

Inquiring Minds At Work:



Discovering the Magic  
Of How to Create  
"Magnetic" Characters  
in Memorable Short Stories

5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> Grade Language Arts Unit

## Content Standards

### **Academic Expectation 2.1**

Students understand scientific ways of thinking and working and use those methods to solve real-life problems

### **Program of Studies**

**ELA-6-I-1** Students will develop questions to obtain ideas and information for authentic tasks (additional supporting Academic Expectation 6.3).

### **Program of Studies**

**ELA-6-W-1** Students will respond to reading, listening, observing, and inquiry through applying writing-to-learn strategies in situations such as graphic organizers, notetaking, journals, and logs and writing-to-demonstrate learning strategies in situations such as graphic organizers, open-response questions, and summaries.

### **Program of Studies**

**ELA-6-W-4** Students will write literary pieces which draw on an understanding of ideas and techniques from a variety of literary genres (additional supporting Academic Expectation 5.2).

### **Core Content**

#### **WR-M-1.3 Literary Writing**

**Literary writing** artfully communicates with the reader about the human condition. Literary forms in the portfolio include poems, short stories, and scripts/plays.

Characteristics of literary writing may include: literary elements of the selected form (e.g., short story—plot, poem—imagery, script--stage directions), descriptive language, literary devices (e.g., simile, metaphor, flashback), effective ordering of events, impressions, and descriptions, creation of an effect (e.g., comedy, irony, suspense, horror, paradox), focus on engaging an audience.

### **Core Content**

**RD-M-1.0.12** Identify characteristics of short stories, novels, poetry, and plays.

**RD-M-1.0.13** Describe literary elements (e.g., characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view) in a passage.

**RD-M-1.0.14** Analyze the relationship between events in a story and a characters behavior.

**RD-M-1.0.15** Explain how a conflict in a passage is resolved.

**RD-M-1.0.16** Identify literary devices such as foreshadowing, imagery, and figurative language (e.g., similes, metaphors, personification, hyperbole).

### **Core Content**

**SC-E-1.3.4** Magnets attract and repel each other, and magnets attract certain kinds of other materials (e.g., iron).

Note: This inquiry unit is designed to be adaptable. If, for example, it is customary to teach *plot* before *characterization*, the workshop sequence can easily be changed.

Characterization

## Inquiring Minds At Work: Creating Characters That Rock!

### Reading/Writing Inquiry Workshop

#### Major Focus: Creating Realistic Characters

*“The inquiry process takes advantage of the natural human desire to make sense of the world...*

*This attitude of curiosity permeates the inquiry process and is the fuel that allows it to continue.”*

National Science  
Foundation

**Essential question:** From our inquiry into what makes a fictional character seem real in a novel, as young authors, what do we need to do to make our own characters come alive in the stories we write?

#### **Inquiry Starter**

Raising questions from  
observing engaging materials

Teacher explains that this inquiry project will incorporate the scientific process to investigate how authors create “magnetic” characters. Through this inquiry, students are likely to see, for example, that, as in life, some characters are more attractive than others. Furthermore, there are those who just seem to attract all kinds of “trials and tribulations.”

Teacher starts with a read aloud of an excerpt from a favorite short story to be interwoven throughout the unit. Teacher gives a focus for listening (e.g., characterization, setting, plot development)

Suggested reading: *Song of the Trees* by Mildred Taylor/ *The Whipping Boy* by Sid Fleischman

(Writer’s Notebooks are used for recording and reflecting throughout the inquiry workshop[s])

## Observing

In groups of two, after activating prior knowledge, learners observe how magnets react to metallic and non-metallic objects (with guidance from the teacher; sample activities follow)

In the same groups, learners observe how characters come alive from a variety of resources that demonstrate characterization. Examples:

- Short selected reading passages from stories they know and don't know (sample resources follow)
- Marker Papers and WP Benchmarks

## Questioning

Learners create their own questions and write these on sentence strips.

Examples for the teacher to use to guide questioning:

- What "magnetic" fictional characters do we already know?
- Where's the best place to start a story? With the character? With the plot?
- How do you decide who is going to tell the story?
- What kinds of details do you need for the character to be lifelike?
- What kinds of problems does a character have to face?

(Questions are categorized and displayed by the teacher.

Students find questions they are most interested in [gallery walk].

New groups are formed based on common interests for next step of inquiry).

**Focused Investigation**  
Planning and investigating  
questions

*To hypothesize or not to hypothesize?  
"Scientists move back and forth among processes to refine their knowledge as the inquiry unfolds. Inquiry is an artistic endeavor, and not the following of a recipe."*

Jerry Pine, Caltech Precollege  
Science Initiative

Teacher models observing and reporting evidence

(See annotated excerpt from *Tangerine* as an example)

## Hypothesizing

Learners re-examine reading materials (with partners) to investigate answers to their questions

(Using annotated model from *Tangerine*, or a different story, participants can record their observations from other reading materials on large mailing labels, which they then place under the relevant question posted in the classroom)

Learners create their own hypotheses/questions in response to their area of interest

### Example - Magnetism

- A magnetic character can either attract or repel you
- Magnetic characters are likely to be complex
- Can an antagonist be a magnetic character?

### Example - Point of View

- I can tell you what I am thinking when I make myself the main character
- It might be hard for me to tell you what I look like when I tell the story in first person
- Is third person narration best for telling a lot about a character's appearance, speech, actions, and thoughts?

## Predicting

Learners predict what makes a fictional character seem real. (Students complete "If I do *this*, then *that* will happen" statements). Examples:

- If we put ourselves in our characters' shoes, they'll be more realistic
- If we know what a character thinks, he'll be more interesting
- If we know how a character interacts with someone else, we'll know more about his personality
- If we know how the character is seen by others, we'll get a different perspective

## Investigating

Learners test their predictions by re-examining reading materials and creating a character to see what works

**Process for Meaning**  
Thinking about and  
communicating what you  
learned

### **Interpreting**

Learners interpret and synthesize what they have learned by creating character sketches (to become developed in short story writing)

### **Communicating**

Author's Chair: character sketches are shared (whole group) and conclusions are made

*"Inquiry gives the opportunity for students to work on developing their social and process skills, to use individual discoveries and observations to build up their conceptual understandings, and the knowledge that their observations and questions have value."*

National Science Foundation

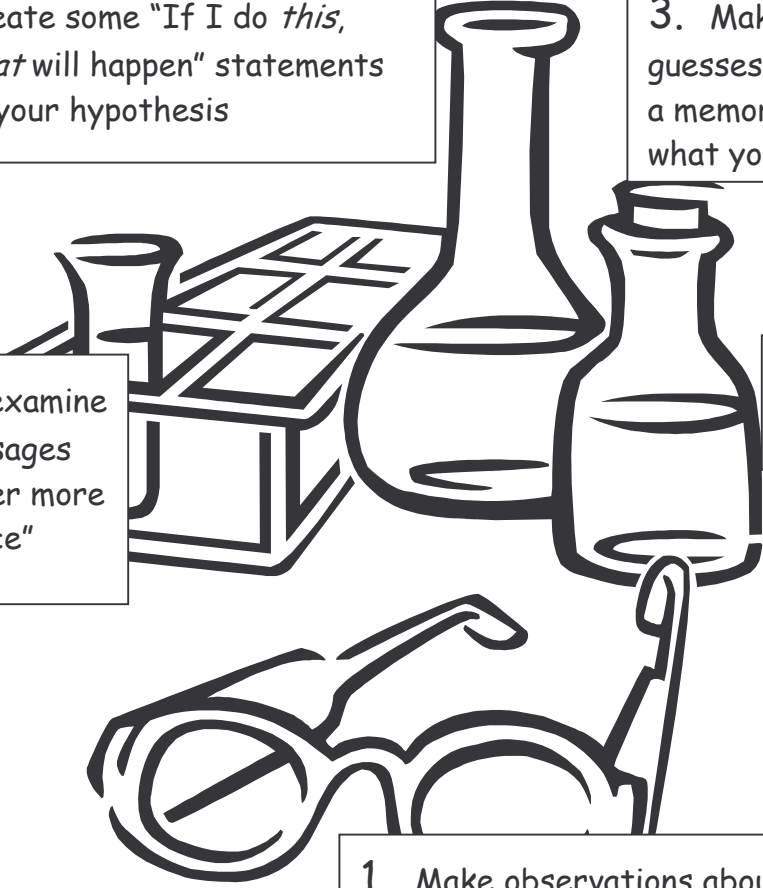
Discovering how to create a realistic character

