6.1 Narrative Writing: Challenges Facing Characters

Subject: ESL
Length: 8 weeks

Unit Summary
In this unit, students will read narrative texts about challenges that characters encounter in stories. They will apply reading and vocabulary strategies to help them understand what they read and they will use the writing process to create narrative writings.

Content Standards and Learning Expectations

Stage 1 - Desired Results

Listening/Speaking
L/S.6.4 Applies correct language patterns to identify and organize events in a variety of narrative texts and text styles.
L/S.6.5 States the main idea or topic and important details from learned concepts or read alouds of a variety of expository texts; applies understanding to summarize the text using acquired vocabulary and appropriate language structure.

Reading
R.6.2 Applies context clues, reference sources, and other vocabulary expansion strategies to assess word meaning; uses prefixes, suffixes, and root words to determine the meaning of unfamiliar and compound words.
R.6.3 Distinguishes main character from supporting characters, compares and contrasts character traits, and describes the setting in fiction.
R.6.4 Sorts and organizes relevant events, identifies cause and effect, makes predictions and inferences, and identifies problem and solution in narrative and expository text.

Writing
W.6.1 Examines spelling patterns and applies structural analysis to correctly spell words.
W.6.3 Applies the parts of speech; identifies subjects and objects using prepositional phrases in sentences.
W.6.4 Identifies elements in descriptive, narrative, and expository forms of writing; uses a variety of sentence types and basic organizational patterns to construct narrative, descriptive, and expository paragraphs.

Big Ideas/Enduring Understandings:
• Challenges are openings to new learning.
• Great narratives capture the reader’s attention from beginning to end.
• Readers use many tools to figure out unknown words.
• The writing process helps us more effectively communicate our own stories.

Essential Questions:
• How do challenges lead to new learning?
• What makes a great story?
• How do I figure out a word I don’t know?
• What makes great writing?

Content (Students will know...)
• Vocabulary expansion strategies to assess word meaning (i.e. Word Wall)
• Elements of narrative text and narrative writing: character, setting, plot, conflict and resolution
• Parts of speech (adjectives to describe character traits)

Skills (Students will be able to...)
• Identify and organize events in narrative texts
• Distinguish main characters from supporting characters in narrative fiction
• Compare and contrast character traits of characters in narrative fiction
• Describe the setting in narrative fiction
• Sort and organize relevant events to
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- Suffixes (-er, est and other suffixes that can be used to compare characters to each other)

Content Vocabulary
- Main event
- Problem/solution
- Strategies
- Main character
- Supporting character
- Setting
- Plot
- Resolution
- Writing process
- Narrative
- Text structure
- Character trait

reconstruct narrative fiction
- Identify problem/solution in narrative fiction
- Examine spelling patterns and applies structural analysis to correctly spell words (i.e. suffixes)
- Use a variety of sentence types to construct narrative paragraphs
- Summarize narrative text using acquired vocabulary and appropriate language structure (sequencing language, retelling main ideas)

Stage 2 - Assessment Evidence

Performance Tasks:

Character Trait Essays
Analyzing Characters Challenges to Determine Character Traits
- Read aloud the story, “Gonzalo”, by Paul Fleischman (See Attachment: 6.1 Text – Gonzalo) and have the class brainstorm the challenges that the two characters face.
- Have students highlight things the characters thought, said, felt, and did to overcome their challenges, using the five senses, highlight each action and place them in a four-column chart in their notebooks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things the character thought</th>
<th>Things the character said</th>
<th>Things the character felt</th>
<th>Things the character did</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Ask students to select one thing each of the characters thought, said, felt and did that best represent the characters and place their selections on the character trait chart (See Attachment: 6.1 Graphic Organizer – Character Trait Chart).
- Have students use descriptive adjectives to describe the characters traits based on the actions they took to confront their

Other Evidence:
- Spelling quiz using suffixes (See Attachment: 6.1 Other Evidence – Spelling Quiz)
- Reflective journal entries at the end of each project (See Attachment: 6.1 Other Evidence – Reflective Journal)
- Journal entries on challenges students have faced and overcome in their lives and challenges they know others to have faced and overcome
- Story Map of Gonzalo’s story (See Attachment: 6.1 Graphic Organizer – Story Map)
- Story elements quiz (See Attachment: 6.1 Other Evidence – Story Elements Quiz)
- Create a Word Wall using unit vocabulary and new concepts/words students encounter in texts they read during the unit (See Attachment: 6.1 Other Evidence – Using Word Walls to Improve Instruction)
- Fluency Running Records and Paired Reading Fluency Checks (See Attachment: 6.1 Other Evidence – Paired Reading Fluency Check)
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- Have students use their character trait organizer to write a two paragraph essay describing the character’s major traits, using examples of actions that the characters took when facing a challenge to support their argument.

- The essay should include at least 2-3 character traits and at least one piece of evidence (i.e. action) supporting each character trait.

