

Brown County Schools

5th/6th grade

Reading Curriculum

Revised July 2010

August

Launching Reading Workshop

Establishing Routines, Reading Logs, Essential Skills

"Children should learn that reading is pleasure, not just something that teachers make you do in school." Beverly Cleary

Unit Overview

The goal for this unit is to establish a reading environment in which readers know what is expected of them. Students need to build a relationship with reading. They need to know the importance of reading, how-to keep track of their reading using the book logs, how-to choose just-right books, build reading stamina, know the workshop routines, work with a partner, and use good reader strategies.

A child needs to be reading just right books 2 hours a day, 7 days a week to maintain even just one year's reading growth. All students should be reading for longer stretches of time each day. They should be making time for reading and they should begin, continue through, and complete books at a good pace.

Establish routines right from the start. Start your reading workshop routine during the first days of school. Teachers need to emphasize that each of us is unique as a reader. Be a book seller. Spread your enthusiasm for books. Be excited about their reading.

At the beginning of the year, teachers need to spend time stressing the importance of stamina by encouraging kids to read for longer stretches of time - at home and at school. In the beginning of the school year, teachers demonstrate reading skills and think aloud in the read aloud to model those skills.

Each day readers will do some writing either on post-its, charts, or in a reading notebook. This writing will be brought to partner conversations after modeling with read alouds. This writing work and partner conversations are absolutely essential elements of a reading workshop.

To start the year, place the students at the levels which they were reading at the end of last year. They should start the year by reading books that are easy for them. If a student has not been assessed yet you can put a bin of random, easy, high interest books for the student. You can move among children, assessing them as they read. When an upper grade student is

progressing well, he is apt to move along three levels a year (although once readers are reading Level R or beyond, they often progress more slowly, maybe just one level a year).

An important thing to remember...Fifth graders who could read beyond Level W should enrich their reading life by enjoying books in different genres or authors at that level and lower instead of reading X and higher. The content in X, Y, and Z books may be too advanced for 5th grade students (this is not set in stone, but more of a guideline to keep in mind).

*Reading instruction should:

match the individual reader,
teach toward independence,
explicitly teach strategies to access skills,
value time for reading,
value volume of reading,
value variety of reading experience, and
follow predictable structures and routines.

*Conferring w/Readers by Serravallo/Goldberg

Alignment with Standards

- 5.1.1 Read aloud grade-level-appropriate narrative text (stories) and expository text (information) fluently and accurately and with appropriate timing, changes in voice, and expression.
- 5.1.6 Understand unknown words by using word, sentence, and paragraph clues to determine meaning.
- 5.3.2 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.
- 5.3.8 Identify the speaker or narrator in a selection and tell whether the speaker or narrator is a character involved in the story.
- 6.1.1 Read aloud grade-level-appropriate poems and literary and informational texts fluently and accurately and with appropriate timing, changes in voice, and expression.
- 6.3.1 Identify different types (genres) of fiction and describe the major characteristics of each form.
- 6.3.5 Identify the speaker and recognize the difference between first-person (the narrator tells the story from the "I" perspective) and third-person (the narrator tells the story from an outside perspective) narration.
- 6.3.9 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.

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YOUR CLASSROOM LIBRARY

- Group your books in bins by the genre, series, author, award winners, our favorites, read alouds, topics, and/or level.
- Label your bins.
- Your books should span the levels of your students only.
- Have special bins that change throughout the year depending on the unit of study for Social Studies and Science.
- Establish a shopping day. Put it on a chart.
- Develop a checkout system.
- Is my library in an inviting place?
- Can my readers easily find what they're looking for?
- Does my library reflect the work we are doing in our classroom?
- Does my library reflect the range of interests and abilities of my students?

RUNNING RECORDS

Use multiple approaches to get information about your students as readers. Students are more than just reading levels. They have histories with books and attitudes about reading. Think about skills the reader needs. Come up with a few strategies for each skill by thinking "What do I do?"

When assessing a child to find their reading level, you must take into consideration accuracy, fluency, and strong comprehension. We want students to read at 96% accuracy and higher, as well as reading fluently at that level. If a child is reading word by word, choppy, and very slow, we would not consider that level to be a child's independent reading level. Also, we want to make sure the child can answer literal questions as well as inferential questions. If he/she is unable to infer at that level, that would not be his/her independent level.

- To assess quickly, use information from last year's teacher.
- To assess quickly, give students at higher reading levels book chapters, and ask them to write retellings. Choose a few books at each level. If possible choose texts that are less familiar to the kids. Have them read the first chapter. When finished with the chapter have them write a retelling without looking back at the chapter. If a child is struggling with the retelling, ask him to retell it orally. (This is an assessment of comprehension not writing ability.) If a student is still struggling give them copies of easier texts to try. Be positive even when a student is struggling.

- Use running records to make sure what students' levels are and to develop skills to work with the students during their conferences. Does he self-correct? Is he fluent?
- Use the TC leveled stories and teacher forms. Have a student copy and a teacher copy of the benchmark text. Record the miscues/errors as the student reads aloud 100 words from a chapter. Use the shorthand symbols to record your observations about the child's reading behavior. Jot down notes about the student's fluency and intonation.
- The student continues reading the section - aloud or silently. When finished he retells the story and you ask him questions. Ask both literal and inferential questions.
- Try an easier level if the student didn't read fluently with 97% accuracy, or if he was unable to answer comprehension questions.
- Try a harder level if the student shows no areas of challenge and can answer the higher-level comprehension questions.
- Give a reading survey to find out what they like to read, their reading history, and their attitudes about reading. Some questions might include:
 - What kind of books do you like to read?
 - Who is your favorite author?
 - What kind of books does your family read to you at home?
 - Do you like to read stories?
 - Do you like to read books where you learn cool facts?
 - What do you feel when you hear "It's time to read!" in school"
 - What do you read at home?

Teaching Points for Launching Reading Workshop

GETTING TO KNOW OURSELVES AS READERS:

- Readers make lists of books they love, that they've heard read aloud or have read on their own, and use this information to study themselves as readers. They read the list of books that they love and ask themselves, "So what does this list of favorite books reveal about me as a reader? What do I feel passionate about as a reader?"
- Readers sketch a picture of one time when they were reading or one book which really mattered to them (when they felt lost in a book or the characters became so real they felt like friends). They can then write or talk with a partner about this: "What was it about that one reading time that made reading work for me?" and "How can we be sure that reading is just as magical in the year ahead?"
- Readers share stories telling how reading is used in their lives. They may tell about learning a video game, a recipe, directions, etc.
- Readers notice what good readers do. Create 2 lists with the kid - a list defining what reading is, the other describes the characteristics of a proficient reader or criteria

for the type of readers we want to be. When do you read? Where do you read? Why do you read?

- Make a list of strategies they learned and used as they were reading such as a chart title Successful Readers... Add to & revise all year.
- Investigate media images depicting readers. Make a chart. Create your own image of a reader. Everyone draws a picture (or take a picture) of self reading.
- Students bring in a favorite book. Have book talks to share favorite books.

BUILDING STAMINA:

- Readers build their reading stamina by reading a little bit more each day. They set time goals. I read 10 pages (minutes) at school. I'll try to read 15 tomorrow.
- Readers build their stamina by staying focused on their books. When they start to lose their focus, they can reread a section of their book or they can rest their eyes for a moment before continuing.
- Readers can build their stamina by setting goals for their reading each day and at home. One way readers can set a goal is by placing a post-it in their book as a visual goal for where they are trying to read during that time.
- Before we read, we can look over the chapters and plan our progress through a book. "If I read _____ chapters a day, I'll be done by _____,"

INDEPENDENT READING TIME

Get to know the levels of the students in your class. Take a few books at each level and study them, asking yourself, "What skills does this level demand?" Plan strategy lessons to teach students in that level.

- Readers know how to shop for books. Model shopping for books.
- Book shopping time is NOT during independent reading time. It is during another part of the day.
- Students choose a week's worth of home and school reading. The number depends on their reading level. Lower level students will need more books.
- Readers choose just-right books at their levels. Make a chart "What Makes a Book Just Right" such as:
 - The topic is interesting.
 - You can read almost all of the words. Teach them the 3-finger rule.
 - You can visualize what's happening.
 - You can read the words smoothly.
 - It is a genre that you enjoy.
 - You don't want to put it down.
 - You can relate to the characters.
 - You understand what is happening.
 - There are less than 5 words I don't know on a page.

- You've read other books in the series.
- You make connections to the text.
- It doesn't feel like work when you are reading.
- Using 3 different sized shirts, students vote on which of the 3 pieces of clothing was "just right" for a student. The relate shopping for clothes to shopping for books.
- If a book is not leveled, read a page. If you missed more than 3 words then that book may not be just-right for you.
- Retell what you just read. Can you do it in sequence? Do you understand it?
- Readers choose a good spot to read - choosing spots where they can focus on their books.

READING LOGS

- Readers keep track of what they've read in school and at home by completely filling out a reading log each day. This helps readers know how many books they've read and what types of books they like. Reading logs also help teachers know important information about their students as readers. Children should be reading the same book at home and school - carrying the book between places.
- CAUTION: Kids won't fill out the reading logs on their own without time for it built in and you checking it frequently.
- Readers always have their reading logs out on the table during Independent Reading. They also begin Independent Reading time by entering the starting page number and any other necessary information before they begin to read.
- Readers know when to abandon a book by noticing when it feels like a chore to read. Put an "A" on the reading log when abandoning a book.
- Analyze their book logs for what to teach. Look at a student's log for patterns that relate to volume, stamina, rate, and consistency. Make a teaching decision based on what would help the reader improve in one of these areas.
 - *Note:
 - How does the student's reading rate at home vary from his rate at school?
 - How long is the student reading in school and at home?
 - How long was this student in one reading level before moving to the next?
 - Does the student tend to read one book at a time or juggle several books or abandon books?
 - What genre is the student reading?
 - Does the student ever reread?
- Conferring with Readers by Serravallo & Goldberg

READERS' WORKSHOP PROCEDURES:

- Readers know the routines and expectations for readers' workshop. Make a chart of the workshop rules.

- Readers bring their tools to the meeting area each day for Reading Workshop. They bring their independent reading books, bookmark, post-its, reading notebook, book log, and a pencil - usually in a gallon size Ziploc bag. Make a chart of workshop materials to bring.
- Have a place where students can exchange dull pencils for sharp and a pile of extra post-its.
- We want to have more time to read our wonderful books so... gather quickly on the rug... no talking during mini-lessons...go to reading spot quickly.
- Be proactive. Teach a mini-lesson about their roles during independent reading time. They only read books they've chosen from the library, reread when finished, and jot down their thinking.
- What is your routine for using kids wanting a bathroom break, sharpening pencils, etc. during workshop time?
- Teach them strategies for staying focused on their reading such as rereading, jotting post-its at the end of each chapter to quickly retell, or find a quieter spot to read. With the kids make a chart of ways to stay focused.

READING PARTNERS:

- Readers have partners who read the same kinds of just-right books. Partners often read the same books or swap books, so that they can talk more deeply about books and what they're reading. Partners shop together.
- Partners know the procedures to have good partner talk.
- They know how to sit facing each other. Talk about ways you should sit when sharing. Have students model sitting with a partner. Practice getting in & out of talk positions quickly.
- During the first week partners talk about what they're reading, how much, and how long.
- Partners know how to ask questions to keep the conversation alive. Make a chart of conversation starters such as: Why did...? What's this part about? How is this (detail) like this (detail)? What would happen if...? Who is ...? What does this section detail...? Do you think that...? I don't understand this section. Make a bookmark for each child or a chart with the conversation starters.
- Partners know how to be a good listener. Students discuss what makes a good listener. What can you do to show that you are listening? Could you retell what your partner just told you? Chart their suggestions.
- Partners can talk about their mental pictures. What do the places in the book look like?
- Partners can sketch the character, the character's home, the house. Talk with your partner about the reasons for this image.
- Partners can listen to each other retell, asking questions to clarify and dig deeper into the story. They can ask questions about the main characters: "What is Mr. Putter

like?" They can ask questions about the reasons why events happened: "Why did he agree to keep the dog?" They can ask questions to encourage prediction: "What do you think will happen next? Why do you think that?"

- Partners need to ask questions to clarify or dig deeper about the main character or the plot. Why did the even happen? Why did the character do that? What do you think will happen next? What would you have done?
- Discuss with your partner how the character talks, what they would like or not like, how they treat others.
- USING POST-ITS
- In the beginning of the year, after modeling thinking aloud with the read aloud, the teacher models writing about reading using charts, post-its, and her readers' notebook.
- Students can write questions, comments, reactions, and retellings on post-its and leave them in their books until they meet with the teacher, a partner, or a book club.
- When finished with a book, the student should transfer the post-its to his readers' notebook for safekeeping.
- Partners can use post-its to mark places where they have strong reactions to the text, then talk about what happened in that section and why they reacted so strongly.
- Partners can support each other by using a post-it to mark a confusing word and working together to figure out the word.
- Partners should use post-its to mark spots for discussion - a funny part, scary part, a confusing part, a funny word, a favorite passage, some dialogue to share.
- Post-it when you learn something new about the character or when a new event happens.
- Notice when a character does something. Stop-and-jot why you think the character did that. What will he do next?

ESSENTIAL READING SKILLS:

- Readers can envision what is happening in the text by making a movie in their mind. Students should draw on their own experiences to add more to the text than what is given. They do this by asking, "Has this ever happened to me? What did it look like?"
- Good readers are able to determine the important ideas in a book/chapter. Do this work in read aloud to support the work in Reading Workshop. Teacher demonstrates how to stop-and-jot. They read a bit, stop and ask, "What was important in this part? What do I think the writer wanted me to really notice?" and jot it on a Post-it. After practicing with read aloud several times, stop-and-jot with your independent books to share with your partner
- Good readers predict what will happen next. They read a bit, stop, and say, "based on what just happened, I think _____ will happen next."
- Good readers identify with the characters. They put themselves in the characters shoes. Teachers model how to talk and think about the characters.

- Kids speak in the voices of the characters. Pretend you are _____. What are you thinking? What would you do? What would you say?
- Kids turn-and-talk about the characters. Listen as if you were the character. Show me on your face how he/she is feeling now. Use your body to show me what's happening to him.
- Good readers care enough about the characters in a book to be happy or angry. "I can't believe...," or "I'm angry that...". Talk back to what characters do.
- Good readers connect to a character by thinking about a time when they acted or felt similar in a similar situation. Children can pause in the midst of reading to recall what happened to them.
- Good readers self-monitor their reading comprehension. They say, "Wait a minute. This isn't right". Teach them to pay attention to when their understanding falters, recognizing that they need to reread, to adjust their reading rate, and to work extra hard to maintain focus on the text.
- Good readers retell what happened showing how this new development fits with the unfolding story. This retelling should include the characters' traits and motivations, the main events of the plot told in sequence, the big problem and how that problem is eventually resolved. Students should be able to synthesize new developments in the story.
- Struggling retellers should pause after reading each chapter, turn back to the start, skim, and retell what happened in a page-by-page progression. They can sketch the story's sequence.
- Good readers understand what they read by synthesizing. Readers realize how sections of a story go together. Partners can talk about why the character does what he does.
- Good readers have strategies that help them tackle challenging words. Readers use the strategies for decoding tricky words, unfamiliar words, and monitoring meaning. Look at the picture. Look at the beginning sound/the ending sound. Look for a smaller word in the big word. Look for chunks. Look at the rest of the sentence.
- Retell the read aloud together making sure story elements are included. Retell your independent reading book with your partner.

WRITING ABOUT READING

- By writing about their reading, students will hold onto and grow their thinking. This writing is a way to clarify their thoughts and a way to be accountable for what they've been taught.
- Have a class reading notebook, where students take turns responding to the read aloud. To start the year the teacher could write the first few responses. Each day a different student responds to that day's read aloud and shares it the next day before continuing the book.

- Use the reading notebook as a place to write longer about a post-it idea. It's a place to write longer about the author's meaning, theories about the characters, connections they've made.
- These entries may be used as starting points for literary essays, clarify their thinking, or just to play around with ideas. It can be a place where the reader sets goals and reflect on their own reading identity.
- Important post-its can be put in the notebook. Be sure to write a heading, title of the book, author, pages, and date.
- This notebook writing should be a *brief* part of reading time. Most of their workshop time should be spent reading.
- Students need to held accountable for their reading. You can't just say or write anything about a text.
- Retell what happened in the story so far.
- Predict what will happen next and why that will happen.
- Write about the setting. Describe the setting. How do you think the setting is affecting the characters? Why?
- What is the problem? How do you think the character will solve the problem?
- Tell about a minor character. How does this character help tell the story?
- Write about some of the words or phrases that you liked or think are important. Why do you think they're important?
- If I was the character, I would...
- How has the character changed since the beginning of the story? Why has he/she changed?
- This part reminds me of _____. Tell about it.
- I can't believe what just happened! Why would...do that? I think maybe it's because...
- The character seems _____. Why is he feeling that way?
- He is the hero. What qualities do you notice about him that makes him a hero?
- He's a bully...nice...smart...scared... Give some examples for the book that show how he is a bully.
- This part is really confusing. What makes it confusing?
- What is the lesson from this book?

CONFERRING WITH READERS:

- Be sure to meet with every student each week. Keep records for each child on his strengths, weaknesses, teaching point, etc. There should be only one teaching point per conference. You may need to spend more than one conference time on a certain skill. Make sure your teaching point has a strategy. Name the skill and the strategy for doing it.
- During the first week of school the teacher should be observing the reader, listening to him read - noticing and recording what skills the student needs to improve. Notice how many pages the student is reading. At what pace does he progress through books?

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Does he abandon most books? Is he reading at home? What genres does he gravitate toward? Learn about their reading behaviors and processes.

- Go around the room giving encouragement and a compliment. Set a positive tone where students know their strengths are recognized. Give compliments that reinforce procedures and strategies. Use a student or a whole group as a model for doing the right thing during readers' workshop.
- Begin conferences by asking students to show you what they've been jotting about their reading and talk to you about some of their ideas.
- Teach students their role in a conference in a whole class mini-lesson. Explain that they are expected to tell what's happening in their book and their processes. They tell a brief summary and strategies they've tried. They tell what they're struggling with and what ideas they're having. Students need to show evidence on ways they've used strategies that you have been teaching.
- As the teacher you need to plan where you will confer, your schedule, and checklist forms you will use. Many teachers prefer to go to the student for the conference. When the teacher moves around it helps with discipline, observations, and you can have impromptu conferences with a small group of kids. It helps to have a schedule so you are sure to meet with every student each week. A form to fill out for each child with strategies, needs, compliment, teaching point helps you remember what you have discussed with each child and can be used as one assessment tool.
- Look through your notes to find weaknesses that could be used as a mini-lesson or teaching point in a conference. Make sure your teaching point has a strategy.

ASSESSING READERS

- Plan a record keeping system. Plan to have records that track individual progress across time, as well as whole-class at-a-glance records. You also need to keep track of students' reading levels and the dates that you see them in conferences.
- Use your student assessments to look for patterns, to develop theories, and to craft long-term goals for individuals.
- Conference notes
- Reader's notebook responses
- Post-its for partner talk/ read aloud
- Running Records
- Weekly rubric with rules for Readers' Workshop

CELEBRATING READING

- Keep kids excited about reading by:
- Scheduling frequent & early author celebrations,
- Scheduling a reading marathon
- Hundred books day
- Thousands books day

- Lunch book discussions
- A library study trip
- Favorite words, sentences, characters

September/October

Reading with Close Comprehension in Order to Get to Know the Characters in Our Books

Essential Reading Skills: Reading with Stamina and Engagement, Decoding, Monitoring for Sense, Envisionment, Determining Importance, Synthesis, Prediction, and Inferring Ideas about our Characters:

Readers need to draw on everything they know and can do in order to read with engagement. Then, as the year progresses, there can be an instructional spotlight on one skill or another. But at the start of the year, we need to be sure that readers are engaged in all of the most essential reading skills. Our students need to envision enough to make movies in their minds as they read, to predict and empathize, sitting on the edge of their seats as they anticipate the story, as they hold tight to the importance of story-line, determining importance and synthesizing as they go.

These students will also need to read with accuracy, using decoding and other skills to word solve and to monitor for comprehension, so when the meaning of a text breaks down, they say, "Huh?" and engage in problem solving strategies to regain a hold on the text. The important thing is that teachers can use reading aloud, book talks, partnerships, writing about reading, independent reading, conferring, and small groups to support these larger agendas.

The first step toward helping students build their relationship to reading is to make sure that every child is reading with engagement. Students need high interest books that teachers try to promote. When books are exciting, kids pick them up, start reading, and stay with them. Engagement needs to translate into identifiable reading skills. No reader can read imaginative fiction with engagement without envisioning the drama or without predicting what will happen next. It is essential in reading imaginative literature (fiction) that stories ignite a vital sort of imagination, one which allows readers to piece together and live inside the world of the story.

The easiest way to help children into this "lost in a book" feeling of being caught up in the story is to read aloud an absorbing chapter book, helping children imagine the world of the story and identify with the main character. This "lost in the story" sense can then be transferred to independent reading. In order to encourage empathy with characters, look up from the read aloud and say things like, "She must be so sad," or "I was thinking about her all night...I'm so worried about her." You can help your students care about their characters by modeling how to talk and think about the characters as if they are real people. Encourage

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them to turn and talk in ways that promote identification with the character. For example, you might say, "How do you think he's feeling right now? Turn and talk." You might also say, "I'm worried about her. Aren't you? Turn and tell your partner about your worries."

Teach your students to fill in the gaps in a story by drawing on all they see in the text and all they've experienced in their lives. Help them to put themselves in their character's shoes and to speak in the voices of their characters. "Partner A, pretend you are Opal. Tell your father why you need this dog. Talk to Partner B as if that's your dad." Then, after a few minutes, you could say, "Partner B, you are the dad. You are looking at that stray dog. What are you thinking? Say your thoughts aloud..." You could also have partners predict together what may happen next, based on what they know about their characters so far.

Partners can also use role-play to say the unsaid things they infer a character is probably thinking. If you are reading a part of a book where there is no dialogue, you can help children to imagine the talk that was probably going on.

Envisioning is a big part of reading with engagement. The act of making mental pictures is strongly linked to comprehension. In order to envision, readers need to read closely enough to draw on textual clues that inform meaning, and they need to draw on all they've experienced themselves in order to add more to the text than what's explicitly detailed. Be sure to point out the ways in which close reading informs your mental pictures, helping you continually revise those pictures in light of new information.

The goal is not only for children to envision and lose themselves in the books that you read aloud. The goal is also for children to do this for themselves when they read. During independent reading and the follow up partnership times, encourage children to talk about their mental pictures.

During independent reading, you'll want to help children identify with the characters in their books. If readers pay attention to how a character acts, to punctuation, to dialogue tags, they can ascertain the character's emotions. They can also feel those same emotions and trace the evolution of them.

As students do the beginning work of making connection with their texts, you'll want to push them beyond literal responses like, "I'm a girl and the character is a girl." You can teach them to connect to a character by thinking about a time when they acted or felt similar in a similar situation. Students can pause in the middle of reading to recall and tell their own parallel, small moment story. They should think and talk about what this story makes them realize and what it teaches them about the kinds of people they are. They can return to the character(s) and see if the same or similar conclusions can be drawn about them.

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By Teaching Readers to Retell and Summarize, We Can Support Word-Solving, Monitoring for Sense, and Synthesis:

Teachers need to be cautious about emphasizing retelling. This very low level of comprehension is necessary but absolutely not sufficient for success in reading. Most of the readers who struggle on state tests are the ones who read too slowly, and who keep their noses so close to the ground that they can only retell in a very literal, bit by bit fashion (often without even grasping the sequence of the whole storyline). It is important that instead of doing this very literal level of retelling, you teach children to read and synthesize the story into a summary that contains the important elements of a story: the characters' traits and motivation, the main events of the plot told in sequence, the big problem and how that problem is eventually resolved (or how the character changes or the lessons the character learns).

During the first few days, you may expect your readers to post it whenever they learn something about the main character's traits or when a new event happens in the story. If a child struggles with comprehension, the child is apt to experience the story as a chain of events, but not see that in fact the events are linked together causally. Major events don't come out of nowhere. The important point will be that when a new event happens in the story, the child reflects, "How does this new event fit with that has gone before in the story?" Also, student may notice what the main character does, and then talk with a partner or jot why the character does what he or she does. Children need to realize that as they read, the sections of a story should go together, with later sections explained by, and set up by the ones that come before. Readers understand what they read by synthesizing.

Some children will skip over or mumble through words that cause them difficulty. Teach them to be flexible word solvers, using more than one strategy, and more than one time. Children will also encounter words that they can decode but can not understand. Children who struggle with decoding benefit from rereading. Teach them to figure out a word's meaning from context. Once a child has gleaned the word's meaning from context, he/she needs to reread the sentence, inserting a synonym for the unknown word.

***In this unit, we will also help students get to know their character(s) in a deeper and more meaningful way. This will include paying closer attention to character traits which before might have seemed meaningless. What does the character say or NOT say? What does the character do or NOT do? The reader will try and make connections about the characters from one book to another as well as see how the character changes throughout the story. What does this tell us? What inferences can we make based on the above as well as so much more.

Students will have studied characters in previous grades, so one challenge will be to make this unit feel different from the ones in the past. One way to do this is to concentrate on secondary or “supporting” characters and how they impact the story. Teachers can think of a popular movie that most children have seen and ask them, how would this movie be different if _____ wasn’t there? (You would choose a supporting or secondary character in the blank. “If there were no Carlisle, how would Edward be different in *Twilight*? If there were no Ashley, how would Scarlett be different in *Gone With the Wind*? If there were no Samwise, how would Frodo be different in *Lord of the Rings*?”

Another challenge to consider is that there is no reading skill called “characters”. Character study is important, but we also want to think about which reading skills we will highlight (this will also make our units different from those in the past).

Reading Skill Study Possibilities for Getting to Know Characters:

- Monitoring for sense
- Prediction
- Envisionment
- Empathy
- Inference
- Synthesis

Alignment with the Standards:

- 5.1.1 Read aloud grade level appropriate narrative text and expository text fluently and accurately and with appropriate timing, changes in voice, and expression.
- 5.1.2 Use word origins to determine the meaning of unknown words.
- 5.1.4 Know less common roots and word parts from Greek and Latin and use this knowledge to analyze the meaning of complex words.
- 5.1.6 Understand unknown words by using word, sentence, and paragraph clues to determine meaning.
- 5.3.2 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.
- 5.3.3 Contrast the actions, motives, and appearances of characters in a work of fiction and discuss the importance of the contrasts to the plot or theme.
- 5.3.4 Understand that theme refers to the central idea or meaning of a selection and recognize themes, whether they are implied or stated directly.
- 5.3.7 Evaluate the author’s use of various techniques to influence readers’ perspectives.

- 6.1.1 Read aloud grade level appropriate poems and literary and informational texts fluently and accurately and with appropriate timing, changes in voice, and expression.
- 6.1.5 Understand and explain slight differences in meaning in related words.
- 6.3.2 Analyze the effect of the qualities of the character on the plot and the resolution of the conflict.
- 6.3.3 Analyze the influence of the setting on the problem and its resolution.
- 6.3.6 Identify and analyze features of themes conveyed through characters, actions, and images.
- 6.3.8 Critique the believability of characters and the degree to which a plot is believable or realistic.
- 6.3.9 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.

There is a lot to cover here, and teachers will want to mesh teaching points as they see fit while keeping the focus on getting to know characters.

The following is a list of teaching points for each of the reading skills mentioned previously:

Monitoring for Sense

Readers check their understanding of the text.

- Good readers monitor for sense before they read. We retell the main things that have happened to the character(s) so far so that we can reconnect with our story.
- Good readers monitor for sense before they read. We reread part of the last chapter so that we can get our minds back into the story.
- Good readers monitor for sense while they are reading. We stop every few pages to retell to ourselves what has happened in the story. If we can't retell, we turn the part we forgot into a question. Then we reread to answer it.
- Good readers monitor for sense while they are reading. We collect character names and relationships in our notebooks. We refer to it whenever we are confused about characters in our story.
- Good readers monitor for sense while they are reading. We notice when there is a lot going on in the story. We stop and think aloud about what's happening in this part to make sure we are getting it.

Possible Thought Prompts:

- I know this happened because on page...
- A part I'm confused about is...
- What just happened?
- He couldn't have done that because...
- I know because...

- I'm lost.
- I'm confused by...
- At first I thought..., but now I think...

Envisionment

Readers use prior knowledge and clues from the text to formulate a picture of a scene in one's mind.

- Good readers envision the setting. We use the current and previous setting clues from the story plus our prior knowledge to make a picture in our minds.
- Good readers envision the character(s) in a scene. We figure out how a character feels. Then we ask, "What does that feeling look like?"
- Good readers envision the character(s). We can act out the text to help envision what the character is thinking, feeling, and doing.
- Good readers envision the story with their senses. We form pictures in our minds and think about certain smells, tastes, sights, sounds, and feelings that emerge.
- Good readers envision the story using details from the author. We notice when the author has given a lot of details. We stop and jot down the information on post it notes or in our notebooks.

Possible Thought Prompts:

- I can imagine...
- I can picture in my mind...
- When I read, I saw...
- I can see...
- When I read this part I can feel...
- When I read this part I can almost smell the ...
- I picture that right now and I imagine...
- The character looks...
- Even though the words don't exactly say that the character is...I picture her/him...
- This book is set (in the old days, in the future, etc), so I'm picturing...

Determining Importance

Readers identify the most important details to the plot of the story.

- Good readers figure out what is important in the story. We identify repeated words, objects, or patterns.
- Good readers figure out what a text is mostly about. We look to see what part the author spent the most time discussing.
- Good readers use text features in the book to determine what is important in the story. We look at the title and the chapter headings as clues to what the most important parts of the book will be.

Possible Thought Prompts:

- This book is mostly about...
- The author keeps mentioning...
- The most important part is...
- The most important characters are...
- The main thing is...
- What really matters is...

Synthesis

Readers put the parts of the text together.

- Good readers synthesize information in the story as they read. We read a part and then ask, "How does this fit with what I have read before?" We can jot down our ideas starting with the words, "This connects to the other part..."
- Good readers synthesize information from the story as they start a new chapter. We stop and ask, "Who are the characters in this scene? What are they doing? How did they get here? How does this scene fit with that I have read before?"
- Good readers synthesize information after a powerful scene. We reread it, this time thinking about the images and messages it conveys, so I can better understand it.
- Good readers synthesize information from the whole story when we finish the book. We think about what happened in the story and also about the big themes and deeper meaning(s) I got from it.

Possible Thought Prompts:

- This connects to the other part...
- Now I'm seeing that...
- I think the big theme in the story is...
- The deeper meaning I get from the theme of the story is...
- I notice that this part goes with the whole story because...

Prediction

Readers use what happened previously, prior knowledge, or knowledge of the story to make the best guess at what will happen in the rest of the story.

- Good readers use our knowledge of how stories go to make predictions. We write "I think _____ will happen next because..." to show this understanding.
- Good readers make predictions about the story. We use our knowledge of relationships plus the clues from the story to make predictions.
- Good readers use information on the book to make predictions. We read the title and the back of the book. Then we think about what the book might be about.
- Good readers check our predictions. We read a little, stop, and think about whether we have changed our ideas about our predictions.
- Good readers check our predictions. After we have made a prediction, we ask, "Does my prediction make sense?"

Possible Thought Prompts:

- I think ____ happen next because...
- I believe that later on in the book...
- I think _____ is going to...
- I predict that...
- I'll bet that...
- The character will...
- I know what's going to happen...because earlier in the book it said...
- I thought _____ was going to happen, but now I think something different because...
- I feel tension because of...So I think what's going to happen is...
- He/she has a big decision to make...I'm thinking that he's going to...

Inferring about Characters

Readers learn about characters through their word, thoughts, and actions.

- Good readers get to know a character. We pay attention to what the character says and thinks versus what he or she does. Then we ask, "Do these match? If not, what does that tell me about this character?"
- Good readers figure out a character's motivations. We pay attention to what he or she does. Then we ask, "What does this character have to gain as a result of his/her actions?"
- Good readers figure out (infer) the meaning of a new word. We read the words around the new word and use the clues from these words to create a possible meaning of the new words. We can ask, "What word would make sense here?"

Possible Thought Prompts:

- I think ____ is the kind of person who...
- _____ is motivated by...
- When ____ said that, I realized that he...
- Maybe he/she's...
- My character is the kind of person that/who...
- He/she feels...
- I can tell that he/she...
- He/she acts like...
- He/she thinks...
- The character is saying...but I think what she/he really means is...
- I know this part says...but I think there is more going on here, like...
- I think this word/phrase really means...because...

Retelling

Readers restate characters, setting, and plot in the correct sequence of the story.

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- Good readers retell the story. We use story elements to retell what has happened (characters, setting, plot, and theme).
- Good readers retell the story. We retell the main events in the story from the beginning and progress in a sequential manner.
- Good readers retell the story, focusing on one character. We retell the main things that happened to one character in the order it happened.
- Good readers retell the story, focusing on one character. We think about what the character wanted, did, or got.
- Good readers retell the story to review what has happened. We review what we have read with our book club. We say, "Last time our book club met, we talked about..."

Possible Thought Prompts:

- _____ is a boy who...
- This story takes place in ...
- The story is about a girl who...
- First...then....next...finally...

Getting to know the characters

- Readers get to know the important secondary characters in the book. They ask themselves, "What relationships are important to the main characters in this book?" It may be a friendship, parent-student relationship, or an oppositional relationship. Are there cliques, gangs, teams within this book? Readers make a list of the secondary characters in their notebook.
- Readers get to know the important secondary characters in the book. They think about the group to which the secondary character belongs. How does this character fit in to this group? How does he/she not fit in to other groups?
- Readers read with attentiveness and alertness to details by paying special attention to the way a secondary character talks. They do this by re-reading the character's words out loud, paying special attention to the words the character chooses, their tone of voice, and the expression the character would have used in the story. Then asking, "What does this tell me about my character?" Readers can write this on a post-it note.
- Readers use partners to learn more about secondary characters by choosing the same books, different books from the same series, or different books they swap. They do this by talking about the types of books and authors they enjoy most, and then shopping for books together.

- Readers use partners to grow their thinking about secondary characters by focusing on a common character. They agree to read, paying special attention to the same character and marking passages that reveal the character's external and internal traits. They mark these passages with notes taken on post-its that can be shared with a partner.
- Readers use partners to grown their thinking about secondary characters by each choosing a *different* secondary or supporting character. They agree to read, paying special attention to their specific character and marking passages that reveal the character's external and internal traits. They mark these passages with notes taken on post-its that can be shared and discussed with a partner.
- Readers keep track of a secondary character throughout a story by keeping track of the character's motivations, traits, and problems. They do this by keeping a chart in their reader's notebooks that can be added to and changed as they learn more from the text. There should be one column each for motivations, traits, and problems.
- Readers get to understand the relationship between the main and secondary characters. What paths brought them together? Was this a choice of the characters? Readers can learn about their secondary character's relationships with other characters by making a *character map* in their reader's notebook. (See included chart with *character map* of Poppleton as well as additional examples
- Readers can continue to learn about their secondary character's relationships with other characters. They ask themselves: What do the individuals in these relationships get and what do they need from each other. Readers can create a T-chart to help organize this information.
- Readers can learn more about a secondary character by creating a T-chart that lists external vs. internal characteristics. Readers can see that what we see on the outside isn't the same as what we find out about the character's "insides". The character may have brown hair, but is he/she brave? Shy?
- Readers think about the role the secondary characters play in the book. They should realize that just as there are predictable ways that stories unfold, there are also predictable roles for secondary characters. Is this character playing the role of teacher - teaching the main character something? Is he/she playing the role of villain? Protector?
- Readers think about the relationship between or amongst characters and think about what would happen if the secondary character was not there. How would the story

change? How would the main character change? Readers should make a list of ideas in his/her notebook.

Thinking deeper about our characters: making inferences

- Readers grow their thinking about characters by paying special attention to what the secondary character does and does not do. They think of a specific action a secondary character made and say, "If he did decide to _____ that means he did not decide to _____." and then, "This tells me..."
- Readers realize that secondary characters have to draw on their internal traits and abilities to face challenges. They find challenges their characters face, and asking, "How did/does _____ deal with this challenge?" They make a T-chart in their notebooks to list out "Challenge," and, "Internal traits helpful in facing challenge."
- Readers continue to grow their ideas about secondary characters by paying attention to how the character treats others. They find a passage where the character is interacting with another character and saying, "He is acting _____ to _____."
- Readers use partners to grow their thinking about secondary characters by sharing noticings they have made. They choose their most thought-provoking post-its and entries and discussing them during a "sharing time" for the last 5 minutes of every workshop.
- Readers recognize new character traits by paying attention to what the secondary character does AND how he does it. They look for clues the author leaves about the characters gestures- the way he walks, sits, stands, moves- and asking, "Why does he _____ like that?"
- Readers continue to grow their thinking of secondary characters by thinking about important events in the story that might act as "windows" to the character's inner traits. They read a few chapters and think, "What happened that might give me a new perspective of my character?"
- Readers begin to think more deeply about their secondary characters by differentiating between their obvious character observations and their more thoughtful ones. They look back at post-its and separate them into 2 groups: simple observations and deep, thoughtful noticings. Readers then choose a "model post-it" to use.

- Readers realize that their theories about their secondary characters should become more detailed and complex the further they get into a story. They re-read all their post-its and entries on a character and ask, "What does all of this tell me about my character that the text does not clearly say?"
- Readers put themselves in their secondary character's shoes by thinking about how he or she would act or feel in different situations. They act out scenes from the book, and then jot down what the character might have been thinking as they acted. "If I were the other character, I would feel/act...." Then asking, "What does this tell me about my character?"
- Readers make judgments or theories of secondary characters by thinking of how they judge people in real life. They watch how people act and respond in different situations, and then decide what those actions make them realize about the person.
- Readers learn to make inferences in their reading by thinking about what the text tells them but does not say in words. They find a section about their character and say "It says... this makes me think or know..."

