

**Reading: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*
Middle School**

Language Arts Literacy Indicators:	3.1 [8, 12-13]	3.2 [6-8]	3.3 [7, 17]
	3.4 [6, 10, 12-13]	3.5 [7-8]	
Cross-Content Workplace Indicators:	1 [1]	3 [1-3, 8-10]	4 [1-2]

Ms. Armentano’s fifth-grade class had just finished reading C. S. Lewis’s *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Throughout the reading, Ms. Armentano had had students pay particular attention to the character development of the four children in the story: Lucy, Susan, Peter, and Edmund. Students had maintained a character log as they read, recording their impressions of the characters based on key scenes in the story. Now as a prewriting activity, students were asked to demonstrate their ability to describe a character in the novel.

Ms. Armentano asked students to compose a letter to be sent from the professor, a character in the story, to the author, C. S. Lewis, specifically developing the topic, “My! How _____ (a character in the book) has changed since I first met him/her in the story.” Each student was to select one of the four children to write about. Today’s lesson dealt specifically with a prewriting activity aimed at teaching students how to find textual evidence to support their impressions of a particular character. Ms. Armentano arranged the class into groups of four students each. Each student was assigned a role, such as artist, reporter, text checker/time keeper, and writer.

Each group had to brainstorm a list of character traits for their assigned character. They could choose descriptors that applied to the character at any time in the story. Descriptors were to be recorded on a Venn diagram. In the left circle, students were to list traits evident near the beginning of the novel; in the right circle, they were to list traits evident nearer the end of the story; and in the junction they were to list enduring traits of the character.

Ms. Armentano initially gave the groups only 15 minutes to complete their Venn diagrams, hoping to raise their level of concern and thereby encourage them to work attentively on the task. As she circulated among the groups, she noticed that most of the students were referring to their reading logs as well as to the text itself for help identifying appropriate descriptors for their character. She also observed, however, that although the groups were working diligently, they could not complete the task in the allotted time. She therefore told the time keepers to advise the group that the time limit had been extended by another five minutes. At the end of 20 minutes, each group’s reporter shared its diagram and samples of its character’s traits with the entire class.

As the next step, Ms. Armentano asked the groups to expand the Venn diagrams into maps by drawing bubbles outside the Venn diagram. The bubbles were to be connected by lines to specific traits appearing inside the diagram. Ms. Armentano asked students

Focus

By identifying the letter as the end goal, the teacher promotes student motivation for today’s activity.

Use of the Venn diagram as a graphic organizer appeals to multimodal learners.

Careful instructional planning and classroom management facilitates successful small-group learning.

Ongoing monitoring may lead to revision of plans.

to use these bubbles to identify specific scenes in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* that supported each character trait listed. “Inside each bubble,” Ms. Armentano explained, “I want you to write the page, paragraph, and line numbers related to the targeted trait. When you write the first draft of your letter, you will use the bubbles to locate your supporting statements from the story.”

Ms. Armentano again set a time limit for the task and asked the time keepers to advise her when their groups had completed this work. After the checkers confirmed the accuracy of the bubble citations, each group reported to the rest of the class. Students then taped their maps to the board so that everyone could refer to them.

In the next lesson, students would choose one of the four characters and use the maps as a starting point for drafting their individual letters.



By emphasizing the importance of textual support, the teacher underscores the need to back assertions with concrete evidence.

Possible Assessments:

1. Assess student ability to understand character change by noting differences between the traits listed in the left and right circles of the Venn diagram.
2. Have each group member evaluate the diagram and bubbles as resources for writing their first draft.
3. Have students evaluate another group’s textual support for traits identified in the Venn diagram.

Questions for Reflection:

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of doing prewriting activities in cooperative groups prior to individual drafting?
2. In what ways does Ms. Armentano’s cooperative learning task allow for both interdependence and individual accountability?
3. In seeking textual support for the identified traits, will Ms. Armentano’s class need more direct modeling of good evidence? If so, at what point should she intervene to provide it?

Extension Activities:

1. Following drafting, the same groups could reconvene for peer revision conferences.
2. Ms. Armentano could use the drafts as a jumping-off point for explaining and illustrating the difference between direct and indirect statements, as well as the correct use and punctuation of textual quotations.
3. Ms. Armentano and the class could jointly develop a scoring rubric.