



Daily and Supporting Learning Targets

- Opening A: Using evidence from the mystery letter, I can describe the author and her purpose for writing the letter.
- Work Time A: I can explore the rhythm and rhyme in the poem “Open a Book, Unlock a Door.” (RF.K.2a, RF.1.2a)
 - I can listen to a line of text containing two rhyming words, and pick out and say the two words.
 - I can listen to several one-syllable words and identify the short or long vowel sound they contain.

Ongoing Assessment

- Observe students during Work Time A. Determine whether they can identify rhyming words and match the rhythm of the oral text (poem) to the movement of their bodies.

Agenda

1. **Opening (5–7 minutes)**
 - A. Read-aloud: Mystery Letter #1
2. **Work Time (7–10 minutes)**
 - A. Phonological Awareness: Rhythm and Rhyme in “Open a Book, Unlock a Door”
3. **Closing and Assessment (3–5 minutes)**
 - A. Reflecting on Learning: How Can Words Change a Person’s Life?
4. **Differentiated Small Group Instruction and Rotations (40 minutes)**

Teaching Notes

In advance:

- Prepare:
 - Mystery Letter #1 and the poem “Open a Book, Unlock a Door” (can be put in envelope addressed to the class to enhance the mystery)
- Articulatory Gestures chart for short vowel sounds

Vocabulary

Key:

(L): Lesson-Specific Vocabulary

(T): Text-Specific Vocabulary

- recite (L)
- adventure, castle, dawn, explore, knight, mystery, peek (T)

Materials

- ☒ Mystery Letter #1 (one for teacher use)
- ☒ Poem: “Open a Book, Unlock a Door” (one for teacher use)
- ☒ Articulatory Gestures chart

Opening

A. Read-aloud: Mystery Letter #1

- (Suggested transition song, “The More We Get Together”):

“The more we get together, together, together, the more we get together, the happier we’ll be. ’Cause your friends are my friends and my friends are your friends. The more we get together, the happier we’ll be.”

1. Teacher displays **Mystery Letter #1** with much curiosity and drama (example: “This appeared on my desk this morning. It’s addressed to us!”).

2. Teacher asks:

“I wonder what this could be—what do you think?”

3. Teacher invites students to share ideas with an elbow partner.
4. Teacher invites one or two students to share ideas aloud with the whole group.
5. Teacher asks:

“Shall we open it and see?”

6. Teacher reads the letter (except for the P.S. note) once or twice without interruption.
7. Teacher asks:

“What is this?” (a letter) “How do you know?” (starts, “Dear First Graders”; is signed at the end; writer says “the reason I’m writing to you...”)

“Why did she write to us?” (to tell us about words, to tell us she’s excited that we’re starting first grade, to give us a poem) “How do you know that’s why she wrote to us?” (She said, “I’m writing to tell you about words...”)

“What do we know about the author/writer of this letter?” (name is Laura, she went to first grade a long time ago, she asks lots of questions, words changed her life in first grade)

Meeting Students’ Needs

- The word “dawn” provides an opportunity to build vocabulary. Consider rereading the first two lines of the letter and asking:

“What does the word dawn mean?” (early morning)

“What from the letter helped us understand what that word means?” (The writer said the sun was just waking up, the day is about to start.)

- Wait to read the P.S. part of the letter—it is revealed in Work Time A.

Work Time

A. Phonological Awareness: Rhythm and Rhyme in “Open a Book, Unlock a Door”

- (Suggested transition song, sung to the tune of “The More We Get Together”):

“Now it’s time to be detectives, detectives, detectives, now it’s time to be detectives, and look for some clues.”

1. Teacher says: "Clearly the writer/author of this letter is excited for us as we start first grade. I'm curious about what she meant when she said, 'Words changed my life and it happened in first grade.' Let's read that part of the letter again."
2. Teacher reads Paragraph 4 again.
3. Teacher says: "This part, where she says, 'Words changed my life and it happened in first grade.'"
4. Teacher says: "I wonder how words can change a person's life."
5. Teacher says: "I just realized there is a little more to the letter!"
6. Teacher reads the postscript.
7. Teacher says: "Maybe her poem can help us with that. Let's keep that question in the back of our minds as we explore the words in her poem over the next few days."
8. Teacher reaches into the envelope to reveal the **poem "Open a Book, Unlock a Door."**
9. Teacher recites the poem aloud with expression while students listen.
10. Teacher says: "There's a wonderful rhythm and beat to this poem. Let's see if we can feel it in our bodies and mouths."
11. Teacher recites the first line with expression, drawing students' attention to the rhythm and beats by tapping the pointer and middle fingers of the right hand against the same two fingers of the left hand while students listen: "I want an adventure, new lands to explore. So I open a book, and unlock a door."
12. Students repeat.
13. Teacher asks:
 - "What rhyming words do we hear?" ("explore," "door")*
 - "What makes them rhyming words?" (They sound the same at the end; they both end with the sound /or/.)*
 - "What vowel sound do we hear in the word 'lands'?" (/a/)*
14. Repeat steps 11–13 with the remaining lines.
15. Teacher says: "Let's recite this entire poem aloud together now, feeling the rhythm, the rhyme, and the beats in our bodies and mouths."
16. Teacher and students recite the poem together.

Meeting Students' Needs

- Consider inviting students to stand while singing the transition song. Invite them to sing with you and "feel" the beats in the song in their bodies (examples: marching quietly in place, tapping with the pointer and middle finger of the right hand against the same two fingers of the left hand).
- If students are not familiar with the word "recite," explain that the word describes what a person is doing when they are speaking aloud a written piece (such as a poem) from memory.
- Use the **Articulatory Gestures chart** as needed to support students' ability to differentiate the sounds of the vowels.

Closing and Assessment

A. Reflecting on Learning: How Can Words Change a Person's Life?

1. Teacher says: "I'm still wondering about the person who wrote that letter to us and what she meant when she said that words changed her life and that it happened when she was in first grade."
2. Teacher asks:
"Any new ideas you'd like to share about that?"
3. Teacher invites one or two students to share their ideas.

Meeting Students' Needs

- Consider recording students' ideas on chart paper to revisit at the end of the cycle.

Independent Work Rotations

Suggested Plan: This first cycle provides time for students to practice what it means to work independently. A brief introduction is made to Materials and expectations for work habits, and social interactions are established.

Note: Three suggestions for independent activities are given. Consider using any or all of these. For example, you may want to have all students working on the same activity, or you may want to have two or three activities happening simultaneously for a set time and then rotate students through.

Independent Reading:

- Students spend time looking at their own individual book(s).

Word Work:

- From Activity Bank: An Activity Bank activity from the Syllable (S) category

Or:

- Each student makes a list of words that are important to them (examples: "mom," "cat," "swimming").
- Consider having students share their lists with a partner. If recorded on paper, these can also be used at a later time to sort into nouns (naming words) and verbs (action words).

Additional Materials

- Writing utensils and paper (one per student)

Responding to Text:

- Students draw a picture representing the writer of the mystery letter. They should include some things they know about her based on what she shared in her letter and label the picture.
- Consider extending this by asking students to record questions they might have about the writer or ideas they might have about how words changed her life when she was in first grade.
- The pictures can be displayed in the classroom alongside a copy of the letter.