

Substitute Guide: Characters and the Lesson of a Story

Grade: 3 **Subject:** Reading / Language Arts **Time:** ~45 min core + ~15 min extension RLA

5-minute guide (plain language)

Students read a short original story, "The Lost Mitten," then find its **lesson** (the central message), describe the main **character** (Sam) with a feeling word, and write the lesson with a detail that shows it. **You do not need a reading background to run this.** The whole story is printed in the student packet, and every question can be answered right from the story. **This packet is read-aloud friendly:** you may read the story or any question out loud to one student or the whole class at any time.

Standards alignment

Framework: 19 TAC §110.5 (Grade 3 English Language Arts and Reading).

- **Central message / lesson:** infer the lesson or message of a story and support it with a detail.
- **Characters:** describe the main character and how the character feels or acts.
- **Text detail:** use a detail from the text to support an answer.

Provisional — pending educator verification against the current official TAC source.

(Standards are paraphrased here, not quoted. Please confirm codes and wording against your official source.)

Setup Before class (5 min)

- Hand out one **student packet** per student.
- Make sure each student has a **pencil**. No devices or other materials are needed.
- Write the date on the board and remind students to fill in the name line.
- Keep the **answer key** with you — it is a separate file and is **not** in the student packet.

Materials What's needed

- Printed student packet per student.
- Pencil per student.
- This guide and the separate answer key (teacher only).
- No technology, no special materials.

Timing Suggested pacing (~45–60 min)

Segment	Time	What students do
Start — Look & Think	5 min	Q1–Q2 warm-up (title guess + a known lesson)
Build — Read the story	10 min	Read "The Lost Mitten," word bank; Q3
Apply — Read closely	15 min	Q4–Q7 (retell, character feeling, lesson, best sentence)

Segment	Time	What students do
Explain — Write the lesson	10 min	Q8 lesson + detail + how it shows the lesson
Close — ACE	5 min	Answer / Cite / Extend
Continue — early finishers	optional ~15 min	Draw Sam and write a caption

Script Read aloud to start

"Today we will read a short story called *The Lost Mitten* and find the **lesson** it teaches. You will work by yourself with just a pencil — no computers. First read the story. Every answer is in the story, so if you are not sure, read it again. Do the questions in order. If one is tricky, skip it and come back. You may read the story quietly out loud to yourself. Put your name, class, and date at the top now. Raise your hand if you would like a word or a question read to you — I am happy to read any part aloud."

Reading the story aloud to the whole class first is a great option for Grade 3. It levels the reading load so every student can focus on the thinking.

Support When students ask for help

- **You may read any part aloud** — the story or any question — to a student or the class, at any time.
- If they are stuck, point them to the **part numbers** [1]–[5]; every answer is in the story.
- Remind them a **lesson** is a full sentence about what the story teaches, not just one word.
- For Q5, help them pick a **feeling word** (glad, proud, warm, kind) and then say *why*.
- Point to the printed **sentence starters** and the **word bank** for Q8 and ACE.
- Do **not** give answers; prompt with "Which part shows that?" or "How does Sam feel at the end?"

Access Accommodations & language support

- **Read-aloud** of the story or any question is allowed for all students.
- Point students to the **sentence starters** and the **word bank** (kid-friendly meanings provided).
- Extended time is fine; the core can stop after Q8 if time runs short.
- Students may answer in short phrases if writing full sentences is a barrier, as long as the idea is clear.
- The packet is grayscale-safe — it prints and reads clearly in black and white.

Tools Allowed & not allowed

Allowed: pencil, the printed packet, quiet self-read-aloud. **Not needed / not allowed:** phones, computers, outside sources (everything is in the story).

Collect at the end: Collect every packet, whether finished or not, with names on them. Stack them for the teacher. Note on a sticky how far most students got and any questions that caused confusion.

Answer key: The **answer key is a separate file** (answerkey.html) and is for the teacher only. Please do not hand it to students.

Teacher follow-up (for the returning teacher)

Watch for two common mix-ups: *retelling the story* vs. *naming the lesson* (students tell what happened instead of what it teaches) and *topic* vs. *lesson* (writing "mittens" or "helping" instead of a full-sentence lesson like "Helping someone feels better than hurrying"). A quick next-day mini-lesson turning a topic word into a lesson sentence would reinforce this well. The character item (Q5) and the best-sentence item (Q7) quickly show who can describe a character and locate a supporting detail.

Characters and the Lesson of a Story

Grade: 3 **Subject:** Reading / Language Arts **Time:** ~45 min + ~15 min extra **Work mode:** On your own · pencil only RLA

Start Here

Today you will **read a short story**.

Then you will find the **lesson** the story teaches.

Use a **pencil**. Work by yourself. Do your best!

Every answer is **in the story**. You can look back any time.

You may read the story **softly out loud**. If a question is hard, skip it and come back.

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Start Look & Think 5 min

Look at the title first. Do not read the story yet.

1The story is called "**The Lost Mitten**." What might happen in this story? Write one guess.

2A **lesson** is what a story teaches us. Write one lesson you know, like "**be kind**."

Build Read the Story 10 min

Words to know

chilly

a little cold.

notice

to see something.

grateful

happy that someone helped you.

"The Lost Mitten" — an original short story

[1] It was a *chilly* morning. Sam walked to school with his hands deep in his coat. On the sidewalk he saw a small red mitten. It did not belong to him.

[2] Sam was in a hurry. He wanted to get to class and play with his friends before the bell rang. "Someone else will find it," he thought. He kept walking. But he could not help it — he looked back at the little mitten sitting all alone in the snow.

[3] Then Sam stopped. He remembered how sad he felt last week when he lost his own hat. He turned around and picked up the mitten. It was tiny, like it came from a little kid.

[4] Sam took the mitten to the school office. A young boy named Theo was there. Theo was crying because his hands were cold. When Theo saw the red mitten, he smiled big. It was his!

[5] Theo was so *grateful*. "Thank you!" he said. Sam felt warm inside, even on the *chilly* day. Being a little late was worth it. He learned that helping someone feels better than hurrying.

3In part [1], what does Sam find on the sidewalk?

Apply Read Closely 15 min

Every answer is in the story. Look back before you write.

4**Retell the story.** Write the beginning, middle, and end. Keep each one short.

Beginning

Middle

End

5**The main character.** Sam is the main character. Pick a **feeling word** for Sam at the end. Then tell why, using a detail.

Feeling word

Why? (use a detail from the story)

6**The lesson.** What lesson does the story teach? Write it as one sentence.

7**Which sentence shows the lesson?** Fill in the circle for **ONE** choice.

- "It was a chilly morning."
- "He turned around and picked up the mitten."
- "Sam wanted to get to class and play."
- "On the sidewalk he saw a small red mitten."

Explain Write the Lesson 10 min

Question 8. Write the **lesson** in one sentence. Then write **one detail** that shows it. Last, tell **how** it shows the lesson.

You may start with: "The lesson is..." · "In the story..." · "This shows the lesson because..."

Lesson (one sentence)

Detail (from the story)

How it shows the lesson

Close ACE Wrap-Up 5 min

Answer

Say the **lesson** of the story in your **own words**. One sentence.

Cite

Name **one part** [1]–[5] where you see the lesson.

Extend

Tell about a time **you** helped someone.

Continue Early Finisher optional • ~15 min

If you finish early (no new things needed):

Draw the main character, Sam. Draw him on the back of this page. Then write **one caption** under your drawing that tells what Sam is doing.

Turn in: Hand in this whole packet with your name, class, and date. Make sure questions 1–8 and the ACE box are done. The drawing is extra — turn it in too if you made one.

G03_RLA_CentralMessage_01 — Characters and the Lesson of a Story Student Packet



TEACHER ANSWER KEY FOLLOWS

Do not copy the pages after this divider for students.

Answer Key: Characters and the Lesson of a Story

Grade: 3 **Subject:** Reading / Language Arts **For teacher use only** RLA

How to use this key

Answers are grouped by section and question number. Many items are open-ended; accept any response that shows correct thinking and uses the story, even if the wording differs. Notes flag where more than one answer works and list common misconceptions. Part numbers below refer to the bracketed markers [1]–[5] in the story. Estimated grading time: ~3–5 min per packet.

Start Look & Think grade for effort · ~1 min

1 Guess from the title "The Lost Mitten."

Full credit for any reasonable guess (e.g., "someone loses a mitten," "a kid finds a lost mitten," "a mitten gets found in the snow"). Any on-topic guess is fine.

2 Name one lesson you know.

Accept any reasonable lesson about life stated as an idea (e.g., "be kind," "help others," "share," "keep trying"). Give effort credit; this is a warm-up.

Build Read the Story ~1 min

3 What does Sam find? (part [1])

From **part [1]**: a small red mitten on the sidewalk (that does not belong to him). Accept "a mitten" / "a red mitten."

Apply Read Closely ~2 min

4 Retell: beginning / middle / end.

Beginning (part [1]–[2]): On a chilly morning Sam finds a small red mitten but he is in a hurry and keeps walking.

Middle (part [3]–[4]): Sam remembers losing his own hat, so he goes back, picks up the mitten, and takes it to the office, where Theo is crying with cold hands.

End (part [5]): The mitten is Theo's; Theo is grateful, and Sam feels warm inside and learns that helping feels better than hurrying.

Accept short, correct versions in the student's own words. Simple wording is fine.

5 Main character (feeling word + why, with a detail).

Feeling word (end): warm / glad / happy / proud / kind — any positive word that fits Sam at the end.

Why (detail): from **part [5]** — "Sam felt warm inside," Theo said "Thank you," and Sam thought being a little late was worth it. Full credit for a fitting feeling word plus any supporting detail from the story.

6 The lesson (full sentence).

Accept any clear lesson sentence about helping/kindness, such as: "Helping someone feels better than hurrying," "It is good to help others," or "Being kind makes you feel good." Reject a single topic word (e.g., "helping" or "mittens") as the full answer — note it and connect it to Q8.

7 Which sentence shows the lesson?

B. "He turned around and picked up the mitten." This is the moment Sam chooses to help, which is the lesson. Why the others are weaker: **A** just sets the weather; **C** shows Sam wanting to hurry (before he changes); **D** only sets up the story. Only **B** shows Sam choosing to help.

Explain Write the Lesson (Q8) ~2 min

8 Lesson (one sentence) + a detail + how it shows the lesson.

Acceptable lessons (any one, or similar, as a full sentence):

- "Helping someone feels better than hurrying."
- "It is kind to help others, even when you are busy."
- "Doing a good thing for someone makes you feel good inside."

Detail locations that show the lesson: Sam stops and remembers losing his own hat [3]; Sam turns around and picks up the mitten [3]; Sam takes the mitten to the office and Theo smiles [4]; Sam feels warm inside and thinks being late was worth it [5].

How it connects: the detail should show Sam *choosing to help* and then *feeling good* — which is exactly the lesson. Full credit for a defensible lesson sentence + one real detail from the story + a link between them (even simply worded).

Lesson & detail scoring rubric (3 points)

Score	Lesson (one sentence)	Detail (from story)	How it shows the lesson
3	Clear lesson stated as a full sentence (not a topic word).	A real detail from the story that matches the lesson.	Clearly tells how the detail shows the lesson.
2	Lesson present but partly a topic or a little off.	Detail is from the story but a weak match to the lesson.	Some correct linkage, but not complete.
1	Only a topic word, or a retell instead of a lesson.	Detail is missing or not really from the story.	Little or no connection made.
0	No lesson / incorrect.	No detail.	No connection.

Close ACE ~1 min

ACE Answer / Cite / Extend.

Answer: accept any accurate one-sentence lesson in the student's own words (see Q8 list).

Cite: the named part must match the lesson (e.g., part [3] Sam turns back to pick up the mitten, or part [4]–[5] Sam returns it to Theo and feels warm inside).

Extend: any real time the student helped someone (e.g., helped a friend, shared a toy, helped a family member). More than one answer is fine.

Watch Common misconceptions

- **Retelling vs. the lesson.** Retelling tells *what happened* (Sam found a mitten and gave it back). The lesson tells *what the story teaches* ("Helping someone feels better than hurrying"). If a student only retells for

Q6/Q8, push them to name the lesson.

- **Topic vs. lesson.** A topic is one word ("mittens," "helping"). A lesson is a full sentence that says something about that topic ("It is kind to help others"). Move students from "helping" to a full lesson sentence.
- **Detail that does not match the lesson (Q7, Q8).** A detail must actually show the lesson. In Q7, sentences A, C, and D do not show Sam choosing to help — only B does.
- **Event vs. character change.** Finding the mitten is the event; the real point is Sam *choosing to help* and feeling good about it.

Teacher follow-up based on likely errors

If many students retell the story on Q6/Q8, run a 5-minute mini-lesson on the difference between "what happened" and "what it teaches." If students write topic words instead of lesson sentences, model turning "helping" into "Helping others feels good." The character item (Q5) is a fast check of who can name a feeling and back it with a detail.

G03_RLA_CentralMessage_01 — Characters and the Lesson of a Story Teacher Answer Key