



It's A Southern Thing, a Literacy Celebration

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This curriculum unit is recommended for kindergarten but can easily adapted for all elementary grade levels.

Keywords: Emergent Literacy Skills, Literacy and Writing.

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

Synopsis: For this unit students will learn that print carries a message and should be an engaging “fiction or a nonfiction text. This unit will focus on a literacy aspect of southern writing and southern culture through picture books. We will be working with fiction and possibly nonfiction texts, comparing, and contrasting what is real and what is not may not be accurate when it comes to cultural readings in the southern states. I will be bringing engaging literature components to reading, writing, possibly dramatic play, small and large group activities. The unit will contain fun and inviting activities that the children will flock to during their center time. By repeated readings of the books through interactive large group activities, and readings, the children will be able to retell a true-to-life version of the lives the characters lived.

One result of this unit will be that the children will have a better understanding of southern cultures, what it means and how to respect each other for who we are. Let the fun begin.

I plan to teach this unit during the spring 2022 to 20 students in most learning domains in Kindergarten. I give permission for Charlotte Teachers Institute to publish my curriculum unit in print and online. I understand that I will be credited as the author of my work

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By Jacquelyn Fizet

Introduction

Today, children are born into a world full of print. The degree to which literacy is evident in home varies, but almost all children see adults being literate every day, reading books, making lists, writing notes, reading newspapers and magazines, reading directions or recipes, filling out forms and text messaging, reading labels on food packaging and doing countless other tasks that require literacy. In a way, children start becoming literate almost from the day they were born, as they notice elements of the world, which are bound to include literacy. Most children do not understand the difference between fiction and nonfiction in the books they may be looking at or the ones being read to them. The way I will present fiction/ non-fiction is by telling them fiction is make believe and non-fiction is real. This can be done through pictures versus real time photographs, explaining the difference.

The ability to read and process information is a necessary part of our educational experience. The teaching of reading and writing to the young child is key for the formation of literacy skills as preschool children get ready for kindergarten and beyond. Literacy is now, more than ever, essential for basic survival on a day-to-day basis. It has been proven that children who struggle to read will struggle in all subject areas. This can cause children to have a negative attitude towards reading and school in general.

What is the importance of a “read aloud?” Since most kindergartners read at a beginning level, reading aloud exposes the children to a variety of fiction and nonfiction books. To emphasize the difference, choose a fiction and nonfiction book about the same subject. For example, read *These Shoes* and a fiction book about shoes. Discuss the difference in the type of information in the book. You might say the shoes in *These Shoes* do not really fit the boy but he is permitted to buy them anyway. If you went to the store with your family, would you want to buy shoes that are too small? Before you read any book to the class, ask the children to predict if it is fiction or nonfiction to reinforce the idea.

Why do I want to include nonfiction books? Simple, nonfiction helps children develop critical thinking, and analytical skills, as well as the ability to read and understand complex texts. More so, nonfiction can help students develop knowledge of their environment and society, crucial in

later grades as students begin reading more content-specific textbooks. Non-fiction picture books can be the perfect choice for a reluctant reader. Non-fiction texts are written in a different language style to fiction texts. If your child is introduced to this style of text early on in the form of non-fiction picture books, they will find it easier to engage with such texts later. I love reading non-fiction books to my students, and they love listening to them. We learn together about new people, animals, places or adventures and what we read often provokes interesting discussions afterwards. There are many compelling reasons for reading non-fiction books to your students in addition to the enjoyment you get from reading them.

This unit will help students explore the specific features of southern based writing and how they represent a southern culture and how books help kindergartners learn the differences between fiction and nonfiction books. Nonfiction books in particular have different features not often found in fiction books, including picture captions, tables of contents, glossaries, indexes and headings. Both types typically include pictures, but a nonfiction book is more likely to use real photographs instead of illustration, which is critical for a kindergartener since most of them are not yet reading. I will be pointing out those features as the children look through books on their own and ask them to look for the print features.

Why chart differences? Charts and diagrams provide a visual reminder for the kindergarten students to help distinguish between fiction and nonfiction. One simple option is a Venn diagram that shows the similar and different text features, since this is the simplest, I will be using it in this diversity unit to get them used to charting similarities and differences. I will have my students brainstorm common details of all people regardless of color, language or backgrounds. This will be a great activity to use in think, pair, and share after I have introduced what cultural diversity means in our world/classroom to the children. Together we will list details about nonfiction books in one of the single circle areas, such as labels, diagrams, and facts. We will then list fiction-specific details in the other single circle area, such as make-believe, conflict, characters, and illustrations instead of photos. I believe it is important to show children aspects of cultural diversity not only in picture books but in real life stories with actual photographs of children from all around our school, city and even the world

Sorting titles of books is a wonderful way to show children how a fiction and non-fiction book may look different. I will show my students most non-fiction pictures are captured, not through illustrations but by actual photos. A simple sorting activity will give my kindergarten students a chance to practice identifying fiction and non-fiction selections. Mt students will look through the books to determine which they are and put the books in separate piles. Another option is to use old book order (like from Scholastic) for the sorting game. Students will divide a piece of paper in half, have one side labeled fiction and the other side non-fiction. They will cut out the covers of the books from the book order papers and glue them in the correct columns of the

paper. This activity can be more challenging since the students cannot open the books to see interior features. This lesson will have them focus on the cover and the titles.

