Guided Reading Lesson Plan

**Before Reading**
1. Ask how many students read comic books. Do they read any long stories in comic book format? What do they enjoy about longer comic books? Are they easier to read than chapter books that are mostly text?
2. Discuss why you think an author chooses to make a comic book instead of writing things out in chapters.

**During Reading**
1. Look at pages 8 and 9. Have students describe what is happening in each panel. Why do you think the left-hand page is so big and the ones on the right are smaller? Comic books often use a sequence of images to show where characters are (context), and then move in closer to look at details or the characters’ expressions, a little bit like how a camera lets you take a picture of an entire birthday party, but also lets you zoom in to focus on someone’s face.

2. A clock is a common way to show time passing in the movies or on television. In what other ways can pictures show us that time is passing? Look at pages 47-50. Leah and Alan are waiting for a train. What methods does the illustrator use to indicate that they are waiting for quite some time? What are the “CLOP CLOP CLOP” sounds? What does it mean when we see more “CLOP” sounds? What is the other indication that time has passed? How many fish people are standing on the platform when Leah and Alan first arrive? How many are there by the time the train comes?

3. The beginning of this story shows Leah and Alan waking up in a strange world. The ending shows them going to sleep in a world very much like ours. Do you think their adventures really happened? Or do you think they were a dream? Some of the things Leah and Alan encounter are ordinary, like bees, lions, cherries, and train stations. What does the illustrator do to make these things seem like a dream? Do we need words to know these things are not quite as they are in everyday life?

**After Reading**
1. Talk about what the comic book format adds to this story. Do you think the story would have been as good if it had been written in chapters with just an illustration here and there?
2. Activity: Draw a short comic (one page or a 2-page spread) showing a situation or setting in a large panel, and then use smaller panels to draw the reader’s attention to details, sounds, or your character’s facial expression. Alternatively, in one or two pages, use panels to show the passing of time, but don’t use clocks or characters talking about time.