

## Grade 2:

# Reading: Characters Are Your Best Friends!

## Purpose: Why This Unit?

Second grade is a transformational year for scholars as readers. You are the leader of this transformation!

Your 7- and 8-year-olds begin the year reading books like Poppleton—short texts, or texts with short chapters, and relatively simple plots with minimal character change. They quickly move into illustrated chapter books, such as Frog and Toad Are Friends, with more complex characters and multiple episodes related to a single plot. Scholars get hooked on characters, entire worlds, and ongoing storylines. A single book can ignite a spark that changes a scholar's entire approach to reading and literature—and instill in her an everlasting love of reading!

**In this unit, your job is to give scholars the ticket to understanding fiction texts — paying attention to the characters!**

**If you do your job well, your scholars will understand that characters are the backbone to any story, and that by noticing what characters do and say, they will understand the big idea.**

Give scholars constant opportunities to express their ideas about characters! Oral language development, or talking, is of the utmost importance.

Think of this unit as part 1 of scholars' love affair with characters.

In the early part of second grade, most of your scholars will encounter characters whose feelings may change, but whose traits stay the same. Later on in the year, your scholars will read series books. In these books, characters reappear in book after book, and most characters will develop and change over time.

But for this second unit, scholars need to become familiar with identifying and interpreting characters. It is one of the most powerful reading skills. They must use their knowledge of the characters to derive meaning from the story overall.

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. For students who are not, it is imperative that you meet with parents, and if you cannot succeed in insisting that the work be done at home, then you need to manage up to leadership.

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

## Lessons

Spend two days on each lesson to give scholars practice.

**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 what characters say, do, and think over time to develop ideas about characters.

**Lesson 4:** Great readers distinguish between character traits and character feelings.

**Lesson 5:** Great readers pay attention to the problem and solution, or outcome, to figure out the lesson the main character (or reader) learns.

## Lesson 1

### What Does Success Look Like?

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

Success is when scholars have mastered identifying the characteristics of the main character. **Lesson 1**

### Engage — 1 minute

Understanding the main character is key to understanding the story.

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

- Using Teammates, read aloud the page on which Pee Wee refuses to sign the petition, and think aloud about what his actions show— that he is brave.
- Use a bubble map graphic organizer to take notes about the character. Scholars will do the same as they read today.
- Read aloud the last page of Teammates.
- Scholars turn and talk about what Pee Wee has learned, judging from the things he has said. Listen in to understand how well scholars notice a character's actions and motivation.
- Briefly share out two scholar responses and add these to the graphic organizer.

### **Independent Reading/ Targeted Teaching Time — 15–20 minutes**

- Scholars must sustain focused reading for a minimum of 15 minutes. Get them excited about getting lost in their books and having the luxury of reading time!
- Whether you are flying solo or teaching as part of a duo, start by making sure all kids are focused and the room has a hushed tone. Play classical or instrumental jazz music, but the volume should be low.
- Narrate scholars who are following through on your expectations, such as staying focused on their book, or who are demonstrating strong reading habits, such as always making a mind movie.
- Spend 2–3 minutes working individually with 3–5 scholars. Ask each scholar about his reading level goal and what's holding him back. Kids should know and articulate their goals!
- 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.
- Choose a scholar to share something that the 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 scholars explaining how the main character's actions make other characters feel, think, or act.

## **Lesson 2**

### **Engage — 1 minute**

Paying attention to the character's actions also means paying attention to how he or she interacts with other characters. This helps us get to know the main character like a friend!

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

- Read a few pages from Richard Wright and the Library Card in which Richard interacts with his mother, and talk about what these interactions help us understand about Richard.
- Use a bubble map graphic organizer to take quick notes about the character. Scholars will do the same as they read today.
- Read a few pages in which Richard interacts with Jim Falk.
- Scholars turn and talk, explaining what they notice about Mr. Falk's and Richard's relationship, and what this helps them understand about Richard. Listen in to understand how well scholars are able to notice and discuss 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.