4. Create some "If I do *this*, then *that* will happen" statements to test your hypothesis

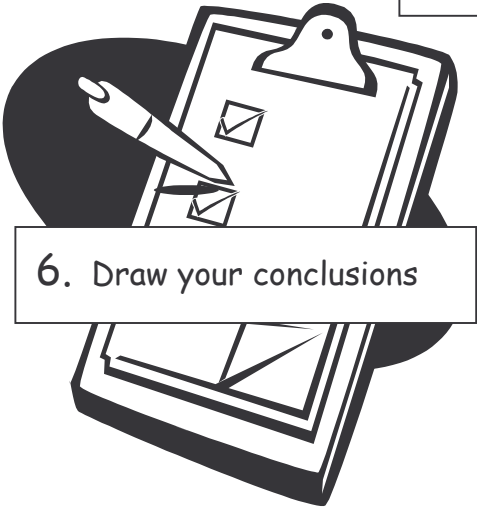
3. Make a few "educated guesses" on how an author creates a memorable character based on what you've observed

5. Re-examine the passages to gather more "evidence"

2. Ask questions about characterization



1. Make observations about how characters are "coming alive" in the passages you're reading

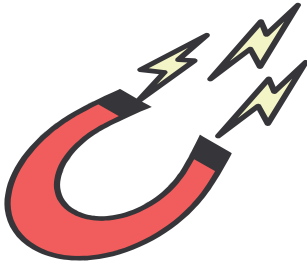


6. Draw your conclusions

7. Create your own character(s)

**K-W-L**  
**Magnets**

What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I learned
<p>There are different kinds of magnets</p> <p>Magnets attract</p> <p>Magnets repel</p> <p>Magnets attract certain objects, but not all objects</p>		



## Magnetism

Magnetism is a property of matter in which there is a force of attraction or repulsion between unlike or like poles. The magnetic forces are strongest near the ends, or magnetic poles, of the magnets. All magnets have two magnetically opposite poles, north (N) and south (S). If a bar magnet is suspended so it turns freely, the north end will point north.

### How Magnets Interact with Each Other

When you bring the north ends of two magnets close together, they repel each other. However, the north and south ends will attract. Like magnetic poles repel, and opposite magnetic poles attract. These forces decrease as the distance between the magnets increases.

Only a few materials show strong magnetic properties. Permanent magnets are made from materials such as iron, cobalt, and nickel, which retain their magnetic properties for a long time. Being near or rubbing against a magnet can cause paper clips and nails to become temporary magnets, but they lose their magnetic properties soon after they are separated from the other magnet.

(Adapted from Glenco, 1997, *Physical Science*, p. 626)

## Magnetism -- Magnetic Attraction

### Materials

#### Magnets

Scissors, tag board, clear plastic cups, water, erasers, rules, pencils, paper clips, thumbtacks, toothpicks, pens, crayons, other assorted classroom objects

### Vocabulary

Magnetic, attraction, magnetic field ([see word tree for related lesson](#))

### Background information

All magnets are surrounded by a magnetic field that is composed of invisible lines of force. This magnetic field is the area of attraction for those objects to which a magnet is attracted or which it attracts. Other magnets and a few metals, especially iron and steel, attract magnets.

The objects that will be attracted in the first activity are scissors, paper clips, thumbtacks and possibly a pen if it has metal parts. The magnet may also lift a ruler if it has a metal edge.

Magnets will also attract objects through other objects such as tag board, water and thin plastic. The magnetic field will operate through these objects, but the strength of the attraction may be reduced somewhat. Some magnets may be too weak to pull objects through the cup of water, especially if they are small with a weaker magnetic field.

### Teaching Suggestions

The following activities can be done with the entire class or in small groups. The choice of format may depend on the availability of magnets. If students are asked to bring magnets from home, this gives a wider variety of different types to share.

Distribute the worksheet and review the instructions. Hand out the magnets and any other needed equipment. Encourage students to be imaginative in trying different objects and to be thorough in their investigations.

The purpose of the first section is to have the children discover that magnets are only attracted to metal objects.

In the second section, students search for items in the classroom to test.

The purpose of the third section is to demonstrate the strength of magnetic fields. Placing index cards, cardboard or other similar materials between the magnets and the objects can extend the third section further. Most magnets will have strong enough magnetic fields to attract the objects right through the materials.

#### Language Arts Connection

Encourage students to think about "magnetic" fictional characters that they know and identify events and/or other characters in the story that help to reveal those characters' "magnetic force."

Adapted from materials found at <http://darkstar.cc/Discovery/Magnetism1of2.JPG>

## ***Magnetic Attraction***

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Try to pick up each of these objects with your magnet. Circle the ones which it picks up.

scissors          eraser          ruler          pencil          crayon  
 paper clip      thumbtack      toothpick      pen

A magnet will only pick up an object made of \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Investigate**

List all the objects you can find which your magnet picks up or is attracted to.

- |          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____  |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____  |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____  |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____  |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

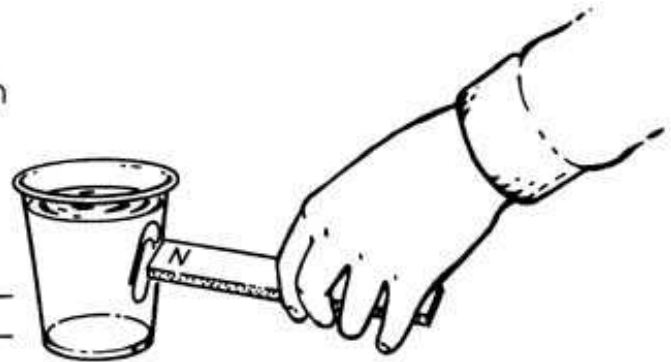
Is the magnet attracted to any non-metal object? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Extending the Concept**

Hold a piece of tagboard between the magnet and each object you listed in the "Investigate" section. List each one the magnet is still attracted to.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Place each of the objects the magnet is still attracted to in a cup of water.

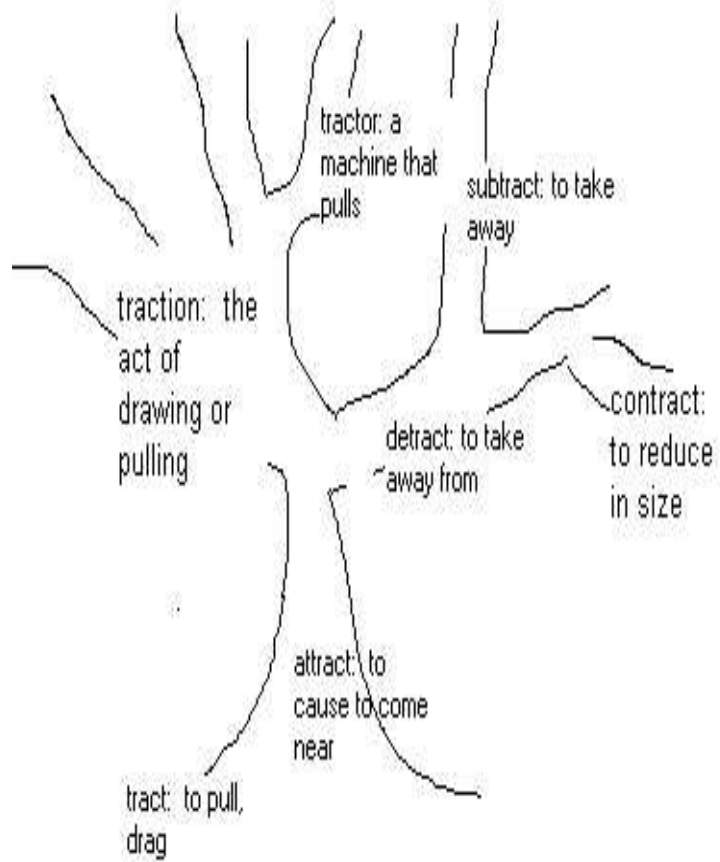
Hold the magnet against the outside of the cup.

Which items was the magnet still able to attract? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What other materials can a magnet attract objects through, besides tagboard and water? \_\_\_\_\_

## Vocabulary Tree



Adapted from *When Kids Can't Read: What Teachers Can Do* by Kyleene Beers  
p. 188-90

*"If the Logans seem real, it is because I had my own family upon which to base characterizations."*

Mildred D. Taylor

## Resources

### A sampling of stories with fully developed main characters:

Ramona	Ramona Quimby, age 8 by B. Cleary
Bud	Bud, Not Buddy by P. C. Curtis
Birdy	Catherine Called Birdy by K. Cushman
Lucy	The Ballad of Lucy Whipple by K. Cushman
Little Willy	Stone Fox by J. Gardiner
Chrysanthemum	Chrysanthemum by K. Henkes
Swamp Angel	Swamp Angel by A. Issacs
Sarah	Sarah Plain and Tall by P. MacLachlan
Karana	Island of the Blue Dolphins by S. O'Dell
Maria	Too Many Tamales by G. Soto
Matt	Sign of the Beaver by E. Speare
Maniac	Maniac McGee by J. Spinelli
Cassie	Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry by M. Taylor
Moon Shadow	Dragonwings by L. Yep
Kira and Matt	Gathering Blue by L. Lowry
Paul	Tangerine by E. Bloor
Matilda	Fever 1793 by L.H. Anderson
Roy	Hoot by Carl Hiaasen

Erik's brother is telling the story about himself

Erik's brother sets the scene

## *Tangerine* by Edward Bloor – Sample Observations

Today was the first day of school. I left the house at seven-thirty to walk to the front of the development and catch the bus... It occurred to me that I've never lived in a development that was finished. I have always lived with overflowing construction Dumpsters and portable toilets sitting on boards.

