First Grade Lesson Plan

"Bella Brown's Messier Than Messy Room" by J.W. Zarek

Overview

This first grade lesson plan uses "Bella Brown's Messier Than Messy Room" to develop reading comprehension, writing skills, mathematical reasoning, personal responsibility, and social-emotional awareness. First graders will engage with the text through close reading strategies, phonics exploration, collaborative learning, digital creation, and real-world problem-solving that addresses the whole child.

Learning Objectives

- Students will analyze character traits, setting, and story structure
- Students will use text evidence to answer comprehension questions
- Students will identify and practice phonics patterns in vocabulary from the text
- Students will write narrative paragraphs with a beginning, middle, and end
- Students will solve addition and subtraction word problems within 20
- Students will identify and practice sequential steps in a process
- Students will apply problem-solving strategies to personal responsibilities
- Students will compare and contrast their experiences with the character's experiences
- Students will collaborate with peers to achieve common goals
- Students will express emotions related to accomplishment and perseverance

Materials Needed

- "Bella Brown's Messier Than Messy Room" book
- Reading response journals
- Writing paper (with primary lines)
- Chart paper and markers
- Math manipulatives
- Sentence strips

- Story map graphic organizers
- Character trait charts
- Student responsibility checklists
- Material for crafting (construction paper, scissors, glue, crayons)
- Digital tablets or classroom computers
- Digital camera or tablet (for documentation)
- Index cards for vocabulary
- Step-by-step task cards
- Emotion cards with faces showing different feelings
- Simple self-assessment rubrics with picture cues
- Word sort cards based on spelling patterns
- Sticky notes for annotation and peer feedback

Vocabulary Focus

- Responsibility
- Sequence
- Perseverance
- Organization
- Strategy
- Solution
- Motivation
- Consequence
- Overwhelmed
- Accomplished

Day 1: Reading Comprehension, Character Analysis & Word Work

Morning Meeting Discussion (10 minutes):

1. Show the book cover and read the title.

2. Ask students to share experiences with messy rooms:
    - "Have you ever had a really messy room?"
    - "What made cleaning up difficult?"
    - "Who helps you get organized at home?"
3. Create a K-W-L chart (Know-Want to Learn-Learned) about organization.
4. Introduce the emotion word "overwhelmed" and discuss what it means.

First Read-Aloud (15 minutes):

1. Read the story aloud, pausing occasionally to check for understanding.
2. Model think-aloud strategies: "I'm noticing that Bella feels overwhelmed by her messy room. I can relate to that feeling when I have a big job to do."
3. Ask prediction questions: "What do you think will happen next?"
4. Point out key vocabulary words as they appear in the text.

Character Analysis (20 minutes):

1. Create a character map for Bella Brown using a digital template projected on the board.
2. Guide students to identify character traits based on text evidence:
    - How Bella feels about cleaning her room
    - How she responds to challenges
    - How she interacts with Grandma Yetta
3. Ask: "What kind of person is Bella? What words describe her?"
4. Record student responses with supporting evidence from the text.
5. Students create their own mini-character maps with a partner.

Word Work Station (20 minutes):

1. Set up 4 word work stations based on vocabulary from the book:
    - **Station 1: Word Sorts** - Sort words from the story by spelling patterns (e.g., short 'e' vs. long 'e')

    - **Station 2: Compound Words** - Identify compound words from the story (e.g., bedroom, butterfly)
    - **Station 3: Syllable Counting** - Sort words by number of syllables (e.g., clean = 1, butterfly = 3)
    - **Station 4: Word Building** - Build new words using letter tiles from key vocabulary
2. Students rotate through stations in small groups.
3. Quick formative assessment: Students complete an exit ticket naming one word pattern they discovered.

Story Structure Analysis (15 minutes):

1. Introduce the story map graphic organizer:
    - Beginning (Problem): Bella's messy room
    - Middle (Actions): Cleaning steps with Grandma's help
    - End (Solution): Clean room and butterfly garden reward
2. Have students complete the story map in collaborative pairs.
3. Discuss how the story follows a problem-solution structure.
4. Take photos of students working together to document collaboration.

Reading Response Journal (15 minutes):

1. Students respond to the prompt: "How did Bella solve her problem? What strategy did she use?"
2. Encourage students to use evidence from the text in their responses.
3. Provide sentence starters for different writing levels.
4. Extension: "What other strategy could Bella have used to clean her room?"

Closing & Self-Assessment (5 minutes):

1. Revisit the K-W-L chart and add information to the "Learned" column.
2. Students complete a quick self-assessment using a simple rubric with smiling/neutral/frowning faces:
    - "I can identify the main problem in the story."

- "I can describe Bella's character."
- "I found word patterns in our word work."

