



Grade 1 - Unit 2 Reading - Understanding Characters and Story Structure

Unit Focus

In *Understanding Characters and Story Structure*, students explore how characters' thoughts, feelings, actions, and experiences shape stories and help readers better understand themselves and others. Through rich literary experiences and character-centered discussions, students learn to compare characters, analyze motivations, and recognize how challenges and emotions influence behavior. As students study recurring themes and patterns across texts, they begin to think deeply about author choices and the lessons stories communicate. This unit also encourages students to make meaningful connections between literature and their own lives while strengthening empathy, comprehension, and narrative understanding.

Instruction is grounded in the Science of Reading, integrating systematic instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and writing development to support the growth of skilled, confident readers and writers. Students engage in structured literacy instruction through Heggerty, which provides daily practice in blending, segmenting, and manipulating sounds in spoken words; Foundations, which provides explicit instruction in phonics, handwriting, high-frequency words, and encoding; Bookworms, which supports vocabulary, comprehension, oral language, and knowledge building through shared reading and interactive read-aloud experiences; and Geodes, which provides connected-text practice that allows students to apply taught phonics skills while building fluency and confidence.

Students engage with high-quality texts that build knowledge, vocabulary, comprehension, and oral language while supporting close reading of grade-level standards, including *Pig the Pug* by Aaron Blabey, *Clark the Shark* by Bruce Hale, *Ladybug Girl* by Jacky Davis, *The Pigeon Will Ride the Rollercoaster* by Mo Willems, *Betty Bunny Wants Everything* by Michael B. Kaplan, *Jabari Jumps* by Gaia Cornwall, *Stand Tall Molly Lou Melon* by Patty Lovell, *Olivia the Pig* by Ian Falconer, *Fancy Nancy* by Jane O'Connor, *The Invisible Boy* by Patricia Barton, *Danny and the Dinosaur Goes to Camp* by Syd Hoff and *The Memory Jar* by Vera Boscal. Students will also read the following books by Kevin Henkes: *Chrysanthemum*, *Lilly's Purple Purse*, *Weekend at Wendalls*, *Sheila Rae the Brave*, *Wemberly Worried*, and *Chester's Way*.

Stage 1: Desired Results - Key Understandings

Standard(s)	Transfer	
Common Core English Language Arts: 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Ask and answer questions about key details in a text. (CCSS.ELA-LITERATURE.RL.1.1)Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson. (CCSS.ELA-LITERATURE.RL.1.2)Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details. (CCSS.ELA-LITERATURE.RL.1.3)Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses. (CCSS.ELA-LITERATURE.RL.1.4)Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events. (CCSS.ELA-LITERATURE.RL.1.7)Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories. (CCSS.ELA-LITERATURE.RL.1.9)Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using frequently occurring conjunctions to signal simple relationships (e.g., because). (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.1.6)	<i>Students will be able to independently use their learning to...</i> T1 Accurately and fluently decode words in order to comprehend and make meaning of a wide range of texts.	
	Meaning	
	Understanding(s)	Essential Question(s)
	<i>Students will understand that...</i> U1 Decoding strategies support accurate and fluent reading, which supports comprehension. U2 Monitoring comprehension and adjusting when something doesn't make sense is essential to understanding text. U3 Analyzing a character's traits, actions, words, and feelings helps them understand how the character influences events in a story. U4 Studying an author's work helps us see patterns in writing and understand an author's purpose.	<i>Students will keep considering...</i> Q1 How do I use what I know about sounds, letters, and patterns to read this text? Q2 What clues in the text and my background knowledge help me understand what I read? Q3 What tools can I use when I get stuck on a word or don't understand something I read?

Stage 1: Desired Results - Key Understandings

- Distinguish long from short vowel sounds in spoken single-syllable words. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.1.2.A)
- Orally produce single-syllable words by blending sounds (phonemes), including consonant blends. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.1.2.B)
- Isolate and pronounce initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes) in spoken single-syllable words. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.1.2.C)
- Segment spoken single-syllable words into their complete sequence of individual sounds (phonemes). (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.1.2.D)
- Decode regularly spelled one-syllable words. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.1.3.B)
- Read words with inflectional endings. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.1.3.F)
- Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.1.3.G)
- Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.1.4.A)
- Read grade-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.1.4.B)
- Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.1.4.C)
- Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion). (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1.A)
- Build on others' talk in conversations by responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1.B)
- Ask questions to clear up any confusion about the topics and texts under discussion. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1.C)
- Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.1.4.A)
- Define words by category and by one or more key attributes (e.g., a duck is a bird that swims; a tiger is a large cat with stripes). (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.1.5.B)
- Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., note places at home that are cozy). (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.1.5.C)
- Distinguish shades of meaning among verbs differing in manner (e.g., look, peek, glance, stare, glare, scowl) and adjectives differing in intensity (e.g., large, gigantic) by defining or choosing them or by acting out the meanings. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.1.5.D)

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- Analyzing: Examining information/data/ evidence from multiple sources to identify possible underlying assumptions, patterns, and relationships in order to make inferences. (POG.1.2)

U5 Applying knowledge of new vocabulary deepens understanding of text.

Q4 How can the words I know help me understand what I read?

Acquisition of Knowledge and Skill

Knowledge

Students will know...

K1 Distinguishing long and short vowel sounds, blending and segmenting phonemes (including consonant blends), and decoding regularly spelled one-syllable words and words with inflectional endings supports accurate reading.

K2 Some words are irregularly spelled and must be recognized by sight.

K3 Reading with purpose, accuracy, and expression supports understanding of a text's meaning.

K4 Elements of story structure (character, setting, problem, solution).

K5 Language used to describe character traits and motivations.

K6 Comparing and contrasting characters' adventures and experiences can deepen understanding of stories.

K7 Words and phrases in a story, along with illustrations and details, can suggest feelings and help describe characters, settings, and events.

K8 Following discussion rules, listening carefully, taking turns, building on others' talk, and asking clarifying questions are important for collaborative conversations and understanding texts.

K9 Foundations & Heggerty:

- Phoneme manipulation
- Phoneme segmentation and blending
- Consonant digraphs
- Bonus letter spelling rule
- Glued sound -all, -am, -an
- Baseword and suffix with the suffix -s
- Pluralization
- Capitalization and punctuation

Skill(s)

Students will be skilled at...

S1 Decoding grade-level words using phonics and word analysis strategies.

S2 Reading and writing sight words.

S3 Reading texts with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression.

S4 Retelling a shared story using character, setting, problem, and solution.

S5 Identifying character feelings and traits based on actions feelings, thoughts, and dialogue.

S6 Comparing and contrasting characters' adventures, experiences, and traits to deepen understanding of stories.

S7 Making predictions before and during reading and supporting those predictions with evidence from the text.

S8 Identifying the most important part of the story using text evidence.

S9 Monitoring comprehension and use strategies when understanding breaks down.

S10 Making text-to-text connections during an author study.

S11 Interpreting words and phrases, including figurative language and subtle shades of meaning, to clarify meaning and enhance comprehension.

S12 Using illustrations and details in a story to describe characters, settings, and events.

S13 Using accountable talk to discuss ideas about texts