I turned right at the end of Kensington Gardens Drive and walked parallel to the high gray wall. Something started to bother me almost immediately. The gray of the wall drifted along in the left side of my vision – distracting me, troubling me. What was it? Something about the wall? Something about the bus stop? Something that I needed to remember? My steps slowed down, and I came to a dead stop, frozen there like a windup toy that had run out of torque.

Then a scene came back to me. Just like the other morning in Houston. Entirely on its own, a scene came back to me:

*I remembered another bus stop.* And a shiny yellow school bus.

I was standing at the back of a line of kids, waiting to board the bus for one of my first days at kindergarten.

Mom had driven me to school on the actual first day. This was the first day when I would be accompanied by no one except Erik, my fifth-grade brother. But Erik did not accompany me for long. He was standing at the front of the school-bus line with his fifth-grade friends when one of them turned, made a gesture, and called to me "Hey, Eclipse Boy, how many fingers am I holding up?"

I didn't realize at first that the boy was talking to me, and I had no idea what he meant. Erik and his friends laughed about the joke, then the bus doors opened and we all filed in. I can't put all of the details in order now, but it became clear to me later that, for some reason, the big kids on the school bus were calling me Eclipse Boy.

The fact is we did have an eclipse that summer, around three weeks before school started. Based on that, Erik was telling his friends this story: The reason for the Coke-bottle glasses on my eyes was that I had stared at the sun, unprotected, during that eclipse.

The story puzzled me then, and it puzzles me now. I do not remember doing any such thing. And yet when I search through our family photos, I can see that I never wore glasses of any kind before that summer. But right after the eclipse, I was wearing these thick lenses that I now call my regular glasses.

Puzzled or not, I went right along with the story. I even told it myself. It gave me a special kindergarten identity. It made me somebody. I was the boy who had not listened and who was now paying the price. Look at me if you dare! I was the living proof that you shouldn't look at an eclipse or you'll go blind; that you shouldn't play in an abandoned refrigerator or you'll suffocate; that you shouldn't go swimming right after you eat or you'll get stomach cramps and drown.

So there I sat on that yellow school bus – Erik Fisher's younger brother, Eclipse Boy, visually impaired and totally incapable of following in his brother's footsteps. (p. 33-34).

His thoughts tell us he's troubled about something

Erik's brother remembers the first time he went to school without his mom - flashback

By telling us what a bigger kid said to him on the bus, we know Erik's brother was teased

Erik's brother explains why he accepted being called *Eclipse Boy*

Erik's brother explains why he was puzzled by his brother's explanation about his glasses

Erik's brother makes us want to know why he can't follow in his brother's footsteps

How has the author "magnetized" us?

**He has told us just enough information to make Erik interesting and to make us want to know more, for example:**

Why has he never lived in a housing development that was finished? Has he moved a lot?

Was it really an eclipse that hurt his eyes?

Why can't he follow in his brother's footsteps?

He has created a character that we can relate to, for example:

Like Eric, we all want to be special

We can probably remember being teased about what we look like

We know that older brothers or sisters can be mean

He has used thoughts, actions, appearance and interactions with someone else to create a "magnetic" character

On a night when the moon gazed down like an evil eye, the young prince appeared in Jemmy's chamber.

"Boy! Tumble out of bed. I need a manservant."

Jemmy saw that the prince was wearing a black cloak and carrying a wicker basket the size of a sea chest. "What you up to now? Walkin' in your royal sleep, are you?"

"I'm running away."

The whipping boy sat bolt upright. Hardly a day passed that he didn't make one plan or another to run off—but a prince? What horrible new mischief was this? "You can't hop off like you was common folks. What's bitin' you?"

Said the prince, "I'm bored."

"With dumping bullfrogs in the moat so no one got a wink o'sleep?"

"Boring."

"And didn't you laugh fit to kill when the knights slipped off their horses and clattered to the ground? You'd hog-greased the saddles."

The prince folded his arms. "Boring."

"And didn't you get me thrashed so that this hide o' mine feels like the devil run me over with spikes in his shoes?"

"Let's be off!"

Why me? Jemmy thought. Can't you find a friend to run off with? But no - not you, Prince Brat. You've got no friends. That's why me.

Jemmy pointed to the window. "It's night out," he protested.

"The best time," replied the prince.

"But ain't you afraid o' the dark? Everyone knows that! You won't even sleep without a lit candle."

"Lies! Anyway, the moon's up, good and bright. Come on."

Jemmy stared at him with dreadful astonishment. "The king'll have a gory-eyed fit!"

"Positively."

"He'll hunt us down. You'll get off light as a feather, but I'll be lucky if they don't whip me to the bone. More likely I'll be hung from the gallows. Scragged for sure!"

"Your lookout," said the prince with a dry grin. "Carry the basket Jemmy-From-The Streets, and follow me!"

*The Whipping Boy* by Sid Fleischman

Chapter 3, The Runaways

Through a thought, Jemmy reveals some important information about his own life: he wants to run away

Jemmy tells pranks Prince has done/we find out he's mean

Jemmy's thoughts give us more info about Prince: he has no friends

Conversation between Jemmy and Prince lets us know more about their relationship and who's in charge: the Prince

<p>Hoot, Chapter One by Carl Hiaasen</p>	<p>My thoughts about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how the author is characterizing Roy, Dana, Officer Delinko and Curly</li> <li>• predicting what comes next</li> </ul>
<p>Roy would not have noticed the strange boy if it weren't for Dana Matherson, because Roy ordinarily didn't look out the window of the school bus. He preferred to read comics and mystery books on the morning ride to Trace Middle.</p> <p>But on this day, a Monday (Roy would never forget), Dana Matherson grabbed Roy's head from behind and pressed his thumbs into Roy's temple, as if he were squeezing a soccer ball. The older kids were supposed to stay in the back of the bus, but Dana had snuck up behind Roy's seat and ambushed him. When Roy tried to wriggle free, Dana mushed his face against the window.</p> <p>It was then, squinting through the smudged glass, that Roy spotted the strange boy running along the sidewalk. It appeared as if he was hurrying to catch the school bus, which had stopped at a corner to pick up more kids.</p> <p>The boy was straw-blond and wiry, and his skin was nutbrown from the sun. The expression on his face was intent and serious. He wore a faded Miami Heat basketball jersey and dirty khaki shorts, and here was the odd part: no shoes. The soles of his bare feet looked as black as barbecue coals.</p> <p>Trace Middle School didn't have the world's strictest dress code, but Roy was pretty sure that some sort of footwear was required. The boy might have been carrying sneakers in his backpack, if only he'd been wearing a backpack. No shoes, no backpack, no books-strange, indeed, on a school day.</p> <p>Roy was sure that the barefoot boy would catch all kinds of grief from Dana and the other big kids once he boarded the bus, but that didn't happen....</p> <p>Because the boy kept running-past the corner, past the line of students waiting to get on the bus; past the bus itself. Roy wanted to shout, "Hey, look at that guy!" but his mouth wasn't working so well. Dana Matherson still had him from behind, pushing his face against the window.</p> <p>As the bus pulled away from the intersection, Roy hoped to catch another glimpse of the boy farther up the street. However, he had turned off the sidewalk and was now cutting across a private yard-running very fast, much faster than Roy could run and maybe even faster than Richard, Roy's best friend</p>	

back in Montana. Richard was so fast that he got to work out with the high school track squad when he was only in seventh grade.

Dana Matherson was digging his fingernails into Roy's scalp, trying to make him squeal, but Roy barely felt a thing. He was gripped with curiosity as the running boy dashed through one neat green yard after another, getting smaller in Roy's vision as he put a wider distance between himself and the school bus.

Roy saw a big pointy-eared dog, probably a German shepherd, bound off somebody's porch and go for the boy. Incredibly, the boy didn't change his course. He vaulted over the dog, crashed through a cherry hedge, and then disappeared from view. Roy gasped.

"Whassamatter, cowgirl? Had enough?"

This was Dana, hissing in Roy's right ear. Being the new kid on the bus, Roy didn't expect any help from the others. The "cowgirl" remark was so lame, it wasn't worth getting mad about. Dana was a well-known idiot, on top of which he outweighed Roy by at least fifty pounds. Fighting back would have been a complete waste of energy.

"Had enough yet? We can't hear you, Tex." Dana's breath smelled like stale cigarettes. Smoking and beating up smaller kids were his two main hobbies.

"Yeah, okay," Roy said impatiently. "I've had enough."

