



A Lesson in Character Traits

By Jeannie Johnson-Young

Welcome!

Thank you so much for downloading this character trait study to go with the picture book *Polka-dot Fixes Kindergarten*. This is a great book to use as a mentor text when teaching a unit focused on character traits such as kindness and empathy. Plus it can help kids understand their feelings. The text focuses on the first day of kindergarten for two little girls. It looks at how they are feeling, how they act, and how they eventually become friends.

This lesson includes a slide show, a detailed lesson plan, and student handouts. This is a very interactive lesson with opportunities for your class to work whole group, with partners, in small groups, and independently. In addition to handouts, the students will work together to create character trait posters to provide visual reminders for students who need the additional scaffolding. You can teach the lesson in one day or over several days. I would recommend doing it in two or three days—especially if you have a large English Learner population or a number of students who need extra scaffolding. I recommend teaching the lesson over several days as it is particularly beneficial if your school uses Daily 5 or another format that provides opportunities to alternate whole group instruction with small group interventions.

I have used “Talk, Read, Talk, Write” extensively in my classroom. It is an amazing teaching method developed by Nancy Motley to increase student participation, improve reading and comprehension skills, and produce excellent written evidence of learning. (If you ever get a chance to attend one of her trainings, jump at it. She is fabulous!) I incorporated the “Talk, Read, Talk, Write” method in this lesson plan specifically because it gives students who might need scaffolding (IEP, ELLs) the help they need to fully participate.

I hope you and your students enjoy reading *Polka-dot Fixes Kindergarten* and this lesson on character traits.

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Objective: Students will be able to identify character traits and explain how they can contribute to a person's actions. They will be able to write 3-6 sentences on one of the characters in *Polka-dot Fixes Kindergarten*.

Common Core Standards Addressed in the Lesson		
Kindergarten	1st Grade	2nd Grade
<p>RL.1.3 With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.</p> <p>RLK.7 With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).</p> <p>W.K.3 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.</p> <p>SL.K.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about <i>kindergarten topics and texts</i> with peers and adults in small and larger groups.</p> <p>SL.K.2 Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.</p>	<p>RL.1.2 Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.</p> <p>RL.1.3 Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.</p> <p>RL.1.7 Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.</p> <p>W.1.2 Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure.</p> <p>W.1.8 With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.</p> <p>SL.1.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about <i>grade 1 topics and texts</i> with peers and adults in small and larger groups.</p> <p>SL.1.2 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.</p>	<p>RL.2.3 Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges</p> <p>RL.2.6 Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.</p> <p>RL.2.7 Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.</p> <p>W.2.3 Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, and use temporal words to signal event order.</p> <p>W.2.3 Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.</p> <p>LS.2.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about <i>grade 2 topics and texts</i> with peers and adults in small and larger groups.</p> <p>LS.2.2 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read</p>

Understandings:	Essential Questions:
Students will understand that....	Students will be able to answer...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Character traits are those inner parts of people that make them a unique individual. • Everyone has character traits. • Character traits can be positive or negative. • Character traits can lead to actions both positive and negative. • People's character traits can change over time and nobody is always good or always bad. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes you unique? • What are some of your character traits? • What are some character traits of Polka-dot, Liz, and Grandpa? • How did some of those character traits lead to the actions of the characters? • How did the relationship between Liz and Polka-dot change?

Supplies:

- Student handouts
- Pencils
- 8 pieces of chart paper
- Markers
- Dictionaries or access to Dictionary.com

Slide Show	You can find the slide show on www.catherineurdahl.com . Click on the For Teachers button to find the slide show.
Slide 1	Explain to the students that they will learn about something new called character traits and that they will use the book, <i>Polka-dot Fixes Kindergarten</i> as their text.
Slide 2	Read the objective out loud to them and tell students to keep it in their minds so that later they can answer questions about character traits and actions.
Slide 3	Have the students turn to a partner and tell each other what they think a character trait is. Have them use the sentence stem provided. Give them about 30 seconds to talk about it, and then have a few of them share out their answers.
Slide 4	Explain to the students what a character trait is and why it is important that authors use them in books.
Slide 5	Tell the students that character traits can be positive or negative. I have given examples, but if you would like, you could have a whole group discussion and get feedback from the kids on some character traits.
Slide 6	Have the students get out their packets and open to the handout on character trait vocabulary. This activity is going to provide a resource for kids who need extra language support. Have them fill out the vocabulary sheet with you, so they can understand what they will do later in a small group.
Slide 7	This slide explains that they are now going to do the same thing, but in a big poster version. Tell them they will work in small groups to create a character trait word poster that they will share with the whole class after they are completed. Let them know each group will be assigned a word and that the poster needs to look like the handout. Tell them you will provide a sample on a slide to help them set up their poster.
Slide 8	Take time to go over each word with the students. Tell them they will learn big kid words, but that you know they can do it. If the students are younger, you might want to have a whole group discussion about what some of these words mean. If they are able to use dictionaries, or Dictionary.com , please have them use that resource to find the definition of the word.
Slide 9	This slide is just a reminder of how they should lay out their poster. *This would be a good stopping place for the first day.

Slides 10—20	<p>These slides are a series of illustrations from the book. They provide opportunities for students to look at what is happening in the story, and to see if they can decipher what character trait is being displayed at that point in the story. These slides, and the accompanying worksheet, reinforce several Common Core Standards. They also an give you the opportunity to do a quick , informal assessment of how students grasp the correlation between pictures in a book, how characters are feeling, and how characters are acting.</p> <p>*This would be a good stopping point for day 2.</p>
Slide 21	<p>It's story time! Read the story aloud to the students, stopping periodically to ask them what character trait a person in the story is displaying at that point. Give the students a chance to agree or disagree with their classmates and explain why they think that way.</p>
Slide 22	<p>This slide teaches students a life lesson that many adults struggle to master. It is so easy to broad brush behavior and use always and never especially when they are mad. This is a chance for the children to talk about how the way a person is acting might be a way to cover how they are feeling.</p>
Slide 23	<p>After the discussion on slide 22, the students will get a chance to think of a way their opinion of someone changed over time. They will write about it on the paper provided in their packet.</p>