



Grade 1:

Reading: What a Character!

Purpose: Why This Unit?

Your 6- and 7-year-olds have been reading short texts with relatively simple plots and just a few characters. Now they are reading texts with more elaborate story lines and more complex characters.

In this unit, your job is to get them hooked and to make observations about characters. They are beginning to develop skills of literary analysis that will last them the rest of their lives.

If you do your job well, your scholars will understand that characters are the key to understanding the big idea in any story, so they need to get to know characters by noticing what they do, say, and learn.

Your first-graders are about to become detectives; by paying attention to characters' actions, they will discover the causes of conflict and its effects on characters and the lessons they can learn from characters.

Please know that if your scholars were with us last year in kindergarten, observing and analyzing characters is not new to them. Not only did they read fiction books and texts, but they also did a unit on story elements. For your new-to-SA scholars, analyzing characters could be unfamiliar.

The development of this capacity to interpret characters and story meaning should be applied at home and at school. It is imperative that ALL your scholars are reading at home and at school. Meet with the parents of any scholars who are not reading at home. If you cannot persuade parents to ensure that their children are doing their homework, you need to manage up to leadership.

It is your responsibility to ensure that ALL your scholars are reading 6 days a week at home!

Lessons

Spend three days on each lesson to give scholars practice.

The first day of a lesson includes direct instruction.

On the additional days, quickly remind scholars of the lesson's objective and get right to independent reading.

Lesson 1: Great readers pay attention to the things that characters say, do, and think. **Lesson 2:**

Great readers pay attention to the main character's relationships with other characters. **Lesson**

3: Great readers pay attention to the main character's feelings.

Lesson 4: Great readers explain what they've learned about life from the character, using key details to support their thinking.

Lesson 1

What Does Success Look Like?

Great readers pay attention to the things that characters say, do, and think.

Success is when scholars can describe characters based on what they say, do, and think.

Lesson 1

Engage — 1 minute

- In life, we get to know people by hearing what they say, watching what they do, and learning how they think. The same is true of characters in a book. We pay attention to what they are saying and doing and think about what we are learning about them!

Direct Instruction (Model/Practice) — 5–7 minutes

- Read aloud On Meadowview Street, stopping at the part where Caroline notices there is no meadow on Meadowview Street and what she does about it. Think aloud about what her actions show—that she is resourceful. Take notes about the main character on a bubble map graphic organizer.
- Continue to read aloud On Meadowview Street. Scholars turn and talk about what Caroline learns, drawing their conclusions from the things she says, does, and thinks. Listen in to understand how well scholars notice her actions and motivations.
- Briefly share out two scholar responses and add these to the graphic organizer. ● Set the expectation that scholars have two eyes reading, two hands on the book, and two feet on the

floor during Independent Reading.

Independent Reading/Targeted Teaching Time — 25 minutes

- Scholars must sustain focused reading for 25 minutes. Get them excited about getting lost in their books and the luxury of reading time! Scholars use the bubble map graphic organizer as they read.
- Both you and your teaching partner should meet with two Guided Reading groups per day, spending approximately 10 minutes with each group.
- In between Guided Reading groups, or during the last few minutes of Independent Reading, spend 2–3 minutes working individually with 2–3 scholars. Ask each scholar to identify her reading goal and what's holding her back. Kids should know and articulate their goals!
- During Independent Reading and Guided Reading, listen to scholars read, assessing their struggles and level of understanding. Do they need to envision more? Do they need to stop after each paragraph and think about what the big idea is? Do they need to work on their fluency? Do they stop to figure out the meaning of unknown vocabulary words? Is their oral language development lagging?
- Model for scholars and give them strategies to tackle their goals.
- Listen to scholars as they read, and hold them accountable for applying the strategies.

Partner Share — 3–5 minutes

- When the timer is up, reset expectations for partner talk.
- Scholars share a key moment in the text when the character said, did, or thought something that helped them get to know the character.
- Listen in to determine if scholars are mastering the lesson objective. Look for a scholar who can model her thinking during the Whole-Class Share.

Whole-Class Share — 5 minutes

- Bring scholars together at the rug and reinforce today's objective.
- The scholar shares something that her character said, did, or thought and what this helped her understand about the character.
- Scholars evaluate which great reading tactic the scholar used.

Lesson 2

What Does Success Look Like?

Great readers pay attention to the main character's relationships with other characters. Success is when scholars are able to identify and explain those relationships.

Lesson 2

Engage — 1 minute

- Stories are like life. Characters in books have good relationships with their friends, just as real people do. We need to be able to find out how characters relate to others.