Rationale

Everyone has a favorite book from their childhood. Worn down and falling apart after dozens of repeat readings, it's often the one we can't bear to throw away or replace. Of course, with so many great children's books out there, it can be hard to narrow your favorite down to just one. I've tried several times, but I always end up with a stack of favorites instead. Reading to young children is proven to improve cognitive skills and help along the process of cognitive development. When you begin reading aloud to children, it essentially provides them with background knowledge on their young world, which helps them make sense of what they see, hear, and read. Reading to my class is a passion of mine. I explain to my students if you can't read, they will be missing so much that this big wide world has to offer to them. Our school district requires us to use the EL curriculum, which in my opinion limits us to texts that are often not interesting or fun to listen to. I also feel that the EL curriculum lacks diversity, which is a very important element in choosing what is read in the classroom. Diversity in children's literature is important for children who identify with different communities because it helps children learn about themselves and feel like they have a valid place in the world. Without it, they may feel invisible or inferior to those. There are many, many reasons why we need diverse books. Diverse books empower, vindicate, normalize, and make visible readers who might otherwise feel forgotten, invisible, or like they're imposters whose stories don't deserve to be told.

Diversity activities teach young children to respect and celebrate the differences in all people. Learning about different cultural aspects offers new experiences for children. It also helps them realize that we're all humans, despite differences in how we look or dress, or what we eat or celebrate. In children's literature, I define diversity as the celebration of unique characters, a celebration of their heritage and culture, and their exterior and interior selves with the deepest sense of empathy and humanity. Imaginative mirrors encourage all of us to be comfortable in our own skin.

In our one-on-one decisions Dr. West introduced me to the world of *The Jack Tales*, folk tales from the southern Appalachians, by Richard Chase, along with other texts with a southern background. I became immediately interested in the Jack Tales because many of the stories paralleled the fairytales I grew up with. And so, my journey into Southern Children's literature began. Believe me when I say if you and your students join the journey, you will not be disappointed. For example, with the Jack Tales by Richard Chase. Storytelling in the 19th century was not limited to the rural settlers. Abe Lincoln carried the practice to the White House. All through the early part of the century there was a constant interchange between oral and printed lore by the way of newspapers and almanacs. The study of the effect of this folklore on literature is quite recent with American literary historians, and they have given little notice to the European relationships of the tall tale. The tales in this collection are not documentary transcriptions.

Mr., Chase has rewritten them for children and has explained his procedure in making composites. His chief interest has been in bringing folklore into usable form and attempting to preserve its spirit. The Jack Tales is a wonderful addition to American folklore, Jack may become more loved by children than some of the more popular books. I will be sharing one of his stories in this unit plan. It will be fun for you to figure out which more popular story it will parallel.

Why are books important for a child's development? Books help kids develop basic language skills and profoundly expand their vocabularies—much more than any other media. Books are interactive; they demand that kids think. ... They expand our universe beyond time and place and inspire our own original thoughts. Books develop critical thinking skills

What are the 5 benefits of reading?

Remember that although you might lose everything, your job, your possessions, your money, even your knowledge can never be taken from you. Vocabulary Expansion the more you read, the more reading to young children is proven to improve cognitive skills and help along the process of cognitive development. When you begin reading aloud to your students, it essentially provides them with background knowledge on their young world, which helps them make sense of what they see, hear, and read. Exposure to reading is important in developing vocabulary for fluency and comprehension, students who scored 90% better than their peers on reading tests, read for more than 20 minutes a day exposing them to 1.8 million words a year. Think about that, reading to children is a remarkable thing.

Reading also improves brain function. Reading regularly with young children stimulates optimal patterns of brain development, which helps build strong pathways in the brain and in turn builds language, literacy, and social-emotional skills that can have life-long health benefits. Cognitive neuroscience shows why: Compared to the brain of an illiterate person, the literate brain is massively changed, mostly for the better, through the enhancement of the brain's visual and phonological areas and their interconnections

A person who reads everyday gets better at it over time. Not surprisingly, daily readers also gain more enjoyment from it than those that read less often. It can even improve memory and critical thinking skills. To promote early literacy, teachers and parents need to provide multiple opportunities. It is important to permit and encourage children to build on their existing knowledge of oral and written language, as well as to provide a supportive instructional environment where children can build a positive attitude toward themselves and literacy development. We, as teachers, need to remember to prepare ourselves as teachers of the very young child to deal with and respect the differences in languages and cultural backgrounds. So,

ask yourself what early literacy instruction should children believe? I believe these include reading aloud, circle time, small group activities, adult- child conversations, and play. Teachers can embed reading and writing instruction in familiar activities, to help children learn both the conventions of print and how print supports their immediate goals and needs.

Activities that promote early literacy skills in kindergarten should include:

1. interactive storybook reading.
2. "pretend" reading and writing.
3. games and other activities to help children identify the letters of the alphabet.
4. interactive experiences with language and print through poems, nursery rhymes and songs

Teachers also need to ensure that children have access to quality and age-appropriate books, both fiction and non-fiction. There are many books written for small children, but this does not mean all books for early readers are age appropriate. Lastly, we need to design a classroom setting for young children that is rich with literacy materials for reading as well as writing. Young children will begin to write and tell you what it says even at a very young age with scribbles. As I begin to teach the unit, I am sure I will see all the developing stages of writing from exploration to developing. I believe that children learn best through play at a very young age. Since I am teaching in an at-risk program, I decided to research how play intervention affects the learning of at-risk kindergarteners, in all domains but especially in literacy. In searching for research studies to support my theory that children learn best through play, I found the research conducted by Han, Moore, Vukelich, and Bell, along with the research from the "Foundation for Child Development" to be the most informative and best support my ideas of learning through play. I am creating this unit because I feel play is the basis of literacy instruction and will be perfect because so much of the learning that kindergartners do. There are three essential contexts for play: cognitive-exploring, asking questions, and thinking; emotional-expressing feelings within the social context, and creative putting together new learning. Through play, children can be responsible for their own learning, and they can use language not just to acquire knowledge, but also to demonstrate their knowledge.

