

# Grade 6

## Narrative Writing – Characters and Controversy

Instructional Unit Resource for the  
*South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards for  
English Language Arts*

South Carolina Department of Education  
Office of Standards and Learning  
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**Grade 6: Narrative Writing:  
Characters and Controversy**

**Unit Rationale/Overview:**

This unit addresses the impact context on a narrative or drama, as well as the interaction of the elements of plot. Building on the fifth grade standard, it sharpens students' understanding of plot, character, and context. Lessons are designed to teach students close reading and writing skills. For the final assessment, students will write a story in which they draw on characters from two narrative texts to describe the impact that context has on the main character or plot.

This unit supports skills and characteristics outlined in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate (<http://ed.sc.gov/scdoe/assets/File/newsroom/Profile-of-the-South-Carolina-Graduate.pdf>). Students build their communication, collaboration, and teamwork skills through lessons that include opportunities for partner and small group work. Communication skills are also developed through the writing components included in the unit. The gradual release model on which these lessons were built also supports students in becoming self-directed.

Estimated time frame: one-two weeks.

**Standards and Indicators**

Targeted implies that these standards are the focus of the unit.

Embedded implies that these standards will be naturally integrated throughout the units.

**Targeted Standards/Indicators**

**Reading - Literary Text**

**6.RL.8 Analyze characters, settings, events, and ideas as they develop and interact within a particular context.**

6.RL.8.1 Describe how a plot in a narrative or drama unfolds and how characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution; determine the impact of contextual influences on setting, plot, and characters.

**Writing**

**6.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, well chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.**

6.W.3.1 Gather ideas from texts, multimedia, and personal experiences to write narratives that:

- a. develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences;
- b. engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters;
- c. organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically;

- d. use dialogue, pacing, and manipulation of time to develop experiences, events, and/or characters;
- e. use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another;
- f. develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing, building on personal ideas and the ideas of others;
- g. use imagery, precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events and develop characters; and
- h. provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

### **Embedded Standards/Indicators**

#### **Inquiry-Based Literacy**

- 6.I.1 Formulate relevant, self-generated questions based on interests and/or needs that can be investigated.**
  - 6.I.1.1 Develop a range of questions to frame inquiry for new learning and deeper understanding.
- 6.I.3 Construct knowledge, applying disciplinary concepts and tools, to build deeper understanding of the world through exploration, collaboration, and analysis.**
  - 6.I.3.2 Examine historical, social, cultural, or political context to broaden inquiry.
- 6.I.4 Synthesize integrated information to share learning and/or take action.**
  - 6.I.4.3 Reflect on findings and pose appropriate questions for further inquiry.
- 6.I.5 Reflect throughout the inquiry process to assess metacognition, broaden understanding, and guide actions, both individually and collaboratively.**
  - 6.I.5.1 Acknowledge and value individual and collective thinking, using feedback from peers and adults to guide the inquiry process.
  - 6.I.5.2 Employ past and present learning in order to monitor and guide inquiry.

### **Clarifying Notes and “I Can” Statements**

#### **Clarifying Notes**

This unit was written using activities that can be appropriate for any literary texts. Teachers may use this unit with study of a novel or with various short stories. Activities include suggestions for effective models for classroom use.

The lesson format is that of gradual release. The Gradual Release Model is when a teacher models for students as a whole group, has them practice in a small group, and then work independently (Levy, 2007). The modeling portion (I do) is a mini-lesson shown by the teacher and should emphasize how to *think through* the process while demonstrating it. The guided practice (we do) might include the

teacher and students' working together, students' working in small groups, or both. It is recommended, but not required, that students complete the independent practice (you do) on their own to determine their individual mastery of the "I can" statement (standard/indicator). Naturally, this format is not required, and teachers who choose to use the included lessons or structure should determine which suggestions fit best within the gradual release components (or other instructional method) based on their own knowledge of students.

### "I Can" Statements

"I Can" statements are learning targets for what students should know and accomplish as related to the standards/indicators.

