



**Down the Rabbit Hole...
Implementing Comprehension Strategies, Character Traits and Reader's Theatre
from Alice in Wonderland**

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
literacy in grades K-2

Keywords: reading strategies, character traits, Alice in Wonderland, reader's theatre

Teaching Standards: See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: This unit will use the classic novel, Alice in Wonderland, to teach students about comprehension and fluency with a focus on inner and outer theatre for students in the classroom. We will focus on comprehension strategies, character traits and the implementation of reader's theatre in the classroom. We will begin with an introduction and review of Alice in Wonderland. Then, students will learn about adjectives and describing words as they prepare to compare and contrast characters in the story. Students will also learn various acting exercises in order to familiarize themselves with theatre in the classroom as they prepare and practice scripts from Alice in Wonderland in the form of staged readings in small groups as well as reader's theatre. As a final activity for students, they will have the opportunity to perform a scene from Alice in Wonderland to an audience in order to express their inner and outer theatre elements. This unit is an interdisciplinary collection of activities centered around literacy, character traits and reader's theatre. It can easily be adapted for older grades.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to twenty-five students in my first grade classroom as well as sharing this unit with teachers on my grade level and the kindergarten and second grade team for implementation in their classrooms.

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Nikki Guevara

Introduction

As a student in my educational journey through elementary, middle and high school, I remember being particularly interested in reading. I loved everything about it! I remember going to the store and begging my mother for a new book. When I was younger, there were no iPads or tablets to distract me from one of the best type of learning, voracious reading.

As a first grade teacher, my job is to teach students *how* to read and how to do it well. Learning to read is quite a difficult task when twenty-five unique students enter my room every school year. These students are at various reading and educational levels. However, with guided instruction, scaffolding information and incorporating best practices, students begin a reading journey they will continue for the rest of their lives. In this unit, we will use the classic novel, Alice in Wonderland, along with effective reading instruction strategies to teach comprehension skills to students while incorporating character traits from characters within the novel and building fluency with reader's theatre scripts depicting scenes from the novel.

While attending the seminar, "Supernatural Figures in Theatre, Film and the Brain" led by Mark Pizzato from The University of North Carolina in Charlotte, I began to realize how I could use his information on good vs. evil as a character analysis in theatre, film and neuroscience while teaching the novel and applying theatre exercises to promote fluency rates and improvisation in the classroom. Information about inner and outer theatre elements will be explored in this unit as a result of learned topics from the seminar.

Throughout this seminar, we have learned about supernatural figures in the form of good vs. evil and animal vs. human characters as well as ways to incorporate theatre exercises in the classroom. I will use this information with our literacy objectives and reading standards in order to teach first graders new concepts surrounding comprehension and fluency as a way to challenge and enrich students. The reading standards will be the focus while incorporating effective comprehension strategies and practices within the curriculum unit. All of these activities will surround topics, characters and scenes from Alice in Wonderland.

I will use literacy elements to create a unit promoting the topic of *comprehension*, *character traits* and *reader's theatre* to help master reading skills such as:

- phonemic awareness
- phonics
- vocabulary
- fluency
- comprehension

I plan to make this curriculum unit available for other teachers at my school and beyond so they have access to the curriculum information and activities to incorporate effective reading strategies such as phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.

My goal is to use the information from the seminar to teach and scaffold information for students as they participate in various Alice in Wonderland activities. Since first graders are learning to read and write, this unit will be a beneficial way to incorporate effective comprehension strategies with the end goal of promoting comprehension and fluency.

The end result would include students understanding how to summarize, inference and draw conclusions, just to name a few. After information is presented to students in the form of teacher-led material, students will use that information with the help of various literacy activities to better understand these literacy concepts. This curriculum unit will assist me in the classroom by helping me to relay important literary information regarding comprehension to students at a young age so they can learn to appreciate and value reading while becoming more effective readers.

Demographics

Bain Elementary School is an elementary school serving close to 1000 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The school is located in Mint Hill, North Carolina in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District. This school system is the second largest in North Carolina and the nineteenth largest in the nation.

I am currently a first grade teacher at our school. This is my twelfth year in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district. I am one of six first grade teachers and teach using the North Carolina Common Core standards (NCCC). I incorporate various literacy-based teaching methods including: Balanced Literacy, Words Their Way, Making Meaning/Vocabulary program, Guided Reading, differentiated teaching methods, flexible grouping, 21st century skills, technology and current research-based strategies to teach and promote reading skills to reach all students. I have taught first, second and third grade over the past twelve years. I have experienced the vertical planning aspect by

teaching in a variety of grades. I have seen the developmental process of students *learning to read* in grades K-1 and also *reading to learn* in grades 2-3.

Teachers at my school use flexible grouping to differentiate student instruction based on individual needs. Balanced literacy programs that include: word work, independent reading, supported reading with the teacher and writing daily help reinforce academic concepts learned in the classroom. Our school motto is *to challenge and prepare students for future success*.

Technology is constantly used to enhance learning opportunities on a daily basis. Teachers in grades K-5 have access to the following technology: document camera, mounted overhead projector, 11 iPads per classroom (10 for students and 1 for personal teacher use), as well as a cordless mouse and keyboard. Teachers also have subscriptions to online magazines such as *Scholastic News* and teaching resources such as *Discovery Education* and *Raz Kids* to help further promote reading and technology. These are just a few of the techniques and teaching strategies used on a daily and weekly basis.

