

Helping a child find a love of reading is one of the greatest things you can do. Who knows better how to do this than teachers? That's why we asked our Educator Fellow, Kyle Gamble, to create these book lists for grades three through five. Kyle has taught children from preschool through the fifth grade. She aligned each list with a specific Common Core State Standard and included the **Lexile® text measure** for each book to make it easier to plan how to use it in the classroom. Also provided with two books per grade is vocabulary to pre-teach. You can find vocabulary lists for the remaining books using our **Lexile® Find a Book** at hub.lexile.com/fab!



Kyle Gamble
Educator Fellow

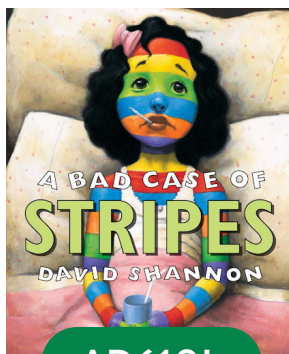
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3rd Grade Mentor Texts to Teach Character Traits

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARD:
CCSS.RL.3.3



AD610L

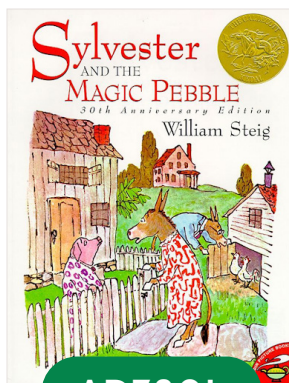
A Bad Case of Stripes by David Shannon

Internal and External Character Traits

A Bad Case of Stripes by David Shannon is a great read-aloud for teaching both internal and external character traits. As the reader follows Camilla's ever-changing physical features throughout the book, they get a good lesson from how she also is changing on the inside and the relief she feels when she finally gets to be true to herself.

[Find a Book](#) Vocabulary to Pre-teach:

contagious, channel, cure, sponge, authority, examine, instant, plain, impress, gourd



AD780L

Sylvester and the Magic Pebble by William Steig

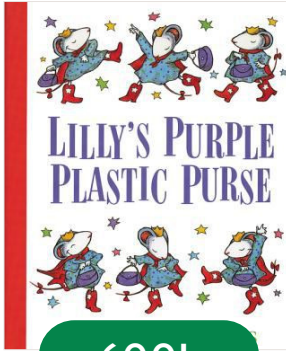
Character Traits: Changing With Circumstance

This is a story of high highs to low lows and even a rock with... feelings? *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* tells the story of a young donkey who comes across a magic pebble that grants any wish he asks for. When one of the wishes goes wrong, the reader learns how quickly excitement can turn to despair. This is a great story to teach how character traits can be influenced by environment and circumstance.

[Find a Book](#) Vocabulary to Pre-teach:

pebble, soothe, scent, instant, hoof, compote, remarkable, gnat, alfalfa, fetlock

AD (Adult Directed) is a Lexile code for books that are better read aloud to a student rather than having the student read independently.



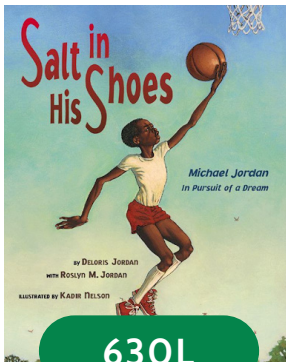
600L

Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse by Kevin Henkes

Changing Character Traits/Growth

This is a great mentor text for teaching students how characters change throughout the stories we read. Lilly adores her teacher and even writes flattering stories about him. However, one day he makes her angry - really angry. She writes a not-so-nice story about him and slips it in his bag. What follows teaches her the power of admitting when you are wrong and the forgiveness of others.

