

# Introduction



**Structure:** A unit of 5 lessons.

- **Imagination & Creation**
- **Character**
- **Plot**
- **Setting**
- **The Full Story**

**Core Subject Content:** ELA (English & Language Arts) for Grades K-3 / Theme: Storytelling

**Summary:** Unlock the power of creative thinking and problem-solving, using Creativity Cans® as a springboard for inspiration. These standards-based lessons and activities teach and reinforce the 4 C's (**Creativity, Critical Thinking, Collaboration & Communication**) along with key ELA (English & Language Arts) skills and concepts. Intentionally open-ended, they are designed to cultivate creativity while teaching core content.

Students engage in a robust creative process including brainstorming, elaborating and collaborating to invent and re-invent unique creatures that serve as central characters in fun storytelling activities. Incorporating oral and written language skills, visual art and literature, these creative lessons show teachers and students alike how the 4 C's can bring stories to life.

### Materials:

- Creativity Can® contents: A variety of, colorful craft materials and doodads designed to stimulate imaginations and inspire creativity and innovation
- White and colored construction paper
- Scissors, tape and extra glue
- Colored pencils or crayons

### Optional Extras:

- Supplement with scrap arts & crafts materials, recycled or found objects, or items brought in from home, e.g., plastic bottles caps, old socks, toilet paper rolls, brown lunch bags, etc.
- Pictures from old magazines
- Zip-lock style plastic bags for storing leftover CC contents

**Essential Question #1:** What makes a story?

Answer: Three main elements: characters, plot and setting.

**Essential Question #2:** What makes a *really good* story?

Answer: **Creativity!**

Creative storytellers use their **imaginings** to come up with **original** characters, plots and settings. That's what makes them interesting and memorable. "Original" means fresh and unusual; something that's different rather than a copy or imitation of something else.

## Learning Objectives

### Core content: ELA (English & Language Arts)

What should students know and be able to do as a result of this lesson?

- Students will be able to ask and answer who, what, when, where, why and how questions to demonstrate understanding of text.
- Students will be able to demonstrate understanding of the characters, setting and plot in a text.
- Students will be able to describe how a character in a story responds to major events and challenges.

### 4C's

What should students know and be able to do as a result of this lesson?

#### Critical Thinking

- Divergent Thinking: Students will use their imaginations and brainstorming techniques to generate as many ideas as possible.
- Convergent Thinking: Students will practice decision-making and creative problem-solving when presented with "structure within freedom."

#### Collaboration

- Students will work cooperatively with others in order to generate new ideas and boost creativity.

#### Communication

- Students will share and present creative ideas and inventions, using oral, written and visual communication skills. This will help them gain confidence in risk-taking and in the creative process.

#### Creativity

- Curiosity: Student will seek additional information when solving a problem or encountering a new idea.
- Elaboration: Students will develop and expand ideas.
- Flexibility: Students will become more adaptable. They will combine ideas to solve a problem, address an issue, or make something new.
- Risk-Taking: Students will be more willing to take chances and learn to view failure as an opportunity to learn.



# “You can create!”

## Unit One

### Lesson #1 Imagination & Creation

#### Introduction to Unit:

##### Talking points:

This week we’re going to work on storytelling. We’re going to create our own characters who will star in their own stories. We will each make up stories involving our characters doing different things in different places. Along the way, we will all be asking and answering questions about: who, what, when, where, why and how.

**Open-ended question:** What do you need to be able to tell a story? [student answers might include: a book, pictures, words, paper...]

**Guided question:** What is the most important thing you need to tell a good story? I’m thinking of something you cannot see or hold in your hand... a word that begins with the letter “I”.

Yes... **imagination!** What is imagination? It’s the ability to imagine things that are not real: the ability to form a picture in your mind of something that you have not seen or experienced.

Can you think of a time when you’ve used your imagination?

Prompts: Have you ever looked up at the clouds and imagined one is something else (like a *marshmallow* or an *animal*)? Have you ever made up a story? Have you ever had an imaginary friend? Have you built an imaginary place? (like a *sand castle*, a *city out of blocks*, or a *pretend house* or *space ship out of a cardboard box*)?

#### Story to inspire creative thinking and imagination 4C: Creativity

Let’s read a story by a famous author who had a wild imagination: Dr. Seuss!

Read the following book to the class: *If I Ran the Zoo* by Dr. Seuss. (Sample text: “A four-footed lion’s not much of a beast. / The one in my zoo will have ten feet, at least! / Five legs on the left and five more on the right. / Then people will stare and they’ll say, ‘What a sight!’”)

