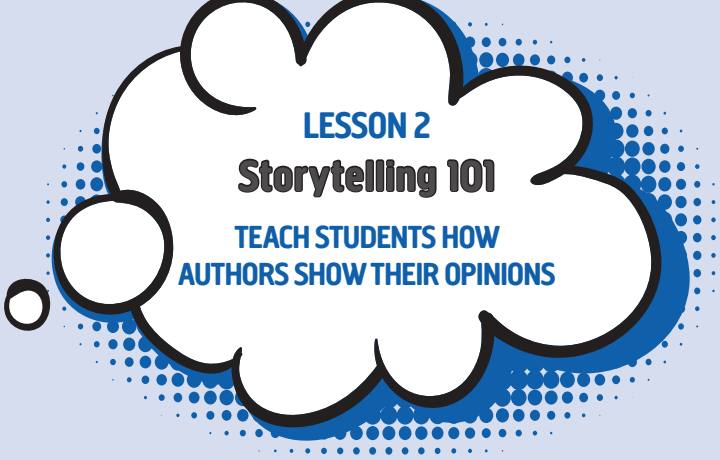

In this lesson, students learn that the way a story is told shows us the author's opinions about a character and allows us as readers to form our own opinions. We can listen to or read a story in this new way.

Decide to Teach This Tomorrow if Your Students

- Focus solely on plot and what is going to happen next
- Have trouble coming up with their own thinking and ideas about characters
- Stick so close to the literal elements of characters that they are unsure how to form opinions about them
- Don't see the connections between the characters and plot

What You Need:

- A story you know well

Tell Why: Explain that our opinions of people and characters impact the ways we tell their stories. Authors have opinions about characters they create, and they don't always tell us exactly what these opinions are. We can think about the details the author shows us about what a character says and how a character speaks, or what a character does and thinks. We can listen to or read a story and form opinions about the characters.

Show How:

- Tell a story in two different ways to highlight how a character can be seen differently depending on the information we receive.
  - *For example, tell a story in which the main character steals food from a neighbor's garden and seems to be sneaky and deceitful. Then tell the same story, but this time explain that the character's family is struggling to get food and there are young children at home who need to be fed.*

(Continued)

- After each telling, pause and ask the students to record their thinking on a sticky note or notebook page and then to discuss it with a partner.
- Then discuss why the opinions may have been different in each telling.

Practice How:

- Students pair up and try out the same storytelling practice.
- First they tell the story showing one opinion about a character.
- Then they tell it a different way to show another opinion.
- Partners debrief on how the opinion changed the story.

A Few Tips:

- If students have trouble hearing the differences, change your voice and pause dramatically to show the differences. Make them obvious.
- If you have trouble coming up with a story, you can retell a true story from your life or borrow a story from a book you have read.
- Since this is just an introductory lesson, don't be too concerned if students have trouble articulating a specific opinion word and instead use words like *nice* or *mean*.

http://bit.ly/2rHtRjy

There are several ways to introduce the concept of character opinions to students of different ages and experiences. Since some students will already come to reading experiences with this focus and line of thinking developed, you can either choose to deepen this even further or introduce it to students who don't necessarily form opinions as they read. What follows are a few activities for introducing character opinions to students.

Sketching: Project an opinion about a character on the board and ask students to picture what this would look like and draw an example of someone (not with names) who illustrates this opinion. For example, project the opinion "competitive" on the board and give students a few minutes to picture, sketch, then discuss their examples. Someone might say, "The character has to win everything and even rushes to be the first person to line up in school." Ask students to add speech or thought bubbles to the sketch if you want to teach how what characters do, say, and think also gives us opinions about them.

Interviews: Students can work on their own or in pairs. Ask them to choose a person they have a positive opinion about in their school or local community. Perhaps model by choosing a colleague. Then list a few opinions you have about this person that you respect and admire. Perhaps you would write down "thoughtful and generous." Then ask students to interview one another about why they have that opinion about a person and give examples that show the opinion. Students might ask me why I think my colleague is generous, and I could tell the story of the time she stayed after school to help me plan a lesson or the time she shared her lunch with me because I forgot mine. After the interviews, have students discuss in groups what they learned from the interviews about opinions.

Self-Reflection: Once you have built a safe classroom space for students to honestly reflect and share, you can ask students to think about their opinions about themselves. They can make a T-chart and list opinions about themselves they carry and then examples of things they did, said, or thought that gave them these opinions. For example, a student might list "hardworking" on the left side of the chart and "I stay after baseball practice for extra work on hitting the ball even farther" as the example on the right side of the chart. As students make these charts, remind them that these are opinions and not fixed traits so they can and likely will change if the students want them to. Also, make sure students generate multiple opinions about themselves so they acknowledge all the many facets and qualities they possess.