As soon as he was freed, Roy lowered the window and stuck out his head. The strange boy was gone.

Who was he? What was he running from?

Roy wondered if any of the other kids on the bus had seen what he'd seen. For a moment he wondered if he'd really seen it himself.

That same morning, a police officer named David Delinko was sent to the future site of another Mother Paula's All-American Pancake House. It was a vacant lot at the corner of East Oriole and Woodbury, on the eastern edge of town.

Officer Delinko was met by a man in a dark blue pickup truck. The man, who was as bald as a beach ball, introduced himself as Curly. Officer Delinko thought the bald man must have a good sense of humor to go by such a nickname, but he was wrong. Curly was cranky and unsmiling.

"You should see what they done," he said to the policeman.

"Who?"

"Follow me," the man called Curly said.

Officer Delinko got in step behind him. "The dispatcher said you wanted to report some vandalism."

"That's right," Curly grunted over his shoulder.

The policeman couldn't see what there was to be vandalized on the property, which was basically a few acres of scraggly weeds. Curly stopped walking and pointed at a short piece of lumber on the ground. A ribbon of bright pink plastic was tied to one end of the stick. The other end was sharpened and caked with gray dirt.

Curly said, "They pulled 'em out."

"That's a survey stake?" asked Officer Delinko.

"Yep. They yanked 'em out of the ground, every damn one.

"Probably just kids."

"And then they threw 'em every which way," Curly said, waving a beefy arm, "and then they filled in the holes."

"That's a little weird," the policeman remarked. "When did this happen?"

"Last night or early this morning," Curly said. "Maybe it don't look like a big deal, but it's gonna take a while to get the site marked out again. Meantime, we can't start clearin' or gradin' or nuthin'. We got backhoes and dozers already leased, and now they gotta sit. I know it don't look like the crime of the century, but still--"

"I understand," said Officer Delinko. "What's your estimate of the monetary damage?"

"Damage?"

"Yes. So I can put it in my report." The policeman picked up the survey stake and examined it. "It's not really broken, is it?"

"Well, no--"

"Were any of them destroyed?" asked Officer Delinko. "How much does one of these things cost—a buck or two?"

The man called Curly was losing his patience. "They didn't break none of the stakes," he said gruffly.

"Not even one?" The policeman frowned. He was trying to figure out what to put in his report. You can't have vandalism without monetary damages, and if nothing on the property was broken or defaced...

"What I'm tryin' to explain," Curly said irritably, "it's not that they messed up the survey stakes, it's them screwing up our whole construction schedule. That's where it'll cost some serious bucks."

*(Copyright by Carl Hiaasen)*

[http://www.alanbrown.com/Z\\_Preview148.html](http://www.alanbrown.com/Z_Preview148.html)

"Your Lordship is still determined, then?" Wormtail said quietly.

"Certainly I am determined, Wormtail." There was a note of menace in the cold voice now.

A slight pause followed - and then Wormtail spoke, the words tumbling from him in a rush, as though he was forcing himself to say this before he lost his nerve.

"It could be done without Harry Potter, My Lord."

Another pause, more protracted, and then -

"Without Harry Potter?" breathed the second voice softly. "I see..."

"My Lord, I do not say this out of concern for the boy!" said Wormtail, his voice rising squeakily. "The boy is nothing to me, nothing at all! It is merely that if we were to use another witch or wizard - any wizard - the thing could be done so much more quickly! If you allowed me to leave you for a short while - you know I can disguise myself most effectively - I could be back here in as little as two days with a suitable person -"

"I could use another wizard," said the cold voice softly, "that is true..."

"My Lord, it makes sense," said Wormtail, sounding thoroughly relieved now. "Laying hands on Harry Potter would be so difficult, he is so well protected -"

"And so you volunteer to go and fetch me a substitute? I wonder . . . perhaps the task of nursing me has become wearisome for you, Wormtail? Could this suggestion of abandoning the plan be nothing more than an attempt to desert me?"

"My Lord! I - I have no wish to leave you, none at all -"

"Do not lie to me!" hissed the second voice. "I can always tell, Wormtail! You are regretting that you ever returned to me. I revolt you. I see you flinch when you look at me, feel you shudder when you touch me..."

"No! My devotion to Your Lordship -"

"Your devotion is nothing more than cowardice. You would not be here if you had anywhere else to go. How am I to survive without you, when I need feeding every few hours? Who is to milk Nagini?"

"But you seem so much stronger, My Lord—"

"Liar," breathed the second voice. "I am no stronger, and a few days alone would be enough to rob me of the little health I have regained under your clumsy care. *Silence!*"

*Harry Potter, Goblet of Fire, Ch 1, p. 8-9*

*There's a boy in the girl's bathroom*  
by Louis Sachar

Bradley Chalkers sat at his desk in the back of the room-last seat, last row. No one sat at the desk next to him. He was an island.

If he could have, he would have sat in the closet. Then he could have shut the door so he wouldn't have to listen to Mrs. Ebbel. He didn't think she'd mind. She'd probably like it better that way too. So would the rest of the class. All in all, he thought everyone would be much happier if he sat in the closet, but, unfortunately, his desk didn't fit.

"Class," said Mrs. Ebbel. "I would like you all to meet Jeff Fishkin. Jeff just moved here from Washington D.C., which as you know, is our nation's capital."...

Mrs. Ebbel smiled at him. "Well, I guess we'd better find you a place to sit." She looked around the room. "Hmmm, I don't see anyplace except, I suppose you can sit there, at the back."

"No, not next to Bradley!" a girl in the front row exclaimed.

"At least it's better than *in front* of Bradley," said the boy next to her....

"That's right," Bradley spoke up. "Nobody likes sitting next to me!" He smiled a strange smile. He stretched his mouth so wide, it was hard to tell whether it was a smile or a frown.

As Mrs. Ebbel began the lesson, Bradley took out a pencil and a piece of paper and scribbled. He scribbled most of the morning and sometimes on the paper and sometimes on his desk. Sometimes he scribbled so hard his pencil broke. Every time that happened, he laughed. (p. 1-2)

*Because of Winn Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo

I went around a really big tree all covered in moss, and there was Winn-Dixie. He was eating something right out of the witch's hand. She looked up at me. "This dog sure likes peanut butter," she said. "You can always trust a dog that likes peanut butter." She was old with crinkly brown skin. She had on a big floppy hat with flowers all over it, and she didn't have any teeth, but she didn't look like a witch. She looked nice. And Winn-Dixie liked her, I could tell.

"I'm sorry he got in your garden," I said.

"You ain't got to be sorry," she said. "I enjoy a little company."

"My name's Opal," I told her.

"My name's Gloria Dump," she said. "Ain't that a terrible last name? Dump?"

"My last name is Buloni," I said. "Sometimes the kids at school back home in Watley called me 'Lunch Meat.'"

"Hah!" Gloria Dump laughed. "What about this dog? What do you call him?"

"Winn Dixie" I said.

"Whoooooeeee," she said. "That takes the strange-name prize, don't it?"

...Gloria Dump made me a peanut butter sandwich on white bread. Then she made one for herself and put her false teeth in, to eat it; when she was done, she said to me, "You know, my eyes ain't too good at all. I can't see nothing but the general shape of things so I got to rely on my heart. Why don't you go on and tell me everything about yourself, so I can see you with my heart." And because Winn Dixie was looking up at her like she was the best thing he had ever seen and because the peanut-butter sandwich had been so good, and because I had been waiting for a long time to tell some person everything about me, I did. (p. 63)

*Mr. Wormwood, the Great Car Dealer*, p. 22 from *Matilda* by Roald Dahl

Matilda's parents owned quite a nice house with three bedrooms upstairs, while on the ground floor there was a dining-room and a living-room and a kitchen. Her father was a dealer in second-hand cars and it seemed he did pretty well at it.

"Sawdust," he would say proudly, "is one of the great secrets of my success. And it costs me nothing. I get it free from the sawmill."

"What do you use it for?" Matilda asked him.

"Ha!" the father said. "Wouldn't you like to know."

"I don't see how sawdust can help you to sell second-hand cars, daddy."

"That's because you're an ignorant little twit," the father said. His speech was never very delicate but Matilda was used to it. She also knew that he liked to boast and she would egg him on shamelessly.

"You must be very clever to find a use for something that costs nothing," she said. "I wish I could do it."

"You couldn't," the father said. "You're too stupid. But I don't mind telling young Mike here about it seeing he'll be joining me in the business one day." Ignoring Matilda, he turned to his son and said, "I'm always glad to buy a car when some fool has been crashing the gears too badly they're all worn out and rattle like made. I get it cheap. Then all I do is mix a lot of sawdust with the oil in the gear-box and it runs as sweet as a nut."

"How long will it run like that before it starts rattling again?" Matilda asked him.

"Long enough for the buyer to get a good distance away," the father said, grinning. "About a hundred miles."

"But that's dishonest, daddy," Matilda said. "It's cheating."

