

Leo the Late Bloomer

by Robert Kraus

Leo, a young tiger, does not do all of the same things that his friends do. His father is concerned, but his mother understands that Leo will do all of these things—when he is ready. And eventually, he does! In this classic story told in rhyme, the message is clear: Like lovable Leo, everyone is unique and does things in their own way and at their own pace.

Create Successful Reading Habits

To effectively decode (sound out) and encode (spell) words, students must be able to:

- identify the individual sounds, or phonemes, that make up the words they hear in speech
- name the letters of the alphabet as they appear in print
- identify each letter's corresponding sound(s)

Current research from the What Works Clearinghouse shows the importance of instruction in phonological awareness. It is recommended to begin by introducing students to larger segments of speech (words) with which they will be more familiar, and gradually draw their attention to smaller and smaller sound segments. Phonemic awareness is the most sophisticated and most important level of phonological awareness. It focuses on the individual sounds in words.

* U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, What Works Clearinghouse. (n.d.). Practice Guides. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuides>

SCIENCE OF READING – CONNECTING RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

What is the Science of Reading?

The **science of reading** refers to the body of evidence that underlies what we know about how children learn to read. It stems from decades of research in educational and developmental psychology, linguistics, cognitive science, and neuroscience. It outlines:

- how reading develops
- what happens in the brains of students with reading difficulties
- the instructional strategies and content that should be taught to support this development

The **science of reading** is the knowledge that comprises all of these things.

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT FLORIDA'S B.E.S.T. STANDARDS

The ELA foundational standards are built on the following premises:

- **Reading foundation instruction should be explicit, sequential, systematic, and cumulative.**
 - **Explicit means that the initial introduction of content is directly stated.**
 - **Sequential and systematic means that instruction should progress from the easiest to the more difficult skills—with much repetition and review.**
 - **Cumulative means instruction builds upon prior learning.**
- **Learning is multisensory in that it involves the use of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic–tactile pathways simultaneously to enhance memory and learning of written language.**

Look for standards alignment in each section of this guide.

WORD WORK – PHONEMIC AWARENESS

Help your students build their phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is the most sophisticated and most important level of phonological awareness. It focuses on the individual sounds in words and does not involve print or letter knowledge.

ELA.K.F.1.2: Demonstrate phonological awareness.
a. Segment and blend phonemes in single-syllable spoken words.

Listen and Blend Phonemes

Leo learned to *read*, *write*, *draw*, *eat neatly*, and *speak* in his own time. Help your students blend phonemes to say these words.

Say to students, “Leo learns how to do a lot of things. I am going to tell you a word. The word will describe something Leo learns to do. I will segment each word by its individual sounds. Then you are going to blend those sounds together and say the whole word.”

Tell your students, “One of the things Leo learns to do is *write*, /r/, /ī/, /t/.”

Hold up one finger for each sound in *write* (three fingers facing students from left to right representing each sound).

“Watch my mouth as I blend the sounds together. /r/, /ī/, /t/, *write*. One of the things he learns to do is *write*.”

“Listen as I segment more words by their sounds. Blend the sounds together to figure out another thing Leo learns to do.”

Present students with the individual phonemes of each word segmented, and have students practice blending the phonemes together to say the whole word. Have students practice with the words *read* (/r/, /ē/, /d/), *eat* (/ē/, /t/), *draw* (/d/, /r/, /au/), and *speak* (/s/, /p/, /ē/, /k/).

ELL and SWD suggestion:

Provide students with additional small-group instruction focusing on blending. Consider what pre-skills are necessary for successful blending at the phoneme level. Students may need instruction at the syllable and onset-rime levels before they are ready to master blending at the phoneme level. Ensure students have frequent opportunities to practice skills with teacher feedback.

TALK ABOUT NEW AND INTERESTING WORDS

When children encounter unfamiliar words, take a moment to talk about the words using child-friendly explanations or definitions.

ELA.K.V.1.1: Use grade-level, academic vocabulary appropriately in speaking and writing.

After reading the text, ask students what they think the word **bloom** means and why they think this. Go back into the text, and point out what happens to Leo when it says that he **bloomed**. He isn't able to read, write, eat neatly, or speak, and after he **blooms** he is able to do all of those things. Provide students with the child-friendly definition below:

“The word **bloom** can be used to describe when people change, grow, or develop fully. In this story, Leo **blooms** when he learns to do new things.”

Complete the activity with additional words from text below:

patience (p. 18): If you have **patience**, you are able to stay calm while waiting. Leo's mother says that you should have **patience** and wait for a bloomer to bloom.

neatly (p. 29): When someone is **neat**, they don't make a mess. Leo learns not to make a mess and to eat **neatly**.

ELL and SWD suggestion:

Multisensory instruction can be utilized to engage various sensory pathways. Provide a hand or body motion to accompany the word **bloom**. This will help reinforce the definition of **bloom** by incorporating kinesthetic movement.

READ FOR MEANING – IDENTIFYING CHARACTER TRAITS

Help your students build their ability to describe the main character within a text. The focus of your questions and discussion before, during, and after reading the text will support students in describing the main character of this story. The character grows and changes throughout the story, showing students that characters can be dynamic. Utilize an Outside/Inside Character Trait graphic organizer to record descriptions orally given by students.

- **ELA.K.R.1.1: Describe the main character(s), setting, and important events in a story.**
 - Clarification 3: Descriptions can be oral, either in response to a question or through discussion.
- **ELA.K.R.3.2: Retell a text orally to enhance comprehension.**
 - a. Use main character(s), setting, and important events for a story.
- **ELA.K.C.5.1: Use a multimedia element to enhance oral or written tasks.**
 - *Clarification 1:* Multimedia elements may include, but are not limited to, a drawing, picture, artifact, audio or digital representation.

Before: Introduction

- Share the purpose for the read-aloud, which is to identify character traits of the main character.
- Say, "The main character is **who** the story is mostly about. In this text, the main character is Leo. As we read, we will stop and describe Leo. We will describe Leo on the outside and inside. On the outside we can describe what he looks like. What he says, does, and feels will tell us what he is like on the inside. We will add our descriptions to our Outside/Inside Character Trait graphic organizer as we read."

During: Outside/Inside Character Trait Graphic Organizer

- Begin reading. Stop and ask questions. Capture student thinking using the Outside/Inside graphic organizer.
- How would you describe Leo so far in this story? What is he like on the outside? What is he like on the inside? (p. 11)
- How has Leo changed? Is he the same on the outside? Has he changed on the inside? How would you describe him now? What does he say? What does he do? How do you think he feels? (p. 29)
- How would you describe Leo's characteristics at the beginning of the text? In the middle? At the end? How can we describe his outside characteristics? How can we describe his inside characteristics? (End of book)
- Once students have completed sections of the graphic organizer, have them turn and talk about their responses as a way to increase engagement.

After: Reread

- Reread the text with a focus on identifying the outside/inside characteristics of Leo's father and mother.

Character Traits



Book Title:

Character Name:

Outside Traits	Picture of the Character	Inside Traits
	A large, empty orange oval is drawn across the middle of the table, spanning the width of the 'Picture of the Character' column and extending slightly into the 'Outside Traits' and 'Inside Traits' columns.	

ELL and SWD suggestion:

Provide students a word bank that contains words and/or pictures that describe Leo. The word bank will help students to complete the graphic organizer. Introducing and discussing these descriptive words prior to completing the activity will help students build their vocabulary.