

Dewey Fairchild is a Common Core Kid!

Parent
Teacher
Sibling

**Problem
Solver**

Background

The Common Core Standards for ELA, and Literacy in History/Social Studies and Technical Subjects, offer a clear description of the “portrait of students” who are college and career ready for the 21st Century.

The standards define what kids should be able to do by the time they graduate. Students demonstrate their independence. “Students can, without significant scaffolding, comprehend and evaluate complex texts across a range and types of disciplines. . .without prompting they demonstrate command of standard English and acquire and use a wide-range of vocabulary. More broadly, they become self-directed learners effectively seeking out and using resources to assist them, including teachers, peers, and print and digital reference material.”

Additionally, they:

- build strong content knowledge
- respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline
- comprehend as well as critique
- value evidence
- use technology and digital media strategically and capably
- come to understand other perspectives and cultures

Each of the above qualities is articulated together painting a picture of open-minded, critical, discerning, skilled, problem solvers. What the authors outline students should be able to do is nothing short of swoon-worthy.

The need

The approach to these goals is the careful grade-level standards on which teachers focus their instruction. Students should meet the standards at each grade and, thus, we know they are well on their way to achieving this portrait of a literate individual.

The number of standards is extensive. Not all kids get there on the timeline we would like. The more ways we can find to support them getting there, the better.

Students benefit from role models along the way. Teachers, administrators, parents, sports figures, and the like may all serve as suitable models, but having examples of fellow students who embody these elements goes a long way to show students that these qualities are not only attainable but also desirable.

A Solution

Dewey Fairchild, is at heart, a Common Core kid. He is a problem solver, whose mission it is to solve kids’ problems they encounter with their parents (book 1), teachers (book 2, Fall 2018), and siblings (book 3, 2019).

In the *Dewey Fairchild* series, readers see him grow to be more confident as a problem solver who learns how to build on the ideas of others, but also rely on his own resources and skills. Technology and research play pivotal roles in his problem solving, as he gains the respect of the adults and kids alike.

Written by an English teacher, this series has its own undercover operation going on. It's aligned with the Common Core standards and thus, not only provides students with a model of a Common Core Kid, but is Common Core Standards aligned. Librarians and teachers value it for its literary merit, and reluctant and strong readers alike are drawn to its whimsical humor and style.

Book 1: *Dewey Fairchild, Parent Problem Solver*

Grades 3-5, also appropriate for struggling readers in older grades.

Book Summary:

Dewey Fairchild isn't just good with parents, he's *great* with them. He's so good at handling parents that he's built a thriving business out of it. He even has a 93-year old assistant, Clara—a great alibi and an even better baker. Dewey settles the most troublesome of cases, from an overprotective mom who won't let her child go to class on her own, to a dad who can't stop picking his nose!

Dewey has no problem handling other people's parents, but when he overhears his parents talking one day, he faces a challenge he never expected. Dewey can solve any problem parents may cause, but what will he do when the parents who are causing problems are his own?

Book 2: *Dewey Fairchild, Teacher Problem Solver*

Grades 3-5, also appropriate for struggling readers in older grades.

Book Summary:

In this follow-up to *Dewey Fairchild, Parent Problem Solver*, our entrepreneurial hero, Dewey, takes on the challenge of troublesome teachers. After getting his first case, Dewey learns that *tons* of kids have problem teachers. Soon, he's juggling a handful of desperate clients—from classic cases of teachers who bore their kids to sleep to the curious case of the science teacher who leaves students scared of water—even water fountains.

Meanwhile, Dewey's school starts limiting toilet paper use—to just one measly square at a time—and replaces Dewey's prized vending machines with (gasp!) a garden. But Dewey has a plan, involving an undercover demonstration featuring edible additions to school property. The fallout is swift. Will their protests for student involvement sway the administration or will they be caught and punished with detention ... or worse?