Thinking and writing about how our characters change

- Readers keep growing and changing their theories of secondary characters by revising original thoughts and theories as they continue to read. They look at their post-its and charts in notebooks often, and add details or changing their theories completely as they learn and read more.
- Readers think between all parts of the book to see how a secondary character changes as the story changes. They choose two or three related sections of the book (beginning, middle, and end) to compare theories about the character at each passage. They can make notes saying, "At first _____ was _____, but later in the book he/she _____." They do this to see how their character changed throughout the story.
- Readers look back in their books to find patterns that tell what kind of a person their secondary character is. They start at the beginning of the book and scan each page. They scan pages for passages that reveal events or descriptions that describe the

character. Once they have marked several pages with post-its, readers look at them all and ask, "How are all these related?"

- Readers learn to realize how the truth of their theories will have an affect on the secondary characters' lives. They do this by looking carefully at their theory, and asking, "If this is true, what will it mean for _____ in the future?"

The following includes additional work on characters that can be used not only to work with secondary characters, but also main characters. Adjust and use as needed....

One Possible Plan for the Start to a Character Unit of Study

Bend I. Reading well involves making mental movies, and this process is not unlike drama. Readers read, trying to envision, to enact, to imagine. When we share our books with others, we sometimes reread and reenact sections of a book and this spurs conversations about characters---what a character is like, what the character is feeling, how the character is apt to talk and act. These conversations help readers imagine the world of the story as we read on.

1. Today I'd like to teach you that when we read, we almost become one of the characters in a book. We see through the character's eyes, as if we were right there in the world of the story, and we talk as if we were the character, saying the words the character says. To do this, we add stuff that is missing. It is almost as if we're creating a movie in our minds—and we're one of the characters in that movie.

-we draw on details in the text in order to envision what's going on

-we draw on our own experiences—places we've been, things we've done-- in order to envision what's going on

2. Today I want to teach you that when we walk in a character's shoes as we read, we are never quite sure if we've got the character right, so we envision tentatively and as we read on, we adjust those early interpretations. So we might at first create a character who is tough and later think, 'Oops,' and make her more gentle.

-If we change our idea about a character, we usually need to change the character's tone of voice or way of acting to match our new ideas about the character. We sometimes go back and reread earlier sections of the book, bringing our newer ideas to those earlier sections.

3. Readers, we already know that we envision tentatively, and we can adjust our early interpretations of a character as we get new information. Today I want to teach you that even after you think you've got the character right, sometimes he/she may behave differently in different situations. Sometimes a character is sweet and quiet at home, but is loud and bossy when with his/her friends. One thing we can do to prepare our minds and to make sense of the characters behaviors is envision a character in the particular situation. We can notice the setting and ask, "How might the character behave in this setting?" Or we can notice the situation and ask, "How might this situation impact the character?"

4. When we read as if we are the character, this makes us feel with the character, this makes us empathize. So we sometimes get all worked up just as if this was truly happening to us or to someone we know. We think, "I'd be so mad," or "Oh, no! He's gonna get in trouble." When we read in this way, we are often racing ahead of the story, worrying about whatever is ahead and then breathing sighs of relief if things turn out ok...or saying to ourselves, "I knew it!" when our worries turn out to be justified. Reading can be emotionally exhausting!

5. We read with close attention to characters and we can't help ourselves but to care about them. When something uplifting or upsetting happens to a character, we find ourselves reaching out to cheer on or soothe him/her. Today I want to teach you that paying attention to the emotions that the character invokes in us will help us to live in the world of the story.

To do this, first find parts of the story where something important is happening to the character. Then, pay close attention to the reactions that you have. Jot down, or talk with your partner, about what happened and your reactions as if you were sharing a story about something that happened to a friend of yours.

When we read feelings for the characters fill our hearts. We then begin to live with the characters in our hearts and in our minds. To help yourself further imagine the world of the story as you read, pay attention to the parts in the story where the character is successful or is faced with challenges. Then, stop and ask, "What do I want to happen to my character here?" "What would I do if I were in this situation?" After thinking about that, read on to see what happens and compare it to your thoughts.

Bend II. There are people in life that 'read people well' and usually, these are people who also understand themselves well. By pushing ourselves to be better at reading the characters in a book, we can become more astute readers of people in life, too, and of ourselves. This begins by working hard to be wiser at really truly understanding the characters in books. We can read, not only imagining ourselves as one of the characters but thinking hard about the kind-of-person that that character is, using close reading to grow, test, and develop theories

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about the character. Sometimes we jot our ideas as we read, and then use those jottings to help us talk with a friend in order to grow about the character.

3. Today I want to teach you that people who are really good at 'reading people' know that actions (and interactions) can be windows to a person. In life and as we read, we can sometimes pause and say, "Let me use what just happened as a window to help me understand this person." Then we squeeze our mind and try to think, "What does this show about this person?"

When we are thinking about a character's actions as windows that can show us the sort of person that a character is, it is helpful to think that those actions are choices, and to keep in mind that the person could have done things differently, seen things differently. If we think, "Why might this person have done this (or seen this) in this manner, not that way?" and come up with our own speculations, then we are beginning to 'read between the lines,' to add our own smart ideas to the book.

When we're thinking about why a character may have done something or made a specific decision, we don't just look up in the sky and think up reasons. We look back on the text that we've already read, thinking, "What did the character do earlier that might connect with or explain this decision, this action?" This means that we'll be reading, say, page 54, and all of a sudden we need to go back and reread, say, page 46 and 38. That's why some people say that reading is 'one step forwards, two steps backwards.'

Of course, we then read on, expecting to confirm our ideas or to change them. We'll read on and think, 'Yes, I was right,' or "Wait a minute, my ideas are changing."

Sometimes reading stories can feel like detective work—even when we aren't reading a mystery. We read, noticing specific clues that help us figure out what these people are like and what's going on in the story. We come up with some tentative theories and then we read on, thinking, 'I was right' or "Oh, my hunch was wrong.'

In life and in books, we can see a person's external life. We can see a character's clothing, manners, and gestures. But we often can't see the character's INTERNAL life—the characters deepest wishes, secret hopes, and his or her worries. But if we look closely at a character's external life, we can figure out stuff about the character's internal life.

7. When we're reading and hoping to get to know a character, we sometimes will notice that some things keep coming up again and again. When this happens, we need to stop and ask ourselves, "What's going on here? Why does this keep resurfacing?" Very often, the

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references that reoccur end up being especially important ones. (Sometimes a character keeps doing something over and over. When we see this, we think, "Gosh. He (she) keeps doing this!" Then we pause and think, "Why does he/she keep doing this sort of thing?" This helps us understand a character.

8. When we read closely and let passages of a book act as windows to a character, we try to remember that characters are complicated. So we don't try to fit the whole of a person into one simple word like saying, "She is nice" or "She's shy." Instead we try to push ourselves to have more exact, more specific, more precise ideas about a character.

Usually it helps to use more words to convey an idea.

When talking about our ideas with each other, instead of saying, "I agree with that," it is helpful to actually re-say what we heard the other person say. Paraphrase each other. Then if the person with the original idea thinks something has been lost in translation, that person can clarify.

As we read, we are developing opinions about characters—but these are tentative opinions, and we know they are subject to change. As we read on, we sort of carry our tentative opinion with us, thinking, 'Let's see if this turns out to be true.' Sometimes we get more evidence, that our opinion seems well-founded, Sometimes, often, we get some new information that changes our original idea.

9. Today I want to teach you that it is important to try to think more deeply about a character. You know how sometimes, in life, we peg people as one thing or another. Like I might say about someone, "Boy, he's such a baby," or "he's a spoiled brat." But we know that people in the world aren't just one way. People—and characters, too—are complicated. People are not just one way. One way to grow more complex, many sided ideas about a character is to notice places in a text where the character seems to act one way, and to think a different way. Those sections of a text often show a character's ambivalence, his or her internal tug of war.

Don't you love it when you get a chance to eavesdrop not only on what a character says but also on what a character THINKS! On a character's inner thoughts! In life, we can't overhear someone's thoughts, but in books, we can. Listen to those parts really closely. Lean in. Pay attention.

Readers, I know you know this. Still, I need to say something. Relationships matter. We can get to know a character by watching how he or she treats others, and we can ask,

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"Why did my character act that way?" We can think about what motivates a character to treat another character in a certain way.

When readers are trying to get to know a main character, we pay attention to the character's relationship with secondary characters. We are aware that the main character is a different person with different people. Just like in life, we are different with different people.

10. Today I want to teach you that it is especially powerful to not only tell someone our ideas but to also show them the evidence for those ideas. Then---and this is the important part---we and the other person can look back and forth between the idea and the evidence, and think more, notice more, saying stuff like, "Wait! Look at this!" or "Yes, but notice also..."

11. People who are good at reading other people tend to pay close attention to the little signs that reveal what a person is really, really like. The first step to reading people well is to be especially observant---to read closely, noticing the tiniest of things. For example, when a person dresses in a particular way or walks in a particular way, this reveals that person... to those who have the eyes to see.

Earlier we learned that tiny details can help us read a person, a character. Here is a secret: that is especially true when one is reading a story, because the author has created the character in a particular way for a special purpose. For example, it was the author who named your character (not the character's mother and father!). The author could have produced any one of a million other names---so why this one? The author could have dressed the character differently, too---so why this outfit? When you realize that authors make characters dress and talk and act in certain ways for reasons, then it's important to speculate about those reasons. In life and in books, little details reveal big truths, if you have the eyes to see.

Earlier we talked about how little details can help us read a person, a character---and we talked about details such as the character's name or outfit. Here is an added tip. We can learn about the character not only from details that pertain to the character---but also from things around the character such as, for example, the setting or the objects that a character holds. Imagine that the author is a painter, and is painting a portrait of a character. Imagine the author/artist places the character in the midst of a steel grey storm with howling winds. The setting will shape your sense of the character. Now imagine the character places in a bright sunshiny day, against a blue sky. See what I mean!

I mentioned earlier that readers pay attention to the setting in a story, knowing that sometimes the setting can reveal something about a character, even if only it reveals the character's latest mood. I want to add onto that. Readers also pay attention to character's homes! On the first day of school, you could have come into this class while

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I was out of the room, and you could have looked around this classroom and know something about me as a teacher. Our homes, our places, reveal stuff about us---that is true in life, and it is true in books. So when you get to sections of your fiction book that seem to be descriptive of a place, especially of a character's home, sit up! Don't let the details fly past you. They are incredibly revealing, for those who have the eyes to see.

Remember that when we meet a character in a story, that character has had a whole lifetime of experiences before the story even began. Sometimes an author will include chunks of information about a character's past. Pay attention--these blasts from the past can often help a reader understand the character's present actions. When we get a blast from the past, then, we can pause and think, "What does the past shine a light on the present?"

Readers pause when we are reading and ask, "What does the character's actions tell me about his or her past experiences?" We wonder, "Does the way the character feels reflect what he/she has been through before?"

12. When we are getting to know a character, we pay attention not only to what characters say but also---here's the important part---to what characters don't say. In life, when a friend doesn't call, doesn't write, this is sometimes more telling than anything! It is true in books, too, that we listen not only to words but also to silences. And then we think, "I wonder what this could mean?" We usually do not know for sure, so we find ourselves trying on different explanations, asking, "Could it be....Or could it be...."

13. One way to be insightful about people is to think, "What might this person desire, what might this person want?" That is, when you are good at reading people, this means you understand what drives a person. This is true in life, but it is especially true in stories because when writers write a story, we sort of have a story-code that we often follow, and that code steers us to create a character who has traits, and those traits relate in some way to some big desires or motivations. When a reader understands a character's motivations, this helps us understand why the character acts in certain ways.

Earlier I talked to you about the fact that authors have a code that helps us write stories that work. We know it usually works to create characters who want something, who go after something...Here is another secret. Usually, the main character wants something....and ends up having to struggle for that. Usually, something gets in the way, there are obstacles, and the main character has to try, try, try. This place---where the character encounters trouble and needs to draw on resources inside or outside that he or she didn't even know were there---is usually the hard of the story.

We, as readers, pay attention to words in books. But it's just as important to pay attention to the silences. We say, 'Whoa, people aren't talking,' or 'Things are unsaid,' and all of us know that silence is almost as loud as words.

14. In the stories we read, characters go through a lot of difficult experiences. Often the characters themselves don't yet understand what these experiences all mean, or how those experiences are shaping them. As strong readers, it's our job to ask, "What might this experience mean for this character? What effect must this have on him (or her)?" We don't know how the pieces of a story—a life—fit together, but this doesn't keep us from asking, "How might these things fit together?" We put pieces of a book together, like pieces of a puzzle, in order to get the full picture, the full meaning.

15. Earlier we talked about big experiences that a character has, and about the fact that as readers, our job is to think about the imprint those experiences seem to be leaving on a character. I also want to teach you this—sometimes something that seems small could end up being really meaningful to a character. For example, let's say you are walking down a hall and the door ahead slams loudly in your face. That's not a big event—the wind blew, the door slammed. BUT you could think about that door in a really deep way, and you could say to yourself, 'That's what life feels like these days. Doors keep slamming in my face.' The events itself, then, could have been a small one but your thinking can make it big. You can sort of make it into a symbol, a deep meaning. Sometimes in a book, the events that have the biggest impact on a character aren't the ones everyone would agree are 'big events.' They are, instead, seemingly small events that for some reason take on big, symbolic meaning.

16. Sometimes when we are reading we get the feeling that we've been here before---like *déjà vu*. We think, 'This character reminds me of someone I met before.' If we stop and think about it, we can pin down who the character resembles. It's often another character, and sometimes it is someone in our family, or a friend. The really cool thing is once we can say, "Yep—that is. This guy is a lot like..." then sometimes this gives us hints for what will probably happen next in the story. We think what that person would do next, and we can predict the character's course.

17. When I am reading, sometime I feel my heart swelling, or I feel a 'thunk' in the pit of my stomach. And I'm not alone—this happens to other readers too. It is important to pay attention to those parts of a story—and to the feeling that we have in response to those parts. We can look more closely at the text, asking, "What is it about this part that gets to me?" and we can also look more closely at our own life, thinking, "What is it about my life that makes this section of the story so important to me?" Usually we respond to a part of a text not only because of what the text says...but also because of what we bring to that section of the text. This sort of thinking can help us think not only about the text but also about ourselves.

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When we read, putting ourselves in the shoes of a character, we think, "How would I act if I were treated this way?"

We've learned that characters often want something and face struggles to get at that something. Something gets in the way and they have to try, try, try. Another thing we know is that characters often learn something through all of their trying. They learn something about themselves, or their friends, or the world. We can pay attention to the parts where they're trying, trying, and ask ourselves, "What is my character learning right now?"

Characters often learn something about themselves or their friends or their world as they struggle to get something they want. We also know that characters use what they've learned to make changes in their lives. Readers think, "What has my character learned?" And then, "How are they changing because of what they've learned?"

Bend III. When we read and pay attention to characters we realize that we are the main character of our own lives. All of a sudden, the thinking we do about characters turns into thinking that can help us to author and improve our own lives. Awareness is the first step towards change, so if we use what we learn from the characters we read about to promote self-awareness, we can change our lives, our relationships and our interactions with others. Like characters, people are complex, but capable of changing and this is one way we can revise our own life stories so we can become better people in this world.

18. Today I want to teach you that different people have different reactions about the characters in the stories they read. This is because a reader's ideas and understanding about characters comes from their own perceptions and life experiences. One thing you can do to help make sense of these differences is by jotting down some thoughts about some of your own life-experiences that you have had which may have contributed to the way you reacted to and felt about a certain character. When you do this, you will probably begin to notice what your own motives are for acting and feeling the way you do about different people in different situations. Next, talk with your partner about the differences and similarities of your reactions based on your own perceptions and life experiences.

19. When we read we learn a lot about the characters and we become attached to them as if they're our friends. If a character does something we don't agree with, we feel anger towards the character. We think, "Why in the world would he/she do that? I'm so mad!" On the other hand, if the character does something we agree with we think, "See....that's why I like him/her so much!" We can use these reading experiences as opportunities to change our lives. To do this, find a part of the story where a character did something that sparked strong feelings inside of you and ask, "Do I agree with what he/she did?" "Do I like him/her?" Why or why not?" Next, think about yourself and the people around you (your

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friends, family, teachers, etc.). Are any of the characters you read about similar to the people in your life? It's impossible that they are exactly the same. So, what are the differences between the characters you read about and the people in your life? Are there any changes you feel you should make in your life to be a better person or to be surrounded by better people?

If we want reading to change our lives, and we most certainly do, we need to ask ourselves, "Would we or would our friends be characters in books that readers would fall in love with, be confused by, dislike, admire, etc? Why or why not?" Lastly, think about what these ideas teach you about yourself and the people around you.

20. As readers, we know that in books characters make choices just like we do in our lives. As readers, we naturally have reactions to the choices character make. The reactions characters have can help you think about the kind of person you want to be.

To do this, think about the choices a character makes and ask, "Did he or she do the right thing?" "Would I have handled the situation the same or differently?"

It's important to let reading change your life by reflecting on who you are. Therefore, if you read about someone you admire or someone who has traits that you find valuable, ask yourself if you demonstrate the same qualities as the character.

21. My dear mother always reminds me that I can learn a lot from my mistakes, but I can learn more from mistakes made by other people. I didn't understand what she was telling me until I got in trouble for the same thing I made fun of my brother for getting in trouble for a week earlier. This is why I want to teach you that we as readers needs to always pay attention to the mistakes that characters make and try our hardest not to make the same mistakes ourselves.

To do this, think about the mistakes that the character in your story made. Ask yourself, "Have I made this mistake before?" "How can I live differently to be sure that I don't make (or repeat) this mistake in my own life?"

22. Sometimes when I finish a book I think, "Oh my! I'm flabbergasted by the changes the character made from the beginning of the story to the end! It's almost like he/she is a completely different character now!" Usually, the changes that characters go through teach them an important life lesson. It is important as readers that we stop and wonder about the changes our characters make and the lessons our characters learn as a result. If we want reading to change our lives, we need to learn from the lessons our characters encounter in the stories we read. We need to let these lessons become part of our lives so we can grow from them.

We also need to talk (and listen carefully to others) about these lessons, as well as the mistakes, that our characters make. Honest and meaningful conversations can help us improve our own lives by becoming better friends, students, children, athletes, etc.

23. When I was a little girl, I always wanted a puppy, but I couldn't have one because I was allergic to them. I had more Pound Puppies than I knew what to do with! It never filled the void in my heart though! I so desperately wanted a real puppy, all my own! My teacher told me that I could read books about puppies and live in the world of my stories when I was sad. I did it... and it worked! I remember so much about the puppies I lived with in the world of the stories I read, it is incredible! As readers, we need to make choices to read books about the wants and desires we have in our lives that we cannot fulfill because of one reason or another. You might have a broken leg and cannot play sports for a while. Books can help you live the way you wish you could live! Let books change your life by reading the ones YOU are INTERESTED IN, and WANT TO LIVE THE LIFE OF!

24. Readers who read, thinking deeply about characters sometimes find that we end up thinking deeply about ourselves as well as about the characters in books. Just as we think about a character's traits, motivations, struggles, changes and lessons...we think about our own traits, motivations, struggles, changes and lessons. We, in fact, end up thinking that we are the main character in our own life story. This is especially important because our life story is still being written....and we are the author! By thinking about the paths that other characters take through life and the lessons they learn, we become more aware of the life path that we are choosing, and the lessons we can learn.

Minilessons

#1:

Today I'd like to teach you that when we read, we almost become one of the characters in a book. We see through the character's eyes, as if we were right there in the world of the story, and we talk as if we were the character, saying the words the character says. To do this, we add stuff that is missing. It is almost as if we're creating a movie in our minds - and we're one of the characters in that movie.

-we draw on details in the text in order to envision what's going on

-we draw on our own experiences - places we've been, things we've done

- in order to envision what's going on

Connection

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Yesterday, I was at school and I was on my way to a classroom I'd never been to before and tried following the signs, but ended up getting lost. So, I decided to ask someone in the hallway how to get to the Private Dining Room in Grace Dodge.

A young woman told me "Go down the hall to Grace Dodge, down the stairs, take a right, and go through the double doors."

I thought to myself "Whoa - let me think, I already know where Grace Dodge is, I just have to go down the stairs and take that right." As I retold myself the directions, I imagined myself in Grace Dodge. I remembered the stairs I always passed by and this time pictured myself going down the stairs.

I'm telling you this because I know you do the same thing I do. You retell yourself what's going on and imagine how you'd act in that situation. I can tell some of you do this because when I give directions to my class messengers, you always imagine how you've already been to that place before and say "Oh, yeah, I know where the main office is - my mom picked me up there before, I can remember how to get there." You are using your past experiences to help you.

You think about your past experiences in your reading too. You've been paying attention to the characters in your stories and noticed the setting, the other characters in the story, and the events. For example, in our read aloud, you notice that Lilly was in school, put on her sunglasses, opened her purse and later her things were taken away. We were able to retell what happened, but I know that because we're great readers, we were all also making a movie in your mind. We see that Lilly isn't listening, that she keeps fidgeting on the rug, that Mr. Slinger is continues to give her a "look" even as he teaches. When we do that, we're envisioning - taking the information we get from the story and to make a movie in our minds.

And I know that when you're reading your own independent books, you are also taking information to create movies in your mind, to really see what's going on in the story. You're really putting yourself in the story!

Because all of you have been practicing retelling and holding onto information from your stories, today I want to teach you that smart readers almost become one of the characters in a book. And specifically, I want to teach you that as we read, we see through the characters eyes and think about what we've done in order to create that clear movie in our mind, so that we can understand what our character's really up to and fill in the stuff that's missing.

Teaching: Demonstration

So, right now, I'm going to read a little bit in chapter 2 of *The Tiger Rising*, and how I hold onto the details in the story so that I can envision what's going on, as I also draw on my own experiences to fill in some of the missing information that the author does not give us.

(Then I read page 3 from the book. There are descriptions of how Rob and his father are acting and that it is the day of Rob's mother's funeral.)

Looking up from the book, I said, "So, I'm picturing that Rob is at a funeral for his mom."

Then I paused, "Hmmm, Rob is at a funeral...well, huh, I'm having some trouble picturing it. The author doesn't tell me what to picture at the funeral." I pause and think aloud "Oh, hmmm, well, I did once go to my grandpa's funeral, so let me think back to what I remember about that."

"Let me try it again," I say. I think aloud "I'm picturing that Rob and his dad are at a funeral. I see that they're standing in a small church and there are lots of people crying all around them. Rob's crying and wearing all black and he's standing in the front next to a casket and a picture of his mom."

Then stepping out of the role of the child, I said to the kids, "Do you see how I had a hard time making the movie in my mind, but then thought back to an experience I had to fill in all the missing stuff? Thinking back to my life really helped me picture what was going on in the story."

Active Involvement

So, let's try this. I know we have been listening to this book as our read aloud. We have been paying attention to the details in the story and can retell, but let's see if we can create a movie in our mind and use our past experiences to fill in any missing stuff in our movies.

(I read page 5.)

Let's pause there. Hmmm...I'm thinking about what the author just told us (holding onto the information) that can help us envision what is going on in this part of the story. (I review a couple of details). Hmmm...Rob stepped onto the school bus...Norton blocked his way...Rob sat in the last seat in the back of the bus. But what else do we see in the movie in our minds? Stop and jot.

Remember envisioning can be what we see, feel, smell, taste or hear. Sometimes it helps to think back to when this happened to you...maybe you've been on a bus before...or you've read another story with a character that was like Norton before. Think about how you think

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things are going on the bus. For a second, talk with your partner and see if you can fill each other in on what's happening in this part of the book. What stuff did you add that the author didn't put in?

(The children talk.)

Readers, can I stop you? I heard people say that they pictured Norton trying to push Rob. I also heard that maybe Rob's stomach hurt already just from the stink on the bus left over from when someone may have gotten sick before on it. I heard that you're hearing Norton and Billy taunting and teasing Rob, even though Rob walks quietly with his head hanging down trying hard to ignore the boys and get away from them.

Link

So readers, I know today, while you read, your minds will be filled with movies you create from holding onto the information from your stories and adding on your own experiences to make it even more vivid. Remember, when you do this, you can hold onto the story longer and it helps you understand what the characters are going through. You get to walk in the characters' shoes when you envision. Remember, too, that these movies in your mind can help most when you connect things you already know to them.

And meanwhile, I'm going to think again about how I'm going to get to 263 Macy...hmmmm, I've had a class in Macy before. Let me think back. Oh yeah, it's that hallway by Milbank Chapel. Go up the stairs and take a right. Hmmmm.

Off you go!

#2:

Today I want to teach you that when we walk in a character's shoes as we read, we are never quite sure if we've got the character right, so we envision tentatively and as we read on, we adjust those early interpretations. So we might at first create a character who is tough and later think, 'Oops,' and make her more gentle.

Connection

On my first day of school one year, I sat down next to a girl that I didn't recognize, smiled, said "Hi" and introduced myself. "Hi" she said back, without a smile. I thought to myself "Wow, she's rude." Later on, the teacher went over to the girl and said to the class, "This is Elizabeth. She's new to our school. I hope that you will all help her out and show her around the school." Suddenly, my thinking about her changed. "Maybe she's not rude," I thought. "Maybe she's just really nervous."

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Think for a minute about a time that this happened to you, a time that you had an idea about a person. But then, you learned something about them that changed the way you thought about them.

Sometimes when we are reading, we do the same thing. We get an idea, a picture of what the character is like as we read. But as we read on we learn something about the character that changes how we picture them. So we stop and ask ourselves, "How do I picture the character now?" and "How has my thinking about him changed?"

Teaching: Demonstration

So now I'm going to read some of *The Tiger Rising* and you'll see how, as I read I think about the type of person the character is. As I read further I will notice if I learn something about the character that doesn't fit with how I picture him. I will stop and think, "How do I picture the character now?" and "How has my thinking about him changed?"

(Read the first two pages of the book.)

Now I'm picturing Rob as a really tough guy. He's walking through the woods. He has blisters all over his legs. He sees a tiger and he's not afraid at all. I'm going to keep reading, imagining Rob as a tough character.

(Read the third and fourth page.)

How am I picturing Rob now? I'm still picturing Rob as tough. But wait a minute. He's talking about how he was crying and about being bullied on the bus. That doesn't seem tough. This part doesn't really seem to go with how I pictured him.

So, how do I picture Rob now? Well now he seems a kind of vulnerable. How has my thinking about him changed? He's not tough anymore, now he's weak. But wait... he still acted tough in the beginning and I don't think he just suddenly changed. Hmm, well I know that characters are complicated; they aren't just one way or the other. So maybe he's tough on the outside since he doesn't cry or show how he's feeling, but on the inside he's vulnerable and in a lot of pain.

So do you see how as I read I got a picture of Rob in my mind. But then as I read further his actions didn't match how I pictured him. So I stopped and changed how I thought about him by asking myself those two questions. "How do I picture him now?" and "How has my thinking about him changed?" And in my mind, I began to picture Rob as a more complex character...not just tough or weak.

Active Involvement

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So now let's try this. I'm going to read a little bit more of *The Tiger Rising*. In this part we will be introduced to a new character. As I read, pay attention to what the character does, says and thinks to come up with an idea about the type of person this character is. Picture her in your mind. But remember that as I continue to read, you might learn something about her that changes how you picture her.

(Read page 8)

This new girl is wearing a pink lacy dress. So I'm thinking that someone who dresses that nicely to go to school is someone who cares about how she looks. I'm picturing her as a very polite, kind and well-behaved girl. Let's keep reading.

(Read the first paragraph of page 9.)

Wow, this doesn't fit with how I pictured this girl. How are you picturing her now? Turn and talk.

I heard some of you saying that you're picturing her as a strong character, someone who stands up for herself.

Now, how has your thinking about her changed? And remember that characters can be complicated. She still is wearing a pink lacy dress. Turn and talk.

Wow, I heard Maria say something really smart. She said that maybe her nice clothes tell us that she is a character who respects herself so she stands up for herself when she needs to.

Link

So readers, I know that as you always do when you read, you will notice what the character does, says and thinks and come up with ideas about the type of person that character is. Remember that as you read on, you might learn something about the character that changes how you picture him. Remember to stop and think, "How do I picture him now?" and "How has my thinking about him changed?" And always remember that characters are complicated. You don't want to just throw out your old picture of the character, but instead add in what you learned about him to make a more complex, detailed picture. If you do this, you will have a better understanding of who the character really is.

#3:

-Readers, we've been talking so much about the character in our read aloud text. We've been talking about how our character has faced struggles, problems, and obstacles along the way.

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We've also talked about what our character has learned from all of these struggles, problems, and obstacles.

Now that we have all of this information about our character, we can't just forget about it. I want to teach you that readers can take what our character learned from facing difficulties and use that information in our life when we face difficulties. We can use what they did to handle or solve their difficulties to solve ours. We can do this by remembering the struggles, problems, and obstacles our character faced; remembering how our character solved them; asking, "Is there something in my life - a struggle, problem, or obstacle - that is similar to my character's?"; and thinking, "How might I solve my difficulty like my character solved his?"

-We learn from our parents, our families, and our teachers. We learn how to tie our shoes, how to do our own laundry, how to make food, and so many other things. When we learn something new, we usually live our lives differently forevermore. For example, when we learn to tie our own shoes, we start being responsible for getting our own shoes on and tied. Life is different. I want to tell you that we can also learn from the characters in our books. They learn things in books and by the end they are living their lives differently. We can also learn from what they learn throughout the story and live differently because of that. We think about an important character in our book and ask, "What did this character learn in this story?" Then, we ask, "How can I use this in my life to live differently?"

--Readers take all that we have learned about the struggles, problems, and obstacles characters face throughout stories and the way these characters act when facing these difficulties into all of the new stories we read. This helps us to think about, to predict, what struggles, problems, and issues our new characters may face and predict how they might act when facing these difficulties. One way we do this is by reading a bit in our new book, thinking about the main character, and asking, "What other character from another book do I know who is similar to this new character? What problems did the old character face and how did the character act?" Then, we can read our new book with this information in our mind.

#4:

Connection

When I was in the seventh grade, my teacher, Ms. McMullen, went around the room handing back our writing assignment. When she handed Susan back her work she said, "Next time you copy an assignment, I'm going to fail you." She implied that the assignment was so well written, she could not have possibly done it herself. She said it loudly enough for everyone to hear. Susan started to respond to the accusation, but the teacher would not listen. Susan realized that no matter what she said, it was pointless. She started to cry, but the teacher just went on without paying her much mind. I felt so bad for her. I knew she worked hard on

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the assignment, and I thought she was being treated unfairly. I felt angry that my teacher was being to mean. I imagined for a moment what it must have felt like to be her in that instance. I knew I would feel frustrated, and imagined she probably felt the same. I knew she was probably thinking how much she hated the teacher for humiliating her, and probably wished something awful would happen to her.

I'm telling you this because many times we see other people, and see things happening to them, and we imagine what it feels like to be them in their particular situation(s). Sometimes we get all worked up just as if this was happening to us, or to someone we know. We think about how we would feel in their position, or what we would do if it happened to us. We identify with them and empathize with them based on situations that we are familiar with, or have experienced before. We wonder about what they must be feeling or thinking in the moment and use ourselves to better understand the person.

Teach

Today I'm going to teach you that we don't only identify and empathize with other people in real life, but also with the characters in our book. We think about them as though they were people we know, and sometimes they may even remind us of ourselves. When things happen to them, it's almost as though it were happening to us as well. We think what they may be thinking, even when the author doesn't explicitly tell us. We become emotionally involved and feel what they may be feeling, or think what they must be thinking. When we read we can do this by thinking about a time we experienced a similar situation, or knew about someone in the same position.

So right now, I'm going to read an excerpt from Tiger Rising. Rob is on the bus and he is being bullied. The author doesn't really say what he's thinking, so I'm not really sure what's on his mind. Wait a minute...I think I know how I can figure out what he might be feeling. I'll think of a time that I was in a similar situation. I remember a time that someone tried to put me down. I felt hurt and angry. I wanted to hurt them back, but I didn't say anything. I started thinking that the person was just mean, and I didn't want to be like them. I wanted someone to defend me, and tell the person she was wrong. Maybe, Rob is also feeling hurt. He's probably upset, and thinking that he wants the bus driver to say something to them. He might also be struggling with defending himself or getting in trouble. I know that I would just deal with it, than risk getting in trouble with my dad. That's probably another reason he doesn't defend himself. I can understand that.

Do you see how I identified with Rob by using my own experience to deepen my understanding of how he feels or what he might be thinking?

Active Involvement:

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Now I want us to try this together. I'm going to read another part of the story to you and I want you to think about how the character feels, or what he might be thinking by imagining this happening to you or someone you know. You can think about past experiences to help deepen your understanding of what is happening in the story. You can also think about a time it happened to someone you know. You can also put yourself in the story and think about what you would be feeling or thinking if it were happening right now.

(Read page 13)

Robert just got called into the principal's office, Jason tripped him and Sistine gave him a dirty look. What do you think he might be feeling or thinking as he's leaving the room? Is he nervous? Is he scared? Is he thinking at least he was saved from the teacher? Is he thinking, "What now?" You can use your own experience to help you deepen your understanding of Rob and empathize with him. You can also think about a time this happened to someone you know. You can also imagine this happening to a classmate right now. Imagine yourself in his class watching all of this, or put yourself in the same position. Turn and talk to your partner. How do you think he feels? What do you think he's thinking?

I heard some of you say he probably feels embarrassed. Others said he might be feeling scared and he's probably wondering why he has to go to the office. Some of you said you felt bad for him, and wished people would stop being so mean.

Link

So readers, today as you read, I want you to pay attention to your feelings toward the character and imagine that whatever happens to the character is happening to you or someone you care about. I want you to empathize with the character by drawing on your past experiences, or putting yourselves in the character's shoes. You can also imagine you are there, and think about how you would feel or what you would be thinking to help deepen your understanding of the character.

#6:

Today I want to teach you that people who are really good at 'reading people' know that actions (and interactions) can be windows to a person. In life and as we read, we can sometimes pause and say, "Let me use what just happened as a window to help me understand this person." Then we squeeze our mind and try to think, "What does this show about this person?"

Connection

Yesterday, when I got home from school my nephews were over and they were swimming in my pool. I went into the backyard to say hello and they were hitting each other with those

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Styrofoam noodles, you know the long tube-like colorful ones. As I was approaching them, their “play fighting” began to spiral out of control and started to look more like a wrestling match than a friendly frolic in the pool.

In the short time that I watched this, I formed a theory about my nephews, “They are immature”.

This is something that we do all the time. We study people and we notice the little things that they do each day. Well, we not only do this with people in our lives but also with characters in our books. We pay attention to what the characters do, which helps us to create a theory about the kind of person that character is.

Let’s think about our class read aloud, *The Great Gilly Hopkins*. Yesterday we discussed the part when Gilly stuck her bubble gum under the handle of Ms. Ellis’s car door. We talked about the actions of the main character and we grew ideas from that. When we stopped to really think about the decision that Gilly made, our theory was that *Gilly is rude*.

Because all of you are growing ideas and theories about your character, today I want to teach you that sometimes reading stories can feel like detective work—even when we aren’t reading a mystery. We read, noticing specific clues that help us figure out what the characters are like and what is going on in the story. Then we come up with some tentative theories and we continue to read on, thinking, “I was right” or “Oh, my hunch was wrong.” Then we either leave our original theory or revise it based on the new information we are learning about the character.

Teach

So right now I’m going to read a little bit of *The Great Gilly Hopkin*, watch me as I take notice to Gilly’s actions and decisions. Pay close attention to the way I come up with a tentative theory about Gilly based on her actions and decisions.

After reading, “So wait, now I’m thinking that Gilly is mean. I say this because she seems so angry towards W.E. It’s like she intentionally wants to taunt him and make him feel bad. The way she makes him flinch when she makes believe she is going to hit him makes me think she’s not really a very nice person. Gilly also teases W.E. for watching Sesame Street. It’s like she wants to intimidate him and have some sort of power over him. He even runs to hide behind Ms. Trotter.

Do you see that when I pay careful attention to the specific actions of the character it helps me to figure out what he/she is like and what’s going on in the story. By doing this, I was able to form a new tentative theory about the main character, *Gilly is mean*. As I read on, I am confirming my theory that Gilly is in fact mean.

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Active Involvement

So let's try this. So far we have been listening to the book *The Tiger Rising* as our read aloud and we have already developed one or two theories as well as some ideas about the main character Rob. Now let's continue reading where we left off, and see if we can develop a theory about the main character.

(Read page 3) ... *They were both dressed up in suits that day; his father's suit was too small. And when he slapped Rob to make him stop crying, he ripped a hole underneath the arm of his jacket.*

I'm going to stop here. Hmmmm...I'm thinking about what I've learned about Rob here as well as earlier stuff. Well, Rob seems like he's kind of wimpy...but wait, what can Rob do about the situation? It is his father. I think a better way to describe Rob is tolerant. My theory is that Rob is tolerant.

Ok, let's try this together. I'm going to read on a bit and then we will think about what new information we have learned that can help us form a theory about Rob.

(Read $\frac{1}{2}$ page)

So we've learned some more information about Rob. He's on the bus and these boys are picking on him and bullying him. Billy shoves him, Norton grabbed hold of Rob's hair with one hand and then grinds his knuckles into Rob's scalp. Wow! I can't believe that Rob just sits there and takes it!! He doesn't even defend himself. Turn and talk to your partner and see what the two of you could come up with. What is your theory about Rob now?

Readers, can I stop you. I heard people say that Rob is misunderstood and that he has a lot of "baggage". I also heard that Rob tucks his feelings away like when you pack a suitcase tightly and then zip it closed. I also heard that Rob is really sensitive but hides his feelings like a turtle hides in its shell for protection.

Will you please turn and talk to your partner and support your theory with evidence from the story.

Link

So readers, today you will be reading and learning new information about your character during your independent work. While you are reading, you will be noticing specific clues that help us figure out what the main character is like and what's happening in the story. Then we come up with some tentative theories and we continue to read on, thinking, "I was right" or "Oh, my hunch was wrong."

Now it's your turn, go off and try it!

#7:

Connection

Readers, last night my mind started to wander and I found myself drifting off thinking about Rob in *The Tiger Rising*. I began worrying about Rob and found myself really holding onto this train of thought asking myself, "Why does Rob behave the way he does?" This led me to think about how often I question Rob's behavior and feelings as a character, over and over again, already just in the beginning of the book. Do you ever do that? It seems so clear for us as the reader to want to reach out to our main characters and ask, "What is really going on?" or "Haven't you learned something? Aren't you realizing that you do the same thing over and over again?"

So readers, I guess what I'm trying to say is that even if we are just beginning to get lost in our books, we still are questioning why our characters behave like they do! What is it that makes them react a certain way, no matter if it is with the same characters or different characters?

