

**Unit 4: Bringing Characters to Life:
Spotlight on Making Meaningful Connections and Inferring (3 weeks)**

Rationale

Why is this unit important and appropriate for this grade level and at this time of the year?

During this unit, students work on studying a character's actions in order to think more deeply about books. This is the first of several units that focus on deepening comprehension skills through the lens of characters.

Learning Outcomes

What do we expect students to know and be able to do at the end of the unit?

Students will:

- Think about characters by studying their actions
- Make personal connections with the characters in books
- Talk about and compare ideas with reading partners
- Infer characters feelings and motivations based on text evidence

Minilessons/Notes/Tips

What minilessons will lead to student learning outcomes?

Possible Minilessons:

- Using pictures to notice a character's facial expressions and gestures
- Identifying a character's appearance and personality traits
- Retelling a character's actions with time words (first, then, after that)
- Using story elements (e.g., notice his/her types of problems, notice way he/she attempts to solve problems) to tell more about a character
- Understanding how making connections help readers (i.e., identifying the purposes of making connections)
 - Connections help readers stay in the story.
 - Connections help readers understand the story.
 - Connections help reader understand the characters.
 - Connections help readers understand the world in the book.
- Thinking how a character is similar and/or different than the reader
- Charting words readers can use to make connections
 - This character is similar to me because... This connection helps me understand the character better because...
 - This character is different from me because... This connection helps me understand the character better because...
- Charting a character's dialogue and actions to develop theories about the character
- Using text evidence to support theories about a character
- Rereading to understand a character better
- Stopping and visualizing to deepen understanding of character
- Keeping track of confusing parts
- "Becoming" the character
 - Asking, What would the character say? Using text evidence to support thinking.

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- Asking, What would the character do? Using text evidence to support thinking.
- Asking, What would the character think? Using text evidence to support thinking.
- Rereading books or parts of books and acting them out in different ways; saying what the character might be thinking, role playing a scene between two characters (e.g., what is each character doing, saying, thinking, feeling?)
- Reading with appropriate expression
- Celebrating the end of the unit. Possibilities may include but are not limited to the following:
 - Have students choose art materials to create a figure of favorite character. Write about a favorite book, scene, etc. with that character explaining why it is a favorite.
 - Have students pair up and act out a scene from a favorite read aloud. Have classmates guess which characters they are acting out.
 - Partner/group students to do a readers theater reading of a scene from a familiar text. Scene selected should have a lot of character dialogue (e.g., *Frog and Toad*, *Poppleton* texts).
 - Create a ring of emotion card for each student. Each card has a different facial expression and vocabulary term (e.g., surprised, excited, embarrassed, bored, worried, angry). Students can refer to cards when thinking about characters in a text. This scaffold provides an opportunity to expose students to emotions beyond “happy” and “mad” thereby expanding their oral and written vocabulary. Cards can be used to prompt thinking during read aloud, guided reading, independent and partner reading as well as support student writing.

Notes/Tips:

- Each day students will spend time independently reading for a **minimum** of 20 min. and reading with a partner for 10 min.
- Choose books with strong characters and good dialogue for read aloud and shared reading such as Ezra Jack Keats (*Goggles*, *Peter's Chair*, *Whistle for Willie*), Cynthia Rylant (*Poppleton*), Kevin Henkes (*Lily*), Mo Willems (*Piggie and Elephant*) David Shannon (*David*) and Sara Pennypacker (*Clementine*), Barbro Lindgren (*Benny's Had Enough*) and Ted Dewan (*Crispin The Pig Who Had It All*).
- During read aloud have students stop and act (e.g., make a face to show me how the character is feeling). During read aloud have students turn and talk (e.g., be the character – what would you say? What would you do?) During read aloud have students stop and sketch (e.g., draw the facial expression of the character, draw the body position of the character).
- Create storytelling rings/strings/strips to help students retell stories.
- Continue and extend understanding of inferring to other genres. Model reading aloud and making inferences in nonfiction, poetry. This is critical for students to understand that comprehension strategies are transferrable across genres.
- During the fourth week of the unit have students read other types of genres (nonfiction and poetry) during independent reading and make inferences.
- **To view Grade 1 archived artifacts for the unit please visit the Grade 1 reading/writing page. Select “Resources” from the top nav bar. To access the units of study website use the link http://ww3.mamkschools.org/units_of_study/.**
- Chart Chums is a great online resource for creating interactive, clear and visually rich anchor charts. To view use the link <http://chartchums.wordpress.com/>.
- Additional resources of sample anchor charts for reading and writing units of study include the following: <http://readingandwritingproject.com/resources/classroom-charts/first-grade.html>.

Professional Resources

What professional resources will be helpful in planning the unit?

- *The Common Core Lesson Book K-5* by Gretchen Owocki
- *The RTI Daily Planning Book* by Gretchen Owocki
- *Teachers College Reading and Writing Project 1st Grade Reading Curricular Calendar 2010-2011*
- *First Grade Readers* by Stephanie Parsons (Chapters 3-6)
- *Comprehension: Strategic Instruction for K-3 Students* by Gretchen Owocki
- *Growing Readers* by Kathy Collins (Chapters 6-7, p. 253)
- *Reading with Meaning* by Debbie Miller
- *The Complete Year in Reading and Writing: Grade 1* by Jaime Margolies and Pam Allyn
- *The Primary Comprehension Toolkit* by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis (Strategy Guide 4 Infer and Visualize)
- *The Next Step in Guided Reading: Focused Assessments and Targeted Lessons for Helping Every Student Become a Better Reader* by Jan Richardson