- I can identify the elements of a narrative or a drama including setting, plot, and characters. (6.RL.8.1)
- I can describe how the plot progresses in a narrative or drama. (6.RL.8.1)
- I can describe how characters respond or change in a narrative or drama. (6.RL.8.1)
- I can determine how context impacts setting, plot, and characters in a narrative or drama. (6.RL.8.1)
- I can write narrative texts to develop imagined experiences. (6.W.3.1)
- I can select and effectively use relevant details to develop ideas when writing narrative texts. (6.W.3.1)
- I can establish a context when writing narrative texts. (6.W.3.1)
- I can introduce a narrator or characters when writing narrative texts. (6.W.3.1)
- I can effectively organize my writing when writing narrative texts. (6.W.3.1)
- I can use language that is appropriate for my audience and purpose when writing narrative texts. (6.W.3.1)

### Essential Questions

These are **suggested** essential questions that will help guide student inquiry.

- How does a plot develop in a narrative or a drama? (6.RL.8.1)
- How do characters respond or change as the plot develops during a narrative or drama? (6.RL.8.1)
- When I read a narrative or drama, how do I determine the impact of the context on plot, character development, and setting? (6.RL.8.1)
- How do I organize my writing and develop my ideas in a narrative text? (7.W.3.1)

<b>Academic Vocabulary</b>
<p>Some students may need extra support with the following academic vocabulary in order to understand what they are being asked to do. Teaching these terms in an instructional context is recommended rather than teaching the words in isolation. The ideal time to deliver explicit instruction for the terms would be during the modeling process. Ultimately, the student should be able to use the academic vocabulary in conversation with peers and teachers.</p> <p>plot  narrative  drama  characters  resolution  contextual influences  setting</p>
<b>Prior Knowledge</b>
<p>In fifth grade, students learned to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● analyze two or more characters, events, or setting in a text and explain the impact on the plot;</li> <li>● explain the influence of cultural, historical, social, and political context on characters, setting, and plot development.</li> </ul>
<b>Subsequent Knowledge</b>
<p>In seventh grade, students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● analyze how setting shapes the characters and/or plot and how particular elements of a narrative or drama interact.</li> <li>● determine the impact of contextual influences on setting, plot, and characters.</li> </ul>
<b>Potential Instructional Strategies</b>
<p><b>Note:</b>  The teacher will determine whether or not lessons are taught in the order listed, based on students’ needs and texts chosen.</p> <p><b>Optional Review of Standard 8.1 - Elements of Literature</b>  You may want to review the elements of literature before starting this unit. Flocabulary provides a free video with online activities to help students review the elements of literature: <a href="https://www.flocabulary.com/unit/fivethings/video/">https://www.flocabulary.com/unit/fivethings/video/</a>. The lesson includes a video, quick review, interactive lyrics, fill in the blanks, and quiz. The teacher can organize this lesson by doing all or parts of it as a class</p>

activity with a projector or all or parts as an individual activity if students have access to their own technology. It can also be done in small groups. Printable activities are available as well.

**Learning Target: I can identify the elements of a narrative or a drama including setting, plot, and characters. (6.RL.8.1)**

**Guiding Question:** When I read a narrative or drama, how do I determine the impact of the context on plot, character development, and setting?

- Model (I do): Read aloud “Counting on Grace” found here: [http://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Counting%20on%20Grace\\_6MA.pdf](http://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Counting%20on%20Grace_6MA.pdf) Model using the think aloud of identifying the speaker, occasion, audience, purpose, subject and tone. For the analysis, use the SOAPSTone (Speaker/Occasion/Audience/Purpose/Subject/Tone) strategy found at <http://teacherweb.com/LA/MandevilleHighSchool/Hooker/soapstone-reading-strategy.pdf>.
- Guided Practice: (We do): In small groups, students can use a story from the textbook or use [www.readworks.org](http://www.readworks.org) (This website is free, but you must sign up for an account.)
- Independent Practice (You do): Students can complete the SOAPSTone analysis chart for independent reading.

**Use the following resources and activities as needed to build students’ understanding of setting.**

Video Cartoon Setting Activity: (to be used with the [Setting Analysis Chart](#) found in the Appendix)

<http://www.watchknowlearn.org/Video.aspx?VideoID=33111>

Video Setting Analysis and Creative Writing Activity: See [Setting Analysis Chart](#) (see Appendix)

This chart was created to be used with the video, but it can be adapted to any literary piece. This document can be completed electronically, in a small group, or individually.

