

THEMATIC UNIT

Related to ELA Prototypes



Theme: **Common Good**

Suggested for: **Fourth Grade**

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~Thematic Units~

Dear Colleagues:

The purpose of this project was to organize thematic units related to previously published MEAP ELA prototypes using best practices in reading and writing.

These were developed by, **real teachers**, just like you! We worked to make them teacher friendly for easy implementation in your classroom. Teachers from school districts across St. Clair County gathered the material. The units are a representation of what each group of teachers thought was important to your grade level and to the themes in the prototypes.

Every packet includes **THEME RELATED TEXT SETS**. These are titles that can be used in a variety of ways to develop a deeper understanding of themes. We have noted the **PAIRED TEXTS** (look for the #2) and **LISTENING TEXT** (#3) that are included in the prototypes. We also noted the title(s) we used for **FRAYER'S MODEL** (#1).

A **PROFUNDITY MATRIX** was developed for each set of paired texts in the prototype to help in identifying possible themes. The matrix also helps look across text to make cross text connections. Blank copies of this chart are included and can be used in your classroom to help students make connections between other texts.

CROSS TEXT QUESTIONS were written and answered to aid in responding to both the multiple choice questions and the provocative question given in the second writing piece of the ELA MEAP assessment.

Many packets include one or more **WRITING MODELS** for the second writing piece. We suggest you use these before or after student writing to exhibit a well written constructed response.

The **TEACHER SUGGESTION PAGE** is a personal response by the individuals involved in the project. Some contain anecdotes from the use of the material in their classrooms. Others contain a plethora of ideas to implement. We hope these help.

OTHER ACTIVITIES (#4) are poems, plays, articles, reader's theater presentations and related suggestions to further develop understanding of the themes.

It is our sincere hope these packets are useful to you and your students.

Happy reading and writing!

Teacher Suggestion Page – Common Good

Dear Colleagues:

Here are some notes and ideas that we hope you can use.

We have included a few reader's theater activities and plays for you.

Our fourth graders use *A River Ran Wild* in social studies for Core Democratic Values lessons and in science for ecology studies. We really feel it is important to integrate the curriculum. Attending the St. Clair County Intermediate School District's Curriculum Integration course is invaluable in learning to develop themes throughout your lessons.

You might want to consider applying for the Detroit Edison Mini-Grant: Energy and the Environment. It is an easy grant to fill out. Look for material in your mailbox in late fall from your local Intermediate School District where applicable or try for the National Gardening Association grants. Our teachers have purchased electrical experiment material, developed historical gardens, a nature trail and instituted recycling programs with funds obtained from these grants.

We think the picture books can be used with many grade levels.

This theme could easily be illustrated in art projects such as mobiles, dioramas and especially collages/montages.

Don't forget celebrating special days in history where individuals have worked for the Common Good. We always have lots of volunteers to act out Rosa Parks on the bus!

ELA Prototype Materials

- **Thematically related texts**
- **Fruyer’s Model examples**
- **Writing from knowledge and experience using narrative strategies**
- **Profundity examples**
- **Cross Text Question examples**
- **Writing in Response to Reading example**

These materials were designed to provide examples of instructional approaches that will help you and your students prepare for the ELA assessment. The examples are all possible answers; they are not to be considered the “right” answers. We wanted to provide examples of other teachers’ thinking through Fruyer’s Profundity and cross text questions to guide you through your own thinking.

The sequence of instruction would be to introduce the theme through using the Fruyer’s Model of concept attainment. Have students write from knowledge and experience. Think through each reading selection using the profundity scale to create a matrix by which cross text questions can be posed and answered. Examples and blank copies are provided to help you in planning instruction.

Thematically Related Text Sets – Common Good

CODE	TITLE	AUTHOR
2	A Picture Book of Rosa Parks	David A. Adler
2	A River Ran Wild	Lynne Cherry
1	Giant Jam Sandwich	John Vernon Lord
	Peter's Chair	Ezra Jack Keats
4	Quick Response (Play)	Joan Benson
	Thank You, Mr. Falker	Patricia Polacco
4	The Bundle of Sticks – Reader's Theater	Lisa Blau
	The Bus Ride	William Miller
3	The Lady In The Box	Ann McGovern
	The Wartville Wizard	Don Madden

Code Key:
Suggested Uses

1 – Frayer's Model

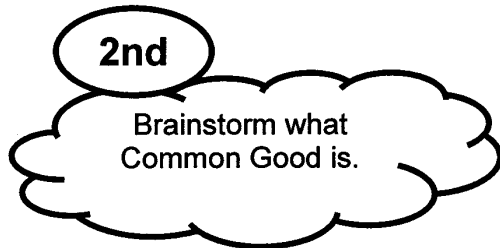
2 – Paired Text

3 – Listening

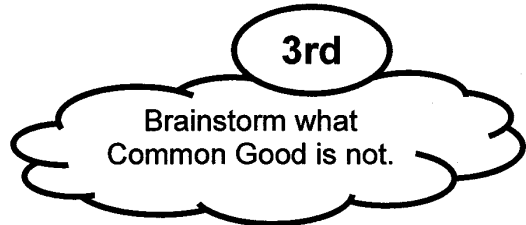
4 – Other

How to Use Frayer's Model to Develop Student Understanding of Themes

Common Good is...



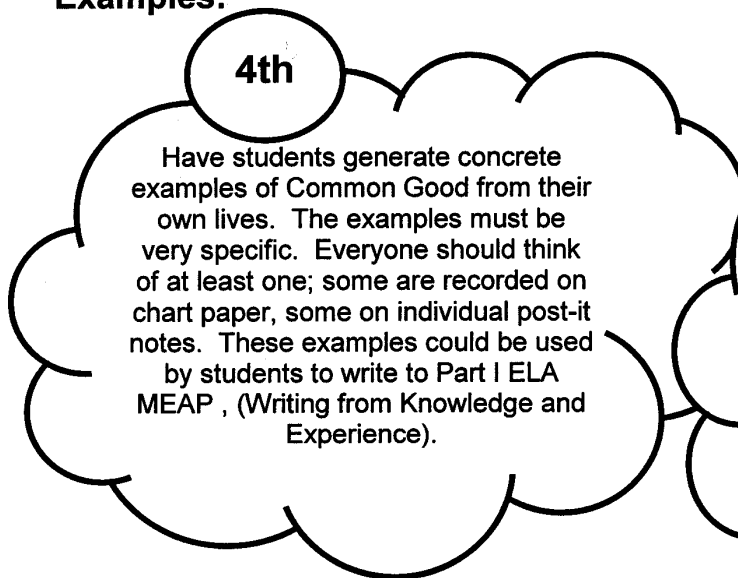
Common Good is not...



