

Grade 4:

What A Character!

Purpose: Why This Unit?

Scholars at SA have been falling in love with characters for a few years now. Previously most of our scholars encountered characters that were one-dimensional and changed less over the course of the book.

Now scholars are encountering complex characters, with real depth, and as readers they must understand character transformation.

In this unit, you will teach your scholars to be close character watchers (think bird watching!) and learn to interpret even subtle clues that will teach readers big ideas about characters and meaning.

In this unit, your job is to ensure that all of your scholars know how to read the clues and interpret characters.

Your scholars have been doing this since Kindergarten, but as the books or texts get more complex, we need to ensure that our scholars remain good detectives, and that their powers of observation about characters remain keen.

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.

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 main 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, and use those observations to develop ideas about characters.

Lesson 4: Great readers notice when characters change, and they think about the reason for the change.

Lesson 5: Great readers explain what they've learned about life from a character and use key details to prove their thinking.

Lesson 1

What Does Success Look Like?

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

Success is when scholars can describe the character traits of the main characters and explain how their actions show those traits. For example, a scholar may prove that a character is dishonest by showing instances where he lies and steals.

Lesson 1

Engage — 1 minute

Understanding the main characters is like being a detective! Pay attention to even the tiniest of clues!

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

- Read aloud the last paragraph on page 10 of The Tiger Rising. Think aloud about how Rob is hiding his emotions.

- Read aloud from the bottom of page 28 to the middle of page 29.
- Scholars turn and talk about what they learn about Rob's father. Listen in to understand how well scholars deduce that Rob's father is selfless.
- Briefly share out two scholar responses and add these to the graphic organizer.

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 having the luxury of reading time!
- Scholars note key details and formulate ideas as they read, using graphic organizers.
- 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, such as always making a mind movie.
- 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, 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?
- 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.
- Partners describe their characters and give evidence based on what the character said, did, or thought.
- 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 has learned about the character and have others evaluate which great reading tactic the scholar used. Bring scholars together at the rug and reinforce today's objective.

Lesson 2

What Does Success Look Like?

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

Success is scholars describing a character and giving evidence based on the character's interactions with other characters. For example, a scholar may describe a character as trusting,

based on the character's decision to be friends with Sistine.

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) — 1–3 minutes

- Read pages 40-42 from The Tiger Rising.
- Show the text under the ELMO and take notes. Think aloud about Rob showing that he trusts Sistine and will take a chance on being a friend.
- Read pages 51-53, in which Rob interacts with Willie May.
- Scholars turn and talk, explaining what they notice about Rob's interaction with Willie May, and what this shows about Rob. Listen in to understand how well scholars are able to notice and discuss interactions between characters and draw conclusions about them.
- Briefly share out two scholar responses.

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 having the luxury of reading time!
- Scholars note key details and formulate ideas as they read using their graphic organizers.
- 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.
- 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.

- Partners describe the main character’s relationship with another character and how this helps them understand the main character better.
- 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 an interaction between the main character and another character, and ask her to explain what this helped her understand about the main character.

Lesson 3

What Does Success Look Like?

Great readers pay attention to what characters say, do, and think over time, and use those observations to develop ideas about characters.

Success is when scholars have mastered the art of noticing and interpreting character development.

Lesson 3

Engage — 1 minute

Often we know our characters so well, we can predict how they’ll act. Then again, characters, like people, change and can often surprise us! We have to be constantly paying attention and ready to change, confirm, or enhance our ideas about them.

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

- Read aloud from page 57 to the top of page 60 of The Tiger Rising. End with: “Caroline…” Scholars turn and talk about what they learned from Rob’s hesitation to answer Sistine’s question and Sistine’s defiance.
- Read aloud pages 61-62. Scholars turn and talk about how this helps them add on to the ideas about Rob and Sistine they developed from pages 57-60. Not only is Sistine bold and defiant to her mom, but she also asks Rob questions that make him say his mother’s name aloud.
- Listen in to understand how well scholars are able to use characters’ actions to develop ideas about them.
- Briefly share out two scholar responses.

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 having the luxury of reading time!
- Scholars note key details and formulate ideas as they read, using their graphic organizers.
- 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.
- 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.
- Partners share events that helped them confirm or enhance their thinking about their characters.
- 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.
- A scholar shares a part of her book that helped her confirm or enhance her thinking about a character.
- Scholars evaluate which great reading tactic the scholar used.

Lesson 4

What Does Success Look Like?

Great readers notice when characters change, and they think about the reason for the change.

Success is when scholars master noticing character changes and are able to correctly interpret the

meaning of those changes.

Lesson 4

Engage — 1 minute

In the previous lesson, we built up our ideas about characters like snowballs, adding to and confirming them. Sometimes, though, we realize that we were all wrong about a character, or that the character has changed during the course of the story! We must constantly reevaluate our ideas to make sure they're correct.

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

- Read aloud from page 76 to the bottom of page 79 of The Tiger Rising. End with: "...Crying. Sistine." Think aloud about Rob and Sistine going to the tiger's cage, and Rob holding Sistine as she cried.
- Read the first sentence of the next paragraph on page 79: "He stood beside her, terrified and amazed." Scholars turn and talk about what they predict will happen, based on what they know about Rob, especially from the second paragraph on page 78: "And Rob opened his mouth....When he stood before Sistine."
- Scholars turn and talk about how they need to revise their thinking about Rob, who offers comfort, and Sistine, who shows feelings underneath her toughness, and why this change may have happened. Listen in to understand how well scholars describe the change and how logical their reasoning is about why Rob has changed.
- Briefly share out two scholar responses.

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 having the luxury of reading time!
- Scholars note key details and formulate ideas as they read, using their graphic organizers.
- 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.
- 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.
- Partners share parts of their books where they noted a change in the character or changed their thinking about 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.
- A scholar shares a part of her book where she noted a change in the character or changed her thinking about the character.

Lesson 5

What Does Success Look Like?

Great readers explain what they've learned about life from a character and use key details to prove their thinking.

Success is when scholars state a clear, specific lesson taught by the story and explain how a character contributed to teaching that lesson.

Lesson 5

Engage — 1 minute

One of the most powerful parts of reading is learning lessons that we can use in our own lives! Often, characters are the key to teaching those lessons.

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

- Read an excerpt from the end of *The Tiger Rising*, such as pages 100-101.
- Scholars turn and talk about the lesson in the book and how Sistine and Willie May helped Rob learn the lesson about things needing to “rise up.” Listen in and press scholars to be precise. They should articulate the lesson Rob learns and how it's connected to Sistine's and Willie May's actions and traits.
- Briefly share out two scholar responses.

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 having the luxury of reading time!
- Scholars note key details and formulate ideas as they read, using their graphic organizers.
- 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.
- 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.
- Partners share a lesson they've learned about life from a character, using details to explain their thinking.
- 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.
- A scholar shares a lesson she's learned from a character, using details to explain her thinking.
- 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: What A Character!

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

- Given scholars the ticket to understanding fiction texts— pay attention to the characters!

Your scholars can:

- Understand that characters are the backbone of any story.
- Notice and interpret character development.

Celebrate your scholars' successes by acknowledging what they can now do as readers as a result of their work over the last several weeks. Scholars now know their characters on a much deeper level than ever before!

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!