"No one ever got rich being honest," the father said. "Customers are there to be diddled."

Mr. Wormwood was a small ratty-looking man whose front teeth stuck out underneath a thin ratty moustache. He liked to wear jackets with large brightly-coloured checks and he sported ties that were usually yellow or pale green. "Now take mileage for instance," he went on. "

Anyone who's buying a second-hand car, the first thing they want to know is how many miles it's done. Right?"

"Right," the son said.

The Barn, by Avi

The last time I had seen him, he was tall and strong. The only thing he'd never owed money on, he'd say, was his handsome face, and Mother bought it right off the shelf.

Now that same face showed nothing but sick and sour dirtiness. His beard - about which he'd been so vain and about which I teased him often in fun - was all crossways, as was his gray-streaked hair.

He made me think of an old corn husk doll without stuffing. As stood staring, he made fluttering motions at the coverlet, his fingers jumping like small fish hauled to land.

*The Flunking of Joshua T. Bates*, by Susan Shreve

One

On Labor Day, driving home from the beach, Joshua's mother told him that he was going to have to repeat third grade.

"Nope, I'm not," Joshua said when his mother told him quietly so his miserable older sister, in the back seat of the bright blue van, wouldn't overhear, although of course she did.

"I've already been in third grade once," Joshua said very reasonably.

"Of course you have, darling, but the teachers feel that you're too young for your class. You need another year to mature."

"I am very mature," Joshua said crossly. "What do they expect at nine years old. A beard?"

"They expect you to be able to read, Josh," Amanda said helpfully from her perch in the back seat. She was reading a fat book with small print just so Joshua's father would say to his mother, "Isn't Amanda a fine student." And his mother would sing back, "Just wonderful, wonderful, wonderful."

"You're a jerk, Amanda," Joshua said to her. "I hope you grow up to be a third-grade teacher and that your hair falls out." (p. 3-4)

## The Fish Pot

...everything went well until one morning, when I was returning from the river with the fish pot, I ran into Jester.

Jester was Boswell's boy-bully. He was rosy-muscled and strong and he had never been to school.

"Let's see what you got there," he said.

My heart-beat quickened as he said it. He was some way off to one side of the track and was engaged in target practice with his catapult. A breadfruit hanging from its branch was his target. As he walked over now to confront me, he began to stuff the catapult into his pocket, and I had a quick impulse to run for it. So I did just that.

"Hold it!" he said as he sprinted after me, but I didn't even look back. I made tracks and when I turned in at my gate, he still had not caught up with me.

"Come, Champion!" I called. "After him, Champ!" I said, although I knew very well that our dog was on a chain. But he heard me and roared and barked and Jester, knowing the character of Champion, made a wise stop.

When I stood safe by the veranda, I dropped the fish pot and looked back. Jester was down the road threatening me. He made a fist and pointed it in my direction; then he put the fist in his eyes and rubbed it around, which was a way of saying he would black my eye. Then he went away. I told Milton.

"Oh, he won't do anything."

"Still I'm scared," I said. "He's a bully, isn't he?"

"He won't dare touch you," he assured me.

"Maybe," I said. "I don't know really. Can you beat him in a fight?"

"How would I know?" he said irritably.

But I knew he couldn't beat Jester.

(From *the Cloud with the Silver Lining*, C. Everard Palmer, p. 45)

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**Inquiring Minds At Work:  
Creating Plots For Our Characters That Rock!**

**Reading/Writing Inquiry Workshop**

**Major Focus:** Creating realistic plots that hold readers' interest

**Essential question:** From our inquiry into plot development, as young authors, what do we need to know to make compelling plots for the stories we write?

**Inquiry Starter**  
Raising questions from  
observing engaging materials

Teacher continues read aloud and gives a focus for listening (plot development)

**Observing**

In groups of two, learners observe what makes up a plot from a variety of resources that demonstrate good plots. Examples:

- Short story summaries
- Comics and action books

**Questioning**

Learners create their own questions and write these on sentence strips  
Examples:

- What are the parts of a plot?
- Does there have to be a conflict or some kind of problem in a short story?
- Are there different kinds of plots?

(Questions are categorized and displayed by the teacher; students find questions they are most interested in [gallery walk]. New groups are formed for next step of inquiry).

**Focused Investigation**  
 Planning and investigating  
 questions

Teacher models observing and reporting evidence through read aloud  
**Hypothesizing**

Learners re-examine the reading materials to answer their questions

Learners create their own hypotheses. Examples:

- ❑ Without a plot, there would be no action
- ❑ If the plot is too predictable, readers will lose interest
- ❑ Foreshadowing makes you want to keep reading
- ❑ Flashbacks are an effective way to create reader interest
- ❑ There has to be a problem but it doesn't have to be a physical fight; it can be a struggle that a person has with himself

## Predicting

Learners predict what a plot will do to advance a story

Examples:

- ❑ If we drop hints, readers will make predictions about what is going to happen and will keep reading to find out if they are right
- ❑ If we create too much action, readers will be distracted
- ❑ If we create a struggle that pulls the reader into a story and won't let go until the reader finds out who or what wins, we've got a good story

## Investigating

Learners test their predictions by re-examining reading materials and creating a conflict and a series of events and resolution to see what works

**Process for Meaning**  
Thinking about and  
communicating what you  
learned

## **Interpreting**

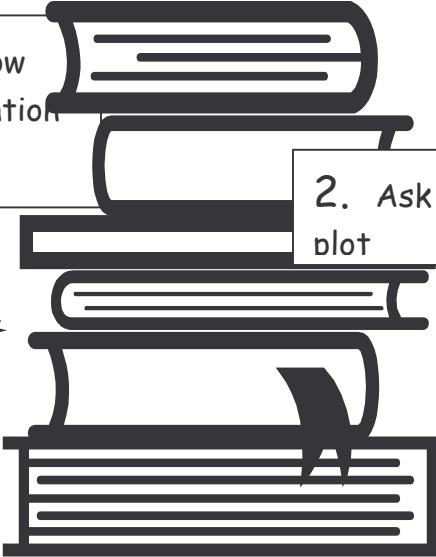
Learners interpret and synthesize what they have learned by creating a conflict within a series of events for one or more of the characters they have created

## **Communicating**

Author's Chair: short story outline (characters, setting, conflict, resolution) is shared with whole group and conclusions are made (recorded in writer's notebook)