### **Independent Reading/ Targeted Teaching Time — 15–20 minutes**

- Scholars must sustain focused reading for a minimum of 15 minutes. Get them excited about getting lost in their books and having the luxury of reading time!
- Make sure all kids are focused and the room has a hushed tone. Play classical or instrumental jazz music at a low volume.
- Narrate scholars who are meeting your expectations.
- Spend 2–3 minutes working individually with 3–5 scholars. Ask each scholar about her reading level goal and what's holding her back. Kids should know and articulate their goals!
- Listen to scholars read and assess their struggles and level of understanding.
- Model and give scholars strategies to tackle their goals. Listen to scholars 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 the main character's relationship with another character, and what they have learned about the character as a result of these interactions. 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.
- Choose a scholar to share an interaction between the main character and another character and describe what this helped him 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 what characters say, do, and think over time to develop ideas about characters.

Success is scholars keeping track of a character's actions and developing ideas about the type of character he or she may be.

### **Lesson 3**

### **Engage — 1 minute**

By paying close attention to our characters across the whole story, we come to know them so well that we begin to anticipate what they might do next.

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

- Read aloud Teammates, starting from when Pee Wee Reese is first introduced until the end of the book. Keep track of Reese's actions to demonstrate that he is unbiased and cares more about his teammates than about what others think.
- Go back to the graphic organizer from Lesson 1 and use the notes there to "connect the dots" and develop ideas based on the details. Think aloud about what your notes make you think about the character. Scholars will do the same as they read today.
- Read the last page of Teammates and have scholars turn and tell their reading partners about Reese's actions and what this makes them think about Reese.
- Listen in to understand how well scholars are able to explain what the character said, did, or thought, and what this made them think about the character as a result.
- Briefly share out two scholar responses.

### **Independent Reading/ Targeted Teaching Time — 15–20 minutes**

- Scholars must sustain focused reading for a minimum of 15 minutes. Get them excited about getting lost in their books and having the luxury of reading time!
- Make sure all kids are focused and the room has a hushed tone. Play classical or instrumental jazz music at a low volume.

- Narrate scholars who are following through on your expectations.
- Spend 2-3 minutes working individually with 3-5 scholars. Ask each scholar about his reading level goal and what's holding him back. Kids should know and articulate their goals!
- Listen to scholars read, assessing their struggles and level of understanding.
- Model and give scholars 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 character's actions and what this makes them think.
- Listen in to partnerships to determine how well scholars can articulate what the character said, did, or thought, and what this made them think about the character as a result. 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.
- A scholar describes the character's actions and what this made her think about the character as a result.
- Scholars evaluate which great reading tactic the scholar used.

## **Lesson 4**

### **What Does Success Look Like?**

Great readers distinguish between character traits and character feelings.

Success is scholars understanding that a character's feelings can change. However, character traits are part of a character's personality and show what the character is like.

### **Lesson 4**

#### **Engage — 1 minute**

By thinking about the character throughout the story, we can notice what the character tends to do, so we can identify his or her traits.

#### **Direct Instruction (Model/ Practice) — 5-7 minutes**

- Explain to scholars that characters have feelings and traits. Both are revealed in what characters do, say, and think. However, character traits are often revealed through behaviors that characters repeat again and again.
- Read aloud pages 4-5 of The King's Equal, starting with "The prince was angry." Model for scholars how you can tell that Raphael's words and actions reveal what kind of person he is.
- Read pages 19-21 of The King's Equal and have scholars turn and tell their partners the character traits that show what type of person Rosamund is.
- Listen in to understand how well scholars are able to distinguish between a character's traits,

- or what he or she is like, and the character's feelings.
- Briefly share out two scholar responses.