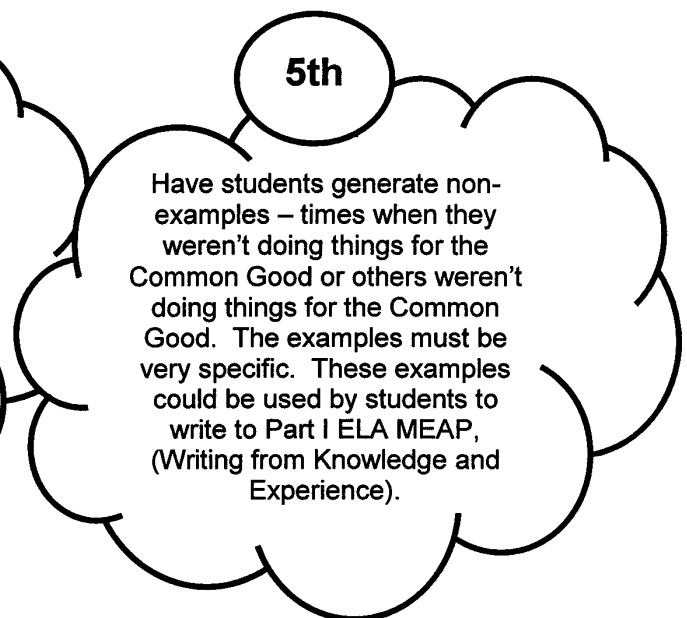
State theme in center oval



Examples:



Non-examples:



6th Read a book about "Common Good" that is not in the prototype. Have students listen for clear examples and non-examples of Common Good. Use names and situations specific to the reading selection, when recording the examples.

7th Have students identify clear examples from the 1st reading selection to record on the chart.

8th Have students identify clear examples from the 2nd reading selection to record on the chart.

9th Have students listen for clear examples and non-examples of Common Good during part three of the prototype to record on the chart.

10th Students who need help can use the clear examples from this chart when writing to Part II ELA MEAP, Response to Reading.

Example of Frayer's Model

Common Good is...

Working toward doing what is best for all.

Community involvement
Positive

Common Good is not...

Choosing something just for your benefit.

Harming others



Examples:

Terry helped pick up trash at Prospect park.

Non examples:

Tim's mom doesn't stop at stop signs or railroad tracks.

...from *The Giant Jam Sandwich*, by John Vernon Lord

Examples:

The citizens called a meeting to solve the problem.

Town making the sandwich.

Getting rid of the wasps together.

Non examples:

Each citizen trying to do his or her own thing.

Wasps bothering people.

...as you continue through the prototype add examples from each of the reading and listening selections

Common Good is...

Common Good is not...



Examples:

Non examples:

Writing From Knowledge and Experience

The English Language Arts MEAP assessment requires students to write from knowledge and experience. Students may choose the style or genre of writing that suites them best. However, the majority of students choose to write personal narratives. Dr. Elaine Weber, Barbara Nelson and Ray Woods, the authors of *Profiles in Writing 2002*, have granted us permission to offer you some information. This information may help you as you instruct students in personal narratives.

These resources will provide you with:

- Description of the four qualities of writing the MEAP assessment used to evaluate student writing;
- A model for creating writing prompts;
- Examples of well written student papers;
- Attributes of writing that commonly appear at this grade level;
- Strategies used by narrative writers; and
- Examples of student papers with the narratives strategies highlighted.

attributes of **writing**

Note

This year the Profiles Project has reorganized the attributes of writing to align with the 4-trait rubric most widely used by Profiles Network members:

Focus on Content and Ideas

Organization

Voice/Style,

and

Conventions.

focus on content

Focus refers to concentration on the content and ideas of the piece of writing and to the development of the content and major ideas with appropriate details, examples, etc.

or gan i za tion

Organization refers to the structure of a piece of writing with logical sequence; beginning, middle, and end; flow; cohesion, coherence, unity, effective leads; transitions and conclusions; sense of wholeness, etc.

Voice/style

Voice refers to the writer's ability/attempts to engage and interest the reader through stylistic elements and techniques such as: descriptive detail, precise word choice, sentence variety, strong verbs, humor, figurative language, personal reflection, etc.

con-ven-tion(s)

Conventions refer to a writer's presentation of a piece of writing through accurate and effective use of writing form including: directionality, spacing, mechanics (capitalization, punctuation), grammar and usage, spelling, etc.

Note

See *Attributes*, pages 30-42, for more details.

profiles prompt

Topic

A Special Place

Thinking About The Topic

Do you have a favorite place that is important to you?

- Where or what is this place or space? (indoors, outdoors, your bedroom, closet, tree house, a place you like to visit, etc.)
- What is it like there?
- What do you do there
- Why is it special to you?

Writing About The Topic

Write about a special place.

You might, for example, do one of the following:

- describe in detail a place that is important to you.
- or ■ tell what you like to do in your special place.
- or ■ tell why your special space is important to you.
- or ■ write about the topic in another way.

You may use examples from real life, from what you read or watch, or from your imagination. Your writing will be read by interested adults.

grade four (A Special Place)

My Special Place

My special place is on top of a hill in Ypsilanti. It has beautiful flowers and two trees next to one another. It also has soft, fluffy grass that I like to lay on. The trees shade me and they hide me when I climb them.

At the bottom of the hill there is a lake. It is called Ford Lake. It is clean, clear, and cool. I like to go swimming there.

I go to my special place when I have been working too hard and need to relax, when I'm sad, or when I need to be alone and away from my family or friends.

One day when I went to my special place I got to spy on my dad from the trees I hid and then jumped out and said "Boo!" I scared my dad out of his wits!

My special place is special to me because I can be alone, there is no one to annoy me and I can have endless fun. Furthermore my special place is special because I can run, play and watch my dog try to amuse me.

Sometimes I bring friends and play tag or swim. I also tell secrets with my best friend.

That is why it's my special place.

focus on content

- ✓ focuses on topic
- ✓ develops with specific and logical reasons

organization

- ✓ strength of piece is in organization
- ✓ cohesive

Voice/style

- ✓ clarity and effective use of language
- ✓ concrete, vivid, and detailed
- ✓ writer tells of world around him, feelings, personal experiences

con-ven-tion(s)

- ✓ control of conventions
- ✓ accuracy in paragraphing

grade four (A Special Place)

My Favorite Place!

