over and killed? Further, Adams begins to realize that the hitchhiker has something to do with death.
The Hitchhiker Video Clips vs. Radio Play Script

Read the first excerpt from the play as directed by your teacher. Then, watch Scene 1 of the Twilight Zone Hitchhiker Episode. Use the play and the episode to answer the questions that follow.

1. How is the main character in the episode different from the main character in the script?

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

2. Why might the episode’s director have made this change?

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

3. After the train has passed, the main character is alone with his/her thoughts in both versions. Although the script is somewhat altered, the purpose of the scene is the same in both versions. Why is this scene an important turning point in the play as well as the episode?

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

Read the second excerpt from the play as directed by your teacher. Then, watch Scene 2 of the Twilight Zone Hitchhiker Episode. Use the play and the episode to answer the questions that follow.

4. Identify two events that are the same in the script and in scene two of the episode.

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________
1. In “The Hitchhiker” by Lucille Fletcher, what techniques does the author use to make the play an exciting experience for the reader?

2. In “The Hitchhiker” Radio Play, how does Orson Welles performance make the experience entertaining for listeners?

3. What did you learn about the human response to fear in the article “Why is Fear Fun?”

EQ: Why is fear such a popular form of entertainment?
**TEKS Alignment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Difficulty Level:</th>
<th>ELAR Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1: Story Devices Lesson**</td>
<td>*Easy</td>
<td>6(A), 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2: Story Devices Practice**</td>
<td>**Moderate</td>
<td>6(A), 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3: Hitchhiker Play Prep*</td>
<td></td>
<td>5(A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 4: Journal Activity*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>**Moderate</td>
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<td>Activity 6: Annotation Guide (Story Devices)**</td>
<td></td>
<td>5(A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity 7: Comprehension Quiz</strong>*</td>
<td></td>
<td>6(A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 8: Radio Play Audio Performance*</td>
<td></td>
<td>5(A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 9: Audio Analysis Guide**</td>
<td></td>
<td>5(A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 10: Text Evidence: Find Evidence That…**</td>
<td>**Moderate</td>
<td>6(A), 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 11: Plot Diagram Graphic Organizer**</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity 12: Plot Diagram Quiz**</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 13: Vocabulary Guide – Standardized Pract.**</td>
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<td>2(B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 14: Story Analysis: Plot Development***</td>
<td>**Challenge</td>
<td>6(A), 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 15: The Hitchhiker Video Analysis***</td>
<td>**Challenge</td>
<td>5(A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity 16: Comprehension Skills Test</strong>*</td>
<td>**Challenge</td>
<td>6(A), 2(B), 8(A), 5(A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 17: Write a Narrative Ending***</td>
<td>**Challenge</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 18: Nonfiction Article **</td>
<td></td>
<td>9(A), 10(A), 13(B)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>9(A), 10(A), 13(B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>9(A), 10(A), 10(D)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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