Rationale/Objectives

This literacy unit is intended for first graders to help master literacy skills such as comprehension and promote fluency while focusing on the classic novel, Alice in Wonderland. This unit will be based around comprehension, character traits and building fluency through the usage of reader's theatre while incorporating the "neurotheatre" within each student.

- Students will be exposed to various literacy-based activities based on studies involving neuroscience and the element of inner and outer theatre to promote comprehension.
- A strong focus on character analysis from the novel will promote students becoming better readers and increase their overall comprehension.
- Specific attention to fluency practice through staged reading and reader's theatre.

We will focus on three major topics in this curriculum unit:

1. comprehension strategies
2. character traits
3. reader's theatre/staged readings

Students will focus on these three topics as they complete a book study on Alice in Wonderland. The unit will also incorporate best practices in literacy instruction and neuroscience while using the novel to build more comprehensive and fluent readers.

Specific areas of focus for the unit will be based on first grade reading standards: Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas as well as Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity.

Background Information for Neuroscience and Literacy Instruction

Neuroscience research and literacy based strategies are two topics that will intertwine in this unit. Students will be taught effective comprehension strategies based on neuroscience research in order to promote comprehension skills with the novel, Alice in Wonderland.

Neuroscience

Neuroscience is defined in Wikipedia as the scientific study of the nervous system. Traditionally, neuroscience has been seen as a branch of biology. However, it is currently an interdisciplinary science that collaborates with other fields such as chemistry, cognitive science, computer science, engineering, linguistics, mathematics, medicine, genetics, and allied disciplines including philosophy, physics, and psychology. In the seminar, “Supernatural Figures in Theatre, Film and the Brain,” we focused on the connections of neuroscience and theatre involving the “inner theatre” of the brain, as explained by our seminar leader. Many examples of brain games and theatre warm ups can be used to help students feel comfortable performing in front of others and as a way to express their inner and outer theatre. Inner and outer theatre elements play an important role in the social and emotional growth of students in the classroom, as students are able to act and perform with their peers. This will take place through the role of students participating in staged readings and reader’s theatre.

According to G. E. Tompkins in the 2006 edition of *Excerpt from Language Arts Essentials*, there are five factors for reading instruction that promote reading skills. Those factors include: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. Equally important are skills of word identification as well as motivation. Students need to be well versed in each of these topics in order to succeed as a reader.

By directly teaching comprehension strategies and embracing the inner and outer theatre, along with modeled reading skills and thinking aloud with read alouds in the classroom, students will increase their reading abilities.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify and manipulate individual sounds, phonemes, in spoken words. Blending and segmenting are two components of phonemic awareness that are needed to promote literacy skills. Sight words also come into play with success as a reader. According to LaBerge and Samuels, "capable readers have a

large bank of words that they recognize instantly and automatically because they can't stop and analyze every word as they read. Through a combination of instruction and reading practice, students' knowledge of words continues to grow." (1)

Phonics

Phonics is the relationship between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language. It is important to teach letter-sound relationship in a systematic, explicit way. The most effective time to teach phonics is in a two-year time span preferably in kindergarten and first grade.

Vocabulary

J. Pikulski and S. Templeton describe the power of vocabulary in their 2004 article, *Teaching and Developing Vocabulary: Key to Long-Term Reading Success*. Vocabulary includes the words we must know in order to communicate effectively in listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is very important for reading comprehension. Teaching specific words before reading helps build vocabulary and reading comprehension. Repeated exposure also helps students learn new words.

In this literacy unit, I plan to read aloud from Alice in Wonderland to expose and broaden the vocabulary of my students. By increasing their vocabulary, I am ultimately increasing their reading skills because new information is presented and that will increase their background knowledge and schema for future reading experiences.

Fluency

The National Reading Panel report, on page 193, defines reading fluency as "the ability to read text quickly, accurately and with proper expression."(2) Capable readers have learned to read fluently—quickly and with expression. Three components of fluency are reading speed, word recognition, and prosody. Some effective types of fluency are choral reading, partner reading, tape-assisted reading and reader's theatre scripts. Fluency as well as inner and outer theatre awareness will take place as students participate in this type of staged reading in front of their peers and or an audience. Students will not only increase their fluency rates, but they will be allowed to express their inner theatres as they perform for others. In the introduction of *Inner Theatres of Good and Evil*, theatre is identified as an art form that "enables actors to externalize the inner performance realms of memory, dream and fantasy through mimetic and narrative skills."(3) This is one of the main goals for students as they participate in reader's theatre to improve their fluency.

According to the Tim Razinski, a recent study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education found that "fourth grade students' oral reading fluency is a strong predictor of silent reading comprehension." The study also found that almost half of the fourth

graders had not achieved an acceptable level of reading fluency. Fortunately, the evidence suggests that fluency can be taught and that effective instruction in fluency leads to overall improvements in reading. (4)

In this unit, students will be exposed to reader's theatre scripts based on scenes from Alice in Wonderland. By practicing fluency in these types of theatre exercises, students will have capabilities of reading "quickly and with expression." This effective reading strategy combined with inner and outer theatre awareness will promote the next level of learning, comprehension.

Reader's Theatre

Reader's theatre is a strategy for developing reading fluency. It involves children in oral reading through reading parts in scripts. In using this strategy, students do not need to memorize their part; they need only to reread it several times, thus developing their fluency skills. The best reader's theatre scripts include lots of dialogue. As a result of this seminar, students will participate in reader's theatre in the several ways to scaffold and build upon theatre skills. Students will first participate by reading the scripts to learn the content. After practice with the content, students will build on these exercises by doing a staged reading and then the final step, reader's theatre with movement and props if applicable to give students the opportunity to express their inner theatre in small groups with an audience.