Highland Renaissance Academy

Highland Renaissance Academy is a public school located in Charlotte, NC, which is in a large city setting. The student population of Highland Renaissance Academy is 409 and the school serves PK-5. At Highland Renaissance Academy, 25% of students scored at or above the proficient level for math, and 17% scored at or above that level for reading.

The school's minority student enrollment is 97%. The student-teacher ratio is 15:1, which is better than that of the district. The student population is made up of 47% female students and 53% male students. The school enrolls 99% economically disadvantaged students. There are 27

equivalent full-time teachers and 1 full-time school counselor. Students engage in Literacy, Math, Social Studies, and Science instruction daily. Literacy at RSWA follows the balanced literacy model. Teachers engage their students in multiple components of the balanced literacy model. This year, staff members will continue to engage in professional development in the EL literacy program. This year (2021-2022), teachers continue to be fully engaged in the Data Driven Instruction (DDI) process. This includes “at a glance” data, which is asking questions and writing students' responses. Our kindergarten teachers also develop checklists to use to track skills that will be used depending on the activity being assessed. Kindergarten teacher's use MasteryConnect to track data and use this data to drive instruction and differentiate lesson plans to meet the needs of all children. Highland Renaissance Academy is a public school located in Charlotte, NC, which is in a large city setting. The student population of Highland Renaissance Academy is 409 and the school serves PK-5. At Highland Renaissance Academy, 25% of students scored at or above the proficient level for math, and 17% scored at or above that level for reading. The school's minority student enrollment is 97%. The student-teacher ratio is 15:1, which is better than that of the district. The student population is made up of 47% female students and 53% male students. The school enrolls 99% economically disadvantaged students. There are 27 equivalent full-time teachers and 1 full-time school counselor.

Unit Goals

A major goal of our society's educational system is for children to become literate. Although agreements exist regarding the importance of literacy, controversy surrounds the timing of literacy instruction and methods used to teach literacy skills. While most reading curricula involve formal instruction, I feel that informal instruction is more developmentally appropriate for five-year-olds. The early childhood literacy curriculum for a five-year-old should use a collaborative learning process that actively involves children to demonstrate their understanding of how words and images communicate meaning. Sadly, with the new literacy curriculum adopted by our district there is a lack of diversity in the books being used for instruction. I plan through this unit to add a better selection of books on Southern Culture and Storytelling since after all we are living in the south. I myself am very excited to explore a genre I have never experienced, my students and I will be learning, and exploring together.

The following goals will serve as the basis of my developmentally appropriate Southern Literacy unit. I will encourage an awareness of how reading and writing are useful, attempt to develop listening comprehension skills, develop my student's concept knowledge, develop their oral language skills, and explore the process of communicating through written language as well as drawing.

Through reading and writing students will recognize when there is print in the environment, knowing that print is read in stories. This will allow them to be aware of the sequence of events

in stories that they can connect to life experiences. Connections between stories, setting, main characters, problems and solutions, and life experiences leads to the students' ability to demonstrate understanding of the literal meaning of stories through questions and comments. Again, this leads to the ultimate goal of differentiating fiction and nonfiction text. I will be introducing many new words that include but are not limited to, author, illustrator, text and illustrations.

Content Research

The South looms large in American children's literature. Many classic works for young people are set in the American South and engage directly with Southern history and culture, from Newbery winners such as Lois Lenski's *Strawberry Girl* (1945) and Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1976) to critically acclaimed crossover works, those written for an adult or general audience that are now sometimes considered children's literature, like Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's *The Yearling* (1938) and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), both Pulitzer Prize winners. More recent historical fiction, contemporary realist novels, for children and young adults have been set in the South, such as Cynthia Kadohata's *Kira-Kira* (2004), John Green's *Looking for Alaska* (2005), and Paolo Bacigalupi's *Ship Breaker* (2010). These are just a few of the most celebrated children's and YA titles, but from the earliest years of the Golden Age of Children's Literature in the nineteenth century, with popular or landmark works like Martha Finley's Elsie Dinsmore series (1857–1905) and Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), children's authors have returned to the South over and over again.

Southern literature is substantially recognizable as contingent upon certain identifiers: geographic, social, cultural, political, as well as historical and linguistic contingencies that make up what is known and named as "the South." Of course, history remains a core emphasis in this arrangement, but to think of southern writing in terms of its organizational forms and features instead of its chronological appearance also shifts the grounds of historical emphasis. For instance, to group southern literature under the headings "antebellum" and "postbellum" makes the Civil War the great rationale of literary production.

Southern literature is itself a genre: a body of texts bound together and meeting expectations of readers through similarities in areas of theme, setting, mood, message, structure, plot etc. The first southern literatures and indeed the first critical pronouncements about southern literature appeared at a time when the South, as a section of the United States, was beginning to understand itself in terms of cultural and political difference in terms of what its way of life was not, and what it was positioned against. In the 1830s, the North argued for this sense of difference from without, through abolitionist societies and popular writing that began to flood media outlets. One of the earliest statements of what southern literature needed to be and to do

was announced in one of the section's first literary journals, the *Southern Literary Messenger*. Its inaugural 1834 issue called for southerners to support a distinctly southern, i.e., *not northern* literature. By 1856, in much more strident tones, the *Messenger* was dictating "The Duty of Southern Authors" in an editorial. Beginning in the 1830s, northern writers and readers were busily creating assumptions about the South's difference, and writers and readers of the South correspondingly defined themselves against the place (the North) or the ideology (Anti-Slavery, Industrial Capitalism) that they saw themselves as different from. Then and now, insiders and outsiders involved in the dynamics of writing about place have both shaped and relied upon types, themes, and conventions that come to define particular places as well as modes of expression. The ideological as well as artistic processes that identified the first southern genres continued to do so throughout the twentieth century.

White novelists of the southern states began in the 1820s to develop the plantation setting as an idealized literary world populated by characters who developed into types, each expected to convey a set of personal qualities, virtues or vices, as well as to act according to fixed mannerisms of dress, gesture, and language. Gender codes also developed for plantation writing as both northern and southern women entered, and finally took over, the marketplace for popular social fiction. Often the plantation literature by men was considered to belong to the genre of the historical romance that used Sir Walter Scott's works as a model, while women's writing came to be viewed under the heading of "sentimental" or "domestic" fiction. In the plantation fiction by writers of either gender, slavery itself was seldom foregrounded in any obvious way. However, if we examine the class constructions on which such fiction's plots are based, we see that the planter aristocracy was the center of social organization for both the "male" historical romance and the "female" domestic novel. At least implicitly, and often directly, these works of both genders were promoting model slave societies founded upon the plantation ideal of patriarchy.

So, what accounts for the prominence of the South in American children's literature? The Romantic association between children and agrarianism, which figures the child as almost a noble savage recalling an imagined past, and the persistent conception of the South as largely rural have conspired to make Southern landscapes and towns appear as ideal settings for depictions of childhood freedom, adventure, health, or development.

The historical atrocities of slavery and Jim Crow segregation, which are so central to American history and culture, of course thrived in the South and left lasting scars on the national psyche, as have natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina. Children's literature, still often perceived as having a didactic mission, has been used to teach child readers about these past events and their contemporary reverberations and uses children and children's culture to work through national traumas or imagine alternative futures. Moreover, from Virginia Hamilton's *M.C. Higgins the Great* (1974) to Carl Hiaasen's *Hoot* (2002) and Sherri Smith's *Orleans* (2013),

the South has been imagined as a place to explore ecological dangers and to imagine the child as a possible savior. The de Grummond Children's Literature Collection at The University of Southern Mississippi (USM), one of the largest children's literature archives in North America, is home to original manuscripts and illustrations of more than 1,300 authors and illustrators and an excess of 160,000 published books dating from 1530 to the present. Notable holdings include the literary estate of Margaret and H.A. Rey, creators of *Curious George*; the manuscripts and art of Ezra Jack Keats, author and illustrator of *The Snowy Day*; the papers of young adult writer John Green; and the archives of the Children's Literature Association. Given its geographic location and its active acquisition of materials from around the nation and region, the de Grummond Collection houses many remarkable works of Southern children's literature.

During the first few weeks in my CTI cohort, our wonderful Professor Dr. Mark West has introduced me to great works of the south and some interesting discussions of the books, *Clover*, *Summer of My American Soldier*, *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*, *Inside Out* and *Back Again and Tangerine*.

In our one-on-one decisions Dr. West introduced me to the world of *The Jack Tales*, folk tales from the southern Appalachians, by Richard Chase. I became immediately interested because many of the stories parallels the fairytales I grew up with.

Play Based Research in Kindergarten

Kindergarten plays a very important role in supporting language growth and development. Talking is the way kindergartners process all the new information they are gathering as they use their senses (look, hear, feel, touch and taste). Language is the most important tool for interpreting and explaining the information they pick up as they explore and learn. Quality talking and listening support memory and enhance listening. The kinds of talk children engage in as they play foster risk taking, support and demonstrate comprehension and strengthen community. Research states there are four kinds of talk, these forms being narrative, explaining and seeking information, oral performance, and giving and understanding directions. These are all essential elements in knowing how to read and write.

Play based learning is a term that embraces two approaches simultaneously. One is that children are given ample time to carry their own ideas into play, with assistance from teachers as needed. The other is that their knowledge of the world has been enriched through appropriate content offered in interesting and experiential ways by the teacher. This can include reading books, storytelling, puppetry, music and the arts, as well as encouraging hands-on activities and exploration of nature. The children's own play and content offered by myself to one another. Play is the basis for so much of the learning that kindergarteners do. There are three essential contexts

for play: cognitive-exploring and asking questions and thinking, emotional-expressing feelings within the social context, and creative- putting together new learning. Through play, children will be motivated to learn.

Many children's behaviors have a play element in them-from fingerplays, to movement games, to building with blocks. However, the play that has the most profound effect on language and literacy development is dramatic play. The characteristics of dramatic play that provide the best opportunities for children to practice language and literacy include:

- Using a variety of props and objects ("Let's pretend this block is our phone and we have to call for help when the car breaks down.")
- Combining multiple roles and themes ("Toby is the daddy. He's the doctor too.")
- Creating a pretend scenario and solving disagreements by talking and negotiating ("Let's play hospital. O.K., you'll be the doctor first, and then I'll be the doctor. You wear this.")

All three elements must be present to promote the highest levels of language and literacy development. However, not all play interactions occur at this level. Intervening in children's play is a delicate thing. On the one hand, we cannot simply stand back and let children figure out how to play. Children may be lacking social skills, or they may be unable to use play props in an imaginative way. Left to their own devices, children will continue playing in ways that are familiar to them. On the other hand, we cannot intervene in play the same way we would intervene in other activities. We cannot become "players" as if we are also children. Our well-meaning corrections (no, you cannot feed bunny plastic carrots), or redirections (you cannot take this puzzle from Lucia, but you can use another one), change play from a child-to-child activity to another teacher-directed one.

The best way to help children play at a higher level is to provide the necessary assistance at the preparatory stages. Become involved before children go into the playhouse or start opening boxes in the block area. If you want to intervene when the play is already under way, you will have to do it indirectly, with minimal intrusion, trying to stay as long as possible outside children's play. For example, if you see children stuck in their scenario, not knowing what else to do, you can offer suggestions without actually entering the play center. To advance their play, you might pretend to call them on the phone ("This is mission control calling. We need you to direct your spaceship to the moon and collect some moon rocks for us.")

Here are some suggestions to help raise children's level of play without making it a teacher-directed activity:

- Help children see different uses for familiar props and create new props.
- Expand the repertoire of play themes and roles by exposing children to new and varied experiences.

- Help children use appropriate strategies in planning their play with their playmates, and, later, in carrying out their play.

Children's play is often referred to as "imagination without limits." However, if you look closely at play in most classrooms, you will see that children are not using a great deal of imagination. In fact, their play props appear to be miniature copies of real objects. When there is no prop for a certain role (no stethoscope for a doctor), a child often prefers to give up the role, rather than use something else as a stethoscope.

Realistic props are useful as tools to introduce children to pretend play. These realistic props help children maintain their roles or remember what the play scenario is all about ("We're playing grocery store and I'm the checker because I have an apron on."). However, after children have some experience using these props, it's time to start replacing them with new props that can have more than one function (for example, a plate used in a pretend restaurant scenario becomes a dial in a pretend spaceship). Eventually, children will be able to use unstructured materials for their props, make their own props, or even pretend that they have a prop when in reality they do not. Typically, by the middle of the year, you can begin to change the ratio of toys from being largely realistic to a combination of realistic, symbolic, and unstructured props.

Play has been linked to the inquiry-based approach of a scientist because both engage in "what if" thinking. The child is continually trying out new possibilities and learns as much from failure and mistakes as from positive outcomes. The process is of great importance to the child rather than the outcome. Creativity, curiosity, play, and problem-solving are all intertwined in early childhood. Social negotiation is also frequently part of the mix. This holds true for children from all socioeconomic backgrounds. The way we present and teach these skills to young child can be life changing. We need to make it exciting, engaging and most of all fun for a five-year old

To help children discover new uses for familiar objects, as well as feel comfortable with new props, you can:

- Model how to use familiar objects in a pretend way (I can pretend this cup is my microphone. What else could it be?).
- Introduce unstructured and multi-functional props in the play area (boxes, bolts of cloth).
- Model how to make props for play using materials in other centers (blocks, art materials).

Just think of the possibilities if the children hear the story, *Jack and the Beanstalk* then *Jack and the Bean Tree*. Just imagine the paralleling of the books that with teachers help that the children will discover and then setting up a Readers Theatre for them to play act in. The possibilities will be so much learning fun for them. Having versions of the same book with some variations in the text and with different illustrations will help children be more creative in

choosing roles and props when acting out this story. Before you know it, you have a little boy playing Goldilocks!

When children act out new themes, they practice new vocabulary associated with these new themes. This is very important since mastery of new words cannot be accomplished without children using these words in a meaningful context. Producing the words during play assures us that the children actually understand what the word means. Also, as children take on different roles, they try out new expressions and intonations that best fit their characters. With the repertoire of roles growing, so does their vocabulary, mastery of grammar, pragmatics of language, and metalinguistic awareness (children's knowledge of language and how it is used). For example, when playing "school," children start using longer and more complex sentences when they act out the role of the teacher or the librarian, incorporating in their speech the words and expressions that they do not use if they play "students."

Another important thing children learn as they act out new themes and new roles (with their newly introduced Southern Literature genre), is that there are many reasons for people to use reading and writing. For example, a doctor will mix up two X-ray films if she does not write the patients' names on them. Jack will not be able to climb the beanstalk unless the children can make a beanstalk.

Instructional Implementation Teaching Strategies

How do I use my play-based instruction with a nonfiction unit on diversity? Start the process by deciding how much information about diversity you feel a five-year-old child will be able to absorb. Class Norms First set age-appropriate class norms, as these will be an important part of promoting inclusion and openness. Be explicit about the ways your class will be respectful to each other and share ideas, opinions and values. Teach even young children how to disagree respectfully. I like to use Restorative Practices to promote self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and decision-making. I like to do this during the morning circle to set the mood for the day. I use a talking piece, explaining to children that everyone will have a chance to speak but must wait until they are holding the talking piece.

Purposeful Planning

Conversations about different genres of children's books in the beginning can be daunting. Do your research first, then read the book yourself before introducing it to your students. Doing this in advance will help you become more comfortable with the text and be easier to effectively read it to your class. An important part of promoting southern children's literature in your classroom is purposeful planning. Planning a lesson is just as important as the execution of the lesson;

especially if your class will discuss new, and unknown topics or ideas. Think about the text that you can use to explore topics about living in the south now and long ago. Consider texts that explore alternate opinions or view history from a new perspective that may not be present in mainstream text. When planning, consider how you will differentiate your lessons for various learners and learning styles. This includes having various picture books and differentiating the way students show mastery. Consider using collaborative learning groups that allow students to work in groups within their class.

Unit Lessons

The best way you can incorporate diversity into your classroom is by making an effort to include books into your curriculum that features diverse characters as much as possible. Using a unit like “Christmas Around the World” is not sufficiently diverse, as this method signals one culture, religion or minority group as being different. When diversity is taught as a separate unit, it is usually confined to one or two weeks and will have little if any impact on our students' understanding and acceptance of others in the end. In this unit plan, I am not going to use the “multicultural unit” but I will be incorporating lessons, through diverse literature, into my classroom routine. Be sure to use those “teachable moments” to discuss similarities and differences as they arise during large group time.

At the beginning of the school year, students are still learning letter names/sounds basic decoding skills and CVC words. It is important to start the year focusing on those basic reading skills. Moving too fast will cause gaps and students will not be able to reach mastery of those beginning skills. It is a good practice when teaching these literature skills to teach students about the importance of illustrations in the text. Using picture cues will help them determine the type of text, answer questions about the text. Analyzing the illustrations will also help develop critical thinking skills. Using wordless stories allows students to focus on the story and relationships between the illustrations and the story instead of the basic reading skills. In the lessons below students will begin to recognize different types of text., including poems (*Stitchin and Pullin*), non-fiction (*I Am Rosa Parks*), as well as fiction books.

I am including a template example that can be used for plugging in the elements of the lesson plan. You can do as many of these books as you like, I plan to space them out over the school year.

Day 1	Preview text: Picture Walk Tricky words Character Information Text to self	Make Predictions KWL Parts of a Book Text Layout
Day 2	Read Text Letters vs. Words Reading Direction Sight Words Stop and Ask Questions	Tricky Words Does it make sense? Re Read Text/Picture Connections
Day 3	Comprehension Questions Written Response Sequencing Oral Retell	Characters/Setting Opinion of Story Problem/Solution Compare/Contrast
Day 4	Book Celebration !!!	

Book 1

The first book in the unit is *A Southern Night Before Christmas* by Kelly Kazek, illustrated by Michelle Hyde. "Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house, we were sticky and sweaty 'cause this is the South." This is how the night before Christmas begins in the South. The weather may be balmy sometimes, but Southerners can still put on a Christmas celebration like no other. No matter the weather or the state, there's no mistaking Santa loves the South. This fun, whimsically illustrated version of the traditional "Night Before Christmas" is perfect for families to read aloud at their annual celebrations. Merry Christmas, y'all!

I will be using this book to introduce our adventure through Southern Children's Literature, because who doesn't like a Christmas story.

Lessons

- Begin the lesson with a Close-Read of the book showing the cover of the book ask the children what they think the story will be about? Read the book all the way through for your students to enjoy. I suggest using props when telling the story to make it even more interesting for the children.
- Before your second read of the book introduce new vocabulary that the students may not know the meaning of. Because I Am in kindergarten. I use sentence strips cut into 4, then print the word and add a photo of the word for better understanding. Check the photo below. Words such as casserole, drawl, platters, pleasant, household and trellis.

- In the story the children each wanted a special gift, have the students illustrated what they would like and display them in the classroom.
- Have the students get into groups, you may need to assign the groups, to make a list of the goodies they would like to eat during the book celebration.
- Have each student make a gift bag for the homeless, you can ask parents to donate the things to put into bags.
- Book celebration, have the children bring sleeping bags or blankets and pillows, to use while you read the book again. After the reading, serve up the things the children choose to eat along with biscuits and sweet tea like in the book.

Book 2

Next in the unit is ***Stitchin and Pullin*** by Patricia C. McKissack and Cozbi A. Cabrera. *Stitchin and Pullin* features a collection of poems and illustrations that tell the rich history of the Black quilt-making community of Gee's Bend, Alabama. An educational and entertaining read for children, all ages will marvel at these masterpieces. Patricia McKissack's 48-page poem collection features lush illustrations by Cozbi Cabrera, which weave together the familial, cultural, spiritual, and historical strands of life in this community.

Lesson

- Begin the lesson with a Close-Read of the book showing the cover of the book ask the children what they think the story will be about? Read the book all the way through for your students to enjoy.
- Before your second read of the book introduce new vocabulary that the students may not know the meaning of. Because I am in kindergarten, I use sentence strips cut into 4, then print the word and add a photo of the word for better understanding. Check the photo below.
- After the second read, have the students ask and answer questions about the story to check for comprehension.
- After the second read, watch a short video on YouTube of how quilts are made, be prepared to answer questions children will ask about quilt making. Tell the students that together they will be making a class quilt.
- Give each student a 10 by 10 square of white construction paper, allow them to use crayons, colored pencils and markers to design their own square, based on their favorite poem in the book. Or you can use muslin material and fabric pens to make your quilt. Sew the pieces together, add a backing and use it in your cozy corner.
- When the squares are finished work as a class to put the quilt together to be displayed in the classroom.

Book 3

I Am Rosa Parks by Brad Meltzer will follow. Rosa Parks dared to stand up for herself and other African Americans by staying seated and organizing the Montgomery Bus Boycott. As a result, she helped end public bus segregation and launch the country's Civil Rights Movement. This friendly, fun biography series inspired the PBS Kids TV show *Xavier Riddle and the Secret Museum*. One great role model at a time, these books encourage kids to dream big.

Lessons

- Begin the lesson with a Close-Read of the book showing the cover of the book ask the children what they think the story will be about? Read the book all the way through for your students to enjoy.
- Before your second read of the book introduce new vocabulary that the students may know the meaning of. Because I am in kindergarten, I use sentence strips cut into 4, then print the word and add a photo of the word for better understanding. Check the photo below.
- After the second read, have the students ask and answer questions about the story to check for comprehension.
- Show the students other extraordinary people what has made a difference in our world. Have each pick a person they would like to know more about and tell them that they will with their parents create a poster board to celebrate this person. Send home a poster board and instructions to parents and have them with their child create their poster board of their person. Be prepared to have students do this with you for the families who do not wish to do this project.
- Celebration day, have the students with their poster boards line up around the room and present their special board. To make it even more fun, invite other classes to come and enjoy your celebration.

Book 4

Home Place by Crescent Dragonwagon is set deep in the woods where there used to be a house that a family once lived. Over there was the chimney. Just imagine little toes warming up beside it. And see those daffodils? Someone took special care to plant and tend to them so that every spring they blossomed as brightly as the year before. Both the house and the family are gone now, but if you go to that spot in the woods, you'll find the chimney and the flowers. Then all you have to do is close your eyes and imagine...With Crescent Dragonwagon's poetic text and Jerry Pinkney's rich watercolors, past and present briefly touch in this remarkable book.

