*English Instructional Plan – Characterization Grade 4*

**Primary Strand: Reading 4.5**

**Integrated Strand/s: Communication and Multimodal Literacies 4.1, 4.3**

**Essential Understanding:**

All students should:

* understand the elements of fiction (i.e., characters, setting, plot events)

**Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes:**

To be successful with this standard, students are expected to:

* explain how illustrations and images contribute to and clarify text
* describe a character’s traits, feelings, and actions as presented in fictional texts
* describe the characters, settings, and important plot events using details
* describe how characters are developed by
  + what a character says
  + what a character thinks
  + what a character does
  + what other characters in the story say or think about them.
  + describe how some characters change and how some characters stay the same
* determine who is telling the story

**Primary SOL:**

4.5 a) Describe how the choice of language, setting, and characters contributes to the development of plot.

e) Identify the narrator of a story and the speaker of a poem.

h) Draw conclusions/make inferences about text using the text as support.

**Reinforced (Related Standard) SOL:**

4.4e Discuss meanings of words and develop vocabulary by listening to and reading a variety of texts.

4.5 b) Make connections between reading selections

i) Compare/contrast details in literary and informational nonfiction text.

**Academic Background/Language:**

Students will need to be exposed to both fiction and poetry in order to begin a deeper analysis of storytelling and characters. The narrator is the person telling the story, and can be inside the story (a character) or outside the story. This is something the students will need to be able to identify. When it comes to poetry, however, the “narrator” is referred to as the speaker, and will be someone the students should be able to describe. It is important to provide instruction on these “storyteller” terms, using question stems such as, “Who is telling the story?”, “How would you describe the speaker of the poem?”, while exposing the students to a variety of fictional texts.

When you teach characterizations, you need to explain that these are the methods by which authors communicate/reveal the attributes of characters. An attribute can be defined as a quality or characteristic of a person; and can include physical traits, feelings, opinions, motivations and effects on other characters. If character traits are the “what” of a character, then characterization is the “how” and “why” behind it. Authors can use two types of characterization to help the readers better understand the character’s behaviors and thought processes, and in turn lead the reader to a deeper comprehension of the character and how they impact the story. These two types of characterization are called Direct (telling) and Indirect (showing).

Direct Characterization, is when the author uses the narrator (or another character) to *tell* us about a character’s attributes. A question students could ask themselves is, “What did the narrator tell you about the character?” Indirect Characterization, is when the author uses the character’s actions to *show* us things about a character’s attributes. Indirect characterization is more complex, and will require the students to make inferences, which thus is a skill that should be previously introduced. “Why would \_\_\_\_ act this way?”, is one example of a question students could ask themselves to support this level of thinking. The acronym, PAIRS, can help with recall of the five approaches of indirect characterization: physical description, action, inner thoughts, reactions, and speech. Encourage students to think deeper about the character with prompts such as, “What do you know/think about the character?”, “How did you learn this?”

## Materials

* Mentor Texts - both fiction and poetry, for example Saturdays and Teacakes by Lester L. Laminack, The Day the Crayons Quit by Drew Daywatt, Dirty Laundry Pile:Poems in Different Voices selected by Paul Janeczko, poems by authors such as, Shel Silverstein, or online text such as, <https://www.commonlit.org/en/texts/the-kids-table?search_id=22743357>

or <https://www.commonlit.org/en/texts/trail-into-darkness?search_id=22743381>

* Chart paper
* Markers

## Student/Teacher Actions: What should students be doing? What should teachers be doing?

1. Hook students’ interest by telling them that you are going to revisit a class favorite (i.e. familiar text), to focus more on the character of the story. Refer to this focus as characterization, defining it as the steps authors take to highlight and explain details about a character.
2. Explain that these details are often called attributes and can include physical traits we see about the character, as well as, things we learn about the character, by hearing what they say and/or seeing what they do (their actions). Remind the students that a narrator tells the story, and sometimes can be a character of the story.
3. Choose one fiction Mentor Text that the students are familiar with, Give a brief review of the story, identify who is telling the story. Explain how you know by using prompts such as, “\_\_\_\_\_\_ is telling the story, and I know this because\_\_\_\_\_.” and then recall one character that has a strong presence in that particular text, the character could be the narrator of the story if you choose.
4. Explain to the students that you will analyze that character, by identifying attributes that the author reveals through *Characterization* (the author tells us or shows us about a character’s attributes through their words, actions, and thoughts) and provide evidence from the text to support*.*
5. On a chart paper, record the title of the text, and the name of the character you are analyzing. Create a graphic organizer, such as a Three-Column Chart, where you will list the attributes and the text evidence. Model for the students as you think aloud to identify and categorize a few attributes from the beginning of the story.
6. After modeling this process with a couple of attributes, invite the students to join in on the discussion, and as a whole group work through this characterization process to categorize and label the next few attributes. Be sure to include a question stem that will prompt the students to identify the narrator, such as “Who is telling the story?” During the discussion, encourage students to cross check the direct attributes with its supporting evidence, to determine if it is the narrator or another character that tells the reader this detail.
7. Continue to gradually release this process to the students, by having them turn to a partner to categorize some of the remaining attributes. If you choose, call on a few volunteers to share this partner work to assess the learning.
8. Next, explain to the students that you are going to take the characterization process further by determining the exact method the author uses to reveal the attributes that you have listed.
9. Introduce the students to the five methods of characterization: Physical description, Action/attitude/behavior, Inner thoughts, Reactions, Speech. If you choose, you can use the acronym PAIRS to help you recall them all for them to refer to as needed.
10. Choose one of the attributes listed on the chart paper, and model your thought process as you determine the specific method of characterization that the author used. Utilize prompts such as, “I would describe the character as\_\_\_\_, because\_\_\_.”, “How does the character feel/act when \_\_\_\_\_.”, “When the character said/did, \_\_\_\_\_ I believe he/she thought\_\_\_\_, because\_\_\_\_.”, “How do the characters interact with each other?”, “Why would the character say\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_?” Then, label that attribute by writing the letter of the corresponding method (P-A-I-R-S), next to it on the graphic organizer. You may want to highlight/underline words from the text evidence provided, that supports your thinking.
11. Gradually release this process to the students, and work through completing the chart, by determining the method of characterization for each attribute listed. If time, have the students share some of their thoughts, and/or jot one down to turn in as an exit slip, to assess their understanding.
12. Display the chart paper in the classroom for students to reference.

