

# First-Day Fly

A boy reflects on preparing his outfit  
for the first day of school

## About the Story

**Lexile® Measure** 860L

*For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.*

**Learning Objective:** to analyze a character in a work of short fiction

**Featured Skill:** character

**Additional skills covered in this lesson plan:** point of view, author's craft, literary devices

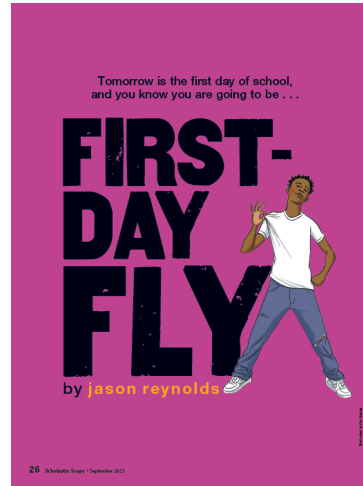
### Essential Questions:

- How can we express ourselves through our appearance?
- What influences our choices about how we present ourselves—our clothing, hairstyles, etc.?
- What is a new beginning?

### Standards:

The article and its suite of support materials support these Common Core Anchor Standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.6, W.2, SL.1, L.4, L.5, L.6

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



## Your Teaching Package

Find your full suite of support materials at [scope.scholastic.com](https://scope.scholastic.com).

### Audio:

- Author read-aloud
- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

### Video:

- Author read-aloud

### Connected readings from the Scope archives:

- "Fancy Dancer"
- "Good Enough"

### Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Literary Devices in "First-Day Fly"
- Literary Devices Scavenger Hunt
- Writing Spotlight: Second-Person Point of View
- Featured Skill: Character
- Contest Entry Form
- Choice Board
- Lesson Plan Slide Deck
- Quiz\*

\*Available on two levels

# Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Featured Skill

## 1. Prepare to Read (15 minutes)

### Do Now: Journal and Discuss (5 minutes)

- Project the following on your whiteboard for students to respond to in their writing journals or on a sheet of paper:

Write about the first day of school. Respond to as many of the questions below as you like:

- Is the first day of school a big deal for you?
  - How do you feel in the days leading up to the first day of school and why?
  - Did the first day of school this year turn out the way you were expecting or hoping?
  - Do you do anything special on the first day of school?
  - Is there any first day of school from your past that sticks out in your memory? Why?
  - Is there anything else you want to say about the first day of school?
- Invite volunteers to share their responses.

### Preview Vocabulary (10 minutes)

- Project the Google Slides version of **Vocabulary Definitions and Practice** on your whiteboard. Review the definitions and complete the activity as a class. Highlighted words: *billow*, *downgraded*, *dress rehearsal*, *starch*. Audio pronunciations of the words and a read-aloud of the definitions are embedded on the slides. Optionally, print the PDF version or share the slideshow link directly to your LMS and have students preview the words and complete the activity independently before class.

## 2. Read and Discuss (45 minutes)

- Read the As You Read box on page 27 or at the top of the digital story page.
- Watch the **author read-aloud video**, in which Jason Reynolds reads “First-Day Fly” to *Scope* readers.

- Point out the directions at the top of the column on the far-right side of page 27 and read them aloud to your students.
- Direct students to read the story independently (optionally, listening to the **audio read-aloud** as they read), pausing to discuss the close-reading questions that appear in the margins of the print magazine or by clicking on the bolded words on the digital story page. Have students record their answers in their own document or on the **Close-Reading and Critical-Thinking** activity located in the Resources tab.

### Close-Reading Questions

(30 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **Describe the point of view from which the story is told. Who is the “you” the narrator is addressing?** (point of view) *The story is told from the second-person point of view. When the narrator says “you,” the narrator is speaking to the main character. In other words, the narrator is speaking as though the main character is the reader. In addition, the narrator has knowledge of the main character’s thoughts and feelings as well as his actions—that’s how the narrator is able to say things like “There are only two days that matter to you” and “You almost sucked your teeth, but didn’t, because you love your life and would hate to lose it before the first day of school over a pair of hand-me-down jeans.”*
2. **How does the main character feel about his shoes? How do you know?** (character) *The main character’s shoes are very important to him, and he takes great pride in keeping them spotless. This is revealed through what happened the day Thomas “Big Foot” Baker stepped on the shoes. For one thing, the main character was sent to the principal’s office because he couldn’t stop talking about how Big Foot Baker got his sneakers muddy. Plus, the main character put a lot of effort into removing the mud from his “babies,” as he thinks of them. What’s more, he was distracted during math class by the “emergency” of his sneakers “practically bleeding to death.” The main character’s pride in his sneakers is further revealed as he prepares them for the first day of school. He has, the narrator says, cleaned the sneakers “almost every day with toothbrush and toothpaste, rag and soap, and sometimes the sharp corner of a protractor.”*
3. **How does the main character feel about school? Why?** (character) *The main character seems to find school kind of annoying. It tries his patience. He seems to have trouble prioritizing learning—as his teachers want him to do—over his personal concerns (like the dirt on his shoes), and he is often sent to the principal’s office. He feels like the teachers don’t understand him. He also finds the other kids immature.*
4. **How does author Jason Reynolds make a topic that could be pretty boring—ironing—fun and interesting?** (author’s craft) *Reynolds makes the topic of ironing fun and interesting through fabulous similes and sensory details, and also by letting the reader in on the meandering*