Alternative: Show images from picture books featuring silly monsters or make-believe creatures. Suggested titles:

- *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith
- *The Gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson
- *Monsterology: The Complete Book of Monstrous Beasts* by Dr. Ernest Drake
- *Jabberwocky* by Lewis Carroll
- *Bananas in My Ears: A Collection of Nonsense Stories, Poems, Riddles, & Rhymes* by Michael Rosen (Author), Quentin Blake (Illustrator)

#### Create your own character 4C: Creativity

##### Instructions to students:

- Make a creature using your Creativity Can contents in any way you like. This is a creature who will be the main character in your stories. There are no instructions to follow. Use your imagination! Go wild!
- You might choose to use the can itself as part of your creature. Or, in a later lesson, you could use your can as a car or space ship or swimming pool or anything you like(!) for your creature.
- [Teachers should set a time limit.]
- Give your creature a name. (First or first, middle and last.)

#### “Musical Chairs” Creature Iterations

##### 4C: Creativity 4C: Critical Thinking

While creating your creatures, add some limitations (divergent thinking) for a fun challenge. Play a game of musical chairs. Each time the music stops, change two things about your creature (add a new feature or swap one feature for another). Then rename your creature! Do this at least 5 times.

##### 4C: Creativity 4C: Collaboration

Older students: Form smaller circles and make your creatures play musical chairs. Each time the music stops, pass your creature one chair to the right. Add a new feature (or two or three) to your “visitor” and then freeze when the music stops and pass it along.

**Homework:** Ask students to bring in at least two small objects to add to their creatures the following day (or add to the collective “Creature Features” basket of miscellaneous objects. Examples: pine cone, stick, clothespin, sponge (cut into pieces), button, ribbon, yarn, recycled yogurt container, piece of gift-wrapping paper.



# “You can create!”

## Unit One

### Lesson #2 Character

#### Develop your character.

4C: Creativity 4C: Critical Thinking

**Introduction:** Yesterday you made a creature. This week you're going to make up stories about your creature. Your creature will be your main character. If this was a movie, your creature would be the star. In a story we use the word “character.” You need to take time to develop your character, to make it interesting. You want your character to be **original**. This means, don't copy another character. Instead, try to make it unique (one-of-a-kind)!

Go get your creature and let it sit on your lap or in front of you while we have a discussion.

**Question:** Characters are an important part of any story. What makes a character interesting or memorable?

**Answer:** A combination of traits—physical and character traits. Physical traits = what a character looks like. Character traits = what a character acts like. *Example: The monster is hairy (physical trait) and grumpy (character trait).*

**Open-ended question:** Can you think of examples of characters who are especially memorable? Ones who stand out in your mind because of the way they look and behave? (*Examples: The Grinch, Voldemort, Oompa Loompas, Clifford the Big Red Dog, Stuart Little, Shrek, Mikey and Sully in Monsters Inc.*)

#### Talking points:

- What is a character?  
A character is a person or animal (or monster!) in a story.
- What is a character trait?  
It's a feature that makes someone distinct.
- A physical trait is how a character looks on the *outside*, whereas a character trait is how a character is on the *inside*.
- A character trait is a distinguishing quality that describes someone's personality, behavior and personal preferences (likes/dislikes).

#### Open-ended questions:

4C: Creativity 4C: Divergent Thinking

#### About Physical Traits

##### Physical Traits

What does your creature look like? Let's brainstorm a list of words (adjectives) to describe the different creatures we've created. *List student answers, starting with prompts if needed, e.g.: big, tall, striped, spotted, polka-dotted, boxy, furry, fuzzy, scaly, lumpy, bumpy, puffy, wrinkly, crinkly, rough, shiny, etc. — save these words for a later lesson.*

##### Physical Features

What physical features do most animals have on their heads? List student answers, e.g.: *Eyes, Ears, Noses, Snouts, Trunks, Mouths, Teeth, Fangs, Whiskers, Antennae, Hair, Horns*

Do most animals have arms? Do four-legged animals have arms? Do birds and bats have arms? What about seals and sea lions? What physical features do animals have on their feet? List student answers, e.g.: *Hooves, Paws, Claws, Wings, Flippers, Webbed Feet*

##### Activity:

Cut up pictures of people and animals from magazines and newspapers. Now cut out just their physical features, like ears, noses, beaks, horns, feet, etc. Remember, in an imaginary creature, you can mix up all sorts of physical features! Use tape or glue to add a few features to your creature.