3. Preview tomorrow's activities: "Tomorrow we'll explore the sequence of events in the story!"

Day 2: Sequencing, Procedural Writing & Digital Storytelling

Morning Reading (15 minutes):

1. Reread the story, this time focusing on the sequence of events.
2. Ask students to listen carefully for the order of tasks Bella completes.
3. Use temporal words: first, next, then, after that, finally.
4. Students use sticky notes to mark important events in the sequence.

Phonics Mini-Lesson (10 minutes):

1. Focus on a phonics pattern found in the book (e.g., long 'e' sound in clean, need).
2. Create a list of words from the text with this pattern.
3. Practice reading these words together.
4. Challenge students to find more examples in classroom materials.

Sequencing Activity (20 minutes):

1. Provide sentence strips with key events from the story.
2. In collaborative groups of 3-4, have students arrange the strips in correct sequence.
3. Once correctly sequenced, have groups share their work.
4. Create a class timeline of events on chart paper.
5. Take digital photos of each group's sequence to document their thinking.

Transition Words Mini-Lesson (15 minutes):

1. Introduce transition words that signal sequence: first, next, then, last, finally.
2. Find examples of these words in the text.
3. Create a transition words anchor chart for the classroom.
4. Practice using these words in oral sentences about classroom routines.

5. Quick formative assessment: students hold up fingers (1-5) to show understanding.

Procedural Writing with Peer Feedback (25 minutes):

1. Explain that procedures are written instructions that tell how to do something in order.
2. Model writing a simple procedure: "How to Sharpen a Pencil"
3. Guide students to write their own procedure: "How to Clean My Desk"
    - Must include at least 3 steps
    - Must use transition words
    - Must have a clear beginning, middle, and end
4. Students illustrate their procedures.
5. Implement structured peer feedback:
    - Partner A reads procedure to Partner B
    - Partner B tries to follow instructions exactly
    - Partners use a simple checklist to provide feedback:
        - Were all steps included?
        - Were transition words used?
        - Can I follow these directions easily?

Digital Storytelling Introduction (20 minutes):

1. Introduce a simple digital storytelling tool (like Book Creator or Seesaw).
2. Demonstrate how to create a basic digital story with images and text.
3. Begin a class digital story titled "Our Classroom Cleanup Adventure"
4. Students brainstorm a classroom area that needs organization.
5. Take "before" photos to use in the digital story.

Closing & Emotions Check (5 minutes):

1. Discuss: "Why is order important when giving instructions?"
2. Introduce emotion vocabulary: accomplished, proud, satisfied.

3. Students share how they feel when they complete a challenging task using emotion cards.

Day 3: Math Connections & Collaborative Problem-Solving

Story Problem Introduction (10 minutes):

1. Return to the story, focusing on the counting elements:
    - Bella folds 10 T-shirts and jeans
    - Bella puts away 4 stuffed animals
    - Bella stacks game boxes
2. Use visualization strategies: "Let's picture Bella's clothes in our minds. She has 10 T-shirts and 8 jeans. How can we figure out the total?"

Math Story Problems (20 minutes):

1. Create story problems based on the book:
    - "Bella had 10 t-shirts and 8 pairs of jeans to fold. How many clothing items did she have altogether?"
    - "Bella put 4 stuffed animals on the shelf. She found 3 more under her bed and 2 in her closet. How many stuffed animals did she have in total?"
    - "Bella had 15 game boxes. She put 7 on the shelf. How many were still left to put away?"
2. Model solving these problems using multiple strategies:
    - Drawings
    - Number lines
    - Equations
    - Ten frames
3. Practice solving together using math manipulatives.
4. Formative assessment: students use thumbs up/middle/down to show confidence in solving.

Collaborative Math Problem-Solving (15 minutes):

1. Divide students into math teams of 3-4.

2. Each team receives a word problem scenario related to Bella's cleanup.
3. Teams work together to:
    - Read the problem carefully
    - Identify what they're trying to find
    - Choose a strategy
    - Solve the problem
    - Explain their thinking
4. Teams present their solutions to another team for feedback.

Create Your Own Story Problems (20 minutes):

1. Students create their own math story problems based on the book.
2. Provide sentence frames:
    - "Bella had ____ (items). She put away ____ (items). How many were left?"
    - "Bella counted ____ (items) and then found ____ more. How many did she have altogether?"
3. Students write and solve their own problems.
4. Share problems with partners to solve.
5. Collect these for assessment of math understanding.

Math Center Activities (30 minutes): Set up 4 centers:

1. **Counting Center:** Count and sort classroom items by category
2. **Addition Center:** Solve "cleaning up" addition problems within 20
3. **Subtraction Center:** Solve "putting away" subtraction problems within 20
4. **Word Problem Center:** Create and solve original story problems
5. Students rotate through centers in small groups.
6. Add a technology option: Use a math app to practice addition/subtraction facts.