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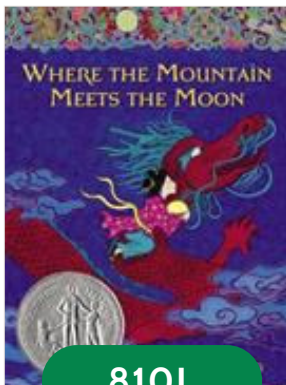
630L

Salt in His Shoes by Deloris Jordan with Roslyn M. Jordan

Character Traits: Persistence, Determination

Michael Jordan wasn't always a 6 foot 6 inch tall basketball star. This story shares about another time in his life: when he was a child who was picked on for being short and wanting to play basketball with the tall boys. In the final basketball game in this story, the reader will learn what the power of persistence, determination, and a little guidance from family can do.

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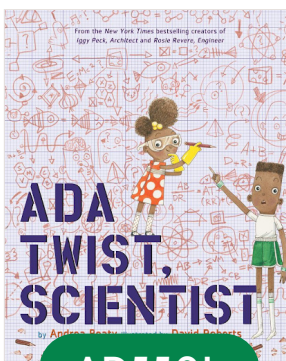
810L

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon by Grace Lin

Character Trait: Persistence

Inspired by Chinese folklore, this mentor text teaches the character trait of persistence. A poor girl, Minli, goes on an adventure to find the Old Man on the Moon in hopes of finding wealth for her family. On her journey, she comes across many extraordinary magical creatures including a dragon who keeps her company on her travels. This is a great book to analyze character growth as Minli learns what is truly important to her at the end of her journey.

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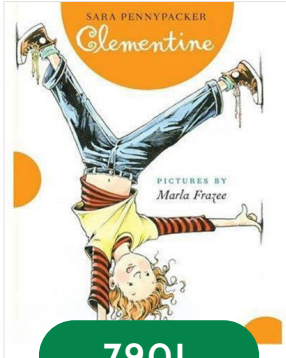
AD550L

Ada Twist, Scientist by Andrea Beaty

Character Trait: Curiosity

Always asking questions beginning with "why," *Ada Twist, Scientist* tells the story of a young girl whose curiosity pervades every part of her life. Her quests to find answers to her questions almost always lead to more questions for her to explore. Ada embodies the character trait of curiosity making this a great mentor text to read aloud and keep in your classroom library!

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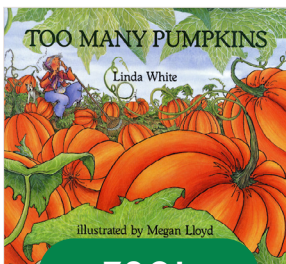
790L

Clementine by Sara Pennypacker

Character Trait: Impulsivity

Clementine is a strong, kind, and artistic child. She is also very impulsive. She is always well-meaning, however often misunderstood which gets her in trouble with adults. Her friend, Margaret, is a bit of an authority type herself — making this the perfect mentor text when looking to compare and contrast character traits.

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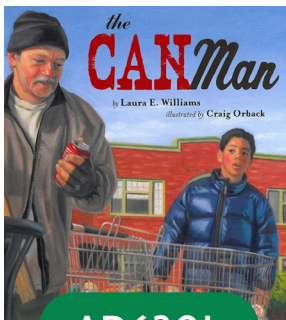
790L

Too Many Pumpkins by Linda White

Character Traits: Avoidance, Growth, Determination, Acceptance

Rebecca Estelle has a problem. A big problem. The one thing she has absolutely too many of, she hates! *Too Many Pumpkins* takes you through a journey from avoidance to acceptance as Rebecca Estelle deals with her big problem. The reader learns that character traits are not always stagnant and can change as the story evolves.