## Lessons for Character Development

**Learning Target: I can identify a character's traits by analyzing the character's actions.** (6.RL.8.1)

**Guiding Question:** How do characters develop in a narrative or drama?

- **Model (I do):** (This lesson, including the Fitzgerald quote, is based on “Action is Character: Exploring Character Traits with Adjectives” lessons linked below.) Choose a picture book in which the links between character traits and actions are explicit. (The remainder of this lesson will use *Stellaluna* as the text.). Engage students by asking them to quick write in response to the meaning of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s quote “Action is character.” When most students have finished, have them share their quick writes with a partner. Next, ask a few volunteers to share their thoughts with the whole group. Explain to students that they will begin to develop their close reading skills by focusing on character and how a character’s actions reveal that character’s traits. Conduct a think aloud of the first few pages of *Stellaluna*, stopping periodically to annotate what particular actions by Stellaluna and/or her mother say about the character’s personality.
- **Guided Practice (We do):** Continue the think aloud, pausing periodically for students to explain how the bat’s actions provide further proof of previously identified traits or reveal new traits. Have students share their ideas with the whole group, and annotate the text according to student responses. Continue the think aloud, shifting the focus to the birds’ traits.
- **Independent Practice: (You do):** After completing the think aloud, provide students with additional picture books or short stories. Lead students through the “Action is Character: Exploring Character Traits with Adjectives” lessons linked below: <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/action-character-exploring-character-175.html>

**Use the following resources and activities as needed to build students’ understanding of character.**

Whole-Class Novel or Literary Text Activity - During Reading activities with a post-reading group project

The following lesson contains handouts and activities to conduct Book Meetings in groups. These activities will result in a final product of a Television Show Skit.

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/lights-camera-action-interviewing-140.html?tab=4#tabs>

Links to documents for meetings:

Character Traits

[http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson\\_images/lesson140/character.pdf](http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson140/character.pdf)

#### Interview Notes

[http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson\\_images/lesson140/important.pdf](http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson140/important.pdf)

#### Possible Rubric for Television Interview Skit

<http://en.copian.ca/library/learning/btg/ed/evaluation/groupwork.htm>

#### “Inside Out” Lessons:

The following set of lessons is based on *The Circuit* by Francisco Jimenez. These lessons may be conducted in whole group, small group, or independent settings and contain during-reading and post-reading engagements. Students analyze character and contextual influences by conducting a close reading and answering text-based questions. This lesson can serve as a model for writing additional lessons on character development and contextual influences:

#### Achieve the Core: Inside Out

<http://achievethecore.org/search?q=francisco+jimenez>

#### Flying to Freedom: *Tar Beach* and *The People Could Fly*

Although the following lesson is designed for grades 3-5, it could be modified for use with older students.

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/flying-freedom-beach-people-32.html>

#### Literacy Design Collaborative (must sign up for free membership to access lessons):

<https://coretools ldc.org>

#### Possible modules / lessons:

##### “Tracking Character Development”

[https://coretools ldc.org/mini tasks/ae53b1a0-c6bc-4a4e-95d6-14bf6ec971bb/product\\_info](https://coretools ldc.org/mini tasks/ae53b1a0-c6bc-4a4e-95d6-14bf6ec971bb/product_info)

##### “Character Study Organizer”

[https://coretools ldc.org/curriculumLibrary?discipline\\_ids=3&standards=R3&page=3](https://coretools ldc.org/curriculumLibrary?discipline_ids=3&standards=R3&page=3)

## Potential Assessment Tasks

Summative (6.RL.8, 6.W.3.1):

The unit summative is modeled after the Achieve the Core’s Mini-Assessment: “Paired Texts: ‘Counting on Grace’ and ‘Iqbal’ ” ([http://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Counting\\_on\\_Grace\\_and\\_Iqbal\\_Pair\\_6MA.pdf](http://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Counting_on_Grace_and_Iqbal_Pair_6MA.pdf)). The task is as follows:

Imagine that a character from text one and a character from text two met each other. Based on what you learned of each character, what would they say to each other if they had a conversation about the controversial issue? Would they agree or disagree on the issue? What arguments would they use for or against it? Write a story telling what happens when these two characters meet and what they say to each other about the issue. Use details and events from the texts to guide your response so the characters you create remain as their original authors intended them to be (Paired Texts, p. 10).

### Note:

For use in this unit, the teacher should modify the task based on his/her selected texts. These texts should address a controversial topic. Texts used for the modification should be “cold reads” that are unfamiliar to students.