My favorite place is my barn. I like it because there are animals in it. I like to hold my rabbits, play with the dogs, or ride and pet the horses. I also like to play in the barn. There is a huge swingset that when I am on it, it feels like I am flying. My father recently finished building the barn. I have also had many emotional experiences in it. About a month ago, we had to euthanize our dog, Dottie. Sometimes when I am alone in the barn, it seems like I can feel her. Our family still has two other dogs. My dog Rufus is a Lab. He is very large for his age. Rufus has a big silly looking box head, and he loves little kids, and he is very gentle. My sister's dog, Freckles, is the same breed as Dottie was. She is a Queensland Heeler Hearing Dog. But let's go back to the barn again. If you a guest at my house, you won't be used to the smell in our barn! Some of the work involves the smell such as, the cleaning of stalls or cages! We have put lots of work into the barn. I love our barn, and it would tear me up emotionally, if anything were to happen to it. ~~Full Page~~ →

We have huge parties in it every Friday night. We have a huge heater for in it for cold night parties in the winter. My favorite place to hang out is the loft. 10 ft off the ground. I have to climb a big ladder, then there is just hay. Doesn't sound like much fun, but wait until you read on! My sister and I go up to the loft and build huge tunnels in the hay. Unfortunately, they always collapse on us. Sometimes I make traps for my sister. I pull out about three or four bails of hay to where it is just a plain ditch. Then I pull a bail out to cover the hole. But it always ends up to be me falling into the traps I've set! Thank you for taking the time to read my story, The End

focus on content

- ✓ focuses on topic
- ✓ develops one point with an anecdote
- ✓ recounts detail through description

organization

- ✓ organized and developed with details
- ✓ natural paragraph breaks

Voice/style

- ✓ strong voice
- ✓ incorporates emotions
- ✓ writes from experience
- ✓ imagery and sensory detail
- ✓ irony and humor
- ✓ binoculars

convention(s)

- ✓ experimentation with punctuation
- ✓ moving toward conventional spelling

attributes **grade four**

focus on content

- ✓ central idea evident/focused
- ✓ responds to prompt
- ✓ emphasis on recounting everything in detail through description
- ✓ exhibits clarity
- ✓ incorporates well-developed ideas
- ✓ uses universal theme
- ✓ includes a moral
- ✓ develops strong characters
- ✓ includes title which catches the attention of the reader
- ✓ uses abstract/sophisticated topics
- ✓ conveys knowledge of subject
- ✓ develops with specific and logical reasons
- ✓ develops one point with anecdote

or **gani** **za** **tion**

- ✓ organizes with beginning, middle, and end (introduction, transition and conclusion – sense of wholeness)
- ✓ uses attention-catching lead sentences
- ✓ opening paragraph “sets stage”/good introductions and setting of scene
- ✓ reaches closure
- ✓ includes reflective ending
- ✓ uses comparison
- ✓ cohesive
- ✓ uses an expository format
- ✓ evidence of mapping/brainstorming
- ✓ uses topic sentence/supporting details

Voice/style

- ✓ demonstrates strong sense of voice (varied/elaborated vocabulary and skillful word choice)
- ✓ incorporates emotions (use of adjectives and adverbs)
- ✓ demonstrates originality
- ✓ explains in a concrete, vivid and detailed manner
- ✓ gives the reader a sense of being there
- ✓ has sense of audience
- ✓ uses humor and irony
- ✓ uses complex sentence structure/sentence variety
- ✓ flow of conversational language
- ✓ writes of world around them, feelings, personal experience
- ✓ uses figurative language (metaphors, similes, personification and analogies)
- ✓ uses imagery
- ✓ uses sensory detail
- ✓ uses strong and effective verbs
- ✓ uses questions effectively
- ✓ uses historical reference
- ✓ uses descriptive adjectives and adverbs
- ✓ effective use of parenthetical remarks
- ✓ concrete, vivid, and detailed
- ✓ snapshots
- ✓ literary allusion
- ✓ mature and creative
- ✓ effective repetition
- ✓ effective use of poetic form
- ✓ vivid language

con·ven·tion(s)

- ✓ demonstrates growing control of grammatical and mechanical structure
- ✓ uses accurate punctuation for dialogue
- ✓ correct use of ellipses
- ✓ pronoun use and agreement
- ✓ uses appositive
- ✓ spells with increasing accuracy to convey meaning
- ✓ writes legibly

strategies used by **narrative writers**

The next step in the Profile process, after selecting the most effective writings and holistically scoring the papers with a rubric, is to identify writing strategies used by the authors of the effective papers. The following list of writers' strategies is a combination of the original list that came from the New Standards Project shared by Sally Hampton and modified by Barbara Nelson to include the writing strategies of Barry Lane. These writing strategies can be taught in focused lessons. It is also a way to talk about narrative writing with students during writing conferences. The list of strategies used by narrative writers follows:

1. forecasting
2. flashback / flash forward
3. foreshadowing
4. compressing - shrink a century
5. naming (specific names of people or objects quantities, number)
6. describing visual details of scenes, objects, or people (size, colors, shapes, feature, dress) binoculars
7. describing sounds or smells of the scene - snapshots
8. narrating specific action (movements, gestures, postures, expressions) snapshots
9. creating dialogues, interior monologues, or expressing remembered feelings or insights at the time of the incident - thoughtshots
10. slowing the pace to elaborate the central moment in the incident - explode a moment
11. using syntax to support meaning
12. creating suspense or tension - explode a moment
13. including the element of surprise
14. comparing or contrasting other scenes or people
15. detailing subjects's routines habits or typical activities - binoculars
16. humor or irony
17. repetition / recurring events, objects, phrases
18. using various characters' voices to narrate a story
19. inserting historical or factual information into a story
20. figurative language - simile, metaphor, personification, onomatopoeia, alliteration
21. effective lead
22. effective conclusion, ending
23. literary allusion
24. creative, insightful word choice/word order (eg. active not passive voice, strong verbs, interesting or unusual use of or combination of words, etc.)
25. transitions
26. engaging audience intentionally and effectively (questioning, conversational tone)

strategies used by **narrative writers** (cont.)

Fourth Grade

My Favorite Place!

My favorite place is my barn. I like it because there are animals in it. I like to hold my rabbits, play with the dogs, or ride and pet the horses **word choice**. I also like to play in the barn. There is a huge swingrope that when I am on it, it feels like I am flying **simile**. My father recently finished building the barn. I have also had many emotional experiences in it. About a month ago, we had to euthenise **word choice** our dog, Dollie. Sometimes when I am alone in the barn, it seems like I can feel her. Our family still has two other dogs. [My dog Rufus is a Lab. He is very large for his age. Rufus has a big silly looking box head, and he loves little kids, and he is very gentle. My sisters dog Freckles, is the same breed as Dollie was. She is a Queensland Heeler Hearinging Dog. But let's go back to the barn again.] If you a guest at my house, you won't be used to the smell in our barn! Some of the work involves the smell such as the cleaning of stalls or cages! We have put lot's of work into the barn. I love our barn, and it would tear me up emotionally, if anything were to happen to it. **syntax** We have huge parties in it every Friday night. We have a huge heater for in it for cold night parties in the winter. My favorite place to hang out is the loft. Apx. 18ft off the ground. I have to climb a big ladder, then there is just hay **visual detail**. Doesn't sound like much fun but? wait until you read on **engaging audience intentionally**! My sister and I go up to the loft and build huge tunnels in the hay. Unfourtuuanatly **transitions** they always always collapse on us. Sometimes **transitions** I make traps for my sister. I pull out about three or four bails of hay to where it is just a plain ditch. Then I pull a bail out to cover the hole **snapshots**. But it always ends up to be me falling into the traps I've sett **humor**! [Thank you for taking the time to read my story, The End.]