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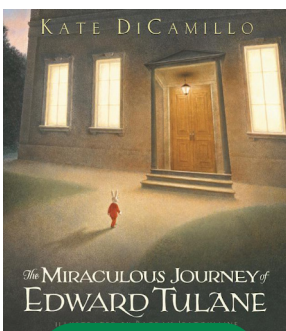
AD630L

The Can Man by Laura E. Williams

Range of Internal and External Character Traits

Tim's family can't afford to buy him a skateboard. So, when he sees the "Can Man" collecting cans he gets the idea to do the same so he can save up enough money to buy himself a skateboard for his birthday. However, his conscience gets to him when he learns that for every can he collects, that's one less can for the Can Man. Along with teaching internal and external character traits, this is a great book for teaching readers about a character's inner sense of right and wrong.

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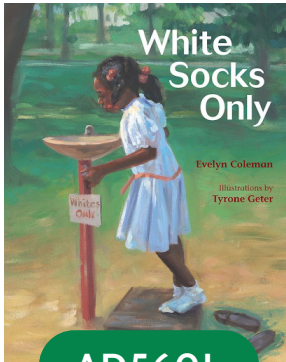
700L

The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane by Katie DiCamillo

Range of Internal and External Character Traits

This is a great story for teaching how characters change over time. Edward, a bunny doll, starts off as a very self-important, distinguished, and uppity bunny. He is very important and his owner, a little girl named Abilene, adores him. He would never consider himself as a "doll" though. One day, he is lost and finds himself on a miraculous journey that will bring him pain, growth, and love again.

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AD560L

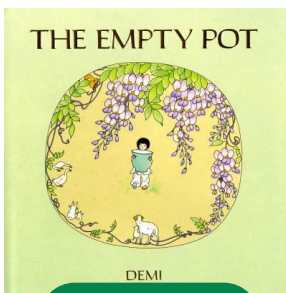
White Socks Only by Evelyn Coleman

Theme: Bravery

A young black girl goes to town one hot day. While thirsty, she comes across a water fountain with a sign that says, "whites only." Misunderstanding what the sign means, she takes off her shoes and steps up to take a drink in her clean, white socks. What follows shows such bravery that it changes this one small part of town forever.

[Find a Book](#) Vocabulary to Pre-teach:

snuff, blind, brim, alley, belt, cement, bandanna, account, folk, chime



630L

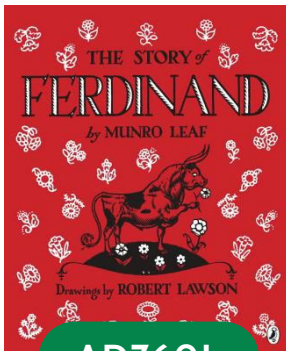
The Empty Pot by Demi

Theme: Patience, Honesty, Integrity, Courage

Ping is a young boy who loves flowers. They burst into blossoms everywhere he goes. When the emperor is in search of a successor to his throne, he sends all of the children home for a year to grow a seed into a flower. A year later, the unexpected outcome of this task will teach the reader the value of patience, honesty, integrity, and courage.

[Find a Book](#) Vocabulary to Pre-teach:

sprout, successor, rich, bloom, throne, admire, emperor, courage, proclamation, blossom



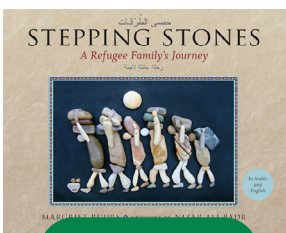
AD760L

The Story of Ferdinand by Munro Leaf

Theme: Acceptance, Being Yourself

This is a charming story that tells the tale of a bull who is not at all like the other bulls at his farm. While the other bulls butt heads and get rowdy all day, Ferdinand enjoys sitting under his favorite tree and smelling the flowers. The challenge comes when a group of men arrives to pick a bull for the coveted spot in the town's beloved bullfighting event. How Ferdinand responds will teach the reader the importance of acceptance and staying true to oneself.