Teaching Point

Because we all have gotten so smart in growing ideas about our characters right from the get go in our books, today I want our focus to be taking the time to really think about the pattern of our character's responses. We think about this all the time trying to get to the heart of why our character responds or behaves a certain way by asking ourselves, "What's going on here? Why does our character keep responding this way?" As readers we have to hold onto why things happen over and over again. This helps us to shed light in studying patterns of behavior across our books.

Have readers sitting with their partners

Teaching Demonstration

So readers, I want you to watch me really carefully as I revisit Rob within these first few scenes of *The Tiger Rising*. I want you to begin to notice how the actions that happen within these small moments really uncover a big part of who Rob is. Sometimes it's helpful to not only revisit sections of our book, but revisit our post-it work. This helps us to see if there are similarities in our noticings about our characters (Tip #1).

The way in which Rob responds (or in this case really fails to respond with dialogue - but in silence **reference mini-lesson #6**) to different characters based on how he is being treated really makes our minds start to think... We become anxious as readers because we want to know our character's motives for acting a certain way right away in our books. We ask ourselves as we read, "Wait...what's going on here? Why does Rob keep on responding to events this way?"

So when I revisit these first couple of scenes thinking about what's really going on and why, I want you as readers to zoom your focus into how I revisit these situations which provoke Rob

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to have the SAME reaction. I'm noticing how different characters are treating Rob. I am, more importantly, trying to grow ideas about what's really happening and why this makes Rob react this way over and over again.

Also keep in mind that as readers it is important to be getting our minds ready to grow these theories, but always have in our minds why we are thinking this way. Sometimes the evidence we draw on is from the book we are reading, but often we rely on other books we have read just because we know how stories tend to go (Tip #2).

(Then I selectively read aloud three situations in which different actions involving different characters cause Rob to respond with the same reaction).

Looking up from the book, I say, "So I'm noticing people are really mean to Rob all the time. I think that Rob is lonely."

Then I pause.... "Wait a minute! I am not focusing on Rob though... and what this is really saying about him as a character. Yes, people are mean to him and yes, he may be lonely.... But what's going on here? Different people mistreat Rob, almost like verbally abuse him over and over again... but, Rob being lonely really isn't a reaction. When I re-read, I notice Rob's reaction is silence! I wonder why?! Hmm... I think that Rob is quiet to admit what is really buried deep down in his suitcase of emotions. We do know every time he begins to release his emotions, they get stopped dead in their tracks- like when his dad hits him for crying over his mom....wow, I don't know readers.... It's scary to think Rob is really depressed and he doesn't have a voice that is heard.

Do you see readers that I didn't just come up with a character trait to sum up Rob's reaction, but 1st I push myself to think about what is really going on with Rob, not just what is happening in each big situation he encounters. 2nd I am really thinking about Rob's responses to the actions in each scene, with different characters, *to learn more about Rob's personality.*

Active Engagement

So let's try this. I know we have been picking apart Rob, but what about Sistine? She is also a major character that we are already learning so much about from just a few pages. I wonder if we can study Sistine in the same way we are with Rob.

(I read the next scene showing a repeated pattern of Sistine's responses).

Let's pause there. Hmm ... I'm thinking about what we have learned in these scenes about Sistine. She gets on the bus, and she's rude, quite frankly to Rob. Rob is polite to her, and Sistine just snaps right back.

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Okay, readers so now I am going to push myself to think about what is really going on in this scene with Sistine. Why is she acting this way? We see her snap not only at Rob, but other characters. What is really going on? Remember our goal for this work is to really think about what is happening that causes our characters to react a certain way, many times over and over again. Now, since Sistine is a newly introduced character, we are paying a lot of attention to her and the way she responds to Rob. Why does she respond similarly to Rob and the other boys on the bus? Turn and talk (Children turn and talk)

Readers, I hear a lot of you sharing that you've been noticing that Sistine is rude and fresh to not only Rob, but to others. Remember, we want to also ponder why this is so. I hear many of you beginning to question possibly Sistine lets her emotions out easily ... similar emotions of being upset or depressed like Rob, but Rob just chooses to hold onto his emotions because others lash out at him. Are we beginning to see how already within the first couple of pages in our book we are growing these theories by paying attention to how our characters respond over and over again? What a powerful tool to use when reading!

Link

Readers, I know today you will go off and read, paying attention to the kind of character traits your characters are revealing. I know that when you are doing this, you are already forming opinions and predictions about what kinds of characters they are based on what you know about how books tend to go, and even your own experiences in the world. Remember that when you read with this in mind, you often begin to notice patterns in responses. And this happens not just between the main character and another character, but similar responses your main character has with different characters in your book. Readers, I want you to keep your eyes peeled for how your character responds in a certain way over and over again. Stop yourself and take a step back. Ask yourself, "Wait - what is really going on?" Because there always is some underlying issue going on to make our characters respond a certain way. Then ask yourself the big question: why. From the beginning of our books we can already start to grow these theories about our characters just by studying their repeated responses. This will push your reading further and keep your mind questioning what really is going on...Off you go!

#9a:

Connection

You know readers, I am a people watcher and sometimes I just sit and watch how people talk and act. People fascinate me! You can learn so much about people by just paying attention to how they treat each other. These observations give me a clue into what kind of people they are as well as their relationships with other people.

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Just like we can pay attention to people in our lives, we also can look for clues about characters and their relationships within a story. We should watch characters actions in our story and ask ourselves "Why did this character just act that way?" By asking this question we can think about what motivates a character to treat another character in a certain way.

Teach

Readers, today I want to teach you pay attention to the characters actions within a story in order to discover the relationships. I want you watch me as a read more from our story *The Tiger Rising* while paying close attention to Rob's actions towards other characters. When I discover him talking or acting with another character I want you to observe me asking "Why?" This will help me to think about what relationship Rob has with other characters in the story and why he treats them in certain ways.

Read chunk of text p. 5 in *The Tiger Rising*:

"Looky here," said Norton Threemonger as soon as Rob stepped onto the school bus. "It's the Kentucky Star. How's it feel to be a star?" Norton stood in the center of the aisle, blocking Rob's path. Rob shrugged. "Oh, he don't know what it's like to be a star." Rob slipped past Norton. He walked all the way to the back of the bus and sat down in the last seat.

Reader's, I have to stop here for a minute. I am noticing Rob's behavior in this small chunk of text. Even though Rob is not doing most of the talking I am still gathering clues about his relationship with this other character on the bus. I am paying attention to his actions. Let me think. "Why did my character just act that way? I think that Rob doesn't want to have anything to do with this boy. It doesn't seem that they have a very good relationship at all. Norton was blocking his path and this told me that they are not friends. Rob decided to go to the back of the bus, which proved to me that he just wanted to ignore Norton and Rob just wants him to leave him alone. Their relationship feels negative to me almost like an enemy.

Did you see what I did there, readers! I read paying close attention to the actions of my character. When I noticed Rob talking or acting with another character I stopped and asked myself, "Why is he acting that way?" This gave me a clue into Rob's relationship with Norton.

Active Involvement

Now I want you to try to pay attention to the how a character treats other characters in the story. Remember, to pay close attention to how a character talks or acts to other people. That will be your signal to stop and ask "Why?" in order to figure out their relationship. Now listen closely as Rob interacts with another character.

Read another chunk out loud p. 5 of *The Tiger Rising*:

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"Hey," said Billy Threemonger, "you know what? This ain't Kentucky. This is Florida." He followed Rob and sat down right next to him. He pushed his face so close that Rob could smell his breath. It was bad breath. It smelled metallic and rotten. "You ain't a Kentucky star," Billy said, his eyes glowing under the bin of his John Deer cap. "And you sure ain't a star here in Florida. You ain't a star nowhere." "Okay," said Rob.

Readers, did you notice we have characters talking and acting in a certain way here? Now ask yourself, "Why?" Why did my character act that way? Take a minute to think about what kind of relationship you think these characters have and why.

Turn and talk to your partner about why you think a character is acting in a certain way. What are the clues that you discovered about their relationship?

Wow! I heard such incredible conversations about the relationships that you discovered in this paragraph. I heard someone say that the actions of Billy told him or her that the characters had the relationship of a bully. That was so smart to pay attention to all the characters actions and not just the main character to uncover the relationships of all characters in a story!

Link

Remember readers, that just like we can observe the people around us by watching how they treat each other, we too can do the same for the characters in our books. Have fun and be a people watcher with all the characters in your books. Whenever you are reading it helps to pay attention to how the characters act and treat each other. By simply stopping and asking ourselves "Why did my character act that way?" We will be able to learn about the relationships within all our stories and the motivations that cause these characters to act in certain ways.

#9b:

Connection

Class, this fall we've been getting to know each other. On the first day of school, I didn't know very much about you at all except your name. I didn't know if you liked to read mysteries or would rather read fantasy books; I didn't know if you preferred baseball over soccer; I didn't even know if you walked to school or took the bus. It was hard for me to tell if you were excited about our class because everyone looked so serious. Maybe you were just nervous to be back in school, or sad that summer was coming to an end. And it was really hard for me to tell if you liked my jokes - everyone was so serious. But as we have spent more time together, I have learned that each one of you has so many different sides to who you are. You can be serious when you're reading a really challenging book...you can be silly at

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necess...you can be super groggy on a Monday morning. We know that people aren't just one way. People - and characters too - are complicated. People are not just one way.

While reading your books, you have been growing ideas about your character. Today, I want to teach you that to understand a character more deeply, we notice places in the book where the character acts in ways that surprise us and make us think about them differently. Like people, characters have more than one side to them.

Teaching

While reading *Tiger Rising*, we have been getting to know Rob. Think about all that we know about him so far... He keeps his feelings inside, he's fearful, and he doesn't stand up for himself. At this point in our reading, you may think that you really know a great deal about Rob's character. For example, remember when Rob was bullied on the bus and he didn't stand up for himself?

So now, I'm going to read from *Tiger Rising* and I'm going to look for evidence that supports my ideas about Rob.

Read p. 19....and suddenly , she began swinging with her fists... "Hey!" he shouted, not meaning to. "Hey!" he shouted again louder. He moved closer, the drawing of the tiger still in his hand.

Looking up from the book. I say to myself, "Wow! What's going on here? Why is he doing this? This is not the shy Rob I know"...(Do you see how I am questioning what is going on here? I stopped to think, does this fit with what I already know about Rob or is this different?) Is Rob going to get in a fight...is he going to yell? Is he going to call for help? Since I know he's shy and fearful and somewhat cowardly, I think he's going to just run away like he always does. That's the way he is.

(So, you notice how I'm trying to fit Rob's actions in with what I know about him? I need more information). I'm going to read on...

Read P. 20 "Leave her alone!" he shouted...read a half a page to... "Leave her alone," Rob said again.

Whoa! Rob is yelling at the mean girl? Now I am starting to think, "This is not the Rob I thought he was." I thought he was a wimp who wouldn't stand up for himself. Now I'm seeing him stand up - not just for himself but for someone else. I'm starting to see that Rob is different than I thought he was. I see that he has more sides to him than the weak victim I saw in the scene on the school bus.

You see that I stopped to think when Rob did something that surprised me. Readers, when I encounter a surprise, I pause and think back to what I already know about the character.

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Hmmmm....I could get a Post-It and write down my thinking and how it is changing...Do you see that Rob is acting in a way that makes us think about his character differently? On the Post-It, I will write, "Out of character! Bravel?! Rob stands up for Sistine! This is not Shy Rob."... and put it in the spot in the book where I had this thought. I now see that Rob has more facets to his character and have recorded my new thoughts.

Active Involvement

So, let's try this. Let's continue reading and see if we can find other examples that deepen our understanding of Rob.

Read pages 20 -21, stop at "...and so he ran."

Wait! I'm confused. I was starting to think that Rob was stronger than this. Why is he running? He was standing up for her. Readers are constantly revising their ideas about characters and read more to find evidence to support their ideas. I need to read on.

Continue reading until "A sudden thrill went through him when he realized that what he was doing was saving Sistine Bailey."...

So turn and talk... what are some ways this event deepens your understanding of Rob? Are you now seeing a different side to his character?

(children talk)

Readers, can I stop you? I heard you say that Rob is standing up for Sistine. I heard Olivia say that this isn't the kind of action Rob would take. We now see more to Rob than we first imagined. I'm thinking that Rob has a strong side to his character, a side that we didn't see in the beginning of the book. We just uncovered new information in the story that showed us a part of Rob that changed our picture of the kind of person he is. As we continue to read, we want to hold on to this new side of Rob. In addition, we want to be open to discovering more facets of Rob, and adding these to what we know.

Link

Today, as you read, keep in mind that characters may be deeper than you originally thought they were. They may reveal aspects of themselves that you didn't predict or realize they had. Remember to pay attention to those actions that surprise you. These surprises can make you think about the character in a different way. Think about those things that make you stop and say, "Wait! There is more going on here than I first thought. This person isn't the person I thought he or she was...this person has sides of himself or herself that add to my picture of the character." And remember to hold onto these new ideas, collecting them as you read, discovering new, more complex aspects of the character.

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#12:

Connection

You know, I'm looking at our chart and I'm noticing all of the things we've learned about character—we've learned what it's like to walk in their shoes, we've taken note of their actions, and listened carefully to their words and what their words tell us about them-- like when Billy says to Rob, "And you sure ain't a star here in Florida. You ain't a star anywhere." By reading those words, we're left with a pit in our stomach- and " I ask myself, hmm, now what does it tell me about him that his head is down and he stared at his legs and wouldn't look up. So I have to pause in my reading and think more about that." we've got a notion about Billy's character.

Teaching Point

But sometimes, when we read we notice that our characters don't say much at all. Maybe you've been in that situation with a friend or a brother or sister. Sometimes, a friend doesn't write or doesn't call and that says a lot too! In your head, you are providing the words, trying to answer the questions- "What's going on here? Is he mad at me?" So, here's what we want to think about today- that it's just as important for us to pay attention to what the characters don't say— looking at the white spaces, the silences.

Active Engagement

So right now I am going to read a little bit from *The Tiger Rising*, when Rob is in the principal's office and we can wonder together why Rob is so quiet and why at the end of the chapter he simply smiles.

(right now I am reading the bottom of 15 and half of 16 ending with "What do you think of the plan?) Rob kept his head down and said "Yes, Sir."

I ask myself, hmm, now what does it tell me about him that his head is down and he stared at his legs and wouldn't look up. So I have to pause in my reading and think more about that."

Wow, I am noticing how important that body language is—kept his head down- so I need to think about using extra clues like what's my character looking like and acting like when there are few words.

I also am asking myself questions like "What else is he thinking- what else would he like to say? I mean if he could say more words... Hey, let's try that.. Why doesn't everyone be Rob and say out loud the one thing you would really love to say to the principal. I know that I would want to tell the principal what I think about his stupid plan.

I also am thinking about the fact that Rob has done this before, simply sat there, like when he was on the bus. Let's go back and look at that too (re-read this section). So, in order to find that Rob did this before makes me think that when I am trying to pick up clues to tease

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out the "missing " words, I might need to spend time rereading the chapter. I think I will remember to slow down a bit- this kind of work is hard, I'm kind of going below the surface and I better swim slowly.

I also am asking myself questions like "What else is he thinking- what else would he like to say? I mean if he could say more words... Hey, let's try that.. Why doesn't everyone be Rob and say out loud the one thing you would really love to say to the principal. I know that I would want to tell the principal what I think about his stupid plan.

Let's pause here ... hmmm... I'm thinking if you could make one statement about what we have gathered about Rob's unwritten words, what would it be? Turn and share your thinking with your neighbor. Great work!

Link

So readers, I know today we will be reading about our characters- thinking about why the character is silent and what he/she might be thinking. By re-reading, looking at body language and going slowly, we are going to find many clues about our characters that are not immediately obvious. It's hard work, but I know that we will really feel like we know everything we can about our characters. Off you go.

#13:

Connection

Readers, remember the other day when we were out on the playground and a bunch of us were standing around watching that squirrel? Remember, we were so fascinated by how hard he was working and how much attention and effort he was spending on getting that nut open? Remember how we thought that the squirrel was probably really, really, hungry to be working so hard to open that nut. By observing that squirrel we were able to figure out what he really, really wanted.

Today I want to teach you that good readers don't just read to find out what happens, they want to know why and they want to understand the characters' situation. Why do they act the way they do? One way we can do this is to ask ourselves "What does this character really, really want?" We can figure this out by observing what the character gives his or her time, attention and effort to. What is he or she working hard at? What is he or she spending time doing? When we explore our characters lives this way, we discover what they really, really, want.

Teaching

Right now I'm going to look back at what we have read so far in *Tiger Rising* and I am going to observe Sistine. I am going to observe what she is working hard at and spending her time on so that I can discover what she really, really, wants. You know... I am thinking about the part

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when Sistine gets on the bus and Rob sees her for the first time. I notice that in this part she is spending a lot of time being kind of tough. She is glaring at everyone and she even insults Billy and Norton. Oh and I totally remember the part when she came to the classroom and she says that she hates the south because everyone in it is ignorant. She also says that her dad would be picking her up the next week. Kind of like she wants everyone to know that she is out of there soon. Remember that? And then of course there is the part when she gets in the fight. Readers, it seems to me that Sistine is working really hard at being tough and kind of keeping everyone at a distance. It kind of makes me think that maybe what she really, really wants is to belong. I'm thinking this because I have noticed that in life sometimes when people act tough they are really trying to hide the fact that they are hurting in some way. Since I know that her Dad isn't with her maybe what she really, really wants is family.

Do you see how I thought back and observed the things that Sistine is working hard at and giving a lot of attention to? It really helped me discover what she really, really, wants.

Active Involvement

So now I want you guys to try this. With your partner I want you to think about what Rob is spending most of his time, attention and effort on. Think about what he is working really hard at. I'm going to give you a few minutes to talk this out with your partner and then I want each of you to jot these observations down in your reading journals.

After partner work...

Readers, you have come up with some really amazing observations about Rob. I think that you really are discovering what he really, really, wants. *Teacher can share with the class a journal observation that shows what Rob is working really hard at or paying attention to that helped the student think about what Rob really, really wants.*

Link

So readers, as you are reading today remember to work on figuring out what the character really, really, wants by observing what the character gives his or her time, attention and effort to. Remember also to observe what is he or she working hard at and spending his or her time doing. These observations will help us discover what the character really, really, wants.

#14a:

Connection

"We all go through difficult situations. Sometimes when we are going through a difficult experience, we think "Why is this happening to me. Just like last night, my son, Michael who will soon be 13, came home from his baseball game and I asked him about the game. He mumbled and went upstairs to get changed. So I followed him, like all good mothers do, and hammered him with questions, "Did you win? Did you get a hit? Did you have make plays?" Michael yelled, "I don't feel like talking right now!"and then slammed the door to his room

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leaving me standing outside the closed door. "Why are you so mean?" I yelled through the door. I was thinking... *why is he being so mean, what did I do.* I remembered how just last weekend I ask him about the school dance and he said "Why do you have to know everything?" And then I thought about how he was arguing with his sister over her coming into his room to look for something -he used to love having his sister around. I thought, what happened to my sweet boy But, then I thought about the how just two days ago I came home and was carrying two really heavy packages and was struggling to get them out of the car and Michael came running out to help me carry them in, without being asked. So I started to think about past experiences experiences with Michael and I started to ask myself questions like, Why is that Michael can be see kind one minute and then seem so mean another? I don't think Michael wants to be mean. I started to put the pieces together. Hmm.. Michael is getting older. Maybe he's trying to be more independent and doesn't like me, his mother, asking so many questions. Maybe he's not really trying to be mean, maybe he just wants more privacy and doesn't want his sister barging into his room. Maybe he's struggling to become an independent person. After all, he's not quite a kid, yet not quite an adult either. I don't think Michael really wants to be mean. So sometimes my first theory, that Michael is just getting mean mean is not true and he is just a way that he is trying to figure out who he is. This is a difficult time for Michael and me and I know some experiences are not always going to be easy and I might ask myself why is this happening? But I also know that if I think of all the experiences in Michael's life and start to put them together, I know that they will all help me understand who Michael is and who it might be becoming as he grows up.

Teaching Point

So this got me thinking about the work we've been doing with characters. We know as readers that characters in a story, like people, go through a lot of difficult experiences. Often the characters themselves don't yet understand what these experiences all mean or how these experiences are shaping them. As readers, it's our job to ask, "What might this experience mean for this character? What effect must this have on him or her? We don't always know how the pieces or experiences of a character, or a person in real life, fit together, but this doesn't keep us from asking. How might these things fit together?" It's kind of like putting together the pieces of puzzle. When we start to put the pieces together we start to question our theories about a character and create new theories and ideas to build a better understanding of the character.

So today I'm going to teach you how good readers think deeply about the experiences a character is having and asks themselves questions so they can begin to put the pieces, like a puzzle, together to get a more complete picture or understanding of the character.

Teaching demonstration

I'll show you what I mean. We've been reading *The Tiger Rising* and we know that Ron has been having some difficult experiences with Norton and Billy. Like the time they called him

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"Kentucky Star", or the time they taunted him on the bus, and the time they dug their knuckles into the side of his head, - Now I'm going to reread an experience that Ron has and I want you to pay attention to how I start to think about how this experience fits in with the other experiences Ron has had up to this point, I ask myself questions. and how it helps me create new theories and ideas to build better understanding of Ron..

(Read pgs 19-21)

At the end of page 21 I start to close the book, but then I stop and say, " Wait a minute, Usually, I would just end the chapter without much thought, like this is just something else happening to the character. But this time I'm going to force myself to think more deeply about what's really going on here and how does this experience fit in with the other experiences that Ron has had. Hmm... in all the other experiences Ron has been having he doesn't seem to react. He holds all his feelings in. Like the time Billy grabbed his hair and Ron just sat there and took it. (see how I'm reflecting on past experiences of Ron.) Yet in this experience when Sistene is getting bullied he really gets involved. He actually confronts the bullies and there is a lot of them. Then he leads the bullies away from Sistene, by running. I wonder why? This is so different from the way he has reacted in other situations (I start to compare this situation with others - I'm beginning to question my theories). Hmm...Could it be that Ron likes Sistene? He doesn't really know her and she did give him that look of pure hate. Could it be that Ron is getting stronger and is tired of being bullied? Or maybe, it's easier for Ron to see how mean the bullies are when it's happening to someone else. Maybe Ron is fed up and he can't take it anymore. Hmm...One things for sure this experience seems to show that Ron is acting different, he might be changing. He used to seem really passive, (thinking about my theories and ideas about Ron), but in this scene he really takes charge. I think these experiences are making Ron not look so passive or scared. He is changing from how I originally thought he was. I think Ron might actually be stronger than I thought. I think Ron might really have guts. (I'm changing my previous theories and ideas).

So readers did you see how when I read about an experience that the character was having I stopped. I reflected on how this experience fits with other experiences the character has had. I started to ask myself questions. "What does this mean about the character, Why is he doing this and How is this different from other experiences the character has had?" I start to see how the pieces of the puzzle fit together. I asked myself, "Do the theories I had about character still hold true?" I started to see that my theories about the character are changing. I am now getting a better understanding or a more detailed picture of the character. I can now take this new information with me as I continue reading.

Active Involvement

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"So now let's all try this. I'm going to continue reading the next scene where we left off in The Tiger Rising and although we've been coming up with a lot of theories about the main character by piecing together the experiences he is having and checking them with our previous theories and ideas, we can also do the same thing for other characters in the story. So as I continue reading, I want to see if we can come up some new theories or ideas about Sistene based on the new experience I'm going to read to you. And remember, you are going to keep in mind the past experiences the character has had and think about how this new experience fits together with that."

I read pages 24 (the scene where she puts her hand on his leg).

After reading I say, "Hmm I'm thinking about the past experiences with Sistene, like when she stood in front of the class and said how she hated Florida and the scene where she shot Ron a look of "pure hate" when he hadn't done anything to her. I certainly came up with some theories about Sistene after those experiences. But now I'm thinking about this experience, where Sistene sits next to Ron and actually puts her hand on his leg. I start to question my theories and ask myself questions... hmm... is Sistene just doing this because she wants to be out of school like Ron or could she be nice because Ron saved her or could Sistene really want a friend even though she said earlier that she hated everyone? Turn to a partner and share what you are thinking.

Remember readers, you want to think about how all the pieces or experiences that you know about Sistene fit together.

(Students talk)

Readers can I sop you. I heard people come up with some amazing theories, like in the past Sistene seemed really mean and seemed to want to be left alone, but this experience shows that Sistene really wants a friend even though she says she hates everyone, I also heard someone say that Sistene even though Sistene said she hated Ron, maybe she wants to show Ron that she's not grossed out by him. Wow, I heard some really great thinking

Link

So readers, I know as you continue to read your books, you will be paying attention to lots of things and capturing your ideas on post-its. And I know that you are going to pay extra close attention to the experiences that the characters in your books are having. I know that you will stop to think about how all the experiences a character has fit together, like a pieces of a puzzle. And, when you stop and think deeply about these pieces you are going to ask yourself questions and begin to form new theories and ideas about your character. You will then be building a deeper understanding of your character that you can carry with you as you continue to read.

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Off you go.

#14b:

Connection

Readers, I've been thinking about all the good work you have done to grow ideas about characters. I've listened in on so many interesting conversations about the characters in your independent books and how they have surprised you, confused you, and stretched you.

Because all of you are so busy thinking about your characters, today I want to teach you how all the different experiences characters go through shape who they are. Often the characters themselves don't yet understand what these experiences all mean, or how these experiences are shaping them. As strong readers, it's our job to ask, "What might this experience mean for this character? What effect must this have on him (or her)? We don't know how the pieces of a story - a life - fit together, but this doesn't keep us from asking, "How might these fit together?" We put pieces of a book together, like pieces of a puzzle, in order to get the full picture, the full meaning."

Teaching

So right now, I am going to read chapter 4 in *The Tiger Rising*, and you'll see me notice Rob's actions and thoughts. Pay close attention to the way I ask questions about how Rob's experiences affect him. Specifically, notice that I am growing ideas about how the way he acts relates to what I have learned about him in the previous chapters.

(Then I read chapter 4 - when Rob remembers how his mother had taught him how to whittle.)

Looking up from the book, I said, "I am thinking that Rob misses his mother so much and in order to keep his memory of her alive he likes to whittle because it is something she had taught him to do. By whittling Rob keeps a connection to his mother."

So, I paused and asked myself, "What might this experience mean for Rob? What effect must this have on him?"

I think this memory of his mother is super important to Rob. Whittling is a way for him to express himself without having to say anything or show any emotion. I think this part fits with what we learned about Rob packing all his feelings in a suitcase and "not thinking." I remember that his father said, "There's no use in crying, because it won't change anything." Hmm... this makes me think that Rob might be ashamed of his feelings and even maybe that

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his father does not show his hurt. Extending this thought, Rob might feel pretty lousy about himself having all these feelings, when his father doesn't allow himself to express his grief.

I think what I a trying to say is that as a reader I am trying to put pieces of the book in order to get the full meaning. I get little clues about the characters and I carry those with me as I read and try to think how these could fit together.

Active Involvement

So readers, we have developed some theories about Rob - but none about the minor characters. Let's continue reading where we left off, and see if we can develop some ideas about Sistine and try to think about what an experience might mean for her.

(I read the rest of chapter 4 - shows again that she doesn't seem to like Rob - or for that matter anyone.)

Hmmm... I'm thinking that Sistine is a lot more expressive with her thoughts and feelings than Rob is. I remember that in the beginning of this chapter Sistine proudly announced that she hated the South and she wasn't going to be staying there for long. Then she *glared* at Rob.

Sistine seems quite different from Rob; Sistine says whatever's on her mind and Rob puts his thoughts away in his "suitcase." I'm wondering how these ideas might fit together. Turn and talk to your partner and see if the two of you could come up with a way these pieces of the story fit together.

(The children talk.)

I heard people say that Rob and Sistine are kind of opposites and that maybe they will be able to help each other because Rob can't express any of his feelings and Sistine erupts with her feelings. This is really interesting - and you know I am also thinking that maybe, just maybe, Sistine doesn't want to like anyone - but I've got to think why that might be, where does this fit. Let's hold onto these ideas, along with your own ideas and growing theories, as we continue with our read aloud and see if we can keep adding pieces to the whole.

Link

We know that in the stories we read characters go through a lot of difficult experiences. So today as you continue to grow ideas about characters, pay special attention to how pieces of your story fit together. By thinking of the story as a puzzle, it helps us as readers build meaning and grow theories about characters. Remember, as readers we are building a whole tool kit of skills and strategies to help us grow ideas. When you read today in your independent books I want to challenge you: either try out this new strategy for pushing your

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thinking by jotting down places where you find a puzzle piece and then stop and think, "how does this fits in the puzzle?" OR, look back at our strategy charts and pick something you haven't tried before. Write down your strategy on a post-it so I can see what you are working on today. Happy reading!

#14c

Connection

Readers, I bet every one of you can think of an experience that changed the way you behaved at least for a little while. I can give you an example from my own family. My son Alex told his little sister that he would help her learn to dive off the diving board in the deep end of the pool. Tori really wanted to be able to dive like her friends, but she was very nervous. Alex coaxed her onto the board and promised that he wouldn't push her. He said he was only going to show her what it felt like to be on the end of the board. Well, you can guess what happened. Tori went to the end of the board...she was just starting to feel comfortable when Alex ran at her and pushed her into the pool. She got out of the pool without too much trouble, but it scared her enough so that she didn't go into the deep end again for two weeks, and she didn't believe anything Alex said for a long time.

In the stories we read, characters go through a lot of difficult experiences. Often the characters themselves don't yet understand what these experiences all mean, or how those experiences are shaping them. As strong readers, it's our job to ask, "What might this experience mean for this character? What effect must this have on him/her?" We don't know how the pieces of a story - a life - fit together, but this doesn't keep us from asking, "How might these things fit together?" We put pieces of a book together, like pieces of a puzzle, in order to get the full picture, the full meaning.

Teaching: Demonstration

Today I'm going to read the first two chapters of *The Tiger Rising*, I want you to listen carefully. I am going to stop and post-it the events that I think might change the way Rob thinks and acts. Pay close attention to the questions I ask myself when I am deciding whether or not an experience is worth noting.

(I begin to read chapter one. I read the first two pages and then stop.)

Looking at the students I say, "Rob has found a tiger! On these two pages the words *tiger* and *found a tiger* are repeated many times and that makes me think that this is very important. "Hmm, I see that Rob said he was afraid to look at the tiger for too long because he was afraid it would disappear. That sentence makes me think this is really a big deal to Rob. I can see he is excited about his discovery.

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I am going to put a post-it on this page and write that Rob is very excited that he has found a tiger. I am thinking that we need to figure out why finding a tiger is so important to Rob.

(I read on.)

"Oh! This says that Rob hadn't thought about his mother since the morning of the funeral, so Rob's mother must be dead. I am going to post-it that because I know that is an important event for anyone.

(I read on.)

This says that at his mother's funeral, "he couldn't stop crying the great heaving sobs that made his chest and stomach hurt," and that when his father "slapped Rob to make him stop crying, he ripped a hole underneath the arm of his jacket." I am surprised or shocked that Rob's father would slap him when he is so upset and sad. I think we should put another post-it here. Rob's father wasn't very caring or gentle at a really hard time and I'm thinking that will change Rob.

Active Involvement

"I am wondering, how do you think Rob was changed by his mother dying? What about his father slapping him? How do you think you would feel if you were Rob? Turn and talk to your partner."

"All right readers, let's look at the post-its we have so far. Rob has found a tiger, we know his mother is dead. I heard you saying that you would have been very sad if you were Rob. Some of you said you would have felt all alone if your father slapped you because you were sad." I think you are beginning to get an idea of who Rob is and how he feels.

It will be difficult to keep track of all of the different experiences we need to string together to understand Rob. I want to show you how to make a chart for to keep track of the thinking you have recorded on your post-its. (I put the chart on the easel and we fill it out together using the post-its we already wrote.)

Let's list the experiences Rob has in the first column, and then how he seems to respond to these experiences in the next column. "What other columns do you think our chart should have to help us gather information and think about how Rob may be changed by his experiences?" "I think we need a column to predict whether he will grow from these new events or whether he will "put more in his suitcase of not-thoughts" and "not-wishes." We will continue to keep this chart as we read *The Tiger Rising*.

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When you read your own independent books today, notice how your characters react to different experiences. Sometimes it is difficult to figure out how the experiences go together. As you read your own books, post-it the experiences you think will shape or change your character's behavior. Make a chart for the main character in your independent reading book, like the one we made for Rob. Find three experiences you can post-it and chart. When you have finished, meet with your reading partner and take turns explaining your thinking about the main character in your book and use your chart to help with your explanation.

#15:

Re-wording of teaching point

Earlier, we talked about big experiences that a character has, and about how our job as readers is to think about how those experiences shape the character. But small experiences in a character's life also end up leaving their imprint. For example, let's say you're walking down the hall and the door ahead slams loudly in your face. That's not a big event - the wind blew, the door slammed. BUT you could find yourself thinking, "That's what life feels like these days. Doors keep slamming in my face." The event itself, then, could be a small one, but your thinking can make it big. Your thinking finds a deep meaning in it and makes it a symbol. Sometimes in a book, the events that have the biggest impact on a character aren't the ones everyone would agree are 'big events.' They are, instead, seemingly small events that for some reason take on big, symbolic meaning.

The character's inner thinking may show you that he or she experiences a small event on a deeper level. Other times, the event may not loom large in the character's mind the way it does in yours.

The act of imagining is an act of living deliberately.

When we imagine that we are a character, we re-imagine ourselves. We are finding ourselves in another person. The more we can find ourselves in the characters we read, the more included we can feel in the world - the more sense of belonging we feel in the world.

By thinking about the path that Rob takes at this point in his life and the lessons he learns, we become more aware of the life path we are choosing. We become more aware of the lies we have allowed ourselves to believe, of the injustices we have accepted, and maybe didn't have to, and of the losses we

#16a:

Connection

When I met my dog for the first time, I just know he was the one for me. I saw him lying down towards the back of the chain linked cage at the kennel. "Hi puppy," I said bending

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down to stroke his soft furry head. I felt as if I already know this dog somehow. It felt like *déjà vu*, I had already seen her somewhere before. I turned to my mom and I said "This dog, have we seen her before?" My mom glanced down at the ball of brown and white fur and replied, "No I've never seen that dog". Something about her seemed so familiar like I already knew this dog somehow. I reached down and stroked her fur and she licked me, like she knew me too. I racked my brain and there it was... Winn Dixie. This dog was just like Winn Dixie. I ended up naming her Dixie.

This can happen in books too. Have you ever been reading a book and suddenly you get the feeling that you've been here before--- like *déjà vu*? And you think, "This character reminds me of someone I've met before." If we stop and think about it, we can pin down who the character resembles. It's often another character, and sometimes it is someone in our family, or a friend. The really cool thing is once we can say, "Yep—that's it. This guy is a lot like....," then sometimes this gives us hints for what will probably happen next in the story. We think what that person would do next, and we can make predictions about characters.

Teach

As I read about Willie May, I stopped when I get to the part when Willie Mae says, "You don't need no doctor. I can tell you how to fix your legs." I stop and say, "I feel as though I've been here before. This character seems so familiar to me. Who does Willie Mae remind me of? I flip through my rolodex in my head. Hmmm, does she remind me of my mom, no. Hmmm, maybe it is the custodian here at school. They both clean. But no that's not it. Wait, I know... she reminds me of the lady in *Because of Winn Dixie*, Gloria Dump. Do you remember, the lady who is blind and hangs all the bottles on the tree?

Do you see how I stopped when I thought of someone who reminded me of Willie Mae? Hmmm... I'm wondering, "What is it about the woman in *Because of Winn Dixie* that reminds me of Willie Mae?". You know how in *Winn Dixie*, Gloria Dump seems to understand Opal and what she's going through. And she listens to her and gives her advice. I think both Willie May and Gloria Dump are wise. And I think that this Willie Mae is going to help Rob through some hard times in the same way that Gloria helps Opal.

Isn't it interesting how sometimes the same author creates characters who seems so similar? So did you see what I did? I stopped when I noticed I was getting that *déjà vu* feeling. I looked away from my book (which is a really great way to stop and think) and I thought to myself, "This seems so familiar. Who does this character remind me of?" I might even say that other person's name quietly to myself. I could have just stopped there, but I thought even harder about how these two characters are similar. "Why do they remind me of each other," I asked. I'm not just thinking about the little things, like if they wear the same clothes. But I'm wondering about them as people. Then I used what I know about Gloria to make some predictions about Willie May".

Active Engagement

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Wow this is such a strange feeling. You have to try it. I'm going to read to you from chapter 12 about when Sistine comes over to Rob's house for the first time. We know a couple things about Sistine already: she doesn't want to be there, she's waiting for her dad to come, she often wears fancy clothes and she's not afraid to fight back. You are probably already thinking about who she reminds you of. As I read this section, where we get to know her better, think to yourselves, "Who does this character remind me of? Why?"

You might be thinking, "Oh my gosh, Sistine is just like my sister! or maybe Sistine is just like Lucky in *The Higher Power of Lucky*. Maybe you are saying to yourself, whoa this is weird. Sistine is just like Opal in *Because of Winn Dixie*."

"Turn and talk to the person next to you about who Sistine reminds you of."

I listen in to conversations and share out what a couple of students said.

Link

Readers, remember that it is important to understand our characters and sometimes we can understand our characters better by noticing when we get that déjà vu feeling and stopping to think of someone we already know from a book, or in real life that really reminds us of this character. And I will tell you a secret...getting to know characters might even help us to better understand the people in our lives. Wow!

#16b

Connection

I'm a crier- I remember the first time I saw "The Little Mermaid" my mom had to take me out of the theatre and into the lobby I was crying so badly when Ariel said goodbye to her father. "Casper"- my eyes were swollen for days. Hallmark commercials can get me teary eyed in three seconds flat. And, all of my favorite books earn their way into their top spots because they solicited some harsh reaction from me; I missed two activity periods in camp because I was sobbing when I was finishing *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* and I think my counselors were too scared to interrupt the sobbing girl who could barely see the words of her book through her tears.

So, am I a freak? Am I a bad reader because sometimes I do so much more feeling than thinking?

I don't think so. I think sometimes we can use our strong feelings towards a book, our gut instincts, and we can use those feelings as clues to the really important parts that we need to think more closely about.

