Engaging Literature Lessons

Analyzing Character Traits

CCA
Common Core
Aligned

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Created by
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Teacher Information and Directions

This mini pack includes a variety of strategies and printables for teaching students how to analyze character traits. You'll find a lesson on how authors reveal character traits, two character trait lists, a variety of graphic organizers, several cooperative learning activities, and a list of suggested character trait books. In addition, all of the character maps are available in landscape format in a separate PDF file for use with an interactive whiteboard. These lessons are designed to take place intermittently over a period of several weeks or throughout an entire school year.

Why Teach Character Traits?

Character analysis offers an easy way to add rigor to any literature discussion. Character trait studies actively engage students and help them develop an understanding of characters' motives. Studying character traits teaches students how to make appropriate inferences from facts. Furthermore, students deepen their understanding of literature by learning to support their opinions with details from the selection. Students enjoy debating and discussing character traits as their vocabularies develop. As a teacher, you'll enjoy the fact that these printables can be used repeatedly throughout the year simply by focusing on different characters and traits.

Common Core State Standards for Literature

The lessons in *Analyzing Character Traits* are perfect for helping you teach Common Core Literature Standards in Grades 3 through 5. The character development component of each standard below can be taught using some or all of the materials in this packet. However, in order to teach all aspects of each standard, you'll need to find additional resources for the other topics described by that standard such as story settings and events.

## Grade 3 - 5 Standards That Reference Character Development

- **Grade 3 RL 3.3** Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.
- **Grade 4 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).
- **Grade 5 RL 5.3** Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

Step-by-Step Lessons for Analyzing Character Traits

1. **Advanced Preparation** - Locate several short read-aloud books with memorable characters. You'll find a bibliography of suggested books on page 22. In addition, you can use short selections from a basal reading text. Biographies work well for character trait lessons, but fictional characters can also provide a rich source of discussion. Duplicate a Character Trait list for each student. You'll find two versions on pages 6 and 7. You may want to duplicate the list on colored paper and laminate it since your students will be referring to this list frequently throughout the year. It's also helpful to locate individual dry erase boards and markers for each student. Many of the lessons involve active participation, and dry erase boards are an easy way to involve all students.

2. **Introduction to Character Traits** - Begin by explaining the term "character trait." A simple definition might be the personal qualities that a character demonstrates such as bravery or loyalty. Ask students to think of a character from a recent book and name one character trait that describes the person. Randomly call on students or have them write their responses on individual dry erase boards to show you. In general, physical qualities like height or hair color are not considered to be character traits.

3. **Emotions versus Character Traits** - Some students may be confused about the difference between emotions and character traits. Explain that the two terms are similar, but emotions can change from moment to moment, while character traits are developed over time. For example, a character may generally exhibit the trait of cheerfulness, yet he or she may feel the emotion of sadness when a friend moves away.

4. **Distribute Character Trait List** - Distribute one copy of the character trait list to each student. Emphasize that they need to store this list in a safe place and take care of it because they will be using it repeatedly throughout the year. Ask them to read over the words, but don't stop to explain the meaning of each one. Later you'll be focusing on a new word each day as you discuss characters in stories and biographies.

5. **Character Clues Overview** - Now ask students how they think authors reveal a character's personality to readers. Point out that authors seldom use character trait words to describe characters; instead, they include clues throughout the selection. Display the Character Clues overview on page 6 and discuss each type of clue with your students. As you discuss the difference between action clues, verbal clues, and other clues, ask them to cite examples from books or stories you have recently read.
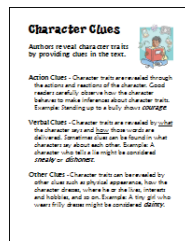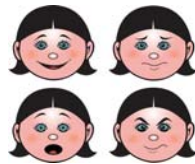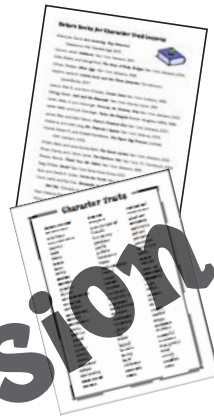
6. **Character Trait Analysis** - Immediately after introducing the Character Clues overview page, display the Character Clues graphic organizer on page 9 on a overhead projector or whiteboard. Read aloud a short book such as *Tacky the Penguin* and ask students to brainstorm a list of character trait words that describe the main character. If their Character Trait list is laminated, they can circle the words on that list. If not, they can write them on a dry erase board or add to a class list on an interactive whiteboard. Then choose <u>one</u> character trait and write it in the center of the graphic organizer. Read through the book another time, asking students to notice actions, words, and other clues that support this trait. Add their ideas to the class graphic organizer. Don't worry if you can't find a detail for every category. In this case, you might want to use the graphic organizer several times with different characters to reinforce the concept of character clues.