What others are saying about the book

“[Dewey's] string of triumphs will have readers cheering him on, rolling in the aisles, and wishing they could line up for consultations.” – *Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

“From an adult's perspective, this story gains bonus points for encouraging close child-parent relationships and bonding through reading—all while being completely kid-centric. Crafty

thinkers ages 9 through 12—especially those with parent problems of their own—that are looking for a humorous, realistic story, will be bound to enjoy *Dewey Fairchild: Parent Problem Solver*. **Highly Recommended.**” – The Children’s Book Review

“I have never read a book with a kid giving advice to other kids to help solve their parent . . . problems! Oh, how the tables have turned! That has to be one of the most clever ideas for a book I have ever seen!” Farrah – Age 10, *Kids Book Buzz*

Curriculum Guide for *Dewey Fairchild, Parent Problem Solver*

Pre-reading Activities:

The following activities align with the following Common Core Standards:

(RL.3-6.1,4,7) (RI.3-6.5,7) (W.3-6.1,3,7) (SL.3-6.1,4,5) (L.3-6.1,2) (CCRA.R.1,4,7) (CCRA.W.3,4,6,7,8) (CCRA.SL.1,2,3,4,5,6) (CCRA.L.1,2,3)

1. The first line of the book is “Having too many secrets is never a good idea, but Dewey Fairchild really, *really* hated that his mom made him bathe *every* day. We’ll soon learn he’s faking his shower and soon after that discover he runs a secret undercover operation as a problem solver. Ask students to write something down that they don’t want someone else to know about, but tell them that they are going to shred the paper so no one will ever see it (otherwise, they may not write down something they actually are hiding). They can write it very small but write what it is in a full complete sentence. Fold their paper in half when done. When everyone is finished, have students shred their papers into tiny pieces. Discuss how it feels to fear being discovered.

2. What problems do your parents or guardians cause you? They won’t let you use electronics on weekdays? They make you empty the dishwasher? Pair-share and then share aloud what some of these are. So far, there are three books in this series: Parent, Teacher and Sibling Problem Solver. What kinds of ideas seemed to come up the most in your class? Do kids in different families have different kinds of problems? Are some parent/child problems universal? What is your opinion about what would make a good next title for a Dewey problem-solver series? Send the author an email at dewey@deweyfairchild.com and let her know. Do a draft first and check it for any punctuation errors before you send it off.

3. Have kids work in groups and research a recipe online or in a cookbook that they like and bake their favorite cookie recipe. Have an in-class taste test to decide which cookies taste the best. Determine what criteria you will use to determine the winners.

4. In this book, the history and background of the Tootsie Roll becomes important. Pick a candy that you love and research the history and background of it. Report on this topic to your classmates sharing a piece of the candy if school and allergies allow!

5. The relationship between a pet and their human can be very special. Do you have a pet who means a lot to you or have you ever had one? Do you know someone who does? What’s so special about this relationship even though it’s between a person and an animal? If the pet could talk, what do you think s/he would say about the human? Write a narrative from your pet’s

perspective. Or write about a special memory you have of your pet. Share some of these with a partner and with the class.

6. The book cover art by Agnieszka Grochalska is simple, but it provides a good amount of detail about what is to come. What information can you gather from what is given there? What might you predict or guess based on what you see? What questions do you have?

7. Denotation means the dictionary definition of a word. Connotation means a feeling or idea that the word suggests. *Dewey Fairchild, Parent Problem Solver*. Take each of these words of the title. Use a dictionary, the Internet, and your own knowledge and come up with the denotations and connotations of each word of the title of this book.

Discussion Topics:

The following discussion topics align with the following Common Core Standards:

(RL.3-6.1,3,4,5,6) (SL.3-6.1,2,4,5) (L.3-6.5) (CCRA.R.1,2,3,4,5,6,8) (CCRA.SL.1,2,3,4)

1. The first line of the book is that, “Having too many secrets is never a good idea . . .” When we first meet Dewey, he is faking a shower. Does he have any other secrets you think? What specific examples can you find from this first chapter to suggest he does?

2. The first chapter of a book often gives us a lot of information (**exposition**) that we don’t really understand yet and we must just wait to find out more. Can you find specific examples of people or things being introduced that you think we might learn more about later? What facts do we learn about Dewey? Other people? The setting? Facts of the story that might come into play later?

3. Is the narration in the book first or third person? From whose point of view is the story being told in the first chapter? Which side of the bathroom door are we on? Does it matter? Why?

4. We learn a lot about characters by: What they do, what they say, what others say about them, symbolic clues, and the figurative language used to describe them. Using these criteria, what do Colin, Seraphina, Dewey, Seraphina’s mom, each reveal about themselves in the chapter entitled “How It All Began”?

5. Authors use similes and metaphors to help describe something just right. In “How It All Began,” Colin says, “What I need is a little brother or one of those Harry Potter house elves I can command to click for me”(5). Look at the context of what’s going on. His finger is tired of clicking and he doesn’t want to leave the computer and fall behind. So he says: “What I need is a xxx or one of those xxx.” Ms. Horn picked “little brother” and “Harry Potter House Elf.” Why? What do those words mean and suggest? How would the sentence change if you substituted other words instead? The exact words matter! Where else do you see symbolic clues and figurative language in the chapter? How would changing the words make a difference?