These past few weeks we've been talking a lot about how to use our brains to get us to feel (to empathize with) our characters. We've talked about how we can put ourselves in our characters shoes and force ourselves to think what our character's thinking and feel what they are feeling. We practiced thinking like Kek- feeling embarrassed when he was, sad when

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he was and confused when he was. Sometimes, though, we can physically feel ourselves naturally reacting strongly to a text, and usually those are the moments when we are most emotionally struck by the story.

For example, I might be a crier because I empathize most with the really sad parts, but some of you may notice that you feel a pit in your stomach when you're nervous for your character or you may notice a smile creep across your face if you're happy with them, or your heart may skip a beat if you're scared for them. Today we're going to ease up on making our brains and thoughts do all the empathizing, and we're going to see where our hearts will take us.

Teaching Point

When good readers get truly lost in their books, sometimes we'll feel our heart swelling, or a "thunk" in the pit our stomach or a tear running down our cheek. It is important to take notice of the responses we have to our books and to the parts of our books that make us respond so strongly. When we see ourselves responding to a story emotionally we can go back into the story and ask, "What is it about this part that gets to me?" and then we can look closely at our own life and ask "What is it about my life that makes this section of the story so important to me?" Usually when we respond strongly and emotionally to a text it is not just because of what the author wrote in that part, but also because of what we bring to that section of the text as people and as readers. Using our hearts to guide our brains can help us think better about the text and better about our own lives.

Teach

I'm now going to show you how natural it is to feel strongly with your story and how to use those emotional responses as entries into parts of the story we need to think more deeply about.

Yesterday when we were reading *Home of the Brave*, I was just reading along. Turning the pages, taking in all the information about how Kek was adjusting to America and about how Kek had got himself a job caring for Gol; I was really forcing myself to think and feel like Kek. And then all of a sudden, I felt my stomach drop when I read that Kek was going to run away to try and find his mama: "I could fly home/and find my mother myself./ That is what a good son would do." Even though I was thinking what Kek must have been feeling all along, this strong physical and emotional reaction made me realize that this part must have been extra important to me.

So I kept on reading for a bit, because when I'm feeling really emotionally tied to a text I hate just stopping in the middle of that reaction (just think how frustrating it is when you're biting your nails in the middle of the scariest movie ever and your little brother turns the TV off- that's just annoying!) So, like I said I just kept on reading, letting my heart do all of the

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work. When I felt my emotions ease up, that's when I decided to go back and reread that part using my brain and not just my heart; my heart clued me in that that part of the story must have been important and so I felt like I needed to go back and more deeply investigate why it got me feeling so nervous and so sad.

I went back to the part where I first started feeling nervous and I forced myself to stop and think "What is it about that part that gets to me?" and I think what made me feel so anxious was all this new emotion that was coming out of quiet Kek; all book he's been so calm and sweet and passive and now all of a sudden the guilt of leaving his mother is rising, and his determination to find her is rising and here I am thinking how he's probably not going to succeed and it's making me nervous and sad for him.

Then I wanted to take my thinking a step further and I asked myself: "What is it about my life that makes this section of the story so important to me?" Hmm, well, I've never really been in a situation like Kek's so I don't think I feel strongly because I went through the same thing as him. But, being a teacher and having seen some of my students go through some of things that Kek has, like loss and moving and failure, I think that makes me feel more strongly for Kek. So when I was feeling nervous and sad for him, I was really feeling nervous and sad for some of my students who have had to go through so much at such a young age.

Active Engagement

I know that you've all been really invested in this book as we've read it aloud together and I remember a few days back when we read the poem about Kek getting Ganwar the job at the farm Marquel and Stefany and a bunch of others said "aw" aloud. That "aw" is a physical/emotional reaction to the text so I copied that poem for you all now so you can look more closely through it and figure out what it is about that part that got to you and what it is about your lives that made that part important to you.

First, look closely through the poem and underline the part that makes you have the strongest emotional response.

When you and your partner are both done, take turns explaining to each other what it is about that part that gets to you and then work through what it is about your life or your experiences that makes that part so important to you. Remember if your partner feels stuck, it is your responsibility to use our talk prompts to push their thinking further!

Link

As you're reading today and every day, remember that you should be thinking about and responding to the story using all of the strategies we've talked about. But I want you now to realize that when you're reading and really getting lost in a book, that sometimes it's okay to ease up on the thinking and to just let yourself feel. Once you notice that strong emotional reaction, you can always go back and think more deeply about what it is about that part and

what it is about your life that really gets to you. When you're reading today and in the future remember to not only use your brain, but your heart.

#17b:

Connection

We all choose to follow different paths in our lives. Because I chose to move to Lebanon, I find my life so different than if I were to have chosen to stay in the U.S. Imagine, I would not even be a teacher today if I had not moved here.

Let's think back to our read aloud and think of how Skyla's choice to leave her children with the grandmother greatly affected their lives. Their lives would have been very different if they were raised by Skyla.

I know that you, as readers, are noticing paths that our characters take and realizing how much they learn based on the path they have chosen.

Today I want to teach you that when characters make choices in our books, it takes them on journeys and leads them to learn specific lessons based on the choices they made in their lives.

I'm going to read aloud from Naomi Leon.

As Naomi approaches the judge and starts to speak, I'm already thinking that what she says is going to affect everyone's lives so greatly.

As I read on, I see that the path that the family's life will take is being affected by her words.

Active Engagement

I'm going to read on a bit, then I want you to describe what you think Owen and Naomi's lives would be like if Naomi did not speak up to the judge about her mother. What journey would be ahead of them?

Children Talk: Readers, I am hearing things like Naomi's life would have been difficult, she would have been used as a babysitter and Owen would have lost his big sister if she had not spoken up. Naomi created a path in her life that she could be happy with.

Link

So readers, I know today you will be reading and looking for those choices that characters make that lead them on to learn life's lessons and journeys based on the choices they make in their lives.

This unit was adapted from the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project.

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October/November Fiction Book Clubs

(Historical Fiction, Fantasy, and Science Fiction)

Reading Fiction Overview

With *fiction* work, your read-aloud prompts and teaching points will tend to focus on activating background knowledge, the characters' traits, the challenges the main character faces, how he/she resolves these problems, how the character changes, lessons the text teaches and the main idea of a text.

Read-Alouds

During your read-alouds, you will want to provide your students to opportunity to activate background knowledge, and determine: the characters' traits, the challenges the main character faces, how he/she resolves these problems, how the character changes, lessons the text teaches and the main idea of a text. You'll also want to show them how to assess the text before reading; make plans for their reading, how to move across the pages (including any pictures) and how to learn new words from context clues.

You can demonstrate on a chart how to synthesize and retell the text as main ideas and supporting information in a boxes and bullets format. They can stop and jot after each section, determining the main idea of that section. They can also stop and jot inferences as they listen: "I notice..." and "This makes me think..."

Partner work

Make sure your students have a chance to meet in partnerships every to day to talk about what they've learned about their characters and the storyline in their reading that day (Today I learned...). Having the opportunity to synthesize their learning and verbalize their theories about the character with supporting information will help create accountability and further their comprehension. When partners meet, they can use their post-its to help organize their discussion. They should often refer back to the text to support the ideas they are presenting.

- When partners discuss our answers about stories, we use evidence from the text to support our answer choice. We can show our partner the section of the text where we found and underlined the answer.

Activating Schema, Building Background Knowledge

- Before reading a fiction story, readers get our minds ready for reading. They ask, "What do I need to be looking for as I read this story? What do I know about how fictional stories tend to go?" Then, with these thoughts in mind, we will begin reading.
- Readers preview the text to get our minds ready to read. We look at the title and pictures of the text, skimming across the pages and asking, "What type of text is this? How is this text set up? What is this text about?" Then, with these thoughts in mind, we will begin reading.

Character Traits

- Readers grow ideas about the characters in our stories. We pay special attention to the way a character talks. We re-read the character's words out loud, paying special attention to the words the character chooses, their tone of voice, and the expression the character would have used in the story. Then we can ask, "What does this tell me about my character?", writing our thoughts on a post-it note.
- Readers can understand our characters better. We compare them to someone similar that we know (friends, family, teachers, etc...). We can think hard, asking, "Who does this remind me of?" Then, we can use that knowledge to predict what our character might do in the story, thinking, what would the person I know do next? Would my character do the same thing?
- Readers can infer the character traits of a character. We pay special attention to the way a character talks, paying special attention to the words the character chooses, their tone of voice, and the expression the character would have used in the story. Then we can ask, "Based on what I just read, what kind of person is this character?", or "What kind of person would do that?" We try not to describe our character in one word, like "She's nice", or "She's quiet." Instead, we try to push ourselves to have more specific and detailed ideas about our character, asking, "What else can I say about my character?", and "What do I really mean by that?" and using more words to express our ideas.
- Readers can understand our characters better. We notice and infer details about our characters' internal and external character traits. We pay close attention to the clothing, mannerisms, and gestures of our character and asking, "What does this tell me about my character?", and "What does this make me think my character worries about and hopes or wishes for?"
- Readers support our ideas with evidence from the text. We say, "When my character did ..., it made me think ... ", or "I think ... because ... ".

- Readers learn more about our characters. We pay close attention to their actions towards others. When we discover our characters interacting with other characters, we can ask, "Why did they treat each other that way?", and "Why did they just do that?"
- Readers read tentatively, knowing that our initial thoughts about our characters might be wrong or have changed. We periodically stop and ask, "Does what I'm reading confirm or change my thoughts about my character?" "How does this new information change what I think?"

Character's Problems

- Readers of fiction read closely, looking for the problems the characters face. We read a little bit, stopping and asking, "What problems are these characters facing?" Then we can ask, "In what way could this problem affect my character?" We can keep track of our thinking by writing the problems our characters face in the margin of the story.
- Fiction readers read closely, looking for how our characters solve their problems. We look back at our notes on what problems the characters faced and asking, "How did my characters solve these problems?", or, "What did he/she do to solve their problems?" We can then underline the section of the story that shows where the characters resolved their problems.
- Fiction readers read closely, looking for how our characters change throughout the story. We stop occasionally to ask, "How is my character acting differently from before?" "What is different about my character's actions, thoughts and emotions at this point in the story?" We can then say, "At first my character was ..., but now my character"
- Readers can infer the wishes and desires of our characters. We look at what they work hard at and spend their time on. We can use those observations to infer by saying, "This makes me think...", and "This shows that what my character really wants is"

Lessons and Main Ideas in Fiction

- Good fiction readers read alertly, looking for the lesson the text teaches. We stop throughout and at the end of the story to ask ourselves, "What was the author's purpose for writing this text? What lesson did the author want to teach me? What did the author want me to feel?"
- Good fiction readers read alertly, looking for the big or main idea of the text. We stop throughout and at the end of the story to ask ourselves, "What was the main idea of this text? What was it mostly about? What was the author's purpose for writing this text?"

- Readers can find the main ideas in a story. We notice when things happen over and over again. Then we can ask, "Why does this keep happening?", "Why does my character keep doing this sort of thing?", and "Why is this so important to the story?"
- Readers can infer the lesson from a story. We look at what a character has achieved in the story. We can ask, "What has my character achieved?", "What did my character learn from this achievement?", and, "What does this teach me?"

Sequence of events

- Readers can follow the sequence events in a story. We make a timeline of the important events. We can pause after we've read the story to retell the important events that happened, using time order words such as first, next, then and finally.

Vocabulary

- Readers can figure out the general meaning of an unfamiliar word. We envision what's happening in that part of the story and using our mental pictures to help find a synonym for the unfamiliar word. They read a passage, stopping and thinking, "What am I picturing is happening now in the story? Based on what I'm envisioning, what do I think that word might mean?"

Historical Fiction

Overview of Historical Fiction Unit

In this unit, students will work on activating, building, and using their background knowledge to help them relate to the time period of their story. Students will be fine-tuning their envisionment skills by learning to read closely to find details that will enhance their visualization. They will also learn to revise what they envision as more details are given. Students will use envisionment, inference, and empathy to grow ideas about the world and way of life for their characters and the challenges and conflict resulting from their worlds and lifestyles.

The teaching points in this unit will tend to fall into the following categories:

Background Knowledge

Envisionment

Growing Ideas about Characters

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Inference Synthesis

*Sixth grade did not initially have historical fiction as a unit of study. As a result, they did not have book sets for it. The following unit uses historical fiction focusing on or around the American Revolution. The same principles and ideas can be used with any historical fiction time period. The 5th grade book order placed contains 12 sets of 4 books for historical fiction book clubs. This should allow each student to read at least 2 books in their book club, while they keep another book going for independent reading. The list of the historical fiction book club titles is at the end of this document. The remaining books for 5th grade historical fiction are individual copies. These individual copies are included for the following reasons:

- Use as a read-aloud. It is best not to let students, at this time of the year, read anything much beyond an "T" on their own. While many children can decode and do have comprehension skills at higher levels, it is best to allow these kids to read a book in which they will not stumble in any way so as to work on deeper comprehension strategies
- Match them up with copies you already have in your classroom library and/or with your teaching partner so as to have additional sets of partner books and/or book clubs.
- Find out which books work best for you in teaching historical fiction and include additional copies in future book orders.
- These can also be a student's independent book to have when not in a book club.

*You will need to make sure the students understand how book clubs work. They will need to set a goal with a post-it so no one reads ahead. This is when they will have their independent book with them so if they finish early, they will not be just sitting there.

Alignment with Standards for 5th Grade:

- 5.1.1 Read aloud grade-level-appropriate narrative text (stories) and expository text (information) fluently and accurately and with appropriate timing, changes in voice, and expression.
- 5.1.2 Use word origins to determine the meaning of unknown words.
- 5.1.4 Know less common roots (*graph = writing, logos = the study of*) and word parts (*auto = self, bio = life*) from Greek and Latin and use this knowledge to analyze the meaning of complex words (*autograph, autobiography, biography, biology*).

- 5.3.2 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.
- 5.3.3 Contrast the actions, motives, and appearances of characters in a work of fiction and discuss the importance of the contrasts to the plot or theme.
- 5.3.4 Understand that theme refers to the central idea or meaning of a selection and recognize themes, whether they are implied or stated directly.
- 5.3.5 Describe the function and effect of common literary devices, such as imagery, metaphor, and symbolism.
- Symbolism: the use of an object to represent something else; for example, a dove might symbolize peace.
 - Imagery: the use of language to create vivid pictures in the reader's mind.
 - Metaphor: an implied comparison in which a word or phrase is used in place of another, such as *He was drowning in money*.
- 5.3.8 Identify the speaker or narrator in a selection and tell whether the speaker or narrator is a character involved in the story.
- 5.3.7 Evaluate the author's use of various techniques to influence readers' perspectives.

Alignment to Standards for 6th Grade:

- 6.1.1 Read aloud grade-level-appropriate poems and literary and informational texts fluently and accurately and with appropriate timing, changes in voice, and expression.
- 6.1.3 Recognize the origins and meanings of frequently used foreign words in English and use these words accurately in speaking and writing.
- 6.1.4 Understand unknown words in informational texts by using word, sentence, and paragraph clues to determine meaning.
- 6.3.1 Identify different types (genres) of fiction and describe the major characteristics of each form.
- 6.3.2 Analyze the effect of the qualities of the character on the plot and the resolution of the conflict.
- 6.3.3 Analyze the influence of the setting on the problem and its resolution.
- 6.3.6 Identify and analyze features of themes conveyed through character, actions, and images.

- 6.3.7 Explain the effects of common literary devices, such as symbolism, imagery, or metaphor, in a variety of fictional and non-fictional texts.
- 6.3.8 Critique the believability of characters and the degree to which a plot is believable or realistic.
- 6.3.9 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.

Read Aloud:

A day or two before the study begins, the teacher starts a new whole class read aloud text that has a clear historical time period and historical struggle for students to discuss. Since the majority of the book club sets are set during the Revolutionary War, it would be helpful to start with read-aloud picture books set during the Revolutionary War to help build your student's background knowledge. We recommend starting with a picture book like *Sam the Minuteman* by Nathaniel Benchley, or *Let's Ride, Paul Revere* and then moving to shorter chapter books. You might argue that these books are better suited to younger readers and it is certainly fine to select more complex ones; we only suggest the early chapter books but their brevity means that in short order, kids will be talking between texts.

Having picture books will also greatly support your students when they begin to envision the world of their own story. At the beginning of the study, the teacher will probably want to help her students think about issues of the time period that lie inside texts. As the study progresses, the teacher could help her students see how they can connect what they are learning about the historical time period in the books to what really happens in the world and how the world is different today. It is important that the teacher reads aloud 3-5 texts across this unit.

If there are not enough multiple copies of books for kids to read them at the same time, kids can swap books that set in the same time period and talk even though only some members of the club will have read any one text.

The unit spotlights talking about and between texts and so the teacher will want to facilitate her students in turn-and-talk partnership conversations in response to the read aloud, as well as whole class conversations about those books.

This unit is a good time to emphasize the importance of accountable talk during interactive read-aloud and whole class conversations. You may want to emphasize conversational prompts such as these...

Accountable Talk Prompts for Historical Fiction

- "I think this isn't fair because..."
- "I can't believe that.....was so different"
- "I know during this time...so I know..."
- "So far in the story I am noticing...this shows me that this time in history..."
- "It sounds like there are some really important events here and the author wants me to learn..."
- "If I was...I would feel..."
- "I think this situation could have been prevented by..."
- "I'm thinking that if I were...I would try to change..."
- "Why do you think that?"
- "I want to add on to what..."
- "Another example of the same thing is..."
- "I see what you're saying..."
- "What you are saying is making me change my first ideas because now I am realizing..."
- "But couldn't you read this differently and say..."
- "I agree..."
- "I disagree..."
- "I can't believe that..."

Week 1: GETTING READY TO READ and BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Readers use background knowledge to build the world of their historical fiction story.

- Readers get our minds ready to read a historical fiction story. We read the blurb on the back of the book, the author's note, any historical notes, and look at the pictures on the cover to familiarize ourselves with this new time period. Then, we ask, "From what I've read and what I've seen, what could the time period and historical struggle be for this story? Who are the characters? What else can I learn from the blurb and pictures? Readers can hold onto this information on a post-it or in their NB.

- Readers continue to get ready our minds ready to read a historical fiction story. We activate our background knowledge involving this time period. We ask ourselves these questions:

"What do I already know about this time period?"

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"What do I already know about this event in history?"

"What do I know about people that lived during this time?"

"What struggles and challenges did they face?"

Then, readers can keep that information in mind as we read. We can also record these ideas on post-it notes or in our notebooks.

- Historical fiction readers notice that most H.F. opens with either the historical conflict or the personal conflict. As we read, we ask, "Which type of tension/conflict does my story open with?" We can look for, write about, and talk about the type of conflict in the opening scenes of our story. Then, we can write new post-its when new information is given about the personal or historical conflict.

- Readers of historical fiction can build our background knowledge about a time period to help us build the world of the story. We read nonfiction texts relating to this time period, looking at the pictures to help envision what the setting/characters of this story might look like. We look at maps to get an idea of where this story took place. We can hold our fiction and non-fiction books next to each other, using the non-fiction book as a warm-up for reading, during breaks, or as a reference when we have questions or confusions (*not* to read the NF text the whole reading time).

- Historical fiction readers notice that most historical fiction stories have two stories taking place. The first story focuses on how the character grows and changes. The second story focuses on how the time period is changing. Readers can record their observations in their notebooks. A graphic organizer like a T chart could be helpful for comparison.

- Readers can take a deeper look at these two stories. We can ask, "How do the historical changes or conflicts impact my main character personally? What relationships do other characters have with this conflict?" Readers can organize their ideas in their notebooks using a chart or other similar graphic organizer.

Week 2: ENVIRONMENT

Readers of historical fiction envision the story to better understand historical fiction texts.

Envisioning Characters

- Readers can picture our characters in our mind. We read closely to find clues about our characters. We pay close attention to the descriptions of the clothes the characters wear, their actions, and their actual words and how they say them. Then we can think, "Based on what I've read, what am I seeing?" Readers can record their thoughts on post-it notes or in our notebooks.

- Readers of historical fiction use background knowledge to make a mental picture of the character. We think of all we know about people who lived during this time period. We can activate our background knowledge by asking, "What have I seen or heard about before (on TV, movies, other books, stories from relatives, etc...) that can help me picture this character?" We record our thoughts on post it notes or in our notebooks.
- Readers can make a mental picture of the characters in our story by carefully reading the details the author gives about the character, stopping and making a picture in our minds by asking, "What would this character look like?" Readers can write a description of their character so far in their notebooks.
- Readers of historical fiction can support our visualization of our main characters with all of our information we have collected so far. We can sketch them in our notebooks. We can do this by looking back through our story at the descriptions the author has given about our characters including their clothing and specific features. We make sure to include all of the information from the author that we have collected on post it notes and notebook entries. We also use everything we know about how people might have looked during this time period. Readers can use all of this information to create a detailed sketch of their character in their notebooks.

Envisioning setting

Readers envision the setting in their story.

- Readers of historical fiction envision the setting in our stories. We use background knowledge to make a mental picture of the setting. We think of all we know about how the world looked during this time period. We can also think of what we have seen or heard about on TV, movies, and other books that can help us picture the setting. Readers can collect their ideas on post it notes or in our notebooks.
- Readers can fill in the unfamiliar parts of our mental image. We ask, "What am I missing from this mental image?" "What parts of the setting do I not see clearly?" Then, readers can think about what we've seen or read about before to help clarify our mental image. Readers can also ask our book club members, "What do you see that I do not?"
- Readers can make a mental picture of the setting in our story. As we read, we carefully look for the details the author gives us about the setting, stopping and making a picture in our minds by asking, "What would this setting look like?" Then we sketch this in our notebooks or record the information on post it notes or in our notebooks.

- Readers of historical fiction can revise our mental picture when we learn new information. We think, "How does this new information change my mental picture?" We can say, "At first I saw...but now I see that..." Readers add this new information to their sketch or to our written thoughts.
- Readers know that our pictures may differ from those of our club members, but we can use those similarities and differences to open up our ideas and talk about the images they've made in our minds. Readers ask each other, "How does your mental picture differ from my mental picture? What do you see that I do not? Does that change my mental picture?"
- Readers of historical fiction can build the world of our historical fiction story. We can compare the setting in the book to different places we have lived in, visited, or read about. We can ask, "How are the buildings different? How do the people look different? How is transportation different?" Then readers can think about how our mental image has changed.
- Readers notice when we have lost the picture in our mind. We can periodically stop and ask, "Is there something I read that I kind of understood, but not enough that I could picture it? Can I see it clearly enough that I can draw a picture of it? Am I a little confused about anything that I've just read?" Then, readers go back, re-read the confusing section and ask, "Can I envision this scene clearly now?" If readers still can't see the mental picture, we can talk to the members of our group to share our thinking and gain new insights from group members.
- Readers can figure out what unfamiliar words in historical fiction stories mean. We can envision what's going on in that part of the story and use that to help find a synonym for the unfamiliar word. We read the passage, stop and think, "What am I picturing is happening now? Based on what I'm envisioning, what do I think that word might mean?" Readers can record our conclusions on a post it note and check with our book clubs when we meet.

WEEK 3: GROWING IDEAS ABOUT CHARACTERS

Readers gain a deeper understanding of the central issues in the story. We look closely at and empathize with the characters and their relationships and challenges.

- Readers identify with the characters in our books. We pay close attention to how they act, what the characters say, and the dialogue tags to determine the characters' emotions. Then, we can think, "Based on what I've read, how do I think this character is feeling?" and keep track of the character's emotions by noting them on a post-it.

- Readers can empathize with the characters' feelings. We read the post-it with a character's feelings and then read on with that feeling in mind so that we can feel what the character is feeling alongside the character.
- Readers can connect to a character. We think of a time when we acted or felt the same way or when we were in a similar situation. Then, we can think, "How did *I* feel when that happened? Why did *I* act or feel the way I did? Knowing how I acted or felt, what is my character probably feeling at this time?" Then, we can write these thoughts on a post-it or in our notebook.
- Readers hold on to important characters and relationships. We keep track of characters that are mentioned frequently and their relationships to others. We can do this by asking, "Who is this character? How do they fit into the story? What is the relationship between these characters?" Then, readers can keep track of the characters and their relationships by noting them on post-its or in our notebooks.
- Readers can get to know our characters better. We pretend we are the character in the story- putting ourselves in his/her shoes. We can close our eyes, pretend we are the character and look around and ask, "What do I see?" Make up every little detail using what you already know and what you can guess. Tell your partner (or jot in your notebook) what you are seeing (I see...). Then we can also think, "What is my character thinking right now?"
- Readers make judgments or theories about characters. We think of how we judge people in real life. We notice how the characters act and respond in different situations and then decide what those actions make us realize about that character.
- Readers of historical fiction infer how the historical time period affects the characters. We ask, "What challenges does my character face because they live in this time period? What challenges do they face because of who they are (race, gender, etc...)?"
- Readers can infer ideas about our characters. We look at how the characters respond to problems. We can ask:
 - What does my characters' response to this event say about him/her?
 - What else could my character have done instead?
 - Why did he respond the way he did?
 - When my character did _____ it made me think _____.
 - What consequences would my character have faced for these (different?) actions?
 - How might my character solve this problem?

We can also respond by saying, "I can't believe...I'm angry that...I wish he'd..."

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- Readers can get to know the characters in our stories better by trying to understand the actions of the characters even if we don't agree with them. We can ask, "Knowing what I know about this time period and the problems my characters face, why are they acting this way? Why would they have done/said that? Based on what I know about people during this time period, what would I have done differently?" Then, we can write our thoughts on post-its or in our notebooks.

- Readers can organize our thinking about what causes characters to act the way they do. We make a web with the characters name in the middle and all of the different influences on his behavior around the sides. We can ask, "What factors influence how my character acts? Is my character influenced social, family, power, age, gender, or race issues?" Then we can record these.

Week 4: INFERRING and SYNTHESISING

Readers think about issues of power among groups and between characters and make inferences to build ideas about the time period and the characters and their actions

- Readers can grow ideas about the issues during the time period of our story. We think about the power struggles during this time period. We can ask ourselves, "Who has power in this story? How do they keep their power? How are people or communities resisting this power?" Then, readers can also examine which people have power to change the situation and ask, "What could the characters have done to change this?"

- Readers can make inferences about the inner plot of a story. We pause after major events and asking, "What do I think is *really* going on right now? What was the author's purpose for including this event? What do I notice characters doing that even *they* don't realize they're doing?"

- Readers can then push our thinking further and asking, "How do I think what just happened will affect my character?"

- When historical fiction readers read a clue about the time period, we can infer information about the time period. We ask,

"What does this detail tell me about this time period?"

"What does this detail tell me about life for people who lived during this time?"

"This makes me think that people living then...."

OR... We can push our thinking about the clues we find. We can ask/write in NB/discuss the information below with group members:

What happened in the story	What this tells me about the historical time period	What my mental picture of this looks like
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Readers learn to make inferences in our reading by thinking about what the text tells us but does not say in words. We find a section about our character or a historical event and saying, "It says _____. This makes me think _____."

- Readers (synthesize) grow ideas about the historical time period of their book. We read closely, looking for new details about life during this time period and how people interact with their environment. We accumulate these details on post-its or lists in their NB.

- Readers keep track of the historical sequence of the story. We write new events/actions on a timeline. We make two timelines: one that contains the significant events in our main characters' life (from the personal story) and another that contains the significant historical events.

- Readers can grow ideas about the historical conflicts during the time period of our story. We think about how these conflicts affected people living during this time. We can ask, "What issues were people dealing with at this time?"

"How were people involved in this historical conflict?"

"How was my character involved in this conflict?" (a bystander, active hero, unwilling hero)

- Readers look back at their initial thoughts about the story and think about whether or not they have changed. Also, we think about what caused those changes. We periodically stop and ask;

"Does what I'm reading confirm or change my thoughts about my character or this historical time period?"

"How does this new information change what I think?"

"Why have my thoughts changed?"

"What happened in the story that changed my thinking?"

"What happened to the character that changed my thinking?"

- After reading, readers think about the factors that caused the events of the story and ask, "How could this situation have been prevented?"

- After reading, we can think about the conflicts of the time period and how those events and conflicts have shaped our world today. We can ask, "How is the world different today as a result of those conflicts?", and "What has our society learned from this time period?"

- Readers can use their reading to affect social change. We think of what they have learned about social issues and injustices from this historical fiction story. We can think, "Is anything like this happening in the world today? What could I do to change it?"

This unit was adapted from the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project.

Fantasy or Science Fiction Unit

Overview of Book Clubs

In a book club, members usually read duplicate copies of the same books, progressing through the texts in sync with each other. This means that members of any club need to be fairly well matched by reading level. The groups profit if members are diverse by gender, ethnicity, and ability to engage in book talks. Usually teachers combine several partnerships to form a club, with four and occasionally six members. Sometimes, however, for one reason or another, a group of children has a hard time working together or staying in sync as readers, and it's not unheard of for a club of four readers to become two clubs of two readers. And some clubs are twosomes from the start.

Book clubs provide us with another opportunity to push our readers to read more. Book clubs rely on members having read to the same point in their texts. This means that members of a club need to make and keep deadlines, saying, "By Wednesday, let's read up to Chapter Six." Are children who read levels M and N reading at least three or four books a week? If children are reading level T texts, are they finishing at least one of these in a week? If not, then be aware that your reading curriculum may be getting in the way of your kids' reading development. Be sure children carry books between home and school, devoting time most evenings to reading. It's not uncommon for book clubs to jettison reading, so this is a time when reading logs are especially important.

Book clubs rely upon children being able to develop an idea while reading the book at home, jotting the idea down, and then bringing it to school the next day, to the conversation. If your children have not yet become accustomed to writing as a way to capture their own ideas, if they're not holding on to their ideas in this fashion, you'll want to help children use writing as a way to think about reading. You may institute a ritual of giving readers a bit of time after they've read and before they talk to look over the text and review their notes in order to "get ready for their talk."

How Read-Aloud Can Support Talk During Book Clubs (and Partnerships)

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We hope that all year long, you've read aloud and you've involved children in interactive book talks afterwards. If you haven't done a lot of work with whole-class conversations around the read-aloud book, highlight these now. The read-aloud work you do in this unit will probably revolve around 2-3 read-aloud texts of varied lengths in the genre the class is studying. Usually we first read aloud a picture book or a very short chapter book, then progress to longer texts.

If you're moving your students into clubs right away in this unit, you may ask children to sit with their book club members during read-aloud time. When they turn and talk in response to the read-aloud, they can now do so with their club members, getting yet another opportunity during the day to talk with each other. This also gives you another chance to coach them as they talk within their club. We often feel constricted in our book club conferences when we aren't familiar with the texts students are reading—the fact that we know the read-aloud book under discussion helps us feel more effective in our coaching. Encourage children to extend each other's ideas with conversational prompts such as, "I agree with...", "Another example is...", or "To add on..." They should value debate and be able to question each other's claims, asking, "Where do you see evidence of that?" and saying, "On the other hand..."

After children talk in their clubs about the excerpt you've just read aloud, you'll convene a whole-class conversation. It's not hard to teach children to stay with and elaborate on each other's ideas after they are in a whole-class conversation. Try transcribing parts of their talk and then using the transcript as a teaching tool. During a mini-lesson, you can ask children to learn from a particular strength in the transcript, and a particular need as well. Of course, as children become more skilled at talking about the read-aloud, you'll want to be sure they're talking in similar ways in their book club conversations.

It's really important that in the book clubs in your class, children are accumulating information within and across their shared texts. Encourage club members to ask, "How does my knowledge of this character build from one page to the next, one chapter to the next? What other texts have I read in my life that can help me understand these texts? You may also encourage children to use clubs as a time to explore vocabulary that they do not understand. Researcher Harvey Daniels suggests keeping a club word-list, with children collaborating to develop definitions for the words they collect, and then trying to thread those same words through their book talks. Certainly, you'll encourage the class to draw on the word chart described earlier, containing specific words for character traits.

Launching Clubs

Once you launch clubs, you'll need to decide how to divide up the reading workshop time. One system that works well is for clubs to meet for the second half (or third) of the reading workshop and to meet on two or three days a week, with the mini-lesson supporting the

reading work and the mid-workshop teaching point supporting the talk work children do in their book clubs. You'll also need to decide how much time to give to talk versus reading. If children are reading forty-five minutes each night, you can devote as much as 30% of the reading workshop to talk. If they aren't reading that much at home, you'll need to reserve more class time for reading. Then, too, you'll need to decide whether all the clubs will meet at the same time, with other times set aside for quiet reading, or will you stagger the clubs? If all children are talking at the same time and all are reading at the same time, this lessens your chances to support their talking, but helps with noise. For more suggestions and details about establishing book clubs in your reading workshops, see Chapter 20 in Calkins' *The Art of Teaching Reading*.

The Genre Study

Your first decision will be the genre you and the children will explore. Your class could read mystery, realistic fiction, historical fiction, or fantasy. We do not recommend poetry or short texts as children need to be reading great volumes of text. Your next decision is content. What is it you aim to teach? That is, if you invite your whole class to spend the month engaged in a shared study of a genre, keep in mind that although *the children* will think the focus on the unit is on a kind of text—say, mysteries—*you* will know that your real goal is to promote the reading skills, strategies and habits that will help children whenever they read anything. That is, a unit on mysteries gives you a wonderful chance to teach readers to read closely, collecting and synthesizing clues...and this is how a reader reads any book, not just a mystery. A unit on historical fiction gives you a chance to teach readers to synthesize elements of story, thinking not just about the setting but about how the setting effects the characters and the plot....and this work is universally important for all readers of stories. Before your genre-based work begins, then, you need to decide on the reading skills you plan to highlight within the unit of study.

Fantasy or Science Fiction: Envisionment, Monitoring for Sense, Identification with Characters, Synthesis

In choosing to study fantasy or science fiction with your class, you are giving children an invitation to journey to other lands and other times. You are inviting children to travel to worlds that authors have created and to create their own fantastical worlds in the writing workshop. Whether it's stretching their powers of imagination by envisioning strange creatures in strange landscapes, or deepening their understanding of characterization by studying heroes and their nemeses, every challenge that fantasy or science fiction poses will push your readers and writers to find new ways of seeing, new ways of interpreting, and new ways of expressing themselves.

Establishing Goals and Plan the Content of Your Teaching

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As you approach this unit, you might be tempted to pull out a textbook on children's literature, one which is loaded with definitions and lists. Children's literature books---and the people who have read them---are full of talk about the different kinds of fantasy or science fiction stories, the different kinds of heroes, the different elements in all of these stories and so forth and so on. Be careful! You are not teaching a children's literature course! You are teaching *reading*. Your goal is not for children to know all about components and kinds of fantasy or science fiction stories. Instead, your goal is for these genres to help your children become hooked on reading. Your goal is the Harry Potter Phenomenon all over again. You are hoping that your whole class can become enthralled by books, reading them in great gulps, reading them all day long and by flashlight after they are supposed to be in bed.

Teachers, become accustomed to looking at your own classroom during reading time, asking, 'Is this what real readers---people in my life who love reading and are good at it---do when they read? If not, is this bringing my kids a whole lot closer, anyhow, to doing what real readers do?'

If your answer is no, then you need to revise your teaching. It is a very big problem if our teaching of genre gets in the way of kids actually reading! It is a very big problem if our teaching of fantasy or science fiction prevents books from working their magic.

So, begin by thinking of your goals. You no doubt want children to understand that lots of readers of fantasy or science fiction books carry those books with them always, reading them in stolen moments all day long, reading vastly more in a day than they have ever read. Lots of times, fantasy or science fiction readers are series readers. We often read the books in sequence (largely because we are always waiting for the next to be released, and when it is we rush to get hold of it.).

Then you need to decide which reading skills you want to develop in this unit, and to be sure that you assess those skills several times in the unit so that your teaching is deliberately designed to support skill development. Of course, you can teach envisionment within this unit. If you wish to assess your kids abilities to envision prior to the unit, you may want to acquire the Higher Level Comprehension Assessments the Project has developed (check the website). That is, dozens of teachers have helped the TCRWP take three stories (at Levels K, R, and V) and insert questions into them which lead readers to do bits of writing-to-reveal-their-envisioning. Teachers College has created a continuum of proficiency, and extrapolated specific skills which need to be developed in order for a reader to envision well. Above all, children need to go from literal to inferential envisioning. They need to not only see whatever the words of the story explicitly *say*, but to also see what those words *suggest*. This involves bringing their own experiences to bear, filling in the gaps of the text.

If you are clear that most of your children are reading in a literal fashion, then you may decide that in this unit, you will be helping them develop more inferential envisionment. To do

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this, you will need to teach them to draw on prior knowledge (which could be extra challenging when reading fantasy or science fiction books because they have NOT typically been in places like these.). You need to teach them to read between the lines, letting bits of precise information convey more than meets the eye. If the text says, "The sun was peeking over the horizon as I..." then the proficient reader not only sees the sun, this reader also knows it is morning and hears the morning sounds. Children may be hesitant to fill in the gaps as they read fantasy stories because these worlds and characters are products of the author's imagination, but you can help them to realize their will be internal consistencies within the text. If the boys all have flatheads and a new character—a male—appears on the scene, the skilled reader gives that male character the requisite flathead.

This work will carry over into their writing as well. If your children start out by writing in their notebooks about their imagined lands, they may work in partners or in their book clubs during writing workshop time to read each other's work, using envisioning skills in reading to support descriptive writing and work with "show and tell." If there is not enough detail in a writer's draft for a reader to envision a full picture, the writer may revise to fill in the missing pieces. If a notebook entry building the world of the story reads, "The dragon lived at the end of a long road in a dark cave," partners may add to this by saying, "I'm picturing a twisty, thin road with weeds growing alongside it."

Of course, you may decide to focus on reading skills other than envisionment. For example, you can use this unit as an opportunity to revisit the content you taught in your unit on character, only this time doing so in a fashion which helps readers integrate and synthesize all the elements of the story in order to understand the reasons *why* characters act as they do. That is, you could spotlight the fact that as good readers, we know our characters and the worlds they live in so well that we understand why characters act as they do, even if we do not always agree with their decisions. Such a unit could support the skills of inference, synthesis and prediction (if we understand why our characters act as they do, inferring causes and effects, then we can use this to help us make truly informed predictions.) The unit would be challenging because readers of fantasy or science fiction can't simply rely on our own personal responses and on empathy in order to understand why characters act as they do—the characters in a fantasy or science fiction story live by the rules and values of another world. To understand the character's decisions, a reader needs to ask, "What rules do these characters live by? How are the 'rules' of this culture different than (and similar) to those of my culture?" Readers might want to ask, "Who has power in this world?" We can teach them to pay attention to any legends or folklore that might be mentioned early in the book as a way to know more about the belief systems of the characters. This work can flourish especially if children are reading across a series.