NOTE: There are numerous examples of good writing in this piece; there is also writing that could be used as good examples for revision lessons:

- first set of brackets ([]) — This is extraneous information and distracts the reader; it could just be eliminated.
- second set of brackets ([]) — This writing disengages the reader; the piece would have ended more effectively without this. Compare with "...read on..." above which is an example of conversational tone which engages the reader.

Using Profundity in Grades 3-12

To get third through twelfth graders to think about books at the theme level we use an activity that is systematic, based on the Profundity Scale, and dependent upon group discussion. The activity must be presented using the to, with and by format. First the teachers model the entire activity to their students. Next, teachers will share the responsibility of the activity with their students. Then teachers will guide students working in small groups through the use of the activity. Finally, students will independently work in small discussion groups to complete the activity or independently complete the activity. Following are the directions we give to teachers to guide students working in small groups. From these directions you should be able to model and share the activity and to help students move to independent use of this activity. The directions will be followed by some hints to help you do that. Depending upon the age of the student, adjust how much direction is needed.

To prepare for the activity you need the following materials for each small group working on the activity; sets of eight different color markers, large sheets of unlined chart paper: two sheets for the teacher and one sheet for each small group. You will also need a great book. There is a list of thematically linked text at the beginning of this unit. If they are books that you and your students have enjoyed over time they are probably good books with good lessons to be learned.

We are going to demonstrate the use of the activity using the book, *Elmer*, by David McKee. *Elmer*, is the story of a patchwork colored elephant. He is always the center of attention until one day he mistakenly gets the notion that the other elephants are laughing at him, not with him. He leaves the herd to find a berry bush that has elephant colored berries. He covers himself in berry juice until he looks like any other elephant. When he rejoins the herd he is unnoticed by the others. He stands there seriously still until he can't stand it any longer and yells, "Booo!" The other elephants think it is a great joke and make the remark that Elmer should have been there to enjoy the joke. In the next moment a rain cloud showers Elmer back to his normal patchwork color. All the elephants think that what Elmer did was his best joke ever and they decide to have a parade each year to celebrate Elmer's best joke. So, every year Elmer comes to the parade looking like a normal elephant and all the other elephants color themselves patchwork.

To begin, hang two sheets of chart paper up where everyone can see them. Devise a way for students to gather the material they need. We usually have them count the number of buttons on their person. The one with the most buttons gets to come up and get the markers and sheet of chart paper. Once everyone is situated in small groups, four to a group seems to be a workable size, and has the materials they need you tell the students to listen for the actions of the main character in the story as you read. Profundity depends on following the actions of one character throughout the story.

Tell the students to listen for the actions of Elmer as you read the story. Remind them that actions are the things Elmer does. Read the story aloud to the class. As a class cooperatively build a list of important actions on the first piece of chart paper. **This list goes along with the Physical Plane: the reader is aware of the physical actions of the character.** Choose the three actions the class feels are the most important being sure that one of them is the turning point of the story (the turning point is often the clearest example of the theme in stories). Then explain that they will be working in co-operative groups, which means we will listen to each person talk and each person will have an opportunity to talk. The person with the most buttons needs to pick up the black marker and draw this shape (a rectangle divided into three equal parts) in the middle of their group chart paper. Then they write one of the three actions chosen by the class in each of the boxes. As they are writing the teacher also draws the boxes and

writes one of the three actions in each of the boxes (on the second sheet of chart paper), as a model.

We always have the students use the markers as their talking sticks. That means when you have the marker in your hand it is your turn to talk and everyone should listen to what you have to say. It is very important to establish this procedure from the very beginning especially if this is the first time the student will be working in cooperative discussion groups. The first student in each group to have a marker is the one with the most buttons on his or her person. We always start there and then the students exchange the use of the marker in the order of which they are sitting in, moving clock-wise around the group. So, moving clock-wise around the group the next person needs a red marker to draw a red bubble that connects to the first action box. We are going to use the example for *Elmer* to help explain the next steps. What the group is going to be thinking about is “Why did Elmer think the other elephants were laughing at him?” **This question goes along with the Mental Plane: the reader is aware of the intellectual actions of the character.** The person with the red marker tells why first, then passing the marker clock-wise, everyone gets to share his or her reason why. When everyone is done sharing, the group synthesizes the information and the person with the red marker writes their response in the red bubble. The next person takes a blue marker and draws a blue bubble that connects to the red bubble. What the group is going to be thinking this time is “was it right or wrong for Elmer to think the other elephants were laughing at him and tell why?” **This question goes along with the Moral Plane: the reader is aware of the character in light of an ethical code.** Repeat the process of sharing and writing shared response in the bubble. The next person takes a green marker and draws a green bubble that connects to the blue bubble. What the group is going to be thinking this time is “What did Elmer get from thinking the other elephants were laughing at him?” **This question goes along with the Psychological Plane: the reader is aware of the psychological forces influencing the character.** It is important to remember that Profundity begins with the actions of the character and always goes back to the actions. It is also important to remember that for the third bubble you must stay specific to the action, you can never go beyond the next action. Students repeat this process for the next two actions on their own. As they are working you wander from group to group monitoring the group discussion, giving advice, modeling discussion behavior, prompting for deeper discussion and giving evaluative feedback that students can use to help monitor their own discussion groups.

Next, the teacher explains to the students that they will understand stories and theme better when they attempt to identify with the characters of the story. Every group now turns over their large sheet of chart paper and makes a list of how these are like a character in the story. Think about the ways you are the same as Elmer to make your list. This typically starts out as a list of physical characteristics; such as, we are both animals. Teachers should get students to think deeper by posing situations from the story to consider while they are filling out the chart. One such situation is pointing out that when Elmer was standing with the herd still, quiet and serious, he yelled, “Booo!” If you would do that then you are like Elmer. Teachers want students to see how their thinking is the same as Elmer’s. Do they do the same things as Elmer? Do they think the same things are right or wrong?

An example of the power identifying with characters has in helping students get to the theme level came about one day as while presenting this activity in a third grade classroom in Memphis, Michigan. We walked into the classroom and were immediately able to identify at least one Elmer, in the room. You can always identify the Elmers in classrooms very quickly. He was a very vivacious, very blond boy seated with a group of about 10 students and he was keeping them very entertained as we were preparing for the activity. He did stop long enough to become thoroughly engaged in the activity. However, when we got to the part where they had to think about “Why did Elmer yell, “Booo!” he stood up, threw his arms in the air, in very Elmer fashion, and announced, “Nobody needs to think, I know the answer, Elmer was addicted to

attention, just like me!” It was a very easy jump for him to get from that understanding to the theme of “Be true to yourself.”