6. Clara is pushing 94 and has had many birthday parties with themes to show for it. What is a theme at a birthday party? Why do people have themes? How do you pick the themes of your parties or decide not to have a theme at all? We can use this idea of themes to help scaffold for

students the idea of figurative language and how it reflects people symbolically in literature. For example, in the chapter entitled “Octopushy” the author describes Dewey’s mom using a simile: “Like a cat, she loved a sunny spot, and it was a warm sunny day” (31). What other figures of speech can you find in this chapter connected to a character? Discuss how these examples are fitting for or represent the character or what is going on in the story.

7. What’s your favorite kind of cookie? Do you remember when you first had it? Have you ever made cookies before? Do you think homemade ones taste better than store-bought? Why or why not? In your opinion, do you think kids should be allowed to eat cookies? As many as they want? As often as they want? Whenever they want? What are the limitations? How many different kinds of cookie types can you name?

8. Discuss how when students were young they had picture books. The pictures helped to tell the story as much as or more than the words themselves. As they got older, they grew into books without pictures. Where did the pictures go? Writers use descriptive language to paint a picture, create a smell, taste, or touch in the readers’ mind. Imagery is language that draws on the five senses, namely the details of taste, touch, sight, smell, sound, and motion. Where do you see examples of this in the chapter “Dewey Fairchild, PPS”? How about in earlier chapters?

9. Adjectives and nouns are not the only places authors choose their words and phrases for effect. They also pay attention to their use of verbs. In the chapter “Dewey Fairchild, PPS,” it reads: “Clara stood about foot nine, which didn’t make her much taller than Dewey . . .”(44). The author uses the word “stood” instead of “was.” Discuss what difference that makes. Look for other places in the book where the author uses ‘was’ and where she uses other verbs. Where might you replace her use of ‘was’? Where do you agree she should have kept it that way?

10. At the end of chapter “Dewey Fairchild, PPS,” Dewey sighs and stares deeply into a picture on the wall. What do you imagine he is thinking? What specifically from the story makes you think so?

11. Discuss the problem solving of Danny’s dad in the chapter “Mission Accomplished.” Seraphina’s mom was over-protective. Danny’s dad played practical jokes. What specific steps did Dewey take to solve these problems? Think of your life and your friends that you know. You all have parents or a guardian. Think of a parent problem you or someone you know has that needs solving. Could any of Dewey’s strategies help with the problems of you or someone else you know? Which parts seem realistic? Which parts do not?

12. Association is the connection of one idea to the next. It’s what gets Dewey off topic in the chapter “Dewey Fairchild, PPS” when Danny mentions Halloween candy and Dewey takes off on his tangent naming all the Kit Kats (51-52). This tendency in Dewey can also prove helpful. How does the association lead him to solving a problem? In the chapter “Hyde and Seek,” which ideas lead Dewey to the next one and the next? Do you ever find yourself thinking this way?

13. Seraphina and Michael discuss the loss of a pet. How can you tell how Seraphina is feeling from specific evidence in the chapter “Clara’s Roll”? Have you ever lost a pet?

14. The chapter entitled “Clara Cottonwood” is the climax of the novel with Dewey’s personal problem coming to a head. The author uses a flashback for this chapter. Why do you think she does this? How does moving back help the story to somehow move forward at this crucial moment in the book?

15. Notice the chapter title “Dewey Picks a Tough Case.” How does the name of the chapter relate to the events of the chapter itself? Did you notice any other examples of where the author plays with language in the chapter to reflect the chapter’s topic? We often don’t pay attention to chapter titles. Go back and flip through the previous chapters and look at the names. Do you notice anything you didn’t before? Are any of them particularly fitting or make sense now that you’ve read the chapters?

16. Juxtaposition is the idea of putting two things next to one another in order to contrast them more or for greater effect. In the chapter “Dewey Picks a Tough Case,” talk about the ways in which the author juxtaposes the baked cookies with the nose picking. Discuss what the effect of doing so is for the reader.

17. It is often said that one’s true character is most quickly revealed in a dire situation. Seraphina and Colin work under high pressure at the dentist office in the chapter “Dr. Don Fairchild, DDS.” Using what they say, do, or any symbolic clues or description, discuss who their true characters seem to be.