#### About Character Traits

**Open-ended question:** Let's brainstorm a list of words (adjectives) to describe the character traits of the different creatures we've created. Use your imagination! (*Write words on the board as they're called out, offering prompts if needed: e.g., grumpy, happy, loud, quiet, serious, silly, nice, mean, stubborn, patient, impatient, angry, funny, shy, goofy, honest, etc. — save these words for a later lesson.*)

What does your creature like and dislike? (*Example: My creature likes eating bugs and playing basketball. It dislikes broccoli and snakes.*)

##### Mini Activity:

Add two or three more objects to your creature. These can be objects you brought from home, objects from the collective basket of found objects, or remaining objects in your Creativity Can. Glue or tape them on. Clean up your work area and bring your creature back with you for the next activity.

# Lesson #2

## Character (continued)

### Describe your character.

4C: Collaboration & Communication

Take a good look at your creature. Which of its physical features stand out the most? If your creature was lost and you had to call the police to report it missing, what would you say?

Think of three words and then three phrases to describe the most distinctive physical characteristics of your creature.

**Teacher prompts:** Say your independent-minded creature walked to your local library on her own and got lost, and you, being a responsible friend, went to find a policeman to report her missing. How would you describe her? What physical traits (distinguishing features) would you mention?

*[Illustration/cartoon of a policeman talking on a walkie-talkie with voice bubble: "Missing puppet reported. Be on the lookout for a short brown creature, approximately one foot tall, with purple hair, one big eye and a pirate tattoo on its left wing. Last scene wearing a hula skirt."]*

### Activity

Form pairs or small circles. Take turns introducing your creature, one at a time. Answer the questions:

- Who is your creature? What is its name?
- Where does your creature live?
- What does your creature eat?
- How does your creature act/behave?
- Why do you like your creature? Do you think our creatures would be friends? Why or why not?

Now let your creatures do the talking! Use your creatures like puppets and have them engage in conversation with one another.

### Extension 1: (Grades 2–3)

**Essential question:** How can you describe someone's personality?

Answer: You can describe someone's personality based on three things: their actions, thoughts and feelings. [Optional: download character traits chart.]

**Open-ended question:** What's your creature like? How would you describe its personality? *(Example: He's a happy monster who's funny and likes to tell jokes, but he gets very grumpy when he's hungry. I always keep a supply of bugs and granola bars on hand.)*

Write these words or phrases down [on a piece of paper or a downloadable worksheet].

### Extension 2 (Grades K–3):

Add to the picture you started in Part #1. Label physical features like: feathers, pointy claws, tattoos, eyebrows, earrings, wings, fangs, freckles, tail, whiskers on the picture you drew of your creature.



# “You can create!”

## Unit One

### Lesson #3 Plot

#### Send your character on an adventure!

Put any remaining items from your Creativity Can in the “Creature Features” basket. baggie. Your can is now empty and free to be used to transport your creature on an adventure of your choosing. Or, think “outside the can” and find something else from home (like an old shoebox) or in the classroom (just ask permission first) and let your imagination run wild.

#### Travel in style. 4C: Creativity 4C: Critical Thinking

Put on your thinking caps. You’re about to send your creature off on an adventure. What kind of vehicle will take your creature to the destination of your dreams? You can create this vehicle completely in your imagination or you can add some simple features. (*For instance, make some wings from construction paper and tape them onto the sides of your Can. Your creature can now ride on top or inside of a giant flying bird – or pterodactyl!!*)

Ask students for ideas. Your creature needs a way to travel long distances. What kind of imaginary vehicle could you create from your Can?

##### Sample ideas:

*Car, monster truck, Winnebago, covered wagon, spaceship, rocket, airplane, teleporter, boat, wooden barrel*

#### Develop your own plot.

4C: Creativity 4C: Critical Thinking

Some stories you can make up as you go along. For this story, you’re going to develop a plot and decide in advance what’s going to happen. You’re going to decide on a beginning, and ending, and the action that happens in between.

Your story must involve two things: 1) your creature and 2) your can.

Begin by explaining the definition of plot. [Could use a modified version of this plot chart: [http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson\\_images/lesson874/bme.pdf](http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson874/bme.pdf)

And also this pre-writing chart: [http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson\\_images/lesson874/prewrite.pdf](http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson874/prewrite.pdf)

These exercises will help students get ready to write a story on the last day of this unit.

#### Extensions:

##### Plot Challenge! 4C: Critical Thinking 4C: Critical Thinking

This is a great example of divergent thinking and “freedom within structure.” Sometimes our most creative thinking comes when we’re the most constrained!

Print out the sheet of “story prompts” at [CC website portal for teachers]. Cut into strips, fold in half, and place in a hat or basket. Have each student pick one at a time and then read out, e.g., “School bus!”

Have them pick again and call out the next object, e.g., “Ladybug!” Older students can pick a third time to introduce a third element, e.g., “Ice-cream cone!”

