

## **The Character Based Literacy Program**

The Character Based Literacy Program of the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University is a character education project, and it is a literacy project. As such, its first objective is to promote school practices that positively influence the processes by which school pupils become good people, good citizens. This can be accomplished by making use of effective and efficient methods to influence the values, thought processes and coping skills of students such that habits and choices result in pro-social rather than anti-social behavior. Because this development of character is a method rather than a subject, it must be accomplished through some definite and specific part of the school curriculum. CBL utilizes the English language arts curriculum because literacy is fundamental to success in school and in life for all students. It is also a natural place to pursue questions of value and character as they occur in literature, language expression and the writing and creative processes. This pursuit can continue into any content area, but is especially relevant in the history-social science and science curriculum areas.

CBL is also a project that intends to serve students who have had marginal success in school and are at serious risk for school failure and antisocial behavior. For this reason the program began in the court-community schools operated by the county offices of education. These schools are a safety net for students who are incarcerated, in foster or institutional care, homeless, hospitalized or in special community schools for expelled, delinquent and out of control youth. CBL began as the vision of teachers and administrators who believe that student character, literacy and school success can be markedly improved in the special schools serving youth who are the least likely to succeed by any school measure. Because this program serves students in public middle and high schools where credit will be awarded, the program also has to meet state standards, use acceptable instructional materials, and result in sufficient student progress to merit grade level credit.

CBL is a middle and high school program in the English language arts meeting California standards and using selections from California's *Recommended Readings in Literature*. It is organized in value themed units with activities that move students away from anti-social thoughts, values and behaviors and into pro-social thoughts, values and behaviors. This is accomplished by engaging students in literature that is acceptable for grade level credit, but also engages their imaginations, connects them to characters they care about, and provides opportunities to discuss the value context of the literature.

Students read and write each day in integrated language arts lessons which utilize all six of the language arts: reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and visually representing. CBL consists of daily lessons rooted in a particular text which students prepare to read, then read, respond and react to, explore more deeply and then extend to their lives and to the world; this is the sequence for the PRREE lesson plan: Prepare, Read, Respond, Explore, Extend. The phases in the lessons each consist of several short activities based on a collection of nearly a hundred literacy strategies which have been validated by research in the teaching of the English language arts and also found usable by teachers of our special populations.

Daily lessons also pay attention to particular values in the readings, and teach rational ways of thinking about problems and conflicts in the story. They also teach skills for coping with situations such as those faced by the characters in the day's reading.

CBL is a coordinated and coherent program. Every classroom using the program is reading literature from a limited list, and utilizing the core methods. In the most recent version of the High School Program, every classroom is teaching the same unit, reading the same book, and doing the same lessons in a given week. We serve students in alternative and special education programs; our students change schools frequently as a result of poverty, custody changes, court decisions, school problems, and a multitude of other reasons. Because the program is coordinated and coherent across the counties, districts, schools and classrooms that participate, students lose little if any ground when they move from one CBL site to another.

Extensive support is provided to teachers through initial training in the program methods, consultations with CBL staff, and through a wealth of program materials including daily lesson plans in English language arts and social studies available on the program web site. The direct URL to reach the program web site is [www.scu.edu/character](http://www.scu.edu/character)

### **Funding Development of the Character Based Literacy Program**

Major funding for the development of the Character Based Literacy program has come from the Walter S. Johnson Foundation and from the Markkula Family Foundation through generous and repeated multi-year grants. Additional funding for expansion in southern California has been provided by the Daniels Fund and the Von Der Ahe Foundation. Funding for CBL New Solutions has been provided by Verity Corporation, Adaptec Corporation, Affymetrix Corporation, Symantek Corporation and Xilinx, Inc. Thane Kreiner and Cheryl Breetmor. In addition, continued funding by CBL subscribers of County Offices of Education and numerous school districts.

## **Essentials of How We Teach the Language Arts**

### **Visual-oral-written Push**

- Oral, visual-leads to-written language
- We emphasize visual and oral language
- We introduce new skills in visual and oral language
- Then we transfer to written language

### **Strengths based model**

- We build on what students do best

### **English is a school language**

- We teach respect and use of
- home, school and community language

### **Writing, reading---thinking**

- We build thinking skills
- even where reading and writing skills limit access

### **Comprehension vs. decoding**

- Work on comprehension doesn't wait for decoding to catch up

### **Internal vs. external**

- We teach language to communicate
- We teach language to mediate thoughts and emotions

### **Sequential vs. simultaneous**

- We don't overwhelm memory systems
- One thing at a time

### **Cumulative and structured**

- Major products are built from smaller ones

### **Build basic habits**

- Show Up
- On Time
- Start Promptly
- Complete Tasks
- Follow Directions
- Get Along – Adults
- Get Along – Peers
- Good Hygiene

**All of this requires careful, long term instructional planning**



CHARACTER  
BASED  
LITERACY

Character Education at the  
Markkula Center for Applied Ethics  
[www.scu.edu/character](http://www.scu.edu/character)

