the MUTTS diaries

• PATRICK McDONNELL •

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Curriculum Connections and Activity/Discussion Guide

The activities in this guide align with Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts for grades 3–5.

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Reading With Pictures

READING with PICTURES

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KIDS

The Mutts Diaries
Patrick McDonnell

GRADE LEVEL: 3–5

Subject
Language Arts, Characterization

Content Standards
Language Arts

Overview
As they read *The Mutts Diaries*, students will select both linguistic and visual evidence from the text showing the appearance, words, and actions of the characters. Students will then analyze character traits of two chosen characters, citing evidence from the text to support their findings. Finally, students will use their character analyses to infer how each of their two chosen characters might respond to a new challenge.
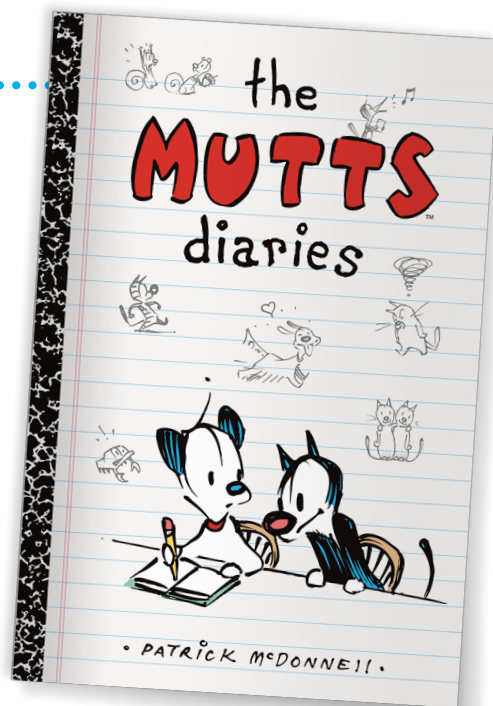
Grade 3

✳ Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3]

✳ Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting). [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7]

✳ Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1]

✳ Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.2]
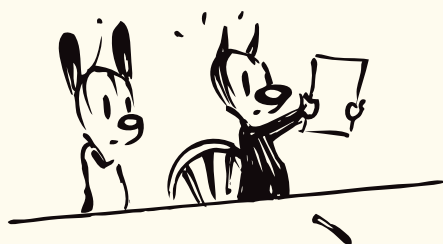
Grade 4

* Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions). [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3]
* Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1]

Grade 5

* Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact). [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3]
* Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2]
* Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem). presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7]
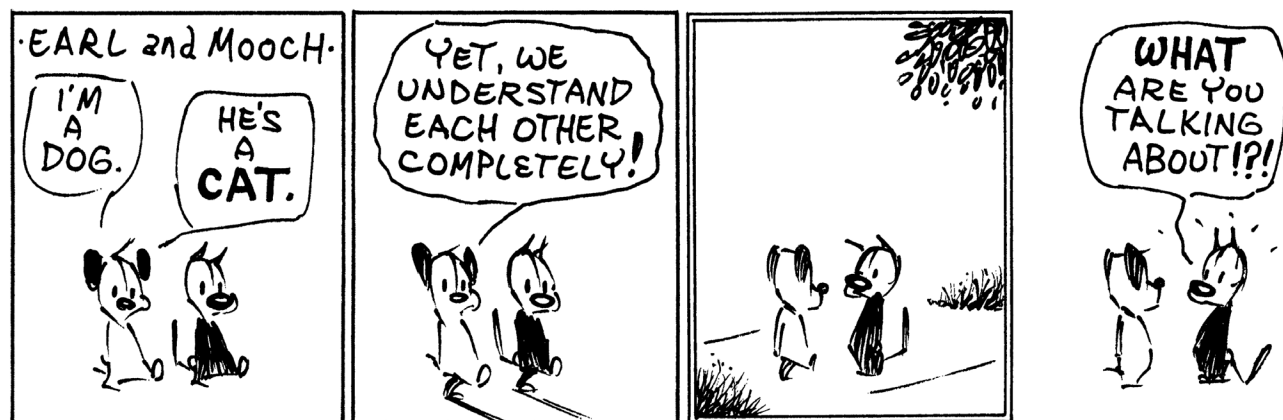
Objectives

* Students will select both linguistic and visual evidence from the text showing the appearance, words, and actions of the characters.
* Students will analyze the character traits of two characters, citing evidence from the text to support each trait.
* Students will use their character analyses to infer how the characters would respond to new challenges and create three-panel comic strips to show their thinking.

