

Playing Great Characters

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Introduction and Objectives

Second grade students are expected to read and comprehend literature on a variety of levels. Empowering them as scholars of reading, I'm reminded of the quotation, "If you give a man a fish you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish you feed him for a lifetime." Aligning to the big ideas being taught in Playful Response to Stories, I am confident that if students learn how to be active readers, they will be able to read for a lifetime. Second grade students read a variety of fiction genres and are expected to interpret the main idea and story elements presented throughout. They also read non-fiction text and use the text features to identify important parts of the text and further comprehend its meaning. All of these things happen throughout the year in my second grade classroom as students become more fluent readers and become more avid at comprehending what they have read.

In second grade, most students' reading education is a bridge from learning to read to reading to learn. One way to activate both of these skill sets is to have students perform what they read. In performing their reading, it increases their fluency and demonstrates they comprehend the meaning and tone of the text or story. It also gives students the opportunity to read with expression and to do this in front of an audience making their performance more authentic for their experience as readers.

Before students respond to stories, they need to learn the important elements of a story. Within each story students read they need to identify who the characters are, what the setting of the story is and what is the plot that moves the action of the story. They will use this information in order to respond to the story in a meaningful way. They will also learn a lot about perspective and point of view because they will be acting out the point of view of the character in the story. If two classmates act out the same scene of a story, they could each have a different interpretation of what that scene can and should look like and therefore have differing perspectives of how to interpret what they understand is happening in a story. This will naturally allow for students to engage in an open discussion about why they chose to act out the story or the scene the way they did and it will build the students' capacities for both speaking and listening, Common Core goals associated with language arts in second grade.

Two of the values and priorities that I would like to highlight and emphasize in my classroom next school year are responsible citizenship and respect for education. I think these are two overarching themes that I want to embed in every lesson that I teach and in

my communications with my students and their families. I think it would greatly enhance my students' understanding of how to be responsible citizens and demonstrate a respect for education if they could discover characters in stories that embodied one or both of those traits. Furthermore, I would like the students to use the scenarios from the stories to act out for their peers how the character in the story showed and invested in the chosen value.

At the beginning of this curriculum unit I will read aloud a book that has a character that really exemplifies either responsible citizenship or respect for education and model how to act out the scene from the story that includes that action in the main idea. I want my students to mimic by modeling, reciting lines and acting the parts, in order to demonstrate to me they know how to take a part of a story and accurately turn it into an action. The second step I will have them do is to work in small groups. I will assign a different book for each group to read, hopefully finding and choosing ones that exemplify either responsible citizenship or respect for education and within the groups' students will have to read the selected story and choose the part that highlights the main idea of responsible citizenship or respect for education. They will need to work as a team taking turns listening to each others' ideas in order to create a production where they act out the highlighted scene. Then they will present their scene to the class in order for their peers to better understand the story they read and the value the story highlighted. I envision these two lessons being taught at the beginning of the school year so students can become familiar with the idea of looking for examples of responsible citizenship and respect for education in the stories and novels that they read. I am confident that if they look for characters who model these traits in the books they are reading they will start acting like responsible citizens and start acting respectful toward education, and even though it won't be a performance, their actions, behaviors, and mannerisms will start to be played based on the actions, behaviors, and mannerisms modeled by the characters in their stories.

Another strategy I will use and implement in order to model for students and to help them understand how to act out stories is to show them scripts or parts of scripts paired with the performance of the script. This way they will begin to understand drama and vocabulary and context around reading and reciting parts of plays. I need to think about how I'm going to allow costumes and props to play into the stories the students are acting out. It is important for students to interpret the costumes and props they wear and use as tools and instruments for what they're playing, and not as toys to get them off task in the classroom. Students need to consider the point of view and perspective of the audience and plan for including props and costumes in their play in order to convince the audience to believe the various situations they are trying to portray in the plays they conduct.

Students will have the opportunity to learn and memorize a small part of a story to act out. Students will practice acting it out in the way they interpret the text to read, but they will also have to act it out in a variety of ways like they are performing it at a baseball

game, or as if they are 90. This will help them to learn how as actors they have the skill sets to perform in multiple contexts and situations, but they really need to read and understand the context clues in the story in order to comprehend the meaning of the scenes and actions in the story. This also allows students to think about the perspectives of others. If they have to respond to something from the point of view that is not their own or not even the character's point of view, they will really show they understand what is happening in the story as well as that they can appreciate and respect the view points of others.