Teachers will use the SC Ready Scoring Guidelines for Text-dependent Analysis to assess this story. Checklists and Scoring Guidelines may be found at:

<http://ed.sc.gov/tests/middle/sc-ready/writing-component-of-sc-ready/>

Formative Assessments:

SOAPSTone

[RAFT](#) (see Appendix; may be used with various texts including those in the lessons above)

Achieve the Core Mini-Assessment: Paired Texts: “Counting on Grace” and “Iqbal”

<http://achievethecore.org/page/2762/counting-on-grace-by-elizabeth-winthrop-and-iqbal-by-francesco-d-adamo-mini-assessment>

## Resources

EngageNY: Myths: Not Just Long Ago:

<https://www.engageny.org/resource/grade-6-ela-module-1>

Achieve the Core Mini-Assessment: Excerpt from Counting on Grace

<http://achievethecore.org/page/496/counting-on-grace-by-elizabeth-winthrop-mini-assessment>

<http://achievethecore.org/page/2762/counting-on-grace-by-elizabeth-winthrop-and-iqbal-by-francesco-d-adamo-mini-assessment>

SC Ready Scoring Guidelines:

[http://ed.sc.gov/scdoe/assets/File/tests/middle/scready/SC\\_READY\\_TDA\\_Scoring\\_Guidelines\\_With\\_Nonscore\\_Codes.pdf](http://ed.sc.gov/scdoe/assets/File/tests/middle/scready/SC_READY_TDA_Scoring_Guidelines_With_Nonscore_Codes.pdf)

SC Ready Writer's Checklist:

[http://ed.sc.gov/scdoe/assets/File/tests/middle/scready/SC\\_READY\\_Writers\\_Checklist\\_Grades4-8.pdf](http://ed.sc.gov/scdoe/assets/File/tests/middle/scready/SC_READY_Writers_Checklist_Grades4-8.pdf)

SOAPSTone: A Strategy for Reading and Writing

[http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/preap/teachers\\_corner/45200.html](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/preap/teachers_corner/45200.html)

Writing Component of SC Ready:

<http://ed.sc.gov/tests/middle/sc-ready/writing-component-of-sc-ready/>

## Grade 6: Characters and Controversy

### RAFT

#### Description

RAFT provides a structure that supports students as they respond in writing to a text / learning experience. Following are the explanations of each component:

**Role:** The writer's role (perspective)

**Audience:** The person or group to whom the writer is writing

**Format:** The format of the writing (letter, poem, newspaper article, etc.)

**Topic:** The subject to be addressed in the writing

#### Purpose

RAFT provides an opportunity for students to consider a concept / event from a perspective other than their own. RAFT can also be used to help develop students' understanding of relationships within a concept/event. Another benefit to RAFT is that it exposes students to various writing forms.

While the novelty of the RAFT assignment tends to appeal to students, motivation is also increased when the teacher prepares more than one RAFT for a particular topic and allows students to choose the assignment they wish to complete. Choice is linked to motivation and success since it often provides students with opportunities to be creative and to show their strengths.

#### How to Create

The teacher provides the specifics of the RAFT components. Specifics are determined using the key understandings of the concept / event. RAFTs that focus on patterns and relationships require a higher level of thinking and promote a more in-depth knowledge of a topic. The level of understanding required to complete the RAFT should match the students' exposure to and experience with the concept / event. Teachers should also consider students' awareness of a particular mode of writing.

#### How to Use

If the RAFT is used in content areas other than ELA, students should be held accountable for the content only rather than the format and grammatical structures. Teachers could work in pairs (ELA and social studies) if a polished piece is expected so that the ELA teacher could provide support.

#### ELA Examples

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
Boo Radley	Jem	Get well soon note	The night of the Halloween pageant
Newspaper reporter	Maycomb county newspaper readers	News article	Bob Ewell's murder

Reference Cited:

Daniels, H., & Zemelman, S. (2004). *Subjects matter: Every teacher's guide to content-area reading*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

**Grade 6: Characters and Controversy**  
**Setting Analysis**

What is the setting?	
How are the characters affected by the setting?	
How would this story have changed if the setting were:	
At the beach?	
In New York City?	
You choose a place!  _____	

## Grade 6: Characters in Controversy Unit References

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