A School Visit Presentation Packet for

Author Nanci Turner Steveson

Figurative Language, Character Building, & Dramatic Interpretation

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An Author and Her Work

Nanci Turner Steveson grew up with a book in one hand, the reins of a pony in the other. She wrote her first "novel" at age nine about a wild horse named Liberty. Nanci is a theatre stage manager, riding instructor, and reading fairy to book hungry children. The mother of two grown sons, Nanci lives in a historic meadow cabin in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, with assorted horses and dogs. She is dedicated to getting books into the hands of the homeless through her Literacy for Hope Project. Nanci is represented by Al Zuckerman, the founder of Writers House, LLC, and can also be reached through her web site at www.nanciturnersteveson.com

Magnolia Grace never wanted to leave Georgia. She never wanted to move with her mama to the farm her daddy owned before he died. But now here she is, in a tiny Vermont town where everybody sings the praises of the father Maggie never knew.

Then Maggie meets the Parker family—two moms, six kids, plus a pony. The Parkers are loud and wild, ask lots of questions, and don't follow any of the rules Maggie grew up with in Georgia. Suddenly Maggie has questions too—questions about her father, and why Mama kept him away for so long. In her search for answers, Maggie will learn that families are like patchwork quilts, sewn together by love, and all the more beautiful for their different colors.

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Annie has been promised a summer of freedom in the country. Freedom from a difficult school year, freedom from her fake "friends" back in the city, and, most of all, freedom from her mom's life-governing spreadsheets and rigid schedules. When Annie meets California, who is visiting her grandfather's farm, it seems she has found the perfect partner for the summer she's always craved. Especially when California offers Annie a real-life adventure: if she and Annie can find the ponies her mom rode as a girl, surely it will remind her mom how wonderful the farm is—and fix what's broken between her mom and her grandfather.

But Annie's summer of freedom is sprinkled with secrets, and everything she has learned about bravery and love will be put to the test when the truth behind the ultimate secret changes her life forever.

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Discussion Overview for GEORGIA RULES

"No one calls me Magnolia. I'm Maggie."

"Maggie," he said. "Okay, Maggie it is. But just so you know, to your father you were Magnolia Grace" (pg. 12).

• Explore the significance of Maggie's name. Consider that the 'no one' she refers to is/was actually her own father, a man she never knew. Predict why this detail is important to the story.
• The word 'grace' is defined as forgiveness, compassion, and kindness. Discuss how forgiveness, compassion, and kindness serve as themes in GEORGIA RULES. Tell how these aspects of grace are granted to Maggie and how she learns to demonstrate them to others.

Even with all that rudeness, being crowded made me feel at home. I could hide in a mass of people like this. For a few minutes I relished the sense of being one of many, and not the center of attention, which, I was realizing, could be exhausting (pg. 60).

• Explain what Maggie meant by being able to 'hide' in a large, boisterous bunch such as James's family. Tell why she would want to do so.
• Discuss ways that GEORGIA RULES explores the themes of isolation, loneliness, and a sense of belonging.

"It means we did things differently in Georgia. I'm trying to learn new rules. Vermont rules" (pg. 204).

• Compare and contrast Georgia rules with Vermont rules. With regards to the themes of forgiveness, compassion, and kindness, tell how the two are different and similar.
• To love unconditionally means to make a decision to love someone regardless of circumstances or disappointments. To love someone in this way is to accept a person as they are, no matter what they do or fail to do. Discuss how Maggie learned to love her deceased father, her mother, and even herself unconditionally.

Character Analysis

Characters show their true nature as they relate to one another. Their actions reveal *character traits* which demonstrate their personalities, experiences, desires, motivations, and points of view. As a story progresses, a character's nature changes. Oftentimes, the things that they learn or experience as a result of the events in the story cause them to develop an awareness of others and to grow in appreciation of those around them. Such is the case for Maggie in GEORGIA RULES. In her quest to learn the truth about her father, she discovered a sense of belonging, acceptance, and understanding that love can be expressed in a variety of ways. And, her character traits changed as a result of her quest to learn the truth about her father.

Character Traits are mannerisms or attitudes displayed by each character. Through observation of a character's trait, a reader can get a sense of who they are and what they want. A character's behaviors, reactions, and responses to events that occur in the story reflect their emotional state of being. In short, the way a character acts defines their traits.