Go back to the person with the most buttons and have them turn the chart paper back over to the bubbling side. He or she needs to draw a large brown bubble. What the group is going to be thinking about here is “What is the theme of this story?” **This question goes along with the philosophical plane: the universal truth the author is trying to expound.**

Then you finish up the activity by having everyone draw a square and respond to one of the prompts listed on the three ways reading can transform your thinking page. This illustrates to students that universal truths are generative. This step often takes you beyond the theme level to the ideas in action level. Now that you know this to be true what can or are you going to do about it. This is the social action level that is described well by Terri and Randy Bomer in their book, *Reading and Writing for Social Action*, (1999) and by Paula Rogovin in her book, *The Research Workshop, Bringing the World into Your Classroom* (2001).

Here are some helpful hints to help you manage the activity in the classroom. This activity takes a few hours to do with the children so think of creative ways to break it down and spread the instruction over several days. You could do all the red bubbles one day, the blue bubbles the next day and then the green bubbles another day or you could do the first action one day or you could do the first action one day the second action the next day and then the third action another day. We recommend that the book be reread each day before resuming the activity. Since it takes a great deal of time to complete the activity, be sure to select text carefully. The teachers we have worked with always stress that they would never have students complete this activity with a book they themselves had not personally analyzed. They want to make sure they are able to help students through the tough spots and they want to make sure that the theme the students infer is reasonable and justifiable given the evidence in the story.

Here are some helpful suggestions to help you present this activity in a to, with, and by format. When modeling the activity the teacher will do all the talking and will be demonstrating how to draw the boxes and bubbles and how to think about the questions before filling in the bubbles. A time or two of modeling should be enough for most classes. When sharing the activity the teacher will share the talking and thinking about the questions with the students. The teacher still draws the boxes and bubbles and fills them in with synthesized answers. It looks and sounds like this when a teacher is sharing, the teacher draws the red bubble and poses the question, “Why did Elmer think the other elephants were laughing at him?” He or she then asks for responses from several students. The teacher then shares their own response and shows the children how to synthesize the several responses into a statement that can be written into the bubble. The teacher continues to share the talking and thinking until the activity is completed. Again, a time or two of sharing should be enough for most classes. When independently completing the activity, the students are to work alone. The teacher’s job becomes one of facilitator and evaluator. As they are working, you wander from group to group, monitoring discussion, giving advice, modeling discussion behavior, prompting for deeper discussion, and giving evaluative feedback that students can use to help monitor their own discussion groups. The ultimate goal is to have kids either using the Profundity Scale in small discussion groups or individually to understand text at a deeper level.

It is very helpful to repeat this process with a second thematically related book. A book that I often pair with *Elmer* is *Stand Tall Molly Lou Mellon*, by Patty Lovell. The theme of both stories is “Be true to yourself,” however; both characters accomplish this through entirely different means. By repeating the process with thematically related books students can compare and contrast one characters understanding of the theme with the other characters understanding of the theme and with their own understanding of the theme. It also demonstrates to students that theme is inferred. It is the teacher in this case who is inferring the theme of both books,

declaring them thematically related and then asking students if they agree or disagree with the theme that the teacher has inferred. To answer that question effectively students will need to provide clear examples from the text to support their position. Looking at two thematically linked books will lead students to a deeper understanding of both texts.

As mentioned before, our ultimate goal is to have kids either using the Profundity Scale in small discussion groups or individually to understand text at a deeper level. We hope, by now, that it is becoming clear to you how useful the Profundity Scale is in helping students discuss and think about text. Hopefully, students will be able to choose text about which they are curious, get with interested others and successfully start and sustain a discussion group around that text. Hopefully, individual students will have enough experience with thinking this way that it will become internalized and students will think this way about all text. One teacher during a workshop remarked, "Now I have all the questions I need to discuss texts with my students." She was referring to the questions asked at each plane during the bubbling activity.

Another adaptation was to use the Profundity Scale Matrix as shown on the next page. Teachers should read two thematically linked texts. Then on a greatly enlarged version of the matrix they would lead children through a group discussion about each box of the matrix. You complete the matrix one book at a time. When you have completed the matrix for both books you can then lead discussions that compare and contrast the two characters' understanding of the theme to your own understanding of the theme. Students then can agree or disagree if the theme of both stories really is the same. Of course, to effectively answer that question, they will need to provide clear examples from the texts to support their position. Using this matrix truly helps students develop a deeper understanding of both texts.

Thematically Related Text Sets Common Good Profundity Matrix-Teacher Example

Titles of paired texts	List three important actions of one character	Why did the character act this way?	Was it right or wrong for the character to act this way?	What did the character get from acting this way?	How am I like the characters in this story?	What is the lesson learned from this story?	How has this lesson learned changed the way I think?
<p>Title: A River Ran Wild</p> <p>By: Lynn Cherry</p> <p>Character: Oweana</p>	<p>Decided with friend, Marion, to do something to clean up Nashua River</p> <p>Helped convince factories to cooperate</p> <p>Helped get national laws passed against pollution</p>	<p>Had a dream about an ancestor mourning the river</p> <p>Needed to get cooperation of companies to get river cleaned</p> <p>To protect other rivers</p>	<p>Right to take care of resources</p> <p>Right because the companies were in control of pollution</p> <p>Right to care for environment</p> <p>Wrong because of huge costs</p>	<p>Cooperation</p> <p>Sense of purpose</p>		<p>Work together for good of all (Common Good)</p> <p>Take care of natural resources</p>	
<p>Title: A Picture Book of Rosa Parks</p> <p>By: David A. Adler</p> <p>Character: Rosa Parks</p>	<p>Joined the NAACP</p> <p>Refused to give up her seat on the bus</p> <p>Helped to change laws so all can be treated equally</p>	<p>To end unfair treatment of African-Americans and others</p> <p>She was tired and also knew that existing laws were unfair.</p> <p>She knew every citizen had the right not to be discriminated against.</p>	<p>Right because discrimination and segregation are wrong.</p> <p>Right because all people are created equal. She paid the same as a white person.</p> <p>Right – to have laws changed so there is no discrimination</p>	<p>Knowledge</p> <p>Power</p> <p>Got arrested</p> <p>Awareness of her cause spread</p> <p>Determination</p> <p>Satisfaction</p> <p>Self-esteem</p> <p>Equality</p> <p>Desegregation</p>		<p>Work together for the Common Good</p> <p>All people should be treated fairly and with respect (Equality)</p>	

Thematically Related Text Sets
Common Good
Profundity Matrix

Titles of paired texts	List three important actions of one character	Why did the character act this way?	Was it right or wrong for the character to act this way?	What did the character get from acting this way?	How am I like the characters in this story?	What is the lesson learned from this story?	How has this lesson learned changed the way I think?

CROSS TEXT QUESTIONS FOR “A RIVER RAN WILD” AND “A PICTURE BOOK OF ROSA PARKS”

Q. Did Rosa Parks and Oweana do the same kinds of things? How were their actions similar or different?

A. Yes, they both worked for the good of all and to respect all living things. Oweana wanted to protect natural resources. Rosa Parks wanted to protect the rights of all people.

