

## Basic Lesson Information

**Grade:** 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Estimated Time:** 60 minutes (30 minutes read-aloud, 30 minutes activity)

### Lesson Objective(s) and AZ Reading Content Standards:

Strand 2: Comprehending Literary text

Concept 1: Elements of Literature

PO 1. Distinguish between major characters and minor characters.

PO 2. Identify common forms of literature (e.g. autobiography).

PO 3. Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot.

**Literary Selection:** *Thank you, Mr. Falker*

Author: Patricia Polacco

Illustrator: Patricia Polacco

Publication: 1998

Genre: Traditional literature (autobiographical tale)

### Supplies Needed:

White board and marker

Construction paper

Colored pencils, crayons

Writing Paper

Sample character web for Mr. Falker and Trish

Sample writing piece on the theme of the story

### Reader-response Activity:

Part 1. I will pass out a piece of construction paper to the students, and I will instruct the students to use as many adjectives as they can to describe the protagonists of the story using a character web. I have an example of what I am looking for, and will share that with the students to get them on the right track (see attached).

Part 2: I want the students to reflect on the story, and explain in a short paragraph the theme of the story. They need to have supporting evidence from the text. How does this story apply to them individually, and their own lives? (see attached)

## LESSON STEPS

1. **Gather the students around the reading area.** To get the students attention, hold your hands up like the “Quiet Coyote” sign to quiet the students down. This is a tactic their teacher uses, and it is a very effective tool to get the students focused.

2. **Hold up the cover of the book and say**, “Today’s story is an interesting tale that you may or may not recognize.”

3. **Questions to motivate the students *before* the story.**

- a. “How many of you have heard of this book before?”
- b. “When you look at the cover and title of the book, what do you think the book will be about?”
- c. “Who do you think Mr. Falker is?”
- d. “Why does the little girl on the cover of the book look so sad?”

4. **Begin read-aloud by announcing the book information. Read with two different voices for each main character.** *Thank you, Mr. Falker*, written by Patricia Polacco, and illustrated by Patricia Polacco.

5. **Stop periodically in the reading to ask questions *during* the reading:**

- a. “What is the little girl’s grandpa trying to demonstrate to her by spooning honey onto a book, and then asking her to taste the honey, and tell the family what the honey tastes like?”
- b. “What is the name of the little girl?”
- c. “What does her brother tell her she will learn to do when she gets into first grade?”
- d. “What does Trisha love to do?”
- e. “Why does Trisha feel different from the other students in school?”
- f. “What does Trisha’s grandmother tell her?”
- g. “What eventually happens to Trisha’s grandparents?”
- h. “Where was Trisha moving to, and why?”
- i. “How long did it take to drive from Michigan to California?”
- j. “Why were the boys calling her bad names?”
- k. “Do you think it is right or wrong to call people names?” “Why?”
- l. “What happens when Trisha starts fifth grade?”
- m. “What is the new teacher’s name?”
- n. “How does Mr. Falker treat Trisha?”
- o. “Who is bullying Trisha?” “Why?”
- p. “What does Trisha do to avoid being bullied during break?”
- q. “Who came to Trisha’s rescue when Eric is calling her terrible names?”
- r. “How does Mr. Falker try to help Trisha?”
- s. “What does Mr. Falker promise Trisha?”
- t. “Who is Miss Plessy?”
- u. “What does Trisha learn to do?”
- v. “Why does Trisha cry at the end of the book?”

7. **Questions *after* reading:**

- a. What do we learn about Trisha at the end of the book?
- b. How did Mr. Falker help Trisha?
- c. What did Trisha’s grandfather teach her about reading?
- d. What do you think Trisha felt like when her classmates teased her because she couldn’t read?
- e. What is the meaning of the sentence “Yes, and so is knowledge, but knowledge is like the bee that made that sweet honey, you have to chase it through the pages of a book!”?

Follow the above instructions for the reader response activity.

*Reflection: Thank you, Mr. Falker, by Patricia Polacco*

**Question 1:** Why did I choose to teach this particular literary selection?

**Answer 1:** When I read this book for the first time, so many themes popped out all at once, and I knew this was the right choice to read to my 4<sup>th</sup> grade service learning students. Issues such as bullying, teasing, taunting, name calling, and not being able to read all spoke volumes to me, and I knew that these were serious topics that my service learning class were experiencing currently, and I wanted to see their reaction to this book.

**Question 2:** How did the students respond to this book? What did they like or not like?

**Answer 2:** This story was received extremely well by the students. One boy in particular heard the story before, and when I was reading the story, others said it sounded familiar to them as well. The issues of bullying, name calling, taunting, and teasing, really hit home with these 4<sup>th</sup> graders. They experience this type of treatment, or worse, they are students who initiate these types of behavior. They all agreed, that it was wrong to treat people this way, and empathized with Trisha, the main character of the book. They liked the ending of the story in particular, where the teacher, Mr. Falker helped Trisha learn to read. They also made the connection that the author of the book, Patricia Polacco, was the character in the book.