[Find a Book](#)



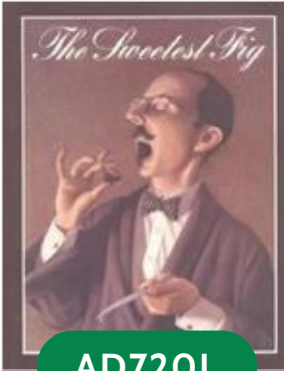
AD480L

Stepping Stones by Margriet Ruurs

Theme: Perseverance

With artwork made entirely of stone, this book is sure to grab the attention of young learners. *Stepping Stones* tells the story of a Syrian family fleeing their country to escape civil war. Only bringing what they can carry, they walk to Europe in search of safety. As the reader follows this refugee family on their journey, they will learn about the power of perseverance.

[Find a Book](#)

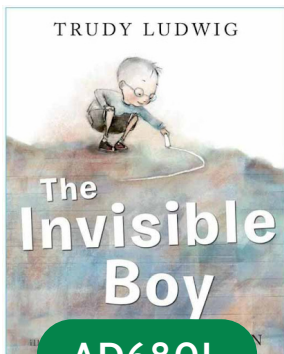


AD720L

The Sweetest Fig by Chris Van Allsburg**Theme: The Golden Rule - Treat Others The Way You Want To Be Treated**

Written by Chris Van Allsburg (the author of *Jumanji*), this story is about a dentist, Bibot, who does not treat others very nicely, including his dog, Marcel. One day a woman comes into his office in need of a tooth removal. When it's time to pay, she does not have any money and instead gives him two figs that will "make his dreams come true." Angry, he kicks her out without any pain medicine. What follows shows Bibot that the woman was truthful about the figs and abruptly teaches him the importance of treating others the way he would like to be treated.

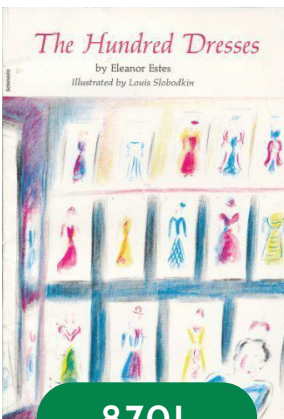
** This book could have some really fun extension activities building off of its theme. What happens next? What will Marcel do as a human? How will Marcel treat Bibot?*

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AD680L

The Invisible Boy by Trudy Ludwig**Theme: Acceptance, Kindness**

Trudy Ludwig's *The Invisible Boy* tells the story of a young child who "doesn't take up a lot of space." Always left out of conversations in the lunchroom and games at recess, he escapes by doing what he loves most: art. With his art and a little empathy, things begin to change with the arrival of a new student. Young readers will learn the power of kindness and acceptance in this touching story about a boy who feels invisible.

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870L

The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes**Theme: Forgiveness, Kindness**

The Hundred Dresses is a beautiful story with themes of forgiveness, kindness, acceptance, and reflection. Wanda Petronski is viewed as "different" at her school. She is a Polish girl who lives in the poor part of town. Despite wearing the same faded blue dress to school every day, Wanda claims to have 100 dresses at home. Of course, no one believes her. When Wanda is suddenly missing from school, the students learn the importance of always being kind and standing up for what is right.

** This book has some ideas that are dated: the drawing contest. Boys draw boats and girls draw dresses. I usually allow my students to point this out, we discuss it (and the time period), and move on.*

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AD550L

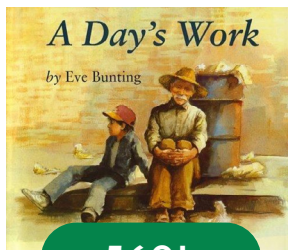
Those Shoes by Maribeth Boelts**Theme: Generosity, Friendship, Needs Vs. Wants**

Several themes permeate this story of a young boy who desperately wants "those shoes." Almost everyone in school already has them. However, with the help of his grandma and a friendly classmate, our main character learns the difference between needs versus wants while the reader gets a good lesson in the power of friendship and generosity.