Materials

* Copies of *The Mutts Diaries*
* *The Mutts Characters* worksheet
* *Character Traits* worksheet
* *Character Reactions* worksheet (optional)
* Pencils
* Colored Pencils, markers, or other art supplies

Vocabulary

* *Appearance*: the way that something or someone looks
* *Character trait*: a quality or characteristic that makes one person different from another
* *Challenge*: something that is hard to do; a test of one's character

Characters

* Mooch, a cat
* Earl, a dog
* Sourpuss, a cat
* Chickpea & Chickpea's brother, cats
* Crabby, a crab
* Guard Dog, a dog
* Bip & Bop, squirrels
* Shtinky Puddin', a cat

Time Frame:

1-3 Class periods

Procedure

Before Reading

1. Take students on a quick book walk through *The Mutts Diaries* without reading the dialogue. Ask students what they think the book is about.

2. Tell students that their purpose for reading this book will be to learn more about each animal character. Activate students' prior knowledge by asking them to turn and talk to a partner about their experiences with pets.

During Reading

3. Divide students into nine small groups and distribute a copy of *The Mutts Diaries* and a copy of the *Mutts Characters* chart to each group. Assign each group a character from the chart. Have students read the "diary" of comic strips for their assigned character or characters, record what type of animal the characters are, and write short descriptions or examples of the characters' appearances, words, and actions that show what the characters are like. Remind students that in comics, information comes from the words as well as the pictures (and the way they work together), so they should describe each character using information from the drawings, as well as the dialogue.

After Reading

4. Display the *Mutts Characters* chart for the class using an overhead projector or document camera. Have each group read out their findings while you fill in the information on the class chart.

5. Discuss the meaning of the term *character trait* (a quality or characteristic that makes one person different from another) with students. As you call out each of the following character traits, have students raise their hands to show which traits they think describe themselves. Discuss each character trait and how it might show in someone's behavior. For example, someone who is honest would not cheat on a test, would return found money, and would admit his guilt if he did something wrong.

Character Traits

HONEST	SERIOUS	PICKY	PLAYFUL
OUTGOING	KIND	GRUMPY	FUNNY
PATIENT	QUIET	PERSISTENT	STUBBORN

Procedure Continued

6. Tell students that they will now choose two characters from *The Mutts Diaries* and describe two character traits for each character, citing evidence from the text. Direct students to look through the class-completed *Mutts Characters* chart and choose two characters to analyze more in depth. If you will be using the rubric (see *Assessment*, below) to assess students' work, share it with them at this time so they know what is expected of them.

7. Distribute copies of the *Character Traits* page to students. Have them write the names of their two chosen characters in the Character boxes and draw quick sketches of each.

8. Tell students to choose two character traits for each of their characters and write them in the *Character trait* boxes. For example, for the character Sourpuss, they might choose *grumpy* and *pessimistic*.

9. Direct students to choose some of the characters' appearances, words, or actions in the text that show each chosen character trait, and summarize the evidence in the *Evidence* boxes. For example, for the character Sourpuss, they might write, "Sourpuss (is) grumpy (because) he says he hates Mondays, he hides under the couch, and he has a 'leave me alone' face." Encourage students to cite evidence from both the dialogue and the drawings. You many want to have students record the page numbers where they found the evidence as well.

10. Tell students that they will now use their analyses of the two characters to infer how each would respond to a new challenge. With students, make a list of some of the challenges that the characters faced in *The Mutts Diaries* (e.g., Bip & Bop throwing acorns at their heads; being outside in the rain; or waiting to be adopted).

11. As a class, brainstorm some new challenges the characters might face. These could be challenges that might occur in the book or challenges that students might face in their own lives, such as bullying or difficult school projects.