**Question 3:** Did you feel more comfortable delivering lesson #2 than the first one?

**Answer 3:** Although I was completely prepared for both lessons, I did feel much more confident and comfortable delivering lesson #2. I felt that my questions were more effective, and the book choice was a really good fit for the class. The students really were very interested in the story, and when I asked before, during and after questions, they responded with all the right answers. I was really impressed with how much they comprehended what was being read to them. I remember when I was a little girl in school, I had a difficult time with reading comprehension. I still have a little bit of difficulty if the subject matter is not of interest to me. These students were right on with all of their answers. This book dealt with some serious issues, and the students seemed really mature in the way they responded to it.

**Question 4:** Did the students learn? How do I know?

**Answer 4:** Yes, the students did learn. I know they learned because their answers to my questions were accurate and complete. When they worked on the reader response activity, I asked the students to put together a character web for either Mr. Falker or Trisha. Just by the descriptive words they chose to describe their character told me that they really listened closely to the story, and when it came time to apply what they learned to writing, they were able to do it.

**Question 5:** What worked well in the lesson? Why?

**Answer 5:** I asked the students if they would recommend this book to their friends to read since they seemed to enjoy it so much, and they said yes. I was happy to hear this response. The more students see how harmful, and hurtful bullying and teasing can be, the more I believe they will be less likely to be that way towards their peers. The main character, Trisha, in the story was teased mercilessly because she could not read. The students in my 4<sup>th</sup> grade service learning classroom now understand a little better now that it is not “cool” to be a bully. Only time will tell if the student’s really learned a lesson from this book, and apply it in their own lives, but they were exposed to the subject, and saw how it affected a little girl who is the same age as they are.

**Question 6:** What were my challenges in planning this lesson? Delivery?

**Answer 6:** I wasn’t sure at first if I was stepping into a territory where I really should not go with my book choice, *Thank You, Mr. Falker*. I am not officially a teacher yet, and the subject matter of the book is a very delicate one, especially these days in school. Bullying is something that I am not really a specialist on, but the book choice turned out to be just perfect, and the students really enjoyed it. I thought the moral of the story was excellent as well, and when I was trying to think of a reader-response activity, I had the students write a one-liner on who has been a supportive influence in their life.

**Question 7:** Did I feel as though I had enough time to do my lesson? Why or why not?

**Answer 7:** I actually felt a little bit rushed doing my lessons. The book wasn’t very long, but the discussion I was having with the students seemed to be rushed a little bit. I also thought when the students were working on their response activity that they were a little pressed for time. Time seems to be a challenge that I am going to have to work on when I become a teacher. A teacher needs to be able to cover quite of bit of material in one day, and for some reason I have a hard time with this. I know I still have a lot to learn, but I hope this does come with experience and practice.

**Question 8:** What could I have done so the lesson wasn’t so rushed?

**Answer 8:** I know it is important for teachers to be prepared and organized, and I definitely was both. I think the subject matter was of such interest to the students that this made the lesson go on a little longer than expected. I think the discussions I was having with the students were important, but I wanted to fit the reader response activity in so I moved things along a little quicker than I wanted to. I think when it is my class, and I am in control of the schedule, if the students are really interested in something I will somehow rearrange something else so this discussion can continue.

**Question 9:** If I do this lesson again, what changes would I make?

**Answer 9:** If I were to do this lesson again, I might break it up into two pieces. I might read the book to the students one day, and then have the students think about what they learned, and

either do the reader response activity for homework, or continue the lesson the following day. I do not want to feel as though I have to rush an activity. Although this book is not very long, there is so much information that needs to be discussed that a longer lesson needs to be planned, and the two day plan seems the way to go. I would, of course, have the before, during and after discussion with the class, but I think the reader response activity would have to wait for the following day. That sounds like a good plan. I fixed my dilemma of running out of time. It is OK for a teacher to continue a lesson the next day if she feels that more time on it is required.

**Question 10:** Is *Thank You, Mr. Falker* a picture book that I plan on having in my future classroom library?

**Answer 10:** Most definitely. I could kick myself right now for not having discovered Patricia Polacco books sooner because I might have even thought of using them for my literature collection project. She has so many wonderful books, and this one in particular is a favorite of mine so far.

**Question 11:** Would I consider using any of Patricia Polacco's books in the future for my lessons?

**Answer 11:** Yes, I definitely would consider using Patricia Polacco books in my future lessons. I do not know very much about her other books, but I hope to read them, and see where they might fit into my future classroom curriculum.