



Close reading plan

Stuart Little, Chapter 2 "Home Problems" by E.B. White

Created by Stacey Albertson, 2014 Connecticut Dream Team teacher

What makes this text complex			
Text and Author	Chapter 2, <i>Home Problems</i> Stuart Little E.B.White	Where to Access Text	This text can be found in the original version of the novel.
Text Description			
In Chapter 2, the narrator of the fiction story goes on to explain other problems they are facing at home because of Stuart’s size. At first, we learn how helpful Stuart can be in various situations. For example, Stuart helps in getting Ping-Pong balls and assisting with a stuck piano key. The narrator goes on to discuss further attempts Stuart’s family makes to ensure that his feelings are never hurt, because of misconceptions about mice; such as the use of the word “mice” in the poem, <i>Twas the Night Before Christmas</i> . This chapter is important in constructing the central message of the text.			
Quantitative			
Lexile and Grade Level	920 Lexile Level, DRA 40 F&P R, Grade 4	Text Length	4 and ½ pages in length
Qualitative			
Meaning/Central Ideas		Text Structure/Organization	
Acceptance of someone’s differences Perseverance Helping and Protecting Family		This chapter of the book is episodic. It describes in detail specific situations that have occurred in the house, because of Stuart’s size. Sentences are long in length, bridging multiple ideas. There is a lot of dialogue throughout the chapter.	
Prior Knowledge Demands		Language Features	
In order to read this chapter of the text, the reader needs to be aware of the fact that Stuart was born into a family of humans. The reader needs knowledge of the physical characteristics of a mouse. It would be helpful for the reader to have knowledge of the poem <i>Three Blind Mice</i> and <i>Twas the Night Before Christmas</i> .		This chapter contains metaphors and language that aides in visualizing. .	
Vocabulary			
Tier Two Words (General academic vocabulary)		Tier Three Words (Domain-specific words)	
“Words that are far more likely to appear in written texts than in speech. [They] often represent subtle or precise ways to say relatively simple things—saunter instead of walk, for example.” (CCSS ELA Appendix A)		“[Tier Three words]...are specific to a domain or field of study (lava, carburetor, legislature, circumference, aorta) and key to understanding a new concept within a text.” (CCSS ELA Appendix A)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mousehole • Grand piano • Damp • Emerge 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louse • Grouse 	
Potential Reader/Task Challenges			
There is a lot of humor throughout the chapter that may be difficult for a young reader to understand. Some of the sentences are long in length and may require the reader to read through them more than once. The identity of the narrator is unknown, and they do use an “I” statement in the chapter.			

Text-dependent questions		
Question	Standard alignment	Page of this document
1. Stuart is a hard worker. Cite two pieces of evidence to prove this claim.	R.L.3.3	#4
2. On page 9, Mrs. Little tore out the song “Three Blind Mice” from the families’ nursery songbook. Why did Mrs. Little do this? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.	R.L. 3.3	#7
3. E.B. White titles Chapter 2 “Home Problems”. Use evidence from the text to explain how this title is appropriate.	R.L.3.5	#10
4. Use the actions of Stuart and his parents as well as the title of the chapter to determine a central message of this chapter. Use evidence to support your answer.	R.L.3.2.	#13
Target Standards		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R.L.3.2. Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text. • R.L.3.3 Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events. • R.L.3.5. Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections. 		

Question 1

Question #1	Stuart is a hard worker. Cite two pieces of evidence to prove this claim.
Standard(s) covered:	R.L.3.1. Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers. R.L.3.3. Describe characters in a story (e.g. their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

Example response that meets standard	Look-Fors
In the beginning of this chapter, Stuart is helping the family by getting the ping pongs balls out of small spaces. The author says that the ball is as tall as Stuart. The author also says that he had to push the ball with all of his might to move it. Stuart didn't give up, even though the ball was heavy. He kept trying. Stuart also goes inside of the piano to help George by moving the stuck piano key. The author says that, "This was no easy job for Stuart". He also says that Stuart liked it. This is why Stuart is a hard worker.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two pieces of evidence from the text. • Examples of how Stuart moved the ping pong balls or went inside of the piano to move the stuck key.