Reader's theatre promotes fluency, helps readers learn to read aloud with expression and also helps build reading confidence. Some ways to effectively implement reader's theatre in the classroom is to first choose a story that can be divided into parts and or has multiple characters. Then, assign reading parts to each child and allow students to practice them orally for fluency. Students will read their assigned part and perform it in front of an audience. Students can also be exposed to different points of view as they take on roles and read different parts to gain the new perspectives of characters involved.

According to the World Literacy Summit report on page 6, students who participate in reader's theatre become more active in the reading process. (5) The more reluctant readers became less reluctant. Students become more literate with comprehension and improve their ability to connect the sequence of events. Social relationships are enhanced and improved; behavioral outcomes occur for students. Reader's theatre and its incorporation in the classroom also ties with Mark Pizzato's inner theatre concept. In his book, *Inner Theatres of Good and Evil*, he describes how there is a "theatre" in the brain. Pizzato states that "Theatre as an art form enables actors to externalize the inner performance realm of memoir, dream and fantasy through mimetic and narrative skills." By participating in reader's theatre, students will be able to tap into their own inner theatres as a way to express themselves and also have an opportunity to focus on different points of view in regard to what is good and what is evil with characters they portray.

Comprehension

Comprehension is the main goal of reading instruction. It is the top of the "reading mountain" so to speak. Comprehension is not only important in the present when a student is reading and responding to text, but it is important for future instances of recalling information. Neuroscience plays a part in comprehension as well. Brain games and neuroscience activities help keep the brain active and engaged as students act as "sponges" by taking in information while synthesizing. Synthesizing information is a valuable tool for students and their ability to comprehend information.

By incorporating visuals and fluency passages in the classroom, students will have practiced reading fluently with peers and working towards becoming more proficient with new vocabulary and word recognition. According to the article, "Research Based Instruction in Reading," Bonnie Armbruster states there are specific strategies that should be taught and specific ways to teach them. Strategies include: monitoring comprehension, using graphic organizers, answering questions, generating questions, recognizing story structure, retelling and summarizing. Ways to teach these strategies include: explicit instruction, modeling, guided practice and cooperative learning. Additionally, comprehension should be taught before, during and after reading. Before reading, predicting and creating a purpose help promote comprehension. During reading, pointing out new vocabulary and monitoring comprehension is beneficial. After reading, it is important to retell and summarize.

Brain games are another way to incorporate neuroscience and literacy in the form of comprehension. According to the article, "Right Brain Games Can Give Your Child Tremendous Learning Abilities," by Brad Davis, brain games such as hand-eye coordination, logic and memory help students increase their capacity to learn. The left hemisphere of the brain learns consciously in a more systematic, logical, orderly manner through repetition, rules and fact-proving. The right hemisphere of the brain learns subconsciously by absorbing and storing visual, auditory, tactile and tasting sensations together in fractions of a second. The right brain has also been referred to as the "image brain" because these sensations are stored as images. Educational games and lessons help develop the right brain and also include left brain components in this type of whole brain learning. (6)

Teaching Strategies

Some teaching strategies I plan to use include **reading aloud** of Alice in Wonderland and **journaling** questions students may have about the story as well as recording new vocabulary. **Read alouds** will be used throughout the unit to promote comprehension, along with think alouds and vocabulary as well as modeling proper reading and writing skills. With this strategy, students will increase vocabulary and promote class discussion. I plan to use books related to Alice in Wonderland as well as

books related to implementing reader's theatre. Any books with strong characters can be used for examples in how to analyze characters. Reading aloud is a great way to share information and create small teaching moments.

Journaling in the form of a composition or spiral notebook will be used on a daily basis to integrate writing across the curriculum with story structure and questions they may have. Students will have opportunities to write, ask questions, illustrate, etc. in individual journals regarding information they are learning. Throughout the unit, students will also keep a vocabulary section in their journals to gain reading exposure by learning new vocabulary words. Students will use their journals for answering class questions and noting any responses or reflections they have.

We will often use a strategy, **Turn and Talk**, for students to orally discuss thoughts and questions they may have in a non-threatening way to promote working collaboratively with others. According to *theteachertoolkit.com*, this strategy permits all students to participate in discussion, rather than only a few students participating in a class-wide discussion. All students are able to process new learning while engaging in meaningful conversation with a classmate.

Comprehension strategies, such as story maps, exit tickets, retelling sticks, etc. will be used before, during and or after reading for comprehension. *Readingrockets.com* states that comprehension strategies, such as story maps help improve students' comprehension, provide students with a framework for identifying the elements of a story and also help students of varying abilities organize information and ideas efficiently.

Character traits, in the form of character analysis, will be taught in order for students to form opinions about good vs. evil characters in the novel. Throughout the seminar, I have learned that characters may be perceived as good or evil based on a person's previous stereotypes about a subject. For example, the Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland*, might be viewed as an evil character by some but after analyzing the character from a different point of view, students may determine he is not so "mad" after all. The Mad Hatter is possibly just upset because Alice has interrupted his tea party. Maybe Alice is an evil or bad character because she is invading Wonderland. The same could go for the Queen of Hearts. It is important to expose students to different points of view as they learn about characters they come across. Switching roles in reader's theatre can also help students gain new perspectives on character they come across. In an effort to promote character analysis, students will complete character trait maps and various **graphic organizers** in order to analyze characters and form opinions about them while focusing on right brain strategies such as story maps. Students will learn to analyze characters and their character traits by learning about adjectives, using an anchor chart, singing an adjective song and participating in comparing and contrasting characters.

