Trait Detectives: How Actions Move the Story

Teacher		**Class**	Grade 3
Subject	ELA	**Topic**	Character traits
Date		**Room**	
Lesson length	60 minutes	**Country**	United States

Students learn to name traits, feelings and wants with story proof. They hunt for clues in pairs and chain actions to events.

Curriculum links

- 3.RL.KID.3 Describe characters in a story and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events [1]

Learning objectives

- Students will describe a trait with proof from thoughts, words, or actions.
- Students will explain a character's feelings and motivation for acting.
- Students will explain how character actions change the story events in order.

Success criteria

- I can name a trait and show words as proof.
- I can say why a character acts and what happens next.
- I can order actions to show how the story changes.

What students already know

Ask: Who is your favorite story person and what is that person like? Take 3 quick answers and ask how they knew.

Key words

character	a person or being in a made-up story [3]
trait	how someone often behaves, like kind, brave, or patient
motivation	the reason why someone wants to do something
feeling	what is happening inside, like happy, scared, or proud
event	one thing that happens in a story

Materials

- Slides 1-7, 10-11
- Video clip 1 traits shape a story song (0:00-3:16) on slide 6
- Passage The Lost Kite paragraphs 1-3, printed for pairs
- sticky notes, pencils
- trait word bank cards with pictures (8 traits)
- chart paper for class chain

Before the lesson

- Print passage The Lost Kite paragraphs 1-3, one copy per pair, plus Worksheet Task B
- Print trait word bank cards with pictures and sticky notes for each pair
- Test Slide 6 Video clip 1 (0:00-3:16) for sound
- Set desks for pairs with space to post sticky notes in order

Lesson outline

0–8 min **Starter** 8 min · Whole class

Hook students as detectives and recall what a character is like.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 1 and greet class as reading detectives with the hook line.
2. Show Slide 5 vote and read the question and four choices aloud.
3. Take a quick vote by show of hands for Brave, Kind, Curious, Patient.
4. Link votes to lesson: today we prove traits with clues, not guesses.

STUDENTS DO

1. Listen to the detective hook and look at Slide 1.
2. Vote for Best Helper Trait and give a quick reason to a neighbor.

Say: Reading detectives, I need your help — this character never tells us what they are like, so how can we figure it out? Look for clues in what they say, think, and do. Vote, then tell your neighbor why you picked that trait.

Ask: What is a character? (A person or being in a story [3]) · Which helper trait did you pick and why? (Any trait with a reason, like brave because they keep trying)

Check understanding: Thumbs up if you can name one trait word; if many thumbs down, quickly name 3 trait words together before moving on.

Support: Let students point to the trait card picture to vote instead of saying the word. **Stretch:** Ask early finishers to give one action that would prove their voted trait.

Use: Slides 1, 5

8–20 min **Teaching** 12 min · Whole class

Teach that traits show in thoughts, words, and actions and push story events.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 2 objectives, then Slide 3 and read both fact lines aloud.
2. Show Slide 4 and explain readers describe personality traits from thoughts, words, and actions [2].
3. Play Video clip 1 on Slide 6 and ask students to clap when they hear a trait word.
4. Model one clue from paragraph 1 on chart paper and state Slide 7 big idea.

STUDENTS DO

1. Clap when they hear a trait word in the video and repeat two trait words.
2. Watch the model and repeat the frame with the teacher.

Say: Writers do not always tell us. We watch what a character says and does to figure them out. A trait means how someone often acts. Traits push actions, and actions move the story!

Worked example: Paragraph 1 proof: She spent all week making a big blue kite. Step 1 words: spent all week making. Step 2 trait: patient. Step 3 say frame: The character is patient because in the story they spent all week making a big blue kite. That careful work lets her join the park race on Saturday, so the action moves the story forward [1][2].

Ask: Where do we find clues to a trait? (In thoughts, words, and actions [2]) · How do traits change the story? (Traits push actions, and actions move story events [1])

Check understanding: Cold-call 3 students to point to words or action that proved patient; reteach with a second clue from paragraph 1 if answers are vague.

Support: Keep 4 trait cards posted and point to patient while modeling. **Stretch:** Ask students to name a second trait from paragraph 1, like careful, and tell which matters more for building the kite.

Use: Slides 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, Video clip 1 (0:00–3:16)

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20–45 min **Main activity** 25 min · Pairs

Find traits with proof and link wants and actions to story events in order.

YOU DO

1. Read The Lost Kite paragraphs 2 and 3 twice aloud while pairs follow on printed copies.
2. Hand out sticky notes and trait word bank cards and remind pairs to hunt for 2 clues.
3. Guide pairs to write trait plus proof on notes and place them first, next, then, last.
4. Circulate to help pairs fill the chain frame: The character wants ___, so they ___, then ___.

STUDENTS DO

1. Reread paragraphs 1-3 with partner and mark 2 thought, word, or action clues.
2. Write one sticky note per clue with trait plus proof and stick them in story order.

