

Submitted by: GENERATION CURES

**TITLE:** CHARACTERS**SUBJECT:** English Language Arts**GRADE:** 3rd & 4th**RECOMMENDED TIME:** 40 minutes**GENERATION CURES CONTENT:** *Zebrafish Webisode 1-What's a Zebrafish***LEARNING GOALS:**

Students will analyze fictional characters' qualities (e.g., courage or cowardice, ambition or laziness) and predict their effects on the plot of a story.

**RESOURCES/MATERIALS NEEDED:**

- Computer / Internet / Projector
- Pen / Pencil / Paper
- *Zebrafish* Webisode 1 "What's a Zebrafish?" ([www.kids.generationcures.org](http://www.kids.generationcures.org))
- Dictionary: Define
  - Vita- though it is her proper name, the word "vita" is of Latin origin, meaning 'life.'
  - Callous- Vita mentions that her guitar playing has produced a callous on her fingers—as often happens to guitar players. A callous is a hardened or thickened area, usually on the skin.
  - Albino- Pablo describes the Zebrafish that are used for medical research as albino, or mutants. An albino Zebrafish is one that is lacking skin color or pigment and is usually see-through or transparent.
  - Mutant- a result of a random change in genes, causing an unexpected trait. Mutant 'albino' Zebrafish are one example of a mutation, which affects the gene that causes color in the fish.

**BACKGROUND:**

In Webisode #1, "What's A Zebrafish," students are introduced to the main character (Vita) and secondary characters (her brother Pablo, Tanya, Walt, Jay, Plinko and Chimp). While visiting Pablo at the hospital, Vita notices fish in the refrigerator. Pablo explains that zebrafish are used in medical research to find cures for diseases. Vita immediately decides that zebrafish would be a great name for a band she is trying to put together.

**LESSON STEPS:**

- Watch with a Purpose: As students watch *Zebrafish* Webisode 1-"What's A Zebrafish," have them list the character names (Chimp, Vita, Pablo, Tanya, Walt, Jay and Plinko) and at least one characteristic each of them has.

- **Connection:** Explain that in any narrative, whether it is in books or movies, one of the first things authors do is create believable characters with real human traits, both good and bad.
- One of the ways we analyze those traits is with character maps. (Model how to create a character map for Vita by drawing a circle with her name in the middle—then call on students and list some of the characteristics they’ve noticed (e.g. purple hair, likes music, rock star, leader) or creating a table similar to the one below:

Example:

Character Name	Physical Characteristics	Likes/Dislikes/ Talents	Inner Qualities	Relationship to other characters
Vita (Is that her real name? What does it mean?)	Purple hair About age 13 Skinny	Musical Rock star Wants to form a band	Leader A little selfish	Sister to Pablo
Pablo				

- Have students work in pairs or teams to complete character maps for the other characters they met in *Zebrafish* Webisode 1.
- Bring the class together to finish the above map for the other characters and have students share some of the traits they saw.
- **Conclusion:** Show the character map on the Zebrafish site. Explain that even the authors of the website felt it was important to list the characteristics of the characters in Zebrafish. Notice that as the authors of that site created another fictional story (show the Caduceus alter-ego characteristics), they reused some of those characteristics to make the fictional characters in Caduceus more believable. As we write our own narratives it is helpful to make and refer to character maps to make our characters believable. As we analyze the characters in the books we read, character maps help us predict and infer how they might act in certain situations. For instance, the next webisode is entitled “Instruments for Change.” Knowing the characters, predict how they may become instruments for change (turn and talk, or stop and jot down their predictions).

**EXTENSIONS:**

- Watch Zebrafish Webisode 2 to see if they predicted correctly.
- Have each student analyze the type of character they would be in a story or movie by creating a character map of themselves.
- Have students apply character-mapping techniques to brainstorm interesting characters for their own personal narratives.
- In small groups, analyze character traits and how the characters change as they face problems during the story.