

# Unit 2 Following Characters Into Meaning and Literary Essay

Content Area: **English Language Arts**  
Course(s): **Language Arts 4**  
Time Period: **October**  
Length: **5 Weeks**  
Status: **Published**

## Unit Summary

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Students critically explore and empathize with characters while reading to expand understanding of characters' traits, motivations, struggles, and lessons. This important reading work deepens comprehension of text by teaching readers to think about characters. Students grow ideas about characters by reading quality fiction at levels determined to be at their instructional levels. Although students have experienced character study previously, this unit pushes them to go deeper, to examine characters by viewing relationships, friendships, and internal and external characteristics. The reader becomes emotionally invested with text characters, and develops a richer picture of these characters and a more complex understanding of the texts they are reading.

To write well about reading, students not only need to learn about writing, they also need to learn more about reading. Writers learn lessons by reflecting about and responding to literature because thinking and writing about literature provides life lessons through analysis of character and theme. In this unit, students usually read and study small packets of short texts, that are rich, complex and well-crafted. The students will read and re-read these stories and choose a seed idea and push their thinking about that idea by responding to prompts like, "The thought I have about this is..." or "This makes me realize that...". The students learn to become an essayist through this unit.

## Standards

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LA.RL.4.1	Refer to details and examples in a text and make relevant connections when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
LA.RL.4.3	Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).
LA.RL.4.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in literature.
LA.RL.4.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems at grade level text-complexity or above, with scaffolding as needed.
LA.RF.4.3	Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding and encoding words.
LA.RF.4.3.A	Use combined knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (e.g., roots and affixes) to read accurately unfamiliar multisyllabic words in context and out of context.
LA.RF.4.4	Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
LA.RF.4.4.A	Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.
LA.RF.4.4.C	Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.
LA.W.4.1	Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
LA.W.4.1.B	Provide reasons that are supported by facts from texts and/or other sources.
LA.W.4.1.C	Link opinion and reasons using words and phrases (e.g., for instance, in order to, in addition).
LA.W.4.1.D	Provide a conclusion related to the opinion presented.
LA.W.4.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are

appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

LA.W.4.5	With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.
LA.W.4.6	With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.
LA.W.4.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
LA.W.4.9.A	Apply grade 4 Reading standards to literature (e.g., “Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text [e.g., a character’s thoughts, words, or actions].”).
LA.W.4.9.B	Apply grade 4 Reading standards to informational texts (e.g., “Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text”).
LA.W.4.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, metacognition/self-correction and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
LA.L.4.1.A	Use relative pronouns (who, whose, whom, which, that) and relative adverbs (where, when, why).
LA.L.4.1.B	Form and use the progressive (e.g., I was walking; I am walking; I will be walking) verb tenses.
LA.L.4.1.C	Use modal auxiliaries (e.g., can, may, must) to convey various conditions.
LA.L.4.1.D	Order adjectives within sentences according to conventional patterns (e.g., a small red bag rather than a red small bag).
LA.L.4.1.E	Form and use prepositional phrases.
LA.L.4.1.F	Produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons.
LA.L.4.1.G	Correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., to, too, two; there, their).
LA.4.W.4.1.A	Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related idea the writer’s purpose.

## Student Learning Objectives

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Reading:

Students will learn to:

- understand characters by making movies in their minds and envisioning the characters' experiences.
- revise mental imagery as they read on and learn new information.
- deepen predictions by making movies in their minds of how our stories might unfold.
- connect to characters with open hearts, by envisioning, predicting, and thinking about characters simultaneously.
- notice and analyze the ways in which other characters interact with the main character.
- identify the theme of different stories.

Writing:

Students will learn to....

- to read, analyze, and discuss texts deeply.
- create an original thesis statement.

- support a thesis statement with evidence from the text.
- briefly summarize a text.
- read and re-read carefully, noticing details about the story and author's craft.
- question the text, the character(s), and the author's purpose to develop a thorough, insightful, and imaginative understanding of their reading.

## Essential Questions

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Essential Questions for Reading:

How do readers walk in other characters shoes?  
 How do readers build theories about characters?  
 How do readers grow and learn lessons alongside the characters in books they read?  
 Why do readers envision character's experiences?  
 How do readers empathize with characters and make connections to their own lives?

Essential Questions for Writers:

Why is literature significant to the reader?  
 What connections has the reader made to the text?  
 Why and how does the reader/writer generate text-supported evidence?  
 How can writing lead to deep comprehension of text?  
 What truths about human existence can texts reveal?  
 How can we use books to spark ideas for writing?

## Enduring Understandings

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Reading Enduring Understanding:

Students understand that...

- in addition to living in the worlds of our stories as we read, we can look at how a character changes through the story.
- readers grow ideas about characters by paying attention to the objects our characters hold dear.
- readers sharpen their ideas about characters by using precise language to describe them and their actions.
- readers use what they know about narratives and characters in general to examine the specific motivations of our own characters.

Writing Enduring Understanding:

Students understand that...

- a number of strategies are used to push their thinking about texts and to find deeper messages/big ideas in texts.
- deeper messages or big ideas of a text can be connected to themselves, other texts, or the world.

## Application

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Reading Application:

Students will be able to independently use their learning to:

- identify secondary characters as part of their environment (reading "wide awake" strategy).

- empathize deeply with characters by making connections between characters' experiences or feelings and their own.
- notice complexity in characters by paying attention to times when they act "out of character."
- develop complex theories about their character by paying attention to how they act.

Writing Application:

Students will be able to independently use their learning to...

- create an original thesis statement.
- question the text, the character(s), and the author's purpose to develop a thorough, insightful, and imaginative understanding of their reading.
- briefly summarize a text.
- support a thesis statement with evidence from the text.

## Skills

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Reading:

Students will be skilled at ...

- identifying character traits.
- empathizing with characters.
- developing character theories.

Writing:

Students will be skilled at ...

- creating a thesis statement.
- writing a brief summary of the text.
- locating text evidence.
- writing a literary essay.