Math Journal Reflection & Self-Assessment (10 minutes):

1. Students respond to: "How did math help Bella organize her room?"

2. Encourage connections between math and organization in real life.
3. Self-assessment: Students color in numbers on a number line to show how confident they feel solving addition and subtraction problems.

Day 4: Responsibility, Life Skills & Social-Emotional Learning

Discussion Circle & Emotional Vocabulary (15 minutes):

1. Discuss what "responsibility" means.
2. Connect to Bella's responsibilities in the story.
3. Ask: "What responsibilities do you have at home? At school?"
4. Create a class definition of responsibility.
5. Introduce and discuss emotion vocabulary:
    - Overwhelmed (when facing the messy room)
    - Frustrated (when tasks seem too big)
    - Proud (when completing a task)
    - Satisfied (when enjoying the clean room)
6. Students share times they've felt these emotions when doing chores.

Personal Responsibility Chart with Digital Documentation (20 minutes):

1. Students create personal responsibility charts:
    - List 3-5 responsibilities they have at home
    - Draw pictures to illustrate each responsibility
    - Write one sentence describing how completing each responsibility makes them feel
2. Share in small groups.
3. Optional technology extension: Take photos of responsibility charts to create a digital class responsibility book.

Problem-Solution Connection & Perseverance Discussion (15 minutes):

1. Return to how Bella solved her problem:
    - She asked for help (called Grandma)

    - She broke big tasks into smaller ones
    - She worked step-by-step
    - She celebrated her success
2. Discuss how these strategies apply to other problems.
3. Introduce the concept of perseverance:
    - What does it mean to persevere?
    - How did Bella show perseverance?
    - When have you shown perseverance?
4. Create a "Perseverance Strategies" anchor chart for the classroom.

Collaborative Real-World Application (25 minutes):

1. Present a classroom scenario: "Our classroom library is very messy."
2. Challenge student teams to:
    - Define the problem clearly
    - Break it into smaller tasks
    - Create a step-by-step plan
    - Assign responsibilities
3. Teams create visual plans with illustrations.
4. Teams present their solutions.
5. Class votes on elements from different plans to create a unified approach.
6. Implement the class plan to actually clean the classroom library!
7. Document the before/during/after process with photos for the digital story.

Reflection Writing with Emotional Connection (15 minutes):

1. Students write about a time they successfully completed a responsibility.
2. Prompt: "Write about a time you finished an important job. How did you feel?"
3. Encourage use of feeling words and details.
4. Provide a word bank of emotion vocabulary.

5. Students illustrate their writing with a "feelings face" showing their emotion.

Closing & Partner Sharing (10 minutes):

1. Students share their writing with a partner.
2. Partners practice active listening by repeating back one thing they heard.
3. Quick formative assessment: Students rate their effort today on a scale of 1-3.

Day 5: Integration, Creative Project & Technology

Story Review & Emotional Journey (10 minutes):

1. Review the main elements of "Bella Brown's Messier Than Messy Room."
2. Create an "emotional journey" chart showing how Bella's feelings changed throughout the story.
3. Discuss how Bella changed from the beginning to the end of the story.
4. Connect to the theme of responsibility and rewards.

Compare & Contrast Collaborative Activity (15 minutes):

1. In small groups, create a Venn diagram comparing:
    - Bella's responsibilities vs. Students' responsibilities
    - Ways Bella organized vs. Ways students organize
2. Discuss similarities and differences.
3. Gallery walk: Groups visit other groups' Venn diagrams and add one sticky note with a comment or question.

Thank You Letter Writing with Peer Feedback (20 minutes):

1. Just as Bella sent a thank you butterfly to Grandma Yetta, students will write thank you letters.
2. Students write to someone who helps them with responsibilities.
3. Letters should include:
    - Greeting (Dear _____,)
    - Thank you statement
    - Specific example of how the person helps

    - How it makes them feel
    - Closing (Sincerely, _____)
4. Students decorate their letters with butterfly illustrations.
5. Structured peer feedback using a simple checklist:
    - Does it have all the parts of a letter?
    - Does it explain why they are thankful?
    - Does it include feeling words?

"My Clean Room" Creative Project with Choice (30 minutes): Offer students choice in how they create their project:

1. **Option 1: Fold-Out Book**
    - Outside: "My Messier Than Messy Room" (showing a messy room)
    - Inside: "My Clean Room" (showing the same room, but clean and organized)
2. **Option 2: Digital Story**
    - Use tablets to create a simple digital book about organizing their room
    - Include photos or drawings of messy and clean spaces
3. **Option 3: How-To Poster**
    - Create an instructional poster about how to clean a room
    - Include step-by-step instructions with illustrations

All projects should include:

- Labels and at least one sentence explaining their cleaning strategy
- Sequence words (first, next, then, finally)
- At least one emotion word describing how they feel when the room is clean

Complete Class Digital Story (15 minutes):

1. Finish the class digital story about the classroom cleanup project.
2. Include:
    - "Before" photos of messy classroom areas

    - Photos of students working together
    - "After" photos of organized spaces
    - Student narration about the process
    - Feelings about the completed project
3. Share the finished digital story with the class.