**Assessment (Diagnostic, Formative, Summative)**

* During a reading conference, have each student identify an attribute of one of the characters, provide text evidence of that attribute and describe the method of characterization that the author used.
* Provide each student a copy of a poem or short story. Have them read it to themselves, and then complete a graphic organizer, such as a three-column chart, identifying the narrator/speaker, a specific character to analyze and at least three attributes of that character.
* Have the students keep track on a book log, or on another source, who is telling the story/who the speaker of the poem is, for each title they read independently.
* Select a passage for the students to analyze a character. Have them circle or underline attributes of that character, highlight the evidence to support their thinking, and identify the method of characterization used by jotting the corresponding letter (P-A-I-R-S) in the margin.
* For each passage in an assessment, have the students note who is telling the story and whether the narrator is a character in the story. They can also write a brief paragraph, explaining how the story would end differently, if the narrator was a different character.

**Writing Connections:**

* Have the students choose one of their independent reading books and describe who is telling the story with examples from the text that supports their thinking.
* Have students choose a poem, or an independent reading book, identify who is speaking/telling the story, and rewrite a paragraph from a different character’s point of view.
* Ask the students to choose a character from one of the characterization charts posted in the classroom or within their notebooks. Then have them write a paragraph explaining how the character developed throughout, providing examples of the language the author used, to help the reader understand/visualize this development.

**Extensions and Connections (for all students)**

* Students can take the books they are currently reading (i.e. their personal book boxes from reading workshop, their current library books, or a basket of books from the classroom library) and read or reread the introduction of a character, in order to identify attributes and evidence following the characterization process.
* Students can take the books they are currently reading, and identify who is telling the story, and the point of view it is being told from. They can list this information, and then write a paragraph supporting their thoughts.
* Students can refer to a characterization chart/graphic organizer, from the classroom and/or their notebooks, and create a different graphic organizer, such as a venn diagram, to compare and contrast themselves with the character from that chart.
* Students can compare and contrast characters across texts, by utilizing the details of two (or more) characterization charts to create a graphic organizer.
* Students can search for additional examples of direct and indirect characterization, within the same text and/or a different text from the series/author, to further support the characterization process they have previously completed.
* Students can search for additional evidence within the same text, or a different text from the series/author, to further support or extend the characterization process they have previously completed.
* Students can compare and contrast stories that are being told by different perspectives/points of view.
* Students can rewrite a story written in third person to first person point of view, and vice-a-versa.

**Strategies for Differentiation**

* Multicultural books for mentor texts and the classroom library
* E-books, recorded audio or books on tape
* Native language text available for ELL students, both audio and written
* Access to modified text
* Modified or student choice of graphic organizer to record attributes and evidence of a character
* Provide word banks for reader’s notebooks and/or in classrooms with examples of direct and indirect character attributes
* Reteach the characterization process in small groups
* Model identifying direct and indirect attributes and evidence that supports, by sharing details/stories about who you are as a teacher, family member or friend
* Develop a matching activity, utilizing characters and attributes from familiar text/s
* Provide a list of key words or signal words that the students can use to help recognize attributes of a character within a text, and the author’s use of direct and indirect characterization
* Guide students’ thinking with additional question/sentence stems such as:
  + Is the narrator a character in the story?
  + What did the narrator tell you about the character?
  + What do you know/think about the character? How did you learn this?
  + The character is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and I know this because\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
  + How do you think the character is feeling? Why?
  + When the character said \_\_\_\_\_, it made me think he/she is/feels/thinks/wants…
  + When the character did \_\_\_\_\_\_, it made me think he/she is/feels/thinks/wants…