thoughts that go through the boy's head as he irons his jeans. Reynolds starts with some playful, entertaining nicknames to help you understand the boy's mom's ironing skills, calling her Princess Press and Iron Woman. He uses a simile to help you imagine exactly what clothes look like after she's ironed them, writing that she turns fabric into "something like thinly sliced pieces of wood." Reynolds then reveals something about the personality of the boy's mother and their relationship, when he writes that she didn't teach him to iron when he was 6 so that she could keep doing it for him. Reynolds uses another surprising and delightful simile to describe ironing itself: "You set it flat and press the iron to it and push the button that triggers the steam, causing it to billow out like the ghosts of wrinkles being set free." The reflections on Mr. Sheinklin and his creased pants are funny and interesting, and there's another evocative simile near the end of the paragraph—"denim like a calm lake"—that helps you understand not just the appearance of the ironed jeans, but the peaceful feeling they impart. The paragraph ends on a humorous note about not wearing church pants to school "even if Jesus asked you to."

**5. Why might the author have decided to present the three "even though"s this way?**

(author's craft) The author likely presented the three "even though"s in this unconventional format to help convey the main character's thoughts. He thinks "even though" . . . and then he lingers on the thought . . . and then he lingers on it even longer. In other words, the arrangement of the words and the way the third "even though" is combined into one word with the letters spaced out causes the reader to hear those words a certain way in their mind: The first "even though" has no special emphasis, then there's a pause; the second "even though" has more emphasis, then there's another pause; the last "even though" is slow and a little stretched out, with a strong emphasis. All of this helps the reader understand that when the line concludes with "she was the one who taught you the shower steam trick in the first place," this is an exasperating thought for the boy. His mom taught him the shower trick, and now she is criticizing him for using it!

**6. How does the main character feel at the end of the story? Why does he feel this way?**

(character) At the end of the story, the boy feels confident, proud, self-assured, optimistic, full of energy—and ready for the first day of school. (In other words, he feels fly.) He feels this way because his outfit for the first day of school is, in his mind, perfect. His shoes are spotless, his tee is exactly the way he wants it, his jeans are ironed to the perfect smoothness—and this gives him great confidence. It's as though the perfection of his appearance has sunken in, making him feel as fly on the inside as he is on the outside.

- Ask students if they think there is anything poem-like about "First-Day Fly," and if so, what. Students may mention the "even though"s that are set apart from the rest of the text and the lines written in verse at the end of the story. These lines are a great place to start—but what about the rest of the story? Let students know that if the story seems particularly poetic, it is likely because Reynolds uses a lot of figurative language and other literary devices often used in poetry. Project **Literary Devices in "First-Day Fly"** on your whiteboard. Read the slides and answer the questions as a class. Optionally, print out the **Literary Devices Scavenger Hunt**, a chart where students can record the devices they find on their own before you discuss them as a class.

- As a class, discuss the following questions.

### Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes)

*The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.*

1. **Do you think that the way we dress and present ourselves can affect the way we feel? What about the opposite—can the way we feel affect the way we dress and present ourselves? Do either or both of these things happen in the story? Explain your responses.**  
*Answers will vary, but students will likely answer that both things can occur: The way we dress can affect the way we feel (e.g., wearing something fancy can make an occasion feel more special, dressing casually can help us feel relaxed, wearing clothes that feel like “you” can give you a sense of comfort or confidence), and the way we feel can affect the choices we make about what to wear (e.g., if you’re feeling sad, you might wear dark colors; if you’re feeling joyful, you might wear something bright). In the story, both things seem to happen. The main character chooses his outfit for the first day of school to fit how special that day feels to him, but also, the outfit he chooses, with every detail just right, gives him a sense of confidence.*
2. **Why might the first day of school be such an important day to the main character? Do you think it’s an important day for a lot of students? Explain.**  
*Answers will vary. Students may offer that for the main character—as for many students—the first day is important because it feels like an opportunity for a fresh start, or because it seems like an opportunity to set the tone for the rest of the school year, or because it’s a time when you see people you haven’t seen all summer, or because you are starting new classes with new teachers and new classmates, and there is something exciting but also a little scary about starting something new.*

### 3. Write About It: Character

(45 minutes)

- Have students complete the **Featured Skill Activity: Character**. This activity prepares them to respond to the writing prompt on page 29 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page:

***In a short essay, compare your feelings about the first day of school to the feelings the main character of “First-Day Fly” has about the first day of school.***

- Alternatively, have students choose a task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of alternate culminating tasks. (Our Choice Board options include the writing prompt from the magazine, differentiated versions of the writing prompt, and additional creative ways for students to demonstrate their understanding of a story or an article.)

## 4. Writing Spotlight: Second-Person Point of View

(15 minutes)

- Project the **Writing Spotlight** activity, available in the Resources Tab, on your whiteboard for a minilesson on writing in second-person point of view, using mentor sentences from the article. Read Slides 1, 2, and 3 as a class.
- Have students complete the You Try It on Slide 4 on their own. Then ask volunteers to share their sentences.

**Connected readings from the Scope Archives about the role that clothing can play in our lives:**

- Fiction: ["Fancy Dancer"](#)
- Fiction: ["Good Enough"](#)