Because I like to integrate subjects across the curriculum, it is natural to use some of the things students are doing and learning in reading and apply them to writing. I would like the students in my class to write narratives describing a time when they were a responsible citizen, and prior to writing down the ideas for the story, they can perform the actions in front of a small group in order for them to better understand and remember what actions to write down and to get feedback on how to describe the actions of the story. They can write other characters into their narratives and be directors of their own story by engaging their peers in acting out their stories. I hope that some of the playful ways they respond to stories in the classroom trickles out to the playground and that they use the props available to them outside to act out different scenes and scenarios from stories. We have a large campus with multiple settings to take the students to play including a typical American playground with jungle gyms and a slide. We have a basketball hoop and soccer and track field, but we also have several wooded areas where students could use the trees and benches to act out scenes from stories with that type of setting.

Every summer when I was in elementary school my grandparents paid for my siblings and I to attend a one-week camp of our choice. For years my brothers spent their week at basketball camp held at the local college campus. My sister chose different camps each summer including dance camp and music camp. And I went to the same theatre camp which was held at the repertoire theatre in the city and eventually moved to being held at the elementary school in my town. I am so thankful and appreciative of these experiences because of all of the valuable lessons I learned through learning lines, building sets, and performing in front of an audience. Participating in drama camps helped me to build my confidence. They allowed me not to be afraid of speaking to an audience of peers and adults. I became a better reader because of it. Performing in plays engages foundational reading skills of building fluency, creating expression, and comprehending literature for the purpose of getting others to understand it. I want to impart this on my students while developing them into better readers and citizens. Even though I work in an elementary school setting with people who spend their days in front of a classroom of children, an observation I have is that when these same people are put in front of adults, they do not deliver with the same ease and comfort. I want my students to be able to talk to audiences of children and adults with the same level of comfort and confidence. This is a valuable skill that will take them far when they are making good decisions in their own lives and

trying to motivate others to do the same. Another observation I have is that there are teachers/adults in my school that lack the skill of reading with expression, I mean real expression that makes students jump when you speak loudly because the dialogue in a story indicates a character shouted something instead of said something. The greatest compliment to my teaching is when my students mimic my expressive reading. This is one thing parents typically comment on when we conference. They notice that when their child is reading he/she uses different voices for the various characters and that their child reads with expression paying attention to the words in a selection as well as the punctuation. Every child is able to do this, especially if they are given the opportunity to read on their developmental level. Through my nine years of teaching, I have watched students become more engaged and motivated by reading because they learn to read with expression which allows them to greater connect to what they are reading then when they deliver there reading without any expression at all. With this curriculum unit, I hope to also see them begin to understand the perspective that audience has in their reading, especially when they are acting out what they are reading.

Background Information

Students respond to what they read in a variety of ways. Using a traditional basal reading program, the expected response is typically in a test format where students demonstrate that they interacted with the text by answering multiple choice, true or false, short answer and essay questions about stories and text that they read. Taking this a step further and focusing on student learning styles and needs, students can be required to respond to text or stories by completing graphic organizers that highlight a particular strategy they are learning. Another way for students to respond to stories is for them to act the story out. Students can do this in multiple ways and when they respond this way, there is no set definition or criteria for how to do this, thus students are adding their own perspective and interpretation of the story when they respond by acting it out.

Students can respond by performing or “playing” a scene from the story. They can choose a segment or part of the story, however big or small they want, and act out what is happening in that scene. They can use imaginary props or bring in realistic or representational items or objects to use to act out the scene. Independent of reading, children tend to do this when they play pretend. They pretend or act out the fantasy of playing house or school. I remember having the Fisher Price child-size kitchen set growing up and my sisters and I used to pretend all the time to cook dinner and feed each other just as my Mother modeled for us every time she fed us. Sometimes our preparation involved dialogue, but often it was just us girls working simultaneously side-by-side doing different parts to prepare a “family dinner.” Children do this when they mimic games or actions they read about in stories. For instance, when Harry Potter first launched, many children played “Quidditch” by riding brooms around their house. (There are even YouTube videos of adults playing it).

