

# Cricket

## THEME

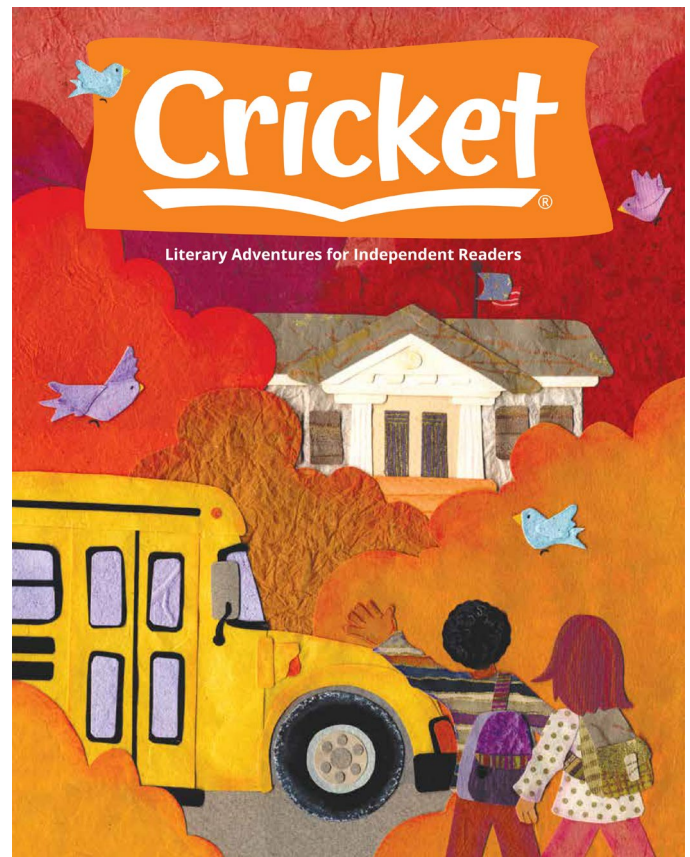
In this issue of *Cricket*, characters face all kinds of challenges, both realistic and fantastic. Explore the challenges characters face using the texts, lessons, and activities in this Teacher Guide.

## CONVERSATION QUESTION

What challenges do characters face?

## TEACHING OBJECTIVES

- Students will analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- Students will determine themes.
- Students will write narratives to develop imagined experiences and events.
- Students will conduct research.
- Students will analyze cultural characteristics.



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

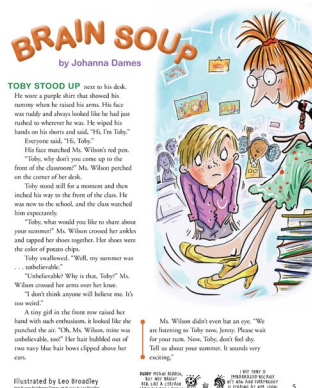
- **Brain Soup**  
Fantasy, ~560L
- **Just a Start**  
Contemporary Realistic Fiction, ~680L
- **The Scales of Justice**  
Poem, N/A

## Brain Soup

pp. 5–9, Fantasy

Teach students to analyze humor using this story about a boy who makes a very strange soup.

Lexile Score: ~560L



## ENGAGE

**Conversation Question:** What challenges do characters face?

Remind students that almost every story is about characters who face challenges or problems. Ask students to name familiar fantasy stories and movies and the types of challenges characters face in them. Discuss how challenges in fantasy stories are different from those in other types of fiction (realistic, historical). Then tell students to note the challenge faced by the characters in this story.

## INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Read the vocabulary words and definitions. 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.

1. The townspeople \_\_\_\_\_ at the elephant walking down the street.
2. My dog Herman looked at me \_\_\_\_\_ when I called his name.
3. I \_\_\_\_\_ in my seat to look at the student sitting behind me.

## RESOURCES

- Examining Humor

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a short story.
- Students will analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- Students will conduct research.

## KEY VOCABULARY

- **expectantly** (p. 5) with a feeling that something will happen
- **swiveled** (p. 6) turned around
- **gaped** (p. 8) looked at someone or something with your mouth open in surprise or wonder

## READ & DISCUSS

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

1. What is your first impression of Toby on page 5?
2. How does your impression of Toby change through the story?
3. How would you describe Ms. Wilson?
4. At what exact point does the story become unrealistic?
5. Why did Toby fall asleep in his soup?
6. Why didn't Toby's mother have an odd reaction to the soup?
7. Describe something that might happen after Ms. Wilson says, "Who is Ms. Wilson?" at the end of the story.

## SKILL FOCUS: Humor

**INSTRUCT:** Explain to students that the quality that makes a story funny, silly, or amusing is called humor. Ask students to identify elements in "Brain Soup" that they found humorous. Tell students that the author of "Brain Soup" creates humor through exaggerated descriptions, funny details and dialogue, and unlikely comparisons. For example, she describes Ms. Wilson's shoes by saying, "Her shoes were the color of potato chips." Point out that this unlikely comparison between shoes and potato chips is humorous because it is so unexpected and unusual.

**ASSESS:** Have students reread the story, paying attention to phrases, passages, and dialogue that they find humorous. Have them use the *Examining Humor* worksheet to record five examples of humor in the story. Then have them briefly explain why they found each example humorous.

## EXTEND

**Science** Have students conduct research to learn about unusual fruits and vegetables from around the world. Then have them create a poster that presents a few examples through words and pictures. You could also have students bring in fruits and vegetables for the class to taste.

### Examining Humor

In the first column below, record five examples of humorous phrases, passages, or dialogue from the story. In the second column, explain why you found the excerpt humorous.

Humorous Excerpt	Why It's Funny

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## Just a Start

pp. 24–29, Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Use this story about a sister and brother who plan a birthday surprise for their father to give students practice in identifying theme.