You could, of course, forward entirely different skills. You could use this as a time to teach readers to respond personally to the stories they read, and to use personal responses as the

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starting point towards reading with empathy and towards prediction. If you made this choice, you would help readers understand that although the worlds in their stories are different than our worlds, there are lots of ways in which characters are similar to us. Even though the world of the story is fantastic, children can still discuss how they identify with the characters' traits, problems, and motivations. You can teach them to notice that even heroes have more than one side to them, and that even heroes have internal conflicts. While the situations and settings of fantasy are not within the students' lived experience, the inner lives of the characters should resonate.

Launching the Unit

Why not start your unit by talking about the world-wide phenomenon of Harry Potter or Star Wars? Tell children that Harry Potter books are not all that unique after all, for they instead represent a phenomenon of our times.

Presumably, early on in the unit you'll forward the goals you have selected. You may also want to help readers bring their knowledge of these genres to bear on their reading. Often, in fantasy books, the hero of the book will embark on a quest, which is introduced early and resolved in part or in whole by the end of the book. You can teach children to pay close attention to the introduction of the quest, to the obstacles that tend to mount as the hero starts out, and to what helps her make it through in spite of all that stood in her way. In read aloud or in coaching into clubs, you will want to show how we can read quest narratives metaphorically: we don't know what it's like to have to fight a dragon, but we do know what it's like to have to face up to a bully even when we want to just walk away. We can start to ask ourselves: what are our dragons? What are our quests? This work will greatly support the students in their initial crafting of story lines for their fantasy writing. Once they see that the internal conflicts of the hero are realistic and familiar, they are less likely to create unlikable, unbelievable characters in their stories.

These genres are often confusing so you'll want to be sure readers monitor for sense. Time travel can be confusing. The use of different perspectives can be confusing. You may want to teach this unit with an emphasis on the importance of reading for sense and of monitoring for confusion. You may want to teach children that they carry with them a tool kit of strategies (such as rereading, talking with other readers, reading on with a question in mind) for responding to confusion.

No matter how you decide to angle this unit, it will help you to know a bit about fantasy or science fiction. Just be careful to use this information sparingly, following the 'Add flour slowly, stirring all the while' advice. If this is your children's first experience in these genres, it is probably enough for most of them to know that in these stories, there are good guys and bad guys. On the other hand, if children have studied fantasy or science fiction before and

you want to make it seem like this will be an All-New and Advanced unit, you may want to sprinkle in an extra dash of terminology.

Reading Aloud to Support this Unit

Depending on the skills you decide to highlight, your reading aloud might be interspersed with turn-and-talk prompts such as these:

- "The setting in this book is so unusual! I'm trying to get a picture in my mind, but it is confusing. Let me see....what do I picture? Umm...Turn and tell each other about what picture you have in your mind."
- "He seems to be our hero, and I'm thinking he might be a good hero. Ummm...Let me think what qualities make me think that...Ummm...Turn and tell each other what you are thinking?"
- "So we've noticed that there's a battle going on between good and evil. I'm trying to think what's going to happen pretty soon. Ummm...Turn and tell your partner what you are thinking."
- "There are a few secondary characters. I know we read to think about the roles they're playing? Why is X in this story anyway?"
- "This part seems really confusing... turn and talk to your partner about what's going on? Turn and talk."

Alignment with Standards for 5th Grade:

- 5.1.1 Read aloud grade-level-appropriate narrative text (stories) and expository text (information) fluently and accurately and with appropriate timing, changes in voice, and expression.
- 5.3.1 Identify and analyze the characteristics of poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction and explain the appropriateness of the literary forms chosen by an author for a specific purpose.
- 5.3.2 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.
- 5.3.3 Contrast the actions, motives, and appearances of characters in a work of fiction and discuss the importance of the contrasts to the plot or theme.
- 5.3.4 Understand that theme refers to the central idea or meaning of a selection and recognize themes, whether they are implied or stated directly.
- 5.3.5 Describe the function and effect of common literary devices, such as imagery, metaphor, and symbolism.
- 5.3.6 Evaluate the meaning of patterns and symbols that are found in myth and tradition by using literature from different eras and cultures.

Alignment with Standards for 6th Grade:

- 6.1.1 Read aloud grade-level-appropriate poems and literary and informational texts fluently and accurately and with appropriate timing, changes in voice, and expression.
- 6.3.1 Identify different types (genres) of fiction and describe the major characteristics of each form.
- 6.3.2 Analyze the effect of the qualities of the character on the plot and the resolution of the conflict.
- 6.3.3 Analyze the influence of the setting on the problem and its resolution.
- 6.3.6 Identify and analyze features of themes conveyed through characters, actions, and images.
- 6.3.7 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.
- 6.3.8 Critique the believability of characters and the degree to which a plot is believable or realistic.
- 6.3.9 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.

Week 1: Envisionment

- Readers envision the setting of their book. We create pictures in our minds of what the author describes. We notice when the writer tells us what the character is seeing, hearing, or touching. We also notice when the writer is describing the weather or what a place looks like. We read a bit, stop and ask, "What details did the writer just give me that will help me see where I am in the story?" Then, we close our eyes, use the details, and see the place. Readers jot down this information on post it notes or in their notebooks.
 - Readers continue to envision the setting of their book. We connect previous personal experiences with details from the book. We think or ask ourselves: "What have I done? Where have I been? What have I seen that my book reminds me of? What fairytale have I read that can help me visualize? We envision our past memory and ask, "What is the same or different from my memory to my book? What should I change in my mental picture and what can I

keep the same?" Readers note these changes and any new information on post it notes or in their notebooks.

- Readers envision characters in their books. We create pictures in our minds of what the author describes. As we read, we imagine our character as we answer the following questions: What does he look like? What does he sound like? How does he act when engaged in a particular activity? How does your character move, talk, interact with others? We jot down these ideas on post it notes or in our notebooks.
- Readers add important information to our mental picture to make it come alive.
 - Readers pause often in our reading to add to our mental picture. We stop in our reading and add new details to their current mental picture. Readers pause and ask, "What new information have I been given that might change what I am seeing? How does this new information change my mental picture? Readers add this new information to their previous post it notes or entries in their notebooks.
 - Readers use their prior knowledge to make the movies in their mind brighter and more meaningful. We use this prior knowledge to develop our pictures' details by asking ourselves; "What have I seen? Where have I been that relates? What can I add to my movie? What is missing? Readers may ask themselves, what video games or television shows have I seen that can assist me in making my envisioning come alive? Readers write down their thoughts on post it notes or in their notebooks.
 - Readers know that our pictures may differ from those of their club members, but we can use those differences and similarities to open up our ideas and talk about the movies they've made in our minds. Readers ask each other, how does your mental picture differ from my mental picture? What did you see that I did not? Does that change my mental picture? How does that change my mental picture? Readers add new ideas and information to their previous post it notes or in their notebooks.
 - Readers revise their mental image as they are presented with new information from the book. Readers tell ourselves; At first I saw _____, but now I see _____. They record this information on a post it note or in their notebook.
- Readers read between the lines to envision their text. We fill in what the writer leaves out. We let bits of precise information convey more than meets the eye and make more out of what the writer is telling us. Readers tell ourselves, "Because I know that _____ looks like _____, I can now also see _____."
- Readers will notice consistencies between our world and the text, and use that information to fill in gaps within the text. For example, if the text says, "The sun was

peeking over the horizon as I..." then the reader not only sees the sun, the reader also knows it is morning and hears the morning sounds.

- Readers notice when things between our world and the book are the same and use that info to fill in the gaps within the text. As we read, we ask, "Does this exist in the real world? If saying so, what all do I know would be true?" Then, we add all of that new information to our mental picture.

Week 2: Monitoring for Meaning

- Readers hold onto important characters and relationships in their stories. We keep track of characters that are mentioned frequently and their relationships to others. Readers ask ourselves, who is this character, how do they fit in to the story? (Readers can do this in their reader's notebooks)
- Readers reconnect to the story before they begin reading each day. We retell the main things that have happened in the story so far.
 - Readers ask ourselves, what do I remember from yesterday? What was happening when I left off? What are the main events that have happened so far?
 - Readers talk with their group to retell the main things that have happened so far. Readers ask each other, what was happening when we left off? What are the main events that have happened so far?
 - Readers get their minds back into the story. We reread part of the last chapter and asking ourselves, what do I remember from yesterday?
- Readers collect information that we have missed during the first read. We go back and reread when we are in the middle of the book, to clarify the new information.
 - Readers ask ourselves, "Did I see miss something that needs more clarification? Could I reread a section or chapter of the book and get a better understanding of what is happening in the book now?"
 - Readers ask ourselves, is this part of the story confusing? Does the story make sense so far?
- Readers notice small things in the story that have great meaning. We step out of our books and looking in at the big picture to grow big ideas. Big ideas need supporting evidence. Readers gather that supporting evidence from rereading our text and asking ourselves, "Does this piece of the story have greater meaning? What might that greater meaning be? What is the author really trying to say here?" Readers record these thoughts and information on post it notes or in our notebooks.

- Readers extend their reading into the world. We ask ourselves, "What is this story about? Why did the author write this story? What was he/she trying to say?" Readers record these ideas on post it notes or in our notebooks.
- Readers look at the big theories in the story for connections to our lives. Readers also look at the lack of connections to our lives. We ask, "What part do/don't I connect to in this book? How do/don't I connect?" Noticing the connections, or lack of connections, will bring deeper meaning of the story into our own lives. Readers ask what have these big ideas taught me about myself and the world? Readers record our thoughts on post it notes or in our notebooks.
 - Readers keep thinking about their books even after they are done reading them. We encourage others to read our book. Readers ask themselves, "How would I describe this book to someone else? Why do I think other should read it? What should I say that would convince someone else to read it?"

Week 3: Identification with Characters

- Readers get to know the characters in their stories. We pay attention to the author's description of a character in order to create a mental image that allows us to grow ideas about the character. Readers pause in our reading to create a visualize image asking ourselves, "What does the character look like? What does the character sound like? How does your character move? How does the character interact with others? What does this character desire? What kind of qualities does this character possess? Is he good? Is he evil? " Readers collect these ideas on post it notes or in our notebooks.
 - Readers look at the importance of the character within the story asking ourselves, "How is this character significant to the story? What kind of impact is this character going to have on the story? Why is X in this story anyway?" Readers record the answers to these questions on post it notes or in our notebooks.
- Readers look at how the physical and emotional environments affect a character. We look at the big picture and how it is impacting our character. Readers pause often in our reading to notice both the physical and emotional settings of a story. Readers ask, "How is it impacting the character? What is the emotional setting of the story? How is this affecting the character? What kind of effect does the physical setting of the story have on the characters?" Readers record what they notice in their notebooks. We can record the information on a T chart for each of the settings. On the left side of the chart, we can write physical/emotional setting. On the right side, we can write about how it affects the character.

- Readers notice changes/growth and turning points in their characters throughout the story. Readers anticipate changes in the main character. Readers can look for clues that point towards a character change whether it is subtle or easily seen. Readers ask ourselves, "How is the character changing? How is this event in the story going to change my character?" Readers can mark places where change is visible with a Post-it.
 - Other characters are also affected by the actions and changes in the main character. Readers look for places in the story that show how the main character has caused the other characters to change. Readers consider the emotions our characters feel during major changes or turning points throughout their journey. We can track these emotions at major turning points by writing in our reader's notebooks.

- Readers pay close attention to the different relationships that characters have in their books. We notice characteristics about relationships between the characters. Readers learn about the main character by observing how other characters treat him or her. Readers ask ourselves, "How is this character treating the main character? How is this character treated compared to the other characters?"

- Readers notice how the relationships their characters have develop or change the book. We put ourselves "in the shoes" of the main character to understand why characters act as they do.
 - Readers pay attention to any legends or folklore that might be mentioned early in the book as a way to know more about the belief systems of the characters. Readers ask ourselves, "What rules do these characters live by? How are the rules of this culture different than and similar to those of my culture? Who has power in this world?"
 - Readers imagine ourselves "in the shoes" of the character and ask ourselves, "Does the relationship surprise me?"
 - When readers are "in the shoes" of their characters, they ask ourselves, "How would I react to this situation? What would I do? How would this relationship make me feel?"
 - Readers stop while they are reading, check their mental pictures of the relationships, and use what they see to understand the story.
 - Readers stop to ask themselves, "Knowing what I already know about the character, what might the main character say right now?"

Week 4: Synthesis

- Readers develop new understandings from reading a book. We put together information from the text and from the reader's own background knowledge in order to create better understanding about their book.
 - Readers pause often in their reading and think about what they have read and about what background knowledge they already have in that area.
 - Readers acquire new information to add to what is previously known and reorganize our existing information. We ask ourselves, "How does this new information change what I previously thought?"
 - Readers encounter new ideas, and weigh them against what we already know and decide whether to change our current understanding about our story. We ask ourselves, "Is this new information enough to make me change my mind about X?"
 - Readers pause in their reading and ask ourselves, "What is the author really trying to say here? Why did the author include this in the story? Does this passage in the story have another deeper meaning?"
 - Readers pause in their reading to notice small things that have big meaning. We ask ourselves, "Does this piece of the story have greater meaning? What might it be, or what is it a symbol for?"

Possible Fantasy Books to Use:

- The Shrinking of Treehorn (Florence Parry Heide)
- The Paper Bag Princess (Robert N. Munsch)
- The Wreck of the Zephyr (Chris Van Allsburg)
- Everyone Knows What Dragons Look Like (Jay Williams)
- The Midnight Unicorn (Neil Reed)
- Clever Ali (Nancy Farmer)
- Merlin and the Dragon (Jane Yolen)
- Dove Isabeau (Jane Yolen)
- The Once Upon a Time Map Book (B.G. Hennessy)
- Tatsinda (Elizabeth Enright)
- A Book of Narnians (C.S. Lewis)
- The Last Days of Gorlock the Dragon (Done Arthur Torgersen)
- Dragon (Jody Bergsma)
- The King's Equal (Katherine Paterson)
- Dr. Merlin's Magic Shop (Scott Corbett)
- Pretty Good Magic (Cathy East Dubowski & Mark Dubowski)
- Water Wishes (Mallory Loehr)
- Earth Magic (Mallory Loehr)
- With Magical Horses to Ride (Winifred Morris)

- Dinotopia - Thunder Falls (Scott Cienein)
- Well Wished (Franny Billingsley)

Possible Science Fiction Books to Use:

- Anna to the Infinite Power (Ames, Mildred)
- Children of the Dust (Lawrence, Louise)
- The Ear, the Eye, and the Arm (Farmer, Nancy)
- Enchantress From the Starts (Engdahl, Sylvia)
- Eva (Dickinson, Peter)
- The Giver (Lowery, Lois)
- Interstellar Pig (Sleator, William)
- Stinker From Space (Service, Pamela)
- The White Mountains (Christopher, John)
- A Wrinkle in Time (L'Engle, Madeleine)

SOURCES:

*Some of this curriculum was taken word-for-word from the Teachers College Curriculum Calendars.

Around the Reading Workshop in 180 Days by Serafini

The Art of Teaching Reading by Lucy Calkins

Conferring with Readers by Goldberg

Teaching for Comprehension and Fluency: Thinking, Talking, and Writing About Reading, K - 8
by Fountas and Pinnell

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Curriculum Calendars and Sample Units of Study

December/January/February

Social Issue Book Clubs & Reading and Responding on a Test/Test Prep. Review

Social Issues

Book Club Helpful Tips

- Book Clubs usually consist of 4 to 6 students. Often these students are two sets of partners combined into a Club.
- Book Club members all read at about the same level and have many of the same interests in books. Club members should be able to choose the text they will read, so it is important that they have similar reading interests.
- Book Club members set goals and do not read past those goals. If they reach the goal before everyone else, they can stop and read in one of their other books.

Talk in Book Clubs

- Beginning Talk:
 - -Does anyone have anything that connects to what we've been talking about?
 - -Lay out confusion
 - -Does anyone have a thought to share?
 - -So, how should we begin?
 - -Someone just throws out an idea
 - -Start with a question
 - -Start with part of the text
 - -Start with a post-it or other writing work done during reading
- More talk:
 - -ask the speaker to say more, to elaborate
 - -say "What?" when someone says something confusing
 - -summarize the conversation so far to clarify the topic at hand
 - -give examples to back up a theory, learning to say "For example" and to ask others for examples

Alignment with 5th grade Standards:

5.3.1 Identify and analyze the characteristics of poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction and explain the appropriateness of the literary forms chosen by an author for a specific purpose.

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5.3.2 Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Literary Text:

Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.

5.3.3 Contrast the actions, motives, and appearances of characters in a work of fiction and discuss the importance of the contrasts to the plot or theme.

5.3.4 Understand that theme refers to the central idea or meaning of a selection and recognize themes, whether they are implied or stated directly.

5.3.5 Describe the function and effect of common literary devices, such as imagery, metaphor, and symbolism.

- Symbolism: the use of an object to represent something else; for Example, a dove might symbolize peace.
- Imagery: the use of language to create vivid pictures in the reader's mind.
- Metaphor: an implied comparison in which a word or phrase is used in place of another, such as *He was drowning in money*.

5.3.8 Identify the speaker or narrator in a selection and tell whether the speaker or narrator is a character involved in the story.

5.3.7 Evaluate the author's use of various techniques to influence readers' perspectives.

Alignment with 6th grade Standards:

6.1.1 Read aloud grade-level-appropriate poems and literary and informational texts fluently and accurately and with appropriate timing, changes in voice, and expression.

6.1.5 Understand and explain slight differences in meaning in related words.

6.3.2 Analyze the effect of the qualities of the character on the plot and the resolution of the conflict.

6.3.3 Analyze the influence of the setting on the problem and its resolution.

6.3.5 Identify the speaker and recognize the difference between first-person (the narrator tells the story from the "I" perspective) and third-person (the narrator tells the story from an outside perspective) narration.

6.3.6 Identify and analyze features of themes conveyed through characters, actions, and images.

6.3.7 Explain the effects of common literary devices, such as symbolism, imagery, or metaphor, in a variety of fictional and nonfictional texts.

- Symbolism: the use of an object to represent something else; for example, a dove might symbolize peace
- Imagery: the use of language to create vivid pictures in the reader's mind
- Metaphor: an implied comparison in which a word or phrase is used in place of another, such as *He was drowning in money*.

6.3.8 Critique the believability of characters and the degree to which a plot is believable or realistic.

6.3.9 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.

Some Issues that Clubs May Study:

- Bullying
- Fitting In/Being New
- Not having friends/Trouble with friends
- Growing Up
- Homelessness
- Poverty
- Divorce
- Family Issues
- Racism/Discrimination
- Peer Pressure
- Animal Rights
- Loss
- Recycling/Environmental Issues
- Building Community
- Illiteracy

Read Aloud:

A day or two before the study begins, the teacher starts a new whole class read aloud text that has a clear and high interest 'Social Issue' inside of it for students to discuss. We recommend starting with a picture book like *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson, *Tight Times* by Barbara Shook Hazen, *Koala Lou* by Mem Fox, etc. Cynthia Rylant's *Every Living Thing* is an EXCELLENT example of short stories that deal with social issues and animals. Because this unit of study is designed to encourage kids to see how one social issue plays out across several texts, it is important that the teacher reads aloud 3-5 texts across this unit. Each teacher should have a book such as *Maniac Magee (W)*, *Souder (T)*, or *Bridge to Terebithia(T)* to use for additional read-alouds. These definitely take more time, but are very well worth it!! The unit spotlights talking about and between texts and so the teacher will want to facilitate her students in turn-and-talk partnership conversations in response to the read aloud, as well as whole class conversations about those books.

The teacher should immerse the students in their own reading of pictures books and short stories. These can be typed and copied so multiple copies are available. (Giving each student a packet is a great idea!) Refer back to the previous character study unit for teaching points while the students are reading. This will involve them in the text and have them using post-it notes to better understand the text.

Teaching point for immersion:

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Readers read with a new lens. Readers should re-read text they have previously read or text that can be quickly read, and ask themselves, "What is this story *really* about?", "What does the author really want us to understand?" "Is this really about a boy who has to take care of his dad's parrot...or is there another reason the author wrote this story?" The teacher would first want to model this with his/her own text. The teacher may want to make copies of specific excerpts from larger pieces of text for the students to read as there may not be enough picture books. The students can then post-it their discoveries and then create a classroom chart.

This unit is a good time to emphasize the importance of accountable talk during interactive read-aloud and whole class conversations. You may want to emphasize conversational prompts such as these...

Accountable Talk Prompts for Social Issues

"I think this isn't fair because..."

"Why do you think that?"

"I want to add on to what..."

"Another example of the same thing is..."

"I see what you're saying..."

"What you are saying is making me change my first ideas because now I am realizing..."

"But couldn't you read this differently and say..."

"I agree..."

"I disagree..."

At the beginning of the study, the teacher will probably want to help her students think about social issues that lie inside texts (for example, in *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson, we can pay attention to the divisions between groups, or in *Junie B. Jones and a Little Monkey Business* we can pay attention to Junie B.'s tendency to bully. We can also help students see how there are often multiple issues inside one text (In *The Other Side* we can explore other issues like peer pressure and people having power over other people). As the study progresses, the teacher could help her students see how they can connect what they are learning about the social issues in the books to what really happens in the world.

Ideally across the unit, each club reads the same 2-4 texts around the same issue. For example, one club studying fitting in may all read *Junie B. Jones First Grader At Last*, *Marvin Redpost Why Pick on Me?*, *My Name is Maria Isabel*, and *Pinky and Rex* across the 4 weeks. (These are more likely for the younger grades, but are good examples for struggling readers.) If there are not enough multiple copies of books for kids to read them at the same time, kids can swap books that address the same issue and talk even though only some members of the club will have read any one text.

Teaching Points:

- Readers predict possible social issues that their character might face. They look at the character(s) on the front cover, paying close attention to the character descriptions the author gives us right from the start. "Based on the information the author has given me about the character's appearance, what social issues might my character face in this book?" "Does the title tell me anything?" "Have I read anything by this author to make me think I might know what the social issue is?" Students will start a prediction page to write down all their thoughts....even as crazy as they might be. 😊
- Readers think deeply about struggles or challenges their character faces. They read or re-read parts where they think something important is happening to the main character and ask themselves, "Is this fair?" They put a post-it in this part to discuss it later with their group. They can find multiple points in the books where they ask themselves this question. They want to challenge their thinking by seeing things that might seem unfair and finding possible solutions in their group discussions.
- Readers think about all they know about the character's external characteristics. "What has the author told me so far about what this character looks like?" "What do I picture the character looks like based on what other characters say?" Readers make a t-chart and write down all the external characteristics on the left-hand side.
- Readers learn more about their character's feelings and internal characteristics. "Does my character talk much?" "Does my character seem shy or loud and crazy?" "Do people say wonderful things about my character?" "Do others think my character is snobby and rude?" Readers decide what the character's internal characteristics are and write these on the right side of the t-chart.
- Readers learn more about their characters by thinking about the group they belong to. They can do this by looking at their external and internal characteristics and then writing what group each would belong to. For example, are they from New York? Then they are a "New Yorker". Do they have a younger sibling? Then they might be part of the "Older sister" group. Do they love to run? Maybe they are an "Athlete". They make a list of their groups in their notebook. They then ask themselves, do the group(s) they belong to contribute to their problem(s)? They can write their ideas in their notebook.

- Readers become more connected to their characters and understand their actions better by focusing on what motivates them...what their characters want or need and how this makes them act. They choose a character and say, "_____ wants/needs _____ and this is making him/her _____."
- Readers become more connected to their characters and understand their actions better by putting themselves into their characters' shoes and thinking about what *they might have done* if they were their characters. They choose a character and an important action their character did and say, "What would I have done in this situation? If I were _____, I would have _____."
- Readers become more connected to their characters and understand their actions better by putting themselves into their characters' shoes and thinking about how *they might have felt* if they were their characters. They choose a character and an important action their character did and saying, "How would I have felt in this situation? If I were _____, I would have felt _____."
- Readers learn more about their character's problems/motivations by seeing how their environment (setting) and/or situation leads to their problems. They can write down their character's setting on one side of a T-chart and then changing it on the other. Then, they ask, "How does the setting/environment contribute to their problems? How might their problems be different if they lived in a different place?" If the characters lived in Hawaii versus inner-city New York, would his/her problems be different?
- Readers realize that there are 2 sides to every issue. They think about their character's perspective...what they are thinking and feeling about the issue. Think about all the things they think and feel. Now think of a character who thinks and feels differently.....what are they thinking and feeling about the issue. You may want to use a t-chart to organize this information.
- Readers think about the social issue in their book and compare it to issues from other books by asking themselves, "Is it the same?" "Is it different?" "Are there patterns?" "This situation reminds me "of.....in another book." Readers can place a post-it note in their book to aid in book club discussion and/or use it to write more in his/her notebook.
- Readers think about the social issue in their book and compare it to issues from their own lives. "Is there a situation in my own life that is similar to the one in=2 Othe

text?" How did you face the issue? Is this the same way the character did? Would you do things differently? Readers can place a post-it note in their book to aid in book club discussion and/or use it to write more in his/her notebook.

- Readers should be on the lookout for character stereotypes....that is, making a statement about an entire group. Readers should put a "red flag", or post-it, when character says something that shows he/she thinks all members of a certain group are the same. Look for words such as "always", "never", "every", etc. Readers can also put up "red flags" (or post its ☺) when the author chooses to stereotype a character in a certain way, such as the teachers in the *Miss Nelson* series.
- Readers should be paying attention to who is telling the story, i.e. the point of view. Is the narrator the main character? A secondary character? Simply someone looking from the outside? How does this telling of the story affect how we see the characters? Would it be different if someone else were telling the story? Readers could write their thoughts in their notebook.

Going Past our Reading.....

**The following is just a suggestion from Teacher's College. Please read over it and make your own personal decisions based on available class time as well as other daily factors ☺*

In the last week or so of the unit, we can teach children that often readers decide to do something about the issue they've been reading about. The last part of this unit could go in many directions, depending on how much time you would like to spend on it, the resources you have available, and the goals you have in doing this project. The project could be short and to the point (posters, fliers, letter writing), or more involved (skits, videos, presentations). It's up to you to decide what you're goals are for this part of the unit. The following are some ideas for teaching the last part of this unit:

Introduce the Project

To introduce the project, you might give students an example of something you've read a lot about and decided to take action (For example, you read a lot about homelessness and you decided to volunteer at a shelter, you read a lot about how important recycling is and so now you make sure to recycle). Tell students that one way readers take action is by teaching others about their issue, by telling the story of their issue to the world. Give students time to formulate a theory about their issue and discuss ideas for how they could tell the story of their issue to the world.

Possible Final Projects:

Art: Posters, Flyers, Brochures, Displays

Media: Commercials, Newsletters, Creating a Class Newspaper, Press Release

Internet: Website (go to Scholastic.com), Pen Pals, Research Presentation

Oral Presentations: Panel Discussion, Role-Playing Interviews, Debates, Speeches

Action: Students volunteer at a local homeless shelter or soup kitchen, students create a school food drive, write letters to politicians or newspapers, create a whole school assembly presentation, volunteer at a hospital, hospice or retirement home.

Develop a rubric for what will be expected in the final project

Using a blank rubric with various criteria, decide as a class what will be acceptable as far as format, presentation/participation, and content of the final project. Emphasize that the goal is to effectively tell the story of their issue to the world (or as many people as they can).

Children work on their final projects (could be more than one session, or take place outside/in addition to Reading Workshop)

Children present their final projects (could be more than one session, or take place outside/in addition to Reading Workshop)

Readers reflect on how their thinking has changed by reading, studying and talking together. Children reflect by discussing what they've learned from their reading with their clubs and assess each other's and their own project using the rubric they developed earlier. Another option would be to mix up the groups and have them discuss what they've learned with another group.

Reading and Responding on a Test

Unit Overview

In this unit you will be preparing your students for the various reading tasks presented on the ISTEP. You will be teaching your students how to read, talk about and answer questions about short texts. You will also be teaching your students strategies for responding to multiple choice and short-response questions, how to support their answers with evidence from the text, strategies for working with unfamiliar words and the literary language they will encounter on the ISTEP. This unit is broken down by genre, with each genre sharing some similar strategies that readers always use when reading and some genre-specific

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strategies. The genres include: realistic fiction, non-fiction, narrative non-fiction and poetry. This unit is meant to be a menu of strategies for you to pick from to teach your students leading up to ISTEP. Included with each genre is a list of the most important strategies they will need to learn so they can read and analyze that type of text before taking ISTEP. Most of these strategies you will have taught in Reading Workshop and are simply review. It will be up to you to choose which are most needed to best prepare your students for testing.

Teacher work to prepare for the unit

Assemble a packet containing 3 years of texts from past ISTEP tests. Gather texts from two earlier grade levels as well as your grade level. Make a packet for each genre that your students are likely to encounter on that years ISTEP. Put the texts in order of difficulty (easiest texts first). Look at the types of reading included on the last 2 years' ISTEP to make sure you have included all of the genres your students are like to encounter.

If you need more short texts, you can take short stories and articles from magazines (*Highlights, Cricket, Cobblestone, Sports Illustrated for Kids, etc...*) and make short test-like questions to go along with it. You will want to do this for stories at several different levels (M-N level, P-Q level, etc...) You might consider ordering the questions the same for each text (main idea, vocabulary in context, mood of story, genre question, etc...) so that you can quickly see which types of questions they are struggling with at different levels.

Testing Language and Word Walls

You can help your students become more familiar with the testing language by using the vocabulary they will encounter on ISTEP during your read-alouds and minilessons and on your accompanying charts. It would also be beneficial to make word walls that contain the vocabulary they might encounter on ISTEP. Ideas for these word walls include, but are definitely not limited to: word walls of words that describe characters, sorted into categories (words that describe happy, sad, scared, etc...; words that mean mostly the same thing: frustrated, upset, enraged) and word walls for Social Studies and Science units.

Sequence of Instruction

You will use this same sequence as you move through each genre, starting at the beginning again as you begin each new genre.

You can scaffold your instruction for each reading genre using the following sequence. Your work will help your students learn to be alert as they read and know what to expect from a text based on how texts of different genres tend to go. Start with short, easy texts,

increasing the level of text difficulty each day, ending with texts at the level of the ISTEP for your grade level.

1. Read aloud a short text. At the beginning, middle and towards the end of the text, you will prompt the students for predictable things to be noticing and thinking about. After your prompt, students will turn and talk with their partners about what they heard.
2. Continue the prompted read-alouds across one or two (or more) more days, increasing the level of text difficulty each time. Before reading, now have students review in partners what they know about this type of text and what they need to pay attention to. You can go from having them turn and talk to stop and jot, then they can also begin answering multiple choice questions (independently or with partners) about the text when you are done with the read-aloud. *See section on teaching how to answer multiple choice questions.*
3. Teach them to read the text silently in partnerships with partner talk throughout the text, answering multiple choice questions after the reading. Now that they have their own copy of the text, you must teach them to mark the parts of the text that support their thinking and refer to the text when discussing their thoughts/answers with partners.
4. Finally, they will read the text and answer the questions independently. You should use this time to pull small groups and/or do individual coaching.

TEACHING HOW TO ANSWER MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

We must teach our students *how* to answer multiple choice questions, not assume they already know. Children are frequently thrown off by the multiple answer choices, especially the “distracter” answer choices that are mentioned in the text but are not the *best* answer. They must learn to look back in the text to find the right answer, always constructing a text-based answer. For each genre, students should use the following strategies of predicting the answer, marking the text, writing the answer, and matching their predicted answer to the correct answer choice. Eventually, they should be able to do this automatically in their head.

Scaffold of Instruction for Answering Multiple Choice Questions

You will use this same sequence as you move through each genre, starting at the beginning again as you begin each new genre.

1. First, offer only the questions. Have students read the question, predict what the answer might be, look back into the text to find the answer, and then write a short answer using evidence from the text.

* When students look back into the text to find the answer, they should mark the portion of the text that gives the answer (underline, circle, star, put a number that corresponds with the question number, etc...)

2. Now, provide the answers to go with the questions. Teach your students to read the question while covering the answer choices. After reading the question, they will again go back to the text to find the answer. Then, they will finally look at the answer choices and choose the answer that most closely matches their text-based prediction.

- Readers answer questions about our stories/articles, etc... by reading a question and predicting the answer.

- We can do this by reading only the question, not the answers, and looking back in the text to find the answer. When we find the part of the text that answers the question, we can circle or underline that part of the text (and possibly write a number in the margin indicating which question is answered by that section of the text).

- We can do this by reading only the question, not the answers, and predicting what we think the answer will be. Then, we can find and choose the answer choice that matches *our* answer the closest.

- We can do this by reading only the question, not the answers, and writing our answer instead of choosing a multiple choice answer.

Strategies for taking tests

You can use these same teaching points for each genre, or teach them during your first genre and keep them posted on a chart throughout the entire test prep reading unit, referring to the chart and re-teaching when necessary.

- Readers make sure we understand the questions we're reading by asking, "What does this question mean? What is it asking me to do?"

- Readers make sure they have the right answer by finding information from the text that supports our answer. First, we can think back over the text and retell it to ourselves. If we still can't think of the answer, we should look back in the text, asking- "Was that in the beginning, middle, or end?", "Where in the text should I look for that information?"

- Students make sure we have enough time to read and answer all of the questions by monitoring the time we have left. We do this by thinking: "How much time do I have left?"

"How much more do I have to read?"

"How many more questions do I have left to answer?"

"How much do I have to read/How many questions do I need to answer each minute to get done?"

- Students can narrow down the answer choices by eliminating choices that couldn't be correct. We can eliminate answer choices by asking, "Which of these does not make sense? Then, we can cross out the choices that don't make sense and look back into the text to find the correct information, matching our predicted answer with the closest answer choice.
- Students can make sure our short response answer matches the question being asked by turning the question into the first part of our answer. We do this by taking off the words that make it a question (Who, What, When, etc...) and re-wording the rest of the question into a sentence format.
- Test-takers make sure to answer every question. We answer questions we're unsure of by first eliminating answers that don't make sense. Then, we look at the remaining answers and ask, "Which choice do I think makes the most sense?" Then, we should mark the question we were unsure of so we can return to it if we have more time.
- Test-takers use our time wisely by using any remaining time to return to questions we were unsure of. We go back and carefully read the questions again and look back into the text, re-reading to find information that answers the question.
- When taking a test, readers can help ourselves know what to pay close attention to during our reading by reading the questions first. We can do this by quickly reading only the questions (not the answer choices), and keeping those questions in mind as we read. When we come across the answer to one of the questions as we're reading, we can mark that section of the text with the question number it relates to.

Dealing with Difficulty in Texts

Word of caution: this section of teaching points can be beneficial for helping students learn to push on through difficult sections of the ISTEP, but it can also be frustrating and demoralizing to do this work. Save these teaching points for the end of your work in each genre, and don't dwell for long on these issues. These teaching points might be better to use in small group or individual conferences as needed.

- Readers can push through a text that difficult for them by skimming along the pages. When readers skim instead of read each word carefully, they run their eyes (and sometimes their finger) along the lines of text, reading a few words of a sentence before determining if it seems like very important information. If it seems very important, readers stop skimming and read the sentence carefully. If the sentence seems more un-important, readers skip the rest of the sentence and continue skimming other sentences.
- Readers can read the questions before reading difficult texts to help them decide which parts of the text to read. They do this by reading the questions and looking back through the text asking, "Which part of the text will I most likely find the answer?" Then, we can only carefully read the parts we need to in order to find an answer.
- When readers become frustrated with a difficult text, they remind themselves that they need to push on and continue through the text and not give up. To push themselves through the text, they can set small goals of what chunk to read next, making sure to stay alert for the important things to look for in this type of text.
- Readers can help themselves not get too frustrated with a difficult text by reading on past an unfamiliar word. We can do this by underlining the unfamiliar word, asking ourselves, "Based on what I just read, what do I think that word might mean?" If we're still not sure of the meaning, we can skip the word and continue with our reading. If there is a question relating to the unfamiliar word and we must know what it means, we can then envision what's happening in that part of the story and use our mental picture to help find a synonym for the unknown word. We do this by reading a passage, stopping and thinking, "What am I picturing is happening now in the story? Based on what I'm envisioning, what do I think that word might mean?"

FICTION

Overview

With *fiction* work, your read-aloud prompts and teaching points will tend to focus on activating background knowledge, the characters' traits, the challenges the main character faces, how he/she resolves these problems, how the character changes, lessons the text teaches and the main idea of a text.

You will want to gather a packet of short fiction pieces at varying levels. At the beginning of your packet, you will want texts that are at a much easier level, with the difficulty increasing throughout the packet until you reach texts at the ISTEP level your students will be tested at. The texts at the beginning of the packet may not need questions to accompany them; you could use those texts to help your students become familiar with the genre and what to look for as they read fiction.

Read-Alouds

During your read-alouds, you will want to provide your students to opportunity to activate background knowledge, and determine: the characters' traits, the challenges the main character faces, how he/she resolves these problems, how the character changes, lessons the text teaches and the main idea of a text. You'll also want to show them how to assess the text before reading; make plans for their reading, how to move across the pages (including any pictures) and how to learn new words from context clues.

You can demonstrate on a chart how to synthesize and retell the text as main ideas and supporting information in a boxes and bullets format. They can stop and jot after each section, determining the main idea of that section. They can also stop and jot inferences as they listen: "I notice..." and "This makes me think..."

Partner work

Make sure your students have a chance to meet in partnerships every to day to talk about what they've learned about their characters and the storyline in their reading that day (Today I learned...). Having the opportunity to synthesize their learning and verbalize their theories about the character with supporting information will help create accountability and further their comprehension. When partners meet, they can use their post-its to help organize their discussion. They should often refer back to the text to support the ideas they are presenting.

- When partners discuss our answers about stories, we use evidence from the text to support our answer choice. We can do this by showing our partner the section of the text where we found and underlined the answer.

Activating Schema, Building Background Knowledge

- Before reading a fiction story, readers get our minds ready for reading by asking, "What do I need to be looking for as I read this story? What do I know about how fictional stories tend to go?" Then, with these thoughts in mind, we will begin reading.

