Lesson Plan on the Short Story “Charles” by Shirley Jackson

Grade Level: Junior High

Submitted by: Melissa MacPhee, Vince Steele, Craig Moffatt, Amber Orychock

Overview: Students will examine Shirley Jackson’s short story, “Charles” by completing a series of activities. The pre-reading activities include a journal entry, a four step approach to vocabulary, a prediction exercise using the program Inspiration, and a graffiti wall. Once students have read the story, they will define the elements of the short story through a graphic organizer, complete a series of questions, create a character creature (possibly using Inspiration or Paint program), and finish with the designing of a book jacket.

Materials: cluster of computers with Inspiration and Paint programs, flow chart paper, markers, and handouts.

English Language Arts Learning Outcomes:

GCO 1: Students will speak and listen to explore, clarify, extend, and reflect on their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences.

1.1 consider and reflect upon the contribution of others’ ideas during discussions
1.2 ask questions that probe for accuracy, relevancy, and validity; respond thoughtfully and appropriately to such questions
1.3 state a point of view in a convincing manner, offering relevant information to support that viewpoint
1.4 listen carefully to identify key points in oral presentations, and evaluate the relevancy of supporting details

GCO 2: Students will be able to communicate information and ideas effectively and clearly, and to respond personally and critically.

2.1 contribute to small-group conversation and whole-group discussion, choosing appropriate strategies that contribute to effective talk
2.2 understand the importance of adapting communication choices such as vocabulary, sentence structure, rate of speech, and tone to meet the needs of different purposes and audiences; select suitable communication choices in various speaking contexts
2.3 give instructions and respond appropriately to instructions, directions, and questions
2.4 evaluate the effectiveness of their own and others’ talk in a variety of contexts; employ and consider the effects of verbal and non-verbal language (e.g., summaries, examples, and body gestures)

GCO 5: Students will be expected to interpret, select, and combine information using a variety of strategies, resources, and technologies.

5.1 access appropriate print and non-print sources with increasing independence and select information to meet specific needs with increasing speed, accuracy, and confidence
5.2 experiment with and rely upon a range of print and non-print (e-mail, CD-ROMs) sources for accessing and selecting information
5.3 employ various relevant research strategies like generating questions, drafting an outline, or interviewing peers to determine what questions they would like answered by their research

GCO 6: Students will be expected to respond personally to a range of texts.
Information and Communication Technology Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

**BOC 9.1** - Operate a wide variety of school media, computer, and other educationally appropriate equipment for learning, communication, and the representation of their learning, independently and safely with teacher supervision

**BOC 9.2** (relates to 6.2) - Use and create information texts in a range of media, using specialized text features of those media to support the communication, with teacher assistance

**BOC 9.3** (relates to 6.3) - Demonstrate comfort with keyboarding and manipulation of computer input and peripheral devices as they work

**BOC 9.4** (relates to 6.4) - Manage their electronic files and correspondence efficiently

**BOC 9.5** (relates to 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4) - From a range of resource options, knowledgeably select, manage, and use technological resources to solve curriculum problems and enhance their learning, with teacher guidance

**BOC 9.6** (relates to 6.6) - Understand and use a wide range of terminology related to the technology they use for learning

**SEHI 9.2** (relates to 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6) - Identify and demonstrate the values and techniques of mass media, popular culture, and electronic information environments, and evaluate the effects of these techniques

**SEHI 9.3** (relates to 6.7, 6.8) - Understand, model, and assume personal responsibility for the acceptable use of copyrighted and other information resources

**SEHI 9.6** (relates to 6.8) - Follow the Internet Access and Use Policy

**PTS 9.3** (relates to 6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5, 6.7) - Explore the curriculum through a wide range of print and electronic forms; accessing and processing information by means of the specialized techniques associated with the technology they select

**PTS 9.4** (relates to 6.5, 6.6) - Create and manipulate sound, images and video, using digital equipment and computer-based editing, to represent their learning for particular audiences and purposes, independently with teacher supervision

**PTS 9.5** (relates to 6.4, 6.5, 6.6) - Develop multimedia presentations, based on sound principles of design, with increasing confidence, efficiency and independence

**CT 9.1** (relates to 6.3, 6.5) - Use language, in a range of aural, print, media and electronic forms to explore and express their perceptions, feelings, ideas and attitudes; refine their thinking; and interact, negotiate and collaborate with others in order to build their understanding

**CT 9.3** (relates to 6.1-6.5) - Critically evaluate how style, form, source, and medium influence the accessibility, validity and meaning of information with independence
Lesson: For the pre reading activities, students will be organized into 5 or 6 workable groups, or as the teacher sees fit. It is suggested that 2 groups will be doing the same activity at the same time.