7. **Daily Character Trait** - This lesson is designed to take place during 15-minute daily mini-lessons over a period of several weeks. During that time, your students will develop a character reference chart. Distribute copies of the Character Trait Reference on page 10. and display a copy for the class. Each day read a short selection or refer to a character in a chapter book. Identify a character trait that applies to the main character, making sure it's one that your students might not already know, such as gullible or ambitious. Write the word in the first column and explain the meaning of the word. Have students help you write a definition for the second column. Then have students brainstorm clues from the selection that support this character trait and record them in the Literary Examples column. Add one word a day to the chart until you've introduced all of the challenging words on the character trait list.

8. **Character Trait Sorting** - To check for understanding, place students in teams of three or four and give each team one copy of the Character Trait Sorting map on page 11 and a set of character trait word cards. Use the cards on page 12 or create your own with the template on page 13. Students cut the cards apart and stack them face down in the middle of the chart. One by one, they take turns flipping over a card, reading it aloud, and discussing it with the team. The team decides if the trait is generally thought of as a positive attribute or a negative attribute and the card is placed face up in the appropriate spot. If it's neither positive or negative, they place it in the "Neutral" box. If they don't know the meaning, they place it in the "Unknown" section. Students take turns flipping over and placing the cards so that everyone participates equally. Finally, discuss the team answers as a class. An alternate strategy would be to stop and have a team discussion after every word is placed on the sorting map. This will keep each discussion short and focused, preventing students from becoming bored during one long class discussion.
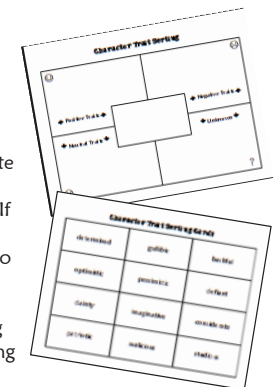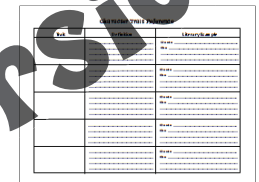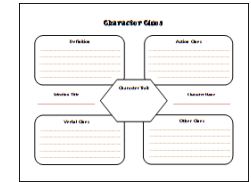
9. **Basic Character Map** - After students are comfortable with most of the words on their Character Trait list, it's time to revisit the concept that a single character often displays numerous character traits. The Character Map graphic organizer on page 15 is an excellent tool for working with this idea. Complete directions for introducing the Character Map to your students can be found on page 14. You can also find a completed example based on the book *Goldie Socks and the Three Libearians* on page 16.
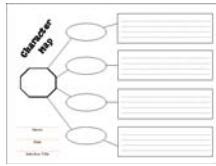
10. **Character Comparisons** - Comparing characters is another way to deepen understanding about character traits and motives. Use the Comparing Characters Venn diagram on page 17 to compare two characters from the same story or characters from different stories. Students can even compare characters with themselves. Allow students to use physical attributes as well as character traits to describe each character.
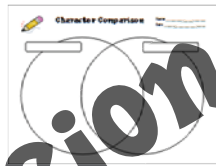
11. **Character Development** - In some stories and biographies, the main character undergoes a significant transformation as a result of an event or interaction with another character. The Character Development map on page 18 offers a way to analyze a character before and after the change takes place. You may want to use the instructional sequence on page 14 to introduce this graphic organizer. It's always best to introduce a new graphic organizer to the entire class or a guided reading group before assigning it to individuals to complete alone.
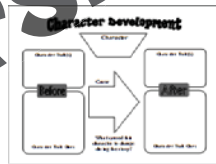
12. **Character Trait Challenge** - As a culminating activity, involve your students in the Character Trait Challenge. Students work in teams of three or four to create a team poster displaying the character traits of a significant character from a biography or other literary selection. Complete directions and printables can be found starting on page 19.