Students can involve their peers in playing different parts or roles in a story. Students assume the role of a character and participate in acting out a story with other students who are pretending to be other characters from the same story. I have younger cousins who love to play “Aladdin” on a fancy carpet their family has at the front door. They have a golden lamp in the same room that they will rub and tell wishes to and then extend the story by acting out the wishes coming true. Ideas like this can be mimicked from so many stories. I know many young girls whose common every-day dress is a princess costume, because they like pretending to be a princess. Disney launched a whole marketing campaign, by recycling all their princesses or female roles from a variety of movies and clumping them together into a princess category which they used to make money by selling a variety of princess items. This has even appealed to me as an adult and I acted it out by dressing as Cinderella for Halloween this year. Who doesn’t want to be recognized as a Princess?

Sometimes characters in a story reach out and motivate or impact a student. As students read and learn more about the character, they start to take on the persona or characteristics of that character. They form a strong bond or connection and suddenly that character is impacting who they are, how they think and make decisions. I fondly remember doing this during the first time I read the novel Anne of Green Gables by Lucy Maud Montgomery. I instantly fell in love with the character Anne when I was first introduced to her in the book. At the beginning of the story, she was caring for a large family of children, which connected to my life because I was the oldest child in a large family. I loved the vocabulary and imagery she used when describing things. I wanted to be a writer, and the words the character Anne used just convinced me that I wanted to be just like her. And, the greatest connection I had to her was her hair color. As an adult I am quite fond of my red hair, but as a child I hated it. Anne went so far as to dye hers, but it came out green.

There are several young adult novels that students will probably read at one point in their educational careers that include the characters acting out the plots of stories they have read. In Mark Twain’s novel The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Tom influences his friends to pretend to act like outlaws from the story of Robin Hood. Tom and his friends continuously pretend to be something they are not throughout the novel, thus working their imaginations. They pretend to be pirates and robbers and other characters modeled after things they have read or made a connection to in real life. In the novel, Little Women by Louisa May Alcott, the March sisters theatrically act out scenes from books in order to entertain themselves. They also creatively used household items as props in their productions, and they allowed an audience, typically their mother, to observe their plays. Books allow readers to increase their imagination. Interacting with stories allows the readers to actively put themselves into another setting, plot, or character and understand the perspective and point of view of someone different, or even similar, to themselves.

Young children are greatly influenced by a variety of people they encounter in their lives. If taught to interact with stories, they will learn to internalize the ideas and actions of the characters in the stories and allow them to influence their lives. By building the character of my students, I want them to learn about and be influenced by historical heroes. I want them to read about real people who have made contributions to the world, and relate to them as someone they could be like. Motivating 21st century learners with information of 20th century leaders will hopefully build their capacity for leadership. Students in my class are going to read and interact with biographical stories of people who exemplify being good citizens, and I hope this will motivate them to be good citizens themselves.

In the book Fluency through Practice and Performance, Timothy Rasinski and Lorraine Griffith offer a lot of ideas and strategies for how to teach children to be fluent readers. One of the things they offer is “in order to continue to motivate students to reach higher- toward a more difficult text and a more dramatic interpretation- they need to perform in front of peers and parents.”¹ They also suggest teaching students how to give specific compliments related to fluency, so when a student “performs” a piece fluently for one or multiple other students, then those students listening can respond by complimenting their rhythm, voice change, expression, etc., thus reinforcing fluency goals and vocabulary.

Strategies

There are so many ways students can playfully respond to stories. While engaging the kinesthetic learners in your classroom, it is also important to promote metacognitive skills and allow students the opportunity to think about why they are portraying a character a certain way and making the choices that they are for their actions. Students can both discuss and write about their thinking as an integration of language arts.

