Character Traits Mini-Lesson #1

INTRODUCTION: CHARACTER TRAITS/EMOTIONS/MOTIVES

WHOLE GROUP

Materials: Character Traits/Emotions/Motives Reproducible

Characters are the people or animals in a story. The details that tell about their personalities are called character traits. The traits of a character can be stated or shown to the reader by the character’s actions. When looking at characters, notice details about how they look, feel and act.

Identifying and understanding characters' traits, emotions, and motives help the reader understand the characters.

As you read about characters, look for:

- What the character looks like
- What the character says and thinks
- What the character does
- What a character feels
- What others say and think about the character
- How a character changes over time with experiences

Key Phrases:

- When the character (says, does, feels, thinks) __________________, I learn __________ about the character.

- I think the character is ________________ because__________________.

MODELING THE STRATEGY

Materials: Picture book The Memory String by Eve Bunting
Character Traits/Emotions/Motives Graphic Organizer Chart #1
Character Trait Words Chart #2
Sticky Notes
Today I am going to use parts of The Memory String to show you about character traits. I can find clues to identify character traits by paying attention to what a character sees, thinks, says and feels. I will also look for how the character changes from the beginning of the story to the end. All of these things will help me come up with a list of character traits and understand the character better. To record my thinking, I will write it down on my character trait portrait.

Teacher models character traits/emotions/motives from the read aloud and records them on a piece of chart paper while “thinking aloud” and discussing the strategy with students.

Mmm . . . I think I am going to concentrate on learning about the traits of one character from the text. I’m going to choose Laura because she is the main character in the book.

The author doesn’t use a lot of words to describe how Laura looks, but I can tell from the text she is a young girl because she lives with her parents and still plays with cat (page 7).

Mmm . . . Laura says a lot of things in the text that give me clues about her character. On page 8, she uses a "sharp voice" to respond to her stepmother. I'm thinking that Laura is mad at Jane.

I can read on page 12 that Laura is hurt when she sees her father touch Jane's neck. I'm wondering why she feels that way.

Mmm . . . Laura feels so upset when Whiskers breaks the memory string on page 17. It must mean a lot to her. I can understand how she feels.

Laura says she has a lot to think about on page 31. I guess she is remembering the soft look on her face and her kindness. I'm wondering what Laura thinks about Jane now.

Wow! I can really tell how much Laura’s attitude towards Jane has changed on page 32 she asks Jane to help her restring the memory string. I’m thinking she wouldn’t ask that if she still resented Jane.

Now I want you to look at all the things we learned about Laura from her actions and we are going to come up with some words that describe her. These words are her character traits. Here are some examples of character trait words: (show list)

Share the Character Trait Words Chart #2 with the students.

Now I want you to think about all the things we know about Laura from the text. Now let’s see if you can come up with some character traits for Laura. Turn to your partner and say, I think __________ (character name) is __________ because __________. You can look at the Character Traits Word Chart if you need help. Be ready to share your thinking with the group.

Give it a try. Give the students 1 minute per partnership to “stop and talk”. Invite several students to share their thoughts with the class and add them to the graphic organizer.
EXAMPLE:  *Character Traits/Emotions/Motives Portrait Chart #1*

**CHARACTER:**  *Laura*

**I THINK**
Laura’s thinks about the soft look on Jane’s face.

**I SEE**
Laura sees her father touch Jane’s neck and is hurt by that.

**I SAY**
Laura talks to her stepmother in a mad, disrespectful way.

**I FEEL**
Laura is very upset when Whiskers breaks the memory string.

**I HAVE CHANGED**
Laura’s feelings have changed because she asks Jane to help her.

**I AM**
Laura is a young girl.

---

**Character Traits**

*Laura is:*

- mad
- lonely
- shy
- smart
- caring
- thoughtful
- unhappy
- emotional
- confused
- upset
INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

Materials:  
- Text at Students’ Independent Reading Levels
- Character Traits/Emotions/Motives Graphic Organizer Chart #1
- Character Trait Words Chart #2

NOTE: This activity can be completed individually, with partners or in a group.

- Now I want you to make your own character portrait. Look for clues to identify your character’s traits by paying attention to what your character sees, thinks, says and feels. Remember to look for words in the text that describe your character. You can look at your word chart if you need help.
- Students select and read a text at their independent level that contains examples of what the characters see, think, say, feel, and how they change over time.
- Students independently, in partners, or as a group, complete the Character Traits/Emotions/Motives Graphic Organizer Chart #1.
- Students share their chart with a partner/other group.
- Teacher reviews what was learned today by asking:

  “What have you learned today about character traits?”
  “Why is it important to know about character traits as a reader?”

SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION

Materials:  
- Instructional Reading Level Text for Small Group
- Character Traits/Emotions/Motives Graphic Organizer Chart #1 or #3 Reproducible
- Character Trait Words Chart #2

GUIDED PRACTICE—SMALL GROUP

- After completing the guided reading session, repeat the same steps outlined for whole group instruction in small group using instructional level text.
- Complete the graphic organizer as a group or as an independent activity.