Discovering how to create a realistic plot

1. Make observations about how the plot is grabbing your attention in the passages you're reading



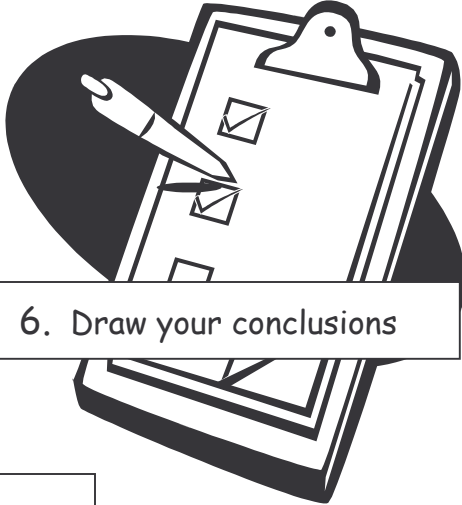
2. Ask questions about plot

3. Make a few "educated guesses" on how an author creates a realistic plot based on what you've observed

4. Create some "If I do *this*, then *that* will happen" statements to test your hypothesis

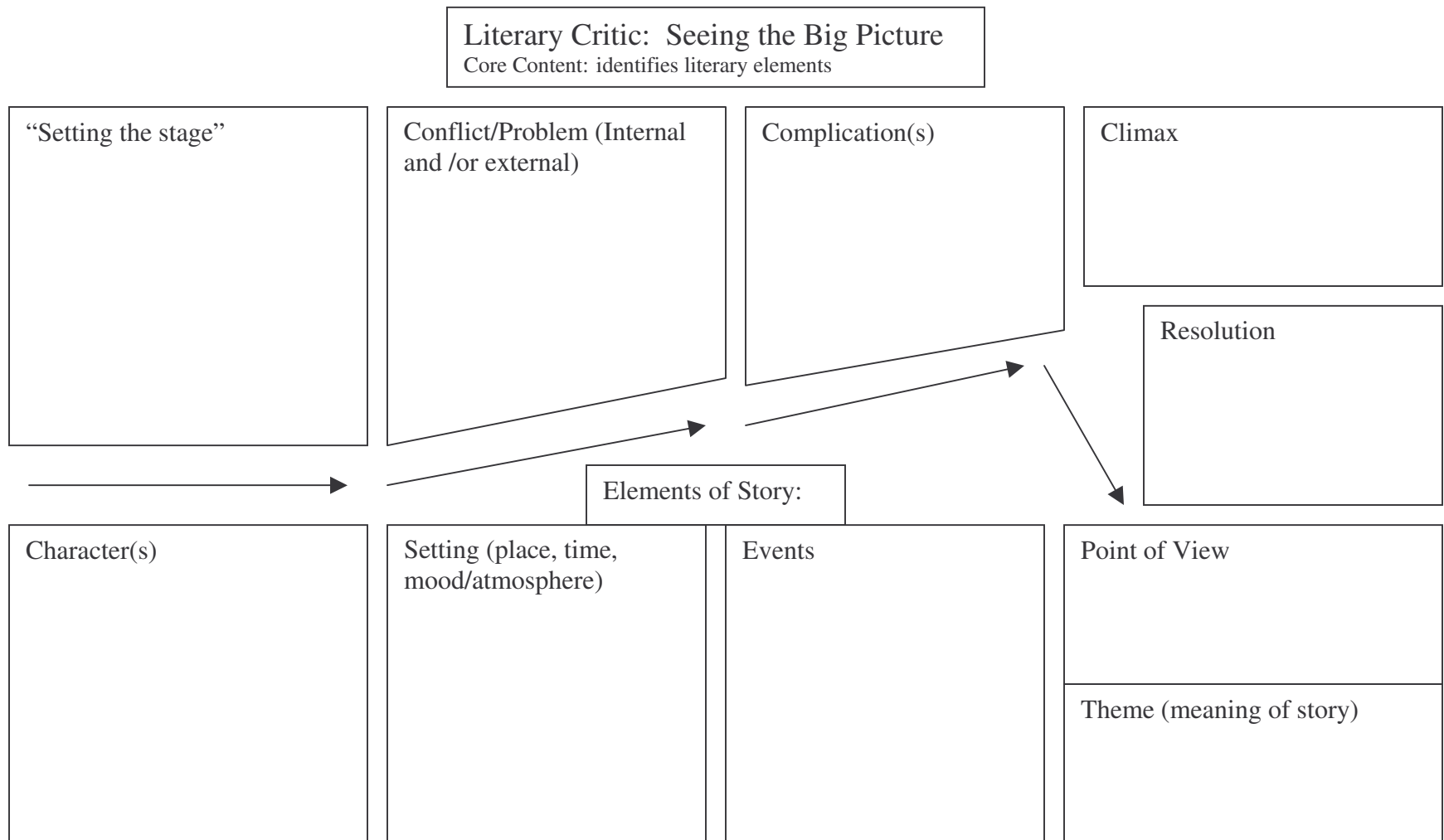


5. Re-read the passages to gather more "evidence"

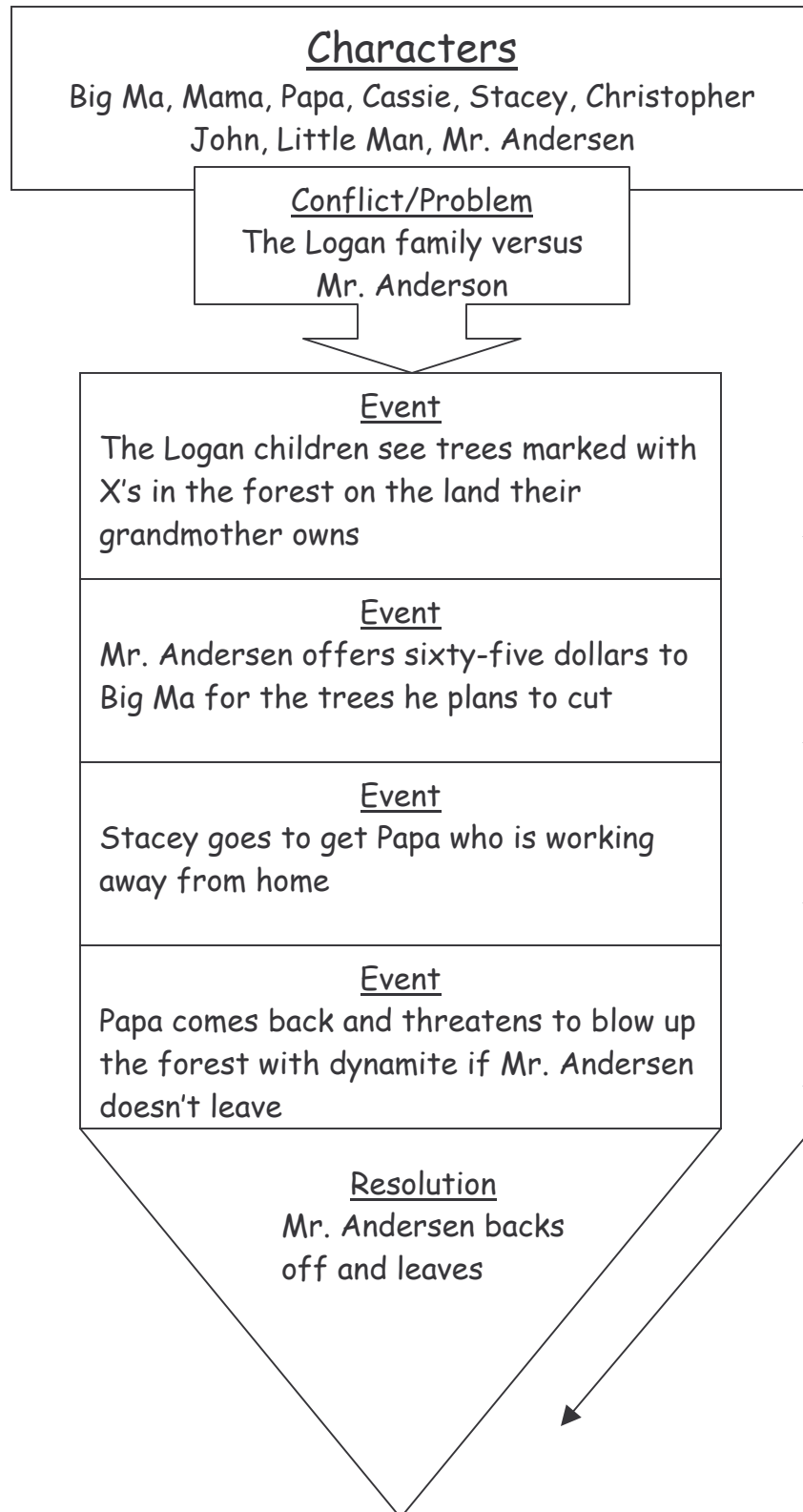


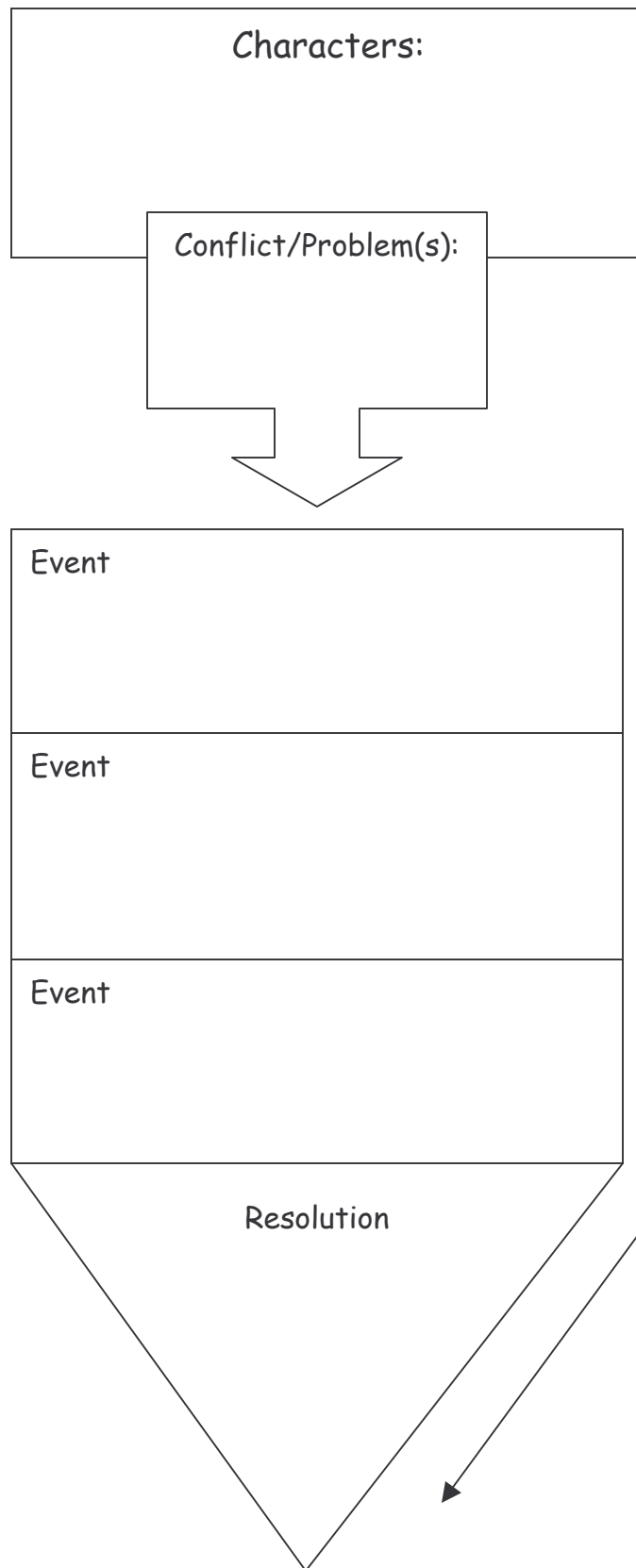
6. Draw your conclusions

7. Create your own plot/conflict/resolution



Plot Summary, *Song of the Trees* by Mildred D. Taylor





Plot Summary, *Song of the Trees* by Mildred D. Taylor**SWBS**

Somebody	Wanted	But	So
Mr. Andersen	wanted to take advantage of the Logan family while Papa was working away from home  (He offers 65 dollars for the trees he plans to cut on their land)	Stacey left home at night to find his father and tell him what was happening	Mr. Logan and Stacey returned and threatened to dynamite the woods if Mr. Andersen didn't leave

