Dear Family Member,

Welcome to our next unit of study, "Characters Facing Challenges."

Just as in real life, characters in literature are faced with challenges they must overcome. In fact, that's the theme of our second unit. As we read tales and poems from around the world, we'll be meeting characters from classic tales, including King Midas from the Greek myth and Yeh-Shen, the heroine of the first "Cinderella"-type tale, from ancient China.

The characters in our selections need to overcome some hardship, sometimes brought on themselves, and sometimes by others. In each, they must find a way to solve their problems. Sometimes, as in the tale of Yeh-Shen, another character, a talking goldfish, comes to her rescue. However, more often than not the characters learn valuable lessons. For example, the milkmaid from an Aesop's fable and a boy from today, competing in a running race, learn about the downside of daydreaming.

What follows are some activities you and your child can work on together. I look forward to working together as partners this year. Should you have any questions about our reading program or about your child's progress, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Characters Facing Challenges

Here are some activities designed to continue the conversation about the challenges and to build on the skills and concepts your child is learning in school. Hopefully, you'll even have some fun, too, as you work together!

Topic Connection

Talk It Up!

As you and your child are watching television, eating dinner, or driving to soccer practice, talk about different kinds of challenges. You can bring up the challenges a TV character might be facing or you can discuss one of the challenges you've faced over the years. Ask about the issues your child might have with friends or at school. What would the characters in our selections do? What lessons can be applied to your own life?

Vocabulary Connection

Act Out Those Adjectives

In this unit, students will meet some colorful characters and learn many new vocabulary words that describe their traits and behaviors, including several adjectives: **jealous, puzzled, clumsy, graceful, spoiled.** Discuss the meaning of each word. Write each word on an index card, shuffle the cards, then take turns picking one of these words, and acting it out. Bonus: List some other words (synonyms) you might use for these adjectives.

Comprehension Connection

What Happens Next?

An important reading skill is being able to make reasonable predictions, based on information in a text. To reinforce this skill, read a story or folktale with your child. Stop after the introduction and ask your child questions like: What do you think this story will be about? What clues can you find to tell you what the character is like or how the character will solve his or her problem?

Phonics Connections

The "I's" Have It

In our phonics instruction, students are reading words that have the *long i* sound, including constructions that have *i, ie, y, and igh*. To help your child gain fluency reading this letter and letter combinations, try the following activity. See how many words with a long "i" sound you can come up with by brainstorming together. Look around the house, open up a book. Below is a list of some words from the unit to help you get started.

Firefly, Spider, liked, night, flies