Educational websites will be used to gather information and ideas. YouTube is a good resource for a children's version of Alice in Wonderland. One example is a video that recaps the story in a kid-friendly way. This can be found online at the following address: www.youtube.com/watch?v=_TKaBRrs-kM. There are also various websites such as stagemilk.com/acting-games that provide acting games for students. Different examples of brain games can also be found online for your students. Examples of brain games can be found at: www.learninggamesforkids.com/miscellaneous_games.html.

Reader's theatre scripts as a form of theatre exercise will take place. Students will study scripts, learn roles, reread for fluency, use props and perform in order to promote inner and outer theatre elements, fluency and comprehension. Popular scenes from the novel such as when Alice goes down the rabbit hole and the tea party with the Mad Hatter can be scripted and performed in the class. Students will be able to express their inner theatre as they take on roles and perform the reader's theatre scripts in small groups and or in front of an audience. Reader's theatre, according to the World Literacy Summit report on page 8, is an instructional practice that develops fluency and promotes overall reading growth while increasing self-confidence in struggling readers. (7)

Throughout the unit, students will participate in a book study, journal, work cooperatively, learn about character traits, use graphic organizers to promote comprehension and perform reader's theatre scripts to increase their fluency rates while **collaborating** with each other and incorporating **artistic and creative elements** with the theater exercises.

This unit will be a beneficial way to promote **cooperative learning, engaging students** in comprehension and theatre as well as **integrating across the curriculum** for an ultimate goal of *increasing reading abilities, promoting reading and writing development* and *setting a foundation* for future success in reading as they become more comprehensive and fluent readers.

Classroom Activities

The classroom activities will be centered around three topics while using neuroscience to make connections with reading and writing as well as reader's theatre to build knowledge, fluency and comprehension with the young readers. Students will build from teacher read alouds to reading specific parts and roles in a reader's theatre setting. Their inner theatres will surface as students' take on roles and characters as they work in small groups. Students will have the opportunity to use costumes, masks, props, etc. if they wish.

We will focus on three major topics in this curriculum unit:

1. comprehension strategies
2. character traits

3. reader's theatre/staged readings

Activity #1- An Introduction to Alice in Wonderland

Objective: In this activity, students will be exposed to a condensed version of the classic story by Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland. The teacher will preview the book and then will use the child friendly version of the story as a visual element from YouTube. Students will learn about the story and complete a story element map.

Background Information: Story maps help improve students' comprehension, provide students with a framework for identifying the elements of a story and also help students of varying abilities organize information and ideas efficiently. Story maps relate to neuroscience because the images used from the story maps are right brain activities.

Introduction: Students will be introduced to the topic of Alice in Wonderland with a sneak peek and a book talk. The teacher will lead a book talk and bring up characters, setting, problems and solutions. Students will get an overview of the story by watching the children's version online as a way to gain insight on the story as well as the characters. The story can be found at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=_TKaBRrs-kM.

Activity: The first activity will be a teacher discussion with the class on the story. Next, students will watch a condensed, student-friendly version of the story to learn about characters, setting, problem and solution. Students will then complete a story map of Alice in Wonderland (See Figure 1). This comprehension strategy, story maps, is a helpful tool to gather and display knowledge of the story. Students will use the story elements map to analyze characters in the story as well as problem and solution from the story. Students will explore the concept of outer theatre as they complete these story maps. Students will use the story maps as a way to externalize the inner theatrical information of the story. Story maps will include elements from the story such as setting, characters, problem and solution to help aid comprehension of the story. Students will complete this after watching the video. Teacher discretion will take place as teachers decide if students should work independently, with partners or in small groups. The activity could also be completed in a whole group setting.

Closure: Student story maps will be shared whole group to further review the story elements and overall knowledge of the story.

Extension: Students can use retelling sticks to retell main parts of the story with a partner. Retelling sticks can be created using the template found at: http://moodle.owensville.k12.mo.us/moodle/pluginfile.php/22780/mod_page/content/3/RetellingSticks.pdf.

Activity #2-Awesome Adjectives

Objective: In this activity, students will learn what an adjective is. Students will learn that adjectives are describing words and this activity will lead into describing characters from the story, Alice in Wonderland, as a way to prepare for analyzing future character traits in the following activity.

Background Information: Adjectives are words that describe or modify nouns. Adjectives are describing words that make our writing more interesting to read.

Introduction: Students will be introduced to the topic of adjectives through the use of an anchor chart (See Figure 2). Students will learn about adjectives through the examples of adjectives in a teacher directed mini lesson.

Activity: Students will participate in adding to the anchor chart by giving examples of adjectives. Students will also learn The Adjective Song (See Figure 3) as an auditory way to learn about this topic. The read aloud of Hairy Scary Ordinary: What is an Adjective? could also be read. Students will then complete an adjective sort for independent practice (See Figure 4).

Closure: Students will share the work from their adjective sort. Any extra adjectives could be added to the anchor chart for further understanding of this grammar skill that will lead into the next lesson, Self Portraits Using Adjectives.