If students are struggling to answer the text-dependent question, use this follow-up plan for modeling and practice:

Objective	In this lesson, you will learn how to describe characters traits in a story by identifying and citing evidence that support your claim.
Prior knowledge to review	Students need to know that characters have traits. The author demonstrates these traits through the characters thoughts and actions. (R.L. 3.3)
Steps to achieve objective	Think aloud for direct instruction
1. What character trait is the question asking me to find evidence to support?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask yourself, "What type of trait is the question asking me about?" • What does "hardworking" mean? • What does this trait look like? • Have I seen someone act like this before?

<p>2. What words in the text support this character trait? Use these words to find your evidence in the text. Write this evidence down to cite in your answer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what parts of my text was Stuart “working”? In the beginning, I remember that he was getting the Ping Pong balls for George, and then he was going into the piano to un-stick the keys. • Go to the part of the text when Stuart was pushing the Ping Pong Balls. • Look for words and phrases that prove that Stuart is “hardworking”. E.B.White says that Stuart was, “pushing a Ping-Pong ball with all his might, the perspiration rolling down his cheeks”. He also says that the ball was the same height as Stuart. • Write these phrases down that show how Stuart was hardworking. • Go to the second part of the text where Stuart is working, and he is inside of the piano. • Look through the text and find words and phrases that Stuart was working hard or exerting a lot of effort. It says that staying in the piano, “was no easy job for Stuart”. It also says Stuart liked working in the piano, even though it was dangerous. Write down this evidence. • Use the actions of Stuart as your evidence of how he is hard working. This evidence provides the support of how Stuart is hard working.
<p>3. Construct a response where you write down evidence you found and how it demonstrates the specific trait of the character.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask yourself, what do I need to say to completely answer the question? • You need to explain where the text explains how Stuart was hard working. Check your list of evidence. • Write you first piece of evidence in paragraph form. Explain how this proves that Stuart is hard working. • Write the second piece of evidence in the paragraph, and go on explain how this proves that Stuart is hard working. • Conclude your response by re-stating the question.

Extension and practice

- If the students are having difficulty finding evidence in the text, have them write down the two parts of the text where the Stuart was working. Have them write these two situations on each side of a paper. Then have them write down words or phrases from that specific portion of the text that proves Stuart was hardworking. Provide them with sentence starters that say, “I know Stuart is hardworking because the text says that _____ . This proves he was hardworking because _____ ” (See Appendix A).
- If the students are having difficulty understanding “hardworking”, look up the term in the dictionary and provide them with other examples of how someone can be hardworking. Share a story with them about how you or someone else could be hardworking.
- If the students are having trouble with quotation marks, write sample quotes on the board, emphasizing the use of the quotation marks. Model for the students how the quotation marks go around the words that are DIRECTLY from the text. Return to the text, and guide the students to see where the words are exactly in the text. This proves that these are the author’s words. Review with them how you write the same quote, but with the quotation marks around the phrase.

What next?

For additional practice, with students or for students' independent work, apply this learning objective and set of steps to other complex texts.

See more examples of how to teach (name skill and standard)

Objective: In this lesson, you will learn how to describe characters traits in a story by identifying and citing evidence that support your claim.

1. What character trait is the question asking me to find evidence to support?
2. What words in the text support this character trait? Use these words to find your evidence in the text. Write this evidence down.
3. Construct a response where you write down evidence you found and how it demonstrates the specific trait of the character.

[Characters In a Story Using Key Details From The Text](#)

Question 2

Question #2	On page 9, Mrs. Little tore out the song “Three Blind Mice” from the families’ nursery songbook. Why did Mrs. Little do this? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
Standard(s) covered:	R.L.3.1. Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers. R.L.3.3. Describe characters in a story (e.g. their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

Example response that meets standard	Look-fors
Mrs. Little is Stuart’s mom. She took the page out of the songbook because she doesn’t want Stuart to see the word “mice” in the song. In the song, the mice are blind. The song also says that a lady is going to cut off a mouse’s tail. Mrs. Little doesn’t want Stuart to have bad ideas in his mind about mice because of the song. She said that things like this make children have bad dreams at night. Mrs. Little loves Stuart and wants to protect him.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students should point out one example of how the song would present a scary thought about mice. For example, the mice being blind, or being chased by the women with the carving knife. This is the evidence from the text. • The response should also include the idea that the Littles want to protect Stuart because he is their son.

