

Differentiated Instruction in Language Arts

- Multiple Intelligences
- Learning Centers
- Flexible Grouping
- Learning Contracts
- Tiering
- Compacting
- Independent Investigations

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Contents

Section I: Differentiation Strategies

Introduction to Differentiated Instruction	2
Multiple Intelligences	4
Learning Centers	6
Flexible Grouping	7
Learning Contracts	8
Tiering	9
Curriculum Compacting	10
Independent Investigation	11

Section II: Differentiation in Language Arts Lessons

Language Arts Literacy Lessons	14
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Skill 1: Character Development

Identifying Character Traits: Whole-Class Lesson	15
A Character Sketch	16
Be a Composer	17
Narrative to Dialogue	18

Skill 2: Figurative Language

Identifying Figurative Language: Whole-Class Lesson	19
Radio Talk Shows	21
Combining Art and Poetry	23
Listen to the Sounds	25

Skill 3: Dialogue

Identifying Dialogue: Whole-Class Lesson	26
Writing Quotations	28
From One Character to Another	31
Making Conversations	32

Skill 4: Cause and Effect

Identifying Cause and Effect: Whole-Class Lesson	33
How Does the Learning Contract Work?	35
Cause and Effect Learning Contract: Level A	36
Cause and Effect Learning Contract: Level B	37

Skill 5: Mood	
Identifying Mood: Whole-Class Lesson	38
What's the Mood?	39
Creating a Mood	40
Using Imagery to Create Mood	42
Skill 6: Compare and Contrast	
Identifying Compare and Contrast: Whole-Class Lesson	44
What's for Lunch?	46
Use the News	48
It's about Time	49
Skill 7: Point of View	
Identifying Point of View: Whole-Class Lesson	50
Global Warming Debate	51
UFO Sighting	52
Be an Art Critic	54
Skill 8: Fact and Opinion	
Identifying Fact and Opinion: Whole-Class Lesson	56
How Does the Learning Contract Work?	58
Fact and Opinion Learning Contract: Level A	59
Fact and Opinion Learning Contract: Level B	60
Section III: Differentiation Templates	
Types of Learners: Organizing Template	62
Multiple Intelligences	64
Creating a Learning Contract	66
Independent Investigation Agreement	67
Self-Evaluation Form	68
Compare and Contrast Chart	69
Compare and Contrast Venn Diagram	70
Resources	71

Introduction to Differentiated Instruction

As teachers, we recognize that students are not all alike and that instruction must be designed to meet the needs of the diverse learners in our classrooms. Differentiating instruction is a way to utilize the strengths and interests of all our students as we plan lessons for them. By providing varied educational opportunities, we can increase the chances for their academic success and make learning a rewarding and challenging experience.

According to Carol Ann Tomlinson, an associate professor at the University of Virginia and an authority on differentiating instruction, teachers can differentiate the following classroom elements based on student readiness, interest, or learning profile:

Classroom Elements

- **Content**
Content is what the student needs to learn. It is usually based on school-district curriculum or national standards.
- **Process**
Process is the method the teacher uses to plan and teach the lessons.
- **Product**
Products require students to demonstrate and apply what they have learned.
- **Learning Environment**
Learning environment is the way the classroom looks—the arrangement of furniture and the types of displays—and the types of instructional materials available to students.

Differentiation Strategies

- **Multiple Intelligences**
- **Learning Centers**
- **Flexible Grouping**
- **Learning Contracts**
- **Tiering**
- **Compacting**
- **Independent Investigations**

Applying Differentiated Instruction

By modifying the key elements—content, process, product, and learning environment—to suit the needs of our students, we can support individual learning requirements. Teachers should assume the roles of facilitators rather than direct instructors by effectively organizing students for particular learning experiences. Students may work in a group, cooperate with a partner, or work independently. It is crucial to remember that these organizational patterns must remain flexible. When designing differentiated instruction, keep in mind that the instruction should always be fair and equitable. Higher ability students are sometimes merely assigned more of the same type of classwork to complete instead of being offered enrichment or higher level lessons. Students at all levels should be challenged with engaging and appropriate types of active learning experiences.