12. Tell students to select a new challenge that their two characters might face. Distribute copies of the *Character Reactions* sheet and let students draw their own three-panel comic frames for each character showing how that character would face the new challenge. Tell students that their drawings don't need to look exactly like the drawings from the book, but they should try to use similar shapes and lines to identify the

characters. Remind students to use what they know about each character from their character analyses, as well as text evidence, to infer how each character would react.

13. Have each student present his or her comics to the class and explain how he or she used the text evidence to support his or her ideas about how each character would react to a new situation.

Assessment

Collect both the *Character Traits* and *Character Reactions* (with student-created comic strips) pages from students. Use the following rubric to assess student learning. If you will be using this rubric to assess students, be sure to share it with them at the beginning of the assignment so they will understand what is expected.

Skill/Task	3 Points	2 Points	1 Points	0 Points
Cites text evidence to support each character trait.	Cites two or more pieces of text evidence that support the character trait.	Cites one piece of text evidence that support the character trait.	Cites text evidence that does not support the character trait.	Does not cite text evidence.
Connects the character traits and evidence to the character's actions in a new situation.	The character reacts to a new situation in a way that clearly reflects his/her character traits.	The character reacts to a new situation in a way that somewhat reflects his/her character traits.	The character reacts to the new situation, but not in a way reflects his/her character traits.	The character does not react to a new situation.

Differentiation and Extended Learning Activities

Character Traits Web

* On chart paper, a whiteboard, or other visual display, draw a simple web organizer. In the center of the web, write a broad character trait, such as nice. Ask students to suggest other character traits related to nice and add them around the web (e.g., kind, patient, considerate, helpful, respectful, courteous, friendly, gentle, loving, or sympathetic). This exercise will help students move beyond general character traits such as nice and mean to more nuanced ideas.
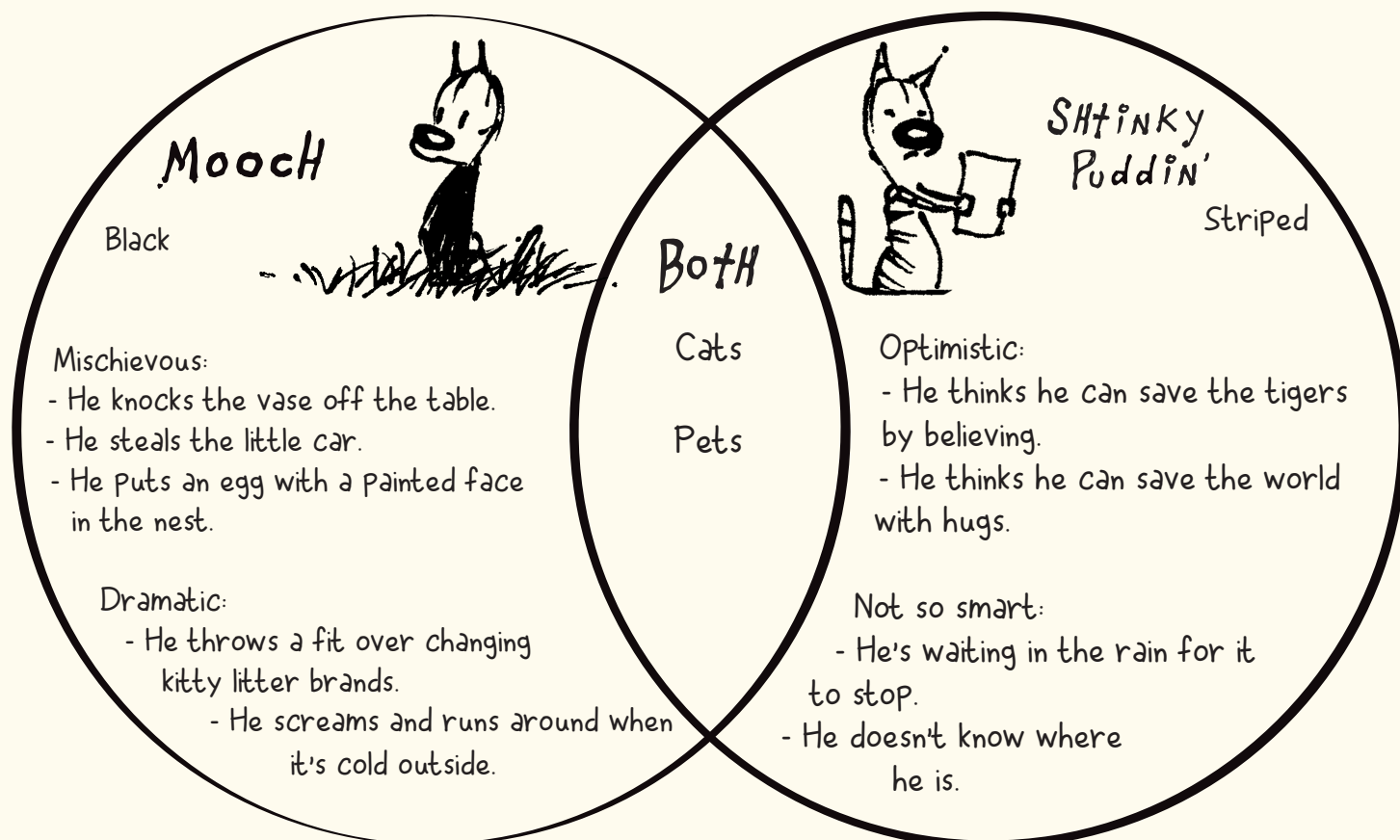
Character Traits: Thoughts, Words, and Actions