At the beginning of the school year or at least the beginning of this unit it is very important for the community of learners to develop a deep sense of respect and care for each other. The classroom environment has to be safe enough for students to take risks and try something new and different. Students need to be encouraged and know they will be supported and not laughed at because everyone’s ideas and actions are valued by all. I recommend doing some action lessons that involve all students posing in different ways and then commending each other for their great ideas. Students can make a tableau in the classroom. The teacher gives the students a thought or idea and one person starts it and students take turns adding themselves to the “picture” to represent whatever the thought or idea was. Students can also recite things like the alphabet, or for my second graders probably even or odd numbers or numbers counting by two’s, five’s or ten’s in order to practice presenting to their peers. I would have them practice doing this in different voices or as different characters, like how would you count by even numbers if you were a kid playing basketball verses how would you count or say the even numbers if you were

an old lady trying to walk to the store. Students would pair saying the number words while also assuming the given actions. By doing something they are familiar and comfortable with students will have the opportunity to build confidence in themselves and trust in their audience to support them in future performances. Students can also memorize and perform poetry for their peers either in a formal setting where students take turns standing in front of a class reciting poems or an informal setting which is modeled after a coffee house poetry jam where students take turns reciting poetry in a comfortable place either standing or sitting.

Students can immerse themselves in a read aloud. By choosing books that are rich with language, imagery, and actions, students can pretend to be characters and act out the actions in a story being read to them. Sometimes it is helpful if the story or a part of the story is read to them more than once so students can capitalize and expand on their ideas for how they want to respond to it. Students can do this independently or move around the room and work in a small team with other students. By capitalizing on the idea of modeling good citizens who have made a contribution to the world, I will share with my students' stories of leaders who have made a difference. Within our district's adopted Basal series, ImagineIt, there is a story about Cesar Chavez, a labor leader and civil rights activist, and there is a story *A Picture Book of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, another civil rights activist and leader. Civil rights, activists, and leader are great vocabulary words for students to learn to understand the role that people who make a difference have to play in order to make contributions to the world. There are a lot of books and stories that are appropriate to the reading and fluency level of my students. *Abe Lincoln's Hat* by Martha Brenner is a book that describes the life of Abraham Lincoln using short sentences and high frequency words that second graders will be able to read and understand. The story *Being Teddy Roosevelt*, by Claudia Mills, is a great chapter book about a young boy who develops a sense of responsibility while researching Teddy Roosevelt for a book report. This story would be a great read aloud for students to motivate them to want to learn more information about people in order to learn about different ways people make a difference and have impacted the world. It could serve as a model for students learning how to problem solve and persevere for something they want. *So You Want to Be President* by Judith St. George suggests traits and information about 42 presidents. Students could act out their actions, or choose a character trait to create and act out their own story line.

Students can play the role of a movie star. With the aid of technology, students can video tape each other acting out parts of a story. Then students can review what they have recorded, discuss with their videographer ways to improve the scene or play it differently and try it again. When doing this, students can assume the personality of the character they are playing. This allows them to foster a relationship with the character by learning and internalizing how the character might act or react to a situation. It is also fun for students to pretend to be someone else and have other students in the class figure out who

they are and what their role is. Higher level thinking skills will be engaged if students are able to self-reflect on their own performances.

Students can engage in character interviews. Students or groups of students can prepare interview questions they could ask of characters in different stories. Then students would have to respond and answer the questions using background knowledge they know about the characters and create an answer from the character's point of view. Students can learn how to speak in different voices in order to really act out the character. It is fun to encourage the boys in your classroom to pretend to take on a girl role and say some of her lines in a "girly" voice, and vice-versa with the girls pretending to recite "boy" lines.

After practicing some already prepared Readers Theater scripts, students can develop their own Readers Theater scripts. They can develop them from a common story they read, or from their own ideas in their heads. Teachers can give students a topic to develop a script about, or students can create them on their own. This activity can be differentiated by having students work either independently, with a partner, or in small groups to develop a common script. Students can then practice their own script and perform their story for other students in the class.

Classroom Activities

A variety of things will take part in the first few lessons in order to help students understand how to act out stories and read with expression. One of the stories students in second grade read is The Lion and the Mouse adapted from Aesop's Fables. This story is accessible for all students to read in our ImagineIt Basal reader. The following procedures will be modeled using this story, but they will also be applied to future stories.

First, students will listen to me reading the story expressively. Each student will have a copy of the story in front of him/herself so he/she can follow along with the words. As the reader, I will make sure to read with expression and to vary the voices for the different characters in the story. I will also read one page in two ways – with expression and again without expression and have students discuss which way was better and why.

