

The Perfects

Max and his family might as well admit it: Life is messy.

About the Story

Lexile: 1050L (article)

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective:

to compare how military kids are portrayed in a work of fiction and a work of nonfiction

Key Skills:

figurative language, text structure, setting, inference, character, key ideas and details, compare and contrast

Essential Questions:

- What are the risks of pretending to be something we are not?
- How do we deal with stress and fear?
- What is it like to have a parent in the military?

Standards:

This article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: **R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.9, W.2, W.9, SL.1, L.4, L.5, L.6**

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of materials at
scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- Story
- Nonfiction text
- Vocabulary (nonfiction)

Literature Connections: ideas for connecting to curricular texts

Activities to print or project:

- DIY Vocabulary (for fiction)
- Vocabulary (for nonfiction)
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Compare and Contrast: Military Kids
- **Core Skills Workout:** Inference
- Quiz*
- **Literary Elements:** Theme Anticipation Guide, Character Thinking Tool
- Contest Entry Form

**Available on two levels*

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1 Preparing to Read

Do-Now: Theme Anticipation Guide

(5 minutes)

As a class, complete the **Anticipation Guide** to activate prior knowledge and build curiosity.

2 Reading the Story

"The Perfects"

(40 minutes)

DIFFERENTIATION: Students who need more support should first listen to the audio version.

- Read the story once through as a class.
- Divide students into groups to read the story again, pausing to discuss the close-reading questions that appear in the margins. Have students write their answers in the margins or on the **Close-Reading Questions** handout.

Answers to Close-Reading Questions

- ▶ **1. Figurative Language** (p. 23) *An object (or a person) that has character is unique in some way that makes it stand out.*
- ▶ **2. Text Structure** (p. 23) *This scene takes place several weeks or months before the opening scene, when Mom discovered the house in which the family is living in the opening scene.*
- ▶ **3. Setting** (p. 23) *The stormy weather contributes to the depressed and foreboding mood of this section. The rain seems like a bad omen—a sign that living in the house is not going to be a good experience.*
- ▶ **4. Inference** (p. 25) *This paragraph really describes Max's family: What the Perfects are not, Max's family is. What the Perfects never do, Max's family does all the time. What the Perfects do, Max's family does not do.*
- ▶ **5. Character** (p. 25) *On page 24, the Perfects are described as not being "so obsessed with*

dinosaurs that they had checked out of reality completely." This line helps you understand that Lindy may think and talk about dinosaurs to avoid facing difficult things in her life—like this moment of flooding the bathroom.

- ▶ **6. Character** (p. 25) *Students might offer that Mom is embracing life as it truly is—and that is a relief to her, or that she has realized that life doesn't have to be perfect for it to be great. Max is also referring to the fact that for once, Mom is not pretending to be happy; she is happy.*

- Come together as a class and discuss the following critical-thinking questions.

Critical-Thinking Questions

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

- ▶ **Do you think that Max's mom makes a good choice at the end of the story when she decides to video chat with Max's dad from the bathroom? Why or why not?** *Answers will vary, but students may say that she does make a good choice because it's best to be honest with the people you love in order to build trust. Being honest will allow Max's mom and the kids to talk to Dad about their struggles. Others may say she doesn't make a good choice because being honest with Dad will cause Dad to worry about them.*
- ▶ **In what way is Max's life changing or about to change? Do you think these changes will be challenging?** *For the first time, Max will be staying in the same house and at the same school for good. This means he will no longer have a reason to avoid making friends or engaging with his peers. Plus, Max's dad is coming home to stay, which means their relationship may be a bit different—for example, Max's dad may play a bigger role in making decisions about Max's day-to-day life. Although these are positive changes, they will likely come with challenges.*

For example, making friends means dealing with the difficult moments of friendship as well as the good moments. If Max's relationship with his Dad shifts, this might take some getting used to as well.

3 Reading the Nonfiction Text

Preview vocabulary.

(5 minutes, activity sheet online)

Project or distribute the **Vocabulary Words and Definitions**. Review as a class. Highlighted words: *deployed, military base, relate, service members, stationed*

Read and discuss the article.

(20 minutes, activity sheets online)

- Have students read “My Life As a Military Kid” independently.
- Have students return to their small groups to discuss the following questions.

Close-Reading Question

(5 minutes, activity sheet online)

▶ According to “My Life As a Military Kid” what are some of the challenges of having a parent in the military? What are some of the rewards? (key ideas and details) *Challenges include having*

to move often and start over making friends, settling in, etc.; not feeling understood by classmates; spending long periods away from your deployed parent; and worrying about your parent's safety. Rewards include exposure to a variety of cultures, a feeling of pride in your parent, and the joy of reuniting with a parent who has been away.

Critical-Thinking Question

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

▶ How can kids help kids with a parent in the military cope with some of the challenges they face? *Ideas might include: If a military kid is new to your school, you could make an effort to befriend them by including them in conversations, asking them to join you at lunch or in afterschool activities, etc.; you could ask them questions about their life; you could invite them and their family to join you on holidays; you could stay in touch with them after they move away.*

4 Skill Building

Featured Skill: Comparing Texts

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

To prepare students for the prompt on page 27, have them complete **Compare and Contrast: Military Kids**. For alternate culminating tasks, see the box below.

Differentiate and Customize

For Struggling Readers

Explain one way that Max's and Marie's lives are similar and one way they are different. Support your answer with details from “The Perfects” and “My Life As a Military Kid.”

For Advanced Readers

Compare how the life of a military kid is described in the fiction with how it is described in the nonfiction. Then explain how reading both real and fictional accounts can help you gain a better understanding of what it's like to grow up with a parent in the military.

For Researchers

Choose a war or time period from the past and research what it was like to have a parent in the military at that time. Create a presentation comparing what it was like for military kids during the time or war you chose and now.

For Fiction Writers

Create the next scene of “The Perfects”: the video chat that Mom, Max, and Lindy have with Dad in the flooded bathroom. Your scene may be in the form of a video, play script, or short story.