- Readers get our minds ready to read by previewing the text. We do this by looking at the title and pictures of the text, skimming across the pages and asking, "What type of text is this? How is this text set up? What is this text about?" Then, with these thoughts in mind, we will begin reading.

Character Traits

- Readers grow ideas about the characters in our stories by paying special attention to the way a character talks. We do this by re-reading the character's words out loud, paying special attention to the words the character chooses, their tone of voice, and the expression

the character would have used in the story. Then we can ask, "What does this tell me about my character?", writing our thoughts on a post-it note.

- Readers can understand our characters better by comparing them to someone similar that we know (friends, family, teachers, etc...). We can think hard, asking, "Who does this remind me of?" Then, we can use that knowledge to predict what our character might do in the story, thinking, what would the person I know do next? Would my character do the same thing?

- Readers can infer the character traits of a character by paying special attention to the way a character talks, paying special attention to the words the character chooses, their tone of voice, and the expression the character would have used in the story. Then we can ask, "Based on what I just read, what kind of person is this character?", or "What kind of person would do that?"

We try not to describe our character in one word, like "She's nice", or "She's quiet." Instead, we try to push ourselves to have more specific and detailed ideas about our character, asking, "What else can I say about my character?", and "What do I really mean by that?" and using more words to express our ideas.

- Readers can understand our characters better by noticing and inferring details about our characters' internal and external character traits. We can do this by noticing the clothing, mannerisms, and gestures of our character and asking, "What does this tell me about my character?", and "What does this make me think my character worries about and hopes or wishes for?"

- Readers support our ideas with evidence from the text by saying, "When my character did ..., it made me think ... ", or "I think ... because ... ".

- Readers learn more about our characters by paying close attention to their actions towards others. When we discover our characters interacting with other characters, we can ask, "Why did they treat each other that way?", and "Why did they just do that?"

- Readers read tentatively, knowing that our initial thoughts about our characters might be wrong or have changed. We periodically stop and ask, "Does what I'm reading confirm or change my thoughts about my character?" "How does this new information change what I think?"

Character's Problems

- Readers of fiction read closely, looking for the problems the characters face. We do this by reading a little bit, stopping and asking, "What problems are these characters facing?" Then we can ask, "In what way could this problem affect my character?" We can keep track of our thinking by writing the problems our characters face in the margin of the story.
- Fiction readers read closely, looking for how our characters solve their problems. We can do this by looking back at our notes on what problems the characters faced and asking, "How did my characters solve these problems?", or, "What did he/she do to solve their problems?" We can then underline the section of the story that shows where the characters resolved their problems.
- Fiction readers read closely, looking for how our characters change throughout the story. We can do this by stopping occasionally to ask, "How is my character acting differently from before?" "What is different about my character's actions, thoughts and emotions at this point in the story?" We can then say, "At first my character was ..., but now my character"
- Readers can infer the wishes and desires of our characters by looking at what they work hard at and spend their time on. We can use those observations to infer by saying, "This makes me think...", and "This shows that what my character really wants is"

Lessons and Main Ideas in Fiction

- Good fiction readers read alertly, looking for the lesson the text teaches. We stop throughout and at the end of the story to ask ourselves, "What was the author's purpose for writing this text? What lesson did the author want to teach me? What did the author want me to feel?"
- Good fiction readers read alertly, looking for the big or main idea of the text. We stop throughout and at the end of the story to ask ourselves, "What was the main idea of this text? What was it mostly about? What was the author's purpose for writing this text?"
- Readers can find the main ideas in a story by noticing when things happen over and over again. Then we can ask, "Why does this keep happening?", "Why does my character keep doing this sort of thing?", and "Why is this so important to the story?"
- Readers can infer the lesson from a story by looking at what a character has achieved in the story. We can ask, "What has my character achieved?", "What did my character learn from this achievement?", and, "What does this teach me?"

Sequence of events

Readers can follow the sequence events in a story by making a timeline of the important events. We can do this by pausing after we've read the story to retell the important events that happened, using time order words such as first, next, then and finally.

Vocabulary

- Readers can figure out the general meaning of an unfamiliar word by envisioning what's happening in that part of the story and using our mental pictures to help find a synonym for the unfamiliar word. They do this by reading a passage, stopping and thinking, "What am I picturing is happening now in the story? Based on what I'm envisioning, what do I think that word might mean?"

NON-FICTION

Overview

With non-fiction reading, your work will focus on teaching your students how to activate their background knowledge about the subject and preview the text, determine the main idea of the text, monitor their comprehension, and synthesize what they've learned.

You will want to gather a packet of short non-fiction pieces at varying levels. Magazine articles tend to be short enough, but make sure that you find some articles for the beginning of the packet that are at a much easier reading level. Keep in mind that children read non-fiction a few levels lower than they read fiction (if a child is reading level M in fiction, you can expect that they would read K in non-fiction). The difficulty of the texts should increase throughout the packet until you reach texts at the ISTEP level your students will be tested at. The texts at the beginning of the packet may not need questions to accompany them; you could use those texts to help your students become familiar with the genre and what to look for as they read non-fiction.

Read-Alouds

During your read-alouds, you will want to provide your students the opportunity to activate prior knowledge, determine the important and main ideas, synthesize, monitor their comprehension, make inferences, and make connections. You'll also want to show them how to assess the text before reading; make plans for their reading, how to move across the pages (including diagrams and pictures) and how to learn new words from context clues. You can demonstrate on a chart how to synthesize and retell the text as main ideas and supporting information in a boxes and bullets format. They can stop and jot after each section,

determining the main idea of that section. They can also stop and jot inferences as they listen: "I notice..." and "This makes me think..."

Partner work

Make sure your students have a chance to meet in partnerships every day to talk about what they've learned in their reading that day (Today I learned...). Having the opportunity to synthesize their learning and teach their partners new information will help create accountability and further their comprehension. When partners meet, they can use the diagrams and charts in the text to help explain the big ideas in the text. They should often refer back to the text to support the ideas they are presenting.

Getting ready to read- Activating Background Knowledge and Previewing the Text

- Before reading a non-fiction piece, readers get our minds ready for reading by asking, "What do I need to be looking for as I read this piece? What do I know about how nonfiction writing tends to go?" Then, with these thoughts in mind, we will begin reading.
- Readers make a plan for how we will read a non-fiction text by looking across the pages and deciding in what order we should be reading the sections and when we should refer to and read the charts, diagrams and pictures.
- Readers get their minds ready to read by previewing the text. We do this by looking at the title and pictures of the text, reading the introduction, subtitles and section headings, skimming across the pages and asking, "What type of text is this? How is this text set up? What is this text about? What is this author going to be talking about?" Then, with these thoughts in mind, we will begin reading.
- Readers can read texts that are difficult for us by skimming texts, looking for important information. We can do this by reading the headings and subtitles and asking, "What do I need to try to find out in this section?" Then, we can skim quickly through the section, paying close attention to the first and last sentences, underlining any important information.
- Before reading a section, readers can determine what information we should be looking for by reading the section heading. If the section heading is a question, we should read to find the answer to that question. If the section heading is a statement, we should turn the heading into a question and read on to find the answer.

Main Idea and Important Information

- Readers find clues to important information in the text by looking carefully for signal words the author has included (*for example, for instance, in fact, in conclusion, most*

important, but, therefore, on the other hand, such as). Then, we carefully read the information that comes after the clue words, knowing that it is important.

- Readers find important information relating to the article by carefully reading the graphics that are included, such as diagrams, cutaways, cross sections, overlays, distribution maps, word bubbles, tables, charts and framed text. After reading the graphics, we can ask, "What did I learn from that?"

"Why was that information important to this article?"

"What new information did this graphic add to the article?"

"How does this diagram/picture/chart/map fit with the main ideas I'm learning?"

- Readers determine the main idea of a section or chunk by retelling what the section was about in one short statement. We do this by reading a section, covering it up and then saying, "This part teaches me..."

Then, we can give details to support that main idea by saying, "It teaches me by giving me examples or evidence such as"

- Readers begin to determine the main idea of a passage by reading the first sentence in a paragraph and asking, "What is this saying?" Then, we read on, sentence by sentence, asking, "How does this fit with what's been said so far?"

- Readers determine the main idea by identifying the "Who" and the "What" of the paragraph or section and their relationship. We do this by asking, "Who is this about and What is happening to _____?" (or say, When who, they what _____.") This helps readers identify the subject and central action.

- Readers can find the main idea or topic sentence by looking for the sentence that seems to "pop out", summarizing the whole section. This sentence may be the first or last sentence.

- Readers can determine the overarching idea of a piece by noticing as they read from one paragraph (or section) to another whether the paragraphs/sections continue to build on one main idea.

- Readers can determine the overarching idea of a piece by asking ourselves when they've finished reading, "What is this *whole* text mostly about?" Then, readers can jot down their thoughts on a post-it in a boxes and bullets format, jotting the overarching main idea and specific supporting details.

Monitoring Comprehension

- Readers read a text in manageable chunks, making sure we understand each chunk before moving on to the next. We do this by reading read a chunk, stopping and asking ourselves, "What did I just read? What did I learn?" If we don't understand what we just read, we reread before moving on.

After retelling what we just read, readers add their own thinking (I can't believe that...That's so interesting that...)

- Readers can figure out unfamiliar words by substituting a synonym for the unfamiliar word. We can do this by rereading the sentence (and relating sentences), asking, "Based on what I'm learning right now, what do I think that word might be?" As we read on, we need to monitor our substitution, thinking, "Is this making sense?", and "Do I need to change what I thought that word might be?"

- Readers figure out unfamiliar words/new vocabulary by reading past the unfamiliar word/new vocabulary, paying attention to any clues the author may have included to help with understanding the meaning of the unfamiliar word/new vocabulary.

Synthesizing

- Readers can summarize a text as we read by jotting notes in the margins with information we've learned in that section. We can do this by asking, "What was this section all about? What did I just learn in this section? What important information did I just read?"

- Readers can find the bigger ideas of a text by looking at the main ideas of the sections and asking, "How does this all fit together?" and "What could I name this huge section or this huge main idea?"

- Readers can grow our thinking about a text by summarizing what we've read so far, then asking ourselves a question and answering it. We might say, "I've read that...I wonder...I think..."

Misc

- Readers can infer ideas about the text by looking at what the information is telling them but not saying explicitly. We can do this by reading a sentence and responding, "This makes me think that..."

- Readers answer their questions about a text by reading on to see if the answer is explicitly stated in the text. If the answer is not stated, we can infer the answer by thinking about everything we have read about the topic and asking, "Based on what I've read and what I know, what could a possible answer be?"

- Readers grow their thinking about a text by asking questions as they read and keeping track of those questions by reading a bit, stopping and asking themselves, "Do I have any questions? Does this make me wonder anything?" Then, we jot these questions on a Post-it to hold on to them.
- Readers search for clues that may help them find the answer to their questions by looking for keywords that go along with their topic.

If time permits, and your students could benefit from the following teaching, you might also want to address:

differentiating between fact and opinion
knowing where they would expect to find this genre of writing

NARRATIVE NON-FICTION

Overview

Depending on the grade level you teach, your students are likely to encounter different forms of narrative non-fiction on the ISTEP. You will want to look at past ISTEP tests to determine which forms of narrative non-fiction you will want to focus on and gather samples of this writing in various levels of difficulty for your reading packet. The different forms of narrative non-fiction can include: biographies, memoirs, success stories, fables, allegories and folktales. These forms of narrative non-fiction often focus on important people in sports, history, scientific figures or animal characters.

Most narrative non-fiction is written in a story format which tells a story about people (or animals) and their achievements. Unlike fiction, students will read narrative-nonfiction expecting to learn something new about the subject the character is involved in (science, sports, etc...). Much of your work in this unit will be reminding your students what they know about reading fiction stories, such as focusing on the characters and the obstacles and challenges they face, while also gathering information that they are learning from the story.

You will want to gather a packet of short narrative non-fiction pieces at varying levels. These can include magazine articles, newspaper articles, and short stories. Once again, make sure that you find some pieces for the beginning of the packet that are at a much easier reading level. The difficulty of the texts should increase throughout the packet until you reach texts at the ISTEP level your students will be tested at. The texts at the beginning of the packet may not need questions to accompany them; you could use those texts to help your students become familiar with the genre and what to look for as they read fiction.

Read-alouds

During your read-alouds you will have them listen for the story structure, pay attention to the character and be listening expecting the text to teach them something. They can stop and jot after parts of the story that teach them something, to synthesize what the story has taught so far, to infer theories about the character, and to keep track of the challenges and achievements of the main character. You'll also want to show them how to assess the text before reading, make plans for their reading, how to move across the pages (including diagrams and pictures) and how to learn new words from context clues.

Story Elements

- Before reading a narrative non-fiction piece, readers get our minds ready for reading by asking, "What do I need to be looking for as I read this piece? What do I know about how fictional stories and informational pieces tend to go?" Then, with these thoughts in mind, readers will begin reading.
- Readers get our minds ready to read by previewing the text. We do this by looking at the title and pictures of the text, skimming across the pages and asking, "What type of text is this? How is this text set up? What is this text about?" Then, with these thoughts in mind, we will begin reading.
- Readers of narrative non-fiction read closely, looking for the problems the main character faces. We do this by reading a little bit, stopping and asking, "What problems is this character facing?", "What struggles is this character having?", "What obstacles did this character have to overcome to succeed?" We can keep track of our thinking by writing the problems our characters face in the margin of the story.
- Narrative non-fiction readers read closely, looking for how our characters solve their problems and overcome their challenges. We can do this by looking back at our notes on what problems the character faced, asking, "How did my character solve these problems?", "What did my character do to overcome the obstacles in his/her way?", and "How did my character draw on his/her resources to meet his/her challenges?" We can then underline the section of the story that shows where the characters resolved their problems and overcame obstacles.
- Readers of narrative non-fiction develop theories about their character by paying attention to the important events in the characters' lives and how they respond to those events. We can do this by asking, "Based on what my character decided to do and how he/she responded to that event, what character traits do I think he/she possesses?"

- Readers determine the effects that secondary characters have on the main character by questioning whether or not the secondary character played a role in the main character solving his/her conflict. We can do this by asking ourselves what kind of relationship the main and secondary characters have with each other, how the main character changed because of the secondary character, and how the secondary character helped or hindered the main character during their conflict.

Non-Fiction Elements

- Before reading a narrative non-fiction piece, readers get our minds ready for reading by activating our background knowledge about the subject. We do this by thinking, "What do I already know about this topic that will help me read this piece?", and "What do I already know about this character that will help me read this piece?"

- Before reading a narrative non-fiction piece, readers get our minds ready for reading by reminding ourselves that this piece will teach us something new about the subject. We can ask ourselves, "What do I think I will learn about this subject and character?" and keep that thought in mind as we read. When we come across information about the character or subject, we should underline it or write the information on a post-it.

- Readers of narrative non-fiction keep track of the information in our stories and articles by retelling chunks in our own words, including both the story and what the story is teaching. We can do this by reading a chapter, section or chunk and saying, "So far what's happened is this...and what I've learned is..."

- Readers of narrative non-fiction can keep track of the information we're learning about the character and subject by making a time-line in our notebook. We can do this by writing any important events from the character's childhood and early beginnings in his/her field. We should also include any times the character faced obstacles and overcame challenges to help us keep track of how the character became so accomplished.

- Readers of narrative non-fiction read closely, noticing both the information *and* the ideas the piece is teaching us, asking, "What am I learning about this character and his or her challenges", "What am I learning about this subject or topic?", and "Why is this person famous?". We can keep track of these noticings on post-its and after we finish our reading, we can sort the post-its, asking, "Does this information relate to the character, the subject or topic, or why this person is famous?"

Big Lesson Learned

- Readers can determine the important lesson or big idea of our piece by inferring what we can learn from the character. We can do this by looking at the important events in the character's lives, where they faced challenges, overcame obstacles and made discoveries.

Then, we can retell the text by saying, "This text (or part of the text) is mostly about....and the big new thing it teaches me is that..."

- Readers can determine the important lesson of our piece by thinking about the important achievements of the character. We can do this by asking, "Why is this person famous?", "What did he or she achieve?", "Why do those achievements matter?", "Why were those achievements so important?" and writing out thinking on post-its, in the margins or in our notebooks.

- Readers can determine the important lesson of our piece by thinking about how all of the parts of the text fit together. We can do this by stopping at the end of the text and asking, "What was this story mainly about?", and "What did lesson did the author want to teach through this story?"

- We can then reflect on what we've learned by asking, "What do I know now that I didn't know before reading this story?" and/or "How is my thinking different after reading this text?"

- Readers can determine the important lesson of our piece by thinking about the big idea that was taught in the story. Then we can ask, "How did this story demonstrate that idea?"

If time permits, and your students could benefit from the following teaching, you might also want to address:

the setting of the story and its importance
infer characters' point of view or perspective

March/April

Nonfiction Reading

Unit Overview

In this unit children will read expository non-fiction texts, narrative non-fiction, and they will keep up independent reading of chapter books, including fiction, biographies, or true stories. Remember that if a child is reading M books in fiction, you should expect that child to be reading K books in nonfiction. If a child has considerable prior knowledge of the subject matter, they can typically read their fiction reading level. It is important that students continue reading narrative texts (fiction, biographies, true stories, etc.) to keep up their stamina and reading rate. Children learn to be stronger nonfiction readers when they read deeply in one subject area; they begin by reading easier books on a topic and then gradually build expertise that lets them tackle harder texts successfully.

Most of your teaching during this unit will tend to fall into one of these broad categories or bends in the road:

1. Strategies to activate background knowledge
2. Strategies to overview text
3. Strategies for questioning
4. Strategies to determine important ideas
5. Strategies to monitor and repair comprehension
6. Strategies to draw inferences
7. Strategies to synthesize information
8. Strategies to visualize

Alignment with Standards

- 5.1.2 Use word origins to determine the meaning of unknown words.
- 5.1.3 Understand and explain frequently used synonyms (words with the same meaning), antonyms (words with opposite meanings), and homographs (words that are spelled the same but have different meanings).
- 5.1.4 Know less common roots (*graph* = *writing*, *logos* = *the study of*) and word parts (*auto* = *self*, *bio* = *life*) from Greek and Latin and use this knowledge to analyze the meaning of complex words (*autograph*, *autobiography*, *biography*, *biology*).
- 5.1.6 Understand unknown words by using word, sentence, and paragraph clues to determine meaning.

- 5.2.1 Use the features of informational texts, such as formats, graphics, diagrams, illustrations, charts, maps, and organization, to find information and support understanding.
Example: Locate specific information in a social studies textbook by using its organization, sections on different world regions, and textual features, such as headers, maps, and charts.
- 5.2.2 Analyze text that is organized in sequential or chronological order.
Example: Compare the organizational structure of such biographical texts as *The Life and Death of Crazy Horse* by Russell Freedman or *Pride of Puerto Rico: The Life of Roberto Clemente* by Paul Robert Walker, noting critical events in the subjects' lives.
- 5.2.3 Recognize main ideas presented in texts, identifying and assessing evidence that supports those ideas.
Example: Read a science text, such as *Astronomy* by Robert Kerrod, and select some of the experiments described in the book to pursue in class. Before beginning the selected experiments, outline the main ideas or concepts to be tested and identify additional supporting detail that explains those scientific concepts.
- 5.2.4 Draw inferences, conclusions, or generalizations about text and support them with textual evidence and prior knowledge.
Example: Use a guidebook, such as *Discovering Fossils: How to Find and Identify Remains of the Prehistoric Past (Fossils & Dinosaurs)* by Frank A. Garcia, to gain information and make predictions about the identification of fossils found in everyday surroundings.
- 5.2.6 Follow multiple-step instructions in a basic technical manual.
- 5.2.5 Distinguish among facts, supported inferences, evidence, and opinions in text.
Example: Identify facts and opinions in a newspaper editorial or editorial page writer's column.
- 6.1.4 Understand unknown words in informational texts by using word, sentence, and paragraph clues to determine meaning.
- 6.2.1 Identify the structural features of popular media (newspapers, magazines, online information) and use the features to obtain information.
- 6.2.2 Analyze text that uses a compare-and-contrast organizational pattern.
- 6.2.3 Connect and clarify main ideas by identifying their relationships to multiple sources and related topics.
- 6.2.4 Clarify an understanding of texts by creating outlines, notes, diagrams, summaries, or reports.
- 6.2.7 Make reasonable statements and conclusions about a text, supporting them with evidence from the text.

Teaching Points

1. Activating Background Knowledge

- Readers think about what they might already know about a topic and remind themselves of all they know before they read. They look at the front cover, read the title, and ask themselves, "What all do I already know about this topic?" Readers can make a list in their reader's notebook.
- Readers decide if they are an "expert reader" or a "discovery reader" of this topic. If they have created a list in their notebook, they can look at it and ask: "Do I know a lot about this topic, or not?" This helps them know how to read the text (paying attention to new vocabulary, reading with a partner, really paying attention to when meaning might slip).

2. Over Viewing Text

- Readers figure out what a text is all about, and what all the parts of the topic are, to understand what the author is going to be saying about this topic. They use the information already obtained from the cover and from the list in their notebook as well all as the helpful features of the text (pictures, captions, titles, text, diagrams, Table of Contents, Index, and Glossary).
- Readers determine how much text in a book is devoted to the topic about which they want to learn more. They use text organizers (*index, preface, table of contents, a glossary and appendix*) to decide if this book is one that will be useful for their topic.
- Readers figure out the main idea of a paragraph. They read the topic sentence because they know that the paragraph will continue with supporting details. Is this an important paragraph for my topic? Should I place a post-it note here so I can return later?
- Readers realize the differences of non fiction texts, such as informational text and "how to" texts. They read a chunk of a text and ask "Is the text telling me about a particular subject or is it telling me how to do something?"

4. Questioning

- Readers grow their thinking about a text by asking questions as they read. They keep track of those questions by reading a bit, stopping and asking themselves, "Do I have

any questions? Does this make me wonder anything?" Then, jotting these questions on a Post-it to hold on to them.

*We hope that kids automatically ask questions as they read, but we can definitely teach them to intentionally do this.

- Readers search for clues that may help them find the answer to their questions. They think about what they are trying to learn and make a list of keywords that might be useful. "If I am trying to learn where a polar bear lives, what words should I look for? Habitat? Home? Sleep?" Readers should make a list of these in their notebooks.
- Readers search for new text about their topics by using the index to find out if their questions can be answered. Readers ask themselves: "Are any of my keywords in the index?" "Are these pages I should hold with a post-it note?"

5. Determining Important Ideas

- Readers notice that nonfiction writing often includes clue words that signal an important part of the text: (*for example, for instance, in fact, in conclusion, most important, but, therefore, on the other hand, such as*) Readers then realize that it is important to pay close attention to what comes next.
- Readers notice that nonfiction writing often includes graphics that give important information: (*diagrams, cutaways, cross sections, overlays, distribution maps, word bubbles, tables, charts and framed text*) Readers learn to pay close attention to these for information on their topic.
- Readers work to determine the main idea of a passage. They take the sentences they've read and say what they learned in one short statement, not a question. This should be written on a post-it and placed on the page.
- Readers determine the main idea in chunks/sections of text. They use the subheadings or section headings, and at the end of each chunk/section, they cover the text and say (or write on a Post-it) "This part teaches me..." Then: "It teaches me by giving examples or evidence such as..."
- Readers determine the main idea by identifying the "Who" and the "What" of the paragraph or section. They ask, "Who is this about and What is happening to _____?" This helps readers identify the subject and central action.

- Readers figure out the overarching idea of a selection. They think of what the boxes and bullets would be for the page/section/chapter and jot quickly the main idea and supporting details in their notebook.
- Readers determine the main idea in a chunk/section of text by looking for the “pop out sentence” as they read. One sentence often seems to summarize the content of a paragraph.
- Readers determine the main idea by noticing as they read from one paragraph to another whether the two paragraphs continue to build on one main idea or if the next paragraph turns a bend, laying out yet another idea. Readers need to say, “This new paragraph builds on the last” OR “This new paragraph is about a different sub-topic.
- Readers organize their thoughts. They write down the “meat” of what they learned by writing down, on a Post-it Note, just key words from a passage or chapter.
- Section headings help readers understand the main idea of the text. If the section heading is a question, such as, “What was a wagon train?” the reader looks for the answer. If it is a statement such as “Fishing Champions”, readers turn the heading into a question and read looking for the answer, such as, “Why are penguins fishing champions?”
- Readers determine if the information is fact or opinion. They ask, “Does the author state a true fact that can be proven?” and “Is the author telling how he feels or thinks about something?”
- Readers determine the cause and effect, such as *Snowshoe rabbits change color from brown to white in the winter*. They ask a specific question about the text, such as “Why did the rabbit change color” (effect) and answering the question, “Because it is winter” (cause).

5. Monitoring and Repairing Comprehension

- a. Readers read a text in manageable chunks, making sure they understand each chunk before moving on to the next. They read a chunk of text and think about that chunk before moving on to the next. They read a chunk, then stop and ask themselves, “What did I just read? What did I learn?” If they don't understand what they just read, they reread before moving on.

- b. Readers figure out unfamiliar words by substituting a synonym for the word based on clues the author includes in the text
- c. Readers figure out unfamiliar words/new vocabulary by reading past the unfamiliar word/new vocabulary, paying attention to any clues the author may have included to help with understanding the meaning of the unfamiliar word/new vocabulary.
- d. Readers figure out the meaning of new vocabulary words by noticing if it has upper case letters. This can suggest the new word is a name of a person, place or thing.
- e. Readers reread the hard parts by reading out loud and telling yourself what you have read.
- f. Readers determine the meaning of unknown words by using their knowledge of root words (nation, national, nationality).
- g. Readers analyze the meaning of complex words by using common roots (meter=measure) and word parts (therm=heat).

6. Drawing Inferences

- Readers grow their thinking about a text by writing questions on Post-its. They read on to answer their own questions. They reread their "Question Post-its" often to see if they now have the answer.
*You may have them put a big question mark at the top of their question Post-its, so it's easier for them to find them for rereading.
- Readers ask questions and try to answer those questions. They remember what they already know about the topic or what they've already read in this text about the topic. They can then infer an answer based on what they know or what they've read. They can say, "Why do elf owls live inside holes in a cactus?" Then, they can try to answer by saying, "I think they live inside holes because..."
- Readers push their thinking as they read. They look at what the information is telling them but not saying (inferring) and saying things like "The thought I have about this is..." or "This makes me think..." or "If that is true, I bet **that _____ is true.**"

7. Synthesizing Information

- Readers grow their thinking about a text by commenting on/reacting to the text as they read. They read a bit and let themselves react to the text by saying things like, "That's weird...That's cool....That's interesting...." Post-its can be used to document their reactions.
- Readers make sense of the text by knowing that some texts are a mixture of non-narrative and narrative structure. These texts may present an idea, supported by facts, and then may tell a story that relates to or illustrates the idea. Some texts like this begin with a story, a letter, a diary entry or a mini biography, and then move into expository text
- Readers make sense of all of this by asking, "What is this story/letter/diary entry teaching me?" AND "How does it fit with what I have been learning?"
- Readers figure out the overarching idea of a selection. They look back on the whole page/section /chapter and say "This is mostly about..." A Post-it can be placed there for reflection.
- Readers sort out the interesting and important ideas. They can create a T-chart labeled "What's Interesting" and "What's Important" and asking "What is interesting in this section?" and "What is important in this section?"
- Readers compare and contrast two different passages about the same subject. They can create a Venn Diagram showing the similarities and differences of the two texts and asking "How is the information alike?" and "How is the information different?"
- Readers evaluate new information that they read. They think about what they already know about the topic and ask, "What did I learn that is new?" and "How is this different from what I already know?"

8. Visualizing

- Readers use text features to make sense of the text. They ask themselves, "How does this diagram/picture/chart/map fit with the main ideas I'm learning?"
- Readers use pictures to make sense of the text and to gather information and grow ideas How: by looking across pictures and asking themselves, "What are these pictures teaching me? How are they the same? How are they different? What new information do they add to the text?"

May

Content Area Book Clubs

As classroom teachers, we know that many students are enthusiastic readers of nonfiction. We also know, however, that nonfiction texts are often more challenging for students to read and comprehend than fiction. With this in mind, we began to consider ways that an interest in nonfiction reading could be fostered and nourished, while simultaneously supporting student growth as readers. In thinking about our own nonfiction reading lives, we realized that in many cases we are reading nonfiction for a specific purpose in our lives. Perhaps we need to know good places to visit on our next vacation, or how to change the oil in our cars. Whatever the need, we are always reading multiple sources to cross-check and synthesize information as readers, and often we are discussing our study with friends or family and building our knowledge of the subject through these conversations. It is this type of work, the natural work we all do as nonfiction readers in our own lives, that we want to highlight in this unit of study. Our unit of study is designed to focus third grade reading instruction in the month of March on Non-fiction Book Clubs within a Content Area. This unit is written with the intention of lifting the level at which students read non-fiction and giving the students an opportunity to work collaboratively as they read and discuss non-fiction texts across a topic.

This unit addresses and further develops the reading skills essential to non-fiction reading, reading across a topic and book club conversation. The skills that are highlighted and expanded in this unit are monitoring for sense, envisioning, interpreting, and synthesis. Students are practicing and using these skills throughout the unit, which will allow them to become experts on their topic.

Comprehension across topical nonfiction texts is the major thrust of this unit. Much of the book club work we imagine readers doing revolves around understandings gleaned from the text. This unit would be easily adaptable to other content areas within any or beyond.

It is assumed that this unit will be taught in a 5th/6th grade class in May of the school year. Throughout the school year, students will have been exposed to non-fiction reading. Students have also had the opportunity to explore book clubs and have had much practice in the structure and flow of these clubs. With non-fiction being a recent and familiar topic of study and the structure of book clubs being in place already, this unit works to move readers beyond the basics of those topics and into a deeper understanding of topical nonfiction reading, through the collaborative, meaning-making structure of book clubs.

Monitoring for Sense

Monitoring for sense is a skill we expect readers to be doing in any type of reading. This applies tenfold when readers are reading topical non-fiction texts with the expectation of becoming an expert on that topic through their reading. The acquisition of this skill is supported throughout the unit through students' work in book clubs as well as anticipated strategy lessons. Students will learn to recognize areas where they feel they are making sense of the text, pulling in both the writing and the images. Students will also identify points where there is confusion and learn to use strategies for making sense of texts both independently and with their book clubs.

Envisionment

Students will learn to pull together information from different sources. In order to do this, they must have the movie screens in their minds. Initially, students will learn to add to the scene they have already created with each new piece of information gained from photographs. Students will also learn to take written information and convert it to a picture in their mind for addition to the scene they have created. Readers will use the pictures in their minds to gain an expert understanding about their topic.

Interpretation

In order to gain a full understanding of the topic, nonfiction readers read between the words using prior knowledge to make sense of the facts presented. Students will learn to dig deeper into facts by asking themselves, "So what?" and seeking to uncover the why and how. Students will learn to dig deeply into photographs, noticing and questioning details to build their understanding of the topic.

Synthesis

Synthesis is woven throughout the book club work of this unit. Students will learn to work together to gather what they have read, seen and discussed and make sense of it. "Synthesizing happens when we merge the information with our thinking and shape it into our own thought... When readers synthesize information, they see the bigger picture as they read." (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007) As students and book clubs move along in the unit and they will be looking for ways of seeing their topic that pull in everything they know, synthesizing their readings and conversations on the topic.

Goals for the Unit

<i>Reading Skills</i>	<i>Unit Goals</i>
<i>Monitoring For Sense</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Students will be able to use text features to organize their thinking about a topic.- Students are able to have topical conversations within their book clubs using evidence from the text to support their thinking/talking.
<i>Envisionment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Students will learn to pull together information across a text and throughout various texts by constructing mental images.- Students will be able to convert written text into a mental picture
<i>Interpretation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Students will be able to read a picture and pull out several main ideas with supporting evidence.- Students will be able to connect information presented in print with information presented through images on the same page.
<i>Synthesis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Students will be able to make connections between texts.- Students will gather information from multiple sources and form their own conclusions based on all that they have read

Unit Overview

The unit unofficially begins a week or two before the month begins, as content read-alouds begin to immerse the classroom. The unit officially begins with students activating prior knowledge and strategies relating to non-fiction reading. Students will begin this unit in multi-topic leveled book bins as prior knowledge is activated and the foundation is laid for more focused non-fiction book club reading. For the first week of the unit, students are reading from a wide variety of content texts. For this week, the available texts will not only lead into the future content work, but will also help to lay a foundation for this line of study.

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Book bins will include books on the topic. Spending the first week in this way allows students to begin to build a schema on which to hang the topical information they will begin gathering in the weeks to come. During the first week it will be necessary to gather book clubs together outside of the reading workshop to make a group decision on topic of study. In order to accommodate readers who may need a higher level of scaffolding, we're recommending that book club select a more difficult topic within the content area. We also recommend using that same topic for your modeling, thereby providing further scaffolding for students that may need it.

For the second, third and fourth weeks of the unit, students will be working in leveled book clubs gathered around a topic of choice. Texts should be provided at a variety of appropriate levels for each topic, in order to allow book clubs the ability to choose their topic of study (from the topics provided). As we previously mentioned, one topic should be set aside to be used for modeling, with the understanding that that topic could be a choice for readers who would need a higher level of scaffolding, particularly in this non-fiction book club unit. During these weeks, students are expected to be reading, gathering information, discussing that information and organizing it in a logical way. Students are reading to become experts, so we expect to see students seeking further information or clarification on subtopics in which they do not feel expert. The culmination of the unit surrounds presenting or sharing content learning in some way. (While we have suggested presenting aloud to peers using a newscaster voice, this information could be presented in a variety of other ways. Please see the attached brochures that came out of student writing about reading during the piloting of this unit for further ideas.)

Teaching Points

#1- Readers read nonfiction to become experts on a topic of interest.

1. (reading) Nonfiction readers keep track of new information from their texts. One way readers can do this is by stopping to record this information (with page references) on paper when it comes up in their reading.
2. (talk) Readers read non-fiction with a book club to help make sense of the text. One way readers can do this is by bringing new learning to their book club and connecting it to what other club members are learning.
3. (reading) Nonfiction readers expect to learn about a topic as they read. When a reader does not feel like they are learning, one way readers can support themselves is by slowing down and asking themselves, "What could this part be trying to teach me about this topic?"
4. (talk) Readers read non-fiction with a book club to help make sense of the text. One way readers can do this is by bringing questions or confusions about the text to their book club.

5. (reading) Nonfiction readers can read to become experts on a topic. One way readers can do this is by reading a variety of texts on the same topic and looking for connections or disconnections between the texts.

#2- Readers seek connections between what they know and what they don't know about a topic.

1. (reading) Readers in book clubs think together about what they already know about a topic and look for things they want to know more about. One way readers can gather this information is by listing out everything they already know about the topic.

2. (talk) Readers in book clubs talk together about subtopics as one way of knowing the bigger topic. One way readers can work efficiently as a club is by asking themselves, "Is there a subtopic that I really want us to look at as a group?" and planning ahead by bringing ideas to the club.

3. (reading) Nonfiction readers connect what they are learning about a topic with what they already know. One way readers do this is by adding on to the list of things they know about a topic, grouping similar information together.

4. (talk) Nonfiction readers think across their topic, noticing areas where they need to gather more information. One way readers can do this with their book club is by grouping information by subtopic (housing, climate, food, etc.) and paying particular attention to subtopics where they don't feel like experts yet.

5. (reading) Nonfiction readers pull in prior knowledge about a topic to support them as they read more about it. One way readers can do this is by looking for parts in the text that connect or disconnect with what they have already learned.

#3- Readers use the pictures and words in a text to create a picture of what they are learning.

1. (reading) Non-fiction readers read the pictures in their text to push themselves to learn new things about their topic. Non-fiction readers can do this by noticing who is the picture and/or what is happening in the picture and then form an idea around what they noticed in the picture.

2. (talk) Non-fiction readers use what they learned from the pictures to inform their thinking and conversation. One way readers do this is by thinking about what they noticed in the picture and putting the information in their own words to share.

3. (reading) Nonfiction readers use text features to organize their thinking about a topic and gather main ideas in a text. One way readers can do this is by paying particular attention to the headings they come across, remembering that they will be gathering lots of information about those subtopics as they read.

4. (talk) Non-fiction readers read photographs so carefully that they are able to look at a photo of a specific place and pull out several main ideas, just like they would with a page of

writing. One way readers can do this is by really zooming in on the details of a picture and questioning what those details tell them about the photo, the people, life.

5. (reading) Non-fiction readers read the pictures and the text together. One way readers do this is by looking for a big connection asking themselves, "How do the pictures show what the text is saying?"

#4- Readers hold onto key ideas from text to text and conversation to conversation, putting it all together to make sense of non-fiction reading.

1. (reading) Non-fiction readers have a "wow" reaction to the pictures and the text, especially when they learn something they didn't know or see something that doesn't go with what they already know. Readers can learn more about their topic by noticing when the text surprises them and asking themselves, "Why did that surprise me?"

2. (reading/talk) Non-fiction readers question the text. Non-fiction readers react/notice when the ideas in the text do not fit with their picture of the topic. Readers make sense of this by discussing, with their book club, why the ideas do not fit together.

3. (reading) Non-fiction readers hold onto key ideas and form an overall theory about their topic. Readers can do this by asking themselves "what did the author want me to learn and how does this fit with the information I have read?"

4. (talk) Non-fiction readers talk about their topic as a whole. Readers can do this by connecting the subtopics together to create a big picture.

5. (talk) Non-fiction readers report with their book club the information they learned and the theory they formed. Readers can do this by sharing the main ideas they have and report the information like a newscaster. (They report the information in their serious newscaster voice)

Conferring

Throughout this unit, conferring will be done in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes. Strategy groups will be pulled and book club support conferences will take place. There will also be conferences done to re-teach and pre-teach different students or groups of students based upon the minilesson teaching points or other individual needs as they come up.

Pre-teaching

On the day of minilesson 2-3, it would be beneficial to pre-teach the content of minilesson 2-4 to any book club that may need extra support gathering knowledge as a team.

Work with Egypt group (our struggling readers) : Pooling individual knowledge for the use of the group.