Extension: Students can sort adjectives as good or bad (positive or negative) as they prepare for an upcoming activity of relating characters as good or evil.

Activity #3- Self-Portraits Using Adjectives

Objective: In this activity, students will create and label self-portraits with adjectives to learn more about describing words and to prepare for the next lesson dealing with character profiles from the story, Alice in Wonderland.

Background Information: This lesson will help students familiarize themselves with using adjectives to describe someone's character. Students will first internalize the use of adjectives to describe themselves. This lesson will prepare the students for the upcoming lesson involving character profiles from the story, Alice in Wonderland.

Introduction: Students will be introduced to the topic of using adjectives to describe themselves. The teacher will model this using an example (See Figure 5). Students will first draw a self-portrait. Then they will think of five or more adjectives that describe themselves. The teacher will assist by creating a word bank for students to choose words,

spell correctly and add to their self-portraits. Students will begin to internalize the idea of inner and outer characteristics by describing themselves.

Activity: Students will complete a self-portrait using crayons, colored pencils, markers, etc. Students will then collaborate with the teacher on words for a word bank using adjectives. Students will then choose five to seven adjectives to describe themselves. Students will then glue the adjectives around their self-portraits as a visual representation of using adjectives to describe themselves.

Closure: Students will share their self-portraits and discuss with the class the adjectives they used to describe themselves.

Extension: Students will create another portrait using adjectives while describing a family member or friend in a positive and friendly manner.

Activity #4- Character Profiles from Alice in Wonderland

Objective: In this activity, students will begin to discuss character profiles from the story Alice in Wonderland. Students will begin to discuss characteristics of characters based on inner and outer characteristics.

Background Information: Character profiles encourage students to think carefully about the characters they encounter while reading. Gaining insight on characters through the use of adjectives will help students analyze, synthesize and form opinions about characters.

Introduction: Students will be presented with a character profile sheet using Alice as a model (See Figure 6). Students will use various adjectives to describe Alice's character. Students will list words that describe Alice externally, such as her physical features, and internally based on things she says and actions she takes in the story. This activity will help students analyze Alice as good or evil. This activity will also allow students to explore given stereotypes among characters in the story and depict the characters through different viewpoints.

Activity: Teacher will begin by showing the class the character profile sheet. Students will work in small groups describing and writing adjectives about Alice. They will start by describing her physical features: blonde hair, black shoes, etc. Next, students will analyze Alice internally based on her character. Such internal characteristics could be: curious, polite, adventurous, etc. Students will work cooperatively in order to complete the character profile sheet on Alice.

Closure: Student will share and determine similarities and differences among their peers with the character profiles on Alice. Teacher will combine the information to create a collective yet diverse character profile on Alice.

Extension: Students will write in their journals about Alice as a character and form opinions on whether Alice is a good or evil character. Writing in journals and incorporating visuals is a way for students to activate both left brain (verbal) and right brain (visual) strategies in the classroom.

Activity #5- Comparing and Contrasting Down the Rabbit Hole

Objective: In this activity, students will compare and contrast characters from Alice in Wonderland using Venn diagrams (See Figure 7). Students will also form opinions on whether characters from Alice in Wonderland are good or evil.

Background Information: Venn diagrams are a type of graphic organizer that can aid with comprehension. Students use Venn diagrams to show the relationship between two or more things in a visual way. Venn diagrams allow students to visually see commonalities and differences between given objects. Venn diagrams are also right brain strategies because they deal with images.

Introduction: Students will be introduced to the Venn diagram and how they will be comparing and contrasting characters from the book, Alice in Wonderland.

Activity: Students will complete a Venn diagram of Alice and the Queen of Hearts or the White Rabbit and the Mad Hatter. Students will use the Venn diagram to identify the commonalities these characters have as well as their differences. Students may associate the Alice and the White Rabbit as good characters and the Queen and the Mad Hatter as evil characters. If this happens, the teacher should promote different points of views to see if their opinion will change. For example, maybe the Queen is not evil, maybe she is just upset that Alice is trespassing. Also, maybe the Mad Hatter is not evil, perhaps he just likes things to be on time and Alice upset his tea party. Students will work independently and or together to create these Venn diagrams in order to compare and contrast characters in Wonderland.

Closure: Students will share completed Venn diagrams and give insight into their thought process as they share and form opinions about the characters from the story.

Extension: Teachers can encourage students to write in journals from different points of view based on characters in the story. For example, tell how the Queen felt when Alice invaded her garden or tell how the Mad Hatter felt when Alice showed up at the tea party.

Activity #6- Acting Exercises

Objective: In this activity, students will focus on acting exercises in order to prepare them for upcoming reader's theatre activities. Students will participate in small group and whole group acting exercises based on focus, creativity and improvisation.

Background Information: Acting exercises help students get comfortable, warmed up and focused. Acting games help develop important skills required for acting and performing. Acting builds self-confidence. It teaches students how to communicate and speak clearly in front of an audience. Acting also promotes social interaction, risk taking, listening skills, responsibility, improved reading skills and learning to think on your feet.

Introduction: Students will be introduced to acting exercise with the help of *stagemilk.com*. This site is a great resource for examples on acting exercises. They are categorized into: getting to know a group, focus games, improvisation games, physical exercises, etc. This resource is a step by step guide on how to implement acting exercises and games for students. Acting exercises will help scaffold the instruction for the next lesson using reader's theatre scripts to practice fluency and comprehension on different scenes of *Alice in Wonderland*.

