

## Dear Family Member,

Welcome to our next unit of study, “Every Story Has Characters.”

We are beginning our second unit in the Benchmark Advance program. As a reminder, each three-week unit features one topic. As with the previous unit, I am providing suggested activities you and your child can do together at home to build on the work we’re doing in class.

In this unit, your child will explore how characters differ in various ways, from the way they look to the way they act. For example, in the fable “The Tortoise and the Hare,” students discover that the tortoise is patient and hardworking while the hare is boastful. Your child will also discover how characters in realistic fiction differ from one another just as people in real life are not all the same. Your child will think about how he is like and different from the characters he reads about. The selections include a variety of genres, including animal fantasy, fables, poems, and realistic fiction.

I’m looking forward to this exciting unit, exploring with your children the wide range of characters we encounter in literature. It will be fun to discover how the children connect with the various characters as well as recognize how the characters in different stories are alike and different.

As always, should you have any questions about our reading program or about your child’s progress, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

# Every Story Has Characters

In this unit, we'll read fables and other genres of fiction featuring a variety of characters, and think in depth about the question "How are characters different?" Here are some activities designed to continue the conversation about characters, to build on the skills and concepts your child is learning in school. I know exploring this topic together will be fun for both of you!

## Topic Connection

### Character Twenty Questions

Play the game "Character Twenty Questions" with your child, or with your whole family. Unlike the traditional game, players must choose only characters, not places or things. Invite your child to think of a favorite character from a book, movie, TV show, etc. The character can be real, fictional, or fantastical, but your child should not say who it is aloud. Next, ask your child yes/no questions about the character, such as "Is he or she an animal?" "Is the character from a book?" Keep asking until you guess who the character is. Then switch roles so that you think of the character and your child asks questions.

## Vocabulary Connection

### Behaviors in Action

Your child is learning new words associated with characters' actions or how they behave, such as **crawled, roared, laughed, cried, walked, raced, argued, growled, whispered, grumbled,** and **barked**. Review the meaning of these words with your child by acting them out together. Discuss where you've seen these actions before, both in stories and in real life. As you go about your daily activities—playing at the park, shopping at the market, visiting the library—encourage your child to keep on the lookout for these behaviors in action.

## Comprehension Connection

### Compare-a-Character

Your child will be reading a variety of well-known stories featuring a range of characters, from the angry bears in "Goldilocks" to the hardworking and underappreciated Little Red Hen. Making connections between self and characters helps readers better understand characters and their actions, which supports overall comprehension. Encourage your child to consider which of the characters she or he is most like, and why. Divide a sheet of paper in half. Label one side with the character's name and your child's name on the other. Then help them write down or draw the similarities.

## Phonics Connections

### I Spy a Sound

In this unit, your child is learning and practicing the /s/ sound, as in *snake, sing,* and *soup* and the /t/ sound, as in *turtle, toes,* and *tomato*. Choose one of the two letter sounds, or both, for an extra challenge, and play I Spy a Sound by identifying words you hear during the day that begin with that sound.