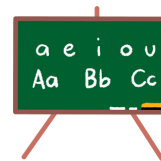


BOOK ONE EDUCATOR COMPANION



Ideas for Phonics & Fluency Practice



In this book, striving readers practice reading **closed syllable words with short vowel sounds**. Here are concepts that students should be familiar with in order to decode this first book in the series.

Vowels vs. Consonants

A vowel is a letter where air leaves the mouth without needing to close any part of the mouth or throat. When making short (or, later, long) vowel sounds, have students see how long they can keep saying the vowel sound (aaaaa, eeeee, iiiii, ooooo, uuuuu). The idea is that they can, if they ever wanted to, say the vowel sound -- short or long -- endlessly. A consonant, on the other hand, closes part of the vocal tract in order to make a sound. To teach this, ask the student to say “b” and see how long they can sustain it. They should not say the letter name, though. To do this effectively, they need to make the letter sound.

Closed Syllable Rule

Every syllable must have at least one vowel and at least one consonant. In a closed syllable, the vowel is closed in by a consonant. This makes the vowel make the short sound (In a-apple-a, the “a” is closed in by the “p,” making the “a” make the short sound; in e-elephant-e, the first “e” is closed in by the “l” and the second one is closed in by the “ph,” making both make the short sound, etc.). When teaching this concept initially, pull out a few words from the phonics guide for one of the chapters. Have students find the vowel and locate the consonant that closes that vowel in. Or, color code a few of the words by making the vowel one color and the consonants another color. Have students practice identifying patterns.

Short Vowel Sounds

Vowels make short or long sounds depending on the syllable type. When a vowel makes the long sound, it says its name (e.g. In “grape,” the “a” makes the long sound, but we’ll wait until Book 8 to learn that one!). When a vowel makes the short sound, it makes the sound it makes rather than says its name (e.g. in “bat,” the “a” makes the “ah” sound).

Short Vowel Keywords

It can be helpful to come up with keywords for students to understand what the vowel sounds are and to use the keywords when they have difficulty decoding part of the text. Older students in particular should come up with their own keywords for different letter sounds. Two requirements for creating keywords: the keyword should make the short vowel sound and it should be something that can be easily drawn/illustrated/pictured.

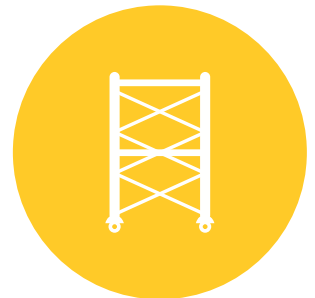


Ideas for Phonics & Fluency Practice



Additional Scaffolds to Provide

- **Color Coding / Highlighting Multisyllabic Words:** Because these are decodables designed for students in grades 4 and above, there are some multisyllabic words, which can be tricky to read if students have not been explicitly taught syllable division rules. Here are some ways you can support students who have not yet developed word-attack skills in syllable division:
 - color code the syllables, having students read one color at a time: **pen**pal
 - box the syllables, having students read one box at a time: pen**pal**
 - highlight the syllables, having students read one color at a time (note: this can be done directly on the decodables if you have print versions): **pen**pal
- **Previewing High-Frequency Words:** Have students read aloud the high-frequency words from the high-frequency words list in the phonics guide at the beginning of the chapter. Formatively assess by taking note of the high-frequency words that students struggle with.
- **High-Frequency Word Practice:** Give students additional practice with both reading and spelling the high-frequency words they struggle with. Have them use them in sentences, write those sentences down, sky-write them, and/or have them make flashcards for them.
- **Previewing Challenge Words:** Similar to the high-frequency words, have students preview the challenge words in the phonics guide. Emphasize that these are challenge words and that students are not expected to be able to decode them at this point (they're called "challenge" for a reason!). Previewing the words will give students greater confidence when they encounter them in context.
- **Interactive Oral Reading with Challenge Words:** Because students are not expected to be able to decode the challenge words, you can read them aloud when they come up in the text in a "we do" approach to reading aloud.
- **Repeated Reading:** Build fluency with decodable texts by having students read pages repeatedly, building momentum with the words each time.



