



My name is Rebecca Stiles, and I am a pre-service high school English teacher. Growing up, I loved to read and write. It has always fascinated me that, through literature, it is possible to enter countless new worlds. It is even possible to be the creator of a new world. English plays a vital role in the education system for two reasons. First, it is essential for productive citizens to be able to communicate through writing. Second, reading literature teaches empathy, shows students from any home environment, the importance of compassion, of being able to see a situation through the eyes of another individual. And this is something society today hungers for. This is how literature can make a difference, and how I plan to teach my students that they can make a difference.

“Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school.”

-Albert Einstein

Born Teaching:
The Life of a Growing Teacher

“A book is the only place in which you can examine a fragile thought without breaking it, or explore an explosive idea without fear it will go off in your face. It is one of the few havens remaining where a man’s mind can get both provocation and privacy.”

-Edward P. Morgan

A girl of about 4 years old sits on the floor of her bedroom with her Barbies and their pink house. One Barbie stands in front of all the other dolls and shows them what each letter is, telling them the name and what sound it makes. Teacher Barbie makes the Kellys and Stacies repeat what she has taught them, and they do it over and over and over again until they get it right. Now this is a girl who is excited to start school in the fall!



That child was me. I would only play with my dolls if I could use them to play teacher. And that was only an option when my mom or little cousin weren’t around to be bullied into being my students. My mother would sit in front of me and let me teach her the alphabet or addition or whatever else I had learned recently. She had to sit in my four-year-old’s chair of course, so that I could be the teacher, not her. (She was a really good sport about the whole thing, even if she had to stay in from pretend recess for laughing when the teacher talked.)

My cousin never wanted to sit still for me to teach him. He was four years younger than I was and had ADD, but Nicky would do anything to get to play with me. I taught him how to

follow behind me in the house parade – he had to stay two steps back and march in time with my music. When he did something I didn't approve of, he was thoroughly scolded. He wasn't allowed to run or yell. And in the end, I helped him with his reading when he started school.

Fast forward a few years to the fifth grade. I was in the gifted class that met one day a week, but the rest of the week I always finished my class work early. My friends knew that if they needed help with something, they could turn to me to help them figure it out. Soon enough, Mrs. Muzzey figured this out, too. She saw that I could sometimes say something a different way and help my peers to understand better than they had with her help. For the rest of the year, when I would finish my work, she would ask a few of my friends if they needed extra help. If they agreed, they would go sit out in the hallway with me where we could work together. Many kids would have hated this, but I ate it up. I loved being able to help my friends understand something they were struggling with. And my friends valued me more for it, too.

As I grew, there was only one thing I ever wanted to be: a teacher (except for once, briefly, when as a five year old I wanted to be an astronaut. I quickly remembered my fear of heights). Teaching was the only thing I ever considered. I'd been telling people what to do and showing them how to do it all my life. When I started filling out college applications, teaching was the only thing I could think of that I even thought I would like to do.

I still feel the same way. Reading has always been my favorite pastime, so it's no wonder that I will teach high school English. I love being dumped into a new world when I start a new book, having withdrawals from a great book's world when I finish it. Reading is important. It is only through books that any person can have the opportunity to examine the thoughts of a person who is their opposite, to think in a truly radical new way without anxiety.

Through reading, I have learned empathy; I have learned that the feelings of others matter. I have learned countless things about different places, people, or religions. Reading teaches what it means to be human. And this is what I want to pass on to my students. Walking into my classroom will be like walking into a new world each day. Life is always about what new people you meet and what new interests you can develop; why should a classroom be any different?

Upon entering my classroom, there will be walls covered with bookshelves. These are filled with books of all genres and interests. I have collected them ever since I started my job as a cashier at a Barnes and Noble. I get an employee's discount, and I use it to make sure I'll have a book to suit each individual I meet. Not finding a book that holds individual appeal will not be an excuse in my classroom. I have so many different topics, there's one to appeal to every person! There will also be a wall in my room filled with the work of my students. I value creativity, and offer many creative assignments. When a student does well, I will make sure it is seen.

What's important to me is that I can teach every individual I encounter something about being a person, something that makes him or her think. I want all students to question their behavior during each human interaction they have. Maybe they'll consider *why* that girl was glaring, instead of making a comment about her x-ray vision. And maybe along the way I can pass on to each student that reading is important. So that no one will ever tell a cashier at a Barnes and Noble, "Oh no...I don't read." Even if I can't teach all of my students what it means to love literature, I hope they can leave their time with me with the knowledge that words are valuable, that reading is more than just letters thrown together on a page to give somebody a headache. I hope I can impart that sometimes it's only through an imitation of life that we can learn anything at all about what it means to *live*.

Overview

Unit: Characterization in Literature

Class: Intro to Literature

Teacher: Becky Stiles

Semester: Spring 2013

Rationale: This unit is essential to every student's education. When reading a novel (or watching a movie, etc.), it is extremely important that each individual is capable of deducing things about and understanding the characterization of the characters presented. Even more important, through learning to understand characterization in fiction, students can learn to look at those around them and see them as well-rounded people, with events and circumstances leading up to present behaviors and life choices. In learning about characterization, my students will learn to be more empathetic citizens.

Summary: In this unit, my students will each read one of four pieces of classic literature based on their reading levels and complete lessons each day to help them explore the characterization present in these readings. After completing the novels, they will be put into jigsaw groups (one from each group), and explore similarities and differences between characterization of different characters. Finally, they will explore characterization in their own writing. The unit will culminate in a book of the class' characterization pieces; each student will receive a copy of the book, and they will be given an opportunity to sign their piece in their classmates' books, giving them a chance to learn about their classmates and form a better community.

Essential Questions:

1. What are the essential components of character?
2. How do the components of character relate to other pieces of what makes up a story?
3. How does your character affect your life? What components of your life have most affected your character?

Objectives:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3b Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3d Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
 - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3e Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1a Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.
 - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1d Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

Length of Unit: approximately 4 weeks

Materials and Resources:

- School: 5-8 copies each of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Outsiders*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and *The Great Gatsby*, computers for students to work on
- Teacher: worksheets and assignments for students, finished books
- Students: writing utensils, notebooks for journaling and documenting lessons

Literacy Strategies:

- Literature circles
- Write-arounds in original novel groups
- Daily tickets to enter (written in the first five minutes of class)
- Creating a Facebook page about the main characters of each novel
- Action!

Assessments:

- Pre-assessment: silent discussions in groups transitioning to class discussion about what makes a person in a book or movie into a character
- Formative assessments:
 - Daily tickets to enter
 - Worksheets about characters while reading, to be completed in groups
 - Small group write arounds
 - Mad libs
 - One day acting – in groups, act out the situation as it has happened so far as the characters themselves
 - Create a facebook page about the main character

- Write a story about how the character will react in a new situation – trade with a partner and write about how the story would change the character afterwards
 - One-word write around in jigsaw groups about what affects character; transition to group discussion, then into one page journal writing about similarities found
- Summative assessments: Write a story about an event that shaped your character. Included should be a section explaining how it changed your character: what other areas of your life were affected? Rubric will be provided.

<p>Day 1 Monday</p>	<p>Introduce Topic: Importance of Character in the Novel Students seated by what book they will read. One word at a time silent discussion about aspects of character. Exit slip: what part of a character do you think is the most essential?</p>
<p>Day 2 Tuesday</p>	<p>Transition silent discussions into class discussion, culminating in class list Decide which ideas students are and are not aware of, then get more info about things they do know – add to class list Pass out books and give first reading assignment (first two chapters) Exit slip: judging from the cover of your book, describe who you think your main character will be</p>
<p>Day 3 Wednesday</p>	<p>Ticket to enter: What aspects of your character do you like? Hate? Who does he remind you of? Seated in groups by what they are reading Each group completes a worksheet about the novel so far, focusing on giving character traits and coming up with textual examples to back up what they've said Assign next reading (approx. to pg 60) Exit slip: How does the character react to the setting? To the plot?</p>
<p>Day 4 Thursday</p>	<p>Ticket to enter: What other characters have you met? Describe at least 3 physical characteristics of two of them. Mad libs: use physical characteristics of characters to answer fill-in-the blank mad libs story Assign next reading (to pg 90) Exit slip: Which of the characters in your novel do you identify with most? Why?</p>
<p>Day 5 Friday</p>	<p>Ticket to enter: What does the main conflict of the novel seem to be? What does this have to do with the main character? How does the character relate to what's happening? Group takes first ten minutes of the class to predict what will happen next in the novel. Next step: Each student writes about how they think the character will react/participate in what the group decided will happen (20 min) 10 mins to compare/contrast answers Assign next reading (to page 120); if not finished with story, finish it over weekend Exit slip: what similarities came up in your group? How does this work with/against emotional reactions the character has already had?</p>

Lesson Plan: Mad Libs Physical Descriptors

Becky Stiles

Intro to Literature

Character Unit

1 Day

Rationale: Character includes the physical aspects and appearances of the person. This activity shows how physicalities of a character can influence feelings about and perceptions of a character, and as a consequence, helps students challenge the importance of physical qualities in people they know.

Objectives:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Materials and Resources:

- School: overhead projector or smartboard
- Students: pencils and journals
- Teacher: Mad libs worksheet, classroom copy of worksheet

Phase One: Ticket to enter. Students list physical characteristics of 2 main characters individually, then compare within groups .

Phase Two: Students fill out a “mad libs” word list (ex.: “color of hair,” “most obvious physical flaw,” etc.), then put those answers in corresponding blanks in a fill-in-the-blank story which uses humor to illustrate how trivial these details can seem.

Phase Three: The class comes together and uses answers from their different novels to fill in the same story. Groups will take turns answering questions, so that the new class creation contains pieces of characters from multiple novels. The class will then reflect in their journals about how this changed what happened in the fill-in-the-blank story. Exit slip.

Homework Assignment: Continue reading

Relation to Summative Assessment: Physical qualities about a character are very important to the perception of and life of the character. Many students may have a significant experience in

their lives that has to do with physical appearances, so this activity gives students a chance to explore their importance.

Lesson Plan: Action!

Teacher: Becky Stiles

Intro to Literature

Character Unit 1 day

Rationale: Now that students have started reading their novels, it is time to help them get into the heads of the characters! This lesson allows students to show off what they have learned about the characters thus far, and forces them to use their knowledge about the characters in a new and interesting way.

Objectives:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Phase One: Ticket to enter. Introduce concept of acting to students. Explain informal nature, more about trying than being great

Phase Two: Acting! Each student chooses one character, and the students work together to act out what has happened so far. Teacher walks around room, observing, and making sure students stay on task.

Phase Three: Close curtain on acting. Congratulate students on job well done. Exit slip.

Homework Assignment: Continue reading

Relation to Summative Assessment: By getting students in the heads of their characters, they are forced to think about how events affect characters and how characters affect the events. In the summative assessment, the students will be asked to step back from their own lives, to look at it and see what most affected who they are. This exercise prepares the students for this look.

Lesson Plan: Sharing Stories

Teacher: Becky Stiles

Intro to Literature

Character Unit

Length of Lesson: 1 and a half weeks

Rationale: Throughout the length of the unit, students have grown to understand the components that make up a character. This lesson utilizes this knowledge of character and hones writing skills by allowing the students to look through their personal experiences to discover what has influenced their personal character, forming a connection between literature and students' everyday lives.

Objectives:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3b Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3d Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3e Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

Materials and Resources:

- School: computers
- Students: paper, pens
- Teacher: bound books of stories

Literacy Strategies:

- Quick write
- Peer reading and feedback

Phase One: Students have a quick write session in which they journal about what events in their lives have affected their character. Students then pick top 3 instances, and write further

about each of those. They will finally utilize these writings to discover which event they'd like to write about.

Phase Two: Writing! Students spend three class periods in the lab, writing their stories. Day 3 will be dedicated to their analysis of how it affected them. Two days of peer workshops will follow, and then a final draft will be due.

Phase Three: The teacher will make a class book on character out of the students' essays. Within the book, the students' names will be missing, and the students will have a "character party" in which they will sign their stories in the other students' books.

Homework Assignment: During length of lesson, students should work on writing as necessary outside of class.

Relation to Summative Assessment: This is the summative assessment for the unit.

THE MAKING OF YOU

October 21-31

Now that we've read about what makes some famous characters who they are, it's time to write your own story!

"When a defining moment comes along, you define the moment or the moment defines you"

-actor Kevin Costner

This is your chance to tell the world what makes you tick. Just like our characters, each of us has defining moments. You'll pick a moment and write an essay about it, telling us the story. Within your essay, you'll include how this shaped you, based on the pieces of character that we learned about throughout this unit. When all the stories are written, I'll compile them into a class book. We'll have a class celebration where each of you will get a copy of this book, and each member of the class will get to autograph their classmates' copies!

- Phase 1:

October 21-23

Brainstorming! We'll spend a few days pre-writing and coming up with ideas about what event you'd like to write about.

- Phase 2:

October 24-25

Writing. We'll head to the computer lab and write!

- Phase 3:

October 28-31

Post-writing – After the hard part's done, we'll read each other's work, revise and finish off with a PARTY!