Q. How are their reasons for acting the way they did similar or different?

A. Both Oweana and Rosa Parks could see the effects of people who did not work for the common good. Oweana, being a Native American, had a strong belief in protecting the earth. Rosa Parks' efforts were focused on protecting the rights of all people.

Q. Did you agree more with the way that Oweana acted or the way that Rosa Parks acted? Why?

A. We believe this is a matter of opinion, however, we felt that both characters fought equally. Oweana worked to protect natural resources, while Rosa worked to end discrimination and segregation among people.

Q. Did Oweana and Rosa Parks get the same thing for their actions? Why or why not?

A. Yes, both got national laws to help protect the cause for which they were fighting.

Q. If both of the characters learned the same lesson what was the lesson?

A. They both worked together for the good of all.

Q. If each of the characters learned a different lesson what were the lessons learned?

A. As they both worked for the common good, Rosa Parks learned great sacrifices and courage must be shown to achieve your goal and Oweana learned that perseverance and community cooperation are necessary.

Q. Do you agree or disagree that the theme of these two stories is “Common Good?”

A. We agree.

**Simple Graphic Organizer
to Help Students
Organize Writing Ideas
for Writing in Response
to Reading**

Name _____

Date _____

House Organizer

**State
Your Position**

Support from Selection 1

Support from Selection 2

Make a Connection

Reading and Writing, (Part 2b) Applying Ideas to a Task

Directions:

During Part 2a of this test you read *River Ran Wild* and *A Picture Book of Rosa Parks*. You may look back at the reading selections to help you answer the following question.

Do rules help everyone? Yes or no. Tell why you agree or disagree. Use examples from both texts to support your thinking. Tell how the two reading selections are alike or connected.

When finished writing fill out this checklist:

- _____ Did I state a position (agree or disagree)?
- _____ Did I tell why?
- _____ Did I use examples from both texts?
- _____ Did I show how the texts are connected or alike?

Writing – Common Good [Model] (Part 2b)

I agree that rules help everyone. Without rules people could act anyway they wanted and that would be harmful to many. If there were not rules about our playground equipment, a child might jump off a swing and get hurt. Before there were seatbelt and child car seat laws, many more people died in traffic accidents than do now.

In both *A River Ran Wild* and *A Picture Book of Rosa Parks* the actions of the characters helped get laws (rules) passed that benefit everyone. Oweana worked to clean up the Nashua River near his home by helping persuade the paper mills to set up waste plants and the factories to stop dumping. More importantly, he worked to help get laws passed so factories would limit pollution across the country. By refusing to give up her seat on the bus that led to the Montgomery bus boycott, Rosa was able to help integrate part of her community. Her actions along with the rest of the civil rights movement lead to passage of amendments to our country's constitution that protect the rights of all. According to the book, "It is now against the law for Americans to discriminate against people because of their race, color, religion or nationality, at work, or in restaurants, hotels, and other public places. The right of every citizen to vote is protected."

Both Oweana and Rosa made our country better for all citizens. Oweana helped protect our natural resources. Rosa Parks protected the rights of African Americans and other minorities. From them I learned that one person's actions could help many people. When I see trash on our playground, I will pick it up. When I see people being treated unfairly, I will speak up.

Related Language Arts Activities:

Before, During and After Prototypes

Rate Your Words

Directions:

Write each word that appears in the first column in the column that matches your understanding of the word.

4 = Words you know and can use correctly

3 = Words you almost know but the meanings are foggy

2 = Words you think you have seen or heard before

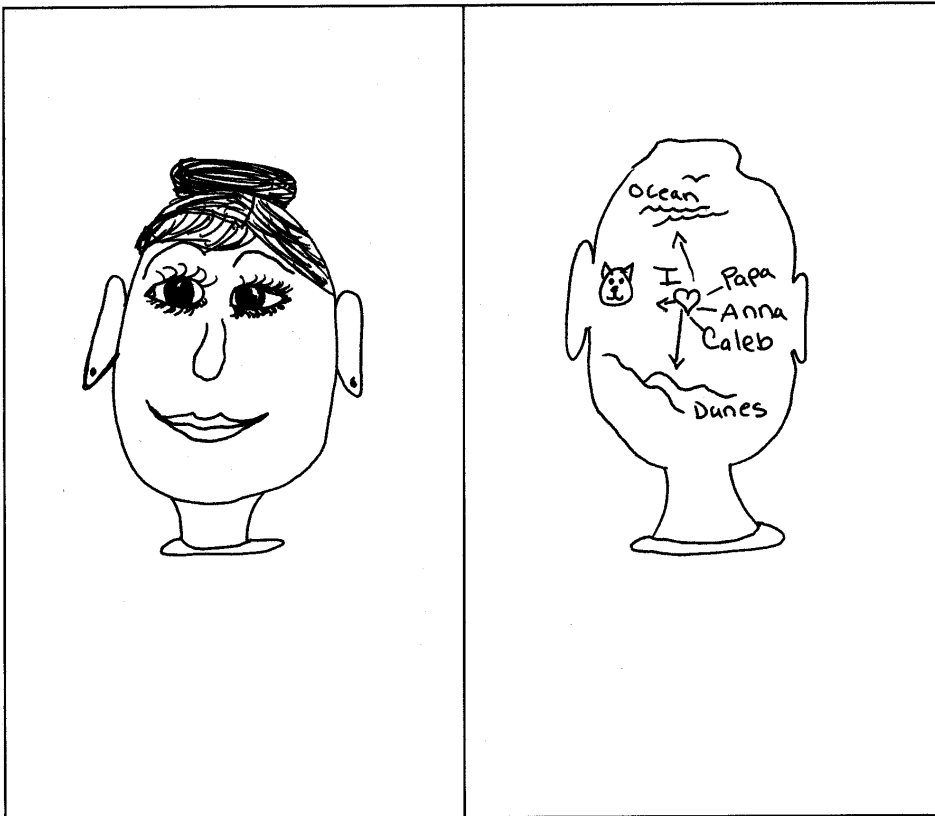
1 = Words you do not know at all

Words	4	3	2	1

Open Minded Portraits

Students will think more about a character and see the story from the character's point of view. Students draw an open minded portrait of the character. These portraits have two parts: First page is the face of the character and then the mind of the character on the second page. It is useful for students to draw several mind pages to show the mind set of the character at certain parts of the story. As the students create these pictures they are telling his or her thoughts about the character.

The two pages of a student's open-minded portrait about Sarah, the mail-order Bride in "Sarah, Plain and Tall" (MacLachlan, 1983), is shown below. The drawings and writing on the "mind" page show what she was thinking at the end of the story.



Cubing

While cubing, students ponder a topic from six points of view. The name “Cubing” is appropriate, due to the fact that cubes have six sides. The six sides to cubing are as follows:

1. Describe the topic, such as shape, color and size.
2. Compare the topic to something else. Think about the similarities and differences.
3. Associate the topic to something else and tell why the topic makes you think of this.
4. Analyze the topic and explain how it is made.
5. Apply the topic and tell how it is used.
6. Argue; take a stand, for or against the topic. List the reasons for your argument.