### **Independent Reading/ Targeted Teaching Time — 15-20 minutes**

- Scholars must sustain focused reading for a minimum of 20 minutes. Get them excited about getting lost in their books and having the luxury of reading time!
- Make sure all kids are focused and the room has a hushed tone. Play classical or instrumental jazz music at a low volume.
- Narrate scholars who are following through on your expectations.
- Spend 2-3 minutes working individually with 3-5 scholars. Ask each scholar about his reading level goal and what's holding him back. Kids should know and articulate their goals!
- Listen to scholars read, assessing their struggles and level of understanding.
- Model and give scholars 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 character feelings or traits based on what the character said, did, and thought throughout the text.
- Listen in to partnerships to determine how well scholars can use a character's actions to name his or her traits. 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.
- Choose a scholar to describe the character's actions and what they revealed about the character's feelings or traits. Highlight how the scholar connected the events in the story to make a logical inference.
- Scholars evaluate which great reading tactic the scholar used.

## **Lesson 5**

### **What Does Success Look Like?**

Great readers pay attention to the problem and solution, or outcome, to figure out the lesson the main character (or reader) learns.

Success is scholars describing what the character, or scholar, learned from the character's problem and resolution.

### **Lesson 5**

#### **Engage — 1 minute**

A character's good and bad moments show or tell the reader something important, like how to be a better person. When we think about the character and how her problem was resolved, we can figure out the lesson.

### **Direct Instruction (Model/ Practice) — 3-5 minutes**

- Using The King's Equal, think aloud about the lesson that Raphael learns in chapters 5-6.
- Model figuring out the lesson, or big idea, by thinking about the character's problem and how it was resolved.

### **Independent Reading/ Targeted Teaching Time — 15–20 minutes**

- Scholars must sustain focused reading for a minimum of 20 minutes. Get them excited about getting lost in their books and having the luxury of reading time!
- Make sure all kids are focused and the room has a hushed tone. Play classical or instrumental jazz music at a low volume.
- Narrate scholars who are following through on your expectations.
- Spend 2–3 minutes working individually with 3–5 scholars. Ask each scholar about his reading level goal and what's holding him back. Kids should know and articulate their goals!
- Listen to scholars read, assessing their struggles and level of understanding.
- Model and give scholars strategies to tackle their goals. Listen to scholars as they read and hold them accountable for applying the strategies.

### **Partner Share — 7–10 minutes**

- When the timer is up, reset expectations for partner talk.
- Scholars have extra time today to 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 her thinking during the Whole-Class Share.

### **Whole-Class Share — 5 minutes**

- Bring scholars together at the rug and reinforce today's objective.
- Choose a scholar to explain the lesson she learned through the character's problem and solution, or outcome. Highlight how the scholar connected the events in the story to make a logical inference.
- Scholars evaluate which great reading tactic the scholar used.

## **Targeted Teaching Week**

Use the next 5 days to work with scholars and increase their capacity to read.

**The most important thing you can do is give kids independent reading time. The best way to improve reading is by having kids read.**



Listen to scholars as they read independently. Talk with scholars one-on-one about their reading and coach them through the key obstacles to being great readers.

Depending on their needs, work with scholars whole group, in small groups, or one-on-one to support them with the:

- Tactics of Great Readers
- Unit goals

## You Did It!

**Congratulations!** You've reached the end of Unit 2: Characters are Your Best Friends!

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

- Given your scholars the ticket to understanding fiction—getting to know the character as you know your best friend!

**Your scholars can:**

- Closely observe the characters in their books, noticing their actions and interactions, to better understand who they are as a character.
- Explain how they used key details to develop ideas about the main character.
- Use their understanding of the main characters 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 last several weeks.** For example, scholars know that characters are the backbone of a story, and that by paying close attention to the characters, they can understand the characters AND the big ideas in their books.

Invite scholars to share how much fun they had getting to know their characters.

**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 last month? Between now and the next unit, your scholars should move to the next reading level. This is always a tricky jump for scholars, and they can easily get stuck, making little to no growth. Enlist parents to help get scholars over this hump!

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.

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

Are 100% of your scholars 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 ahead in the next 15 days. Set a goal for children who are not reading at home. Who will you get to consistently read at home? Set a goal for moving any scholars who are stuck. Why are they stuck? Do they read most or all words correctly? What is their struggle with decoding? Do they understand what they're reading? Do they understand the big idea? 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!