Tomorrow's minilesson will reveal a strategy for pooling knowledge from all club members in order to create a greater understanding of the text, which is a focus of our book club work throughout this unit. This conference would be a pre-teaching conference in order to lay the

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groundwork for the minilesson the students will be participating in the following day. Students need to gather with their writing about reading, their post-its and your provided large paper for gathering and grouping ideas (a sheet of posterboard would work, a sheet of chart paper, etc.) It would likely go something like this:

So readers- I'm calling you together today because I need your help. Your book club has been gathering so many brilliant facts and ideas from your reading and you've been talking about them but I've noticed it can get hard because one person is talking about their post-its, and then someone else is talking about when they have written about and sometimes it seems like there is so much you know but it doesn't all go together. I want to show you a way you can help things to go together and gather your thinking as a group. Can you please gather up all the post-its and writings you have so far on Egypt? I want you to bring them over and we're going to get organized as a group now. We'll share our brain power and pool our knowledge.

What I want to teach you today is that we can organize our thinking around subtopics, just like how many nonfiction book are written, and that will let us see what we know a lot about and what we need to learn more about. I'm going to start with a post-it I made in my own reading. It says, "Egyptians eat bean stew." I read that in one of my books. Now, instead of all of us just putting down any post-its we have, let's use this one post-it to start and look to see if anyone else has something that connects with this. Let's make a little collection of post-its about this same sort of thing. When I read that post-it, I'm thinking it's mostly about food in Egypt. Does anyone else have a post-it or writing like that? (I'd keep a pad of blank post-its on hand, for students to copy short info from their long writing onto during this exercise. I'd let the group go and add on around that post it, talking about the topic as they went. When there were no more post-its to add, I'd do one of the following:

- a) (Appropriate only if there were very few post-its for the topic) Wow, readers... when I look at this group of post-its, it makes me wonder... is food in Egypt something we as a book club know a lot about, or is this something we need to read more about? What do you think? From now Let's do that.
- b) (Appropriate if there are a lot of post-its for the topic) Look at all the things we already know about food in Egypt. It looks like a lot, but I'm thinking we might still find out more about this as we read on. Let's make a plan to add anything else we find out about food .

Okay, who else has a post-it we could build on? (Select a student idea, get students started and pull back. Watch until the group runs out of post-its for that topic and see if they are able to maintain a transition to another subtopic. If so, let them be and move along. If not, lean into one of your needier students and encourage them to start with one of their ideas).

Reteaching

Throughout the unit, readers will need to do several different actions as they read on a daily basis in order to support their reading and comprehending of nonfiction texts. All of these

actions are crucial to successful work in this unit of study, and will warrant spending time conferring on them and reteaching.

Readers will need to be writing about reading in ways that are meaningful and help them make sense of not only the text that they are reading right now, but the current text within the framework of the topic as they know it to that point. This means that writing about reading becomes a true working document where ideas are explored, changed and expanded upon on a daily basis. Conferring around writing about reading might take the following forms:

- 1) Readers can add book and page information to their writing about reading to make it easier to support their ideas in conversation
- 2) Readers can choose to use post-its to organize and reorganize their thinking as they learn new things from the texts that they are reading.
- 3) Readers often question texts, particularly when information presented in different texts seems to disagree. Writing about reading allows a reader to think on paper and prepare their ideas to bring to their book club.
- 4) Readers write about reading to keep record of their thinking. Readers return to their previous thinking to see how it has been affected by new learning.
- 5) Readers write about reading for their own use as readers. Readers write about reading in ways that make them want to go back to prior writing and add to it, change it, question it, etc.

Readers need to be reading with the purpose of learning to become experts about a topic. This means that they must be constantly gathering information as it comes up in texts, seeking information in areas that they feel they don't know enough about, looking for ways that information can be connected together and trying to make sense of information. Conferring around reading nonfiction to become an expert on a topic might take the following forms:

- 1) Readers read nonfiction to learn as much as they can about a topic. It's hard to learn from reading in a distracting reading spot. Readers can fix this by making smart choices about reading locations.
- 2) Readers of nonfiction read (or reread) texts to gather information in an area they do not yet feel they know enough about. One way readers locate this information is by using the index or table of contents.
- 3) Readers think about new ideas and concepts by connecting them to prior knowledge or reading. One way to do this is to read and think, "What else do I know that fits with this?"
- 4) Readers of nonfiction often read to find the answers to questions that they have created in their mind. One way readers can guide their reading is to think of questions they have about a topic that they want to locate answers to.
- 5) Readers know that books are not the only source of information about a topic. Readers can gather information about a topic by going beyond books to locate information in magazines and on the internet.

- 6) Nonfiction writers write to teach about something from their own perspective. Readers consider the perspective of the writer in order to better understand what they are reading. One way to understand a writer's perspective is to read the "About the Author" to understand how they came to know about the topic.

Book Club Support

Readers at this time of year are relatively new to book clubs, so there are predictable situations that are likely to come up as they navigate how to make book clubs successful structures within their reading workshop time. Below are some of the ways conferring with a book club might go during this unit:

- 1) Book clubs are a place for readers to learn through conversations. Readers learn from conversation by listening to other people's comments and responding to them.
- 2) Book clubs are a place for readers to learn through conversations. Readers learn from conversation by listening to a comment and planning a response by asking themselves, "Do I agree or disagree with what they just said? Why?"
- 3) Book clubs are a place to bring the ideas you have been having during your independent reading. Readers help their book club conversations run smoothly by thinking ahead to the next club meeting and planning what they might want to talk about in the club.
- 4) Book clubs are a place to bring your questions about what you are reading and get some ideas. Readers become more independent by really using their book club as a resource for questions, not just asking the teacher.
- 5) Clubs usually have a clubhouse, or a place to call their own, where they do their work. One way book clubs can do this is by choosing a consistent meeting spot and a consistent place for all their club materials.

Assessing Readers throughout the Unit

Assessment will occur throughout this unit. Whether it is during the active engagement aspect of the minilesson during a conference with an individual student or book club, all informal and formal assessments will be used to drive instruction.

Conferring

Conferring with individual students and book clubs will serve as a main form of assessment throughout the unit. In being that this unit's focus is on non-fiction reading and book clubs, conferring will hold two purposes, one, addressing reading skills and strategies students are using and the second being talk moves students are and are not utilizing. Conferring opens the reader's world to the teacher and allows the teacher to focus on the skills in which the student(s) need to develop in their reading and talking. It also allows the teacher to highlight the smart work students are doing while they are reading and/or talking within their clubs.

Areas of deficiency: Analyzing conference notes will serve as a jumping off point for further teaching. It will lend itself to effectively planning strategy groups and shared reading instruction.

Areas of strength: From conferring with students/clubs we can tap into the smart work students are doing. The teacher can highlight the strategies students are using and use this work as mentor work for other students in the class.

During conferring, note taking on the teacher's part is a major component to effective planning and future teaching. A teacher needs to research the reader(s), collect data on the strategies they are using effectively and ineffectively in order to decide what to teach.

Active Engagement

During the minilesson, we have the students briefly try out the strategy that we are teaching them that day. Even though the students are not doing this work in their own books yet, the active engagement part of the minilesson gives the teacher a glimpse into the students' train of thought and initial use of the strategy. If students seem to be struggling with a strategy during the active engagement, the minilesson can then have two active engagements to give the students another opportunity to have a go at the strategy.

Student and Date	Reading Strategies Used (Choose one to Compliment)	Areas to develop (Jot down areas of deficiency)	Teaching and Future Teaching (Choose one strategy from areas to develop)
			T: F.T.:
			T: F.T.:
			T: F.T.:
			T: F.T.:
			T: F.T.:
			T: F.T.:

	Below Standard	Working Towards Standard	Meets Standard	Exceeds Standard
Monitoring for Sense	Talk and/or teacher questioning does not demonstrate an understanding of the topic. Student does not appear to be using text features to read and understand.	Student uses text features for support from page to page, but uses them only in the text in which they appear rather than carrying them from text to text. Talk demonstrates a general understanding of the topic.	Student uses text features to organize his or her thinking about a topic. Talk demonstrates a clear understanding of what is being read.	Student is able to create his or her own text features (headings, captions) in his or her mind when they are not provided in the text itself, and then uses these to organize his or her thinking.
Envisionment	Student is able to create a picture in his or her mind that directly matches a provided illustration/photo. Student does not build upon the picture in their mind as they gather new information.	Student can create a picture in his or her mind using primarily the provided images from a text and converting some written text into pictures. Student does not consistently pull information from a variety of sources.	Student pulls together information across a single text and also between various texts by constructing mental images. Student is able to convert written text into a picture in his or her mind	Student gathers information from all available resources in order to create a cohesive and multifaceted picture in his or her mind. The student creates a synthesized mental image.
Interpretation	Student is able to talk about a picture, but cannot pull out a main idea. Talk is very literal and is not based in prior knowledge.	Student can read a picture and pull out at least 1 main idea that they can support using evidence from the picture (and perhaps prior knowledge).	Student can read a picture and pull out at least 3 main ideas with supporting evidence from the picture (and perhaps prior knowledge).	Student can read a picture and pull out at least 3 main ideas with supporting evidence from the picture, prior knowledge and other texts.
Interpretation	Student does not identify connections between print and images OR recognizes only the most literal connections.	Student connects the print and images on a page but cannot expand upon the connections when asked.	Student is able to connect and talk about information presented in print with information presented through images on the same page.	Student recognizes disconnects between images and text on the same page, and looks for how they might connect.
Synthesis	Student does not recognize the interconnected nature of topical texts. Student does not talk across texts.	Student shares ideas with the book club, but does not support these ideas with textual evidence from multiple sources.	Student shares ideas in topical conversations within book clubs using evidence from the texts to support his or her thinking.	Student shares ideas with textual support and poses questions of his or her peers. Student cross-checks discussions with texts.
Synthesis	Book Club conversations and conferences are focused exclusively on the text at hand, no reference to prior texts or knowledge.	Book Club conversations and conferences tend to be focused on the text at hand, few references to prior texts.	Book Club conversation and conferences will reveal the student making connections between texts.	Book Club conversation and conferences will reveal the student making connections between texts, life experience and prior knowledge.

The above rubric could be reproduced for each student to assist teachers with determining areas of strength and weakness in this unit of study. It also gives some indication of where students might be during this unit, and the direction we want to take them over the course of the unit.

This unit was adapted from a TC Unit of Study by Annie De Lucia and Jill Fay (students, spring 2008).

POETRY

Overview

While getting your students ready to study poetry for ISTEP, the main focus will be on:

- understanding the big meaning of a poem
- what a poem demonstrates or teaches
- recognizing, naming and considering the effect of figurative language and other poetic devices
- understanding the structure of a poem and its significance

You will want to gather a packet of poems containing various structures and forms of figurative language. Also include poems that require your students to infer the subject and big meaning of the poem and infer the symbolism of a part or line.

Big Meaning of Poetry

- Before reading a poem, readers get our minds ready for reading by asking, "What do I need to be looking for as I read this poem? What do I know about how poems are written?" Then, with these thoughts in mind, we will begin reading.
- Readers can determine the subject of a poem by reading the title, looking at any illustrations, and reading the poem, asking, "What is this poem mainly about?", "Who or what is this poem describing?"
- Readers think about the title of a poem and hold the title in our mind as we read down the page. We continue to ask ourselves, "What does the title seem to mean now?"
- Readers can understand poems better by using our own words to describe/retell the poem. We can do this by rereading small sections of a poem until we can say in our own words what each section is about. We can ask, "What is this about? What is happening here? What is the idea in this section?" Readers may jot our thoughts in the margins or on post-its to keep track of our thinking.
- When reading poetry, readers think across the sections of text and about the possible connections by asking ourselves, "How does this part fit in with what I read before? If it doesn't fit in, how can I fill in with my thinking so that there is a connection between the parts?"

- When reading poetry in partnerships or groups, readers begin to interpret poetry by asking ourselves, "What is the tone or emotion of the poem?", "Which images are particularly important?", "Which repeating lines, phrases or words are worth thinking more about?", and "Which words or phrases are confusing and need more investigation?"
- Readers read and re-read the final lines of a poem to try to understand how these lines make sense with every part of the text. Readers ask ourselves, "Does the ending of this poem offer new insight into the rest of the poem?"
- Readers use imagery to better understand a poem by making a picture in our minds with the poet's words. We can do this by reading a section of a poem, stopping and asking (with eyes closed if necessary), "What am I picturing right now?", "What have I seen before that this makes me think about?"

Structure and Format of Poetry

Readers look at the poem and how it appears on the page and determine how it affects the meaning of the poem.

- Readers notice the structure of the text by looking at how the poem appears on the page and asking, "What stands out in this poem?", and "What does the poet want the reader to see?"
- Readers of poetry can determine how form influences the meaning by looking at the length of a poem and the style and size of the font. Then we can ask, "Why is it important that the poem is this long?", and "How is the meaning influenced by this font?"
- Readers notice the shape of a poem and ask ourselves how the shape influences our interpretation of the poem: "What does this shape make me think about?" "How does this shape affect the meaning of this poem?"
- Readers notice the white space or blank space around the poem and ask ourselves, "How does this space affect our interpretation of the poem?", "If there is a lot of white space around the poem, perhaps it suggest a setting of emptiness or silence. If the words are crowded onto the poem, the poem might suggest a setting of chaos or noise."
- Line breaks create a visual and rhythmic pause; they also place emphasis on the last word in a line of poetry. Readers begin to notice how line breaks are used in poetry and ask ourselves, "Why is that word being emphasized?", "Does this word influence the meaning of the poem?", "Does this word change my thinking in any way?"

Poetic Devices

Readers look for, find, and discuss examples of poetic devices.

In groups or with a partner, readers find and discuss examples of poetic devices by asking, "What techniques is the poet using and how do these techniques affect the meaning of the poem?"

Teacher note: Some poetic devices to notice, discuss, and specifically teach, depending on the needs of your students and the devices they are more likely to encounter on ISTEP:

Metaphor

Simile

Personification

Rhyme

Rhythm

Repetition

Alliteration

Onomatopoeia

Voices

Capitalization/punctuation

- Stanza breaks are like the chapters, section markers, or paragraph breaks of poems. Readers read these breaks as signals of a change and ask ourselves, "Has there been a shift in an idea?", "Is there a new voice speaking?", "Has time passed?", "Is there a new image?"

- Readers of poetry determine if the form/rhyme scheme reinforces the meaning of the text by asking ourselves, "Why are *these* words the words that are being repeated?", "What do these words have to do with the story, ideas, or images of this poem?"

- Readers try to stretch their talk about one poem for as long as possible by thinking about and discussing ideas like:

This makes me wonder if...

Part of me agrees with this, but another part of me thinks that...

This text seems to want me to think...but other texts want me to think...

This unit was adapted from the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project and many outstanding teachers at Brown County School Corporation.

April/May Genre Book Clubs

(Historical Fiction, Fantasy, and Science Fiction)

Reading Fiction Overview

With *fiction* work, your read-aloud prompts and teaching points will tend to focus on activating background knowledge, the characters' traits, the challenges the main character faces, how he/she resolves these problems, how the character changes, lessons the text teaches and the main idea of a text.

Read-Alouds

During your read-alouds, you will want to provide your students to opportunity to activate background knowledge, and determine: the characters' traits, the challenges the main character faces, how he/she resolves these problems, how the character changes, lessons the text teaches and the main idea of a text. You'll also want to show them how to assess the text before reading; make plans for their reading, how to move across the pages (including any pictures) and how to learn new words from context clues.

You can demonstrate on a chart how to synthesize and retell the text as main ideas and supporting information in a boxes and bullets format. They can stop and jot after each section, determining the main idea of that section. They can also stop and jot inferences as they listen: "I notice..." and "This makes me think..."

Partner work

Make sure your students have a chance to meet in partnerships every to day to talk about what they've learned about their characters and the storyline in their reading that day (Today I learned...). Having the opportunity to synthesize their learning and verbalize their theories about the character with supporting information will help create accountability and further their comprehension. When partners meet, they can use their post-its to help organize their discussion. They should often refer back to the text to support the ideas they are presenting.

- When partners discuss our answers about stories, we use evidence from the text to support our answer choice. We can show our partner the section of the text where we found and underlined the answer.

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Activating Schema, Building Background Knowledge

- Before reading a fiction story, readers get our minds ready for reading. They ask, "What do I need to be looking for as I read this story? What do I know about how fictional stories tend to go?" Then, with these thoughts in mind, we will begin reading.
- Readers preview the text to get our minds ready to read. We look at the title and pictures of the text, skimming across the pages and asking, "What type of text is this? How is this text set up? What is this text about?" Then, with these thoughts in mind, we will begin reading.

Character Traits

- Readers grow ideas about the characters in our stories. We pay special attention to the way a character talks. We re-read the character's words out loud, paying special attention to the words the character chooses, their tone of voice, and the expression the character would have used in the story. Then we can ask, "What does this tell me about my character?", writing our thoughts on a post-it note.
- Readers can understand our characters better. We compare them to someone similar that we know (friends, family, teachers, etc...). We can think hard, asking, "Who does this remind me of?" Then, we can use that knowledge to predict what our character might do in the story, thinking, what would the person I know do next? Would my character do the same thing?
- Readers can infer the character traits of a character. We pay special attention to the way a character talks, paying special attention to the words the character chooses, their tone of voice, and the expression the character would have used in the story. Then we can ask, "Based on what I just read, what kind of person is this character?", or "What kind of person would do that?" We try not to describe our character in one word, like "She's nice", or "She's quiet." Instead, we try to push ourselves to have more specific and detailed ideas about our character, asking, "What else can I say about my character?", and "What do I really mean by that?" and using more words to express our ideas.
- Readers can understand our characters better. We notice and infer details about our characters' internal and external character traits. We pay close attention to the clothing, mannerisms, and gestures of our character and asking, "What does this tell me about my character?", and "What does this make me think my character worries about and hopes or wishes for?"
- Readers support our ideas with evidence from the text. We say, "When my character did ..., it made me think ... ", or "I think ... because ... ".

- Readers learn more about our characters. We pay close attention to their actions towards others. When we discover our characters interacting with other characters, we can ask, "Why did they treat each other that way?", and "Why did they just do that?"
- Readers read tentatively, knowing that our initial thoughts about our characters might be wrong or have changed. We periodically stop and ask, "Does what I'm reading confirm or change my thoughts about my character?" "How does this new information change what I think?"

Character's Problems

- Readers of fiction read closely, looking for the problems the characters face. We read a little bit, stopping and asking, "What problems are these characters facing?" Then we can ask, "In what way could this problem affect my character?" We can keep track of our thinking by writing the problems our characters face in the margin of the story.
- Fiction readers read closely, looking for how our characters solve their problems. We look back at our notes on what problems the characters faced and asking, "How did my characters solve these problems?", or, "What did he/she do to solve their problems?" We can then underline the section of the story that shows where the characters resolved their problems.
- Fiction readers read closely, looking for how our characters change throughout the story. We stop occasionally to ask, "How is my character acting differently from before?" "What is different about my character's actions, thoughts and emotions at this point in the story?" We can then say, "At first my character was ..., but now my character"
- Readers can infer the wishes and desires of our characters. We look at what they work hard at and spend their time on. We can use those observations to infer by saying, "This makes me think...", and "This shows that what my character really wants is"

Lessons and Main Ideas in Fiction

- Good fiction readers read alertly, looking for the lesson the text teaches. We stop throughout and at the end of the story to ask ourselves, "What was the author's purpose for writing this text? What lesson did the author want to teach me? What did the author want me to feel?"

- Good fiction readers read alertly, looking for the big or main idea of the text. We stop throughout and at the end of the story to ask ourselves, "What was the main idea of this text? What was it mostly about? What was the author's purpose for writing this text?"
- Readers can find the main ideas in a story. We notice when things happen over and over again. Then we can ask, "Why does this keep happening?", "Why does my character keep doing this sort of thing?", and "Why is this so important to the story?"
- Readers can infer the lesson from a story. We look at what a character has achieved in the story. We can ask, "What has my character achieved?", "What did my character learn from this achievement?", and, "What does this teach me?"

Sequence of events

- Readers can follow the sequence events in a story. We make a timeline of the important events. We can pause after we've read the story to retell the important events that happened, using time order words such as first, next, then and finally.

Vocabulary

- Readers can figure out the general meaning of an unfamiliar word. We envision what's happening in that part of the story and using our mental pictures to help find a synonym for the unfamiliar word. They read a passage, stopping and thinking, "What am I picturing is happening now in the story? Based on what I'm envisioning, what do I think that word might mean?"

Historical Fiction

Overview of Historical Fiction Unit

In this unit, students will work on activating, building, and using their background knowledge to help them relate to the time period of their story. Students will be fine-tuning their envisionment skills by learning to read closely to find details that will enhance their visualization. They will also learn to revise what they envision as more details are given. Students will use envisionment, inference, and empathy to grow ideas about the world and way of life for their characters and the challenges and conflict resulting from their worlds and lifestyles.

The teaching points in this unit will tend to fall into the following categories:

Background Knowledge

Envisionment

Growing Ideas about Characters

Inference

Synthesis

*Sixth grade did not initially have historical fiction as a unit of study. As a result, they did not have book sets for it. The following unit uses historical fiction focusing on or around the American Revolution. The same principles and ideas can be used with any historical fiction time period. The 5th grade book order placed contains 12 sets of 4 books for historical fiction book clubs. This should allow each student to read at least 2 books in their book club, while they keep another book going for independent reading. The list of the historical fiction book club titles is at the end of this document. The remaining books for 5th grade historical fiction are individual copies. These individual copies are included for the following reasons:

- Use as a read-aloud. It is best not to let students, at this time of the year, read anything much beyond an "T" on their own. While many children can decode and do have comprehension skills at higher levels, it is best to allow these kids to read a book in which they will not stumble in any way so as to work on deeper comprehension strategies
- Match them up with copies you already have in your classroom library and/or with your teaching partner so as to have additional sets of partner books and/or book clubs.
- Find out which books work best for you in teaching historical fiction and include additional copies in future book orders.
- These can also be a student's independent book to have when not in a book club.

*You will need to make sure the students understand how book clubs work. They will need to set a goal with a post-it so no one reads ahead. This is when they will have their independent book with them so if they finish early, they will not be just sitting there.

Alignment with Standards for 5th Grade:

- 5.1.1 Read aloud grade-level-appropriate narrative text (stories) and expository text (information) fluently and accurately and with appropriate timing, changes in voice, and expression.
- 5.1.2 Use word origins to determine the meaning of unknown words.
- 5.1.4 Know less common roots (*graph = writing, logos = the study of*) and word parts (*auto = self, bio = life*) from Greek and Latin and use this knowledge to analyze the meaning of complex words (*autograph, autobiography, biography, biology*).
- 5.3.2 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.
- 5.3.3 Contrast the actions, motives, and appearances of characters in a work of fiction and discuss the importance of the contrasts to the plot or theme.
- 5.3.4 Understand that theme refers to the central idea or meaning of a selection and recognize themes, whether they are implied or stated directly.
- 5.3.5 Describe the function and effect of common literary devices, such as imagery, metaphor, and symbolism.
 - Symbolism: the use of an object to represent something else; for example, a dove might symbolize peace.
 - Imagery: the use of language to create vivid pictures in the reader's mind.
 - Metaphor: an implied comparison in which a word or phrase is used in place of another, such as *He was drowning in money*.
- 5.3.8 Identify the speaker or narrator in a selection and tell whether the speaker or narrator is a character involved in the story.
- 5.3.7 Evaluate the author's use of various techniques to influence readers' perspectives.

Alignment to Standards for 6th Grade:

- 6.1.2 Read aloud grade-level-appropriate poems and literary and informational texts fluently and accurately and with appropriate timing, changes in voice, and expression.

- 6.1.4 Recognize the origins and meanings of frequently used foreign words in English and use these words accurately in speaking and writing.
- 6.1.4 Understand unknown words in informational texts by using word, sentence, and paragraph clues to determine meaning.
- 6.3.1 Identify different types (genres) of fiction and describe the major characteristics of each form.
- 6.3.3 Analyze the effect of the qualities of the character on the plot and the resolution of the conflict.
- 6.3.3 Analyze the influence of the setting on the problem and its resolution.
- 6.3.6 Identify and analyze features of themes conveyed through character, actions, and images.
- 6.3.7 Explain the effects of common literary devices, such as symbolism, imagery, or metaphor, in a variety of fictional and non-fictional texts.
- 6.3.8 Critique the believability of characters and the degree to which a plot is believable or realistic.
- 6.3.9 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.

Read Aloud:

A day or two before the study begins, the teacher starts a new whole class read aloud text that has a clear historical time period and historical struggle for students to discuss. Since the majority of the book club sets are set during the Revolutionary War, it would be helpful to start with read-aloud picture books set during the Revolutionary War to help build your student's background knowledge. We recommend starting with a picture book like *Sam the Minuteman* by Nathaniel Benchley, or *Let's Ride, Paul Revere* and then moving to shorter chapter books. You might argue that these books are better suited to younger readers and it is certainly fine to select more complex ones; we only suggest the early chapter books but their brevity means that in short order, kids will be talking between texts.

Having picture books will also greatly support your students when they begin to envision the world of their own story. At the beginning of the study, the teacher will probably want to help her students think about issues of the time period that lie inside texts. As the study progresses, the teacher could help her students see how they can connect what they are learning about the historical time period in the books to what really happens in the world and

how the world is different today. It is important that the teacher reads aloud 3-5 texts across this unit.

If there are not enough multiple copies of books for kids to read them at the same time, kids can swap books that set in the same time period and talk even though only some members of the club will have read any one text.

The unit spotlights talking about and between texts and so the teacher will want to facilitate her students in turn-and-talk partnership conversations in response to the read aloud, as well as whole class conversations about those books.

This unit is a good time to emphasize the importance of accountable talk during interactive read-aloud and whole class conversations. You may want to emphasize conversational prompts such as these...

Accountable Talk Prompts for Historical Fiction

"I think this isn't fair because..."

"I can't believe that.....was so different"

"I know during this time...so I know..."

"So far in the story I am noticing...this shows me that this time in history..."

"It sounds like there are some really important events here and the author wants me to learn..."

"If I was...I would feel..."

"I think this situation could have been prevented by..."

"I'm thinking that if I were...I would try to change..."

"Why do you think that?"

"I want to add on to what..."

"Another example of the same thing is..."

"I see what you're saying..."

"What you are saying is making me change my first ideas because now I am realizing..."

"But couldn't you read this differently and say..."

"I agree..."

"I disagree..."

"I can't believe that..."

Week 1: GETTING READY TO READ and BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Readers use background knowledge to build the world of their historical fiction story.

- Readers get our minds ready to read a historical fiction story. We read the blurb on the back of the book, the author's note, any historical notes, and look at the pictures on the cover to familiarize ourselves with this new time period. Then, we ask, "From what I've read and what I've seen, what could the time period and historical struggle be for this story? Who are the characters? What else can I learn from the blurb and pictures? Readers can hold onto this information on a post-it or in their NB.

- Readers continue to get ready our minds ready to read a historical fiction story. We activate our background knowledge involving this time period. We ask ourselves these questions:

"What do I already know about this time period?"

"What do I already know about this event in history?"

"What do I know about people that lived during this time?"

"What struggles and challenges did they face?"

Then, readers can keep that information in mind as we read. We can also record these ideas on post it notes or in our notebooks.

- Historical fiction readers notice that most H.F. opens with either the historical conflict or the personal conflict. As we read, we ask, "Which type of tension/conflict does my story open with?" We can look for, write about, and talk about the type of conflict in the opening scenes of our story. Then, we can write new post-its when new information is given about the personal or historical conflict.

- Readers of historical fiction can build our background knowledge about a time period to help us build the world of the story. We read nonfiction texts relating to this time period, looking at the pictures to help envision what the setting/characters of this story might look like. We look at maps to get an idea of where this story took place. We can hold our fiction and non-fiction books next to each other, using the non-fiction book as a warm-up for reading, during breaks, or as a reference when we have questions or confusions (*not* to read the NF text the whole reading time).

- Historical fiction readers notice that most historical fiction stories have two stories taking place. The first story focuses on how the character grows and changes. The second story focuses on how the time period is changing. Readers can record their observations in their notebooks. A graphic organizer like a T chart could be helpful for comparison.

- Readers can take a deeper look at these two stories. We can ask, "How do the historical changes or conflicts impact my main character personally? What relationships do other characters have with this conflict?" Readers can organize their ideas in their notebooks using a chart or other similar graphic organizer.

Week 2: ENVISIONMENT

Readers of historical fiction envision the story to better understand historical fiction texts.

Envisioning Characters

- Readers can picture our characters in our mind. We read closely to find clues about our characters. We pay close attention to the descriptions of the clothes the characters wear, their actions, and their actual words and how they say them. Then we can think, "Based on what I've read, what am I seeing?" Readers can record their thoughts on post it notes or in our notebooks.

- Readers of historical fiction use background knowledge to make a mental picture of the character. We think of all we know about people who lived during this time period. We can activate our background knowledge by asking, "What have I seen or heard about before (on TV, movies, other books, stories from relatives, etc...) that can help me picture this character?" We record our thoughts on post it notes or in our notebooks.

- Readers can make a mental picture of the characters in our story by carefully reading the details the author gives about the character, stopping and making a picture in our minds by asking, "What would this character look like?" Readers can write a description of their character so far in their notebooks.

- Readers of historical fiction can support our visualization of our main characters with all of our information we have collected so far. We can sketch them in our notebooks. We can do this by looking back through our story at the descriptions the author has given about our characters including their clothing and specific features. We make sure to include all of the information from the author that we have collected on post it notes and notebook entries. We also use everything we know about how people might have looked during this time period. Readers can use all of this information to create a detailed sketch of their character in their notebooks.

Envisioning setting

Readers envision the setting in their story.

- Readers of historical fiction envision the setting in our stories. We use background knowledge to make a mental picture of the setting. We think of all we know about how the world looked during this time period. We can also think of what we have seen or heard about on TV, movies, and other books that can help us picture the setting. Readers can collect their ideas on post it notes or in our notebooks.
- Readers can fill in the unfamiliar parts of our mental image. We ask, "What am I missing from this mental image?" "What parts of the setting do I not see clearly?" Then, readers can think about what we've seen or read about before to help clarify our mental image. Readers can also ask our book club members, "What do you see that I do not?"
- Readers can make a mental picture of the setting in our story. As we read, we carefully look for the details the author gives us about the setting, stopping and making a picture in our minds by asking, "What would this setting look like?" Then we sketch this in our notebooks or record the information on post it notes or in our notebooks.
- Readers of historical fiction can revise our mental picture when we learn new information. We think, "How does this new information change my mental picture?" We can say, "At first I saw...but now I see that..." Readers add this new information to their sketch or to our written thoughts.
- Readers know that our pictures may differ from those of our club members, but we can use those similarities and differences to open up our ideas and talk about the images they've made in our minds. Readers ask each other, "How does your mental picture differ from my mental picture? What do you see that I do not? Does that change my mental picture?"
- Readers of historical fiction can build the world of our historical fiction story. We can compare the setting in the book to different places we have lived in, visited, or read about. We can ask, "How are the buildings different? How do the people look different? How is transportation different?" Then readers can think about how our mental image has changed.
- Readers notice when we have lost the picture in our mind. We can periodically stop and ask, "Is there something I read that I kind of understood, but not enough that I could picture it? Can I see it clearly enough that I can draw a picture of it? Am I a little confused about anything that I've just read?" Then, readers go back, re-read the confusing section and ask, "Can I envision this scene clearly now?" If readers still can't see the mental picture, we can talk to the members of our group to share our thinking and gain new insights from group members.

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- Readers can figure out what unfamiliar words in historical fiction stories mean. We can envision what's going on in that part of the story and use that to help find a synonym for the unfamiliar word. We read the passage, stop and think, "What am I picturing is happening now? Based on what I'm envisioning, what do I think that word might mean?" Readers can record our conclusions on a post it note and check with our book clubs when we meet.

WEEK 3: GROWING IDEAS ABOUT CHARACTERS

Readers gain a deeper understanding of the central issues in the story. We look closely at and empathize with the characters and their relationships and challenges.

- Readers identify with the characters in our books. We pay close attention to how they act, what the characters say, and the dialogue tags to determine the characters' emotions. Then, we can think, "Based on what I've read, how do I think this character is feeling?" and keep track of the character's emotions by noting them on a post-it.

- Readers can empathize with the characters' feelings. We read the post-it with a character's feelings and then read on with that feeling in mind so that we can feel what the character is feeling alongside the character.

- Readers can connect to a character. We think of a time when we acted or felt the same way or when we were in a similar situation. Then, we can think, "How did *I* feel when that happened? Why did *I* act or feel the way I did? Knowing how I acted or felt, what is my character probably feeling at this time?" Then, we can write these thoughts on a post-it or in our notebook.

- Readers hold on to important characters and relationships. We keep track of characters that are mentioned frequently and their relationships to others. We can do this by asking, "Who is this character? How do they fit into the story? What is the relationship between these characters?" Then, readers can keep track of the characters and their relationships by noting them on post-its or in our notebooks.

- Readers can get to know our characters better. We pretend we are the character in the story- putting ourselves in his/her shoes. We can close our eyes, pretend we are the character and look around and ask, "What do I see?" Make up every little detail using what you already know and what you can guess. Tell your partner (or jot in your notebook) what you are seeing (I see...). Then we can also think, "What is my character thinking right now?"

- Readers make judgments or theories about characters. We think of how we judge people in real life. We notice how the characters act and respond in different situations and then decide what those actions make us realize about that character.

- Readers of historical fiction infer how the historical time period affects the characters. We ask, "What challenges does my character face because they live in this time period? What challenges do they face because of who they are (race, gender, etc..)?"

- Readers can infer ideas about our characters. We look at how the characters respond to problems. We can ask:

What does my characters' response to this event say about him/her?

What else could my character have done instead?

Why did he respond the way he did?

When my character did _____ it made me think _____.

What consequences would my character have faced for these (different?) actions?

How might my character solve this problem?

We can also respond by saying, "I can't believe...I'm angry that...I wish he'd..."

- Readers can get to know the characters in our stories better by trying to understand the actions of the characters even if we don't agree with them. We can ask, "Knowing what I know about this time period and the problems my characters face, why are they acting this way? Why would they have done/said that? Based on what I know about people during this time period, what would I have done differently?" Then, we can write our thoughts on post-its or in our notebooks.

- Readers can organize our thinking about what causes characters to act the way they do. We make a web with the characters name in the middle and all of the different influences on his behavior around the sides. We can ask, "What factors influence how my character acts? Is my character influenced social, family, power, age, gender, or race issues?" Then we can record these.

Week 4: INFERRING and SYNTHESISING

Readers think about issues of power among groups and between characters and make inferences to build ideas about the time period and the characters and their actions

- Readers can grow ideas about the issues during the time period of our story. We think about the power struggles during this time period. We can ask ourselves, "Who has power in this story? How do they keep their power? How are people or communities resisting this

power?" Then, readers can also examine which people have power to change the situation and ask, "What could the characters have done to change this?"

- Readers can make inferences about the inner plot of a story. We pause after major events and asking, "What do I think is *really* going on right now? What was the author's purpose for including this event? What do I notice characters doing that even *they* don't realize they're doing?"

- Readers can then push our thinking further and asking, "How do I think what just happened will affect my character?"

- When historical fiction readers read a clue about the time period, we can infer information about the time period. We ask,

"What does this detail tell me about this time period?"

"What does this detail tell me about life for people who lived during this time?"

"This makes me think that people living then..."

OR... We can push our thinking about the clues we find. We can ask/write in NB/discuss the information below with group members:

What happened in the story	What this tells me about the historical time period	What my mental picture of this looks like
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Readers learn to make inferences in our reading by thinking about what the text tells us but does not say in words. We find a section about our character or a historical event and saying, "It says _____. This makes me think _____."

- Readers (synthesize) grow ideas about the historical time period of their book. We read closely, looking for new details about life during this time period and how people interact with their environment. We accumulate these details on post-its or lists in their NB.

- Readers keep track of the historical sequence of the story. We write new events/actions on a timeline. We make two timelines: one that contains the significant events in our main characters' life (from the personal story) and another that contains the significant historical events.

- Readers can grow ideas about the historical conflicts during the time period of our story. We think about how these conflicts affected people living during this time. We can ask,

"What issues were people dealing with at this time?"

"How were people involved in this historical conflict?"

"How was my character involved in this conflict?" (a bystander, active hero, unwilling hero)

- Readers look back at their initial thoughts about the story and think about whether or not they have changed. Also, we think about what caused those changes. We periodically stop and ask;

"Does what I'm reading confirm or change my thoughts about my character or this historical time period?"

"How does this new information change what I think?"

"Why have my thoughts changed?"

"What happened in the story that changed my thinking?"

"What happened to the character that changed my thinking?"

- After reading, readers think about the factors that caused the events of the story and ask, "How could this situation have been prevented?"

- After reading, we can think about the conflicts of the time period and how those events and conflicts have shaped our world today. We can ask, "How is the world different today as a result of those conflicts?", and "What has our society learned from this time period?"

- Readers can use their reading to affect social change. We think of what they have learned about social issues and injustices from this historical fiction story. We can think, "Is anything like this happening in the world today? What could I do to change it?"

This unit was adapted from the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project.

Fantasy or Science Fiction Unit

Overview of Book Clubs

In a book club, members usually read duplicate copies of the same books, progressing through the texts in sync with each other. This means that members of any club need to be fairly well matched by reading level. The groups profit if members are diverse by gender, ethnicity, and ability to engage in book talks. Usually teachers combine several partnerships to form a club, with four and occasionally six members. Sometimes, however, for one reason or another, a group of children has a hard time working together or staying in sync as readers, and it's not unheard of for a club of four readers to become two clubs of two readers. And some clubs are twosomes from the start.

Book clubs provide us with another opportunity to push our readers to read more. Book clubs rely on members having read to the same point in their texts. This means that members of a club need to make and keep deadlines, saying, "By Wednesday, let's read up to Chapter Six." Are children who read levels M and N reading at least three or four books a week? If children are reading level T texts, are they finishing at least one of these in a week? If not, then be aware that your reading curriculum may be getting in the way of your kids' reading development. Be sure children carry books between home and school, devoting time most evenings to reading. It's not uncommon for book clubs to jettison reading, so this is a time when reading logs are especially important.

Book clubs rely upon children being able to develop an idea while reading the book at home, jotting the idea down, and then bringing it to school the next day, to the conversation. If your children have not yet become accustomed to writing as a way to capture their own ideas, if they're not holding on to their ideas in this fashion, you'll want to help children use writing as a way to think about reading. You may institute a ritual of giving readers a bit of time after they've read and before they talk to look over the text and review their notes in order to "get ready for their talk."