In the following lesson, students will analyze the Character Traits for several of the characters in GEORGIA RULES using a **Character Wheel by following the steps below.**

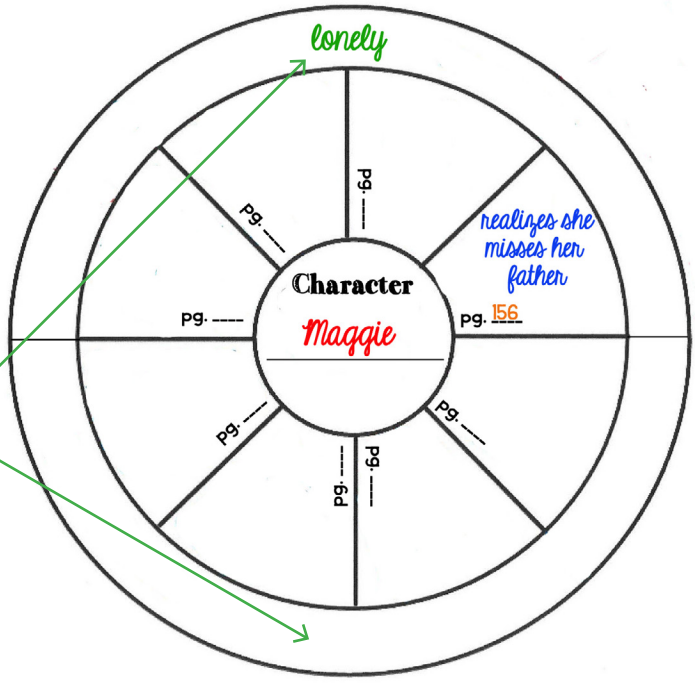
- **Have a copy of GEORGIA RULES to use as reference to cite examples of character trait behaviors.**
- **Print the list of Character Traits (Guide, pg. 6) and copies of the Character Wheel (Guide, pg. 7).**
- **Study the list of Character Traits to discover two traits that best describe a particular character.**
- **Using the Character Trait Wheel, write chosen traits in the spaces provided in the outer circle.**
- **Search through GEORGIA RULES to discover situations and actions in which the characters demonstrated a particular trait. Describe the action and cite the page number on which the behavior and/or action occured.**
- **Repeat the process for all of the characters featured in the GEORGIA RULES Reader's Theater (Guide, pg. 6). Employ the traits when dramatizing each role.**

WRITE CHARACTER'S NAME

CHOOSE TWO TRAITS THAT DESCRIBE THE CHARACTER. WRITE THEM HERE.

DESCRIBE BEHAVIOR AND/OR ACTION THAT DEMONSTRATES TRAIT.

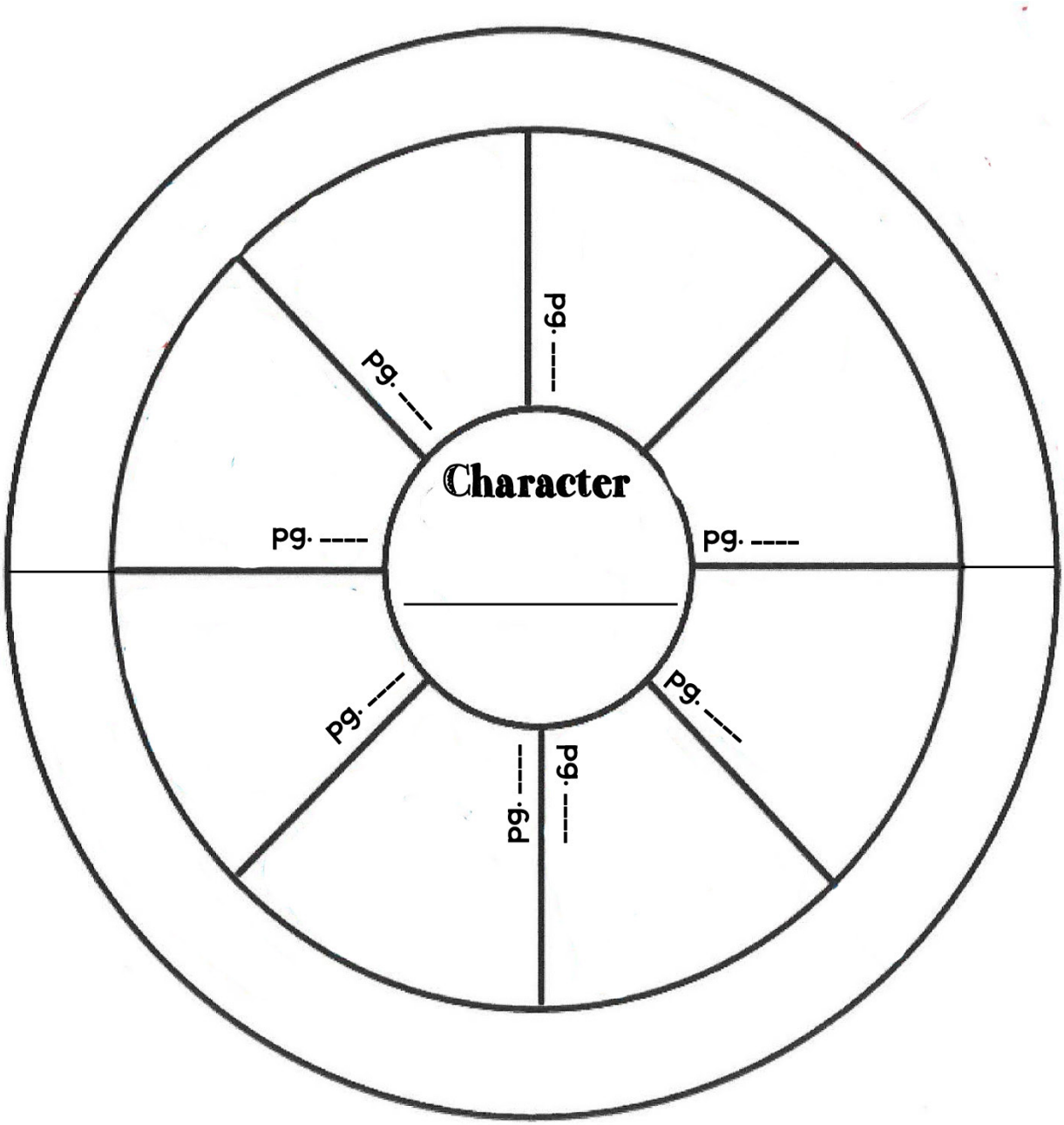
CITE PAGE NUMBER ON WHICH THE BEHAVIOR AND/OR ACTION OCCURS.