Direct Instruction (Model/Practice) — 5–7 minutes

- Read a few pages from Goal. Notice how Ajani interacts with the other boys, and think aloud about what these interactions help us understand about Ajani.
- Take notes about the main character on a bubble map graphic organizer.
- Continue to read aloud from Goal, noticing how Ajani interacts with the other boys.
- Scholars turn and talk, explaining what they notice about Ajani's relationships with the other boys and what this helps them understand about Ajani. Listen in to understand how well scholars are able to notice interactions between the main character and other characters and what this makes them think about the main character.
- Briefly share out two scholar responses and add these to the graphic organizer.
- Set the expectation that scholars have two eyes reading, two hands on the book, and two feet on the floor during Independent Reading.

Independent Reading/Targeted Teaching Time — 25 minutes

- Scholars must sustain focused reading for 25 minutes. Get them excited about getting lost in their books and the luxury of reading time! Scholars use the bubble map graphic organizer as they read.
- Both you and your teaching partner should meet with two Guided Reading groups per day, spending approximately 10 minutes with each group.
- In between Guided Reading groups, or during the last few minutes of Independent Reading, spend 2–3 minutes working individually with 2–3 scholars. Ask each scholar to identify her reading goal and what's holding her back. Kids should know and articulate their goals!
- During Independent Reading and Guided Reading, listen to scholars read, assessing their struggles and level of understanding. Do they need to envision more? Do they need to stop after each paragraph and think about what the big idea is? Do they need to work on their fluency? Do they stop to figure out the meaning of unknown vocabulary words? Is their oral language development lagging?
- Model for scholars and give them strategies to tackle their goals.
- Listen to scholars as they read, and hold them accountable for applying the strategies.

Partner Share — 3–5 minutes

- When the timer is up, reset expectations for partner talk.
- Scholars describe the main character's relationship with another character and how this helps them understand the main character better.
- Listen in to determine how well scholars can describe their main characters' relationships with other characters and what these interactions make them think about the main characters. Look for a scholar who can model her thinking during the Whole-Class Share.

Whole-Class Share — 5 minutes

- Bring scholars together at the rug and reinforce today's objective.
- The scholar shares an interaction between her main character and another character and what this helped her understand about the main character.
- Scholars evaluate which great reading tactic the scholar used.

Lesson 3

What Does Success Look Like?

Great readers pay attention to the main character's feelings.

Success is when scholars are able to describe how the main character is feeling and what is happening in the story to make the character feel that way.

Lesson 3

Engage — 1 minute

- Characters in our stories are just like people. They have feelings just as we do. By paying close attention to what is happening in the story and how it affects the character's feelings, we learn more about what type of person the character is and understand the story better.

Direct Instruction (Model/Practice) — 5–7 minutes

- Read aloud First Come the Zebra and think aloud about how Abaani feels as a result of what's happening in the story.
- Take notes about the main character on a bubble map graphic organizer.
- Continue to read aloud First Come the Zebra, keeping track of what happens in the story to make Abaani have strong feelings about Haki.
- Scholars turn and talk, explaining what they notice about Abaani's feelings toward Haki and what causes him to feel that way. Listen in to understand how well scholars are able to explain how the character feels.
- Briefly share out two scholar responses and add these to the bubble map graphic organizer.
- Set the expectation that scholars have two eyes reading, two hands on the book, and two feet on the floor during Independent Reading.

Independent Reading/Targeted Teaching Time — 25 minutes

- Scholars must sustain focused reading for 25 minutes. Get them excited about getting lost in their books and the luxury of reading time! Scholars use the bubble map graphic organizer as they read.
- Both you and your teaching partner should meet with two Guided Reading groups per day, spending approximately 10 minutes with each group.
 - In between Guided Reading groups, or during the last few minutes of Independent Reading, spend 2–3 minutes working individually with 2–3 scholars. Ask each scholar to identify her reading goal and what's holding her back. Kids should know and articulate their goals!
- During Independent Reading and Guided Reading, listen to scholars read, assessing their struggles and level of understanding. Do they need to envision more? Do they need to stop after each paragraph and think about what the big idea is? Do they need to work on their fluency? Do they stop to figure out the meaning of unknown vocabulary words? Is their oral language development lagging?
- Model for scholars and give them strategies to tackle their goals.

- Listen to scholars as they read, and hold them accountable for applying the strategies.

Partner Share — 3–5 minutes

- When the timer is up, reset expectations for partner talk.
- Scholars describe how the main character feels and what is happening in the story to make him or her feel this way.
- Listen in to partnerships to determine how well scholars can articulate a character's feelings and the events in the story that cause a character to feel a certain way. Look for a scholar who can model her thinking during the Whole-Class Share.

