

Animals are Characters, Too: Characters who Gallop, Bark and Squeak

“Why do authors use animals as characters?”
“How do authors use animals in fiction and non-fiction differently?”



This eight-week unit invites students to compare how animals, especially horses, dogs, and mice, are portrayed in fiction and nonfiction.

Reading Standards for Literature

Key Ideas and Details

RL.4.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RL.4.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

RL.4.3 Describe **in depth** a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character’s thoughts, words, or actions).

Craft and Structure

RL.4.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology (e.g., Herculean).

RL.4.5 Explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose, and **refer to the structural elements of** poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and **drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogue, stage directions) when writing or speaking about a text.**

RL.4.6 Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the **difference between first- and third-person narrations.**

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

RL.4.7 Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

RL.4.9 Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics and patterns of events in stories, myths and traditional literature from different cultures.

Reading Standards for Informational Text

Key Ideas and Details

RI.4.2 Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

RI.4.8 Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text.

RI.4.9 Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

Reading Standards: Foundational Skills

Phonics and Word Recognition

RF.4.3 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

a. Use combined knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (e.g., roots and affixes) to read accurately unfamiliar multisyllabic words in context and out of context.

Fluency

RF.4.4 Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

a. Read on-level text with purpose and understanding.

b. Read on-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.

c. Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

Writing Standards**Text Types and Purposes**

W.4.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

- a. Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
- b. Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
- c. Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.
- d. Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
- e. Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

Production and Distribution of Writing

W.4.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W.4.5 With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

W.4.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

W.4.8 Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.

W.4.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

- a. Apply grade 4 Reading standards to literature (e.g., “Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text [e.g., a character’s thoughts, words, or actions].”).
- b. Apply grade 4 Reading standards to informational texts (e.g., “Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text”).

Speaking and Listening Standards**Comprehension and Collaboration**

SL.4.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- a. Come to discussions prepared having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
- b. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.
- c. Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.
- d. Review the key ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

SL.4.2 Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

SL.4.3 Identify the reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

SL.4.4 Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

SL.4.5 Add audio recordings and visual displays to presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.

SL.4.6 Differentiate between contexts that call for formal English (e.g., presenting ideas) and situations where informal discourse is appropriate (e.g., small-group discussion); use formal English when appropriate to task and situation.

Language Standards

Conventions of Standard English

- L.4.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- b. Form and use the progressive (e.g., I was walking; I am walking; I will be walking) verb tenses.*
 - d. Order adjectives within sentences according to conventional patterns (e.g., a small red bag rather than a red small bag).*
 - e. Form and use prepositional phrases.*
 - g. Correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., to, too, two, there, their).*
- L.4.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
- b. Use commas and quotation marks to mark direct speech and quotations from a text.*
 - c. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence.*
 - d. Spell grade-appropriate words correctly, consulting references as needed.*

Knowledge of Language

- L.4.3 Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
- a. Choose words and phrases to convey ideas precisely.*
 - b. Choose punctuation for effect.*
 - c. Differentiate between contexts that call for formal English (e.g., presenting ideas) and situations where informal discourse is appropriate (e.g., small-group discussion).*

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

- L.4.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 4 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- a. Use context (e.g., definitions, examples, or restatements in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.*
 - b. Use common, grade-appropriate Greek and Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., telegraph, photograph, autograph).*
- L.4.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
- a. Explain the meaning of simple similes and metaphors (e.g., as pretty as a picture) in context.*
 - b. Recognize and explain the meaning of common **idioms**, adages, and proverbs.*
- L.4.6 Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being (e.g., quizzed, whined, stammered) and that are basic to a particular topic (e.g., wildlife, conservation, and endangered when discussing animal preservation).