Little Things Matter

Characters

Lucy
Molly
Sammy
Gabby
Matt
Adam

Setting
This reader’s theater takes place at school, Lucy’s house, and the carnival.

Act 1

Lucy: Happy birthday, Molly! I can’t wait to go to the carnival tonight to celebrate your birthday.

Molly: I hope my mom let’s me go. I can’t believe we have to take a science test tomorrow. There’s no way I’ll have time to study for a science test on matter and celebrate my birthday in the same night.

Sammy: I’m worried, too. I need to get an “A” on this test. The only thing I know about matter is that it’s the amount of material found in an object.

Gabby: All I know is that everything in the universe is made up of matter. Beyond that—I’m clueless!

Molly: I vaguely remember our teacher talking about the three states of matter. She said that everything from the farthest star to the biggest truck to the smallest speck of dust is made of matter. But I’m sure I need to know much more to pass the test.

Matt: Well, let’s all go home to study now. Then we’ll meet at the carnival at 6:00 tonight.
Molly: I hope my mom will let me go, since it’s my birthday. I’ll call you later.

Lucy: I wasn’t sure she’d ever leave! Do you think we still have time to make Molly a birthday cake, study for the test, and go to the carnival?

Gabby: Birthdays only come around once a year, so we have no choice. We have to celebrate Molly’s birthday somehow.

Lucy: Well, let’s all go to my house then. Maybe we can study for the test while we make Molly a cake.

Matt: That’s a good idea, Lucy. Let’s go!

Act 2

Lucy: The first thing we need to do is get all the ingredients for the cake. Everything should be in the cupboard.

Sammy: Adam and I have the ingredients. Okay now, let’s see. I think we need to put the baking soda and other dry ingredients into a bowl.

Adam: I’ll pour in the vinegar.

Matt: Wait, Adam! Vinegar isn’t one of the ingredients in cake. The recipe doesn’t say to add vinegar.

Adam: Oops! I’m sorry.

Lucy: Look at all of the bubbles! They’re filling all the way to the top of the bowl.

Adam: Did I ruin Molly’s cake?

Gabby: Actually, it may be a good thing that Adam added vinegar to the cake ingredients. It gives us a good reason to study for our science test.

Matt: What do you mean?

Gabby: Our teacher said that there are three states of matter—solid, liquid, and gas. Adam has just created a gas from mixing together a solid and a liquid.
Lucy: That’s right. The vinegar reacted with the baking soda. This caused a chemical reaction, which changed the vinegar and baking soda into a gas.

Matt: Then, the gas is released into the air. The notes I took in class say that gas particles aren’t close to each other at all.

Gabby: I guess you could say they’re claustrophobic.

Adam: They like to be free and move around as much as possible. Gas doesn’t have a definite shape or volume. That’s why you can’t really trap gas into a container like a bowl.

Sammy: Do you remember that experiment our teacher did for us in science class? The gas escaped, even when she put a lid on the bowl.

Lucy: If the gas is strong enough, it could blow the lid off the container.

Adam: Let’s try it!

Sammy: No, not today. We need to make the cake.

Lucy: We’re really learning a lot about matter, aren’t we?

Adam: And having fun, too!

Sammy: Let’s start over on Molly’s cake.

Gabby: Yeah, I don’t think she would appreciate the sour taste of vinegar in it.

Matt: Then, we can go to the carnival.

### Act 3

Molly: There you are! I was afraid you wouldn’t show up to the carnival.

Lucy: We wouldn’t miss your birthday. We even made a cake for you.
Small Things Lesson Plan

Objectives

- **Fluency:** Students read passages fluently after practicing and monitoring fluency with repeated readings.
- **Content Area:** Students will learn interesting and important facts about the three states of matter.

Summary

*Little Things Matter* is the story of a group of students who celebrate a friend’s birthday by attending the local carnival. Unfortunately, their teacher has assigned a test on matter the next day. The children must study for the test while at the carnival, so they find creative ways to learn about matter using experiences on the rides and the food at the carnival.

Materials

- *Little Things Matter* script booklets
- *Small Things Character Masks* (pages 98–103 or Teacher Resource CD); copied on cardstock
- copies of *Take-Home Script: Little Things Matter* (Teacher Resource CD)
- *PowerPoint®* slide show (Teacher Resource CD)
- Science textbooks and other reference materials related to the subject of matter
- overhead transparencies of the poem and song text
- Performance CD and CD player or computer with a CD drive and speakers

Introduce the Literature

Bring vinegar and baking soda to class. Ask a volunteer to pour the vinegar into the baking soda and instruct the class to observe what happens. Explain that they will read three books about matter and the different states of matter. Tell students that the three states of matter—solid, liquid, and gas—can be observed all around them, including the experiment they just observed. The first book they will read is *Matter* by Christopher Cooper. The second book is *The Magic School Bus Gets Baked in a Cake* by Linda Beech. The third book is *George* by E.L. Konigsburg. Read all three books with the class or choose just one to read. After reading the books, ask the class to identify the three states of matter in the vinegar and baking soda experiment. What other examples of the three states of matter did they learn about from the books? List those examples on the board. Ask the class to list other knowledge about matter that they learned from the books.

ELL Support

Since there are three different books that correspond with the script, it might be helpful to divide the books among the students, allowing different students with varying reading levels to read to the various groups. Allow the different groups to share what they learned from the group.