How Read-Aloud Can Support Talk During Book Clubs (and Partnerships)

We hope that all year long, you've read aloud and you've involved children in interactive book talks afterwards. If you haven't done a lot of work with whole-class conversations around the read-aloud book, highlight these now. The read-aloud work you do in this unit will probably revolve around 2-3 read-aloud texts of varied lengths in the genre the class is studying.

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Usually we first read aloud a picture book or a very short chapter book, then progress to longer texts.

If you're moving your students into clubs right away in this unit, you may ask children to sit with their book club members during read-aloud time. When they turn and talk in response to the read-aloud, they can now do so with their club members, getting yet another opportunity during the day to talk with each other. This also gives you another chance to coach them as they talk within their club. We often feel constricted in our book club conferences when we aren't familiar with the texts students are reading—the fact that we know the read-aloud book under discussion helps us feel more effective in our coaching. Encourage children to extend each other's ideas with conversational prompts such as, "I agree with...", "Another example is...", or "To add on..." They should value debate and be able to question each other's claims, asking, "Where do you see evidence of that?" and saying, "On the other hand..."

After children talk in their clubs about the excerpt you've just read aloud, you'll convene a whole-class conversation. It's not hard to teach children to stay with and elaborate on each other's ideas after they are in a whole-class conversation. Try transcribing parts of their talk and then using the transcript as a teaching tool. During a mini-lesson, you can ask children to learn from a particular strength in the transcript, and a particular need as well. Of course, as children become more skilled at talking about the read-aloud, you'll want to be sure they're talking in similar ways in their book club conversations.

It's really important that in the book clubs in your class, children are accumulating information within and across their shared texts. Encourage club members to ask, "How does my knowledge of this character build from one page to the next, one chapter to the next? What other texts have I read in my life that can help me understand these texts?" You may also encourage children to use clubs as a time to explore vocabulary that they do not understand. Researcher Harvey Daniels suggests keeping a club word-list, with children collaborating to develop definitions for the words they collect, and then trying to thread those same words through their book talks. Certainly, you'll encourage the class to draw on the word chart described earlier, containing specific words for character traits.

Launching Clubs

Once you launch clubs, you'll need to decide how to divide up the reading workshop time. One system that works well is for clubs to meet for the second half (or third) of the reading workshop and to meet on two or three days a week, with the mini-lesson supporting the reading work and the mid-workshop teaching point supporting the talk work children do in their book clubs. You'll also need to decide how much time to give to talk versus reading. If children are reading forty-five minutes each night, you can devote as much as 30% of the reading workshop to talk. If they aren't reading that much at home, you'll need to reserve

more class time for reading. Then, too, you'll need to decide whether all the clubs will meet at the same time, with other times set aside for quiet reading, or will you stagger the clubs? If all children are talking at the same time and all are reading at the same time, this lessens your chances to support their talking, but helps with noise. For more suggestions and details about establishing book clubs in your reading workshops, see Chapter 20 in Calkins' *The Art of Teaching Reading*.

The Genre Study

Your first decision will be the genre you and the children will explore. Your class could read mystery, realistic fiction, historical fiction, or fantasy. We do not recommend poetry or short texts as children need to be reading great volumes of text. Your next decision is content. What is it you aim to teach? That is, if you invite your whole class to spend the month engaged in a shared study of a genre, keep in mind that although *the children* will think the focus on the unit is on a kind of text—say, mysteries—*you* will know that your real goal is to promote the reading skills, strategies and habits that will help children whenever they read anything. That is, a unit on mysteries gives you a wonderful chance to teach readers to read closely, collecting and synthesizing clues...and this is how a reader reads any book, not just a mystery. A unit on historical fiction gives you a chance to teach readers to synthesize elements of story, thinking not just about the setting but about how the setting effects the characters and the plot...and this work is universally important for all readers of stories. Before your genre-based work begins, then, you need to decide on the reading skills you plan to highlight within the unit of study.

Fantasy or Science Fiction: Envisionment, Monitoring for Sense, Identification with Characters, Synthesis

In choosing to study fantasy or science fiction with your class, you are giving children an invitation to journey to other lands and other times. You are inviting children to travel to worlds that authors have created and to create their own fantastical worlds in the writing workshop. Whether it's stretching their powers of imagination by envisioning strange creatures in strange landscapes, or deepening their understanding of characterization by studying heroes and their nemeses, every challenge that fantasy or science fiction poses will push your readers and writers to find new ways of seeing, new ways of interpreting, and new ways of expressing themselves.

Establishing Goals and Plan the Content of Your Teaching

As you approach this unit, you might be tempted to pull out a textbook on children's literature, one which is loaded with definitions and lists. Children's literature books---and the people who have read them—are full of talk about the different kinds of fantasy or science fiction stories, the different kinds of heroes, the different elements in all of these stories and so forth and so on. Be careful! You are not teaching a children's literature course! You are

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teaching *reading*. Your goal is not for children to know all about components and kinds of fantasy or science fiction stories. Instead, your goal is for these genres to help your children become hooked on reading. Your goal is the Harry Potter Phenomenon all over again. You are hoping that your whole class can become enthralled by books, reading them in great gulps, reading them all day long and by flashlight after they are supposed to be in bed.

Teachers, become accustomed to looking at your own classroom during reading time, asking, 'Is this what real readers—people in my life who love reading and are good at it—do when they read? If not, is this bringing my kids a whole lot closer, anyhow, to doing what real readers do?'

If your answer is no, then you need to revise your teaching. It is a very big problem if our teaching of genre gets in the way of kids actually reading! It is a very big problem if our teaching of fantasy or science fiction prevents books from working their magic.

So, begin by thinking of your goals. You no doubt want children to understand that lots of readers of fantasy or science fiction books carry those books with them always, reading them in stolen moments all day long, reading vastly more in a day than they have ever read. Lots of times, fantasy or science fiction readers are series readers. We often read the books in sequence (largely because we are always waiting for the next to be released, and when it is we rush to get hold of it.).

Then you need to decide which reading skills you want to develop in this unit, and to be sure that you assess those skills several times in the unit so that your teaching is deliberately designed to support skill development. Of course, you can teach envisionment within this unit. If you wish to assess your kids abilities to envision prior to the unit, you may want to acquire the Higher Level Comprehension Assessments the Project has developed (check the website). That is, dozens of teachers have helped the TCRWP take three stories (at Levels K, R, and V) and insert questions into them which lead readers to do bits of writing-to-reveal-their-envisioning. Teachers College has created a continuum of proficiency, and extrapolated specific skills which need to be developed in order for a reader to envision well. Above all, children need to go from literal to inferential envisioning. They need to not only see whatever the words of the story explicitly *say*, but to also see what those words *suggest*. This involves bringing their own experiences to bear, filling in the gaps of the text.

If you are clear that most of your children are reading in a literal fashion, then you may decide that in this unit, you will be helping them develop more inferential envisionment. To do this, you will need to teach them to draw on prior knowledge (which could be extra challenging when reading fantasy or science fiction books because they have NOT typically been in places like these.). You need to teach them to read between the lines, letting bits of precise information convey more than meets the eye. If the text says, "The sun was peeking over the horizon as I..." then the proficient reader not only sees the sun, this reader also knows it is

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morning and hears the morning sounds. Children may be hesitant to fill in the gaps as they read fantasy stories because these worlds and characters are products of the author's imagination, but you can help them to realize there will be internal consistencies within the text. If the boys all have flatheads and a new character—a male—appears on the scene, the skilled reader gives that male character the requisite flathead.

This work will carry over into their writing as well. If your children start out by writing in their notebooks about their imagined lands, they may work in partners or in their book clubs during writing workshop time to read each other's work, using envisioning skills in reading to support descriptive writing and work with "show and tell." If there is not enough detail in a writer's draft for a reader to envision a full picture, the writer may revise to fill in the missing pieces. If a notebook entry building the world of the story reads, "The dragon lived at the end of a long road in a dark cave," partners may add to this by saying, "I'm picturing a twisty, thin road with weeds growing alongside it."

Of course, you may decide to focus on reading skills other than envisionment. For example, you can use this unit as an opportunity to revisit the content you taught in your unit on character, only this time doing so in a fashion which helps readers integrate and synthesize all the elements of the story in order to understand the reasons *why* characters act as they do. That is, you could spotlight the fact that as good readers, we know our characters and the worlds they live in so well that we understand why characters act as they do, even if we do not always agree with their decisions. Such a unit could support the skills of inference, synthesis and prediction (if we understand why our characters act as they do, inferring causes and effects, then we can use this to help us make truly informed predictions.) The unit would be challenging because readers of fantasy or science fiction can't simply rely on our own personal responses and on empathy in order to understand why characters act as they do—the characters in a fantasy or science fiction story live by the rules and values of another world. To understand the character's decisions, a reader needs to ask, "What rules do these characters live by? How are the 'rules' of this culture different than (and similar) to those of my culture?" Readers might want to ask, "Who has power in this world?" We can teach them to pay attention to any legends or folklore that might be mentioned early in the book as a way to know more about the belief systems of the characters. This work can flourish especially if children are reading across a series.

You could, of course, forward entirely different skills. You could use this as a time to teach readers to respond personally to the stories they read, and to use personal responses as the starting point towards reading with empathy and towards prediction. If you made this choice, you would help readers understand that although the worlds in their stories are different than our worlds, there are lots of ways in which characters are similar to us. Even though the world of the story is fantastic, children can still discuss how they identify with the characters' traits, problems, and motivations. You can teach them to notice that even heroes

have more than one side to them, and that even heroes have internal conflicts. While the situations and settings of fantasy are not within the students' lived experience, the inner lives of the characters should resonate.

Launching the Unit

Why not start your unit by talking about the world-wide phenomenon of Harry Potter or Star Wars? Tell children that Harry Potter books are not all that unique after all, for they instead represent a phenomenon of our times.

Presumably, early on in the unit you'll forward the goals you have selected. You may also want to help readers bring their knowledge of these genres to bear on their reading. Often, in fantasy books, the hero of the book will embark on a quest, which is introduced early and resolved in part or in whole by the end of the book. You can teach children to pay close attention to the introduction of the quest, to the obstacles that tend to mount as the hero starts out, and to what helps her make it through in spite of all that stood in her way. In read aloud or in coaching into clubs, you will want to show how we can read quest narratives metaphorically: we don't know what it's like to have to fight a dragon, but we do know what it's like to have to face up to a bully even when we want to just walk away. We can start to ask ourselves: what are our dragons? What are our quests? This work will greatly support the students in their initial crafting of story lines for their fantasy writing. Once they see that the internal conflicts of the hero are realistic and familiar, they are less likely to create unlikable, unbelievable characters in their stories.

These genres are often confusing so you'll want to be sure readers monitor for sense. Time travel can be confusing. The use of different perspectives can be confusing. You may want to teach this unit with an emphasis on the importance of reading for sense and of monitoring for confusion. You may want to teach children that they carry with them a tool kit of strategies (such as rereading, talking with other readers, reading on with a question in mind) for responding to confusion.

No matter how you decide to angle this unit, it will help you to know a bit about fantasy or science fiction. Just be careful to use this information sparingly, following the 'Add flour slowly, stirring all the while' advice. If this is your children's first experience in these genres, it is probably enough for most of them to know that in these stories, there are good guys and bad guys. On the other hand, if children have studied fantasy or science fiction before and you want to make it seem like this will be an All-New and Advanced unit, you may want to sprinkle in an extra dash of terminology.

Reading Aloud to Support this Unit

Depending on the skills you decide to highlight, your reading aloud might be interspersed with turn-and-talk prompts such as these:

- "The setting in this book is so unusual! I'm trying to get a picture in my mind, but it is confusing. Let me see....what do I picture? Umm...Turn and tell each other about what picture you have in your mind."
- "He seems to be our hero, and I'm thinking he might be a good hero. Ummm...Let me think what qualities make me think that....Ummm...Turn and tell each other what you are thinking?"
- "So we've noticed that there's a battle going on between good and evil. I'm trying to think what's going to happen pretty soon. Ummm...Turn and tell your partner what you are thinking."
- "There are a few secondary characters. I know we read to think about the roles they're playing? Why is X in this story anyway?"
- "This part seems really confusing... turn and talk to your partner about what's going on? Turn and talk."

Alignment with Standards for 5th Grade:

- 5.1.2 Read aloud grade-level-appropriate narrative text (stories) and expository text (information) fluently and accurately and with appropriate timing, changes in voice, and expression.
- 5.3.7 Identify and analyze the characteristics of poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction and explain the appropriateness of the literary forms chosen by an author for a specific purpose.
- 5.3.8 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.
- 5.3.9 Contrast the actions, motives, and appearances of characters in a work of fiction and discuss the importance of the contrasts to the plot or theme.
- 5.3.10 Understand that theme refers to the central idea or meaning of a selection and recognize themes, whether they are implied or stated directly.
- 5.3.11 Describe the function and effect of common literary devices, such as imagery, metaphor, and symbolism.
- 5.3.12 Evaluate the meaning of patterns and symbols that are found in myth and tradition by using literature from different eras and cultures.

Alignment with Standards for 6th Grade:

- 6.1.2 Read aloud grade-level-appropriate poems and literary and

informational texts fluently and accurately and with appropriate timing, changes in voice, and expression.

- 6.3.1 Identify different types (genres) of fiction and describe the major characteristics of each form.
- 6.3.4 Analyze the effect of the qualities of the character on the plot and the resolution of the conflict.
- 6.3.5 Analyze the influence of the setting on the problem and its resolution.
- 6.3.10 Identify and analyze features of themes conveyed through characters, actions, and images.
- 6.3.11 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.
- 6.3.12 Critique the believability of characters and the degree to which a plot is believable or realistic.
- 6.3.13 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.

Week 1: Envisionment

- Readers envision the setting of their book. We create pictures in our minds of what the author describes. We notice when the writer tells us what the character is seeing, hearing, or touching. We also notice when the writer is describing the weather or what a place looks like. We read a bit, stop and ask, "What details did the writer just give me that will help me see where I am in the story?" Then, we close our eyes, use the details, and see the place. Readers jot down this information on post it notes or in their notebooks.
 - Readers continue to envision the setting of their book. We connect previous personal experiences with details from the book. We think or ask ourselves: "What have I done? Where have I been? What have I seen that my book reminds me of? What fairytale have I read that can help me visualize? We envision our past memory and ask, "What is the same or different from my memory to my book? What should I change in my mental picture and what can I keep the same?" Readers note these changes and any new information on post it notes or in their notebooks.

- Readers envision characters in their books. We create pictures in our minds of what the author describes. As we read, we imagine our character as we answer the following questions: What does he look like? What does he sound like? How does he act when engaged in a particular activity? How does your character move, talk, interact with others? We jot down these ideas on post it notes or in our notebooks.
- Readers add important information to our mental picture to make it come alive.
 - Readers pause often in our reading to add to our mental picture. We stop in our reading and add new details to their current mental picture. Readers pause and ask, "What new information have I been given that might change what I am seeing? How does this new information change my mental picture? Readers add this new information to their previous post it notes or entries in their notebooks.
 - Readers use their prior knowledge to make the movies in their mind brighter and more meaningful. We use this prior knowledge to develop our pictures' details by asking ourselves; "What have I seen? Where have I been that relates? What can I add to my movie? What is missing? Readers may ask themselves, what video games or television shows have I seen that can assist me in making my envisioning come alive? Readers write down their thoughts on post it notes or in their notebooks.
 - Readers know that our pictures may differ from those of their club members, but we can use those differences and similarities to open up our ideas and talk about the movies they've made in our minds. Readers ask each other, how does your mental picture differ from my mental picture? What did you see that I did not? Does that change my mental picture? How does that change my mental picture? Readers add new ideas and information to their previous post it notes or in their notebooks.
 - Readers revise their mental image as they are presented with new information from the book. Readers tell ourselves; At first I saw _____, but now I see_____. They record this information on a post it note or in their notebook.
- Readers read between the lines to envision their text. We fill in what the writer leaves out. We let bits of precise information convey more than meets the eye and make more out of what the writer is telling us. Readers tell ourselves, "Because I know that _____ looks like _____, I can now also see _____."
- Readers will notice consistencies between our world and the text, and use that information to fill in gaps within the text. For example, if the text says, "The sun was peeking over the horizon as I..." then the reader not only sees the sun, the reader also knows it is morning and hears the morning sounds.

- Readers notice when things between our world and the book are the same and use that info to fill in the gaps within the text. As we read, we ask, "Does this exist in the real world? If saying so, what all do I know would be true?" Then, we add all of that new information to our mental picture.

Week 2: Monitoring for Meaning

- Readers hold onto important characters and relationships in their stories. We keep track of characters that are mentioned frequently and their relationships to others. Readers ask ourselves, who is this character, how do they fit in to the story? (Readers can do this in their reader's notebooks)
- Readers reconnect to the story before they begin reading each day. We retell the main things that have happened in the story so far.
 - Readers ask ourselves, what do I remember from yesterday? What was happening when I left off? What are the main events that have happened so far?
 - Readers talk with their group to retell the main things that have happened so far. Readers ask each other, what was happening when we left off? What are the main events that have happened so far?
 - Readers get their minds back into the story. We reread part of the last chapter and asking ourselves, what do I remember from yesterday?
- Readers collect information that we have missed during the first read. We go back and reread when we are in the middle of the book, to clarify the new information.
 - Readers ask ourselves, "Did I see miss something that needs more clarification? Could I reread a section or chapter of the book and get a better understanding of what is happening in the book now?"
 - Readers ask ourselves, is this part of the story confusing? Does the story make sense so far?
- Readers notice small things in the story that have great meaning. We step out of our books and looking in at the big picture to grow big ideas. Big ideas need supporting evidence. Readers gather that supporting evidence from rereading our text and asking ourselves, "Does this piece of the story have greater meaning? What might that greater meaning be? What is the author really trying to say here?" Readers record these thoughts and information on post it notes or in our notebooks.

- Readers extend their reading into the world. We ask ourselves, "What is this story about? Why did the author write this story? What was he/she trying to say?" Readers record these ideas on post it notes or in our notebooks.
- Readers look at the big theories in the story for connections to our lives. Readers also look at the lack of connections to our lives. We ask, "What part do/don't I connect to in this book? How do/don't I connect?" Noticing the connections, or lack of connections, will bring deeper meaning of the story into our own lives. Readers ask what have these big ideas taught me about myself and the world? Readers record our thoughts on post it notes or in our notebooks.
 - Readers keep thinking about their books even after they are done reading them. We encourage others to read our book. Readers ask themselves, "How would I describe this book to someone else? Why do I think other should read it? What should I say that would convince someone else to read it?"

Week 3: Identification with Characters

- Readers get to know the characters in their stories. We pay attention to the author's description of a character in order to create a mental image that allows us to grow ideas about the character. Readers pause in our reading to create a visualize image asking ourselves, "What does the character look like? What does the character sound like? How does your character move? How does the character interact with others? What does this character desire? What kind of qualities does this character possess? Is he good? Is he evil? " Readers collect these ideas on post it notes or in our notebooks.
 - Readers look at the importance of the character within the story asking ourselves, "How is this character significant to the story? What kind of impact is this character going to have on the story? Why is X in this story anyway?" Readers record the answers to these questions on post it notes or in our notebooks.
- Readers look at how the physical and emotional environments affect a character. We look at the big picture and how it is impacting our character. Readers pause often in our reading to notice both the physical and emotional settings of a story. Readers ask, "How is it impacting the character? What is the emotional setting of the story? How is this affecting the character? What kind of effect does the physical setting of the story have on the characters?" Readers record what they notice in their notebooks. We can record the information on a T chart for each of the settings. On the left side of the chart, we can write physical/emotional setting. On the right side, we can write about how it affects the character.

- Readers notice changes/growth and turning points in their characters throughout the story. Readers anticipate changes in the main character. Readers can look for clues that point towards a character change whether it is subtle or easily seen. Readers ask ourselves, "How is the character changing? How is this event in the story going to change my character?" Readers can mark places where change is visible with a Post-it.
 - Other characters are also affected by the actions and changes in the main character. Readers look for places in the story that show how the main character has caused the other characters to change. Readers consider the emotions our characters feel during major changes or turning points throughout their journey. We can track these emotions at major turning points by writing in our reader's notebooks.

- Readers pay close attention to the different relationships that characters have in their books. We notice characteristics about relationships between the characters. Readers learn about the main character by observing how other characters treat him or her. Readers ask ourselves, "How is this character treating the main character? How is this character treated compared to the other characters?"

- Readers notice how the relationships their characters have develop or change the book. We put ourselves "in the shoes" of the main character to understand why characters act as they do.
 - Readers pay attention to any legends or folklore that might be mentioned early in the book as a way to know more about the belief systems of the characters. Readers ask ourselves, "What rules do these characters live by? How are the rules of this culture different than and similar to those of my culture? Who has power in this world?"
 - Readers imagine ourselves "in the shoes" of the character and ask ourselves, "Does the relationship surprise me?"
 - When readers are "in the shoes" of their characters, they ask ourselves, "How would I react to this situation? What would I do? How would this relationship make me feel?"
 - Readers stop while they are reading, check their mental pictures of the relationships, and use what they see to understand the story.
 - Readers stop to ask themselves, "Knowing what I already know about the character, what might the main character say right now?"

Week 4: Synthesis

- Readers develop new understandings from reading a book. We put together information from the text and from the reader's own background knowledge in order to create better understanding about their book.
 - Readers pause often in their reading and think about what they have read and about what background knowledge they already have in that area.
 - Readers acquire new information to add to what is previously known and reorganize our existing information. We ask ourselves, "How does this new information change what I previously thought?"
 - Readers encounter new ideas, and weigh them against what we already know and decide whether to change our current understanding about our story. We ask ourselves, "Is this new information enough to make me change my mind about X?"
 - Readers pause in their reading and ask ourselves, "What is the author really trying to say here? Why did the author include this in the story? Does this passage in the story have another deeper meaning?"
 - Readers pause in their reading to notice small things that have big meaning. We ask ourselves, "Does this piece of the story have greater meaning? What might it be, or what is it a symbol for?"

Possible Fantasy Books to Use:

- The Shrinking of Treehorn (Florence Parry Heide)
- The Paper Bag Princess (Robert N. Munsch)
- The Wreck of the Zephyr (Chris Van Allsburg)
- Everyone Knows What Dragons Look Like (Jay Williams)
- The Midnight Unicorn (Neil Reed)
- Clever Ali (Nancy Farmer)
- Merlin and the Dragon (Jane Yolen)
- Dove Isabeau (Jane Yolen)
- The Once Upon a Time Map Book (B.G. Hennessy)
- Tatsinda (Elizabeth Enright)
- A Book of Narnians (C.S. Lewis)
- The Last Days of Gorlock the Dragon (Done Arthur Torgersen)
- Dragon (Jody Bergsma)
- The King's Equal (Katherine Paterson)
- Dr. Merlin's Magic Shop (Scott Corbett)
- Pretty Good Magic (Cathy East Dubowski & Mark Dubowski)
- Water Wishes (Mallory Loehr)
- Earth Magic (Mallory Loehr)
- With Magical Horses to Ride (Winifred Morris)

- Dinotopia - Thunder Falls (Scott Cienein)
- Well Wished (Franny Billingsley)

Possible Science Fiction Books to Use:

- Anna to the Infinite Power (Ames, Mildred)
- Children of the Dust (Lawrence, Louise)
- The Ear, the Eye, and the Arm (Farmer, Nancy)
- Enchantress From the Starts (Engdahl, Sylvia)
- Eva (Dickinson, Peter)
- The Giver (Lowery, Lois)
- Interstellar Pig (Sleator, William)
- Stinker From Space (Service, Pamela)
- The White Mountains (Christopher, John)
- A Wrinkle in Time (L'Engle, Madeleine)

SOURCES:

*Some of this curriculum was taken word-for-word from the Teachers College Curriculum Calendars.

Around the Reading Workshop in 180 Days by Serafini

The Art of Teaching Reading by Lucy Calkins

Conferring with Readers by Goldberg

Teaching for Comprehension and Fluency: Thinking, Talking, and Writing About Reading, K - 8
by Fountas and Pinnell

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Curriculum Calendars and Sample Units of Study

Reading Poetry

Unit Overview

The focus of this poetry unit is to have students begin to feel comfortable and confident in reading and interpreting poetry. The lessons in this unit will support the writing workshop poetry unit if the teacher chooses to teach the reading and writing of poetry at the same time. Students tend to write better poetry if they are also reading poetry closely at the time. The immersion phase of this unit can be tied to both reading and writing workshop. In the immersion phase students are asked to begin noticing the different text structures and poetic devices that are being used in poetry; at this point some student may know the technical terms for these devices and some may not. The teacher may choose to rename the student terms and begin a chart of the poetic terms. As students begin to acclimate themselves to reading, listening, and interpreting poetry the teacher will want to define the poetic terms on the on going classroom chart.

Although the focus of this unit is reading poetry, reading poetry will not take up the entire reading workshop time, students should still be given time to do their independent reading in their just-right books (outside of poetry). Towards the end of the unit students will begin applying their poetry reading strategies - imagery, personification, alliteration, white space, rhythm etc... to their everyday reading strategies. Students will need to continue in their reading partnership or clubs throughout the poetry unit. This will allow for students to hear different perspectives and interpretations of poems.

Alignment with Standards

- 5.1.1 Understand and explain the figurative use of words in similes and metaphors.
- 5.3.1 Identify and analyze the characteristics of poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction and explain the appropriateness of the literary forms chosen by an author for a specific purpose.
- 5.3.5 Describe the function and effect of common literary devices, such as imagery, metaphor, and symbolism.

- 6.1.1 Read aloud grade-level appropriate poems and literary and informational texts fluently and accurately and with appropriate timing, changes in voice, and expression.
- 6.1.2 Identify and interpret figurative language and words with multiple meanings.
- 6.3.3 Define how tone or meaning are conveyed in poetry through word choice, figurative language, sentence structure, line length, punctuation, rhythm, alliteration, and rhyme.

- 6.3.6 Identify and analyze features of themes conveyed through characters, actions, and images.
- 6.3.7 Explain the effects of common literary devices, such as symbolism, imagery, or metaphor, in a variety of fictional and nonfictional texts.

Materials:

- A variety of different poetry books, or packets of poetry that cover a wide variety of topics and styles and lengths of poetry. Poems should be somewhat matched to reading levels.
- A folder of poems that students bring to class, poems they know, like, love, find interesting
- Poetry CDs so students can listen to poetry
- Some novels that are written in verse form
- See back page for TC suggestions for reading poetry collection

Poetry Unit- Reading

Adapted from Audra Robb and the Secondary Staff Developers, Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, teacher

Week 1-Immersion

Readers make observations and notice the features of poetry.

- Readers make observations of what kinds of subjects poets write about. We look at the title and read the poem. We ask, "What is this poem mainly about?" or "Who or what is this poem describing?" We also look at the illustrations for clues about the subject?
- Readers notice the structure of the text. We look at how the poem appears on the page and ask, "What stands out in this poem?" or "What does the poet want the reader to see?"

(Teacher Note: text structures that students may notice:)

- Length of poem
- Font size and style
- Shape of poem
- Poetic forms, such as sonnet, sestina, villanelle, etc...
- Line breaks and white space/ stanza breaks
- Punctuation/capitalization
- When reading poetry readers notice the sounds of poetry by asking, "How did the poet want this poem to sound?" and "How does the poet indicate this to the reader?"

(Teacher Note: sound techniques that students may notice.)

- Rhyme
- Rhythm
- Repetition
- Alliteration
- Onomatopoeia
- Assonance

Readers learn to read poetry aloud

- When readers read poetry aloud we use line breaks, sentence punctuation, and stanza breaks to help us know when to pause in our reading of the poem. Line breaks are indications of slight pauses. Ending punctuation indicates a longer pause. Stanza breaks may indicate either a slight or longer pause.
- Readers understand that we can use our voice to show the emotion or mood of the poem. We try different tones of voice and ask ourselves if this feels like the right sound for this poem.
- When performing poetry readers use their voices to show the listener what is important in the poem. We emphasize different words to illustrate this importance.
- When reading poetry out loud readers try to read at a pace that is appropriate to the poem. We use clues from the text like punctuation, spacing, and white space as indications of how fast or slow to read.

Week 2:

Readers interpret the poems we are reading.

- When reading poetry in partnerships or groups, readers begin to interpret poetry. We ask ourselves, "What is the tone or emotion of the poem?", "Which images are particularly important?", "Which repeating lines, phrases or words are worth thinking more about?", and "Which words or phrases are confusing and need more investigation?"
- Readers break poems into small sections to read and reread until we can say in our own words what each section is saying. We ask ourselves, "What is this about?", "What is happening here?", "What is the idea in this passage?". Readers may jot our thoughts in the margins to keep track of our thinking, or use a post-it or notebook as a place to keep track of our thinking.
- When reading poetry readers think across the sections of text and about the possible connections between the sections. We ask ourselves, "How does this part fit in with what I read before, if it doesn't fit in how can I fill in with my thinking so that there is a connection between the parts?"
- Readers think about the title of a poem and hold the title in our mind as we read down the page. As we continue to ask ourselves, "What does the title seem to mean now?"

- Readers read and re-read the final lines of a poem to try to understand how these lines make sense with every part of the text. Readers ask ourselves, "Does the ending of this poem offer new insight into the rest of the poem?"

Readers notice how story elements, ideas and issues, and imagery help them to read for a deeper meaning in their poem.

- When reading poetry readers notice when a poem has a story inside of it or if an event or sequences of events is being retold. We also pay close attention to see if the conflict will be resolved or if we will be left in suspense. We ask ourselves, "What is happening in this story?", "How will the ending affect me as a reader?"
- Readers of poetry notice when the poem introduces a character. We notice names or pronouns like "I," "he," "she." We can think about the "persona" in a poem. We ask ourselves, "What kind of person is this?", "What does he/she want?", and "What kind of relationship does this character have with others?"
- Readers notice when the poem takes place in a specific setting. We think about the imagery in the poem and making a picture in our minds with the poet's words. In order to understand what it might feel like to be in that particular setting, we may also ask ourselves, "How does the "persona" in the poem feel in this setting?"
- Readers notice when a poem offers ideas and we always try to understand and respond to the ideas and issues in a poem. We talk to our partner or group or write in our notebooks about whether we agree or disagree with the ideas and or issues the poet offers and why. Readers of poetry recognize that a poem is offering an idea when we ask ourselves, "Are any keywords or phrases being repeated?", "Is the poet or "persona" expressing an opinion?", "Is part or all of the poem dealing with issues that exist in the world?", "Are there any lines in the poem that can be lifted out of the poem and applied to life in general?"
- Readers can push themselves to say more about the ideas in the poem. We ask ourselves, "How is this idea the same or different from other ideas on this same topic?", "Where have I heard this kind of thinking before?", "What parts of the poem support this idea?", and "What evidence can we find in the world to support this idea?"
- Readers read more than one poem and think about common themes among the poems. We look for key issues or emotions that appear in both texts and talking about what each text has to say about those issues or emotions, compare and contrast.
- Readers may notice that more than one image or idea is compared in a poem. Readers try to say everything we can about both parts of the comparison. We ask, "Why are these two images or ideas brought together?", "What do they share?"

Week 3:

Readers look for, find, and discuss examples of poetic devices.

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- In groups or with a partner readers find and discuss examples of poetic devices. We ask, "What techniques is the poet using and how do these techniques affect the meaning of the poem?"

Teacher note: Some poetic devices to notice and discuss

- Metaphor
- Simile
- Personification
- Rhyme
- Rhythm
- Repetition
- Alliteration
- Onomatopoeia
- Voices
- Capitalization/punctuation

Readers look at the poem and how it appears on the page and determine how it affects the meaning of the poem.

- Readers of poetry can determine how form influences the meaning. We look at the length of a poem and the style and size of the font.
- Readers notice the shape of a poem and ask ourselves how the shape influences our interpretation of the poem.
- Readers notice the white space or blank space around the poem and ask ourselves, "How this space affects our interpretation of the poem?", "If there is a lot of white space around the poem perhaps it suggest a setting of emptiness or silence, if the words are crowded onto the poem, the poem might suggest a setting of chaos or noise."
- Line breaks create a visual and rhythmic pause; they also place emphasis on the last word in a line of poetry. Readers begin to notice how line breaks are used in poetry and ask ourselves, "Why is that word being emphasized?", "Does this word influence the meaning of the poem?", "Does this word change my thinking in anyway?"
- Stanza breaks are like the chapters, section markers, or paragraph breaks of poems. Readers read these breaks as signals of a change and ask ourselves, "Has there been a shift in an idea?", "Is there a new voice speaking?", "Has time passed?", "Is there a new image?"
- Readers of poetry determine if the form/rhyme scheme reinforces the meaning of the text. We ask ourselves, "Why are these words the words that are being repeated?", "What do these words have to do with the story, ideas, or images of this poem?"

- Readers notice how poets use capitalization and punctuation in poetry and ask ourselves if the conventions affect our understanding of the poem.

Week 4 :

Readers listen to what poetry sounds like when read aloud.

- Readers begin to notice how poetry sounds and how poets use different sound techniques to help create a setting for the poem or make connections to images and ideas in the poem. Readers listen for harsh sounds, soft sounds, and other sounds that evoke emotion and ask ourselves, "What other sounds of the poem add to our ideas and understanding of the poem?" Rhyme, Rhythm, Repetition, Alliteration, Onomatopoeia, Voices

Readers make connections to poetry.

- Readers notice when a poem offers ideas about an issue in the world. They use the poem to talk about the world, and they use examples from the world to bring new meaning to the poem. When we move back and forth between talking about the text and talking about the world, we stretch our thinking about both the text and the world. Readers can start this thinking by paying attention to characters and their issues, if the poem tells a story, places where the text uses key terms or images that remind us of big issues. Example: Images of nature might point to environmental concerns.
- Readers look for symbols in poems as a way to make more of the text. There may be one image that is repeated that becomes symbolic throughout the text: there may be multiple images that go together and make up a system of symbols. We can push ourselves to think about these connections. We ask ourselves, "What do these images remind us of?", "What do they seem to stand for in the world?", and we can think about what the text is saying about the symbolized subject.
- Readers try to stretch their talk about one poem for as long as possible. We think about and discuss ideas like: This makes me wonder if... Part of me agrees with this, but another part of me thinks that...This text seems to want me to think...but other texts want me to think...

Readers make connections between poetry and their everyday reading

- Readers begin to make connections between poetry and everyday reading. We notice the imagery authors use in books and ask ourselves, "How does this author use words to help me create pictures in my mind?" Readers notice how the authors choose different font style and size in prose and ask ourselves, "Why did the author want me to notice this writing?", "Has something changed, like the character, the setting, the time, am I hearing the character's inner thoughts?" Readers notice that authors of prose also use metaphors, similes, alliteration, repetition, etc... to create images for the reader, and emphasis important points by asking ourselves, "How has this author's comparison of this

person to this object helped me better understand the character?" and "Has this been said before by other characters in my book?"

Some Possible Culminating Reading Projects:

We may ask students to create one of the following projects to demonstrate their thinking about the poems they have read.

A performance of a favorite poem plus a conference in which the student talks about why this poem is important and what it is saying.

An annotated diagram of a poem that generated excellent conversation for a partnership or group: the poem can be centered on a piece of chart paper, with arrows connecting specific lines to specific comments that students made.

Integrated Reading/Writing Poetry Anthology: an anthology of poems, some original (written by the students) and some selected by the student. Students write an introduction explaining the connection between the poems.

Tape-recorded conversations: Students tape record their reading of a poem and the conversation that follows.

Poetry Slam: Students could invite parents (or other classes in the school, or another school in the building) to attend either an in-school open-mike poetry slam. Students can create a café-like environment and observe conventions of poetry cafes, such as snapping instead of applause and performances following each other in a spontaneous way.

Poetry Clubs: Students could invite parents (or other classes) to attend either in-school or after-school poetry talks. Students could select poems worth talking about and lead small group discussions with students and parents, demonstrating the strategies they have practiced in class of stretching thinking and pushing conversations to deeper level.

Some Suggestions for Poetry Reading

Easier Texts:

Honey, I Love, and Other Love Poems, by Eloise Greenfield

Joyful Noise: Poems For Two Voices by Paul Fleishman

The Sun is On, by Linda Michelle Baron

All the Small Poems and Fourteen More, by Valerie Worth

Rimshots: Basketball Pix, Rolls, and Rhythms, by Charles R. Smith Jr.

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A Suitcase of Seaweed and Other Poems, by Janet S. Wong
Water Music: Poems for Children, by Jane Yolen

Mid-range texts:

Celebrate America: Poetry and Art by Nora Panzer, ed.
Selected Poems of Langston Hughes, by Langston Hughes
Salting the Ocean, by Naomi Shihab Nye
Heart to Heart: New Poems Inspired by Twentieth Century American Art, by Jan Greenberg,
Quiet Storm: Voices of Young Black Poets, by Lydia Omolola Okutoro, ed.
Poems From Homeroom: A Writer's Place to Start, by Kathi Appelt
Hopscotch Love: A Family treasury of Poems, by Nikki Grimes
You Hear Me: Poems and Writing by Teenage Boys, by Betsy Franco, ed.
Things I Have to Tell You :Poems and Writings by Teenage Girls, by Betsy Franco, ed.

More Challenging texts:

Slow Dance: Heart Break Blues, by Arnold Adoff
I, Too, Sing America: Three Centuries of African American Poetry, by Catherine Clinton, ed.
What Have You Lost, by Naomi Shihab Nye
Paint Me Like I Am: Teen Poems from WritersCorp, by Bill Aquado, ed.
Poetry For Young People Series, (Introduces students to classic poets)
Selected Poems by E.E. Cummings, by Richard S. Kennedy, ed.
Poems to Read: A New Favorite Poem Project Anthology, by Robert Pinsky, ed.

Novels Written in Verse: *Some mature content*

Locomotion, Jacqueline Woodson
Make Lemonade and *True believer*, by Virginia Euwer Wolff
Meet Danitra Brown and *Bronx Masquerade*, by Nikki Grimes
Love that Dog and *Heartbeat*, by Sharon Creech
Jump Ball: A Basketball Season Poems, by Mel Glenn
Stop Pretending: What happened When My Big Sister Went Crazy, by Sonya Sones
What My Mother Doesn't Know, by Sonya Sones
Out of the Dust and *Witness*, by Karen Hesse
Worlds Afire, by Paul B. Janeczko
Girls Coming in for a Landing, by April Halprin Wayland
This unit was adapted from the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project.