Gilly Hopkins
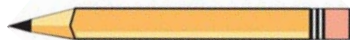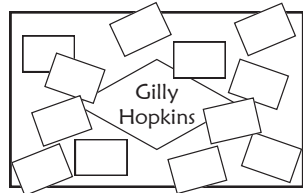
If you enjoyed my **Analyzing Character Traits** pack, please check out my other resources in these locations. Thanks!
- **TeachersPayTeachers store**
  http://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/Laura-Candler
- **Teaching Resources Website**
  http://www.lauracandler.com
- **Corkboard Connections Blog**
  http://www.corkboardconnections.com.

Character Traits

absent-minded	dreamer	methodical
adventurous	energetic	mischievous
ambitious	even-tempered	obedient
argumentative	friendly	outgoing
bashful	fun-loving	optimistic
bold	generous	patient
bossy	gentle	patriotic
brave	gullible	persistent
busy	handsome	pessimistic
caring	happy	polite
careless	hard-working	proud
cautious	helpful	reckless
cheerful	heroic	reserved
clumsy	honest	resourceful
compassionate	humble	respectful
conceited	humorous	rude
confident	imaginative	selfish
considerate	impatient	serious
content	independent	shy
courageous	innocent	sly
cranky	intelligent	sneaky
creative	inventive	spoiled
critical	joyful	stingy
cruel	lazy	stubborn
curious	leader	studious
dainty	logical	successful
daring	lovable	suspicious
dedicated	loving	thoughtful
defiant	loyal	timid
demanding	malicious	unruly
determined	mannerly	unselfish
devious	messy	witty

Character Traits

adventurous	honest
bossy	imaginative
brave	impatient
busy	intelligent
careless	joyful
cautious	lazy
cheerful	loving
clumsy	loyal
courageous	messy
creative	obedient
cruel	patient
curious	polite
dainty	proud
determined	rude
friendly	selfish
funny	shy
generous	sly
gentle	sneaky
happy	spoiled
hard-working	stubborn
helpful	thoughtful

Character Clues

Authors reveal character traits by providing clues in the text.

Action Clues - Character traits are revealed through the actions and reactions of the character. Good readers carefully observe how the character behaves to make inferences about character traits. Example: Standing up to a bully shows *courage*.

Verbal Clues - Character traits are revealed by <u>what</u> the character says and <u>how</u> those words are delivered. Sometimes clues can be found in what characters say about each other. Example: A character who yells, "No! We're going to do it my way!" might be considered *bossy*.

Other Clues - Character traits can be revealed by other clues such as physical appearance, how the character dresses, where he or she lives, interests and hobbies, and so on. Example: A tiny girl who wears frilly dresses might be considered *dainty*.