Activity #1 (Pre Reading)
Students will complete the following pre-reading journal entry:

“Have you ever blamed someone for something that you’ve done? On the other hand, has someone ever blamed you for something that you haven’t done? Explain what happened and how you felt in each situation.”

Activity #2 (Pre Reading)
Students will complete the vocabulary exercise attached as appendix a

Activity #3 (Pre Reading)
Students will look at the picture from the story’s title page (see appendix e) and try to make four predictions as to what the story is about using the computer program Inspiration. The central idea can simply be “What is the short story Charles about?” Students can then arrange their four thoughts around the central idea using the program’s given shape tools.

Activity #4 (Pre Reading)
One possible theme for the short story Charles might be “take responsibility for your actions.” Students will use a graffiti wall to further predict what the short story is about.

A) In large, clear writing, place this theme on a large piece of flow chart paper and hang it on the classroom wall.
B) Have students think about their previous predictions of the story from the last activity.
C) Ask students to examine the theme on the paper and have them try to elaborate more on their previous prediction by writing a short summary of what they think the story is about now that they’ve been given another “piece of the puzzle.” Students will see the thoughts of their classmates and will use the graffiti wall to elaborate on their ideas.
Activity #5 (Reading Activity)
Students will read the story “Charles” (see appendix f)

Activity #6 (Post Reading)
Students will define the elements of the short story using a graphic organizer. appendix b

Activity #7 (Post Reading)
Students will answer the following questions:
Q1. Who is narrating the short story Charles?
Q2. According to the narrator, how did Laurie change when he started kindergarten?
Q3. When was Charles first mentioned in Laurie’s home? Explain what he had done?
Q4. Explain how Charles became a household joke at Laurie’s home.
Q5. Why were Laurie’s parents looking forward to meeting his kindergarten teacher?
Q6. Why did Laurie’s parents take so long to find out the truth about Charles?
Q7. Why did Laurie create the imaginary boy Charles?
Q8. As the story comes to an end, most of us are very surprised to learn the identity of Charles. If you go back and read the story again you may notice that the author plants clues along the way to prepare you. What clue to the identity of Charles can you find in the opening paragraph of the story?

Activity #8 (Post Reading)
Students will create a character creature for “Laurie/Charles,” and present their “creature” to the class. appendix c
(See appendix d for Sample Character Traits)
OPTION: Students could create their character creature on either the Inspiration or Paint program found in Windows. Creating a time schedule, the teacher could allot 15 to 20 minute time slots for each student in the class. Students could be working on their book jackets and/or questions while waiting for their computer time.

Activity #9 (Post Reading)
Students will create a book jacket for the short story Charles.
The book jacket must meet the following criteria.
A) Title of story and the author’s name
B) A detailed and colorful picture that will capture the attention of potential readers.
C) A catchy and meaningful phrase that will also serve to draw readers in to the story.
Using a standard dictionary, or the website dictionary.com, insert the definition of each word in the table below. Find the sentence in the story and enter in the table below.

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<th>Vocabulary Word</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Context Guess</th>
<th>dictionary.com or glossary definition</th>
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<td>Give up</td>
<td>To reject or disown.</td>
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Appendix B – Elements of a Short Story Graphic Organizer
Identify the following elements for the short story:

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<td>Point of View:</td>
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<td>Theme:</td>
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Character Creature Assignment

This term we have read and discussed the story "Charles".

Your in-class assignment involves the following:

1. Think of 5 traits of the character Charles.

2. Choose a different animal to represent each trait.

   Example: If the character is quiet, a mouse may be an animal used to represent this particular trait.

3. Create a new creature that reflects the traits of both the animal and the creature.

   Example: Your new creature could have the stripes of a zebra, the nose of an elephant, the neck of a giraffe, and so on. Remember - you must include 5 animals to represent 5 traits.

4. On plain white paper, draw and color your new character creature.

5. You must also include a write-up explaining what each animal represents. Give a thorough description of your new character.
## Sample Character Traits

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Appendix e
THE DAY my son Laurie started kindergarten he renounced corduroy overalls with bibs and began wearing blue jeans with a belt. I watched him go off the first morning with the older girl next door, seeing clearly that an era of my life was ended, my sweet-voiced nursery-school tot replaced by a long-trousered, swaggering character who forgot to stop at the corner and wave good-bye to me.

He came home the same way, the front door slamming open, his hat on the floor, and the voice suddenly become raucous shouting, “Isn’t anybody here?”

At lunch he spoke insolently to his father, spilled his baby sister’s milk, and remarked that his teacher said we were not to take the name
of the Lord in vain.

"How was school today?" I asked, elaborately casual.

"All right," he said.

"Did you learn anything?" his father asked.
Laurie regarded his father coldly. "I didn't learn nothing," he said.

"Anything," I said. "Didn't learn anything."

"The teacher spanked a boy, though," Laurie said, addressing his bread and butter. "For being fresh," he added, with his mouth full.

"What did he do?" I asked. "Who was it?"

Laurie thought. "It was Charles," he said. "He was fresh. The teacher spanked him and made him stand in a corner. He was awfully fresh."

"What did he do?" I asked again, but Laurie slid off his chair, took a cookie, and left, while his father was still saying, "See here, young man."

The next day Laurie remarked at lunch, as soon as he sat down, "Well, Charles was bad again today." He grinned enormously and said, "Today Charles hit the teacher."

"Good heavens," I said, mindful of the Lord's name. "I suppose he got spanked again?"

"He sure did," Laurie said. "Look up," he said to his father.

"What?" his father said, looking up.

"Look down," Laurie said. "Look at my thumb. Gee, you're dumb." He began to laugh insanely.

"Why did Charles hit the teacher?" I asked quickly.

"Because she tried to make him color with red crayons," Laurie said.

"Charles wanted to color with green crayons so he hit the teacher and she spanked him and said nobody play with Charles but everybody did."

The third day—it was Wednesday of the first week—Charles bounced a see-saw on the head of a little girl and made her bleed, and the teacher made him stay inside all during recess. Thursday Charles had to stand in a corner during story-time because he kept pounding his feet on the floor. Friday Charles was deprived of blackboard privileges because he threw chalk.

On Saturday I remarked to my husband, "Do you think kindergarten is too unsettling for Laurie? All this toughness and bad grammar, and this Charles boy sounds like such a bad influence."

"It'll be all right," my husband said reassuringly. "Bound to be people like Charles in the world. Might as well meet them now as later."
On Monday Laurie came home late, full of news. "Charles," he shouted as he came up the hill; I was waiting anxiously on the front steps. "Charles," Laurie yelled all the way up the hill, "Charles was bad again."

"Come right in," I said, as soon as he came close enough. "Lunch is waiting."

"You know what Charles did?" he demanded, following me through the door. "Charles yelled so in school they sent a boy in from first grade to tell the teacher she had to make Charles keep quiet, and so Charles had to stay after school. And so all the children stayed to watch him."

"What did he do?" I asked.

"He just sat there," Laurie said, climbing into his chair at the table. "Hi, Pop, y'old dust mop."

"Charles had to stay after school today," I told my husband. "Everyone stayed with him."

"What does this Charles look like?" my husband asked Laurie.

"What's his other name?"

"He's bigger than me," Laurie said. "And he doesn't have any rubbers and he doesn't ever wear a jacket."

Monday night was the first Parent-Teachers meeting, and only the fact that the baby had a cold kept me from going; I wanted passionately to meet Charles's mother. On Tuesday Laurie remarked suddenly, "Our teacher had a friend come to see her in school today."

"Charles's mother?" my husband and I asked simultaneously.

"Naaah," Laurie said scornfully. "It was a man who came and made us do exercises, we had to touch our toes. Look." He climbed down from his chair and squatted down and touched his toes. "Like this," he said. He got solemnly back into his chair and said, picking up his fork, "Charles didn't even do exercises."

"That's fine," I said heartily. "Didn't Charles want to do the exercises?"

"Naaah," Laurie said. "Charles was so fresh to the teacher's friend he wasn't let do exercises."

"Fresh again," I said.

"He kicked the teacher's friend," Laurie said. "The teacher's friend told Charles to touch his toes like I just did and Charles kicked him."

"What are they going to do about Charles, do you suppose?"
Laurie's father asked him.
Laurie shrugged elaborately. "Throw him out of school, I guess," he said.

Wednesday and Thursday were routine; Charles yelled during story hour and hit a boy in the stomach and made him cry. On Friday Charles stayed after school again and so did all the other children.

With the third week of kindergarten Charles was an institution in our family; the baby was being a Charles when he filled his wagon full of mud and pulled it through the kitchen; even my husband, when he caught his elbow in the telephone cord and pulled telephone, ashtray, and a bowl of flowers off the table, said, after the first minute, "Looks like Charles."

During the third and fourth weeks it looked like a reformation in Charles; Laurie reported grimly at lunch on Thursday of the third week, "Charles was so good today the teacher gave him an apple."

"What?" I said, and my husband added warily, "You mean Charles?"

"Charles," Laurie said. "He gave the crayons around and he picked up the books afterward and the teacher said he was her helper."

"What happened?" I asked incredulously.

"He was her helper, that's all," Laurie said, and shrugged.

"Can this be true, about Charles?" I asked my husband that night.

"Can something like this happen?"

"Wait and see," my husband said cynically. "When you've got a Charles to deal with, this may mean he's only plotting."

He seemed to be wrong. For over a week Charles was the teacher's helper; each day he handed things out and he picked things up; no one had to stay after school.

"The PTA meeting's next week again," I told my husband one evening. "I'm going to find Charles's mother there."

"Ask her what happened to Charles," my husband said. "I'd like to know."

"I'd like to know myself," I said.

On Friday of that week things were back to normal. "You know what Charles did today?" Laurie demanded at the lunch table, in a voice slightly awed. "He told a little girl to say a word and she said it and the teacher washed her mouth out with soap and Charles laughed."

"What word?" his father asked unwisey, and Laurie said, "I'll have to whisper it to you, it's so bad." He got down off his chair and went
around to his father. His father bent his head down and Laurie whispered joyfully. His father’s eyes widened.

“Did Charles tell the little girl to say that?” he asked respectfully.

“She said it twice,” Laurie said. “Charles told her to say it twice.”

“What happened to Charles?” my husband asked.

“Nothing,” Laurie said. “He was passing out the crayons.”

Monday morning Charles abandoned the little girl and said the evil word himself three or four times, getting his mouth washed out with soap each time. He also threw chalk.

My husband came to the door with me that evening as I set out for the PTA meeting. “Invite her over for a cup of tea after the meeting,” he said. “I want to get a look at her.”

“If only she’s there,” I said prayerfully.

“She’ll be there,” My husband said. “I don’t see how they could hold a PTA meeting without Charles’s mother.”

At the meeting I sat restlessly, scanning each comfortable matronly face, trying to determine which one hid the secret of Charles. None of them looked to me haggard enough. No one stood up in the meeting and apologized for the way her son had been acting. No one mentioned Charles.

After the meeting I identified and sought out Laurie’s kindergarten teacher. She had a plate with a cup of tea and a piece of chocolate cake; I had a plate with a cup of tea and a piece of marshmallow cake. We maneuvered up to one another cautiously, and smiled.

“I’ve been so anxious to meet you,” I said. “I’m Laurie’s mother.”

“We’re all so interested in Laurie,” she said.

“Well, he certainly likes kindergarten,” I said. “He talks about it all the time.”

“We had a little trouble adjusting, the first week or so,” she said primly, “but now he’s a fine little helper. With occasional lapses, of course.”

“Laurie usually adjusts very quickly,” I said. “I suppose this time it’s Charles’s influence.”

“Charles?”

“Yes,” I said, laughing, “you must have your hands full in that kindergarten, with Charles.”

“Charles?” she said. “We don’t have any Charles in the kindergarten.”