Now tell a story featuring 1) your creature and 2) the two–three objects. Use at least five sentences to tell your story.

Example: [Could have link to examples of stories sent in by teachers on website.]

*One day, a monster named Geronimo was waiting for the school bus. A ladybug landed on his nose, which made him very ticklish. He let out a huge sneeze, which blew the ladybug through the air. A young girl was walking by eating an ice-cream cone. The ladybug landed on top of the ice-cream and the little girl gobbled it up. The end.*

##### Story Re-Telling 4C: Collaboration & Communication

Classmates take turns re-telling other students’ stories. If a classmate leaves out key details, ask for volunteers to fill in the blanks or add more detail. Keep track to make sure each student has a chance to both tell and re-tell a story.

##### Add a New Element: Mix things up! 4C: Creativity

Any opportunity to work on multiple iterations of an idea or product (like a creature) flexes a child’s creative muscles! If a writing exercise sparks a new idea about a creature’s physical features, consider allowing a student to add one more element (e.g., wings to let the creature fly).

Time permitting, encourage students to create a new creature (a pet for their main creature) to add a new dimension to their storytelling. Name the pet, describe its personality, etc.



# “You can create!”

## Unit One

### Lesson #4 Setting

#### Set your own scene.

##### Materials:

- Pictures of different landscapes and scenery from magazines or printed downloadable templates in the Resources section.
- Use glue sticks to mount on cardboard to make more sturdy.

##### Preparation:

Settings can be related to cross-curricular content (like habitats to reinforce Science lessons) or general (city, farm, dinosaur den, underwater, outer space, etc).

**Essential Question:** What is a setting and how does it affect a story?

**Answer:** The setting is when and where a story takes place. It affects the characters and the plot in many ways.

In this activity, your creature will fly, drive, ride, roll or teleport to different settings. How does each new setting affect your creature? How does each new setting affect the story?

*Example: My creature Fish-Cat was bored at home and wanted to see the world. So he hopped on a helicopter and landed in the desert. It was exciting to see camels! But soon he became very hot and thirsty...*

#### Instructions:

Work in pairs to tell a story, using your two creatures and pictures of different habitats as settings (like desert, polar ice, tide pool, ocean, tropical rainforest, temperate forest, grasslands) as backdrops.

##### A) Creature Stories 4C: Collaboration & Communication

Pick your first setting. Have your creatures arrive by way of their “can” mode of transportation. Use your creatures to tell a story with the setting as a backdrop. You may take turns each making up a sentence, or you can have your two creatures engage in dialogue (talking to each other). Creatures should ask each other questions containing the words: who, what, when, where and why?

##### B) Scene Change 4C: Creativity 4C: Critical Thinking

After a few sentences, the teacher or a student rings a bell and says, “Scene Change!” and hands the pair a new scene. The challenge is to quickly adapt the story to reflect the new setting! Questions to consider: How does your creature adapt to its new setting? (e.g., Does it grow webbed feet and flippers in order to swim in the ocean?)

##### C) Circle Time 4C: Collaboration & Communication

You and your partner choose your favorite story from this activity and tell it to the rest of the class. At the end of each story, classmates are encouraged to ask the storytellers questions containing the words: who, what, when, where and why?



# “You can create!”

## Unit One

### Lesson #5 The Full Story

#### Write it all down.

4C: Creativity 4C: Critical Thinking

Now it's time to write and illustrate your own story! This can be a story you've created over the past week, or it can be a revised or brand new one.

Your story must contain three elements: 1) your creature, 2) your vehicle, 3) a setting.

Use the notes you wrote in Part #3 to guide you as you write your story. [Teachers should provide suggested number of sentences based on grade level and differentiated learning factors.]

If you came up with a new idea during Part #4, it's okay to change or refine your plot.

#### Draw what's in your imagination.

4C: Creativity

Illustrate your story however you like. Use colorful crayons and colored pencils. The only rules: Include your character (creature) in your chosen setting.

Older students may add captions and label key features with leader lines pointing to them (e.g., sharp fangs, fins, snout, tattoo)

#### Now change things up.

4C: Creativity 4C: Critical Thinking

Draw a brand new backdrop for your setting. How does this change your story? Write a new ending.

#### Lights, camera, action!

4C: Creativity 4C: Communication

Time permitting, have students take photos of their creatures in their different settings. These can later be used for multimedia storytelling projects or even to create a stop-motion animation!

(Extensions can also provide ideas for cross-disciplinary activities that spark creative thinking and cover additional subject content areas. All lesson plans could make good use of these, possibly as free mini lessons available online.)