Say: Detectives, read twice. Find two clues. Write the trait and the proof on sticky notes. Put them in order to show how actions change what happens. Use the frame: The character is ___ because ___.

Worked example: Paragraph 2 worked chain: Feeling sad and wanted to quit is the want. Clue action: she took a deep breath, stayed brave, and reached the string with help. Trait: brave. Chain: The character wants to quit, so they take a deep breath and reach with help, then the race keeps going. This shows how their actions contribute to the sequence of events [1].

Ask: Why did the character say what was said and do what was done? (She felt sad and wanted to quit, then felt brave with help from a friend, so she tried again [2]) · How does the brave action affect the story? (Her brave action kept the race going and changed the ending from sad to happy [1]) · What words prove patience or courage in paragraph 3? (Tied the tail tighter and ran fast, did not give up [2])

Check understanding: Pairs hold up one sticky note and read: The character is ___ because in the story they ___; check that proof matches trait, fix one pair aloud if needed.

Support: Give a bank of 8 traits with pictures and the frame, The character is ___ because ___. **Stretch:** Find a second action by the same character that shows a different trait and explain which matters more.

Use: Worksheet Task B

45–55 min **Share** 10 min · Whole class

Retell the ordered chain to show how actions cause story events.

YOU DO

1. Invite 3 pairs to post their sticky notes in order on class chart paper.
2. Model retell with first, next, then, last using their notes.
3. Show Slide 10 photo and ask what feeling they see and what might happen next.
4. Restate that describing this link shows how actions contribute to events [1].

STUDENTS DO

1. Post sticky notes in order and retell the chain with first, next, then, last.
2. Look at faces and hands on Slide 10 and predict one next action.

Say: Great detectives put clues in order. First she builds the kite. Next wind pulls it in a tree. Then she stays brave and tries again. Last she finishes and smiles. Tell what feeling leads to what action.

Worked example: Full retell: First, a shy student is careful and patient and builds a big blue kite. Next, wind pulls it into a tree and she feels sad. Then, she stays brave, ties the tail tighter, and runs fast. Last, the kite lifts high and she finishes smiling. Her patience and courage changed the ending [1].

Ask: What if she had quit in paragraph 2 — how would the ending change? (The race would stop and she would not finish, so there would be no happy ending.) · Which action most changed the events? (Staying brave and reaching with help, then tying and running, kept the race going.)

Check understanding: Listen for first, next, then, last plus trait and proof; if order is wrong, reorder one chain together as a class.

Support: Give sentence starters: At first ___. Then they ___. So ___. **Stretch:** Tell how that brave action would change what happens next if the wind blew again.

Use: Slides 7, 10

55–60 min **Plenary** 5 min · On their own

Check each objective with a short exit ticket.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 11 exit ticket and read the three stems aloud.
2. Give 3 minutes for students to write two short lines on paper.
3. Collect papers while restating the big idea in one sentence.
4. Preview next lesson: we will compare two characters.

STUDENTS DO

1. Write trait plus proof and one action-event link on exit slip.
2. Hand in slip and state one trait word learned today.

Say: Show what kind of detective you are. Finish these two lines. One trait I spotted was ___ because ___. One action changed events when ___. You have three minutes.

Ask: Name one trait and proof from today? (Patient because she spent all week making the kite; brave because she reached with help)

Check understanding: Scan 5 slips at door for trait plus matching proof; reteach small group tomorrow if proofs are missing.

Support: Allow copying one trait from the word bank and dictating proof to partner to write. **Stretch:** Add one question I still have about the student's bravery or patience.

Use: Slide 11

Common mistakes

Mistake	How to spot it	How to fix it
Calling a feeling in the moment a lasting trait, like sad means sad person	Sticky note says trait is sad with no often-behavior	Ask: Is sad how she often acts, or how she feels right now? Trait is brave or patient; sad is the feeling [2]
Naming a trait with no story proof	Says she is kind but cannot point to words or action	Ask: What did she say, think, or do that shows it? Point to the exact words [2]
Retelling events out of order or missing cause	Says she smiled, then built kite, with no link	Reorder with first, next, then, last and add so / then to show action changed events [1]

Support

- Give a bank of 8 traits with pictures and the frame, The character is ___ because ___.

Stretch

- Find a second action by the same character that shows a different trait and explain which matters more.

For the LSE or teaching assistant

Sit with target pairs in main activity; point to trait bank pictures, read paragraph 2 aloud slowly, and scribe proof if needed while student picks trait.

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Check for understanding

Question	Answer
One trait I spotted today was ___ because ___?	Patient because she spent all week making a big blue kite; brave because she took a deep breath and reached with help
One action changed story events when ___?	She stayed brave and reached with help, so the race kept going and she finished smiling
Why did the student keep trying instead of quitting?	Her friend said, "Try again." She wanted to finish the race, and she stayed brave and patient.

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