**Sequencing Picture Books**
Analyzing sequence to understand how characters solve problems

- Read aloud the book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle *(Note: while this text is below grade level for Grade 6 students, picture books are ideal for teaching this skill. Students should practice the skill independently with texts at their appropriate reading level).*

- Explain that the main purpose of reading the book is to listen for the main events in the story in order and identify when the character (caterpillar) overcomes challenges he is facing in the book.

- After reading aloud the book, as a class, plot out the timeline of the main events in the book using sequencing language (first, then, next, after that, finally, etc.).

- Circle the point on the timeline where problem was identified, and where the caterpillar overcame the problem.

- Have students read their own books that include a character that faces a challenge and overcomes it. Ask them to draw pictures of at least five events in the book and write 2-3 sentences describing each event next to each picture.

- Assemble the pages into a sequencing picture book that includes at least five events, uses appropriate sequencing language (first, next, then, after, finally, etc.).
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- etc.), and identifies the problem and when the character solves the problem.
- Have students share their work with the class and have them do reflective journal entries to reflect on what they learned during this activity.

Writing My Own Narrative using Challenge as a Theme

- Review elements of narratives  
- Explain to students that in the story “Gonzalo,” the character Gonzalo faces the challenge of not knowing English and having to learn it when he moves to the United States.
- Have students make a list of challenges that people face when they relocate to a new country different from their own.
- Invite students to write about a fictional character (someone you make up) who moves to a new country and needs to learn how to do something in the new culture. Maybe the character needs to learn how to speak a new language, get around the new city, or find his/her way in a new school.
- Have students brainstorm titles for their stories.
- Tell students to make sure their stories have a beginning, middle and an end.
- Ask them to include details that tell how the character resolves his or her problem about how to do something. Have them use adjectives to show how the character changes through the story.
- Have students revise their stories for ideas, spelling, capitalization and punctuation (See Attachment: 6.1 Writing Tool – Peer Editing Checklist).
- Have students make two illustrations of the narrative they wrote to accompany the story. The first illustration will show the character and the problem that he/she encountered. The second illustration will show the character after the problem was resolved.
- Students can share stories aloud with class.
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**Stage 3 - Learning Plan**

**Learning Activities**

**Reading & Story Maps**
- Have students do a story map of their favorite story.
- Have students describe the elements of a narrative without saying the term and have the class identify the term. For example a student may say, “The people or animals in a story are the ______.” The class will answer, “characters.”
- Have students illustrate the main events in Gonzalo’s story and have them place the events in sequential order.

**Character’s Traits and Character’s Challenges**
- Give students a list of character traits (See Attachment: 6.1 Learning Activity – Adjectives Describing Character Traits) and have them describe the personalities of their family members. Have them explain why they use these words to describe their family.
- Compare and contrast characters or classmates using suffixes (Gonzalo is taller than Tio Juan... My mom is the kindest and prettiest woman I know... My hair is longer than Sara’s hair but Juanita’s hair is the longest in the class).
- Have students make a list of all the characters in Gonzalo’s story and have them identify them as major or minor characters and explain their choice.
- Use a Venn Diagram (See Attachment: 6.1 Graphic Organizer – Venn Lines) and the list of character traits (See Attachment: 6.1 Learning Activity – Adjectives Describing Character Traits) to write a paragraph comparing and contrasting Gonzalo and Tio Juan’s characters from the story Gonzalo.
- Have students write about a time they had to learn something new and have them describe how they solved the problem - based on the actions they took to solve the problem, have them use adjectives that describe their own character.

**Sample Lessons**
- Lesson on comparing and contrasting character traits (See Attachment: 6.1 Sample Lesson – Compare and Contrast Character Traits)
- Lesson plan on understanding characters (See Attachment: 6.1 Sample Lesson – Understanding Character)

**Additional Resources**
- Video: *Every Young Person Has Challenges, Ages 8-12: Dealing with peer pressure and other challenges* Copyright 2004 / 60 minutes
- Graphic Organizer: Problem and Solution Diagram (See Attachment: 6.1 Resource – Problem and Solution Diagram)
- Ideas and lessons on teaching challenges (See Attachments: 6.1 Resource – Describing the Unknown and 6.1 Resource – The Art of Communication)
- Traits of Fiction (See Attachment: 6.1 Resource – Traits of Fiction)

**Literature Connections**
- *The Hundred Dresses* by Eleanor Estes (character analysis)
- *Seed Folks* by Paul Fleischman (story narratives)
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- New Kids in Town: Oral Histories of Immigrant Teens by Janet Bode
- The Diary of a Wimpy Kid by Jeff Kinney
- The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie
- Little Red Riding Hood (story sequence)
- Gloria Estefan-Houghton Mifflin Traditions
- Paul Bunyan-Houghton Mifflin Expeditions