

Dear Family Member,

Welcome to our next unit of study, “Many Kinds of Characters.”

We are beginning our second unit of study in the Benchmark Advance program. As a reminder, each three-week unit features one topic. As with the previous unit, I am providing suggested activities you and your child can do together at home to build on the work we’re doing in class.

In this unit, your child will explore how characters differ in various ways, from the way they look to the way they act. For example, in the fable “The Tortoise and the Hare,” students discover that the tortoise is patient and hardworking while the hare is boastful. They will also discover how characters in realistic fiction differ from one another just as people in real life are not all the same. They will think about how they are alike and different from the characters they read about. The selections include a variety of genres, including animal fantasy, fables, poems, and realistic fiction.

I’m looking forward to this exciting unit, exploring with your child the wide range of characters we encounter in literature. It will be fun to discover how the children connect with the various characters as well as recognize how the characters in different stories are alike and different.

As always, should you have any questions about our reading program or about your child’s progress, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Many Kinds of Characters

In this unit, we'll read fables and other genres of fiction featuring a variety of characters and think in depth about the question "How do we learn about characters?" Here are some activities designed to continue the conversation about characters, building on the skills and concepts your child is learning in school. Exploring this topic together will be fun for both of you!

Topic Connection

Character Compare and Contrast

Invite your child to brainstorm characters from books, movies, TV shows, etc. who she thinks she is most like. Have your child describe how she is like these characters in terms of what they say, do, or think. Next have her consider a character who is her polar opposite. Again, elicit from your child how she is different from the character.

Vocabulary Connection

Words in Action

Your child is learning new words related to how characters act, think, and speak. Your child is also learning words that describe characters. Some examples include **demand, explain, reply, run, skip, wail, walk, yell, idle, industrious, wicked, sensitive, brag, bark, cry, whisper, gobble**. Review the meaning of these words by acting them out together. Discuss where you've seen these actions before, both in stories and in real life. As you go about your daily activities—playing at the park, shopping at the market, visiting the library—encourage your child to point out when she sees the words in action.

Comprehension Connection

Time Line

Several of the selections your child will be reading feature a sequential text. For example, in the fable "The Ant and the Grasshopper," the story begins in summer, then moves into fall and ends in winter. Recognizing order of events in a story, or sequence, is a key reading skill. To review this skill, have your child write down a story scene by scene on separate index cards or sheets of paper, or you can write it down for your child. It can be a story he makes up or one he knows well, such a fairy tale. Once the story is complete, mix up the cards and have your child put the story in the correct order.

Phonics Connections

Let's Play!

In our phonics instruction, your child is reading words that begin with *l*-blends. An *l*-blend is a consonant plus the letter *l*. When the two consonants are combined, you can hear the sound that each letter makes, such as *pl* in the word **play**. Play this game to practice *l*-blends. On each of fifteen cards, write one *l*-blend as follows: three cards for each blend *bl*, *cl*, *fl*, *gl*, and *pl*. Shuffle the cards. Take turns with your child choosing a card and coming up with a word that begins with that blend. If you make a word, you keep the card. Keep playing until all the cards are used.