Second, students will participate in chorally reading the story. This allows for all students to read the same story at the same time without signaling out any students. When chorally reading, students will be practicing with expression. It naturally allows for differentiation because students read at different developmental stages, so if a child is not ready to read all of the words, he/she can read some of the words without being embarrassed about skipping words, but also learning the words he/she needs to know by listening to a peer read them. I usually have students sit in a circle when doing this so I can look around and see who is struggling, and I can also make sure students are engaged

and participating by keeping track of what page we are reading from. Students are easily motivated by their peers and if they hear a classmate read with expression, it stirs a competitive edge to want to learn the words so they can recite them as well.

Third, students will then watch the story acted out on a YouTube video.² Students will see the actions of the characters played out in the story as well as hear another author read the story and vary the voices of the characters. Because this story has two characters I could put students in groups of two or three. If students are in groups of two, each student will choose a character to play in the story and then they will both participate in being the narrator by chorally reading the narrated part. If students are in groups of three, two students can choose to play the part of the two characters and the third student will be the narrator. Once students are in their groups, they will sit together and start practicing reading the story with their different parts. The objective is for them to be able to read their own parts with fluency and expression, and this might be achieved by rereading the same section or story multiple times. Then students want to start acting out the story so that eventually an audience can have a visual understanding of what is happening in the story. Students can choose to use their books to remember the words from the story, or they can pair the words with actions and tell about what is happening and being said in the story in their own way.

In order to introduce action, we will first discuss what props they think would be appropriate for the story. Second graders are expected to identify the setting of stories, so we will discuss what the setting of this story is and have them imagine what they think that background of the story should be. This is a great story to start with because it focuses around one main prop which would be a net. Students could use a blanket and pretend it was a net (unless we could get a real net for our classroom). It's important for students to realize that props should be used to enhance and support the action and story line of the performance, and not take away from it or be overly distracting to the audience.

After students have multiple opportunities to practice learning, reading, and acting out their story in their group, then they will perform the story for an audience of their peers. This can be done either in front of the whole class or have two groups paired up to perform for each other. Students will offer positive feedback and compliments to the group that is performing in order to build the self-esteem and confidence in the group member so they are motivated to continue to read and perform stories. It is also valuable for students to see what their peers are capable of doing as a motivating factor for doing something better. If one person or one group doesn't fully understand how to act the story out or is not confident enough to act it out with expression when performing for their peers, they may be more motivated and confident to do it when they see their peers doing it with confidence. I want students to build a comfort level of performance in front of their peers so this can frequently reoccur in our classroom.

The above steps and routine can be repeated multiple times with multiple stories as students become accustomed to playfully responding to stories. In order to build their capacity as creative players, they need many opportunities to play. And, each opportunity will increase their capacity to read and understand literature.

Students will learn to apply the skills they use in performing stories to writing their own stories to perform. Based around the idea of responsible citizenship, students will work together in groups to create a play that models how to be responsible citizens in the classroom.

First, students will brainstorm ways they are responsible at school. I will record these ideas on the board in a list and have the students also list them in their notebooks so they can refer back to their ideas not only when they're creating the play, but also in a daily classroom setting if necessary.

Then students will be put in groups of three or four. I want the groups to be small and manageable so everyone has the opportunity to give input and feel like a contributing member of the group. Students need to decide what the setting of their play is going to be. They can choose among their own classroom, the special area classroom (music, media, art, physical education, and technology), the cafeteria, the hallways, and the playground. Students need to select who the characters in their play are going to be. This will support their understand of perspective and point of view. If they are choosing the teacher role as one of their characters then they need to consider what a teacher would do or say to support the responsible action. They can also choose the role of the principal, the janitor, another teacher in the school, a student, a parent, or they can even create a fantasy situation where they have a superhero or imaginary character making suggestions for what to do and say.

Next, students need to write their script. If I had more computers and more students who could fluently type, I would probably let them start by typing their scripts on the computers so they can easily erase, re-write, or move things as they think things through and create their first draft of their script. Some students will probably be writing their script and groups need to decide if one or two people share the responsibility of actually writing the script while everyone is responsible to give input, or if every student will be responsible for writing the script. Because students in second grade are still developing skills for writing and sounding out words, my expectation would be for the group to work together to write the words the best they can, but they do not have to be spelled perfectly as long as the students can read what they wrote. Students also need to differentiate the lines. It might be best if students decide which character they are each going to be so that they can have ownership for writing the lines for their own character. That way, when it comes time to start practicing reading the script, they already know what most of their lines are going to be and it will make it easier for them to read and say them, especially for the struggling readers.

