

Contrasting Characters

Purpose

Students will contrast the actions, motives, and appearances of characters in a work of fiction and discuss the importance of the contrasts to the plot or theme.

Materials

For the teacher: chalkboard, chalk

For each student: *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson, copy of Black Line Master (BLM) *Character Contrast Chart*, pencil

Activity

A. Introduce the Activity

1. Draw a line on the chalkboard. Label one end “fearless” and the other “fearful.”
2. Explain to students that the line is a continuum measuring the amount of fear one has. Ask students to come to the chalkboard one by one. Have each student make a mark on the line that measures his/her fearlessness and write their name underneath it. Ask students why they placed themselves where they did on the continuum.
3. Tell students that they are going to read a novel in which the two main characters are on opposite ends of this continuum, yet are best friends.
4. Ask students why they think authors often place contrasting characters with contrasting motives in their plots. (If students are unfamiliar with the term *motive*, explain that it means a character’s reason for doing something.)
5. Point out to students that through examining contrasting characters we can better understand the motives for their actions.
6. Tell students that while they are reading the novel *Bridge to Terabithia*, they will be taking notes to contrast the two main characters.

B. Activity

1. Assign each student a copy of the novel *Bridge to Terabithia*.
2. Give each student a copy of the BLM *Character Contrast Chart*.
3. Tell students to fill in the BLM as they are reading the novel.

(continued)

EXTENDING
THE



ACTIVITY

Have students repeat this activity with the novel *On My Honor* by Marian Dane Bauer. Direct students to compare and contrast the two stories and to compare the two main characters in each book.

MEETING
INDIVIDUAL



NEEDS

If students are having difficulty with the activity, conduct a small literature group within the class and have students complete the activity together.

Standards Link
5.3.4

Activity (continued)




C. Close the Activity

1. Discuss student responses.
2. Discuss what students learned by contrasting the two characters.
Ask students how having two such different characters enhances their reading of the book.

Questions for Review

Basic Concepts

Ask the following questions while students are working independently:

-  What is a character's motive?
 -  Contrast the motives of the two main characters.
 -  How do the contrasting personalities of these two characters affect the plot?
-

Name: _____



Character	Appearance	Education	Family	Religion	Fears	Actions	Vision of Terabithia
Jess							
Leslie							

Character Contrast Chart

Teacher Directions

Distribute copies of the BLM *Character Contrast Chart* to the class. Have students read the novel, *Bridge to Terabithia*, on their own. Direct them to fill in the top row of the BLM with information about Jess and the bottom row of the BLM with information about Leslie. Encourage students to write page numbers next to their observations. Discuss student responses.

Answer Key

Student responses will vary.