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4th Grade Mentor Texts To Teach Theme

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARD:
CCSS.RL.4.2



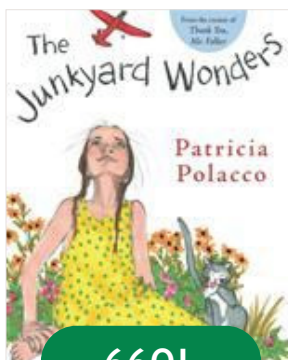
560L

***A Day's Work* by Eve Bunting**

Theme: Honesty, Integrity

Francisco's abuelo has just emigrated to America. He does not know any English yet and must find work. Francisco helps him find a job doing some gardening work even though he doesn't know much about gardening. After a major mishap on the first day, Francisco learns the importance of honesty and integrity.

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660L

***The Junkyard Wonders* by Patricia Polacco**

Theme: Inclusion, Acceptance, Empathy

Trish starts at a new school only to find out that she is still in a "special" class with other kids who are "different" just like her. Her disappointment fades when her teacher puts the students into "tribes" to work together for the year and helps them learn the true meaning of the word genius with a simple trip to the junkyard that turns into the creation of extraordinary things.

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5th Grade Mentor Texts To Teach Figurative Language

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARD:
CCSS.RL.5.4



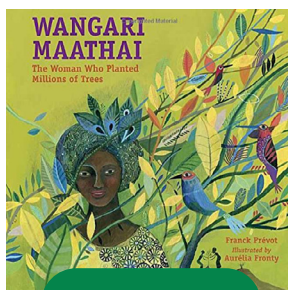
750L

***Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan**

After tragedy strikes, a young Mexican girl must leave her home along with her mother and friends who used to work for her family. Set during the Great Depression, they immigrate to California to work as migrant farmers. The novel follows Esperanza during a year of many challenges and even more growth. Five big metaphors permeate throughout this story, making it a great mentor text for teaching figurative language.

[Find a Book](#) **Vocabulary for Chapter 1:**

incline, swell, distant, lie, thud, caterpillar, tendril, vineyard, leafy, valley



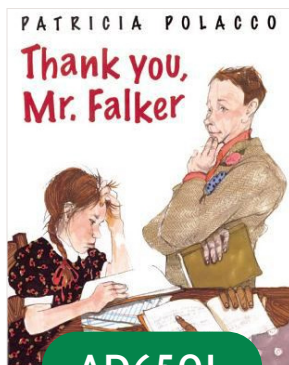
970L

***Wangari Maathai: The Woman Who Planted Millions of Trees* by Franck Prévot**

In this true story about environmental activist Wangari Maathai, students will be exposed to beautiful descriptive and figurative language as they learn about how Wangari changed the landscape and lives of the people in Kenya.

[Find a Book](#) **Vocabulary to Pre-teach:**

cultivate, symbolic, razing, govern, vitality, bongo, pursue, liberate, basin, immense

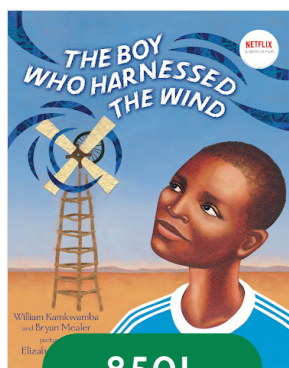


AD650L

Thank You, Mr. Falker by Patricia Polacco

Patricia Polacco shares her own childhood story of struggling to learn how to read. With the use of rich figurative and descriptive language, you can almost feel the frustration and loneliness she felt as a young child. This is a great text to help young writers understand the power of language and the emotions they evoke in readers.

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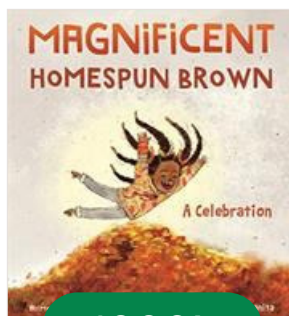


850L

The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind by William Kamkwamba

When a boy is kicked out of a school that his family cannot afford anymore, he uses science to create a windmill to save his village. With similes and metaphors like, “So cracked and wrinkled that his hands and feet looked as if they were chiseled from stone,” and “Without water, the sun rose angry each morning and scorched the fields, turning the maize into dust,” this is great mentor text for teaching figurative language.