Adapted from *When Kids Can't Read: What Teachers Can Do* by Kyleene Beers, p. 144-49

### SWBS

Somebody	Wanted	But	So

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## **Inquiring Minds At Work: Creating Settings for Characters That Rock!**

### **Reading/Writing Inquiry Workshop**

**Major Focus:** Creating settings that help breathe life into our characters and advance our plot

**Essential question:** From our inquiry into the influence of a setting on a story, as young authors, what do we need to know to create realistic settings for our stories?

**Inquiry Starter**  
Raising questions from  
observing engaging materials

Teacher continues read aloud and gives a focus for listening (setting)

#### **Observing**

In groups of two, learners observe what settings contribute to a story from a variety of resources that demonstrate memorable settings. For example:

- ❑ Short selected reading passages from stories they know and don't know
- ❑ Marker Papers and WP Benchmarks

#### **Questioning**

Learners create their own questions and write these on sentence strips.

Examples:

- ❑ How do you describe what a place looks like so that your reader can see it as clearly as you can?
- ❑ How do you use your senses to describe a setting?
- ❑ Do you have to be concerned with time?
- ❑ Can too many details be a problem? How do you decide what to leave in and what to take out?

(Questions are categorized and displayed by the teacher; students find questions they are most interested in [gallery walk]. New groups are formed for next step of inquiry).

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Focused Investigation</b>          Planning and investigating          questions</p>
--

Teacher models observing and reporting evidence through read aloud of a favorite passage that demonstrates an effective setting (example follows)

### **Hypothesizing**

Learners re-examine reading materials (with partners) to investigate answers to their questions

Learners create their own hypotheses in response to their area of interest

Examples:

- The setting can help you see a character more clearly
- The setting can create a mood, e.g., a stormy night
- Time and place are important so that the reader knows whether the story happened a long time ago or just recently
- Changing settings can help the story move

### **Predicting**

Learners predict what makes a setting significant. Examples:

- If you want to create suspense, the setting should be mysterious
- If you want the setting to be believable, creating one from your own experience might help

### **Investigating**

Learners test their predictions by re-examining reading materials and creating a variety of settings to see what is effective

**Process for Meaning**  
Thinking about and  
communicating what you  
learned

## **Interpreting**

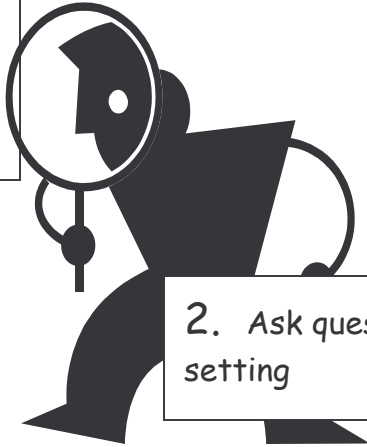
Learners interpret and synthesize what they have learned by creating a clear picture of a setting - where and when the events of the story take place

## **Communicating**

*Author's Chair*: settings are shared (whole group) and conclusions are made (recorded in writer's notebook)

Discovering how to create an effective setting

1. Make observations about how the author is "setting the scene" in the passages you're reading

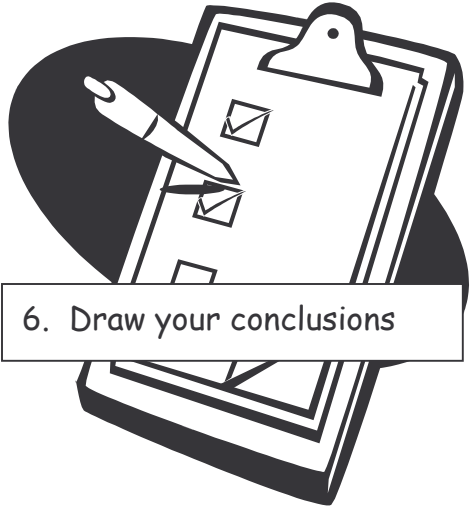
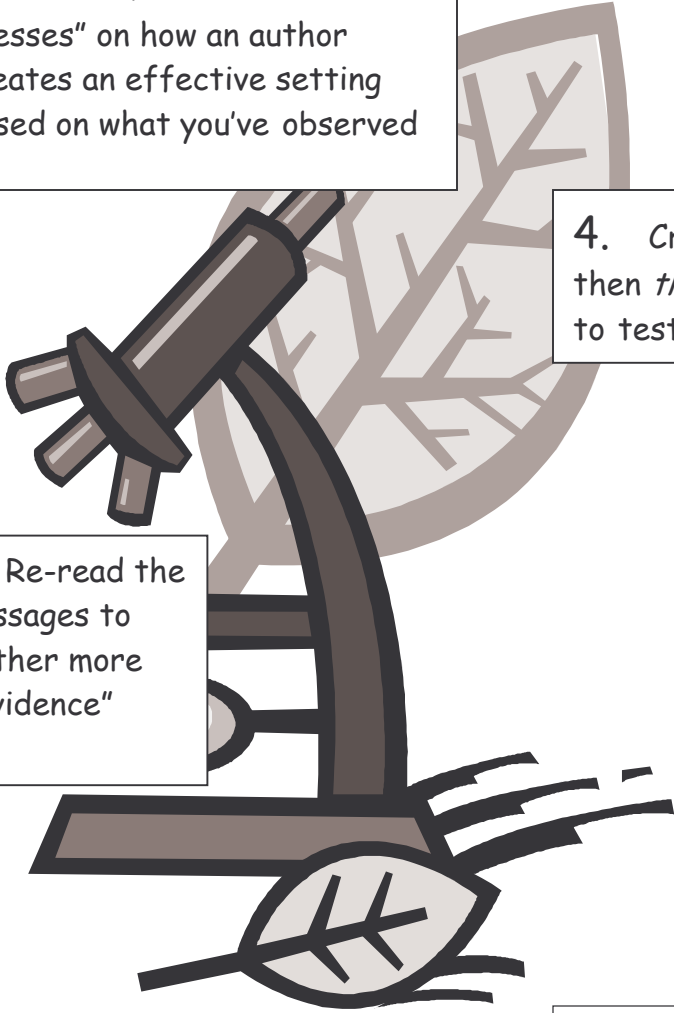


2. Ask questions about setting

3. Make a few "educated guesses" on how an author creates an effective setting based on what you've observed

4. Create some "If I do *this*, then *that* will happen" statements to test your hypothesis

5. Re-read the passages to gather more "evidence"



6. Draw your conclusions

7. Create your own setting

**A sampling of stories with memorable settings**

Tuck Everlasting by Natalie Babbitt

Smoky Night by Eve Bunting

Julie of the Wolves by Jean Craighead George

From the Mixed up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler by E.L. Konigsburg

Sarah Plain and Tall by Patricia Mac Lachlan

Grandfather's Journey by Allen Say

The Keeping Quilt by Patricia Polacco

The Bracelet by Yoshika Uchida

Hatchet by Gary Paulsen

Bridge to Terebithia by Katherine Paterson

Tiger Rising by Kate DiCamillo

Tar Beach by Faith Ringgold

Fever 1798 by Laurie Halse Anderson

Esperanza Rising by Pam Muñoz Ryan

*Fever 1798* by Laurie Halse Anderson

Strong verbs establish mother's impatience

Date gives historical context

Author places Matilda in the middle of an unpleasant situation

August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1793

I woke to the sound of a mosquito whining in my left ear and my mother screeching in the right.

"Rouse yourself this instant!"

Mother snapped open the shutters and heat poured into our bedchamber. The room above our coffeehouse was not large. Two beds, a washstand, and a wooden trunk with frayed leather straps nearly filled it. It seemed even smaller with Mother storming around.

