

Spider®

THEME

The texts in this teacher guide examine competition—from sibling rivalry to gingerbread house competitions. Discuss ideas about competing with students and use the articles to help students learn about text structures and theme.

CONVERSATION QUESTION

Why do people compete?

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

- Students will analyze how individuals, events, and ideas interact over the course of a text.
- Students will determine central ideas or themes.
- Students will analyze the structure of texts.
- Students will analyze the physical, cultural, and environmental characteristics of different places.
- Students will write informative/explanatory texts.
- Students will write descriptive texts.



In addition to supplemental materials focused on core English Language Arts skills, this flexible teaching tool offers vocabulary-building activities, questions for discussion, and cross-curricular activities.

SELECTIONS

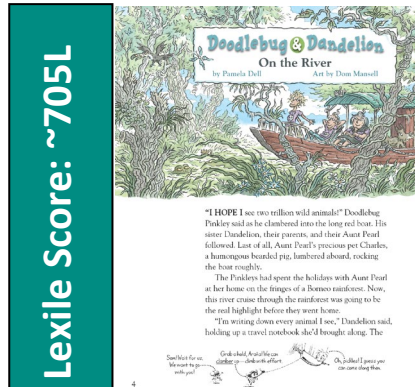
- **Doodlebug & Dandelion**
Fantasy, ~705L
- **Raji's Race**
Contemporary Realistic Fiction ~505L
- **Gingerbread Houses**
Informational Nonfiction, ~1105L

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Doodlebug & Dandelion

pp. 4–8, Fantasy

Give students practice in identifying story elements using this wild story about sibling rivalry on a river cruise in Borneo.



RESOURCES

- **Story Map Worksheet**

OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a short story.
- Students will analyze how individuals, events, and ideas interact over the course of a text.
- Students will analyze the physical, cultural, and environmental characteristics of different places.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **riffling** (p. 5) looking through something quickly and not very closely
- **griped** (p. 6) complained
- **smugly** (p. 7) done in a way that shows excessive satisfaction or pride in oneself
- **bellowed** (p. 8) shouted in a deep voice

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: Why do people compete?

Ask students to describe the ways in which they compete, such as playing a sport, working toward good grades, or trying to improve at an activity. Explain that positive competition can bring out the best in all participants, while negative competition is based on the idea of winning at all costs. Tell students this story is about a kind of competition called sibling rivalry. Invite students to share experiences of sibling rivalry.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Display the vocabulary words and definitions and read them aloud.

Then display the sentences below and have students use the vocabulary words to complete them. Finally, remind students to look for the vocabulary words as they read the story.

1. My sister smiled _____ after she won the prize for best costume.
2. I _____ through my backpack to find my homework assignment.
3. The farmer _____ across the field to bring his cows to the barn.
4. Students _____ about the surprise quiz Ms. Loman gave them.

READ & DISCUSS

After students read the story, use these questions to prompt discussion:

1. Where does the story take place?
2. What details in the story seemed unusual?
3. Compare Doodlebug and Dandelion. How are they similar/different?
4. Do you think Doodlebug was treated unfairly?
5. Why does Charles bellow in pain all the way home?
6. Was this situation between the siblings realistic? Explain.

SKILL FOCUS: Analyze Story Elements

INSTRUCT: Invite students to name the elements of a short story. Then display a copy of the *Story Map Worksheet* and review these terms in the graphic organizer: *character, setting, problem/solution, story events*. Ask students to identify these elements in a familiar story. Record students' responses, correcting them as needed.

ASSESS: Distribute a copy of the *Story Map Worksheet* to each student. Have students work in pairs to identify and record the story elements in "Doodlebug & Dandelion." After all students have completed the worksheets, discuss responses as a class. Invite students to share themes or messages they find in the story.

EXTEND

Social Studies Tell students that insects are a form of food in many cultures around the world. Have students conduct research to learn about some of these places and the way in which insects are eaten there. Pose the question, "Why aren't insects not eaten as much in the West?" Suggest that students look for insect-based food items at a grocery store.

Name _____

Story Map

Use the organizer below to record information about “Doodlebug & Dandelion.”

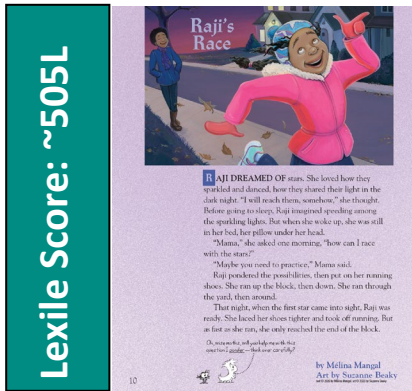
Characters	Setting
What is the problem?	
List the story events that lead to the problem.	
How is the problem solved?	
List the story events that lead to the solution.	

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Raji's Race

pp. 10–14, Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Use this story about a girl who wants to race with the stars to teach students to identify theme.



RESOURCES

- **Identify Theme**

OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a short story.
- Students will determine central ideas or themes.
- Students will write informative/explanatory texts.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **ancestors** (p. 11) people who were in someone's family in past times
- **visualized** (p. 11) made a mental picture of someone or something
- **pulsing** (p. 12) moving with a steady beat

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: Why do people compete?

