

Interpreting Characters: The Heart of the Story

Grade 4: Fiction, Unit 1

Postassessment Sample Responses

Following are sample responses for each question, at a range of levels. These samples will help students notice if they have done similar work in their responses, and thus will be a helpful part of their self-assessment. These can also serve as mentor texts to help your students to identify specific ways they can lift their work to the next level. For Postassessments (Units 1 and 2), we provide sample responses for one level above grade level, in addition to the levels provided in Preassessments.

Question	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<p>1. What kind of person is Leo?</p> <p><i>Inferring About Characters and Other Story Elements: Character Traits, Supporting Thinking with Text Evidence</i></p>	<p>Leo is sad. Or Leo is happy.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level may confuse traits with feelings. Or students could supply a trait, especially if the trait is explicitly named in the text.</i></p>	<p>Leo is nice. He rescues a turtle and takes good care of him. Leo takes Charlie the turtle everywhere. He hugs and kisses him!</p> <p><i>Responses at this level tend to identify a character trait and to use evidence to support this thinking.</i></p>	<p>Leo is a caring friend. I know this because he rescues a turtle and takes good care of him. Leo carries Charlie the turtle on his shoulder. He even hugs and kisses him! Charlie makes Leo not be depressed because now he has a friend. But I think deep down he still wants a human friend.</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Everyone thinks Leo is slow. He got put in the slow class at school. But when he gave a long speech about his turtle, he showed his smart side. He told people lots of facts about turtles, like what kinds of talents they have. He won a prize for the best talk so now I bet people are not sure if he really IS slow.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level tend to show how a character is complicated. They discuss more than one trait and/or motivation. Students also use and discuss details from different parts of the text to support their answers.</i></p>	<p>Leo is a caring friend. I know this because he takes Charlie the turtle everywhere on his shoulder. He even hugs and kisses him! I think Leo is so into his turtle because the turtle is the only friend he's got. It says that when he was put in the slow class, "Leo thought he would never get over it. He saw no way to be happy after that."</p> <p>I think Leo has given up on having friends at school. When other kids give their reports, he doesn't even listen. He's probably dreaming of getting home to explore the backyard with Charlie. That's sort of sad because deep down Leo is lonely for a human friend.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level tend to show how characters are complicated and/or contradictory. They discuss more than one trait and/or motivation, especially the more hidden sides of the character, as well as the obvious. Students also use and discuss details from different parts of the text to support their answers.</i></p>

Question	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<p>2. How did Leo change from the beginning to the end of the story and why?</p> <p><i>Character Response/Change</i></p>	<p>First Leo was sad and slow. Then he got a turtle and was happy.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level tend to mention a change in feelings or actions and provide a surface-level reason for the change.</i></p>	<p>In the beginning Leo felt sad because everyone thought he was slow and he didn't have any friends. But then he got Charlie, a turtle. He started taking Charlie everywhere and felt happier. He even took Charlie to school when he gave a report about turtles. He got an award and was much happier.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level may focus on changes in character feelings, actions, or traits. They typically point to one key event from earlier in the story to explain the change.</i></p>	<p>In the beginning Leo felt sad because everyone thought he was slow. The school put him in a slow class. His own dad said he was "slower than the rest." But then Leo got Charlie, a turtle. He started taking Charlie everywhere and felt happier. He even took Charlie to school when he gave a report about turtles. He got an award and learned he wasn't so slow after all.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level address change across the whole story. They often include discussion of how other story elements (other characters, setting, problem, key events) play a part in causing the change. In cases where the character changes because he or she has learned a life lesson, student responses may talk about the lesson or theme.</i></p>	<p>In the beginning Leo felt sad because everyone thought he was slow. The school put him in a slow class. His own dad said he was "slower than the rest." But then Leo got Charlie, a turtle. He started taking Charlie everywhere, even to school. He gave a report about turtles and his love of Charlie made it into a great report. Leo put his whole heart into it. Leo's report also showed people that he wasn't so slow after all. Leo got an award for the best talk and for the first time in a long time he felt FAST.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level address change across the whole story. They write about subtle as well as more obvious changes in characters and multiple possible causes for the changes. They often include discussion of how other story elements (other characters, setting, problem, key events) play a part in causing the change. In cases where the character changes because he or she has learned a life lesson, student responses may talk about the lesson or theme.</i></p>