Character Clues

Action Clues

Character Name

Other Clues

Definition

Character Trait

Selection Title

Verbal Clues

Character Trait Reference

Definition

Literary Example

Trait

Character ____
Clues ____

Character ____
Clues ____

Character ____
Clues ____

Character ____
Clues ____

Character ____
Clues ____

Character Trait Sorting

↑ Negative Traits ↑

→ Unknown →

↑ Positive Traits ↑

→ Neutral Traits →

Character Trait Sorting Cards

bashful	gullible
defiant	pessimistic
considerate	imaginative
studious	malicious

| determined |
| optimistic |
| dainty |
| patriotic |

Character Trait Sorting Cards

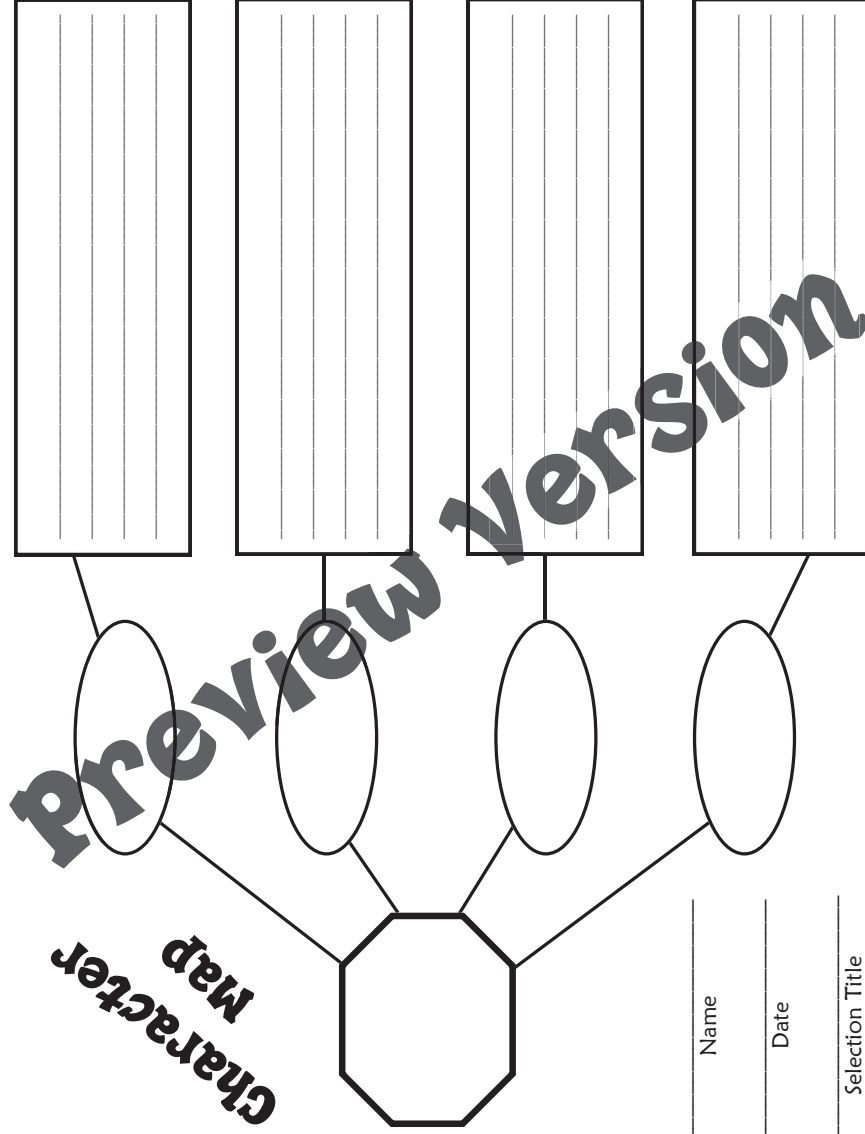|			

Introducing Character Maps

Overview

To make sure students understand how to use this graphic organizer, introduce it in stages. Each step is described below, and the steps move from teacher-directed instruction to independent practice. The entire sequence may take a week or more.
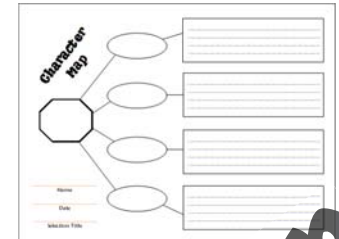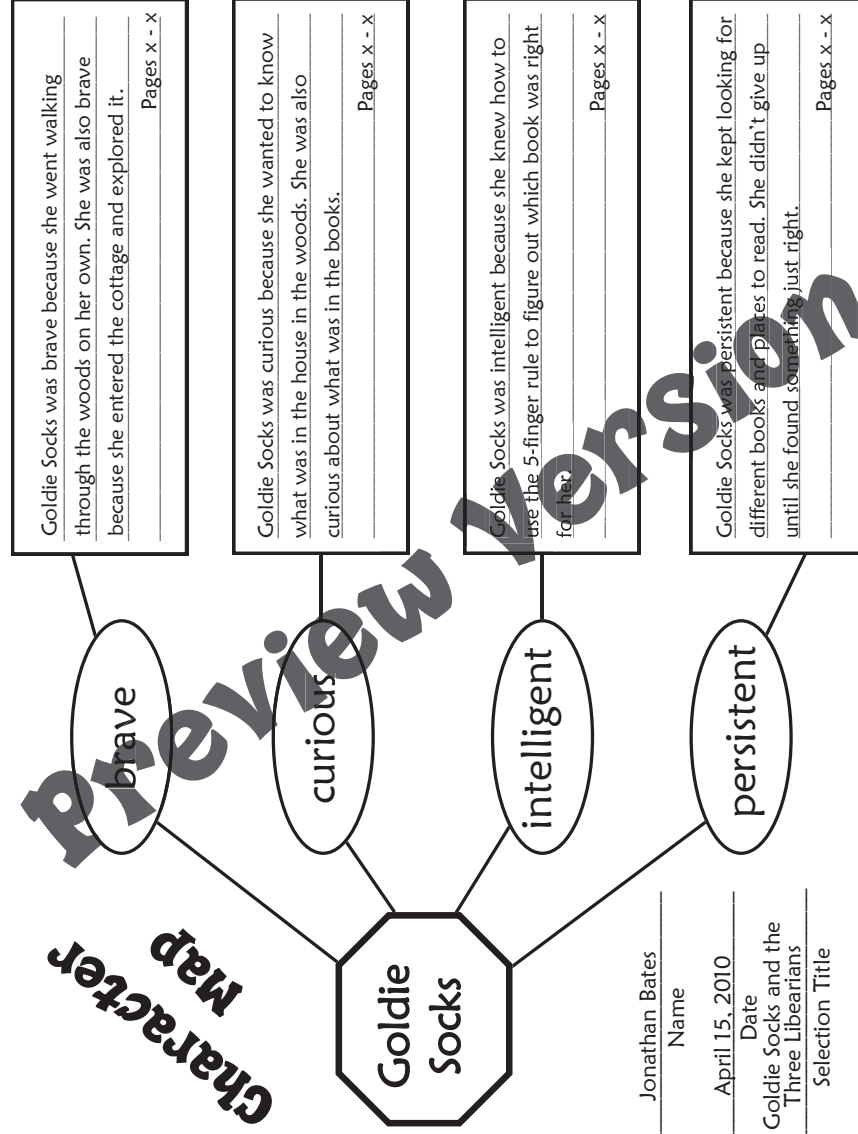
Instructional Sequence

1. **Whole Group Lesson** - After reading a selection from a chapter book, have students brainstorm a list of traits that describe the main character. Call on students randomly to share their ideas, making sure they justify their suggestions with clues from the book. Distribute copies of the graphic organizer, and have students write the main character's name in the octagon. Then choose one character trait and have the entire class write that trait in the top oval. (Refer to the example on page 16.) Display a blank copy of the graphic organizer so they can see how the process works. Write supporting details in the top rectangle and include page number references if possible. Depending on the time allotted for this lesson, you can focus on one trait a day or complete the entire graphic organizer all at once.

2. **Guided Reading Groups** - This graphic organizer works well in a guided reading group. You can read the selection to the entire class, but complete the graphic organizer together within the small group setting. Before adding each character trait to the map, discuss it thoroughly in the group and have students look back in the selection for supporting details.