Activity: Students will work together in order to try out different acting exercises. The purpose of the acting exercises and games is to familiarize students with working and talking in front of a group. The acting games will allow students to perform and work together for a common goal. Teacher will start off with getting to know a group or focus game such as Rainstorm from *stagemilk.com*. Then the teacher can move to other games from the creativity category, such as *What Are You Doing?* and finally to the improvisation category such as, *Sit Stand and Bend*. Teacher will need to start slowly and then move to the more difficult improvisation categories as students become more comfortable with acting. Students will engage in their left and right cortex functions as they take on different roles with acting. The left cortex, dominant in language and speaking, will be activated as students use their verbal memory in the acting exercise. The right brain will be activated as students make imagistic, holistic sense of what they are interpreting in the acting exercises.

Closure: Students will reflect on things that went well from the acting exercises as well as things they would do differently. Responses can be oral or written in their journals. The teacher also incorporates math by having students gather data in voting on their favorite acting exercises.

Extension: Students can create their own acting games or situations to be performed at a later time for the class.

Activity #7- Reader's Theatre with Alice in Wonderland

Objective: In this activity, students will focus on reading and acting out scenes from Alice in Wonderland, such as the beginning when Alice goes down the rabbit hole and or the infamous mad hatter tea party. Students will improve their fluency and comprehension by reading and rereading scripts based on scenes from the book.

Background Information: Reader's theatre promotes fluency, helps readers learn to read aloud with expression and also helps build reading confidence. Students who participate in reader's theatre become more active in the reading process. Students become more literate with comprehension and improve their ability to connect sequence of events. Reader's theatre is a great way for students to express their inner and outer theatre.

Introduction: Students will be introduced to the reader's theatre process. The process will build from the initial script reading to performance in front of an audience.

Activity: The teacher can create a script using the sample provided (see Figure 8). The teacher will use the following steps to implement reader's theatre in the classroom:

1. Choose a story that can be divided into parts or characters.
2. Assign reading parts to each child.
3. Ask students to read their scripts orally for practice.
4. Have students read assigned part to the audience. Encourage students to switch roles.

Closure: Students will use the reader's theatre scripts to practice fluency. Students will also switch roles in the reader's theatre scripts to become exposed to taking on different roles and points of view.

Extension (Staged Readings): Students can further the reader's theatre experience by bringing in costumes and or props for acting out the scripts. Students can use these items to bring the scripts to life. Parents can also be contacted and students can perform for a real audience after mastery of the scripts.

Appendix 1: Implementing District Standards

My unit would implement various Common Core Reading Standards for Literature in a significant way. The literacy based unit would incorporate reading standards as well as the North Carolina Essential Standards for reading and writing to produce an overall educational and informative unit to improve fluency and comprehension for first grade students while teaching about story elements, characters and reader's theatre. Students would have the opportunity to increase their reading skills in order to develop and apply strategies and skills to read and write. Students would also develop and apply strategies to comprehend text that is read, heard and viewed in various forms of literature and fictional text. Students will be exposed to speaking and listening standards as they participate in theatre exercises.

The North Carolina Standard Course of Study objectives that will be taught in the unit deal with reading, writing, speaking and listening:

Literacy: Reading Standards for Literature

RL.1.1-Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

RL.1.2-Retell stories, including key details and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

RL.1.3-Describe characters, setting and major events in a story, using key details.

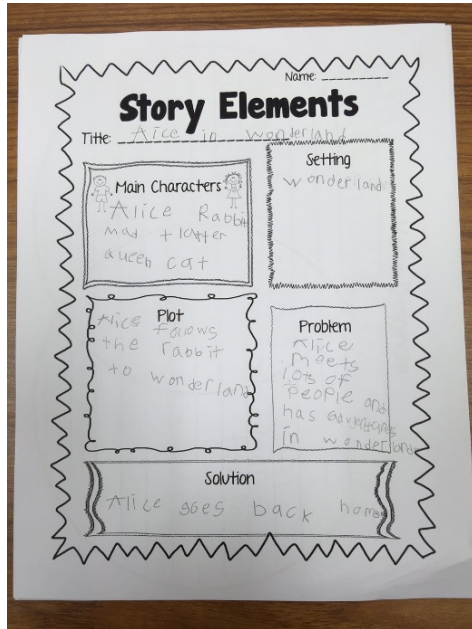
Writing: Text Types and Purposes

W.1.3-Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order and provide some sense of closure.

Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration

SL.1.1-Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

Figure 1-Story Elements Map

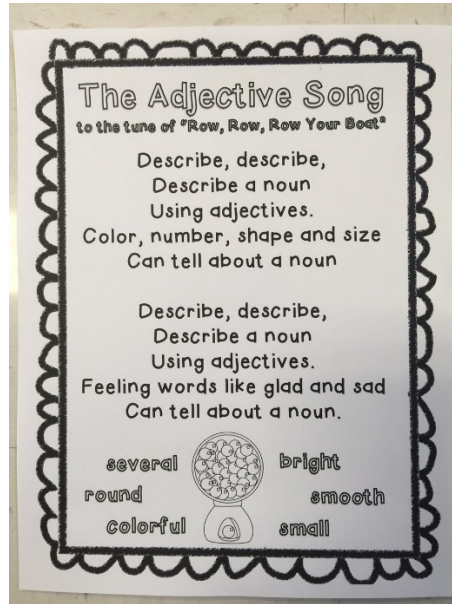


<http://cdn.tristro.net/uploads/ideas/docs/FREE-Story-Elements-Graphic-Organizer1.pdf>