Use these simple steps when utilizing the cubing exercise:

1. Choose a topic
2. Divide the students into six groups; invite each group to look at the topic from one of the six points of view. (Each student in the group can create his or her own point of view, if you wish, each six member group can create it's own cube.)
3. Students should think about ideas within the point of view of the group. Do a drawing or outline of ideas that were collectively gathered.
4. The students now will share their ideas with the class and attach their group ideas to a box. (Students may choose to construct a cube by folding and gluing cardboard or paper into a box.)

Application: Cubing can be used for across-the-curriculum thematic units. Middle and Upper grades can cube topics such as Antarctica, endangered animals, the Underground Railroad, and the Nile River. Cubing is also useful in analyzing the characters in a story. A group of students wrote this cubing about Annemarie, the girl who helps to hide her Jewish friend Ellen in *Number the Stars* (Lowry, 1989):

Describe: Annemarie is a Danish, Christian, ten year old and she's a girl. She has blond hair and blue eyes and is very intelligent and athletic. She is a good friend.

Compare: Ellen and Annemarie are both intelligent Danish girls, and they are both good friends. They are both good students as well. They are different because Annemarie has blond hair and Ellen has brown hair. Annemarie is thinner than Ellen and she can run faster than Ellen. They are also of different religion, which is the biggest difference in this particular story. During WWII religion was a factor in the safety of Ellen and the struggles of Annemarie.

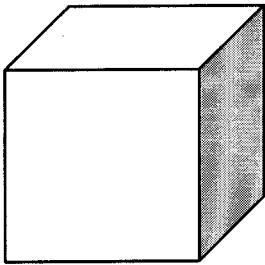
Associate: Annemarie is just like the rest of us. She would fit right in with our class.

Analyze: Annemarie is a normal girl but she had to be brave because of the war, if we lived through a war we might become strong like Annemarie. If a friend is in trouble you should try to help them, even though it might be dangerous.

Apply: It is a very smart thing to do, to pretend to be dumb. During the war, it can be dangerous if you know too much.

Argue: Annemarie decided to be brave. She could have left Ellen to take care of herself but she didn't. Ellen had to be brave, if she hadn't she would have been sent to a concentration camp or she could have been killed.

Cubing (make a box)



	Apply it	
Argue (for or against)	Describe it	Associate it
	Compare it	
	Analyze it	

Retelling Steps Using the GO! Chart

[From *The Power of Retelling ~ Developmental Steps for Building Comprehension*, by Vicki Benson and Carrice Cummins]

Standard Retelling Steps:

Day 1 1. Predictions / Vocabulary

Before reading have students make predictions based on title and the cover of the book.

Give children vocabulary that is used in the story to help guide predictions.

A prediction should be logical, derived from the given information. The teacher should always ask the child why and refer to story structure i.e. setting, characters, problem and solution.

Then children should be able to add vocabulary words that they think they may see in the text. (READ STORY)

Day 2 2. Confirm or disconfirm predictions based on the reading.

3. Understandings / Interpretations / Connections

In these two columns the students will be analyzing and organizing the story.

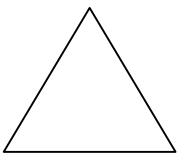
Understandings: The teacher should challenge the students to support their understandings from the story and continually refer back to the book.

Interpretations: When interpreting the story the children will reach a deeper understanding by questioning the story. Some questions will be what they were wondering during reading but others will extend beyond the story.

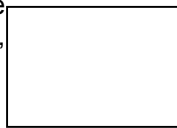
Connections: In this column children will relate the text to a personal experience, another text or a worldview.

Day 3 4. Retelling

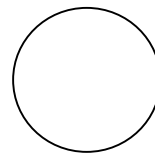
Now it is time to put the story back together. The shapes will help guide the students in analysis and organization of the story. (Teacher may have to work with the shapes prior to this story.)



The triangle symbolizes the beginning, because we usually find the characters, the setting, and the problem there. Each point represents one of the story elements.



The rectangle symbolizes the middle, because we usually find the events that take place that lead to the resolution of the problem, one event for each corner.

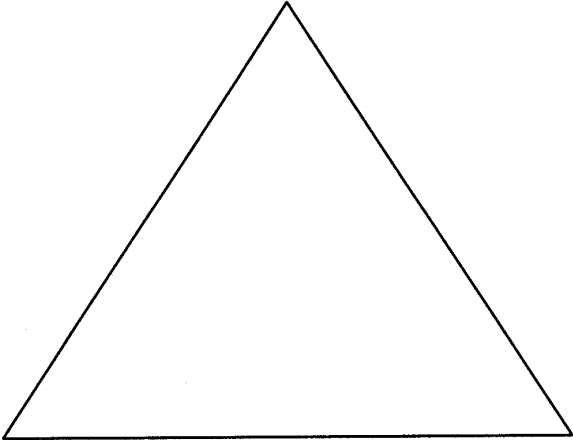


The circle symbolizes the end and the idea, "what goes around comes around." This is where the solution to the problem is discovered.

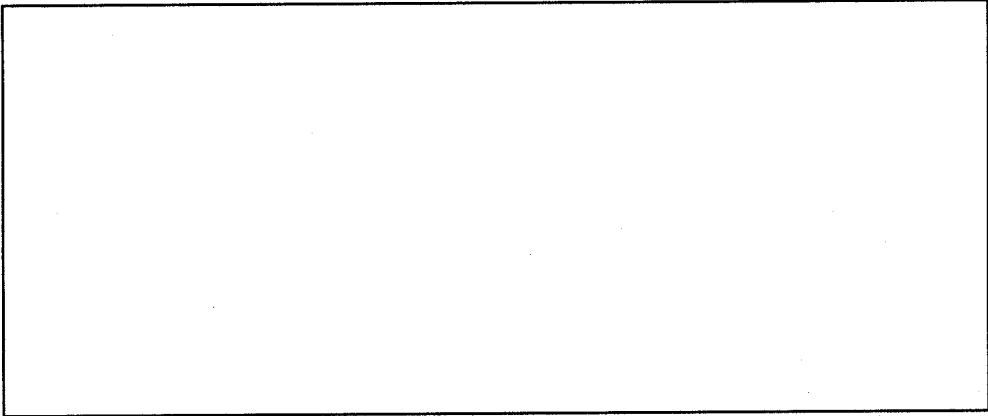
Go Map

Name _____

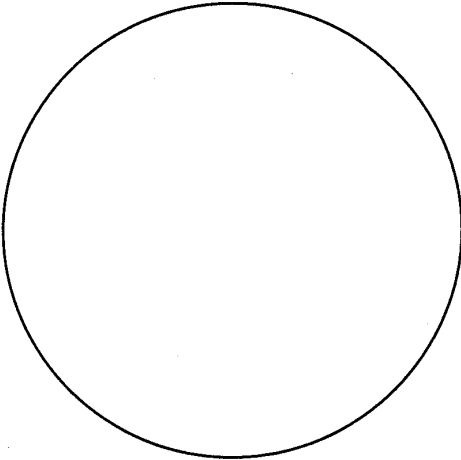
Story _____



Beginning



Middle



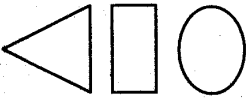
End

Name _____

_____ Title

Date _____

_____ Author

Predictions	Vocabulary	Understandings	Interpretations	Connections	Retelling
					

What is Reader's Theater?