3. **Partner Practice** - The last step before completing the Character Map independently is to complete it with a partner. Each person begins by jotting down 4 or 5 character traits that apply to the main character. Then they take turns completing the parts of the graphic organizer. One person states a trait and explains the supporting details. If his or her partner agrees, that information is added to the map. If there is disagreement, they select a different character trait or ask for help. Then the other person names a trait, justifies his or her choice, and records it on the Character Map. By the end of the activity, each person will have completed 2 ovals and 2 rectangles. The benefit of working with a partner is that students gain a deeper understanding of character traits by discussing and justifying them.

4. **Independent Practice or Assessment** - Finally, students should be able to complete the graphic organizer without help. Using the Character Map this way works well as a literacy center activity, preparation for a literature circle discussion, or as an assessment.

Note: This sequence of instruction can be used to teach any of the character graphic organizers in this mini pack. It would be especially effective with the Character Development graphic organizer on page 16.
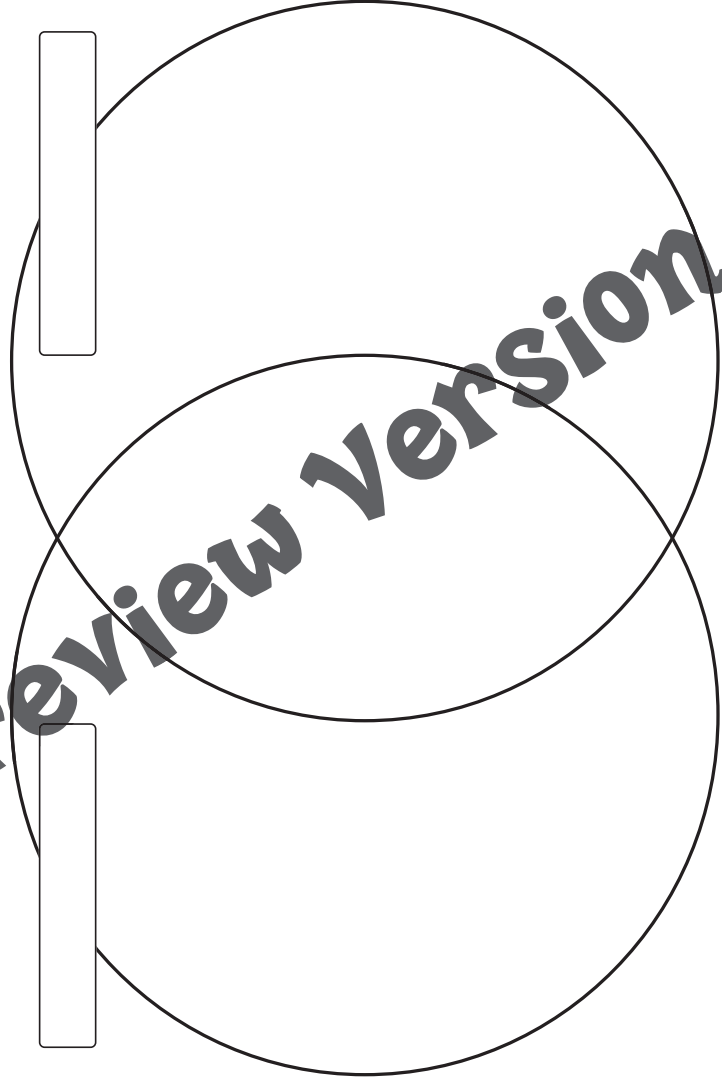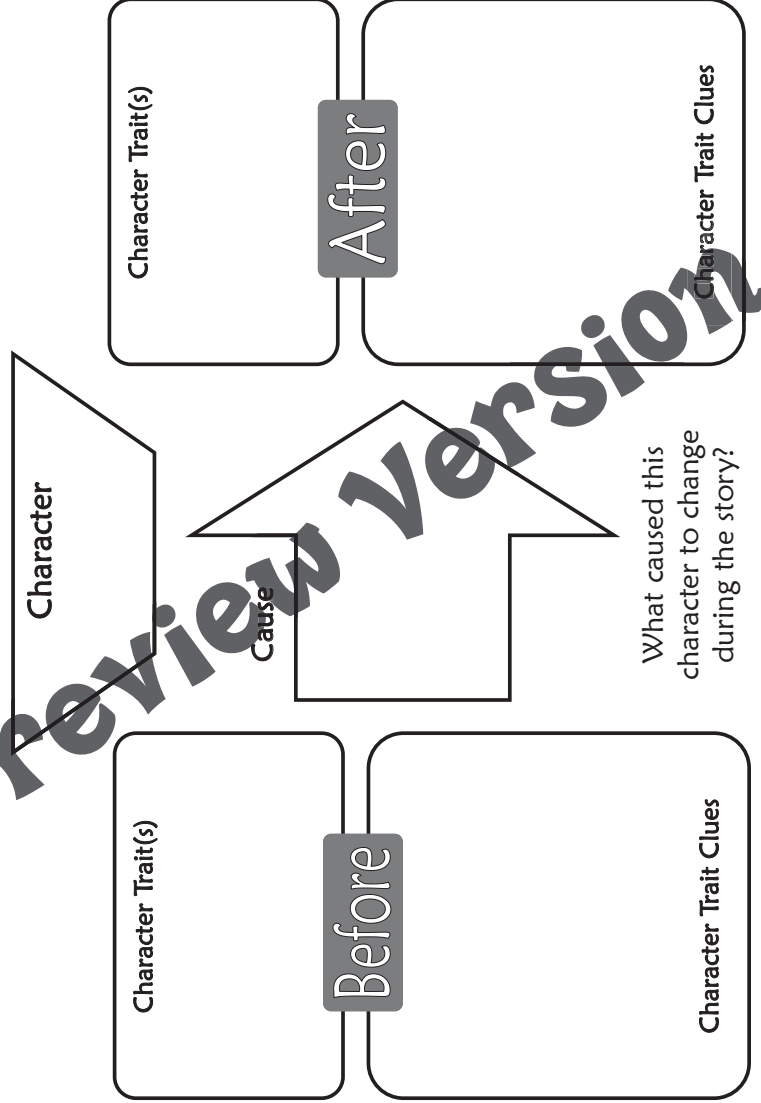
Character Map