Gallery Walk, Celebration & Assessment (15 minutes):

1. Display all student projects.
2. Conduct a gallery walk where students view each other's work.
3. Students leave positive feedback on sticky notes.
4. Circle up to share what they learned about responsibility.
5. Students complete a simple self-assessment about their learning:
    - "I can sequence events in a story."
    - "I can solve math problems about organizing."
    - "I can write about responsibilities."
    - "I can work with others to solve problems."
    - "I can explain how completing tasks makes me feel."
6. Award "Responsibility Expert" certificates.

Assessment Framework

- **Pre-Assessment:** KWL chart about organization and responsibilities
- **Formative Assessments:**
    - Exit tickets after key activities
    - Thumbs up/middle/down confidence checks
    - Partner work observations
    - Quick write responses
    - Oral responses during discussions
- **Summative Assessments:**

    - Completed story maps and character analyses
    - Math word problem solutions
    - Procedural writing samples
    - Thank you letters
    - Creative projects
    - Self-assessment reflections
- **Performance Assessments:**
    - Collaborative classroom cleanup activity
    - Digital storytelling project
    - Presentations of problem-solving strategies

Differentiation Strategies

- **For students needing support:**
    - Provide sentence frames for writing activities
    - Offer graphic organizers with more structure
    - Create simplified versions of math problems
    - Allow for drawing responses alongside writing
    - Provide word banks for vocabulary support
    - Partner with peer helpers for complex tasks
    - Offer audio recording options for writing activities
    - Provide visual step-by-step instructions
- **For advanced students:**
    - Extend writing to include more complex paragraphs
    - Create multi-step math word problems
    - Design a complete "Room Organization Guide"
    - Add research components about organization methods
    - Create a script for a "How to Clean Your Room" instructional video

    - Compare this book with other books in the Bella Brown series
    - Mentor younger students in organization strategies
    - Design a classroom organization system

Technology Integration

- **Digital Storytelling:** Create simple digital books about organization
- **Photo Documentation:** Capture before/after images of organization projects
- **Math Apps:** Reinforce addition and subtraction skills
- **Recording Tools:** Record student reflections and storytelling
- **Presentation Software:** Create simple slides about responsibility
- **Virtual Gallery:** Share student work with families digitally
- **Learning Management System:** Post activities and resources for students

Social-Emotional Learning Components

- **Self-Awareness:** Identifying emotions related to tasks and accomplishment
- **Self-Management:** Learning strategies for breaking down overwhelming tasks
- **Responsible Decision-Making:** Creating and implementing organization plans
- **Relationship Skills:** Collaborating on cleanup projects
- **Social Awareness:** Understanding how organization affects others

Home Connection

- Send home a family letter explaining the responsibility theme
- Create a "Family Organization Challenge" for students to complete at home
- Share photos of classroom projects on class communication platform
- Invite families to share organization strategies that work at home
- Send home blank responsibility charts for family use
- Create a class book of responsibility stories to share with families
- Share the digital classroom cleanup story with families
- Provide a list of recommended apps that support organization skills

Cross-Curricular Connections

- **Science:** Sorting and classifying objects by properties
- **Art:** Creating visual representations of clean/messy spaces
- **Social Studies:** Responsibilities within a community (home, school)
- **Technology:** Document organization strategies using digital photos
- **Health:** Connection between organization and reduced stress
- **Physical Education:** Movement activities related to cleaning tasks
- **Music:** Create cleanup songs or chants to make organization fun

Standards Alignment

This lesson addresses first grade standards in:

- **Reading:** Story elements, comprehension, character analysis, phonics
- **Writing:** Narrative and procedural writing with appropriate structure
- **Speaking/Listening:** Collaborative discussions, presenting ideas
- **Math:** Addition and subtraction word problems within 20
- **Social-Emotional:** Responsibility, task completion, problem-solving
- **21st Century Skills:** Organization, collaboration, communication, technology

Teacher Reflection Questions

After teaching this unit, consider:

1. Which elements of the lesson most engaged students?
2. How effective were the collaborative learning components?
3. Did the technology integration enhance student understanding?
4. Which assessment strategies provided the most useful information?
5. How might you adapt this lesson for future use?
6. Which social-emotional components had the greatest impact?
7. How did students respond to the choice-based activities?