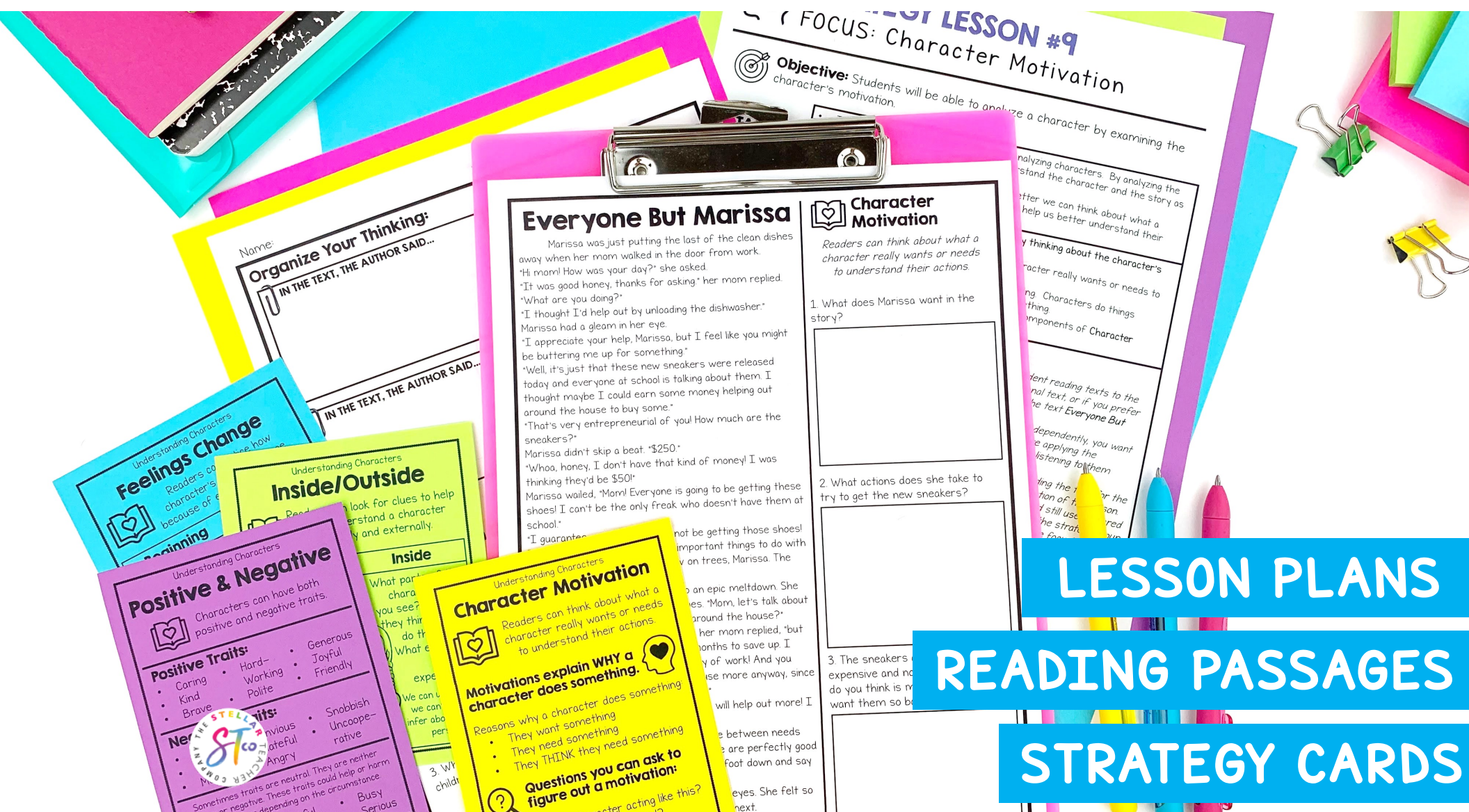


12 scripted lessons and passages to teach all about characters.

SMALL GROUP LESSONS CHARACTER ANALYSIS



LESSON #9
FOCUS: Character Motivation

Objective: Students will be able to analyze a character by examining the character's motivation.

Name: _____

Organize Your Thinking:
IN THE TEXT, THE AUTHOR SAID...

Everyone But Marissa

Marissa was just putting the last of the clean dishes away when her mom walked in the door from work. "Hi mom! How was your day?" she asked. "It was good honey, thanks for asking," her mom replied. "What are you doing?" "I thought I'd help out by unloading the dishwasher." Marissa had a gleam in her eye. "I appreciate your help, Marissa, but I feel like you might be buttering me up for something." "Well, it's just that these new sneakers were released today and everyone at school is talking about them. I thought maybe I could earn some money helping out around the house to buy some." "That's very entrepreneurial of you! How much are the sneakers?" Marissa didn't skip a beat. "\$250." "Whoa, honey, I don't have that kind of money! I was thinking they'd be \$50!" Marissa wailed, "Mom! Everyone is going to be getting these shoes! I can't be the only freak who doesn't have them at school." "I guarantee you won't be getting those shoes! Important things to do with money are trees, Marissa. The

Character Motivation

Readers can think about what a character really wants or needs to understand their actions.

1. What does Marissa want in the story?

2. What actions does she take to try to get the new sneakers?

3. The sneakers are expensive and no one else has them. Do you think it's worth it? Why or why not?

By analyzing the character and the story as a whole, we can think about what a character really wants or needs to help us better understand their actions.

Character Motivation

Character Motivation

Character Motivation

Character Motivation

Character Motivation

Character Motivation

Character Motivation

Character Motivation

Character Motivation

Positive & Negative
Characters can have both positive and negative traits.

- | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------|
| Positive Traits: | • Hard-Working | • Generous |
| • Caring | • Polite | • Joyful |
| • Kind | | • Friendly |
| • Brave | | |

Negative Traits:

• Envious	• Snobbish
• Careless	• Uncooperative
• Angry	

Sometimes traits are neutral. They are neither positive nor negative. These traits could help or harm a character, depending on the circumstance.

- Busy
- Serious

Character Motivation
Readers can think about what a character really wants or needs to understand their actions.

Motivations explain WHY a character does something.

Reasons why a character does something

- They want something
- They need something
- They THINK they need something

Questions you can ask to figure out a motivation:

- What does the character want?
- What does the character need?
- What does the character think they need?