If students are struggling to answer the text-dependent question, use this follow-up plan for modeling and practice:

Objective	In this lesson, you will be able to make an inference about a character’s actions by using specific text evidence and your prior knowledge.
Prior knowledge to review	Students need to be able to describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges. (R.L.2.3)
Steps to achieve objective	Think aloud for direct instruction
1) Find the specific part of the text. Re-read.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This question asks me to think about a specific part of the story. First, I need to find that part in the story and turn back to it in my book. Then I need to re-read the section and check any notes I may have made on it.

<p>2) Ask yourself, "What is the character doing?" Find the text evidence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After I have re-read this part of the text, I need to analyze what the text has said. In this case, the book says that Mrs. Little tore out the page. It then goes on to her comments, which explain that she doesn't want Stuart to have "notions" in his head. • It also says that she would feel, "badly to have my son grow up fearing that a farmer's wife was going to cut off his tail with a carving knife".
<p>3) Ask yourself, "What do I know about this? Why is this character doing/saying this?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First, I need to figure out what I know about this. I have a mom, just like Mrs. Little. And my mom always wants me to be safe and protect me. Sometimes, she doesn't let me watch certain TV shows, or play with some video games. That's because my mom wants to protect me. Mrs. Little is doing the same thing here. (You could turn and talk here to have the students discuss • I know the song <i>Three Blind Mice</i> and I can remember this part. I am thinking that Mrs. Little doesn't want Stuart to hear the song because he is a mouse, and it could be very frightening, kind of like a scary movie.
<p>4) Write a response that puts your thoughts and the text evidence together.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By using my prior knowledge and the text, I can say that Mrs. Little tore out the page in the songbook because she wanted to protect Stuart. • I know this because she said that she doesn't want Stuart to have bad ideas in his head. This is my text evidence. • I know my mom says things like this to me because she wants to protect me. The inference I am making is that Mrs. Little tore out the page in the songbook because she wants to protect Stuart, and she doesn't want him to have scary ideas about mice in his head, because he is a mouse.

Extension and practice

- If the students are having difficulty understanding the scenario, have a class discussion about the song Three Blind Mice. Have the children turn and talk about why the Little's wouldn't want to hear this song. Also have the student's think of a time that their parents tried to protect them from something.
- If the students are having trouble understanding what an inference is, provide them with a visual. The visual will consist of a "mixing" of their own prior knowledge with the text evidence. (Appendix B) By putting these two ideas together, what are they able to assume? You can provide them with the example. For instance, "If a student walks into the classroom with an umbrella, I can infer that it is raining outside. The evidence is the umbrella that I see them carrying. I KNOW that umbrellas are used when it is raining. This knowledge helps me come to the conclusion that it is raining outside".

What next?

For additional practice, with students or for students' independent work, apply this learning objective and set of steps to other complex texts.

See more examples of how to teach making inferences.

Objective: In this lesson, you will be able to make an inference about a character's actions by using specific text evidence.

1. Find the specific part of the text. Re-read it.
2. Ask yourself, "What is the character doing?" Find the text evidence.
3. Ask yourself, "What do I know about this? Why is this character doing/saying this?"
4. Write a response that puts your thoughts and the text evidence together.

[Determine a character's motivation](#)

Question 3

Question #3	E.B. White titles Chapter 2 “Home Problems”. Use evidence from the text to explain how this title is appropriate.	
Standard(s) covered:	R.L.3.5. Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections.	
	Example response that meets standard	Look-fors
	<p>The author of this story named this chapter “Home Problems”. I think he did that because there are a lot of problems the Little’s are having at home because Stuart is a mouse. For example, they have to rip out the pages of a songbook because the word mouse is in it. They also change the way they sing a Christmas song because the word mouse is also in that. At the end, they start worrying about Stuart going down a mouse hole. These are all problems that they are having at home because Stuart is a mouse. That is why he named the chapter “Home Problems”.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student needs to point out at least two examples from the chapter that are problematic for the Little’s. These include ripping out the page of “Three Blind Mice” from the songbook, rewording “Twas the Night Before Christmas”, and worrying about Stuart going into the mouse hole. • The student needs to explain that these are problems that they are facing in their home because Stuart is a mouse, and that is why the author named this chapter, “Home Problems”.
If students are struggling to answer the text-dependent question, use this follow-up plan for modeling and practice:		
Objective	In this lesson, you will be able to find text evidence that supports the chapter title of the text by analyzing the chapter title and finding details that support it.	
Prior knowledge to review	Students need to have an understanding of how books are broken up into chapters, and how chapters are named. It is important for them to understand that author’s name a chapter after a “big idea” that is taking place in that section of the text.	
Steps to achieve objective	Think aloud for direct instruction	
1) Ask yourself, “What does the title of the chapter mean?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the title of the chapter. This titled is, “Home Problems”. First, I am going to make sure that I understand the words in the title. I know what a home is, and I also know what a problem is. • Then I need to ask myself what does this title mean? I am thinking that “Home Problems” means that you are having problems at your house of home. Something is going wrong there. For this chapter, I think that the author is using this title because he is going to tell the reader about the problems that the characters are having at home. 	