Figure 2-Anchor Chart



Figure 3-Adjective Song



Example from: <http://www.classroomfreebiestoo.com/2014/01/the-sing-long-adjective-song.html>

Figure 4- Adjective Sort

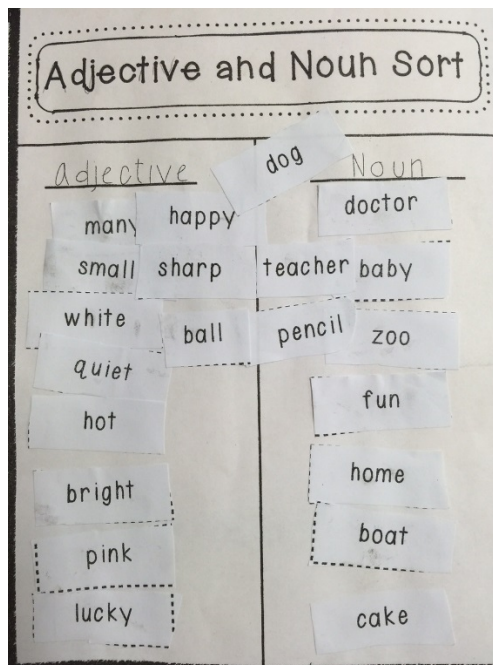


Figure 5-Self Portraits with Adjectives

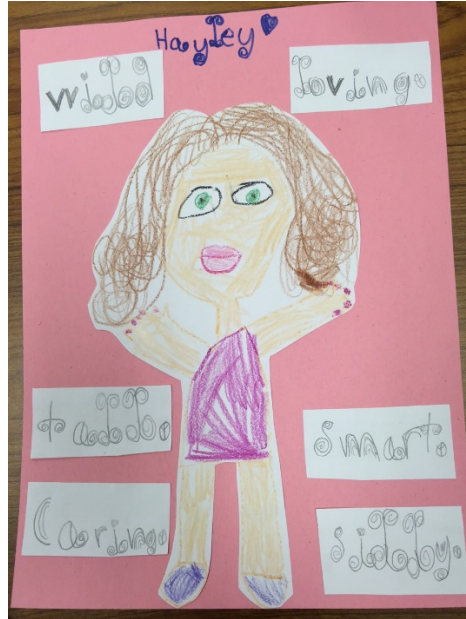


Figure 6-Character Profile Sheet

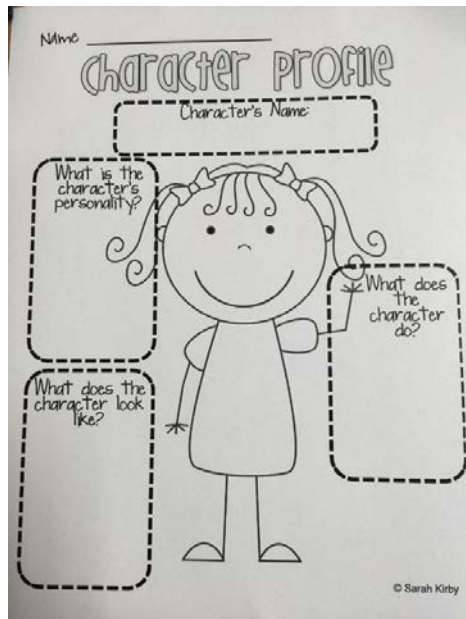
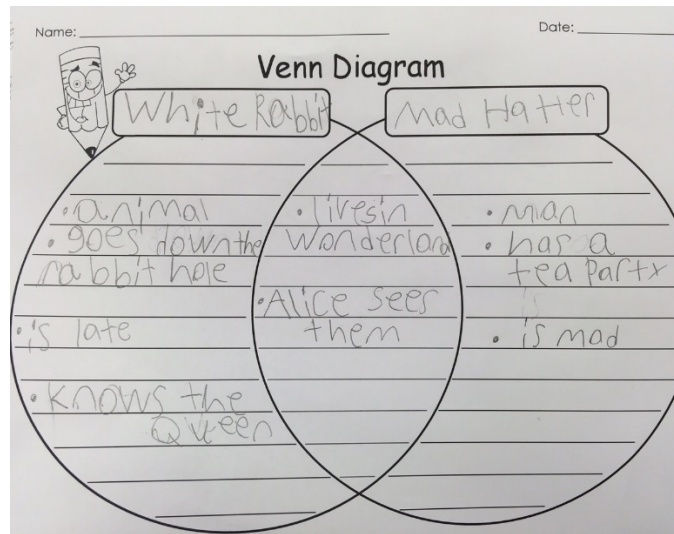


Image example from: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3uQOnujG7hbUZhNDFwcnQzc0U/view>

Figure 7-Venn Diagram



Example from: More Time 2 Teach on TeachersPayTeachers.com

Figure 8-Reader's Theatre Script Example

Scene 1: Down the Rabbit Hole

Narrator 1: Alice is sitting by her sister on a riverbank. She is very tired and has nothing to do. She is reading a book.

Narrator 2: Suddenly, a White Rabbit with pink eyes runs close by her. The White Rabbit takes a watch out of his waistcoat pocket.

Alice: How curious!

White Rabbit: Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I shall be too late!