Whole-Class Share — 5 minutes

- Bring scholars together at the rug and reinforce today's objective.
- The scholar describes how her character feels and what makes her think this. Scholars evaluate which great reading tactic the scholar used.

Lesson 4

What Does Success Look Like?

Great readers explain what they've learned about life from the character, using key details to support their thinking.

Success is when scholars describe what they (and/or the character) have learned from the character's problem and solution.

Lesson 4

Engage — 1 minute

- A character's good and bad moments show the reader something important, like how to be a better person. When we think about how a character's problem was resolved, we learn a lesson.

Direct Instruction (Model/Practice) — 5–7 minutes

- Read The Money Tree, and think aloud about the lesson that Miss McGillicuddy learned.
- Model figuring out the lesson, or big idea, by thinking about the character's problem and how it was resolved.
- Have students recall First Come the Zebra; scholars turn and talk about the lesson the characters learned and what that teaches them. Listen in to understand how well scholars are able to explain the lesson learned.
- Set the expectation that scholars have two eyes reading, two hands on the book, and two feet on the floor during Independent Reading.

Independent Reading/Targeted Teaching Time — 25 minutes

- Scholars must sustain focused reading for 25 minutes. Get them excited about getting even further lost in their books and the luxury of reading time!
- Both you and your teaching partner should meet with two Guided Reading groups per day, spending approximately 10 minutes with each group.
- In between Guided Reading groups, or during the last few minutes of Independent Reading, spend 2–3 minutes working individually with 2–3 scholars. Ask each scholar to identify her reading goal and what’s holding her back. Kids should know and articulate their goals!
- During Independent Reading and Guided Reading, listen to scholars read, assessing their struggles and level of understanding. Do they need to envision more? Do they need to stop after each paragraph and think about what the big idea is? Do they need to work on their fluency? Do they stop to figure out the meaning of unknown vocabulary words? Is their oral language development lagging?
- Model for scholars and give them strategies to tackle their goals.
- Listen to scholars as they read, and hold them accountable for applying the strategies.

Partner Share — 5–7 minutes

- When the timer is up, reset expectations for partner talk.
- Scholars describe the character’s problem and outcome and the lesson they took away from the character’s experience.
- Listen in to partnerships to determine how well scholars can explain the lesson they learned through the character’s problem and the resolution. Look for a scholar who can model his thinking during the Whole-Class Share.

Whole-Class Share — 5 minutes

- Bring scholars together at the rug and reinforce today’s objective.
- The scholar explains the lesson he learned through his character’s problem and solution.
- Highlight how the scholar connected the events in the story to make a logical inference.
- Scholars evaluate which great reading tactic the scholar used.

You Did It!

Congratulations! You’ve reached the end of Unit 6: What a Character!

As a result of teaching this unit, **you, as the teacher, have:**

- Given your scholars the ticket to understanding that fiction is all about characters and that readers have to interpret characters!

Your scholars can:

- Closely observe the characters in their books, noticing their actions and interactions, to better understand who they are.
- Explain how they used key details to develop ideas about the main character.
- Use their understanding of the main character to understand the big ideas, or lessons, in their books.

Celebrate your scholars’ successes by acknowledging what they can now do as readers as a

result of their work over the past several weeks. For example, scholars know that characters make the story come alive and that by paying close attention to what characters do, say, and think, they can understand the characters AND the big ideas in their books.

Reflect on your successes and stretches, as well as those of your scholars. Look at your F&P results. Have your scholars grown as readers over the past month? Between now and the end of the next unit, your scholars should move to their end-of-year reading goal: level J. Enlist parents to help get scholars over this hump! Your rooms should be much quieter during independent reading time, as scholars have stopped vocalizing and are reading inside their heads.

Already have some level J scholars? Make sure they have bookmarks to mark books that require more than one sitting to read! Can scholars retell texts in sequential order and include characters, problem, solution, and lesson learned? If they can't, redouble your efforts here!

Scholars must read at home, as well as in school. Are 100% of your kids reading 6 days a week at home? Make sure at-home reading is happening, and meet with families who are falling short to recommit them to this team effort. Scholars should be working toward sustaining independent reading for up to 30 minutes.

Are 100% of your kids reading fluently? Are they using all the tools at their disposal to figure out the meaning of what they are reading?

Are 100% of your kids doing their literacy homework?

Going into the next unit, make specific reading goals for yourself. Set a percentage goal for how many children you will move in the next 15 days. Set a goal for children who are not reading at home. Whom will you get to consistently read at home? Do they understand what they're reading? What is their struggle with decoding? How will you partner with parents to support their growth?

If you are having trouble meeting your goals, do not wait until you have NOT succeeded. Consult your colleagues. Consult your leaders. ASK FOR HELP so you can meet your goals!