2) Find the evidence in the text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now that I know that this chapter is going to talk about problems at home, I need to find the evidence in the text that explains the problems they were having at home. • I remember that the Littles ripped the Three Blind Mice page out of a book, so Stuart wouldn't see the word mouse. They also re-wrote the words for <i>Twas the Night Before Christmas</i>. The problem here is that the Littles have to make sure that that Stuart never sees the word mouse. • Also, at the end of the chapter, the Little's realize that they are afraid that Stuart will go into the mouse hole. This is another problem for them. • I need to write down the evidence that I have to support my answer.
3) Make an inference using your prior knowledge and your evidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am thinking about how all of the ideas that the narrator talks about in this chapter are problems that parents don't typically face with a human child. • That makes me think that the author wants me to know that the family is having this specific problem because Stuart is a mouse. This "big idea" here is that the family is facing a lot of problems at home because Stuart is a mouse.
4) Write a response that incorporates the evidence and answers the question.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now, I need to take my evidence and create a response with it. First, I need to tell the reader what I think the title of the chapter means. • Now, I need to support that idea by using the evidence that I found, and prove that these are the problems the Little's are facing in their home because Stuart is a mouse. • I need to wrap up the response by saying that the author used this as a chapter title because the chapter talks about the problems the Little's have at their house.

Extension and practice

- If the students are having difficulty organizing their evidence into their response, provide them with a graphic organizer (Appendix C) that they can put their ideas into. You can then use a flow chart to help the students to see how you can put the evidence together to create a response. The visual will help the students to see what components they need to incorporate in their response.
- If your students are having difficulty understanding the concept of "home problems", discuss what type of problems they have at home first. This may help them to make the connection. It would also be helpful to review the vocabulary with them from the chapter. For example, they may have difficulty understanding the language the author uses when describing the ripping out of the song page, as well as the re-wording of *Twas the Night Before Christmas*.

What next?

For additional practice, with students or for students' independent work, apply this learning objective and set of steps to (name type of text and skill/standard)

See more examples of how to teach (name skill and standard)

Objective: In this lesson, you will be able to find text evidence that supports the chapter title of the text.

1. Ask yourself, "What does the title of the chapter mean?"
2. Find the evidence in the text.
3. Write a response that incorporates the evidence and answers the question.

[Interpret the Title of a Poem](#)

Question 4

Question #4	Use the actions of Stuart and his parents as well as the title of the chapter to determine a central message of this chapter. Use evidence to support your answer.	
Standard(s) covered:	R.L.3.2. Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in a text.	
	Example response that meets standard	Look-fors
	In this chapter the reader learns that Stuart is a hard-worker. I think Stuart works hard because he wants to make his family happy. He does this when he goes inside the piano to help George. Stuart’s parents also want him to be happy. That is why they worry so much about him. They even make sure that no one sings songs with the word “mouse” in it. They are also very worried that Stuart will go in the mouse hole. I think the author titled this chapter “Home Problems” because these are problems the Little’s face at home. They face these problems because they love and care about each other. That is why I think the message of this chapter is that family members will do anything for one another even if they don’t look like each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of Stuart helping his family, by being a hard worker • Evidence of Stuart’s family worrying about him and protecting him • Mention of the title of the chapter and what it means. • A general conclusion that includes the central message of the chapter. Such as family protects each other, family members will help each other, or family members can still care about each other even if they don’t look like each other
If students are struggling to answer the text-dependent question, use this follow-up plan for modeling and practice:		
Objective	In this lesson, you will be able to determine the central message of the chapter and support it with evidence from the chapter by analyzing the actions of the characters.	
Prior knowledge to review	Students need to be able to identify what a central message is (R.L.1.2). Students need to be able to use text evidence to support a central message (R.L.2.2).	
Steps to achieve objective	Think aloud for direct instruction	
1) Ask yourself, “What does the author want me to know about the characters in this text based on their actions?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After I have read the text, I need to take some time to think it over. It may help if I look back at the notes I took while I was reading. • I need to ask myself, “What does this author want me to take away from this? What are they trying to tell me?” • I am going to go back through the text, and think about the characters actions. As I write the actions down, I will write down what I think this action shows. • For example, when Stuart works hard to get the Ping-Pong ball for George, I know he is doing it because he wants to make George happy. Also, when Stuart’s parents rip out the page in the songbook, I know they are doing that because they don’t want Stuart to see the word “mouse”. They are trying to protect him. 	

