Jim Heynen (b. 1940) is an author of short fiction, as well as poetry, novels, and nonfiction. Some of Heynen’s best-loved stories are about a group of farm boys, whose adventures were inspired by the author’s own childhood spent in rural Iowa. Says Heynen, “Good stories from the imagination are waiting to be born from the good characters of our experience.” Although his farm-boy stories are not autobiographical, they do contain details from his own life and the lives of people he knew. In addition to being a prolific writer, Heynen is also a teacher. He has served on the faculty of St. Olaf College in Minnesota and Pacific Lutheran University, and he continues to give lectures and workshops on writing.

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**TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS**

**Focus Standards:**

- **E1.4(F)** Make inferences and use evidence to support understanding.
- **E1.4(G)** Evaluate details read to determine key ideas.
- **E1.4(A)** Analyze how themes are developed through characterization and plot in a variety of literary texts.

**E1.8(D)** Analyze how the author’s use of language achieves specific purposes.

**Additional Standards Addressed:**

- **E1.4(I)**
- **E1.5(F)**
- **E1.5(H)**
- **E1.9(C)**
- **E1.9(D)(i)**
- **E1.9(D)(ii)**
One winter there was a freezing rain. How beautiful! people said when things outside started to shine with ice. But the freezing rain kept coming. Tree branches glistened like glass. Then broke like glass. Ice thickened on the windows until everything outside blurred. Farmers moved their livestock into the barns, and most animals were safe. But not the pheasants. Their eyes froze shut.

Some farmers went ice-skating down the gravel roads with clubs to harvest the pheasants that sat helplessly in the roadside ditches. The boys went out into the freezing rain to find pheasants too. They saw dark spots along a fence. Pheasants, all right. Five or six of them. The boys slid their feet along slowly, trying not to break the ice that covered the snow. They slid up close to the pheasants. The pheasants pulled their heads down between their wings. They couldn’t tell how easy it was to see them huddled there.

The boys stood still in the icy rain. Their breath came out in slow puffs of steam. The pheasants’ breath came out in quick little white puffs. Some of them lifted their heads and turned them from side to side, but they were blindfolded with ice and didn’t flush. The boys had not brought clubs, or sacks, or anything but themselves. They stood over the pheasants, turning their own heads, looking at each other, each expecting the other to do something. To pounce on a pheasant, or to yell Bang! Things around them were shining and dripping.
with icy rain. The barbed wire fence. The fence posts. The broken stems of grass. Even the grass seeds. The grass seeds looked like little yolks inside gelatin whites. And the pheasants looked like unborn birds glazed in egg white. Ice was hardening on the boys’ caps and coats. Soon they would be covered with ice too.

4 Then one of the boys said, Shh. He was taking off his coat, the thin layer of ice splintering in flakes as he pulled his arms from the sleeves. But the inside of the coat was dry and warm. He covered two of the crouching pheasants with his coat, rounding the back of it over them like a shell. The other boys did the same. They covered all the helpless pheasants. The small gray hens and the larger brown cocks. Now the boys felt the rain soaking through their shirts and freezing. They ran across the slippery fields, unsure of their footing, the ice clinging to their skin as they made their way toward the warm blurry lights of the house.

My Notes

Making Observations
- What are some details of the setting of this story?
- What happens in the story?

Scaffolding the Text-Dependent Questions
4. How are the beautiful and destructive results of the ice storm reflected in the actions of the farmers and the boys? What do the farmers do during the ice storm? Are their actions beautiful or destructive? What do the boys do during the ice storm? Are their actions beautiful or destructive?
Returning to the Text

1. What are the effects of the freezing rain throughout the first paragraph?
   In the first paragraph, the freezing rain makes “… things outside start to shine with ice,” and the “Tree branches glistened like glass.” It is beautiful but it is also destructive. The tree branches “broke like glass,” and the eyes of the pheasants “froze shut.” E1.4(G)

2. Reread paragraph 2. Why do the farmers leave their houses? What sentence from the text supports your response? Why do the boys leave their houses?
   The farmers intend to find and kill the pheasants that are freezing in the rain. “Some farmers went ice-skating down the gravel roads with clubs to harvest the pheasants that sat helplessly in the roadside ditches.” The intention of the boys is not clear: “The boys went out into the freezing rain to find pheasants too.” E1.4(G)

