

## Lesson Plan: Understanding Empathy through Narrative

### Introduction

For a unit or set of lessons that includes design thinking using the Extraordinaires Design Studio®, the following lesson precedes the formal distribution of design projects. For this lesson, students are given the opportunity to learn about and exercise their empathy skills.

### Learning Objective & Standards

Given the assigned Extraordinaire character card and graphic organizer, students will use their knowledge of empathy to identify, list, and discuss their observations about an Extraordinaire's appearance, environment, occupation, and other details in order to assess the character's needs and compose a short narrative to illustrate that need during a day in the life of the character.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.8.** Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1.** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
  - **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1.B.** Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.

### Materials

- One Extraordinaire Character Card per pair of students, or a shared Extraordinaires Design Studio®.
- Graphic Organizer: Getting to Know Your Extraordinaire, one per student.

### Anticipatory Set or Do Now

The teacher will ask students the following question: "If someone followed you around for a week, what three things would they say that you would need to make your life easier? This could involve your studies or responsibilities, the place where you live or hang out, or any sport or hobby that you enjoy."

Students write their responses and share them either with a partner or as part of a brief whole class discussion.

The teacher will point out to students that some of their needs may not be obvious to the casual viewer or even to a close friend. If there is time, the teacher may ask the following second question: "What does it take to truly understand what other people need to make their lives better?"

### **Direct Instruction**

- The teacher will give to students the definition of “empathy” [the ability to understand another person’s feelings and experiences] and explain what it means to empathize with someone else.
- Using one of the Extraordinaires character cards (preferably enlarged and displayed via projection or interactive whiteboard), the teacher will think aloud while examining both sides of the card in order to model how to “get to know” or empathize with the character.
- The teacher will first focus on the front of the card to capture the “essential” version of the Extraordinaire, and then focus on the smaller scenes on the reverse side to locate the secondary and surprising facets of the Extraordinaire’s life.

### **Student Activities**

The teacher will *randomly* distribute to each student a graphic organizer, and then distribute one Extraordinaire character card to each pair of students. [Teachers may consider purposeful alternate grouping of students for differentiation.]

While the teacher circulates around the room, the students will

- examine both sides of the card together,
- discuss what they see,
- help each other to find as many details as possible,
- and record their observations about the character’s life on their individual graphic organizers.

### **Formative Assessment or Independent Practice**

Once students have filled in the entire spider map section of the organizer with their shared observations, they will independently write brief narratives about a day in the life of the Extraordinaire. One student will write about the Extraordinaire’s *work day*, and the other will write about the Extraordinaire’s *day off*. The teacher will collect the organizers at the end of the class to review the narratives.

The teacher will assess how proficiently students have articulated their understanding of the life of the Extraordinaire as a representation of the students’ understanding of empathy. This may also include assessing the observations in the spider map to evaluate how well the students interpreted the illustrations.

### **Summary**

Returning to a whole class format, the teacher will ask students to voluntarily share with the class a moment of empathy that they experienced with their Extraordinaire, followed by either of the following key questions: “How does knowing that change the way you would help the character?” or “How does knowing that give you ideas that you wouldn’t have had otherwise?”