Character Traits

adventurous
afraid
ambitious
angry
annoyed
anxious
arrogant
artistic
athletic
active
bad
beautiful
bold
bossy
brave
busy
calm
careful
caring
careless
cautious
charming
cheerful
childish
clever
clumsy
confident
confused
cooperative
courageous
cruel
curious
daring
demanding
dependable
depressed
determined
dishonest
disrespectful
doubtful
eager
easygoing
embarrassed
entertaining
energetic
evil
excited
fearless
foolish
friendly
frustrated
funny
gentle
grateful
greedy
grouchy
guilty
happy
hard-working
helpful
honest
hopeful
imaginative
impatient
impolite
independent
intelligent
jealous
kind
lazy
a leader
lonely
loving
loyal
mean
messy
mischievous
mysterious
naughty
nervous
nice
obnoxious
polite
quiet
respectful
rowdy
rude
sad
scared
selfish
serious
shy
silly
sloppy
smart
sneaky
sorry
spoiled
successful
stubborn
studious
sweet
talented
thankful
thoughtful
trustworthy
unhappy
unselfish
upset
weak
witty
worried

Character Wheel



Reader's Theater - GEORGIA RULES
Chapter 9

List of characters:

Maggie
Mama
Biz
Lucy
Sonnet
Kendra
James

Setting: All characters and a mule are gathered in the front of Maggie's home

SCRIPT:

MAGGIE: (Speak directly to the audience)Mama stepped out of her fire-engine-red Mustang. Her head was wrapped in a turquoise scarf and she was wearing sunglasses as big as the whole state of Georgia!Of course, her lip stick matched the color of her car. When she saw all of us standing there, including the mule, she lowered her sun shades, and raised her eyesbrows. This was going to be awful.

MAMA: (Raise eyebrows and observe scene with skeptism)

BIZ: (Amazed) Is that your mom? She looks like a movie star!

MAGGIE: (Roll eyes and speak directly to the audience) Mama made her way around the side of the car and sashayed across the yard, waving one arm in the air.

MAMA: Well, hi, y'all. Maggie, sugar, do we have our first guests?

MAGGIE: (Speak directly to the audience) Mama's pointy heels sank in the grass, almost causing her to trip and fall. She slipped off her shoes one at a time and tip toed barefoot toward us.

MAMA: Oops, silly me! I hope that dog of Deacon's has its own private place for you know what other than our grass!

LUCY: (Lean toward Kendra giggling)

KENDRA: (Lean toward Lucy giggling)

SONNET: (Scribble a note in notebook)

BIZ: (Wide-eyed surprise)

MAGGIE: (Speak directly to the audience) Mama stopped short when she saw James's leg. Or no leg. Or thing that was there instead of a leg. And she stared. With her mouth open. Just the way she'd always said made me look like trailer trash.

MAMA: (Stare directly at Jame's leg, shocked)

MAGGIE: (Mortified) Mama! Mama!

MAMA: (Startled, turn away from James) Oh! Excuse me!

MAGGIE: (Speak to cast indignantly) This is my mom, Mrs. Baird. (Turn to Mama) Mama, this is James.

JAMES: (Reach out and shake Mama's hand) James Parker, nice to meet you. (Gesture toward Lucy, Biz, Kendra, and Sonnet) These are my sisters - Lucy, Biz, Kendra, and Sonnet.