Question	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<p>3. Reread lines 87–93 from “Slower Than the Rest.”</p> <p>How is this part of the story important to the whole story?</p> <p><i>Analyzing Parts of a Story in Relation to Whole</i></p>	<p>This tells the end of the story. After Leo gave his report, he got a prize.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level discuss how a particular part in the story fits into the story’s sequence of events. Students may tell what came before the part and/or what came after.</i></p>	<p>This part tells how the problem is solved. The problem was that Leo felt sad to be put in the slow class and now he’s won a prize and doesn’t feel slow.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level tend to name which story element was featured in a particular part in the story (in this case, “the problem”). Student responses also include the importance of the particular part to the rest of the story.</i></p>	<p>This part is important because it is the resolution of the problem. The problem was that Leo felt sad when he was put in the slow class. When he got Charlie he started to feel happier. But this is the part of the story when he feels REALLY happy because he won his first prize ever and doesn’t feel slow.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level discuss how a particular part affects or is affected by other parts of the story. Students name the story element that is featured in this part and also include specific details from other parts of the story, perhaps to explain a decision or change.</i></p>	<p>This part is important because it is the resolution of the main problem in the story and it shows the theme of the story. The problem was that Leo felt sad because he was put in the slow class. When he got Charlie he started to feel happier because now he had a friend. But he still felt slow. So deep down, he was still sad. In this part, he is given a prize for the best report and he doesn’t feel slow anymore. It says, “And for the first time in a long time, Leo felt <i>fast</i>.” The author teaches that it’s not fair to call someone slow. Everyone has talents.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level use literary language to explain how a particular part of the story is important to the whole story. In addition to discussing the story element(s) featured in this part, students may also discuss how this part supports a larger idea or theme in the text. Fifth-grade responses may also consider the author’s word choice or craft techniques, and often quote the text.</i></p>

Question	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<p>4. Write about a theme (or life lesson) that this story develops. Use details from the story to support your answer.</p> <p><i>Determining Themes/ Cohesion</i></p>	<p>It is hard for Leo to be slow and that makes him sad.</p> <p><i>Or</i></p> <p>Leo feels bad about being slow and gets a turtle named Charlie and that makes him happy.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level tend to focus on the story itself rather than on a universal theme that the story develops. Students may simply retell a part of the story or they may name a lesson they learned from it or a reaction—or feeling—they had.</i></p>	<p>When Leo got up in front of the class and gave his report, he learned the lesson that you have to try because when you try, you can do it. Leo gave his report and he felt proud and he felt fast.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level name a life lesson that a character in the story learns, most often at the end. Students tend to retell a part of the story that shows this lesson.</i></p>	<p>A theme this story develops is that everyone has talents. Early in the story, Leo found hidden talents in his turtle. People think turtles just sit in their shells but Leo found out that Charlie can actually run fast. He also found out that Charlie looks wise. And at the end of the story, after Leo gave a good report about Charlie, the whole school clapped for him. It was like they had found his hidden talent too. They were saying Leo is smart after all.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level explore one theme across the story. Students are not yet able to name multiple themes, but can explain how one theme emerges in more than one part of the text. Some students may do this by showing the absence of the theme at the start of the story, and the presence of it by the end, while other students may cite a couple examples of the theme developing across the story.</i></p>	<p>A theme this story develops is that everyone has talents. Early in the story, Leo found hidden talents in his turtle. The author could have made this a story about Leo and his dog, not his turtle, but the story tells about a turtle because everyone thinks turtles are slow. So the turtle is a symbol for being slow. People think turtles just sit in their shells but Leo found out that Charlie can actually run fast. He also found out that Charlie looks wise. And at the end of the story, after Leo gave a good report about Charlie, the whole school clapped for him. It was like they had found his hidden talent too. They were saying Leo is smart after all.</p> <p>This story also teaches the theme that it's wrong to label people as slow. When Leo was put into the class for "slow" kids, he got depressed. It said, "Leo thought he would never get over it. He saw no way to be happy after that." Charlie the turtle wasn't put into the slow class but people do label turtles as slow. But the turtle turns out not to be slow and Leo is also not slow. The story teaches that it is wrong to label people or animals as slow.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level name more than one theme that the story develops. Students can explain how parts of the text develop each theme and will reference specific details or quote the text. If asked, they can discuss the techniques that the author uses to highlight at least one of the themes.</i></p>