Reader's Theater is minimal theater in support of literature and reading. There are many styles of Reader's Theater, but nearly all share these traits:

No full memorization. Scripts are held during performance.

No full costume. If used at all, costumes are partial and suggestive, or neutral and uniform.

No full stage sets. If used at all, sets are simple and suggestive. Narration provides the framework for dramatic action. Reader's Theater was developed as a convenient and effective means to present literary works in dramatic form. This is still its primary use, though many scripts now published are original dramatic works rather than literary adaptations.

Originally popular on college campuses, Reader's Theater has now moved to the lower grades, where it is seen as a key tool for creating interest in reading. Kids love to do it, and they give it their all – more so because it's a team effort, and they don't want to let down their friends! And if the script is based on an available book, they of course want to read it. What's more, reader's theater is a simple activity for the teacher, since it requires no setup apart from the reproduction of scripts.

Reader's Theater has been found effective not only for language arts, but for social studies as well. Performing multicultural literature is one of the best ways for students to become interested in and familiar with other cultures.

Internet Resources:

www.lisablau.com

www.aaronshep.com

The Bundle of Sticks

A Fable by Aesop

A Reader's Theater Script by Lisa Blau

Reader #1 **Reader #2** **Reader #3**
Farmer **Aesop**

Reader #1 **Good Morning! Welcome to our presentation of a fable by Aesop called...**

Aesop **The Bundle of Sticks.**

Reader #2 **Once there was a poor farmer who had many sons.**

Reader #3 **But alas, his sons were always fighting.**

Reader #1 **One day the farmer told his sons to come inside his little house.**

Reader #3 **The farmer gave each of his sons a bundle of sticks and said...**

Farmer **I have given you each a bundle of sticks. I want each of you to break this bundle of sticks in two.**

Reader #1 **The sons tried and tried but they could not break the bundle of sticks.**

Reader #2 **When each of his sons had given up, the farmer smiled and gave each son just one stick.**

Reader #3 Then the farmer said...

Farmer I have given each of you one stick. I want you to try and break just one stick.

Reader #2 Of course each son could easily break his stick.

Farmer My sons I hope you have learned a lesson from this bundle of sticks.

Reader #3 The farmer said to his sons

Farmer If you work together you will be as strong as a bundle of sticks. But if you argue, you will be weak just like the single stick.

Aesop And the moral of this story is: Working together brings strength.

All The End

Everyone Joins In Everyone must help to keep our Earth clean!

Characters:

Katy

Justin

Mason

Mayor Wesley

Grandma Emily

Grandpa Dan

Setting:

Last week the kids and their Grandmother went hiking in a part of the woods that was not far from town. It was an area that Grandma Emily used to play in when she was a little girl. She wanted to show her Grandchildren the natural beauty just outside of their neighborhood.

Scene one:

Katy: I wonder why there are no birds singing today.

Justin: Wow! This is not good, look at all of the dead raccoons in the brush over there (as he points downriver). There must be a whole family together. (They walk in that direction). Look at the trees they are all slimy and the leaves are bumpy. Look at all the junk in the water. There's paper and someone's garbage bag. (As he pokes the bag with a stick)

Katy: (Sniffing the air). What is that smell? Something is really wrong with this area Grandma Emily.

Grandma Emily: It's obvious that someone has been throwing his or her junk into the woods. I think that some of the factories in town are dumping chemicals and waste into the ground too. I'm going to take some soil samples.

Katy: What are we going to do with the samples once we get them Grandma Emily?

Grandma Emily: I think it would be a good idea to take them to the Health Department and have them tested.

Mason: They could tell us what's killing all of the animals and damaging the trees. Let's go get Grandpa Dan.

Scene two:

Three days later, Grandma Emily, the children and Grandpa Dan are sitting in the DNR office waiting for someone to talk to them but everyone was in a meeting.

Justin: Grandma, what do you think they can do about all of the animals and the trees?

Grandma Emily: Oh Justin, I think a lot of people care about the environment and these people will do what's best, I'm sure.

Ranger Wesley: (apologetic) Sorry! I got tied up in a meeting you know how it is. (Then shakes Grandma Emily and Grandpa Dan's hand before sitting down.) (Ranger Wesley is printed on his shirt). What can I do for you folks?

Mason: Hello, Ranger Wesley. The other day while we were hiking we saw dead animals and garbage in the woods. The smell was terrible.

Katy: We took some samples of the soil to the health department. They told us that there are dangerous chemicals in the ground.

Justin: Those chemicals are killing the trees along with the animals and can make us really sick.

Grandma Emily: (Hands the test results to the Ranger before grabbing her husband's arm) here are the results of the testing. You can see every one of the chemicals they found. Most of them are dangerous like those found in household cleaners and pesticides. Just like the ones they make in town.

Grandpa Dan: Not to mention everything that people are dumping.

Ranger Wesley: Yes, I know about all of the things that have been dumped, we were just having a meeting with the authorities. All of this dumping is destroying the oxygen in the area that the wildlife needs to live. Not to mention the animals eat the fish from surrounding rivers that have also been contaminated.

Mason: What can we do to stop all of the pollution?

Ranger Wesley: We have groups of people that are working together to clean up the woods and bring in new soil and get rid of the bad soil. I'll be talking with the factory owners and we can get more people to help clean up. Are you ready to help?

Children: Yes!

Ranger Wesley: Let's meet again in two weeks and by then the woods should be clean again.

Grandpa Dan: (seeing the kids through the door) (He says to the Ranger) we'll see you in a couple of weeks. (And gives the Ranger a thumbs up.)

The children and the grown ups bring out a banner that reads " Together We'll Keep Our Earth Clean"

The End

Excellent Resources of Activities That Build Understanding of Themes

Tom Jackson offers three useful resources to encourage active participation. I have used these activities in my classroom and the students not only enjoyed participating, they gained valuable insight into some of life's lessons. These lessons encourage active learning through role-playing, games, demonstrations, and problem solving. Skills taught are transferable to other tasks. Students learn to analyze, draw conclusions, and assume responsibility. These lessons can be used as an anticipatory set for theme in the ELA Prototypes.

Activities That Teach, by Tom Jackson
More Activities That Teach, by Tom Jackson
Still More Activities That Teach, by Tom Jackson

To order any of these books or other materials:

Active Learning Center, Inc.
3835 West 800 North
Cedar City, UT 84720
www.activelearning.org