## PRREE Lesson Plan: Into, Through & Beyond a Fiction Text

<b>P</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>
<b>PREPARE</b>	<b>READ</b>	<b>RESPOND</b>	<b>EXPLORE</b>	<b>EXTEND</b>
<p><b><u>1. Background</u></b> Background knowledge about a place, time, event, person, or thing.</p> <p><b><u>2. Wordwall</u></b> Five vocabulary words to teach and add to the Word Wall.</p>	<p><b><u>3. Review</u></b> Review the timeline from the beginning every day.</p> <p><b><u>4. Read</u></b> Read the selection, usually in a Shared Reading <i>Read React Predict Cycle</i> of 2-3 pages.</p>	<p><b><u>5. Timeline</u></b> Agree on the facts in today's reading, and list the 3-5 most important on the Timeline: what did the characters do?</p> <p><b><u>6. Map</u></b> Add to ongoing, class activities like a KWL chart or Map: where did the characters go?</p>	<p><b><u>7. Activity</u></b> Explore the reading more deeply with a visual or oral language activity.</p> <p><b><u>8. Discussion</u></b> Ask discussion questions of all 9 types.</p> <p><b><u>9. Analyze</u></b> Analyze the key paragraph.</p>	<p><b><u>10. Write</u></b> Every student writes a short product from today's prompt to connect to the unit theme.</p> <p><b><u>11. Close</u></b> Close by extending today's lesson to life and the world</p>

# Character Based Literacy Program Lesson Plan

## Novel, Day



### Outcomes for today

Task

## PREPARE

**1. Background** Background knowledge about a place, time, event, person, or thing.



**Justice Requires Restraint.** Justice demands I not say or do some things to myself, any other person, or the planet because justice demands it. The actions I take and the decisions I make, must respect the rights of all.

**Question?**

Answer.

**2. Wordwall** Five vocabulary words to teach and add to the Word Wall.

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## READ

**3. Review** Review the timeline from the beginning everyday.

**4. Read** Read the selection, usually in a Shared Reading *Read React Predict Cycle* of 2-3 pages.

Setting	Characters	Pages

## RESPOND

**5. Timeline** Agree on the facts in today's reading, and list the 3-5 most important on the Timeline.

**6. Map** Add to ongoing, class activities like a KWL chart or Map: where did the characters go?

Directions.

## EXPLORE

**7. Activity** Explore the reading more deeply with a visual or oral language activity.

Directions.

**8. Discussion** Ask discussion questions of all 9 types.

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Questions.

**9. Analyze** Analyze the key paragraph.

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Key Paragraph.

### **EXTEND**

**10. Write** Every student writes a short product from today's prompt to connect to the unit theme.

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**11. Close** Close by extending today's lesson to life and the world.

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## **An English Lesson in a Character Based Literacy Classroom**

### **Before**

- 1. Instructor has lesson plans from the CBL web page for the current quarter.
- 2. All 3 required writing products are produced by full quarter students.
- 3. Instructor uses daily written lesson plans of their own or from CBL.
- 4. The classroom has a word wall and timeline for the current text.
- 5. A variety of student visual products for the current text are in the room.
- 6. Every student's daily and cumulative work is in a writing folder.
- 7. Materials and texts are well organized for distribution and retrieval.

### **During**

- 1. The lesson unfolded in a PRREE format.
- 2. Students prepare to read with a key idea and vocabulary for the word wall.
- 3. The timeline was used to review the sequence of the story so far.
- 4. Students read an appropriate length of the current text in fitting mode.
- 5. Students stopped briefly to image, react or predict every 2-3 pages.
- 6. Students clarified the facts and established them on the timeline.
- 7. Students used visual, oral and written language to explore the text in depth.
- 8. Literal, structural, idea, craft, author, literature, life, evaluate and inference?
- 9. Students analyzed key selections of the text.
- 10. Students wrote from a prompt requiring comprehension and transformation.

### **After**

- 1. The value theme of the unit was clear in this lesson.
- 2. The tone, activities and discussions of this lesson form good character.
- 3. This lesson was positive, encouraging and success oriented.
- 4. This daily writing prompt will lead to the cumulative major product.
- 5. Students were engaged in the reading, discussion and exploration of the text.
- 6. Students learned 5 new words, 1 new concept and 1 new language convention.
- 7. The lesson moved at a brisk pace with clean transitions and few disruptions.
- 8. Students learned standards identified in this unit.
- 9. The level of ideas discussed in this lesson was appropriate for high school.

### **System**

- 1. Instruction is available for students who need decoding instruction.

## **An English Lesson in a Character Based Literacy Independent Study**

### **Before**

- 1. Instructor has lesson plans from the CBL web page for the current quarter.
- 2. All 3 required writing products are produced by full quarter students.
- 3. Instructor has a system for producing weekly student instructions or contract.
- 4. The student has a word wall and timeline for the current text.
- 5. The student has visual products for the current text in a folder.
- 6. Every student's daily and cumulative work is in a writing folder.
- 7. Materials and texts are well organized for distribution and retrieval.

### **During**

- 1. The lessons each day unfolded in a PRREE format.
- 2. Students prepare to read with a key idea and vocabulary for the word wall.
- 3. The timeline was used to review the sequence of the story so far.
- 4. Students read an appropriate length of the current text in fitting mode.
- 5. Students stopped briefly to image, react or predict every 2-3 pages.
- 6. Students clarified the facts and established them on the timeline.
- 7. Students used visual, oral and written language to explore the text in depth.
- 8. Literal, structural, idea, craft, author, literature, life, evaluate and inference?
- 9. Students analyzed key selections of the text.
- 10. Students wrote from a prompt requiring comprehension and transformation.

### **After**

- 1. The value theme of the unit was clear in the work of the week.
- 2. The tone, activities and discussions with the student form good character.
- 3. Meetings are positive, encouraging and success oriented.
- 4. This daily writing prompt will lead to the cumulative major product.
- 5. Students were engaged in the reading, discussion and exploration of the text.
- 6. Students learned 5 new words, 1 new concept and 1 new language convention.
- 7. The activities will be completed independently.
- 8. Students learned standards identified in this unit.
- 9. The level of ideas discussed in this week was appropriate for high school.

### **System**

- 1. Students are able to complete reading independently.