Lessons

- Begin the lesson with a Close-Read of the book showing the cover of the book ask the children what they think the story will be about? Read the book all the way through for your students to enjoy.
- Before your second read of the book introduce new vocabulary that the students may not know the meaning of. Because I am in kindergarten, I use sentence strips cut into 4, then print the word and add a photo of the word for better understanding. Check the photo below.
- Have each student draw a picture of their house, remind them to use details when drawing, and to remember to put their name and date on their picture.
- On celebration day have the students put their pictures in a time capsule. Explain to the students that their picture will be saved and open at a much later time. I have asked my principal if she would mind keeping the time capsule and give each child their picture when they move on to middle school. Another option would be to keep the time capsule and give it to their fifth-grade teacher when they move up from fifth grade. I think it will be fun for them to see how they drew their picture when they were in kindergarten.

Book 5

Alabama Spitfire by Bethany Hegedus is about the inspiring true story of Harper Lee, the girl who grew up to write *To Kill a Mockingbird*, from Bethany Hegedus and Erin McGuire. Perfect for fans of *The Right Word* and *I Dissent*. This nonfiction picture book is an excellent choice to share during homeschooling, in particular for children ages 4 to 6. It's a fun way to learn to read and as a supplement for activity books for children. Nelle Harper Lee grew up in the rocky red soil of Monroeville, Alabama. From the get-go she was a spitfire. Unlike most girls at that time and place, Nelle preferred overalls to dresses and climbing trees to tea parties. Nelle loved to watch her daddy try cases in the courtroom. And she and her best friend, Tru, devoured books and wrote stories of their own. More than anything Nelle loved words. This love eventually took her all the way to New York City, where she dreamed of becoming a writer. Any chance she had, Nelle sat at her typewriter, writing, revising, and chasing her dream. Nelle wouldn't give up, not until she discovered the right story, the one she was born to tell. Finally, that story came to her, and Nelle, inspired by her childhood, wrote *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Lessons

- Begin the lesson with a Close-Read of the book showing the cover of the book ask the children what they think the story will be about? Read the book all the way through for your students to enjoy.
- Before your second read of the book introduce new vocabulary that the students may know the meaning of. Because I am in kindergarten, I use sentence strips cut into 4, then print the word and add a photo of the word for better understanding. Check the photo below.
- After the second read, have the students ask and answer questions about the story to check for comprehension.
- Have a very real talk with your students about how they may face many obstacles as they are growing up and, on their way, to be what they want to be as an adult. Make an obstacle course in or outside the classroom and have each child complete that obstacle course. Ask them what the hardest part of the course was and let them know that their determination helped them get to where they needed to be.

Celebration, have each child draw and present a picture of what they want to be when they grow up to share with the class. You may have to have the tough discussion that fairies and superheroes are not really an occupation. Put their pictures in a binder to be read often when the children would like to visit the idea again, perhaps even change their minds.

Book 6

Good Night Georgia by Adam Gamble and Mark Jasper features many Southern locations and features. It includes Providence Canyon, Etowah Indian Mounds, Appalachian Mountains, Okefenokee Swamp, Savanna River and river boat, Tybee Island Lighthouse, Georgia peaches, shrimp boats, fishermen, sea turtles, Blue Ridge Mountains, and more. This charming Southern board book allows young readers to visit the Peach State's most exciting landmarks and attractions. Children love hands-on learning, which is why I choose this book, the process will be messy so be prepared.

Lessons

- Begin the lesson with a Close-Read of the book showing the cover of the book ask the children what they think the story will be about? Read the book all the way through for your students to enjoy.
- Before your second read of the book introduce new vocabulary that the students may know the meaning of. Because I am in kindergarten, I use sentence strips cut into 4, then print the word and add a photo of the word for better understanding. Check the photo below.

- After the second read, have the students ask and answer questions about the story to check for comprehension.
- In advance, show the children a video showing the topography of the state of Georgia, make sure it's a fun age-appropriate video, I found a good one on YouTube.
- Ask parents to send in recyclable items that the children will use in their diorama. Take a nature walk with the children reminding them to gather things they say in the video that may be helpful to use in their dioramas. I have 22 kindergarten students, so I am going to make 4 groups to work together to create their diorama. This is going to be messy so be prepared. You will need bigger boxes than a shoe box so keep those Amazon Prime boxes. Remember to have fun.
- Have each group share out their diorama pointing out the different elements of their diorama.

Book 7

The final book is ***Jack and the Bean Tree*** by Gail E Haley. A boy climbs to the top of a giant beanstalk where he uses his quick wits to outsmart a giant and make his and his mother's fortune. This book parallels the book *Jack and the Beanstalk*. The illustrations are amazing and I'm sure your students will enjoy this version.

Lessons

- Begin the lesson with a Close-Read of the book showing the cover of the book ask the children what they think the story will be about? Read the book all the way through for your students to enjoy.
- Before your second read of the book introduce new vocabulary that the students may know the meaning of. Because I am in kindergarten, I use sentence strips cut into 4, then print the word and add a photo of the word for better understanding. Check the photo below.
- After the second read, have the students ask and answer questions about the story to check for comprehension.
- This story is a retelling of the book *Jack and the Beanstalk*, so I decided to do a comparison and contrast of the two books. This can be done with a Venn diagram which would be a fun new skill with the students.
- For this book celebration I am going to do a "Readers Theater" with my students using both books, so every student gets a part. To do readers theater 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 theater scripts

include lots of dialogue. Depending on the grade you teach would drive the difficulty of the script.

- For this celebration we will be inviting admin, k-2 grade levels and parents. Making invitations to the celebration would be a fun way to get the students excited about what they will be presenting.

Materials needed

Book 1

1. Biscuit dough or make your own playdough to look like biscuit dough.
2. Sweet tea or Apple juice
3. Quart baggies, for making giving bags to the homeless, include items such as juice boxes, granola bars, socks, toothpaste and toothbrushes.