18. The last page of the book says, “It felt so good to have friends.” What makes a good friend? What evidence can you cite from the story of Dewey’s friends being good ones?

19. The last page of the book says, “Just what, he wondered, had Clara said and done to bring it all, well, *home*?” What do you think Clara did? What specific evidence from the story makes you think so?

20. Now that you have finished the book, when we look back at the exposition in the first chapter, what things do we understand better that we did not understand before?

Activities:

The following activities align with the following Common Core Standards:

(RL.3-6.1,3,4,5,6) (RI.3-6.5,6,7) (SL.3-6.1,2,3,4,5,6) (W.3-6.1,3,4,5,6,7)

(L.3-6.2,3,4,5)(CCRA.W.1,3,4,5,6,7,8,9) (CCRA.SL.1,2,3,4,5,6) (CCRA.L.1,2,3,5)

1. Rewrite the opening scene from the other side of the door. Change the point of view so it’s from Dewey’s Mom’s perspective. What is she thinking? What would she be doing? Saying? As you share these, discuss how might that change the opening of the book.

2. Divide into groups and assign each group one character from the chapter “How It All Began.” Using specific evidence based on what the character says, does, what others say, symbolic clues, and the figurative language used to describe him or her, students can create and present these in a variety of ways from open minds, life-sized characters traced on butcher paper, shared Google docs, etc. They should copy parts of the quotations, use words, symbols, can cut out pictures

from magazines, draw, etc. Each group should present their character findings to the larger class by paraphrasing portions of the text they read aloud and the symbols or pictures they came up with to represent these ideas. Since no one will get much out of it if these are presented poorly, the teacher can use this as an opportunity to work on how to present speaking clearly and with good pacing.

3. Have students do a reader's theater from the opening pages of the chapter "Octopusy" (bottom p.25 – top p.29). Highlight it into three parts: a narrator, Dewey, and Clara. Read a sentence on the board and show them how it has different meaning based on stress, volume, intonation, and pacing. For example: Where were you last night? (a mom, a friend, a sibling). The teacher should practice what dialogue sounds like when someone gets interrupted. They should keep in mind pacing, volume, intonation, and stress when they read their parts. Have students film each other and present these to the class. Vote on which group considered stress, volume, intonation, and pacing most effectively given the actual story and support their reasons why using specific evidence from the text.

4. Brainstorm as a class with students all the birthday party themes they had growing up. Have students take one of the themes from their own childhood birthdays (or someone else's if they wish it had been theirs) and create a birthday theme that fits them best. Or, take a theme of a birthday for someone else you know and create a theme. After they get a theme, come up with how they would decorate the party: what kind of cake? Music (specific songs)? Decorations? Food? All, of course, in the theme. As they share what they come up with, help students to understand that their decorations are like figurative language authors use in books by connecting this activity to discussions you've had on figurative language as it connects symbolically to characters and events (see discussion point #6).

5. Authors sometimes use figurative language to build a bridge between what you know and what you don't. As the teacher reads the depiction of Wolfie on pages pp.43-44, ask students to note as many comparisons to things with which they are familiar. Discuss how you don't know what Wolfie really looks like so the author tries to paint a picture in your mind with things with which you are familiar (milk, dandelion, etc). Look at this link of the author's real dog on whom the character was based: <http://deweyfairchild.com/wolfie.html>
How close were you in your mind's eye? Pick a person or pet that you know that other people do not. Write a narrative in which you describe that person or pet using at least five figurative devices to help build a bridge for your reader as you develop either a real or imagined situation and that person/pet's reaction.

6. In the chapter "Dewey Fairchild, PPS," it reads: "Clara stood about four foot nine, which didn't make her much taller than Dewey . . ." (44). Do a lesson on the passive voice and on present progressive as simple ways to get rid of their to-be verbs. Show them online the lists that exist for words to replace "to be" with ideas for concrete verbs. Have students go back to their own writing and highlight all of the times they have "am," "is," "are," "was," "were," "be," "being," "been." When they are stuck, let them work in pairs and then do some as a class and see which ones they can replace with more concrete verbs

7. Dewey's family looks through a big box of Crayola Crayons for the color that best matches

their eyes. Look online at all the Crayola crayon colors. What color do you think matches closest to your eyes, hair, skin? Other related activities: Using those colors and actual crayons, draw a picture of yourself. Or do this for someone else you know. Select one character or object in the book, and using the details provided, try to color it using the crayon colors you think match best. Or, pick a scene in the book and add more detail to it than the author did but including the colors from the crayon box, rewriting the passage with the additional information to make it more colorful.

