

3–7 Grade ELA Lesson Plan

Good Boy by Andy Hirsch

Grade Levels

3–7

Time

45–60 minutes

Common Core State Standards (CCSS ELA)

- **RL.3–7.1:** Ask and answer questions using evidence from the text.
 - **RL.3–7.2:** Determine the theme or central idea.
 - **RL.3–7.3:** Describe how characters respond to challenges and change over time.
 - **RL.3–7.6:** Explain how a character's point of view influences the story.
 - **RL.3–7.7:** Analyze how illustrations contribute to the meaning and tone of the story.
 - **W.3–7.3:** Write narratives using descriptive details and clear event sequences.
 - **SL.3–7.1:** Participate effectively in collaborative discussions.
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Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze Charlie's character growth throughout the story.
 - Explore themes of courage, perseverance, friendship, and overcoming anxiety.
 - Use text and illustrations as evidence to support their ideas.
 - Reflect on personal challenges through narrative writing.
 - Understand how graphic novels communicate emotions through both words and artwork.
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Essential Questions

- What does courage look like?
 - How can friendship help us overcome challenges?
 - Why is it important to step outside our comfort zones?
 - How do illustrations help readers understand a character's emotions?
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Materials

- *Good Boy* by Andy Hirsch
 - Character Growth Graphic Organizer
 - Sticky Notes
 - Chart Paper
 - Writing Journals or Notebook Paper
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Vocabulary

- Anxiety
 - Perseverance
 - Confidence
 - Courage
 - Compassion
 - Conflict
 - Inference
 - Theme
 - Graphic novel
 - Point of View
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Before Reading (10 minutes)

Activate Prior Knowledge

Ask students:

- Have you ever been nervous about trying something new?
- What qualities make a good friend?
- How can animals help people?
- What does it mean to be brave?

Students complete a **Think-Pair-Share** before discussing responses as a class.

During Reading (25 minutes)

Character Growth Tracker

Students record evidence as they read.

Event	Charlie's Feelings	Evidence (Words & Pictures)	What Charlie Learns
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Encourage students to notice:

- Facial expressions
- Body language
- Ralph's actions
- Dialogue
- Changes in Charlie's confidence
- Visual clues that reveal emotions

Class Discussion

Discuss:

1. What challenges does Charlie face?
2. How does Ralph help Charlie grow?
3. What role does friendship play in the story?
4. Which illustrations best show Charlie's emotions?
5. How does Charlie change from the beginning to the end?

Mini-Lesson

Understanding Emotions in Graphic Novels

Explain that graphic novels often communicate emotions through artwork as much as through words.

Readers should pay attention to:

- Facial expressions
- Body posture
- Panel size and layout
- Background details
- Color and shading
- Sound effects
- Dialogue and thought bubbles

Ask students to identify one panel where the illustrations reveal Charlie's emotions without directly stating them.

Collaborative Activity (10–15 minutes)

"Helping Hands" Discussion

In small groups, students discuss:

- What advice would you give Charlie when he feels anxious?
- How does Ralph encourage Charlie?
- How can friends support someone facing a challenge?

Groups create a list titled:

Ways We Can Help Someone Feel Brave

Share responses with the class.

Writing Activity (20–25 minutes)

Writing Prompt

Everyone faces challenges that can feel overwhelming at times. Write about a time when you overcame a fear or tried something outside your comfort zone, or imagine you are Charlie preparing for a dog agility competition with Ralph. Describe the obstacles you face, the people or pets who encourage you, and what you learn about courage, perseverance, and believing in yourself. Include details about your thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Extension Activities

Grades 3–4

Comic Reflection

Draw a four-panel comic showing:

- A challenge
- A helpful friend
- A brave decision
- A successful outcome

Include dialogue and captions.

Grades 5–7

Character Analysis

Write an essay explaining how Charlie changes throughout the story.

Use evidence from both the text and illustrations to support your ideas.

Creative Activity

Design your own therapy or rescue animal.

Include:

- Animal name
 - Personality traits
 - Special talents
 - How it helps people
 - An illustration with labels
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Assessment

Formative

- Class discussions
 - Character Growth Organizer
 - Participation in group activity
 - Reading observations
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Summative Writing Rubric

Criteria	4	3	2	1
Ideas	Thoughtful and detailed	Clear	Developing	Limited
Organization	Logical sequence	Mostly organized	Some organization	Difficult to follow
Text Evidence	Strong support	Some support	Minimal support	No evidence

Criteria	4	3	2	1
Conventions	Few errors	Some errors	Frequent errors	Many errors

Exit Ticket

Students respond to one question:

- What helped Charlie become more confident?
- How did Ralph make a difference in Charlie's life?
- Which illustration best showed courage?
- What advice would you give Charlie at the beginning of the story?

Differentiation

Support

- Partner reading
- Sentence starters
- Visual vocabulary cards
- Teacher-guided discussion
- Graphic organizers

Extension

- Compare Charlie's journey with another graphic novel character who overcomes a challenge.
- Rewrite an important scene from Ralph's point of view.
- Create an additional chapter showing Charlie and Ralph facing a new obstacle together.

Cross-Curricular Connections

Health/SEL: Discuss healthy ways to manage anxiety and stress, such as talking to trusted adults, practicing mindfulness, exercising, or spending time with pets.

Art: Create a comic strip illustrating how body language and facial expressions can communicate emotions without words.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Connection

Students reflect on:

- Self-awareness
 - Managing emotions
 - Empathy
 - Resilience
 - Friendship
 - Growth mindset
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Big Idea

Good Boy shows that courage isn't about never feeling afraid—it's about taking one step at a time, accepting support from others, and believing in yourself even when challenges seem overwhelming. Through Charlie and Ralph's friendship, readers learn that growth often begins just outside their comfort zone.