Name

Date

Selection Title

Character Map

Goldie Socks

- brave
  - Goldie Socks was brave because she went walking through the woods on her own. She was also brave because she entered the cottage and explored it.
    Pages x - x

- curious
  - Goldie Socks was curious because she wanted to know what was in the house in the woods. She was also curious about what was in the books.
    Pages x - x

- intelligent
  - Goldie Socks was intelligent because she knew how to use the 5-finger rule to figure out which book was right for her.
    Pages x - x

- persistent
  - Goldie Socks was persistent because she kept looking for different books and places to read. She didn't give up until she found something just right.
    Pages x - x

Jonathan Bates
Name

April 15, 2010
Date

Goldie Socks and the
Three Libearians
Selection Title

Character Comparison

Name _____
Date _____

Preview Version

Character Development

Character Trait(s)

After

Character Trait Clues

Character

Cause

What caused this character to change during the story?

Character Trait(s)

Before

Character Trait Clues

Preview Version

Character Trait Challenge

Materials for each team of four:

- Large sheet of construction paper or poster paper
- Scissors and glue sticks
- One rhombus pattern (half of page 18)
- Character Trait slips (2 or 3 copies of page 19)
- Character Trait list
- One or more copies of the same book or story (basal reader biographies work well)

Gilly Hopkins
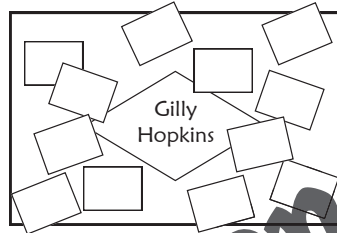
Directions:

1. As a class, select an important character from a read-aloud book, novel, or basal reader story that everyone has read recently.
2. Challenge your class to see which team can name and justify the most character traits for that character in a given period of time.
3. Give each team one copy of the Character Trait slips page and have them cut it apart so that everyone starts with two slips of paper.
4. Ask them to think of character traits that describe the character and that can be supported with details from the story. Each person should write one character trait on his or her slip of paper and look for a page in the story that contains a supporting detail. The detail and page number should be recorded on the slip of paper. Students also need to record their first name on the line.
5. Team members should discuss the character traits and details as they work to be sure that they don't duplicate traits. If they run out of slips, provide them with additional copies. Encourage your students to help each other with finding character traits and supporting details from the selection.
6. Have students place the rhombus in the middle of the poster paper and write the name of the character inside. As they complete each character trait slip, they should place it somewhere on the poster around the heart and glue it down.
7. Allow at least 30 minutes for this activity. When time runs out, allow students to walk around the room and view each other's posters. Decide which team has the most character traits that are supported by details from the story. Students may challenge each other's character traits and details if they don't agree with them. You can also award bonus points for teams that come up with character traits that are unique to their team poster (no other team thought of that trait).
8. If you grade this activity, assign individual grades by counting the number of traits found by each student and the quality of the responses.

Trait _____ Supporting Details: _____ _____ _____ Page(s) _____ Name _____	Trait _____ Supporting Details: _____ _____ _____ Page(s) _____ Name _____
Trait _____ Supporting Details: _____ _____ _____ Page(s) _____ Name _____	Trait _____ Supporting Details: _____ _____ _____ Page(s) _____ Name _____
Trait _____ Supporting Details: _____ _____ _____ Page(s) _____ Name _____	Trait _____ Supporting Details: _____ _____ _____ Page(s) _____ Name _____
Trait _____ Supporting Details: _____ _____ _____ Page(s) _____ Name _____	Trait _____ Supporting Details: _____ _____ _____ Page(s) _____ Name _____

Picture Books for Character Trait Lessons

Biedrzycki, David. *Ace Lacewing, Bug Detective*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge, 2005.

Cannon, Janell. *Stellaluna*. New York: Scholastic, 1993.

Coles, Robert, and George Ford. *The Story of Ruby Bridges*. New York: Scholastic, 2004.

Gilman, Phoebe. *Jillian Jiggs*. New York: Scholastic, 1988.

Hopkins, Jackie M. *Goldie Socks and the Three Libearians*. Fort Atkinson: UpstartBooks, 2007.

Jackson, Ellen B., and Kevin O'Malley. *Cinder Edna*. New York: Mulberry, 1998.

Kellogg, Steven. *Jack and the Beanstalk*. New York: Morrow Junior, 1991.

Lester, Helen, & Lynn Munsinger. *Hooway for Wodney Wat*. New York: Scholastic, 2000.

Lester, Helen, and Lynn Munsinger. *Tacky the Penguin*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988.

Levine, Ellen, and Kadir Nelson. *Henry's Freedom Box*. New York: Scholastic, 2007.

Madonna, and Loren Long. *Mr. Peabody's Apples*. New York: Callaway, 2003.

Munsch, Robert N., and Michael Martchenko. *The Paper Bag Princess*. Lindfield, NSW: Scholastic, 2006.

O'Neill, Alexis, and Laura Huliska-Beith. *The Recess Queen*. New York: Scholastic, 2002.

Pfister, Marcus, and J. Alison James. *The Rainbow Fish*. New York, NY: NorthSouth, 2006.

Polacco, Patricia. *Thank You, Mr. Falker*. New York: Scholastic, 1999.

Steig, William. *Shrek!* New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2010.

Seuss, and Charles D. Cohen. *Yertle the Turtle*. New York: Random House, 2008.

Viorst, Judith, and Ray Cruz. *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 2007.

Watt, Melanie. *Scaredy Squirrel*. New York, N. Y.: Scholastic, 2009.

Whitcomb, Mary E., and Tara Calahan. King. *Odd Velvet*. San Francisco: Chronicle, 1998.

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