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: Yesterday we read this book and then wrote a book review about our favorite character. What was your favorite character? (Allow responses.) I will retell the story today. As you listen, think about which character is your least favorite and why. Then we will write book reviews about the character we like least. Retell the story in your own words using the illustrations as prompts.

Close the big book and say: My least favorite character is Katy’s dad. He doesn’t say anything to encourage Katy. All he does is pull off her covers! That’s not really helpful. He could have told her about something fun that would happen at school, like her brother did. This might have made her want to get up. Now I will write my opinion. Remember that an opinion is part of a book review.

Write an opinion on chart paper, for example, “Katy’s dad is not very 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 help you reread your sentence to check it. Then say: Another part of a book review is the reason for an opinion. I need to tell why Katy’s dad is not very helpful.

Write a reason, for example, “He didn’t tell Katy why she would like school.” Model applying the strategies listed above as you write.

Ask students to help you reread. Then say: Now I want you to decide which character you like least. Then write why the character is your least favorite. 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 talk to a partner about their least favorite character. Say: Tell your partner which character you like the least. Remember to tell why this character is your least favorite.

If your class includes English learners, you may wish to model using the following oral sentence frames to support their partner talk:
- My least favorite character is ______.
- I don’t like this character because ______.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring (20 MINUTES)

Distribute students’ writing folders. Invite students to write their book reviews. Ask questions as needed to help students develop their sentences, and remind them to reread after each word. Continue to ask students to say words slowly, write the sounds they hear, and write the high-frequency words they know. 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. Encourage students to get ideas from one another as well.

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 don’t like ______ because ______.
- I will say the word ______ and listen for the first sound.
- I will describe ______ with the word ______.

Directive and Corrective Feedback
- Which character will you write about? Why?
- Listen for sounds you know. Write any sounds you can hear.
- What words could you use to describe ______?

Self-Monitoring and Reflection
- Did you name the character? Did you tell what you don’t like? Tell me about that.
- I noticed that you reread words slowly. How did that help?
- Show me where you used uppercase letters correctly.

Validating and Confirming
- You made me think about the character ______ in a new way!
- You wrote the word ______! You worked that out!
- You asked yourself questions. That’s something strong writers do to write strong sentences.

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.