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Character Analysis

By: Lori McDonald
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Introduction

This is the first lesson in a fourth-grade novel study on *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl. This unit could continue over several days until the novel is completed.

Learning Objectives

- (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1) Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2) Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.
- (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3) Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

Materials Needed

- *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl (either 1 copy for the teacher or 1 for each student depending on your format)
- Post-it notes
- Projectable picture of James Henry Trotter

Procedure

Warm-up - Show students a picture of the main character in the story, James Henry Trotter. This can be an illustration from the book or still shots from the movie. Read the following to students:

James Henry Trotter thought his life would never get any better after his parents were eaten by a rhino and he had to go live with his cruel aunts, Spiker and Sponge. However, one day a strange little man gave him a bag that contained something that would change his life forever.

1. Students will read chapters 1-5 of the book. You can choose how you will do this based on the abilities of your class. Students can read independently, listen to you read it, listen to other students read, or a combination of any/all of those. As you (or they) read, students should use post-it notes to write down any evidence they read or hear about the character traits of James.

2. Put students into groups of four or five and have them sort through their post-its notes, combining and eliminating duplicates.

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**Language Arts
Grades 3-5**

3. Then, give each group a graphic organizer similar to this one. Any graphic organizer on character analysis should be fine. Assign a group leader to lead discussion and record ideas.

4. After group work is completed, each student should then be given a copy of the graphic organizer that their group completed. Have each group (or just group leader) present the group's ideas by projecting their graphic organizer and explaining their ideas.

5. Students will return to their own desks or areas and complete the evaluation/writing assignment below.

Evaluation

What are James Henry Trotter's most obvious characteristics? Did his character change at all through the first 5 chapters? Would you have responded the way James did? Be sure to use examples from the story to support your ideas.

Students' writing samples would be graded (or self-graded) using the following rubric.

Categories	4	3	2	1
Characteristics	4 or more characteristics of the main character are discussed.	3 characteristics of the main character are discussed.	2 characteristics of the main character are discussed.	1 characteristic of the main character is discussed.
Text Evidence	4 or more examples of text evidence are given.	3 examples of text evidence are given.	2 examples of text evidence are given.	1 example of text evidence is given.
Notable Details and Descriptions	5 or more details or descriptions are included.	4 details or descriptions are included.	2 or 3 details or descriptions are included.	There is only one or no detail or description included in the story.
Ending	Ending is very clear, reflective, and memorable.	Ending is clear and memorable.	Ending is unclear.	Ending is not obvious or not included.
Grammar	Fewer than 3 grammatical errors.	4-6 grammatical errors.	7-9 grammatical errors.	10+ grammatical errors.