

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.