From Casts to Comics Vocabulary Guide

IES
Recommendation

3A

CHAPTER ONE: Max Picks Up a Pen

credit (noun) points earned by receiving a grade

- Page 8: "You write letters to a penpal for extra **credit** in this class."

timber (noun): wood used for building houses and making furniture

- Page 11: "Max wrote of his city. Of the ships, **timber**, and fish."

CHAPTER TWO: Min's Unlikely Penpal

exchange (verb; noun): if people exchange things, they give them to each other at around the same time; a brief conversation

- Page 18: "LEX = Letter **Exchange**"

CHAPTER THREE: A Shock for Max

cross (adjective): angry or irritated

- Page 33: "Did anyone send Min comic-letters when she was **cross**?"

jock (noun): someone who plays sports

- Page 33: "Maybe I'm not a **jock** right now, but I can be a good pal."

mock (verb): to laugh at, tease, or try to make someone look foolish

- Page 35: "And this is my cat, Biff, and a flock of birds that **mocked** him!"

CHAPTER FOUR: Min Lifts Up Max

lantern (noun): a lamp in a metal frame with glass sides

- Page 51: "There were **lanterns** up and down the streets."

pluck (verb): to take something in your hands and pull it from where it is

- Page 51: "At last, she **plucked** up the perfect piece."

local (adjective): belonging to the area where you live or are talking about

- "I am sending you a panda made by a **local** artist."



Comprehension Questions for Book One



In this book, we discover the stories of Max and Min. Max loves to play ball. Min likes reading and art. Can comics help these unlikely penpals become friends?

Within the Text

- Why is Max not allowed to play basketball anymore?
- How does the Letter Exchange program (LEX) help Max be able to play basketball again?
- What did Max write about in his first letter to Min? What did Min write about in her first letter to Max? (*Extension: Compare and contrast Min's and Max's letters to each other. What makes them similar? What makes them different?*)

About the Text

- Why do you think Chapter 2 is titled "Min's Unlikely Penpal?" (*Or: What makes Max and Min unlikely to be friends?*)

Beyond the Text

- What lessons did Max learn from receiving and responding to Min's letters?
- How do Max and Min help each other?
- What does it mean to "lift someone up"?

Reaction Questions for Book One:



BOOK

What were these stories mostly about?

What do the authors want you to know about Max and Min?



HEAD

What did you learn about in this book that you didn't know before reading it?



HEART

How did you feel after reading Max's story?

Whose story did you connect to more? Why?



Comprehension Questions by Chapter



CHAPTER ONE: Max Picks Up a Pen

- Why is Max not allowed to play basketball anymore?
- How does the Letter Exchange program (LEX) help Max be able to play basketball again?
- What did Max write about in his first letter to Min?

CHAPTER TWO: Min's Unlikely Penpal

- Why do you think Chapter 2 is titled "Min's Unlikely Penpal?" (Or: What makes Max and Min unlikely to be friends?)
- What did Min write about in her first letter to Max?

CHAPTER THREE: A Shock for Max

- What lessons did Max learn from receiving and responding to Min's letters?
- What does it mean to "lift someone up"?

CHAPTER FOUR: Min Lifts Up Max

- Compare and contrast Min's and Max's letters to each other. What makes them similar? What makes them different?
- How do Max and Min help each other?



Written Response to Reading

Directions: Use what you learned to reflect on your experience reading the book. Fill in the blanks with your own thoughts and evidence from the text.

_____ is a story about _____

_____. _____ wants

_____, but _____

so _____. I enjoyed reading this story because I connected to

_____. I also learned about _____

_____. I believe _____ should read these books in order

to _____.

Self-Editing Checklist

- ☐ Each sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with punctuation.
- ☐ I capitalized the first letter of all proper nouns (names of people, places, and groups).
- ☐ If the vowel makes the short sound, it is closed in by a consonant.
- ☐ I read my writing out loud, pointing to each word as I said it.

