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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2011 Volume I: The Art of Reading People: Character, Expression, Interpretation

Making Friends with Characters: Exploring Friendship through Literature

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by Sarah Hall Kiesler

Using a carefully selected progression of read-aloud texts, this unit is intended to cultivate in first and second grade students an ability to take another person's perspective – to consider what a person's actions, words, and reactions tell us. We will practice reading characters' facial expressions and words for clues as to how they feel. The texts included in this unit were selected because they offer students the opportunities to explore friendships between characters while at the same time considering implications for their own relationships. My hope is that the included activities will help them gain critical skills necessary to manage and repair their friendships when conflicts and misunderstandings arise. This unit will allow young students to not only to build empathy for the other people in their lives but also for the characters they encounter in literature.

(Developed for Language Arts, grade 1; recommended for Language Arts and Civics, grades 1-2)

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