Write a Book Review: Analyze Characters

1. Focus (15 MINUTES)

Display the cover of Katy’s First Day of School. Read aloud the title. Say: What do you see on the cover? What do you think this story might be about? (Allow responses.) Let’s read it and find out! As I read this story aloud, think about which character is your favorite and why.

After you finish reading, close the big book and say: My favorite character is Katy’s brother. He is the one who finally talks her into getting out of bed! Now I will write my opinion about my favorite character. Remember that an opinion is an important part of a book review.

Write an opinion on chart paper, for example, “I think Katy’s brother is helpful.” As you write, model the following:

- Emphasize the concepts about print that students still need to practice.
- Continue to model how to say a word slowly and use letter/sound relationships to write words. For words with higher-level spelling patterns, say: Remember that if you don’t know how to spell a word, you can just write the letters for the sounds you hear.
- Tell how you remember to write those words you see often in print.
- Model rereading after each word by pointing to the words you’ve written so far and then pointing to where the next word should go. Say: We’re ready for the word ______. Then discuss and write the word.
- Model adding end punctuation and checking for the correct beginning and end to your sentence.

Ask students to check your sentence by rereading it with you. Then say: Another part of a book review is the reason for an opinion. I need to tell why I think Katy’s brother is helpful.

Write a reason, for example, “He tries to help Katy by telling her about painting at school.” Model applying the strategies listed above as you write.

Ask students to help you reread to check your sentence. Then say: Now I want you to think of the character that you like best in the story. First write which character you like. Then write why you like that character. Remember that an opinion and a reason are two of the most important parts of a book review!
NOTE: Although the mentor big book teaches four parts of a book review—title and author, opinion, reason, and recommendation—these kindergarten lessons focus on the opinion and reason.

For students who need more challenge, continue to display the book reviews in the mentor big book so they have models to refer to. Later you may also want to add the title/author and a recommendation to your modeled book reviews (while emphasizing that students need write only an opinion and a reason) to help reinforce the four parts.

2. Rehearse (5 MINUTES)

Invite students to tell a partner about their favorite character. Say: Tell your partner which character you plan to write about. Remember to include the character’s name and tell why that character is your favorite.

If your class includes English learners, you may wish to model using the following oral sentence frames to support their partner talk:
• My favorite character is ______.
• I like this character because ______.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring (20 MINUTES)

Distribute students’ writing folders. Invite students to write their book reviews. Validate the decisions of students who decide to change their messages or write about something other than a character. Ask questions as needed to help students develop their sentences, and remind them to reread after each word. Reinforce the editing and revising strategies taught in the Journal Writing unit, such as adding adjectives, using an uppercase letter for the word I, and checking for the correct beginning and end on each sentence.

Use the Sample Responsive Conferring Prompts to help you provide differentiated support to individual students based on your observations.

4. Share (5 MINUTES)

Invite two or three students to share their book reviews. Point out and celebrate examples of opinions supported by information from the text. You may wish to provide additional modeling based on your observations during Independent Writing and Conferring.

Sample Responsive Conferring Prompts to Support and Scaffold Writers

Goal Oriented
• I like _____ because ______.
• I will say the word _____ and write the letters for the sounds I hear.
• Notice that I use an uppercase letter for the word _____ at the start of the sentence.

Directive and Corrective Feedback
• Tell me why you liked ______. Now write that.
• Tell me some words to describe ______. Use one of the words in your sentence.

Self-Monitoring and Reflection
• Did you explain why you liked one character best? Tell me about that.
• What letter would you expect to see at the beginning? In the middle? At the end?
• How could you fix that?

Validating and Confirming
• You wrote the letter that stands for the ______ sound.
• You wrote the word _____! You worked that out!
• You stated an opinion and you supported it. That’s what strong writers do!

Teacher Tip
Although drawing is not mentioned in the Focus lesson, allow students who would benefit from drawing before writing to do so. Alternatively students could draw pictures after writing to reinforce the idea that their opinions and reasons are based on the text.