Book 2

1. 10x10 white construction paper
2. Markers or
3. 10x10 muslin fabric squares
4. Fabric markers

Book 3

1. Poster Board
2. Hero examples/list
3. Directions for parents

Book 4

1. White construction paper
2. Crayons, markers, colored pencils
3. Something (like a jar) for a time capsule

Book 5

1. Construction for students to use to draw their portrait.
2. Crayons, markers, colored pencils.
3. Three ring binders.

4. Page protectors to protect pictures after they have completed and to use as a student made book.

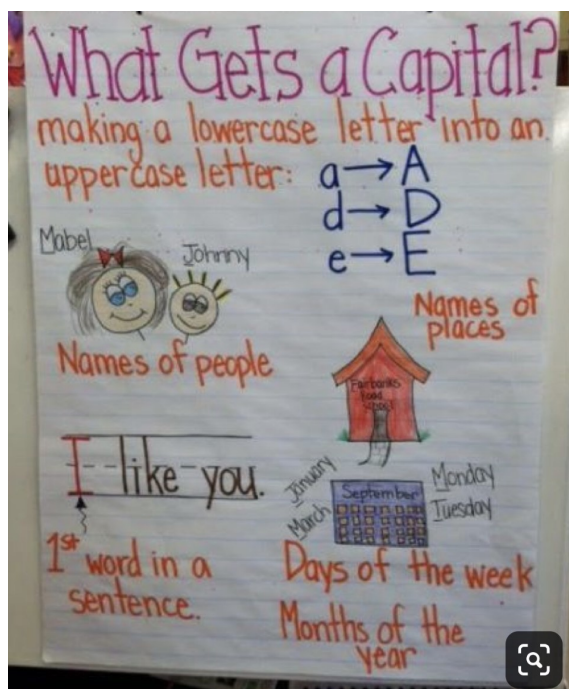
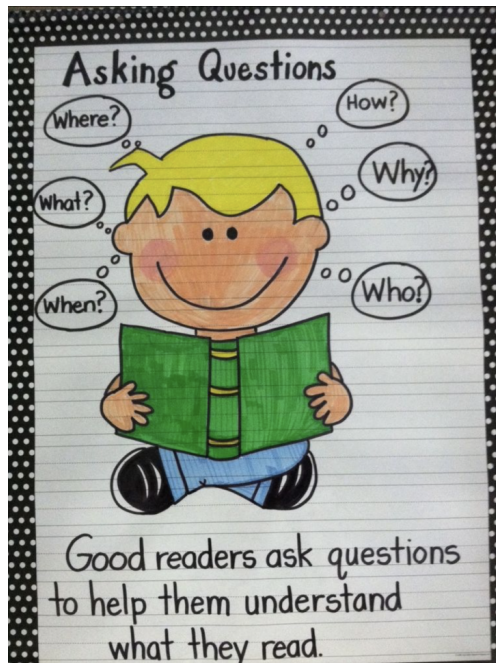
Book 6

1. Boxes, larger than a shoe box.
2. Glue Colored paper.
3. Recycled things (ask parents to donate).
4. Pictures from the actual story for students to refer to when constructing their diorama.
5. Old magazines.

Book 7

1. Props
2. Green bulletin board paper to make bean stalks
3. Scripts for students
4. Costumes (optional) I usually find what I need at Goodwill

Anchor Charts that may be helpful



Appendix 1:

Teaching Standards Our teaching standards come from North Carolina Kindergarten Foundations for Early Learning and Development. All the standards I have chosen will directly relate to my unit content, as well as being measurable and will be ongoing.

APL-1 I can show curiosity and express interest in the world around them.

APL-5 I am willing to try new and challenging experiences.

APL-8 I can maintain attentiveness and focus.
ESD-4 I can form relationships and interact positively with other children.
RI.K.1 I can ask and answer questions about key details in informational text.
RI.K.4 I can ask and answer questions about words in a text.
RI.K.7 I can describe how the words and illustrations work together to provide information.
RL.K.2 I can retell stories including key details.
RL.K.3 I can identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.
RL.K.10 I can actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.
W.K.2 I can dictate, draw, and write to explain.
W.K.3 I can dictate, draw, and write to tell a story.
W.K.5 I can add details to my writing.
W K 6 I can publish my writing.
W.K.7 I can help my class research and write.

Appendix 2:

Student Resources

<https://www.abcmouse.com/> is a beneficial website because it takes children through the natural progression in all learning domains. Once a level is accomplished by the student it automatically takes them to the next level.

<https://www.starfall.com/> is a wonderful website that promotes early learning in letters, letter sounds and early reading.

Teacher Resources

Arndt, E. (n.d.). Confessions of a Homeschooler. Retrieved from <https://www.confessionsofahomeschooler.com/>.
This is a great resource for additional activities to complement the unit.

Geiger, A. (n.d.). The Measured Mom. Retrieved from <https://www.themeasuredmom.com/>.
A great website developed by a stay-at-home mom who also has many teaching ideas in all learning domains and most of the things she uses you will have in your home. She also has many teaching games and project masters free of charge.

Kramer, J. (n.d.). Making Learning Fun. Retrieved from <https://makinglearningfun.com/>.

This site has many teaching ideas in all domains and links them to favorite and popular children's books. They also provide master copies of images that you may want to complete a unit.

iPads let the children do a reader's workshop of the story and then allow them to play it back, you'll be surprised not only of the enjoyment it brings but how they want to do it differently next time.

School or neighborhood library instead of buying books and companion books for the units. When I get a book from the library, I make sure to let my students know that they too can go to the library to borrow books. The library will provide teachers applications for library cards, give these to students to take home and have their parents fill out so they too can take their children to the library.

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