## RESOURCES

- Analyze Theme

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a short story.
- Students will determine themes.
- Students will work collaboratively to write and illustrate a picture book.

## KEY VOCABULARY

- suppress** (p. 25) to not allow yourself to feel, show, or be affected by an emotion
- murky** (p. 25) very dark or foggy
- simultaneously** (p. 29) happening at the same time

## ENGAGE

**Conversation Question:** What challenges do characters face?

Invite students to name their favorite stories or movies and to briefly describe the challenges faced by the main character(s). Explain that this story is about a family that faces challenges together. Tell students to note each character's challenges and how he or she deals with them.

## INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Display and read aloud the vocabulary words and definitions. For each word, have students write a sentence that uses it correctly. Have students share their sentences with a partner. Then remind students to look for the vocabulary words as they read the article.

## READ & DISCUSS

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

- How does Fern feel about Trevor? Identify two of Fern's feelings and how you learned about them.
- What challenges does each character in this story face?
- How do they respond to their challenges?
- What motivated Trevor to keep working on the story?
- How do you think Dad felt after he listened to the story?
- What does the last line of the story mean?

## SKILL FOCUS: Analyze Theme

**INSTRUCT:** Remind students that the theme of a work is its central message about life or human nature. Continue by explaining that usually themes are not stated directly but can be inferred from events and details in a story. Next, distribute the *Analyze Theme* worksheet to students and review the list of clues to theme. Have students work independently to find clues on the first page of the story and add information to their worksheets. Briefly discuss the details students find. Then have them review the rest of the story and add more details to their worksheets.

**ASSESS:** Have students pair up to compare the details they recorded on worksheets. Then have them complete the worksheet by writing and supporting one or more themes for the story.

## EXTEND

**Art/Writing** Arrange for students to partner with a buddy from a younger class or special needs class. Be sure that the students understand the elements of a picture book. Students will work together to write a simple book about a chosen emotion or feeling. Remind students that Trevor was mad/sad and that working on the book helped him work through the feelings and gave him a source of pride. Tell students that their role is that of Fern's . . . guiding their partner to tell the story and then prepare it for publishing. Talk about the importance of illustrations and encourage the partners to work together to create meaningful pictures. Display and share finished books.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Analyze Theme

Clues to a story's theme can be found in story details, such as the ones listed in the chart below. Look for examples of these clues in "Just a Start." Record the details in the chart.

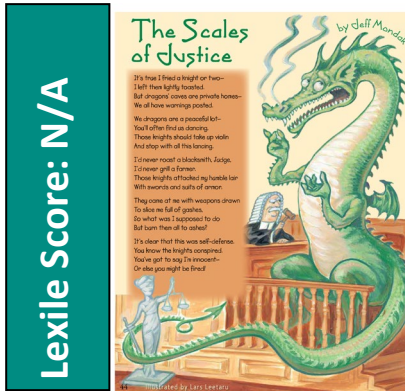
Clues	Details from the Story
Conflicts in the story	
Characters' <b>thoughts</b> and <b>feelings</b>	
Characters' <b>words</b>	
Characters' <b>actions</b>	
Important <b>events</b>	
How characters <b>change</b>	
Lessons characters learn	

**Put It All Together:** What is the theme of this story? Is there more than one theme? Support your ideas with details from the chart.

## The Scales of Justice

pp. 44, Poem

Use this poem that reveals a dragon's perspective to inspire students to rewrite a folktale or fairy tale from an unusual perspective.



### OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a poem.
- Students will write narratives to develop imagined experiences and events.
- Students will analyze cultural characteristics.

### KEY VOCABULARY

- **lot** (p. 44) a particular group, collection, or set of people or things
- **humble** (p. 44) not special, fancy, or expensive
- **conspired** (p. 44) secretly planned with someone to do something that is harmful or illegal

### ENGAGE

**Conversation Question:** What challenges do characters face?

Brainstorm a list of familiar fairy tales. Discuss the main characters, or protagonists, in the tales and the challenges they face. Then, for each tale, identify the antagonist, or the person or thing that works against the main character. Finally, tell students to think about whether the voice in this poem is that of a protagonist or an antagonist.

### INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Read the vocabulary words and definitions. 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.

1. The thieves \_\_\_\_\_ to rob the bank.
2. My \_\_\_\_\_ home is not a castle, but it's cozy and comfortable.
3. We sampled a \_\_\_\_\_ of flavors at the ice cream stand.

### READ & DISCUSS

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

1. Who is the speaker in this poem?
2. Who is the speaker addressing?
3. What is the setting of this poem?
4. What reasons does the dragon give for breathing fire at knights?
5. What threat does the dragon make in the poem?
6. Does the dragon do a good job of defending itself?

### SKILL FOCUS: Rewrite a Tale

**INSTRUCT:** Review the list of fairy tales you generated with students earlier. Point out that in most fairy tales, a prince rescues a princess, a knight slays a dragon, and evil stepmothers and wolves are punished in some way. Then read aloud the picture book *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs*, by John Scieszka. Discuss how this story differs from the original story of the three little pigs. Review the definition of *antagonist*. Then have students choose a traditional fairy tale and retell it from the antagonist's perspective. Have students plan their stories by choosing the tale, deciding whose perspective they will use, and outlining the events they will write about.

**ASSESS:** Have students write their stories and then work with a partner to review, revise, and edit their work. Finally, have students take turns reading their stories to the class.

### EXTEND

**Social Studies** Have students learn about dragons in popular culture, such as dragons in stories, comics, movies, TV shows, and games. Then have them create presentations showing four or five examples of dragons in popular culture and identifying the traits and characteristics of the dragons. Have students deliver their presentations to the class.