Narrator 3: The White Rabbit runs across the field, and Alice chases it all the way to a large rabbit hole. Alice crawls in after the White Rabbit.

Narrator 4: The rabbit hole goes straight on like a tunnel and then dips down into a well. Alice has only a moment to think of stopping herself, but it is not enough time. She falls down the hole.

More examples can be found at: <http://www.literarywonderland.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Alice-in-Wonderland-Readers-Theater-Nov-2005.pdf>

List of Materials for Classroom Use

Alice in Wonderland, the novel

This is used for storyline and reader's theatre.

Anchor chart paper and markers

This is used to explain adjectives and character profiles.

Art supplies (paper, crayons, pencils, markers, etc.)

These are used for activities listed.

Internet access

This is used for the online version of Alice in Activity #1.

Read aloud books from Bibliography

These are used throughout the activities listed.

Reader's Theatre scripts

These are created by the teacher and used for reader's theatre in the classroom.

Retelling Sticks

These are used as an extension activity.

Story Maps

These are used to help organize and process story elements.

Venn diagrams

These are used to compare and contrast characters.

Writing journals

These are used throughout as reflection tools.

Reading List for Students

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice in Wonderland*. London: Juvenile Productions, 1933.

This is the story the unit is based on and needed for story maps and character analysis.

Chanko, Pamela. *25 Fun Phonics Plays for Beginning Readers*. New York: Scholastic, 2009.

This is a great resource for word work and phonics review.

Cleary, Brian P., and Jenya Prosmitsky. *Hairy, Scary, Ordinary: What Is an Adjective?* Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 2000.

This is a read aloud for teaching adjectives.

Henkes, Kevin. *Chrysanthemum*. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1991.

This book has a very strong character names Chrysanthemum.

Lovell, Patty, and David Catrow. *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2001.

This book has a very strong character called Molly Lou Melon.

Pugliano, Carol. *25 Just-right Plays for Emergent Readers*. New York: Scholastic Professional Books, 1998.

This is a resource for reader's theatre scripts for young readers.

Rathmann, Peggy. *Officer Buckle and Gloria*. New York: Putnam's, 1995.

This book has two strong characters, Officer Buckle and his police dog, Gloria.

Annotated Bibliography for Teachers

Armbruster, Bonnie B. "Put Reading First: the Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read: Kindergarten Through Grade 3" (*Jessup, MD: National Institute For Literacy, National Institute Of Child Health And Human Development, U.S. Dept. Of Education, 2001*).

This is an excellent resource for literacy instruction for teaching literacy.

Barchers, Suzanne I. *Reader's Theatre for Beginning Readers*. Englewood, Colo.: Teacher Ideas Press, 1993.

This is a helpful tool for reader's theatre in the classroom.

Barchers, Suzanne I., and Charla R. Pfeffinger. *More Readers Theatre for Beginning Readers*. Westport, Conn.: Teacher Ideas Press, 2006.

This is the next edition of reader's theatre in the classroom.

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice in Wonderland*. London: Juvenile Productions, 1933.

This is the basis for the unit we are working on.

Chanko, Pamela. *25 Fun Phonics Plays for Beginning Readers*. New York: Scholastic, 2009.

This is a great resource to use for word work and phonics review for early readers and lower elementary school students.

- LaBerge, David, and S. Jay Samuels. *Basic processes in reading: perception and comprehension*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum Associates; 1977. Print.
- Martin, Rod. *Drama Games and Acting Exercises: 177 Games and Activities*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: Meriwether Pub., 2009.
This is another great resource for drama games in the acting classes.
- Pizzato, Mark. *Inner Theatres of Good and Evil: The Mind's Staging of Gods, Angels and Devils*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Publishers, 2011.
This is the book from our seminar leader that our talk was based on from CTI.
- Pikulski, John and Shane Templeton. "Teaching and Developing Vocabulary: Key to Long-Term Reading Success", *Current Research in Reading/Language Arts (2004)*.
This resource is for learning more about teaching vocabulary in the classroom.
- Pugliano, Carol. *25 Just-right Plays for Emergent Readers*. New York: Scholastic Professional Books, 1998.
This is a helpful resource for young readers and reader's theatre.
- Rathmann, Peggy. *Officer Buckle and Gloria*. New York: Putnam's, 1995.
This is a mentor text example if you need another example for character traits and well as the Venn diagram with comparing and contrasting character traits.
- Spolin, Viola. *Improvisation for the Theater: A Handbook of Teaching and Directing Techniques*. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1963. LaBerge, David, and S. Jay Samuels. *Basic processes in reading: perception and comprehension*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum Associates; 1977. Print.
This is a helpful tool for understanding comprehension.
- Tompkins, Gail E. *Language arts essentials*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall, 2006. Print.
This resource is a helpful tool for literacy information.

Chicago formatting by BibMe.org

Notes

¹LaBerge, David, and S. Jay Samuels. *Basic processes in reading: perception and comprehension*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum Associates; 1977. Print.

²www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/nrp/documents/report.pdf

³ Pizzato, *Inner Theatres of Good and Evil: The Mind's Staging of Gods, Angels and Devils*.

⁴ www.timrasinski.com/presentations/phonics_to_fluency.pdf

⁵ <http://worldliteracysummit.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Presentations/JTJackson%20KJenkins%20KJanuaryVance.pdf>

⁶ www.acceleratedlearningmethods.com

⁷ <http://worldliteracysummit.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Presentations/JTJackson%20KJenkins%20KJanuaryVance.pdf>