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1000L

Magnificent Homespun Brown: A Celebration by Samara Cole Doyon

Beautifully written and illustrated, *Magnificent Homespun Brown* is rich with figurative language sharing with the reader many different, and magnificent, shades of brown that surround us every day.

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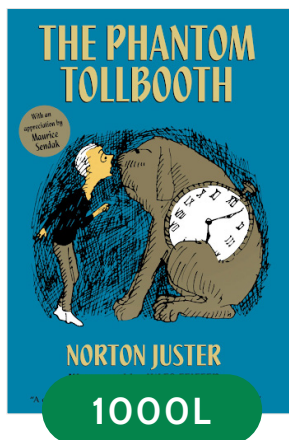


700L

Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls

This classic novel for dog lovers tells the story of a boy and his two hunting companions. Both heartbreaking and hopeful, young readers will learn that something beautiful can grow from ugliness. The book features similes, metaphors, hyperbole, personification, and onomatopoeia, making it a great text to hit on many different forms of figurative language.

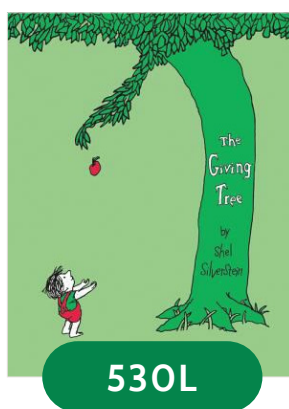
[Find a Book](#)



The Phantom Tollbooth by Norton Juster

This classic is filled with delightful similes and personifications such as, “...the world looked like an enormous coloring book that had never been finished,” and “the calm sea bumped playfully along the beach.” Also included in the book are two big metaphors worth studying: The Island of Conclusions and The Sea of Knowledge. *The Phantom Tollbooth* makes for a great read-aloud with plenty of opportunities for follow-up activities while teaching figurative language.

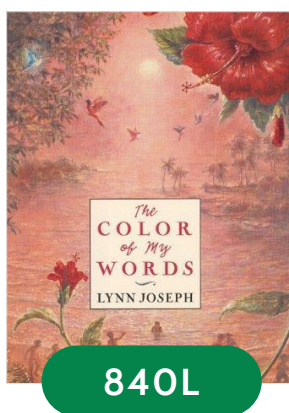
[Find a Book](#)



The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein

A classic story to teach personification, *The Giving Tree* is about a boy's lifelong relationship with a tree. The tree gives and gives until it has nothing left and the boy has grown into an elderly man. You can take this read-aloud a step further by identifying the metaphors the boy and tree represent (selfishness and selflessness).

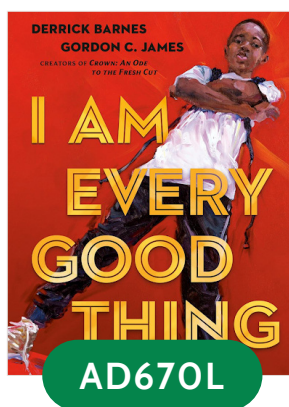
[Find a Book](#)



The Color of My Words by Lynn Joseph

This story is about 12-year-old Ana Rosa, a young writer, in the Dominican Republic. Though words are feared where she lives, she can't help but write everything down that inspires her — even through tragedy.

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I Am Every Good Thing by Derrick Barnes

In this powerful book, a young black narrator uses figurative language to celebrate all that he is. With lines such as, “I am that smile forming on your face” and “I am good to the core, like the center of a cinnamon roll,” it is the perfect book for teaching figurative language while celebrating all that one person can offer to the world.

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