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"J vs. K" Lesson Plan Guide

by Kwame Alexander and Jerry Craft

Unit Overview

Duration: 1 week

Grade Level: 3-5

Program: Sunshine State Young Readers Award (SSYRA) 3-5

Subject Integration: ELA, Art, Creative Writing, Social-Emotional Learning

Essential Question: *What can we accomplish when we combine our different strengths with people we don't expect to work well with?*

Learning Objectives — Students will be able to:

- Compare and contrast J's and K's storytelling strengths
- Analyze how rivalry develops into collaboration over the course of the story
- Identify how words and images work together to tell a story in graphic novel format
- Evaluate the value of combining different creative strengths
- Express understanding through collaborative and individual creative projects

ONE-WEEK LESSON PLAN

Day 1: Meet J and K

Objective: Introduce the two main characters and their rivalry

Materials: Book, character comparison chart

Opening (10 min):

- Quick-write: "Describe a time you competed against someone for something you really wanted."

Main Activity (30 min):

- Introduce J the artist and K the writer
- Create a class Venn diagram comparing J's and K's strengths
- Discuss: Why do you think the Creative Storytelling Competition matters so much to both of them?

Closing (5 min):

- Exit ticket: "Would you rather tell a story with words or pictures? Why?"

Assessment: Character comparison, personal connection

Day 2: Words and Pictures Working Together

Objective: Analyze how graphic novel format combines text and art to tell a story

Materials: Book, sample graphic novel pages

Opening (10 min):

- Discussion: "What can a picture show that words can't, and what can words show that pictures can't?"



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Main Activity (30 min):

- Examine a few pages closely, noting how word and image work together
- Discuss the collaboration between Alexander (words) and Craft (art) as real-world creative teamwork
- Try a mini activity: write one sentence, then swap with a partner to illustrate it

Closing (5 min):

- Share illustrated sentences in pairs

Assessment: Understanding of graphic novel craft, creative collaboration

Day 3: The Rivalry Heats Up

Objective: Track the escalating competition between J and K

Materials: Book, conflict tracking chart

Opening (10 min):

- Think-pair-share: "What's the difference between healthy competition and unhealthy competition?"

Main Activity (30 min):

- Read and discuss key moments of the rivalry
- Chart moments where the competition helps versus hurts J and K
- Discuss: What might J and K be missing out on by only seeing each other as rivals?

Closing (5 min):

- Exit ticket: "One word to describe J and K's rivalry right now is ____."

Assessment: Conflict analysis, vocabulary use

Day 4: Working With Your Greatest Enemy

Objective: Analyze the turning point when J and K must team up

Materials: Book, collaboration reflection sheet

Opening (10 min):

- Discussion: "Have you ever had to work with someone you didn't get along with? What happened?"

Main Activity (30 min):

- Read and discuss the moment J and K decide to collaborate
- Discuss what each character has to give up or compromise to work together
- Writing prompt: "Write a paragraph about what J and K's combined story might be about."

Closing (5 min):

- Share one idea for J and K's combined story

Assessment: Analysis of collaboration, creative writing

Day 5: Creating Together

Objective: Synthesize the story's message about combining strengths

Materials: Drawing and writing supplies, project choice cards



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Opening (10 min):

- Preview project options; students select and begin

Main Activity (30 min):

- Option A: Partner project — one student writes a short story opening, another illustrates it
- Option B: Analytical paragraph — "How does J vs. K show that different strengths can work together?"
- Option C: Design a poster for the Creative Storytelling Competition featuring J and K's combined entry
- Share work in pairs or small groups

Closing (5 min):

- Class closing: "One thing I learned about teamwork from this book is..."

Assessment: Collaborative project quality, thematic understanding

Differentiation

- **Advanced learners:** Research the real collaboration process between an author and illustrator and compare it to J and K's story
- **Students needing support:** Provide sentence starters and graphic organizers for the Venn diagram and conflict chart
- **English Language Learners:** Use the visual, graphic-novel format as a support; pre-teach key vocabulary like "rivalry" and "collaboration"
- **Reluctant writers/artists:** Allow students to lean into their preferred mode (writing or drawing) for creative projects, just like J and K

Materials List

- Class set of "J vs. K"
- Character comparison chart / Venn diagram
- Sample graphic novel pages for close reading
- Conflict tracking chart
- Drawing and writing supplies for Day 5