After the script is complete, I will make copies of it so that each student in the group has access to his/her own script to read from and practice. Then students in the group will begin to practice reading the script in their group. Students will read their parts and decide what type of expression and voice to use for their characters. They can also discuss as a group what expression and voice to use if a peer has an idea for someone else. Students will be allowed and expected to practice their script multiple times so they are comfortable and confident with reading it. Then they need to decide what props to use (if any) and begin to practice their play by incorporating action. Students will need to choose one spot in the classroom to use as the setting and “stage” for their action, but they can incorporate movement and props into that one spot. Students will continue to practice and now perform their play for their own individual group and then eventually to a group of their peers. Students will showcase their talents of writing and performing a play by performing it to their classmates.

Again, after each performance, I will make sure classmates congratulate and offer compliments to the group performing. I want students to feel empowered and supported in their artistic attempts, and I want them to feel valued and appreciated, as well as believe that their work and ideas have meaning for the greater purpose of the whole class understanding how to be a responsible citizen.

In continuing with the theme of highlighting responsible citizens, students are also going to understand the historical significance of famous people acting responsible throughout the history of our country. Students need to understand the past in order to help inform the future, and second graders can begin to recognize the values, traits, and characteristics of other people who have made significant contributions to our country.

I will probably start at the library with this one and find biographical books on my students’ reading levels that highlight people who acted responsibly throughout history. Then I will display the books for students and have them engage in taking a picture walk through the books to see who they might be interested in learning more about, and also what books they think would be appropriate for them to read. Students will then rank their top 5 choices so that I can hopefully allow them to read about someone they are interested in and want to learn more about. After each student has made his/her five choices, I will assign a person based on their choices.

Students will begin to read their biography book. As they read they will complete a graphic organizer (Appendix II) that allows them to look for specific things about their person in order to learn more about their person. Students can also use other sources to find out information about the citizen they have chosen, including encyclopedias, other biographical books, and the internet.

After students have finished reading their biography and completing their graphic organizer, they will begin to write how they are going to model for their peers who their

person is and what contributions he/she made. They need to decide how to play out the person's life so their classmates can understand more about their person. Students need to consider how they are going to dress so that their outfit is fitting to the time period the person lived in. Students also need to consider the manner and way in which they are going to act like the person. Lastly, they need to think about a character value that the person really exemplified in his/her life and consider how they are going to model that character value so their peers will also understand it.

Once students have put together all of the pieces of understanding about the person's life, creating an outfit and props to use to act as the person, and deciding how to act like the person and what to teach others about the person, we will then have a citizen's cafe. I'm picturing decorating my classroom with table cloths on the tables and serving drinks and cookies and having students sit at tables with other citizens and discussing who they are pretending to be and what contributions they have made and how. Students will need to be in character at the citizen's cafe and teach other students about whom they are using the first person point of view perspective. This idea is adapted from the book Being Teddy Roosevelt by Claudia Mills. The character in the story is preparing a biography about Teddy Roosevelt while also questioning what Teddy would have done in order to get something he really wanted. It would be beneficial if my students could think about how the life of the person they are studying connects to their own life, or how to apply the character traits to their own lives. Students need to know where they can fit in history and to value their own story compared to others.

As I continue to learn and explore how to get students to interact with stories in a playful manner, I am watching it play out in my classroom. Because I model for my students how to read with expression, I am observing them pay attention to punctuation in their reading and I am listening to them read with expression. I've started to pair up students to partner read selections that are developmentally appropriate to their reading level, and I'm curious to see if students will take initiative to start acting out the plot of the story on their own or see what happens after I encourage them to take a chance at acting it out and playing with it, or if it is something I will need to model for them. I am fully confident that all of these strategies and lessons will build my students reading fluency as well as their motivation to read and interact with selections.

Resources

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women*. New York: Barnes & Nobles Classics, 2004. This young adult novel describes the lives of four sisters who act out stories and plays for entertainment.

Brenner, Martha. *Abe Lincoln's hat*. New York: Random House, 1994.
This easy reader details Abraham Lincoln's life and contributions that he made.

