

## Grade 3:

# Reading: Characters Are Just Like Us

## Purpose: Why This Unit?

In Unit 1, you created a culture of enthusiastic readers and helped scholars select books they are passionate about! Now it is time to push your scholars to develop as readers and thinkers, beginning with truly understanding their characters.

To deepen scholars' thinking you **MUST** make sure scholars are reading their entire books, so that they can fully understand patterns in their characters' behavior and changes over time. If you are struggling to invest scholars in their books, it is likely because they are not interested in what they are reading. It is your job as the teacher to make sure every child in your classroom has a book they are excited to read!

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

Please know that if your scholars were with us last year in Grade 2, characters are not new to them. Not only did they read fiction books and texts, they also did two units devoted to characters. For your new-to-SA scholars, characters could be unfamiliar.

**You will be successful if at the end of this unit, ALL of your scholars understand that characters are the backbone to any story, and that by noticing what characters do and say, they will understand the big idea of any piece of fiction.**

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

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 students who are not reading at home. If you cannot succeed in convincing the 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 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 the main character says, does, and thinks.

**Lesson 2:** Great readers pay attention to the way the main character treats others and what this tells them about this character.

**Lesson 3:** Great readers pay attention to what characters say, do, and think over time to develop ideas about characters.

**Lesson 4:** Great readers notice when characters change and can articulate the reason for the change.

**Lesson 5:** Great readers explain what they have learned about life from the character by using key details to prove their thinking.

## Lesson 1

### What Does Success Look Like?

Great readers pay attention to the things that the main character says, does, and thinks.

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— the character is our

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

- Read the first two paragraphs of page 14 from Because of Winn-Dixie. Think aloud about how Opal’s actions reveal that she is understanding. Model recording this in your reading notebook.
- Read the last two paragraphs of page 14 and the first paragraph of page 15.
- Scholars turn and talk about Opal’s character traits. Listen in to understand how well scholars use what the character says, does, and thinks to identify character traits.
- Briefly share out two scholar responses.

**Independent Reading/ Targeted Teaching Time — 25 minutes**

- Scholars sustain focused reading for 25 minutes.
- 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 books, or who are demonstrating strong reading habits, like using what a character says, does, and thinks to identify character traits.
- 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.
- In partnerships, scholars share the character traits they identified in the main 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 what she learned about her character and have others evaluate which great reading tactic the scholar used.

## Lesson 2

### What Does Success Look Like?

Great readers pay attention to the way the main character treats others and what this tells them about this character.

Success is scholars being able to explain what the character's treatment of others tells you about the character.

### 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 our characters better!

#### Direct Instruction (Model/ Practice) — 1-3 minutes

- Read aloud from Chapter 3 of *Because of Winn-Dixie*. Start on page 20: "I started in on Winn-Dixie right away, trying to clean him up." End on page 21: "Winn-Dixie looked down at the ground, like he was trying to remember if he had."
- Read from page 40, ending at the top of page 44: "'Yes, ma'am,' I told her. 'He has a large heart, too.'"
- Scholars turn and talk about what this interaction reveals about the main character. Listen in to understand how well scholars identify character traits by paying attention to how the character treats others.
- Briefly share out two scholar responses.

#### Independent Reading/ Targeted Teaching Time — 25 minutes

- Scholars sustain focused reading for 25 minutes.
- Make 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 meeting your expectations, such as thinking about what the main

character's treatment of others tells you about the character.

- 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 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.
- In partnerships, scholars share what they learned about the character from his/her treatment of others.
- Listen in to determine if scholars are mastering the lesson objective. 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.
- Choose a scholar to share what she learned about her character and have others 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 recognizing character development over time and using patterns in the main character's behavior to identify traits of this character.

### **Lesson 3**

#### **Engage — 1 minute**

By paying close attention to our characters throughout the 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 from pages 99-100 of *Because of Winn Dixie*. Think aloud about how you know

Opal is a caring person based on patterns in her behavior. Model recording this in your reading notebook.

- Scholars look back over your class notes about Opal to identify a time when she acted in a way that was predictable.
- Scholars turn and talk about what else they learned about Opal based on a pattern in her behavior. Listen in to understand how well scholars use patterns in a character's behavior to identify traits of that character.
- Briefly share out two scholar responses.

### **Independent Reading/ Targeted Teaching Time — 25 minutes**

- Scholars sustain focused reading for 25 minutes.
- Make 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 meeting your expectations, such as looking for patterns in their characters' behavior to help them predict what their characters might do next.
- 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 and assess their struggles and level of understanding.
- 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.
- In partnerships, scholars share the ideas they developed about their characters based on trends in their behavior.
- 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 what she learned about her character and have others evaluate which great reading tactic the scholar used.

## **Lesson 4**

## What Does Success Look Like?

Great readers notice when characters change and can articulate the reason for the change.

Success is when scholars can use evidence from the text to explain why a character changed.

## Lesson 4

### Engage — 1 minute

As readers, it is important to notice when a character changes and think deeply about why this happened.

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

- Reread your notes from the first few lessons of this unit. Model reflecting on how Opal has changed since the beginning of the story. Read the first full paragraph on page 147 of Because of Winn-Dixie. Think aloud about why Opal now finds friends her own age, not just adults. Model recording this in your reading notebook.
- Read another passage that shows Opal has changed.
- Scholars turn and talk about why Opal has changed. Listen in to understand how well scholars can use evidence from the text to explain why a character changed.
- Briefly share out two scholar responses.

### Independent Reading/ Targeted Teaching Time — 25 minutes

- Scholars sustain focused reading for 25 minutes.
- Make 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 meeting your expectations, such as thinking deeply about why a character changed.
- 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 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.
- In partnerships, scholars share how and why their main characters changed.
- 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 what she learned about her character and have others evaluate which great reading tactic the scholar used.

## **Lesson 5**

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

Great readers explain what they have learned about life from the character by using key details to prove their thinking.

Success is when scholars can use evidence from the text to articulate a lesson they've learned.

### **Lesson 5**

#### **Engage — 1 minute**

As a reader, it's important to determine what lessons we can learn about life from our characters' experiences.

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

- Read aloud pages 177-178 of Because of Winn-Dixie. Think aloud about how you know Opal has learned to begin to let her mother go and to fill that void with other meaningful relationships. Then continue to think about the lesson you, as a reader, have learned about life alongside Opal.
  - Scholars look back over their notebooks and turn and talk about what they can learn about life from their characters' experiences. Listen in to understand how well scholars use evidence from the text to identify a lesson that is applicable beyond the context of the book.
- Briefly share out two scholar responses.

#### **Independent Reading/ Targeted Teaching Time — 25 minutes**



- Scholars sustain focused reading for 25 minutes.
- Make 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 meeting your expectations, such as using evidence from the text to articulate a lesson they've learned.
- 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 and assess their struggles and level of understanding.
- 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.
- In partnerships, scholars share the lessons they can learn from their characters' experiences.
- 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 the lessons she has learned and have others 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 Just Like Us.

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

- Shown scholars how to understand the main idea of any fiction text by paying attention to the characters!

**Your scholars can:**

- Closely observe the characters in their books, noticing their actions and interactions, to better understand who they are as characters.
- 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 now recognize that if they can determine who a character is as a person and what makes him or her change, this will help them understand 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 last month?

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 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. Who 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!