Before using differentiated instructional materials for their students, teachers must first gather information about the students. Academic assessments, such as tests, portfolios, and cumulative files, offer information about students' strengths and weaknesses. Interest Inventories or student interviews provide clues to the things students prefer and enjoy. Multiple Intelligence Surveys help teachers understand how students learn best. Classroom observations also reveal differences in learning needs. Talks with family members and other teachers may provide additional insight into determining what method of instruction is the proper match for each child.

In Section II, you will find a variety of strategies for differentiating your language arts literacy instruction. The language arts content that is used in the lessons is based on national standards requirements. Choose the strategy or strategies that fit best with the content that you are teaching and the students in your class.

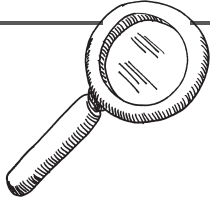
In Section III, you will find a series of template pages to help organize students into categories based on their learning abilities and styles. The section also contains forms: a student contract to fulfil assignment requirements; and a teacher self-evaluation sheet. There are also organizational charts for teachers to use with the assignments in Section II, Lesson 6.

Multiple Intelligences

What Are Multiple Intelligences?

Educators long believed that verbal/linguistic and mathematical/logical types of intelligence were the essential intelligences to possess. However, in 1983, Dr. Howard Gardner of Harvard University developed the theory of Multiple Intelligences. This theory greatly broadens the vision of intelligence. Dr. Gardner's identified intelligences are listed below.

- **Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence**
This intelligence describes people who excel in reading, writing, speaking, and other forms of communicating.
- **Logical/Mathematical Intelligence**
This intelligence describes people who excel at diverse mathematical skills, computer programming, scientific studies, abstract thinking, and solving problems logically.
- **Visual/Spatial Intelligence**
This intelligence describes people who excel in visual perception; these people are often artistically talented.
- **Bodily/Kinesthetic Intelligence**
This intelligence describes people who excel at using physical activity, such as in sports or in dance. They may be builders or performers. They express themselves through bodily movement.
- **Musical Intelligence**
This intelligence describes people who excel at playing musical instruments, singing, composing music, and dancing; they possess a special sensitivity to sounds.
- **Interpersonal Intelligence**
This intelligence describes people who excel at working with and cooperating with others. They communicate well and are sympathetic to the problems of other people.
- **Intrapersonal Intelligence**
This intelligence describes people who excel at working alone. They have a good sense of themselves, their emotions, and their abilities.
- **Naturalist Intelligence**
This intelligence describes people who excel in living with nature. They are sensitive to the needs and problems of the natural world, interact well with animals, and like to grow things.



Identifying Character Traits

Whole-Class Lesson

In addition to the way a character looks, each character has specific traits. Throughout the story the author gives us clues about each character. Often the clues are found in what the character says, does, thinks, or feels, or by how he or she reacts to others and to events in the story.

Choose one character from the story you are reading and tell what you have learned about that character.

Story Title: _____

Character: _____

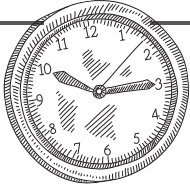
In each box give examples of the character's traits according to the label above the box.

Actions

Feelings

Reactions

Comments and Remarks



It's about Time

This center activity challenges you to compare and contrast two time periods. You may work independently or with a partner. Copy and cut out the Time Travelers tickets. Place them face down and choose two tickets. These tickets have specific time periods written on them. Compare and contrast two or more aspects of life during these two periods. Some possible aspects to compare are architecture, education, home life, agriculture, communication, government, human rights, fine arts, health, clothing/fashions, military, and transportation. You will need resource materials or the internet to help you locate the information. Include pictures or photographs to support your research.

Share your findings with the whole class in an oral presentation. You may use PowerPoint, if available.

Materials:
Writing paper
Pencils, pens
Time Travelers tickets
Resource materials, internet

Time Travelers 1950–2000	Time Travelers 1750–1800	Time Travelers 1550–1600
Time Travelers 1900–1950	Time Travelers 1700–1750	Time Travelers 1500–1550
Time Travelers 1850–1900	Time Travelers 1650–1700	Time Travelers 1450–1500
Time Travelers 1800–1850	Time Travelers 1600–1650	Time Travelers 1400–1450