<p>2) Pull all my thoughts together. What do these ideas show?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First, I need to re-read all of the conclusions I came to from the character’s actions. Is there any theme that is common to them all? • I need to think about how this theme relates to the title of the chapter. For example, I know from the characters actions that this family really cares about each other, and is willing to protect each other, regardless of the fact that they look A LOT different. The title of the chapter “Home Problems” is in place to show that all of these problems they face, is because they truly love and care about each other. It’s not always each, but they truly are a family.
<p>3) Create a response that explains the central message and incorporates the text evidence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To begin my response, I need to explain how I determined the central message. I will explain what I think the central message is. In this story, I believe the central message is to love and care for your family members, regardless of whether or not they look like you. All families are different. • I then need to support this central message with evidence from the text. I need to explain the evidence and then provide information on how that relates to the central message. I need to be sure to include evidence of Stuart’s actions, his family’s actions, as well as the title of the chapter. All three of these support the central message.

Extension and practice

- For extra practice, have the students are having trouble combining the ideas from the evidence, have them use the graphic organizer. First, they should fill in their evidence. Have them re-read the evidence and find the “big idea”. Conclude by having the students write the central message in the top box.
- If the students are having trouble understanding what the central message is, give them some verbal scenarios. For example, you could say, “Yesterday, I got on my bike. My mom told me to put my helmet on, but then she went inside. I really didn’t want to put my helmet on, so I decided not to. I knew she wouldn’t come back out for a while. So I started riding my bike down the driveway without my helmet. I ran over a bump, and I fell off the side of my bike. I banged my head. I went running into my house. When I got into the bathroom, I saw that I had a cute on my forehead. It hurt really badly. Too bad I didn’t have my helmet on”. Have the students discuss why happened in the story. Discuss how the girl in the story got hurt. She got hurt because she didn’t have her helmet on, and she didn’t have her helmet on because she didn’t listen to her mom. Therefore, the big idea is that the girl should listen to her mom. If she had listened, the problem in the story would never have happened. This tells me that this is the message the author wants me to learn from the text.
- For practice, have the students come up with short stories of their own. Have them verbally share the stories with one another during a Turn and Talk. The students should share the central message with their partner after they have listened to the story. This will help the students to become familiar with how meaning in a story is constructed.

What next?

<p>For additional practice, with students or for students' independent work, apply this learning objective and set of steps to (name type of text and skill/standard</p>	<p>See more examples of how to teach (name skill and standard)</p>
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Objective: In this lesson, you will be able to determine the central message of the chapter and support it with evidence from the chapter.

1. Ask yourself, "What does the author want me to know?"
2. Pull all my thoughts together. What do these ideas show?
3. Create a response that explains the central message and incorporates the text evidence.

[Identify the Theme of the Story by Asking What Did the Character Learn](#)

Appendix A

Evidence #1

Evidence #2

Stuart was working hard when_____.	Stuart was working hard when _____.
Words or Phrases that Prove this from the Text:	Words of Phrases that Prove this from the Text:
I know Stuart is hardworking because the text says that _____. This proves he was hardworking because _____ _____ _____.	I know Stuart is hardworking because the text says that _____. This proves he was hardworking because _____ _____ _____.

Appendix B

Fill in the chart with information from your text. Conclude by making your inference.

My Prior
Knowledge

+

Text Evidence

=

Inference

Putting Evidence into a text

Topic Sentence: (Introduce your idea)

Evidence 1:

Evidence 2:

Your Closing Thoughts:

