

My Neighbor Is A Caterpillar

Character Motivations and Catalysts – Grade Four

Indiana Standards Connection

Reading

Comprehension and Analysis of Literary Text

4.3.2

Identify the main events of the plot, including their causes and the effects of each event on future actions, and the major theme from the story action.

4.3.3

Use knowledge of the situation, setting, and a character's traits, motivations, and feelings to determine the causes for that character's actions.

4.3.6

Determine the theme

Word recognition, fluency and vocabulary development

4.1.1

Read aloud grade-level-appropriate narrative text and expository text fluently and accurately with appropriate timing, changes in voice and expression.

Listening and Speaking: Skills, strategies and applications

Comprehension

4.7.1

Ask thoughtful questions and respond orally to relevant questions with thoughtful elaboration.

4.7.13

Deliver oral summaries of articles and books that contain the main ideas of the event or article and the most significant details.

Lesson Summary:

Students learn that actions are the result of motivation. Everything we do is spurred by some need or catalyst. Reading, as well as the study of history, becomes more interesting and personal when students understand not just the dates, locations and results of specific events, but the motivations of the individuals involved. This exercise will help them learn to examine motivations more carefully and to understand the concepts of cause and effect. Each student will review and answer the questions on the work sheet. It is suggested that the students write their responses on paper and the teacher lead them in a class discussion afterward.

Pre-Assessment:

- Ask the students to define the word “catalyst” and the word “motivation.” Differentiate between the two by explaining that a motivation is something that induces action while a catalyst is an event or individual that prompts a change in the relationship between two or more other individuals or situations, without being directly effected itself. For example, “Mom” in *My Neighbor Is A Caterpillar* is a catalyst. She forces a change in the relationship between Michael and Mr. Jackson. She also provides the “motivation” by pressing Michael to help his neighbor.
- Have the students read *My Neighbor Is A Caterpillar*, as a group.
- Discuss the meaning of plot and theme. What were the main events in this story? Was there a central theme?
- Hand out the Character Motivations & Catalysts work sheet and tell the students to write several sentences for each answer. This can be done as a homework assignment with follow-up discussion in the next day's class.
- Classroom discussion should include urging students to justify their answers based on information in the text, and quizzing them on the motivations of characters beyond the two main individuals: i.e. What motivated the partisans? What motivated Joe to help Mr. Jackson when he was wounded? What motivates people to fight in a war? Are there catalysts involved in these actions? What is the cause and effect in each situation? Urge students to pose questions and generate debate based on the characters and actions in the story.

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Name _____

Date _____

Directions:

- ◆ Think about the causes and effects contained in *My Neighbor Is A Caterpillar*. How were the characters changed in the process? What was the catalyst involved?
- ◆ Refer back to the book as you answer the questions below. Put yourself in Michael's shoes. How would you react to your mother, to Mr. Jackson, and to the stories you were hearing and the emotions Mr. Jackson was showing? Think about your own motivations and try to determine if they are similar to or different from Michael's.
- ◆ Answer each question as completely as possible, giving reasons for your answers and referring back to the text. Use a separate sheet of paper or the back of this sheet to write a longer explanation.

1. What motivated (or caused) Michael to help Mr. Jackson clean his garage? Was there a catalyst involved? What was it?

2. What motivated Mr. Jackson to tell Michael the story of his service in World War II? What was the catalyst that prompted him to begin reminiscing?

3. What motivated Mom to take Michael over to Mr. Jackson's house? Did Mom know that Mr. Jackson would tell his story to Michael?

4. Mr. Jackson said he dropped out of high school to join the Army? Was that a wise decision? What motivated him to do so and was there a catalyst involved?

5. What motivated the nurse in the field hospital to slap Mr. Jackson's face?

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6. On two different occasions, Joe, the bombardier, patched up Mr. Jackson when he was injured. Why did Joe do this?

7. Why did Mr. Jackson return to combat after being wounded the first time? What was his motivation for continuing to fight, despite being afraid?

8. Why did Michael decide to stay with Mr. Jackson instead of playing with Eric? Would you have made the same decision? Why?

9. What was the theme of this story? List three major events in the plot line.

10. What motivated Mr. Jackson to give Michael his caterpillar pin?

11. Why did Mr. Jackson say that all the GIs in World War II were heroes, and then later insist that he was not a hero?

12. Why did Michael run home to read Mr. Jackson's book? Did Michael's mother make him read the book?