George, Judith. *So you want to be president?* New York: Philomel Books, 2000.
This brightly illustrated picture book describes past presidents and anecdotes about them.

Hooplakidz. "The Lion and The Mouse." YouTube - Broadcast Yourself. .
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5eh2NU0mjrc&feature=relmfu> (accessed October 30, 2011). This is a brief animated version of Aesop's Fable The Lion and the Mouse.

Mills, Claudia. *Being Teddy Roosevelt*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.
This children's short story book describe a young boy's perseverance to learn about Teddy Roosevelt and also actualize his own dream of playing the saxophone.

Rasinski, Timothy , and Lorraine Griffith. *Fluency Through Practice and Performance*. Huntington Beach, California: Shell Education, 2010. This teaching guide offers a wealth of ideas and suggestions for how to increase students' fluency.

Twain, Mark . *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. New York: Barnes & Nobles Classics, 2003. This young adult novel describes the adolescent years of Tom Sawyer, a young boy with a vivid imagination.

Appendix I – Implementing the Common Core State Standards

RL.2.2. Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.

RL.2.5. Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

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.

RL.2.10. By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories and poetry, in the grades 2–3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

Students will meet the Reading Literature (RL) standards by reading and recounting the information and plot of the stories they are reading. This will be done in informal conversations with their peers or play acting groups. Stories will be differentiated based on the students' reading levels in order to engage and motivate students.

RF.2.4. Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding. Read grade-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression. Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

Students will meet the Reading Foundational Skills (RF) by using voice and expression when acting out the stories and plays they are learning.

SL.2.4. Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.

Students will meet the Speaking and Listening (SL) standards when they act out and communicate with their peers the ideas they comprehend in the stories they are reading. Students will select what information from the plot of stories is important to share with their audience so their audience can understand the main idea they are trying to convey through the story.

L.2.3. Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

Students will meet the Language (L) standard by applying the use of conventional grammar when speaking and writing.

Appendix II – Gathering Character Information

Name: _____

Date: _____

Name of Character:

Date of Birth:	Date of Death:
Place of Birth:	Place of Death:

Name 3 contributions he/she made or reasons why he/she is well-known:

1.
2.
3.

Value/Citizen Trait:	Cool Fact to Remember:
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Use the back to draw and describe how you imagine your person to look.

Appendix III: Presentation/Performance Rubric

This generic rubric can be used and applied to performances students conduct throughout the unit. It can be changed and adapted for specific skills as well.

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Enthusiasm	Facial expressions and body language generate a strong interest and enthusiasm about the topic.	Facial expressions and body language sometimes generate a strong interest and enthusiasm about the topic.	Facial expressions and body language are used to try to generate enthusiasm, but seem somewhat faked.	Very little use of facial expressions or body language. Did not generate much interest in topic being presented.
Preparedness	Student is completely prepared and has obviously rehearsed.	Student seems pretty prepared but might have needed a couple more rehearsals.	The student is somewhat prepared, but it is clear that rehearsal was lacking.	Student does not seem at all prepared to present.
Speaks Clearly	Speaks clearly and distinctly all (100-95%) the time, and mispronounces no words.	Speaks clearly and distinctly all (100-95%) the time, but mispronounces one word.	Speaks clearly and distinctly most (94-85%) of the time. Mispronounces no more than one word.	Often mumbles or can not be understood OR mispronounces more than one word.
Posture and Eye Contact	Stands up straight, looks relaxed and confident. Establishes eye contact with everyone in the room during the presentation.	Stands up straight and establishes eye contact with everyone in the room during the presentation.	Sometimes stands up straight and establishes eye contact.	Slouches and/or does not look at people during the presentation.
Volume	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members throughout the presentation.	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members at least 90% of the time.	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members at least 80% of the time.	Volume often too soft to be heard by all audience members.
Listens to Other Presentations	Listens intently. Does not make distracting noises or movements.	Listens intently but has one distracting noise or movement.	Sometimes does not appear to be listening but is not distracting.	Sometimes does not appear to be listening and has distracting noises or movements.

¹ Tim Rasinski and Lorraine Griffith, *Fluency Through Practice and Performance*.
(Huntington Beach: Shell Education, 2010).

² Hooplakidz, The Lion and The Mouse,
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5eh2NU0mjrc&feature=relmfu> (accessed October 30,
2011).