Involving All Students

Assign the main roles to six of the students and ask the other students to be the readers of the song and the poem. Allow them to practice reading the song and poem together as a group several times, while the other students practice reading their roles. Another suggestion is to divide the remaining students in half and assign the poem to one group and the song to the other.
Reading the Script

1. Before reading the script, ask if any students have been to a carnival or amusement park. What types of rides were there? What foods did they eat at the carnival? Make a list of the foods and rides. After students have read the script, review the lists of rides and food once again, following the steps below. Ask the class to choose a food or a ride from the list and to explain how to use it to learn about the three states of matter. Students should draw their examples on poster board to share with the class.

2. Provide each student with a copy of the script, give the script booklets to small groups, or print copies of the *Take-Home Script: Little Things Matter*. Explain that the class will read a script about a group of students that learn about matter the hard way—through trial and error while performing an experiment.

3. Due to the many scientific terms in the script, it is suggested to read half of the script the first day and the other half the following day. This will allow time to discuss and review terms related to the study of matter. Also, discuss and define the scientific words presented in the script, such as *matter*, *liquid*, *solid*, *gas*, *state*, *chemical change*, and *atom*. Allow students to give the definitions and examples for these words, along with the other words in the glossary. List the examples on chart paper for students to refer to as they read the script.

4. List the six characters from the script on the board. Ask the class to identify the way in which each of the characters’ names corresponds with some form of matter. Ask students to draw a picture of the characters on poster board, showing how each character’s name relates to the different areas of matter.

5. Assign students their parts in the script and allow them to read the parts silently to familiarize themselves with the parts before the practice readings and the actual performance. Explain that they should do repeated readings to improve their fluency while reading the script.
Assigning Roles

Assign roles to students based on reading proficiency. When students practice fluency, it is important that they read materials at or below their reading level so they can focus on accuracy, expression, and reading rate. If a student reads text that is too difficult, attention is focused on sounding out words and comprehension rather than fluency.

Approximate reading levels for the roles in this script are:

- Adam: high 4th grade
- Matt: low 5th grade
- Molly: high 5th grade
- Sammy: high 4th grade
- Lucy: low 5th grade
- Gabby: high 5th grade

Meeting the Fluency Objective

1. The fluency objective for this script focuses on the use of repeated readings to increase reading fluency. Explain that when a script contains so many difficult words and phrases, it is important to practice reading the lines over and over again to ensure smooth reading.

2. Divide the class into groups of six. Assign each student in the group a speaking part. If a group has less than six students, select one or more students to read two speaking parts.

3. Have each group read through the script to determine where to place emphasis on certain words or to add expression. If using copies of the script, tell students to write reminder notes about proper expression on their copies of the script.

4. To improve their fluency and expression, remind students to slow down as they read and to read unknown words several times so that they do not stumble over them during the performance.

5. Allow the students to do several repeated readings in the small groups for practice. The class might also practice reading along with the PowerPoint® script on the Performance CD or reading along with the professional recording of the script.

6. When students have practiced repeated readings of the script, song, and poem, allow them to perform the script for another class.
Small Things Lesson Plan

Content-Area Connection—Science

The content-area focus of this script is to teach students interesting and important facts about matter, including the three states of matter. The following activity may be done prior to reading the script.

1. Invite students to share the information in the script that they found to be the most interesting about matter. What did they learn about the three states of matter? Complete a K-W-L chart, instructing students to write down the facts they knew about matter before reading the script, what they would like to know about matter, and what they learned about matter after reading the script.

2. Discuss the K-W-L chart, and then have students go on a classroom scavenger hunt for the three states of matter. Before the hunt, review the song with the students, discussing how matter is found everywhere. Divide the class into three groups. One group will be the solid group, one the liquid, and one the gas. Ask them to think of anything inside or outside the classroom that would contain the state of matter assigned to their group. Each group should create a list of those items or objects. Allow the gas group to use textbooks to list types of gases that are found in the environment.

3. Once the students have completed their lists, ask them to share with the class the things that contain the three states of matter. Then, ask them if they learned anything new in the scavenger hunt that can be placed on the K-W-L chart.

4. Give students an opportunity to do further research about matter. Continue to complete the K-W-L chart as students learn more about matter.

ELL Support

Allow the ELL students to work in a group that was assigned to either a solid or liquid for the scavenger hunt. This will allow them an opportunity to find objects or items in the classroom that fulfill the assignment, rather than having to do research about gases in the environment.
Fine Arts Connection

1. The *Little Things Matter* script contains a song and a poem that relate to the reader’s theater, but are not limited to use only with the Small Things script.

2. Ask students to do repeated readings of the poem, especially those students who will be performing the poem. Ask the students to create simple costumes or masks to wear during the performance of the poem that are based on ideas found in the poem. For example, one student might create ice skates that he could hold while reading that particular line of the poem, while another student might create a curly wig to don when the line about curly hair is read. The costumes or props should reflect the meaning of the lines in the poem.

3. Listen to the professional recording of the song, divide the class into small groups, and ask them to create an original song or poem to accompany the reader’s theater script. Suggestions include singing about “Mickey Matter” or “Ally the Atom.” Students should share the knowledge they learned about matter in their song.

4. After students create a song or poem, ask them to design colorful science posters about matter that will accompany the songs. Students can design colorful diagrams to display information about matter. Display posters as they perform.
Small Things Lesson Plan

Performance CD

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<tr>
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<td>Volume 3, Track 01</td>
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<td>Volume 3, Track 02</td>
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<td>Song: “Matter is Everywhere”</td>
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Teacher Resource CD

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<td>Song Transparency: “Matter is Everywhere”</td>
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Small Things Character Masks

Adam
Small Things Character Masks

Gabby
Lucy
Small Things Character Masks

Matt
Molly
Small Things Character Masks

Sammy