MAMA: (Wide-eyed) Y'all are all from the same family? Well, it's so nice to meet you. Isn't it nice to have new friends, sweetheart?

JAMES: We came to see if Maggie wanted to swim.

MAMA: (Cheery) And an invitation to swim, too!

MAGGIE: (Speak directly to the audience) That was not what I expected. First of all, I didn't know these people were already my friends. And secondly, shouldn't I be able to use the Georgia rules to my advantage on an as-needed basis? Like now? In Georgia, Mama would have to meet their parents before I'd allowed to go off with them. She didn't even know about the two-moms part yet.

MAMA: (Wearing a fake smile) I didn't know there was a pool nearby. Is there a country club I haven't sniffed out?

JAMES: Around here, families swim in the river.

MAGGIE: (Speak directly to the audience)Mama fell silent. She looked from girl to girl, then right to James's leg without even stopping at his face.

MAMA: (Speak slowly) Well. . .I see. I suppose it would be all right.

MAGGIE: (Speak directly to the audience, indignantly) What about the Georgia rules?

LUCY: (Sweetly) Is it okay if afterward we go to the store for ice cream?

MAMA: (Turn to Lucy) Well, aren't you the most adorable thing ever? And what store do you mean, sweetheart?

JAMES: We own the country store near town. Little over a mile up the road from here. Sue and Kori will be there. I can drive Maggie back if it's too late.

MAMA: Who are Sue and Kori?

MAGGIE: (Speak directly to the audience) Here it comes.

JAMES: My moms. We have two of them.

MAGGIE: (Speak directly to the audience) I flinched on behalf of this family would would now be judged mercilessly at our dinner table. Mama's shoulders rose so slightly that no one else probably saw it. But I did. I knew her body language as well as I knew the name of the hair color she used every month to keep her roots from showing.

MAMA: (Suspiciously) Two moms. I see. Is there a father involved?

MAGGIE: (Turn to Mama, shocked) Mama! That's none of your. . .

JAMES: It's okay Maggie. We all have different fathers. Sonnet, Biz, and Lucy are adopted. Haily and I are from when our moms were married to husbands. Kendra is a foster.

KENDRA: (Scowl and look away sharply)

MAMA: And how many does that make all together?

JAMES: Six. Five girls and me. Haily's working at the store today.

MAMA: (Suspiciously) Hmmmm, is that so.

MAGGIE: (Speak directly to the audience)I eyed Mama as she cock a hip and looked suspiciously at each one of them. Then she and I exchanged a long, hard glance.

MAMA: Well, James, all I have to say is that Vermont is a very interesting state. Maggie, guess we're not in Georgia any more. Are we, sugar?

MAGGIE: (Speak directly to the audience, exasperated) You got that right, Mama. No more Georgia rules, that's for certain.

Figurative Language

Figurative language uses words or expressions with a meaning that is different from the literal interpretation. A writer states facts as they are when using literal language. Figurative language uses exaggeration or 'word pictures' to illustrate a point.

Two examples of figurative language are the **metaphor** and the **simile**. A metaphor is a comparison made between things which are not typically alike. A simile also compares two things and often uses the words like or as. The comparisons used in both metaphors and similes form descriptive pictures in the reader's mind.

Consider the following quote found in SWING SIDEWAYS on page 169 in which the author used both metaphor and simile to describe the tone of a voice.

The phrase underlined in blue serves as an example of a metaphor. Mr. McMurty's voice and tea are two things that are not alike. Chamomile-tea is known for its ability to calm one's state of being. Mr. McMurty's once calm, even-tempered tone is gone.

A word picture: tea!

"Catherine said what?" Gone was the soothing, chamomile-tea tone. His voice had turned as cold as a stone on a frozen hill.

A word picture: a stone!

The phrase underlined in red serves as an example of a simile. Mr. McMurty's voice has become cold. Note the use of the word 'as' to establish the comparison between his voice and a cold stone on a frozen hill.

Create your own metaphor and simile word pictures on the following page.
Get creative with this!
Have fun!

Similes & Metaphors

MAKE UP YOUR OWN SIMILES BELOW. TRY TO THINK OF EXCITING AND ORIGINAL PHRASES. ILLUSTRATE YOUR SIMILE IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.

As disgusting as _____

_____

sketch your word picture

Wrinkly, like _____

_____

sketch your word picture

As exciting as _____

_____

sketch your word picture

MAKE UP YOUR OWN METAPHORS BELOW BY WRITING ORIGINAL SENTENCES USING FIGURATIVE IMAGES. ILLUSTRATE YOUR METAPHOR IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.

Write a sentence describing the taste of medicine.

_____

_____

sketch your word picture

Write a sentence describing a scary dream.

_____

_____

sketch your word picture

Write a sentence describing your bedroom.

_____

_____

sketch your word picture

Common Core State Standards Alignment

English Language Arts Standards » Anchor Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

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