Explain to students that instead of competing against others, sometimes people compete against themselves. Continue by explaining that they do this by setting a goal and trying to reach it. Offer some examples from your own life. Then ask students to share ways that they compete against themselves at home, at school, and in their activities. Finally, tell students to identify the goal set by the girl in this story.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Display and read aloud the vocabulary words and definitions. Have students work in pairs to write sentences that use the words correctly. Invite partners to share their sentences with the class. Correct errors. Then remind students to look for these words in the article.

READ & DISCUSS

After students read the story, use these questions to prompt discussion:

1. What goal does Raji set for herself?
2. What did Raji learn about her mother's ancestors? What trait did they show?
3. What did Raji learn about Dhruva? What trait did he show?
4. Why do you think Raji's parents told her these stories?
5. What did Raji learn from reading?
6. What does Raji mean when she says, "It's not a race. It's a journey."?
7. How does Raji feel at the end of the story?

SKILL FOCUS: Identify Themes

INSTRUCT: Explain that the theme of a story is a message or lesson about life that an author wants to share with readers. Give examples of common literary themes, such as "don't give up on your dreams," and "actions speak louder than words." Point out that themes often sound like good advice. Continue by explaining that usually themes are not stated and that students can figure out themes by thinking about information and events in a story, including:

- Characters' problems and how they react to them
- The important decisions characters make
- The way characters change and grow
- The lessons characters learn

Discuss possible themes of popular books and movies.

ASSESS: Distribute the *Identify Theme* worksheet and have students work in pairs or groups to complete it.

EXTEND

Writing Instruct students to write about someone they know or admire who shows fortitude (courage and strength) and/or devotion (dedication to a cause, activity, or religion). Tell students to describe the person and explain how he or she shows these traits.

Name _____

Identify and Support Theme

Complete the chart using information from "Raji's Race." Then use the information to help you determine a theme of this story.

1. What challenge does Raji face?
2. How does Raji react to this challenge?
3. What does Raji see in her dreams?
4. What does Raji learn from her parents' stories?
5. In what ways does Raji grow or change?
6. What lessons does Raji learn?

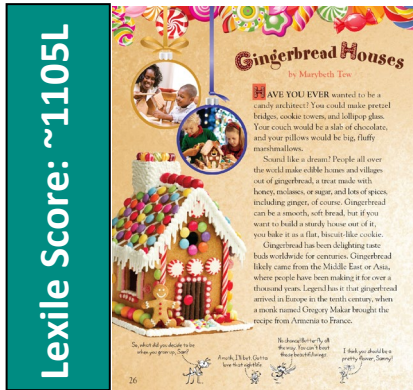
On the back of this sheet, write a theme of the story and list the details from the story that helped you determine this theme.

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Gingerbread Houses

pp. 26–29, Expository Nonfiction

Use this article about gingerbread to analyze descriptive text structure and main idea and details.



OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a nonfiction article.
- Students will analyze the structure of texts.
- Students will write descriptive texts.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **sturdy** (p. 26) strongly made
- **biscuit** (p. 26) a crunchy cookie
- **mold** (p. 27) a container that is used to give its shape to something that is poured or pressed into it

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: Why do people compete?

Talk with your students about television cooking competition shows that they enjoy. Invite them to explain what they like about the shows and whether they would like to be in a cooking competition. Ask students to share what they like to cook and if they have ever made gingerbread. Then tell them this article tells about gingerbread and gingerbread competitions.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Display and read aloud the vocabulary words and definitions. Then have students work in pairs to write sentences that use the words correctly. Invite partners to share their sentences with the class. Correct errors. Instruct students to look for these words in the article.

READ & DISCUSS

After students read the article, use these questions for discussion:

1. What is a candy architect? Would you like to be one?
2. What kind of gingerbread is used to make gingerbread houses?
3. How did gingerbread spread from Asia to Europe to America?
4. Is it a fact that Gregory Makar brought gingerbread to France? Explain.
5. In what ways did gingerbread become an art form?
6. How did the Brothers Grimm make gingerbread popular in Germany?
7. Describe three modern gingerbread traditions.

SKILL FOCUS: Descriptive Text Structure

INSTRUCT: Remind students that when authors use descriptive text structure, they describe a topic by listing its characteristics, features, or examples. Continue by explaining that descriptive paragraphs begin with a main idea. The rest of the sentences in the paragraph support the main idea. Display a word web and the third paragraph in the article, which begins "Gingerbread has been delighting...." Ask students to identify the main idea and restate it in their own words. Add this to the center of the word web. Then have students identify details that support this main idea. Add these to the surrounding circles of the web.

ASSESS: Have students work in pairs to find the main idea and details in two other paragraphs in the article. Tell partners to begin by underlining the main idea in one color and the details in another color. Then they should create a word web to record this information in their own words. Finally, bring the class together and have partners present their webs.

EXTEND

Writing Have students use a word web to plan a descriptive paragraph. Tell students the paragraph can be about any topic. After students write their paragraphs based on the web, invite them to read their work to the class.