8. Imagine that you can go to Dewey with any parent problem you have. Give students Dewey's problem information form from page 50 and have them fill it out with an issue for Dewey to solve. If they don't have one they want to do that's real, have them make up one that they think Dewey should do for fun in the book. Then, get in groups of 3-4 people. Pass the paper around and let someone else see if they can come up with an idea for how to solve it. Fold their solution over so the next person doesn't see their solution and pass it to them to come up with their own solution to the same problem. At the end, the student gets the paper back and reads the problem and all the different solutions to the group.

9. Students can then take this information and use it as brainstorming to help them begin prewriting for their own problem piece to solve. Write a paragraph, page, or two pages in which you present the problem a parent is causing you or someone you know, and you argue what you think would make the best solution based on your personal experience, your friends' suggestions, and the research you have done.

10. In the chapter entitled "Clara's Roll," Michael and Seraphina talk about the death of their pets. Have you ever lost a pet? Write about a time in which you lost a pet. If you've never had one, you can write about the time you lost someone else dear to you who brought you comfort.

11. Have students (on large chart paper) draw a big triangle and a smaller triangle within it. The chapter "Clara Cottonwood" is the climax of the novel with Dewey's personal problem coming to a head. Review with students the basics of plot structure and have them trace the major plot moments that have led up to this moment for Dewey by having them gather evidence through quotations, symbolic pictures, and words that trace the exposition, rising action, and crisis as they fill in the larger triangle. Each group can then be given one of his cases, and trace the plot structure all the way through, from exposition to resolution for the case the group is assigned. All groups share with the larger class.

12. Do the pretend assignment Dewey does for real and write a paper about your parents or guardians when they were kids. Using the questions in the chapter "Big News," mail a friend or sibling of one of your parents or guardians and use that information to write a narrative with a clear sequence of events about this person's life as a kid.

13. Pick a topic that you care about solving. What problems in your life or the life of others need solving? Apply the different steps that Dewey applied and any that you felt he was missing to solve your own problem or a problem for someone else. Gather evidence from informational texts and getting ideas from your friends or adults around you.

14. Write a graphic organizer in which you develop arguments for and against the following statement: “Parents should listen to children about how to solve problems.” Then, write an opinion piece in which you support whichever position you believe more strongly with your specific reasons and developing your explanations as to why.

15. Do a fishbowl debate. Pose the question: “Should parents listen to kids about solving problems?” Have students research and consider ways to support whatever their position is. Randomly pick a small group of students to come sit in front of the classroom in a half-circle facing the rest of the class. The rest of the students ask a question to the panel or take turns taking their spot in the fishbowl, but, otherwise, they are not allowed to speak.

16. Do a classroom debate on the following position: “Children should have a say regarding whether their family moves.” Each side should research their pro or con positions, and include anticipating the opposition for their rebuttal time.

17. Using specific evidence from the book and analysis to back up a clear position, write a persuasive essay about *Dewey Fairchild, Parent Problem Solver*. An essay topic based on some of the above discussions and activities: Write an essay in which you analyze one of the characters in the book. How does the character grow or change? Be sure to include symbolic as well as literal moments from the book to support your position. Plan, word process, revise, peer edit, and publish.

Vocabulary

This list is provided with page numbers so that students can use sentence-level context as clue to the meaning, (L.3-6.4) (CCRA.L.4)

Hue 2

Obsessed 5

Appetizing 7

Plight 9

Anticipated 11

Protrusion 12

Regretted 14

Grimace 14

Clamored 15

Cringed 17

Seize 19

Jabbering 20

Hyperventilating 23

Theatrics 24

Composure 24

Symbiotic 42

Meticulous 43

Affirmative 43

Careened 47

Consumer 47

Questionnaire 49

Antics 50
Interject 52
Inspiration 56
Dexterity 68
Jarringly 69
Spontaneous 69
Audible 72
Rummaged 81
Compassion 88
Grit 95
Inevitably 101
Louse 111
Manifested 114
Intrigued 117
Immunity 127
Amis 135
Admonished 142
Integral 144
Revolt 150
Reputation 151
Satiated 155
Percolate 166
Inopportune 169
Inspiration 171
Vile 176
Immaculate 180
Commotion 187
Virtues 199
Privy 208
Muse 214
Pleated 217
Sabbatical 227
Applicable 240