



Seuss for Seventh Graders: Identifying Explicit and Implicit Themes within the Works of Dr. Seuss

Guide for Curriculum Unit 04.02.08

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This unit attempts to teach higher level thinking skills to students with lower level reading skills. Seventh-grade students, who normally scoff at infantile books such as Dr. Seuss, will become literary critics who learn the value of interpretation as they discuss, debate, and determine the explicit and implicit themes found within five of Dr. Seuss' "message books": *The Sneetches*, *The Lorax*, *The Butter Battle Book*, *Horton Hears a Who*, and *The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins* .

Through teacher modeling and guided practice, middle-school students will read a biographical sketch of Dr. Theodor Seuss Geisel and take an in-depth look at the literary concept of *conflict* which plays an important role in his later books. Within small groups students will read the chosen books, discuss CMT-based questions (focusing on main idea, theme, and author's purpose), brainstorm possible themes, and practice the skill of summarizing. Further into the unit, small groups will reform, compare and contrast the themes found in each book, and work on a collaborative theme-related final project to present as a group.

Teaching adolescent students requires a delicate balance of visualizing each student as a blossoming young adult capable of critical thinking while also recognizing that each "young adult" is not quite as confidently capable of higher level literary skills. This unit plays on the dichotomy of our adolescent students, pushing them to recognize the literary voices hidden inside.

(Recommended for Reading and Language Arts, grades 6-8.)

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