3. Write two sentences from the text that support the inference that the boys’ intentions toward the pheasants may differ from those of the farmers.
   “The boys had not brought clubs, or sacks, or anything but themselves.”
   “They stood over the pheasants, turning their own heads, looking at each other, each expecting the other to do something. To pounce on a pheasant, or to yell Bang!” E1.4(F)

4. How are the beautiful and destructive results of the ice storm reflected in the actions of the farmers and the boys?
   The farmers are part of the ice storm’s destructive results—they use the storm as an opportunity to harvest pheasants easily. The boys are part of the ice storm’s beautiful results—through their experience with the pheasants in the storm, they learn to behave mercifully. E1.6(A)

ACTIVITY 1.6 continued

8. RETURNING TO THE TEXT: Have students return to the text as they respond to the rest of the text-dependent questions. If students have difficulty answering the questions, provide scaffolding.

9. For task 3, have students observe the telling details that help them distinguish between the intentions of the farmers and the boys. Ask students for specific quotes to demonstrate textual evidence of the farmers’ and the boys’ intentions. Have students annotate the text as you discuss and/or display the following examples.

   Farmers’ intentions: “with clubs to harvest the pheasants”
   Boys’ intentions: “The boys went out into the freezing rain to find pheasants too.”; “The boys had not brought clubs, or sacks, or anything but themselves.”; “They stood over the pheasants … looking at each other, each expecting the other to do something. To pounce on a pheasant, or to yell Bang!”; “He covered two of the crouching pheasants with his coat…”; “The other boys did the same.”

   Point out that there is one line that directly states the farmers’ intentions, but readers must follow multiple clues to speculate about the boys’ intentions. Discuss how this uncertainty about the boys builds as the story unfolds, making readers scared for the pheasants.

10. Invite volunteers to share their responses with the class.
1.6

Working from the Text

5. Reread the first three paragraphs of the story and work with a partner to answer the following question: How does a sense of danger to the pheasants gradually build as the story unfolds? Discuss what details make you scared for the pheasants.

Focus on the Sentence

Write multiple sentences that tell why readers become more and more nervous about what will happen to the pheasants. You can use the following sentence frame to help you compose each of your sentences:

The sense of danger to the pheasants gradually builds because of

After you have finished writing your sentences, combine them into one longer complex sentence. Use parallel structure in your longer sentence.

Appreciating the Author’s Craft

As directed by your teacher, discuss the following questions with your classmates.

- In paragraph 3, how does the author link the boys and the pheasants? In what ways do the boys begin to feel like the pheasants?
- Both the boys and the pheasants have breath coming out in “puffs of steam,” and they both are “turning their … heads” in the icy rain as ice continues to harden on them. “Ice was hardening on the boys’ caps and coats. Soon they would be covered with ice too.”
• How would the story’s ending be different if the author removed “unsure of their footing” in the final sentence? Would you be more or less likely to think the boys will continue to behave empathetically, or sensitively, now that they’ve had this experience with the pheasants?

Check Your Understanding
State your analysis of the author’s craft by completing the following sentence frame:

_Heynen shows how the boys developed empathy for the pheasants by _________._

15 Note how Heynen shows that the boys are building empathy toward the pheasants as they mirror the pheasants’ movements and sensations (e.g., breath of both the pheasants and the boys coming out in “puffs,” the pheasants and the boys turning their heads, and the boys feeling the sensation of gradually becoming covered in ice, just like the pheasants).

16 Underscore the boys’ earlier indecision about what to do with the pheasants and how the story could have ended differently, perhaps with the boys following another impulse. (Note: You will revisit this theme in Unit 2 with the poem “The Fight.”)

17 Have students complete the Check Your Understanding sentence frame independently.

ASSESS
Review students’ responses to the Check Your Understanding task and ensure that they have an appropriate, evidence-based analysis statement.

ADAPT
Sentence combining is one way to practice writing topic sentences. If students struggle with writing topic sentences, give them more opportunities to practice sentence combining.