Brief description of bedroom shows family is not rich even though they own a coffeehouse

"Get out of bed, Matilda," she continued. "You're sleeping the day away." She shook my shoulder. "Polly's late and there's work to be done."

The noisy mosquito darted between us. I started to sweat under the thin blanket. It was going to be another hot August day. Another long, hot August day. Another long, hot, boring, wretched August day. (page 1-2)

Weather emphasizes unpleasant situation



*Poppy*, by Avi

Descriptive language paints a vivid, peaceful picture

A thin crescent moon, high in the sky, shed faint white light over Dimwood Forest. Stars glowed. Breezes full of ripe summer fragrance floated over nearby meadow and hill. Dimwood itself, veiled in darkness, lay utterly still.

The veil of darkness and the stillness of Dimwood, suggests something unexpected is about to happen

## *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen

It was late one winter night, long past my bedtime, when Pa and I went owling. There was no wind. The trees stood still as giant statues. And the moon was so bright the sky seemed to shine. Somewhere behind us a train whistle blew, long and low, like a sad, sad song.

I could hear it through the woolen cap Pa had pulled down over my ears. A farm dog answered the train, and then a second dog joined in. They sang out, trains and dogs, for a real long time. And when their voices faded away it was as quiet as a dream. We walked on toward the woods, Pa and I.

Our feet crunched over the crisp snow and little gray footprints followed us. Pa made a long shadow, but mine was short and round. I had to run after him every now and then to keep up, and my short, round shadow bumped after me.

But I never called out. If you go owling you have to be quiet, that's what Pa always says.

---

## *Home Place* by Crescent Dragonwagon

Every year, these daffodils come up. There is no house near them. Unless someone happens to come this way, like us, this Sunday afternoon, just walking, there is not even anyone to see them. But still they come up, these daffodils in a row, a yellow splash brighter than sunlight, or lamplight or butter, in the green and shadow of the woods. Still they come up, these daffodils, cups lifted to trumpet the good news of spring, though maybe no one hears except the wind and the raccoons who rustle at night and the deer who nibble delicately at the new green growth and the squirrels who jump from branch to branch of the old black walnut tree.

But once, someone lived here. How can you tell? Look. A chimney, made of stone, back there, half-standing yet, though honeysuckle's grown around it-there must have been a house here. Look. Push aside these weeds-here's a stone foundation, laid on earth. The house once here was built on it.

*Dogsong* by Gary Paulsen

Russel had moved away from life in the village but he was not rebelling. He was working toward something in his mind, not away from something he didn't like. He had moved in with Oogruk, but his father knew it and approved.

There was school, of course. He was not going to school but he was learning and everybody knew that; it would have been hard to stop him trying to learn what he wanted and needed to know and so nobody tried. It would not have been polite to try it and many considered Russel old enough to know what he was doing.

Life in the village went on as it had before. Men took snowmachines out on the ice to find seals, when they could get through the leads. Other hunters took other snowmachines back into the hills and found caribou, sometimes killing six or seven to bring back for other people who could not hunt.

In the long darkness house life took on a meaning that couldn't exist in the summer. Families sometimes moved in with each other for a time, played games, fought the boredom that could come with the semi-arctic night. The village had a game room with television and it was usually crowded with both adults and children, watching the outside world. (Ch 5).

*Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan

Aguascalientes, Mexico

1924

"Our land is alive, Esperanza," said Papa, taking her small hand as they walked through the gentle slopes of the vineyard. Leafy green vines draped the arbors and the grapes were ready to drop. Esperanza was six years old and loved to walk with her papa through the winding rows, gazing up at him and watching his eyes dance with love for the land.

"This whole valley breathes and lives," he said, sweeping his arm toward the distant mountains that guarded them. "It gives us the grapes and then they welcome us." He gently touched a wild tendril that reached into the row, as if it had been waiting to shake his hand. He picked up a handful of earth and studied it. "Did you know that when you lie down on the land, you can feel it breathe? That you can feel its heart beating?"

"Papi, I want to feel it," she said.

"Come." They walked to the end of the row, where the incline of the land formed a grassy swell.

Papa lay down on his stomach and looked up at her, patting the ground next to him.

Esperanza smoothed her dress and knelt down. Then, like a caterpillar, she slowly inched flat next to him, their faces looking at each other. The warm sun pressed on one of Esperanza's cheeks and the warm earth on the other.

She giggled.

"Shhh," he said. "You can only feel the earth's heartbeat when you are still and quiet."

She swallowed her laughter and after a moment said, "I can't hear it, Papi."

"*Aguántate tantito y la fruta caerá en tu mano,*" he said.

"Wait a little while and the fruit will fall into your hand. You must be patient, Esperanza."

She waited and lay silent, watching Papa's eyes.

And then she felt it. Softly at first. A gentle thumping. Then stronger. A resounding thud, thud, thud against her body.

She could hear it, too. The beat rushing in her ears. *Shoomp, shoomp, shoomp.*

She stared at Papa, not wanting to say a word. Not wanting to lose the sound. Not wanting to forget the feel of the heart of the valley.

She pressed closer to the ground, until her body was breathing with the earth's. And with Papa's. The three hearts beating together.

She smiled at Papa, not needing to talk, her eyes saying everything.

And her smile answered hers. Telling her that he knew she had felt it.

(p. 1-3)

## Two Clouds and a Grand Total

That was how it had always been before Grandpa's accident. We would breakfast early and tidy up and be at the church by nine o'clock because that was the hour Grandpa rang the first bell. I can't say that I liked those times better, because the rush to church always interfered with and spoilt a good Sunday breakfast...

Ordinarily we hurried through breakfast and were at the church at nine. Then we had an extra hour to study what Scripture passages Miss Kirby had assigned us, if we hadn't studied them as yet - and usually I hadn't. For let it be understood that although we had a whole hour, which some other boys might have spent playing or searching for lizards, we dared not have done any such thing in our Sunday suits. Not with Grandpa around. No, we would crawl into a pew meekly as doves and study our verses while Grandpa, sitting somewhere behind us and peering over his spectacles dropped low on his nose, read his Bible. He read aloud because Grandpa was the one who thought that reading wasn't reading if it wasn't done aloud.

Now, as I plodded on heavily toward church beside Milton, I looked back and noticed that Grandpa was out of sight, and I remembered the penny that he had given to Milton as offering. Why should *he* have the pleasure of plunking it into the collection plate and not me? Yes, why? So I began to scowl again and to sniff.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Your shoes?"

"No," I said and walked briskly, to the detriment of my heels and toes, in my demonstration to him that no shoes could ever make me sniff.

"What then?"

"The penny," I said.

"What about it?"

"You have it," I said.

"Sure I have it. Grandpa gave it to me to drop in the collection plate."

"I want it," was all I said.

"Don't be stupid, Timmy," Milton said. "It's offering money. I'm not going to keep it or spend it!"

"I want it," I said.

"Oh, that!"

"Yes," I said. "I want to drop it in."

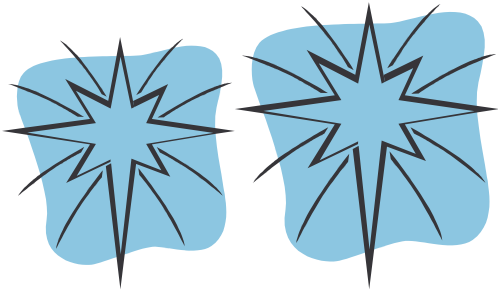
"Stupid," he said. "You stupid, childish cry baby!"

"Give it to me," I said.

I noticed already that he wasn't concerned about having the joy of plunking it into the plate and I knew he would give it to me. With a little pressure. A little more honest-to-goodness sniffing. And I was right too. His hand went into his pocket and came up with the copper coin and mine sailed out to his and took the penny.

"There," he said. "And stop making a fool of yourself."

## Two Stars...



Two things I have done well on this task are:

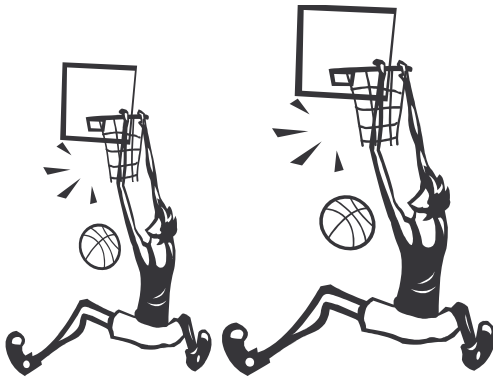


## and a Wish...

I wish I could do this better:



**Two slam dunks...**



Two things I have done well on this task are:

1.

2.

**And a missed foul shot...**

I wish I could do this better:

## Inquiry Project Participation Rubric

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Consistently</b>	<b>Most of the time</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Rarely</b>
Makes careful observations				
Takes relevant notes				
Asks thoughtful questions about observations that can lead to investigations				
Provides logical explanations				
Gathers relevant evidence from investigations				
Communicates results clearly				
Participates in self assessment				

Next Steps: