Who’s Next Door?
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Target grades: Kindergarten, 1, 2
Reading levels: Fountas & Pinnell: I
Lexile® Measure: AD 380L
Reading Recovery: 15–16
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ABOUT THE BOOK
Chicken is thrilled when he finds out someone new has moved in next door. His quiet house deep in the woods can be lonely sometimes, and it would be so much fun to have a friend! But Chicken never catches so much as a glimpse of his neighbor, despite many days spent waiting, pacing, and knocking on his door. As it turns out, his neighbor, Owl, has been doing the same thing, yearning to meet Chicken — only he’s been doing it at night. It’s not until after the two exchange notes and mix up plans for a visit, each using his own definition of “tomorrow,” that they meet fortuitously and find a creative way to enjoy each other’s friendship despite their different schedules.

KEYS TO THE STORY
After reading Who’s Next Door? aloud, ask students:
- Who is the main character in the story? Or do you think the story has two main characters? Why or why not?
- If the story has only one main character, who is the other (secondary) character in the story? Could the story happen without him?
- Where does the story take place? What is the setting?
- What are the four most important events of the story?
- Does Chicken have a problem at the beginning of the story? What is it?
- When does the action of the story change? What does Chicken do that changes the pattern in the story?
- How does Owl respond?
- What is the problem once Chicken and Owl meet? How do they solve the problem?

Additionally, for Second Grade students, ask them to think about how Chicken’s decision to write his new neighbor a letter is the turning point of the story. Ask: How might the story have ended differently if he had not written the letter?
READ LITERATURE STANDARD 3

**RL.K.3** With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.

**RL.1.3** Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

**RL.2.3** Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

**THE STORY UNFOLDS**

Review the three major elements of every story: characters, setting, and plot (major events). Ask students to identify each of the following in *Who’s Next Door?*

- **Characters**
  - How are the two characters in the story the same?
  - How are they different?
  - In what ways are Chicken and Owl like their animal counterparts in the everyday world?
  - In what ways are they more like people?

- **Setting**
  - Where does the story take place?
  - Why is it necessary for the two houses to be right next door to each other in order for the major events to happen?
  - If you were to change the setting of the story to a farmyard where Chicken lived in the chicken coop and Owl lived in a nearby tree, how would the story change?

- **Plot (Major Events)**
  - Make a list of the major events in the story.
  - What are the three most important events and how do they affect the characters?

**IS IT TRUE?**

**Kindergarten**

Having students reference specific details in the text and illustrations, ask:

Is *Who’s Next Door?* a true book? What clues do you find in the text and illustrations that let you know that it is not a true book?

**First Grade**

After reading *Who’s Next Door?* aloud, read two primary-level informational books, one about chickens and one about owls. Consider these titles:

- *Owls* by Emily Rose Townsend (Capstone Press, 2004)
- *Owls* by Gail Gibbons (Holiday House, 2006)
- *Chickens on the Family Farm* by Chana Stiefel (Enslow, 2013)
- *Chickens* by Kathryn Clay (Capstone Press, 2012)

Then, ask students to describe the major differences between *Who’s Next Door?* and informational texts about owls and chickens.
FROM BEGINNING TO END  
Second Grade

Engage students in a discussion about the beginning of *Who’s Next Door?*  
Author Mayuko Kishira begins with four pages that introduce Chicken.  
Ask: Why is this somewhat lengthy introduction necessary in order for the  
conclusion of the story to work well? How would your understanding of the  
story change if the first four pages were eliminated?

MOVING DAY  
Kindergarten and First Grade

Sometimes characters in very different stories have similar experiences when  
two books share the same themes. Two Owlkids books tackle the themes of  
moving and making new friends: *Who’s Next Door?* and *Arto’s Big Move.*  
Read and discuss each story individually, working to clarify an understand  
ing of characters, setting, and plot (major events). Once students have a solid  
understanding of the two books, introduce a compare-and-contrast activity  
using a Venn diagram (double bubble). If the Venn diagram format is new to  
them, explain that the unique qualities of each story are listed in the right  
and left sides of the two circles and that the qualities the two stories share are  
listed in the intersection of the circles. Consider all aspects of the story in your  
comparison; however, in order to meet Standard 9, be sure that students focus  
on the adventures and experiences of the characters in the two stories.

Kindergarten, First Grade, Second Grade

After reading *Who’s Next Door?* aloud to students and discussing it in general,  
ask students to focus exclusively on the written correspondence between  
Chicken and Owl. Read each of the three letters in the book and discuss their  
purposes. The final letter of the book is a letter from Chicken to Owl offering  
a solution that may help the friends to see each other more often. Ask students,  
either as a whole group or individually, to write a corresponding or response  
letter from Owl in which he offers a solution that may accomplish the same  
goal. Ask students to add illustrations to make the intent of the letter clearer  
to the reader.

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