* On chart paper, a whiteboard, or other visual display, draw a three-column chart. Title the chart with a character trait, such as *Character Trait: Persistent*, and label the columns with the headings *Thoughts, Words,* and *Actions* respectively. Together with students, list thoughts, words, and actions a character might exhibit that show he or she has the character trait *persistent*. See the example below. You may want to work with students on creating two charts to differentiate between similar character traits, such as *persistent* and *stubborn*.

Character Trait: Persistent		
Thoughts	**Words**	**Actions**
"I won't give up."	"Just a little more ..."	Starts a project and keeps working until it is finished.
"This is difficult, but if I work hard, I can do it."	"Please don't interrupt me while I'm working."	Keeps going even when he/she feels like giving up.
"I know I can get there!"	"I'm ready to go on to the next step!"	Sets smaller goals along the way and achieves them.

Comparing Characters

✱ Have students use Venn diagrams to list differences and similarities between their two chosen characters. They should list both character traits and text evidence. See the example below.

Mooch

Black

Mischievous:
- He knocks the vase off the table.
- He steals the little car.
- He puts an egg with a painted face in the nest.

Dramatic:
- He throws a fit over changing kitty litter brands.
- He screams and runs around when it's cold outside.

Both

Cats

Pets

SHtinky Puddin'

Striped

Optimistic:
- He thinks he can save the tigers by believing.
- He thinks he can save the world with hugs.

Not so smart:
- He's waiting in the rain for it to stop.
- He doesn't know where he is.

Digital Comics

✱ Let students use a free online digital comic creator, such as MakeBeliefsComix or the ReadWriteThink Comic Creator, to create their character-reaction comic strips.

Character Role Play

✱ Give students an opportunity to act out the scenarios they created in their three-panel comic strips. Remind students that they need to show each character's traits through action and dialogue. Give students time to create props or costumes, if desired, and to plan and rehearse their performances. Let students present their skits and have the class guess which characters and character traits each student is portraying.

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CHaracters

Name _____ Date _____

Name	Type of Animal	Appearance	Words	Actions
Mooch				
Earl				
SourPuss				
Chickpea and Chickpea's Brother				
Crabby				
Guard Dog				
Bip and Bop				
SHtinky Puddin'				

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Character Traits

Name _____ Date _____

Character:

→ is

Character Trait:

→ because

Evidence:

Character Trait:

→ because

Evidence:

Character:

→ is

Character Trait:

→ because

Evidence:

Character Trait:

→ because

Evidence:

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Character Reactions

Name _____ Date _____

Character: _____

Challenge: _____

Character: _____

Challenge: _____