3

REASONS TO LOVE

THESE SMALL GROUP LESSONS

TIME-SAVING

Stop searching for small group resources. This bundle includes EVERYTHING you need for a successful small group lesson on describing and analyzing characters in a story.

LOW PREP

These lessons are seriously just print and teach. Pick the objective you want to cover, print the materials, and you'll be all set to teach your lesson. It will take you just a few minutes each week to print and prep your small group lessons.

EASY TO USE

Each lesson set follows a simple easy-to-use framework. If you are uncertain how to structure your small group lessons, this resource is perfect for you. You can finally feel confident in how you teach your small group lessons.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Organize Your Thinking:	
Holly's Feelings	Holly's Actions
Holly's Character Traits	
Holly's Speech	Holly's Thoughts

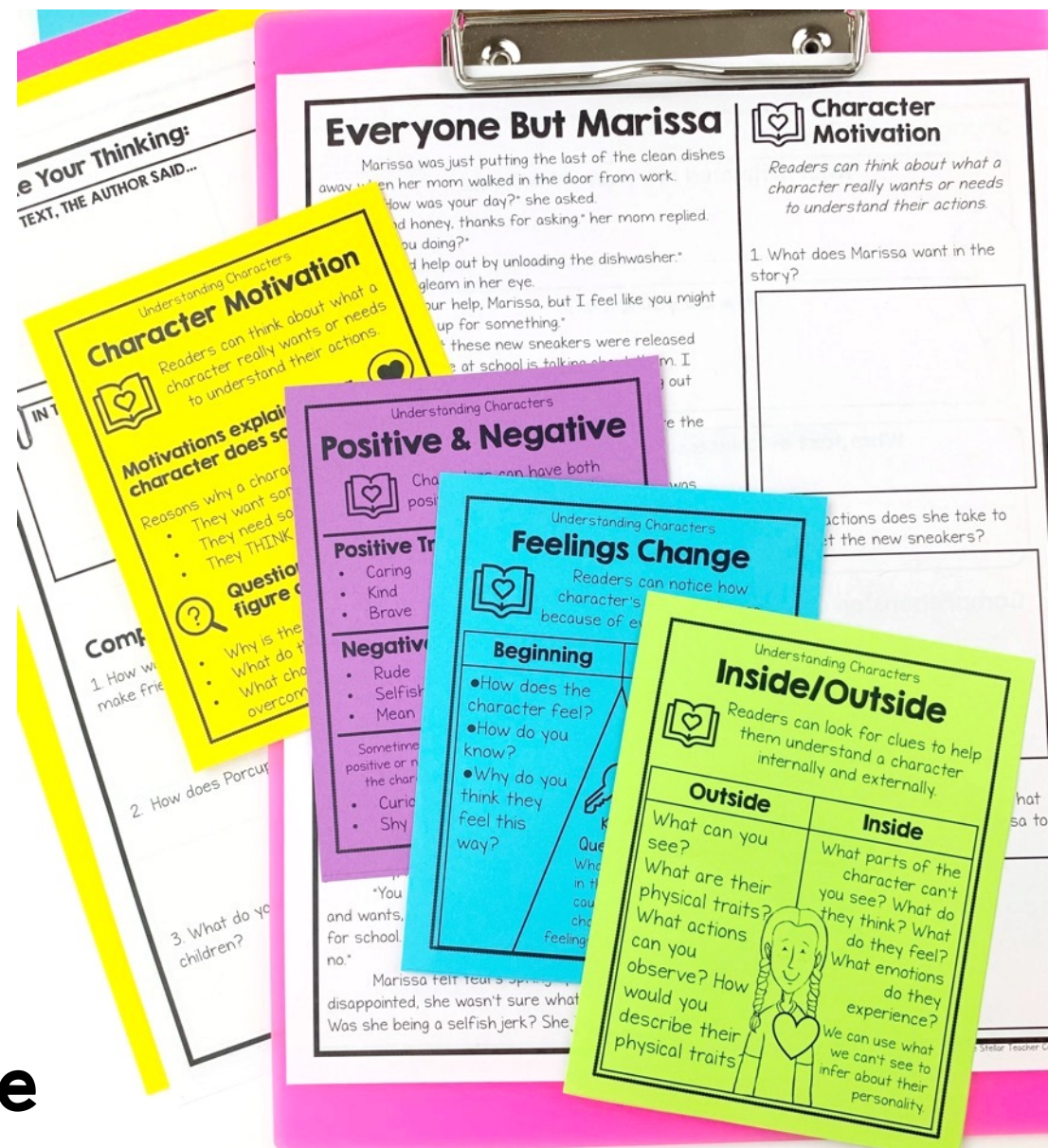
Comprehension Questions:

1. Why is starting middle school extra stressful for Holly?
2. How does Holly's mom try to help her through the morning?
3. Use the descriptions of Holly's thoughts, words, and actions in the story to summarize what you can infer about her personality.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

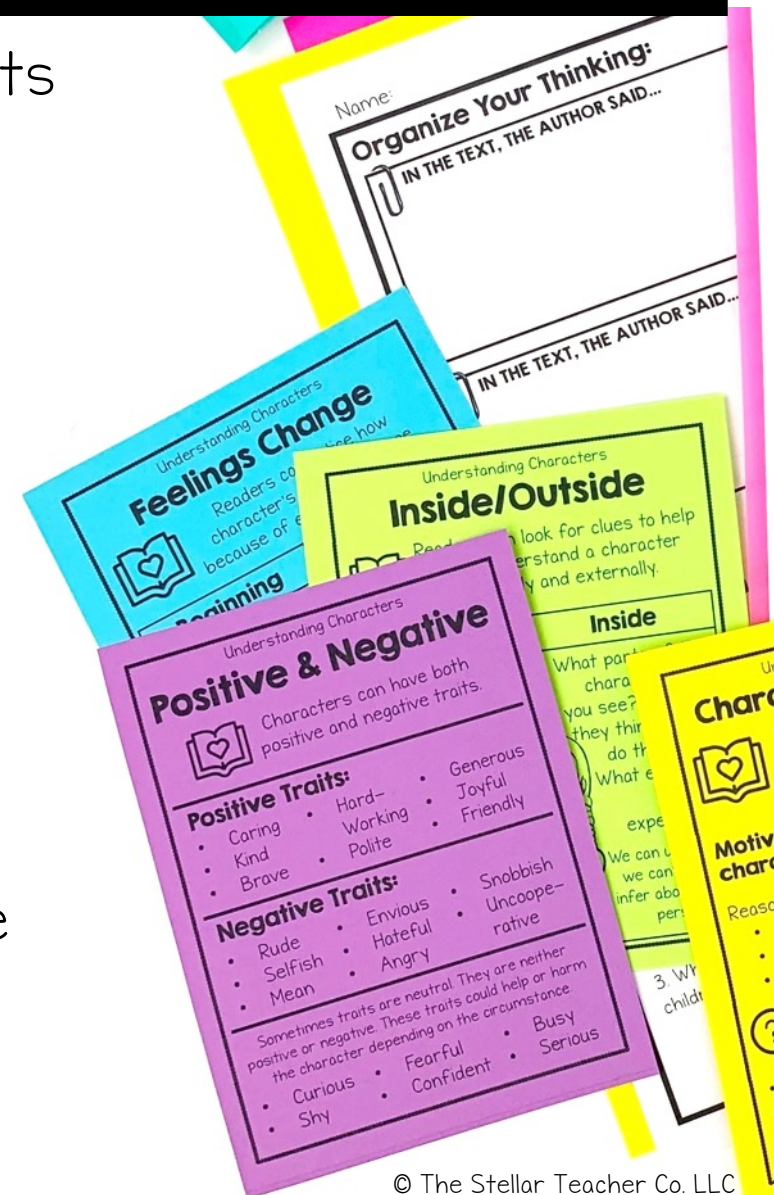
12 READING SMALL GROUP LESSON SETS

- 12 Scripted Lesson Plans
- 12 Reading Passages
- 12 Response Sheets/ Graphic Organizers
- 12 Strategy Cards (AKA Mini Anchor Charts)
- Digital Versions
- Answer Key
- Small Group Teacher Guide



WHAT SKILLS DO THESE LESSONS COVER?

- Lesson #1: Internal/External Character Traits
- Lesson #2: Positive & Negative Character Traits
- Lesson #3: Inferring Character Traits
- Lesson #4: Character Feelings
- Lesson #5: Character Feelings Can Change
- Lesson #6: Comparing Characters
- Lesson #7: Analyzing Character Actions
- Lesson #8: Making Character Predictions
- Lesson #9: Character Motivation
- Lesson #10: Characters Learn Lessons
- Lesson #11: Using Text Evidence to Describe Characters
- Lesson #12: Different Character's Perspectives



WHO NEEDS THIS RESOURCE?

THIS RESOURCE IS PERFECT IF YOU ARE A...

STRATEGY LESSON #1
FOCUS: Inside/Outside

Objective: Students will be able to analyze a character in depth by identifying internal and external traits.

TARGET

- Today we are going to spend some time analyzing characters. By analyzing the characters in a story, we can better understand the character and the story as a whole.
- When we analyze the character we will look for clues to help us better understand the character both internally and externally.

TEACH

The focus for today is understanding characters from the inside and outside.

- When we look at characters in this way we analyze both their internal and external traits.
- When we analyze characters from the outside we look at things we can see. What are the physical traits? What actions can you observe? How would you describe their physical traits?
- When we analyze characters from the inside we look at parts of the character we can't see from the outside. What do they feel? What emotions do they experience?
- Let's look at the focus card to see the different components of **Inside/Outside**.

Now it's your turn to try this strategy on your own.

Teacher Notes

- Ideally, students would be able to bring their independent reading texts to the strategy group. If your students aren't reading a fictional text, or if you prefer to have all students using the same text, you can use the text *A Hard Door to Open* to help students apply this specific strategy.
- While students are reading and practicing this strategy independently, you want to check-in and talk with each student about how they are applying the strategy. Keep the discussion focused on their thinking vs. listening to them read.
- If you choose to use the shared text and students are reading the text for the first time, you might need to provide more time for this portion of the lesson. One way you can keep your strategy lessons more concise and still use a shared text is by providing students with the text prior to coming to the strategy group. This will make sure that while they are at the table, all they are focusing on is applying the strategy.

TACKLE

TRANSFER

Discuss:

- Who can tell me how this focus helped you better understand the character?
- How did considering inside and outside traits help you better analyze the character?

Link:

- Remember, you can analyze characters anytime you are reading independently. You can identify the external and internal characteristics to better understand the character.

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- 4th or 5th grade reading teacher
- 3rd grade teacher with strong readers
- 6th grade teacher looking for remedial resources
- Intervention teacher
- Tutor
- Literacy coach looking for resource for your teachers
- Parent who wants to provide enrichment at home
- Student teacher

Just print the set you want to teach, and you're set for a stellar small group lesson.

LOW PREP and EASY-TO-USE



STRATEGY LESSON #3

FOCUS: Inferring Traits



Objective: Students will be able to identify a character by inferring their traits.

TARGET

- Today we are going to spend time analyzing characters in a story, we are going to look at them as a whole.
- When we analyze the character, we will look at their speech and thoughts, which will help us understand their traits.

The focus for today is understanding analyzing their feelings, actions, and traits.

TEACH

- With this focus, you start by looking at the thoughts of the character.
- When we analyze the character, we look at their feeling, what actions they take, and what they think.
- Let's look at the focus on Inferring Traits.

TACKLE

Now it's your turn to try it out.

Teacher Notes:

- Ideally, students will work in a strategy group. If you don't have all students, you can assign them to help students who are struggling.
- While students are working, you should check-in and provide feedback on their strategy. Keep them on track.
- If you choose to use this first time, you can assign them to read. One way you can make this text is by providing a text that is by a character who is feeling nervous.
- This will make it easier for them to understand the text.

Holly's First Day

Holly looked anxiously in the mirror. "Is this the one?" she thought to herself. Her bed was buried under discarded outfits. Holly turned in a slow circle to look at her clothes from all angles while performing a mental list of pros and cons. "Well, it's color coordinated. This is the newest line from a trendy designer." Holly paused, "I just don't know if he's trendy here!" she wailed.

The first day of middle school is stressful under any circumstances. But Holly was starting middle school after having moved from a big city to a much smaller suburban community. Always nervous and careful, the situation was bringing up all of Holly's anxiety.

To make matters worse, she had to take the bus. Holly had never been on a bus before! Everyone on the city took the subway everywhere. This place and everything about it felt wrong, wrong, wrong. Her biggest fear was being the center of attention. Good or bad, attention was terrifying.

"What if everyone laughs at me?" Holly wondered, still looking in the mirror.

"Holly!"

It didn't matter anymore, she was going to be late. Her second biggest fear. "Here goes nothing," she muttered as she grabbed her backpack and went downstairs to get some breakfast.

"Good morning, Holly, are you so excited?" Her mom seemed maniacally chipper.

"Have you met



Inferring Traits

A character's feelings, actions, speech, and thoughts, can help a reader infer that character's traits.

1. How does Holly feel about the first day of middle school?

2. What are some things Holly did before the first day?

3. What tone do you think Holly used when she was talking to her mom?

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK...

SCRIPTED TEACHER LESSON PLANS

Focuses on one bite-sized objective.

Each lesson follows the same 4T lesson structure: Target, Teach, Tackle, Transfer.

Includes the exact words and phrases you should say to help your students master the objective.

STRATEGY LESSON #6
FOCUS: Comparing Characters

Objective: Students will be able to analyze a characters by comparing characters across categories.

TARGET

- Today we are going to spend some time analyzing characters. By analyzing the characters in a story, we can better understand the character and the story as a whole.
- When we analyze the character we will compare two characters across different categories.

TEACH

The focus for today is comparing characters across different categories.

- With this focus, you start by selecting two key characters in the story.
- You want to think about how you can compare them in similar ways so you want to select categories to use to think about each character.
- When we analyze the characters it's a good idea to compare the characters traits, feelings and problems.
- Let's look at the focus card to see the different components of **Comparing Characters**.

Now it's your turn to try this focus on your own.

Teacher Notes:

- *Ideally, students would be able to bring their independent reading texts to the strategy group. If your students aren't reading a fictional text, or if you prefer to have all students using the same text, you can use the text **A Babysitting Issue** to help students apply this specific strategy.*
- *While students are reading and practicing this strategy independently, you want to check-in and talk with each student about how they are applying the strategy. Keep the discussion focused on their thinking vs. listening to them read.*
- *If you choose to use the shared text and students are reading the text for the first time, you might need to provide more time for this portion of the lesson. One way you can keep your strategy lessons more concise and still use a shared text is by providing students with the text prior to coming to the strategy group. This will make sure that while they are at the table, all they are focusing on is applying the strategy.*

TACKLE

TRANSFER

Discuss:

- Who can tell me how this focus helped you better understand the character?
- How did comparing the characters to each other help you better analyze the character?

Link:

- Remember, you can analyze characters anytime you are reading independently. You can use compare two characters across different categories, including their traits, feelings and problems. This will help you better understand the characters.

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TAKE A CLOSER LOOK...

STUDENT PASSAGES & RESPONSE PAGES

Student passage written for each lesson objective.

Raven's Lesson

Raven screamed and dove through the middle of the game of tag being played by the other forest animal children. They all dropped to the ground, covering their heads in panic. Raven laughed as he flew away. That would teach them to play fun games without him!

Raven is what you could call a loner. He spent time with his family and the other ravens but didn't have any friends. This made him feel strange - like he didn't know how to act around other kids so they would want to play with him. So, he carried out invasions on the other children's games just so they would notice him. He didn't really understand why he was never invited to play with them.

Raven was sitting on a branch preening his feathers when he heard a rustling in the leaves on the ground below. "Squawk! Who's there?" he screeched.

Porcupine waddled out of the leaves. "It's just me, Raven!" "What do you want?" Raven demanded.

"Just to talk. When I was new here, I had a hard time making friends. I think my prickly parts made the other kids nervous, and that made me feel nervous. I didn't know what to say or how to say it to get included in the fun games. But then a nice kid came and talked to me, introduced me to the other children, and we became friends just like that! I thought I would do that for you."

Raven looked away. "If those kids don't want to play with me, that is their problem!" he huffed.

"Raven, you are honestly acting like a bully! Screaming and diving at people, you seem mean. Why would they want to play with you?"

"I am being funny to make everyone want to play with me!" Raven defended himself.

"Raven, I think you know that acting like that is NOT going to make you any friends. If you could settle down and talk to the other kids, you will see they are nice and would love to play with you. If you stop acting like a lunatic, that is."

Raven hung his head. "You're right, Porcupine. I just feel like I've tried for so long to get included! It's hard to not take it personally."

Porcupine chuckled. "It's hard for us to understand you want to play when you are dive bombing our heads! Come on, I'll introduce you to the others."

Analyzing Actions

Readers can analyze a character's actions and behaviors to understand them on a deeper level.

1. How does the author describe Raven's actions?

Blank response box for question 1.

2. What type of character would act that way?

Blank response box for question 2.

3. Why do you think Raven acted that way?

Blank response box for question 3.

Date: _____

Mr Thinking:

AUTHOR SAID...

THIS HELPS ME BETTER UNDERSTAND RAVEN'S ACTIONS BECAUSE...

AUTHOR SAID...

THIS HELPS ME BETTER UNDERSTAND RAVEN'S ACTIONS BECAUSE...

Questions:

Response to his feeling left out? Is that an effective strategy to help Raven? How did Porcupine know to do that?

When Porcupine and Raven go to talk to the other animal

Questions to help students apply the focus skill to the passage.

Includes graphic organizer & three general comprehension questions.

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK...

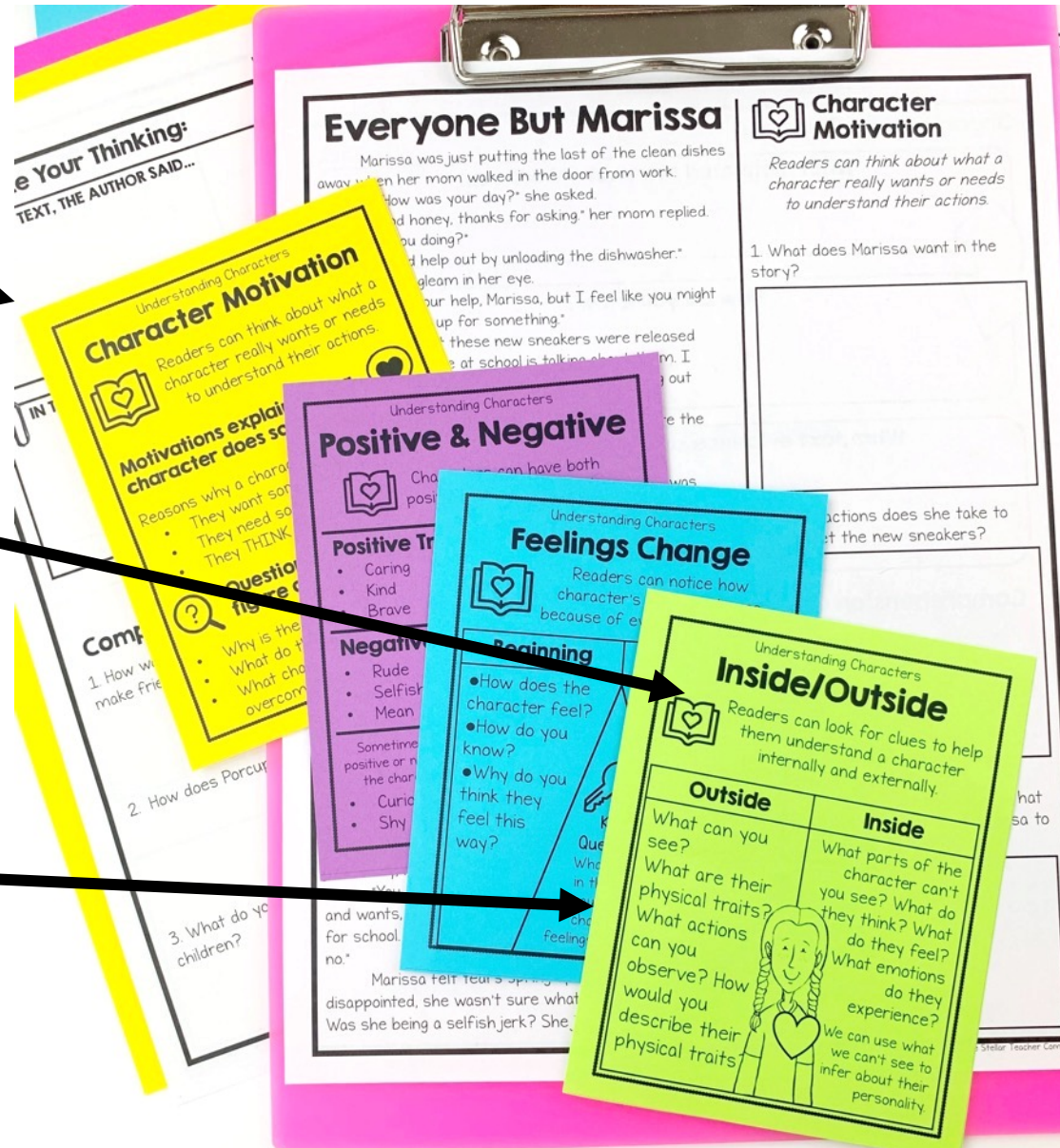
STRATEGY CARDS (AKA MINI ANCHOR CHARTS)

Strategy card for each lesson objective.

Student friendly definition or explanation.

Includes questions, steps, a process, or a visual reminder of how to apply that focus skill.

Great to place on a strategy ring!



TAKE A CLOSER LOOK...

ANSWER KEY WITH POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Penelope's Two Sides

Penelope's parents liked to describe her as a force of nature. Incredibly creative, Penelope was constantly preoccupied by whatever art project she was currently involved in. Unfortunately, this meant that she was also messy and forgetful.

Today is Penelope's sister's birthday. Her mom had left her in charge of cleaning the downstairs and decorating for Fiona's birthday party. She had every intention of doing so, until a melody ran through her head. "I'll write Fiona a song!" Penelope thought to herself and ran to the piano.

Penelope had already made Fiona a beautiful art piece out of an old window she had glued tissue paper onto. Then she painted around the tissue paper to make an underwater scene layered with different colors and textures. The painting was beautiful and would look perfect in Fiona's room. It had also taken hours and been the source of some family conflict when Penelope forgot to get ready to go to a barbecue.

So, yes, Penelope is creative and caring and messy and distracted. She had almost an entire song composed when her mom came home from shopping stressed and out of breath.

"Penny!" Penelope could tell from one look at her mom's face that she was in trouble. Only, she didn't quite know why. "Penny! What have you been doing all morning? You were supposed to decorate for Fiona's party! Guests will start arriving in half an hour."

Penelope moaned and smacked her forehead gently on the piano. She remembered now!

"I'm so sorry, mom! I started writing a song for Fiona and completely forgot."

"Of course you did." Her mom was clearly irritated. "I'll just do it myself."

"No!" Penelope shouted. "I will double time it, I promise! You'll see I can get it done. You go get the food together."

Half an hour later, Fiona came home from her sleepover excited for her birthday party. The downstairs was decorated with balloons and streamers, plus there was food and drinks set up. Penelope had done a great job! Penelope was also a wreck. Her hair was wild, her clothes crumpled and dirty. Their mom took one look at Penelope and burst into laughter. "Great job decorating, Pen! Go get cleaned up and then you can play us the song you wrote for Fiona."

Positive & Negative Answer Key

Characters can have both positive and negative traits.

- What are some of Penelope's positive traits?
 - She is very creative.
 - She is thoughtful.
 - She is caring.
- What impact did these traits have on her actions?
 - She makes beautiful things.
 - She gets inspired and forgets to do other things she needs to do.
 - She makes art and writes songs.
- What are some of Penelope's negative traits?
 - She is messy.
 - She is forgetful and distracted.
- What impact do these have on her actions?
 - She forgets to do important things, like get ready to go to a barbecue and decorate for her sister's birthday.
 - She sometimes causes family conflicts or irritates her parents.

Thinking: Answer Key

Date: _____

PENELOPE

POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• messy• forgetful• distracted
POSITIVE TRAITS <p>ful things. nd forgets to : needs to do. writes songs.</p>	IMPACT OF THOSE TRAITS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• She forgets to do important things, like get ready to go to a barbecue and decorate for her sister's birthday.• She sometimes causes family conflicts or irritates her parents.

Questions: Answer Key

one like Penelope? What are some of the benefits and

t friend is like Penelope. She's an awesome best friend because games for us to play. Sometimes it can be difficult playing and has so many ideas and she has a hard time making decisions

and why her mom was mad when she got home from

her mom was mad because she had forgotten that she was

ter's birthday party.

re to Penelope to help her be more organized and less

le not have to meet the same expectations as others?

f be more organized by making a to-do list of things she

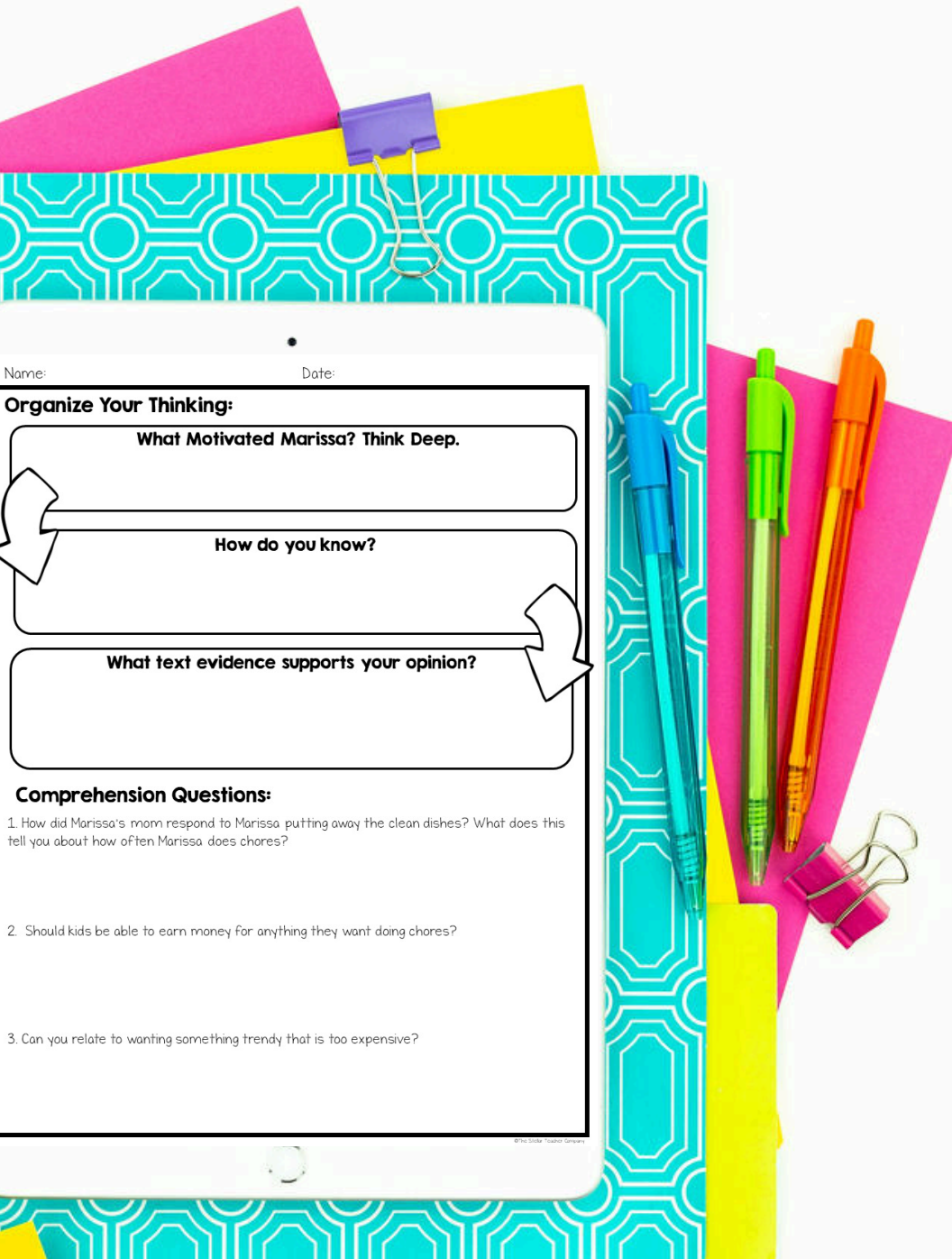
sticky notes. She also could set alarms for herself to give

she's creative doesn't mean she should have different

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Includes possible answers for the questions on the front of the reading passage.

Also includes possible/suggested answer options for the graphic organizer and comprehension questions.

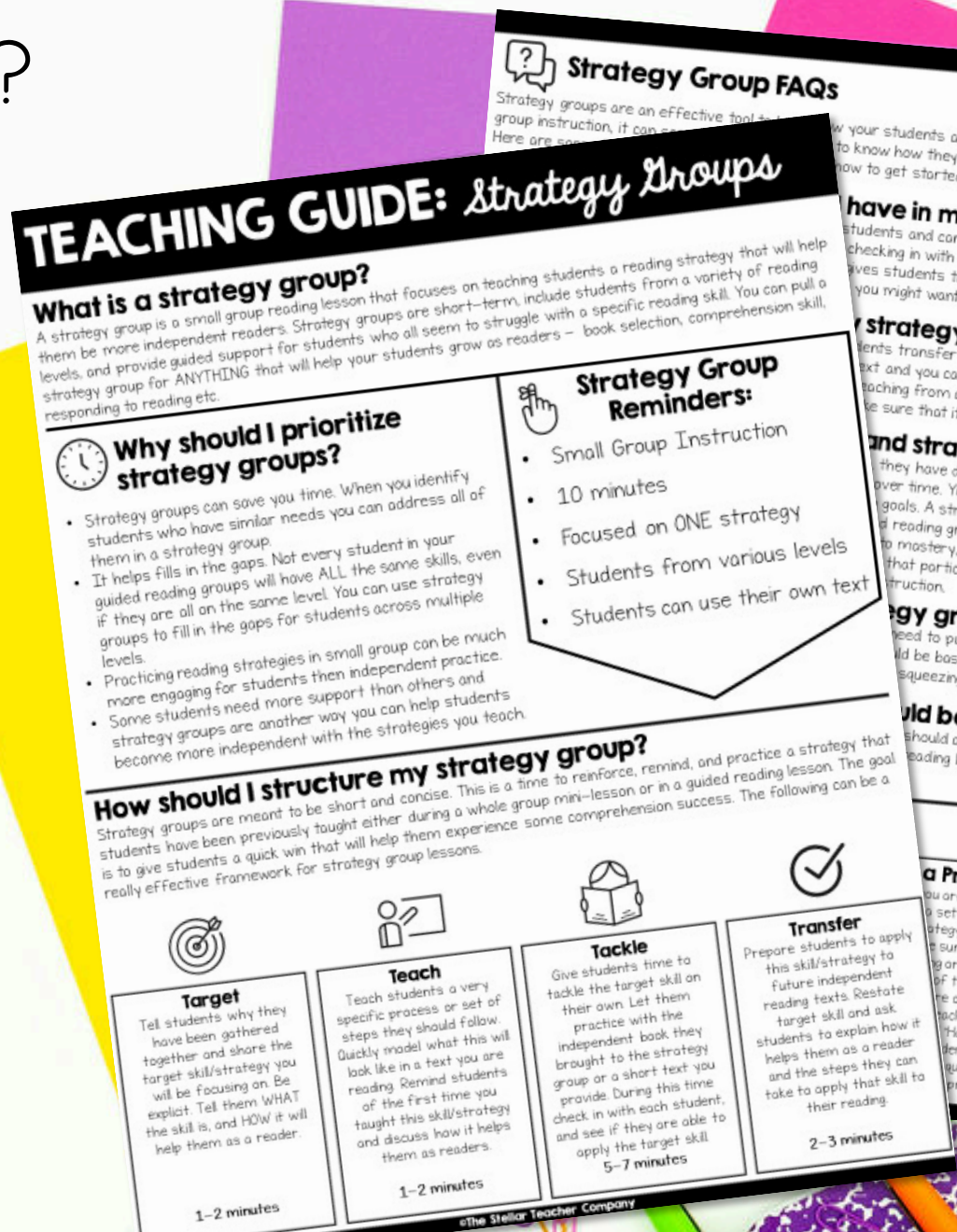


works in both
VIRTUAL &
In person
CLASSROOMS

INCLUDES TEACHER GUIDE

Are you new to using small groups in your classroom?
No worries! We got you!

This resource also includes a 2 page teaching guide PDF that walks you through all the ins and outs of strategy groups. You also get a generic strategy group lesson plan along with sentence starters so you can create your own strategy lesson plans.



Strategy Group FAQs
Strategy groups are an effective tool for...
group instruction, it can...
Here are some...

TEACHING GUIDE: Strategy Groups





What is a strategy group?
A strategy group is a small group reading lesson that focuses on teaching students a reading strategy that will help them be more independent readers. Strategy groups are short-term, include students from a variety of reading levels, and provide guided support for students who all seem to struggle with a specific reading skill. You can pull a strategy group for ANYTHING that will help your students grow as readers - book selection, comprehension skill, responding to reading etc.

Why should I prioritize strategy groups?
• Strategy groups can save you time. When you identify students who have similar needs you can address all of them in a strategy group.
• It helps fill in the gaps. Not every student in your guided reading groups will have ALL the same skills, even if they are all on the same level. You can use strategy groups to fill in the gaps for students across multiple levels.
• Practicing reading strategies in small group can be much more engaging for students than independent practice.
• Some students need more support than others and strategy groups are another way you can help students become more independent with the strategies you teach.

Strategy Group Reminders:

- Small Group Instruction
- 10 minutes
- Focused on ONE strategy
- Students from various levels
- Students can use their own text

How should I structure my strategy group?
Strategy groups are meant to be short and concise. This is a time to reinforce, remind, and practice a strategy that students have been previously taught either during a whole group mini-lesson or in a guided reading lesson. The goal is to give students a quick win that will help them experience some comprehension success. The following can be a really effective framework for strategy group lessons.

 Target	 Teach	 Tackle	 Transfer
Tell students why they have been gathered together and share the target skill/strategy you will be focusing on. Be explicit. Tell them WHAT the skill is, and HOW it will help them as a reader.	Teach students a very specific process or set of steps they should follow. Quickly model what this will look like in a text you are reading. Remind students of the first time you taught this skill/strategy and discuss how it helps them as readers.	Give students time to tackle the target skill on their own. Let them practice with the independent book they brought to the strategy group or a short text you provide. During this time check in with each student, and see if they are able to apply the target skill.	Prepare students to apply this skill/strategy to future independent reading texts. Restate target skill and ask students to explain how it helps them as a reader and the steps they can take to apply that skill to their reading.
1-2 minutes	1-2 minutes	5-7 minutes	2-3 minutes

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“This was a great resource for my students to work on independently as we covered the different skill focuses regarding characters and their traits and feelings.”
- Katrina S.



STRATEGY LESSON

FOCUS: Inside



Objective: Students will be able to identify internal and external

TARGET

- Today we are going to spend some time on characters in a story as a whole.
- When we analyze the characters, we will understand the change.

The focus for today is

- When we look at characters, we will notice how they change.
- When we analyze the characters, we will notice how they change.
- What are the physical traits that describe their personality?
- When we analyze the characters, we can't see from the beginning of the story.
- Let's look at the strategy card to see how we can change strategy.

TEACH

Now it's your turn to try this focus on your own.

Teacher Notes:

- Ideally, students would be able to bring their own strategy group. If your students are not in a strategy group, have all students using the same text to help students apply this specific strategy.
- While students are reading and practicing, do a check-in and talk with each student about their progress. Keep the discussion focused on their progress.
- If you choose to use the shared text, you might need to provide a first time. One way you can keep your strategy lesson is by providing students with the text. This will make sure that while they are applying the strategy.

TACKLE

Discuss:

- Who can tell me how this focus helped you?
- How did considering how the character's feelings change the character?

TRANSFER

Link:

- Remember, you can analyze characters and their feelings. You can identify the external and internal traits of a character.



STRATEGY LESSON

FOCUS: Feelings



Objective: Students will be able to identify that characters' feelings can change.

TARGET

- Today we are going to spend some time on characters in a story, we can better understand the whole.
- When we analyze the character, we will notice how they change.

TEACH

The focus for today is understanding the beginning to the end of the story.

- With this focus, you will notice how the characters change in the story.
- When we analyze the characters, we will notice how they change from the beginning of the story versus the end of the story that caused the change.
- Let's look at the strategy card to see how we can change strategy.
- Let's look at the focus card to see how we can change strategy.

TACKLE

Now it's your turn to try this focus on your own.

Teacher Notes:

- Ideally, students would be able to bring their own strategy group. If your students are not in a strategy group, have all students using the same text to help students apply this specific strategy.
- While students are reading and practicing, do a check-in and talk with each student about their progress. Keep the discussion focused on their progress.
- If you choose to use the shared text, you might need to provide a first time. One way you can keep your strategy lesson is by providing students with the text. This will make sure that while they are applying the strategy.

TRANSFER

Discuss:

- Who can tell me how this focus helped you?
- How did considering how the character's feelings change the character?

Link:

- Remember, you can analyze characters and their feelings. You can use text evidence to notice how the characters change from the beginning and end of the story.

Everyone But Marissa

Marissa was just putting the last of the clean dishes away when her mom walked in the door from work. "Hi mom! How was your day?" she asked.

"It was good honey, thanks for asking," her mom replied. "What are you doing?"

"I thought I'd help out by unloading the dishwasher." Marissa had a gleam in her eye.

"I appreciate your help, Marissa, but I feel like you might be buttering me up for something."

"Well, it's just that these new sneakers were released today and everyone at school is talking about them. I thought maybe I could earn some money helping out around the house to buy some."

"That's very entrepreneurial of you! How much are the sneakers?"

Marissa didn't skip a beat. "\$250."

"Whoa, honey, I don't have that kind of money! I was thinking they'd be \$50!"

Marissa wailed, "Mom! Everyone is going to be getting these shoes! I can't be the only freak who doesn't have them at school!"

"I guarantee you everyone will not be getting those shoes! Families these days have more important things to do with their money. Money doesn't grow on trees, Marissa. The answer is no."

Marissa felt pretty close to an epic meltdown. She was sure she DID need those shoes. "Mom, let's talk about it! Can't I earn money doing thing around the house?"

"You can to a certain extent," her mom replied, "but \$250 would take you months and months to save up. I don't even make \$250 in a whole day of work! And you really should help out around the house more anyway, since your dad and I both work long hours."

"I know mom, and I promise I will help out more! I just really, really need these shoes."

"You need to learn the difference between needs and wants, sweetie. The shoes you have are perfectly good for school. I'm going to have to put my foot down and say no."

Marissa felt tears spring up in her eyes. She felt so disappointed, she wasn't sure what to do next. Was she being a selfish jerk? She just didn't know anymore.



Character Motivation

Readers can think about what a character really wants or needs to understand their actions.

1. What does Marissa want in the story?

2. What actions does she take to try to get the new sneakers?

3. The sneakers are really expensive and not necessary. What do you think is motivating Marissa to want them so badly?



"These are just what I was looking for. It can be hard to know what to do in reading small groups. These give the perfect lessons that are so adaptable. Great ideas!"

- Jessica W.



“These are just what I was looking for! These provide great small group lessons that are so adaptable! Thank you for creating this resource!”
- Shannon S.

Name: _____

Organize Your Thinking:

What was Tyler's _____

Tyler's Hard Work

Tyler was exhausted. He and everyone in his family always strived for excellence. Now in 10th grade, Tyler was on the student council, played three sports, took extra classes, and was in every honors class available to 10th graders. On top of that, he tutored after school and on the weekends in addition to being on his way to earning Eagle Scout status in the Boy Scouts.

Every morning Tyler rolls out of bed at 5:00am a little more tired than the day before. Lately, he feels like he is fighting just to stay afloat. He doesn't remember the last time he did something just because he wanted to or felt joy in his day-to-day life. But excellence requires hard work and dedication, so he just keeps going. Until he can't anymore.

Tyler's mom sticks her head in his room at 6:30 on a school morning. "Tyler!" she exclaims, because she is surprised he is still asleep, rather than ready to leave for his extra class at 7:00am.

"Mom," he moans. "I just can't wake up."
"Are you sick?" She's starting to get concerned.
"I'm sick of working so hard," he is trying not to cry at this point.

Tyler's mom sat down on the edge of his bed. "What's going on, Ty?" she asked.

"I'm exhausted, mom. All I ever do is work, work, work. I haven't slept in or done anything fun since I was in junior high. I don't want you and dad to be disappointed, but I feel like I'm going to have a complete meltdown."

"I didn't know you felt that way! Why didn't you talk to us?" his mom inquired.

"I feel that, as a family, this non-stop work ethic is just what we do. I don't have problem with hard work! But I have no balance in my life and I can't do this kind of schedule through college and into my career years."

"Of course not, Tyler! We thought you were doing all of these extra activities because you WANTED to, not because you feel like you HAVE to."

"I wanted to do what was required to get into a good college to set myself up for a good life. But lately I feel like I'm setting myself up for a nervous breakdown. I need help."

"Of course. Why don't you sleep a little more and skip your extra class today. We can sit down at dinner tonight and put our heads together as a family to come up with ways to lighten your load. The way you're feeling is not how childhood should feel!"

"Thanks, mom." Tyler was already falling back asleep feeling a hundred times better.

Lessons Learned

Characters can learn an important lesson from overcoming challenges

1. What was Tyler's challenge?
2. What steps did he take to overcome it?
3. What life lesson did Tyler learn?

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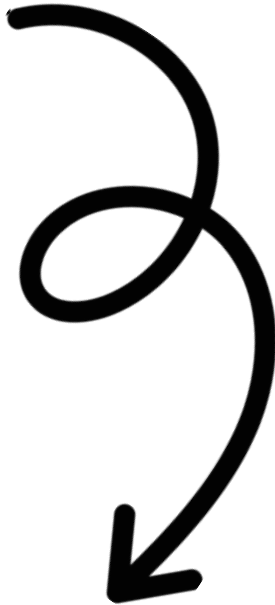
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