

Lesson Skill: Main idea or theme

Strand Reading — fiction

SOL 1.9

2.8

Materials

- Read-aloud fiction
- What Is the Author Trying to Tell? graphic organizer (attached)

Lesson

Before the lesson, mark stopping points in the fiction book at important events in the story, preferably at the beginning, middle, and end.

1. Explain to students that when authors write books, often they are trying to tell us something. It is important to take the time to also explain that even if the author does not intentionally set out to tell the reader something—if he/she is writing a story that came from his/her creativity—an overriding idea or theme is revealed. Display the What Is the Author Telling Us? graphic organizer. Explain to students that as they read the story, they will occasionally stop to fill in important events from the story. They will then use these events to decide what the author’s main idea or theme is.
2. Read the book aloud, and stop at predetermined pages to discuss the important events on each page. Write the events in the graphic organizer in chronological order. After reading the book, review with students the three events the class used to complete the organizer. Lead a discussion about the main idea or theme the author is conveying. At the end of the discussion, write the main idea or theme on the graphic organizer.

Strategies for Differentiation

- Prior to the lesson, students can practice selecting the main idea or theme with familiar stories.
- Select the main idea or theme and the events of familiar stories for students to place on the graphic organizer. You may prepare written or typed events and main ideas or themes for students to glue on the graphic organizer.
- If students still have trouble identifying the main idea or theme, use smaller samples of texts and ask students, “What is the topic or the one word the text describes?” Next ask, “What does the text say about that one word?”

What Is the Author Trying to Tell?

