

The Reason I Will Love John MacFarlane Jr. Until the Day I Die

A story about cancer—and love

About the Story

Lexile® Measure 730L

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

Learning Objective: to analyze the title of a work of fiction

Featured Skill: character

Additional skills covered in this lesson plan: inference, text structure, critical thinking

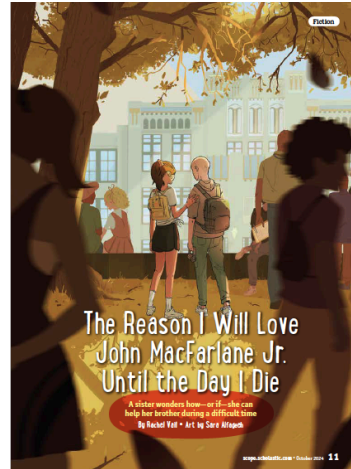
Essential Questions:

- How can we support others in coping with difficulties?
- How can illness affect a person and those around them?
- What does it mean to blend in? What makes us want to blend in or stand out from the crowd?

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, W.2, SL.1

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



Your Teaching Package

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

Audio:

- Story read-aloud
- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

Connected readings from the *Scope* archives:

- “Don’t Break Tradition”
- “Aftershocks”
- “Why I Shaved My Head”

Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Featured Skill: Character
- Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
- Discussion Questions
- 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 (10 minutes)

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: *chemo, flanked, flinched, loping, remission, terminal*. 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 (75 minutes)

- Read the “As You Read” box on page 12 or at the top of the digital story page.
- For students’ first read, have them follow along as they listen to author Rachel Vail read her story aloud. The **audio read-aloud** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.
- Optionally, have students reread and annotate the story independently. Here are some symbols you might have them use:

! = I’m surprised.

? = This is unfamiliar.

★ = This is important.

💬 = “I wonder . . .” (add comments or questions)

💙 = I love this.

- Divide students into groups to discuss the questions in the story along with their annotations. (The discussion questions appear in the margins of the print magazine or by clicking on the bolded words on the digital story page.) If you’d like students to respond in

writing, an interactive and printable **Discussion Questions activity** is available in your Resources tab.

Discussion Questions

(30 minutes)

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

- 1. Why has Calvin lost so much weight?** (inference) *You can infer that Calvin has lost weight as a result of having cancer.*
- 2. What does Jodie tell Mackey? How does her telling him this relate to what happens later?** (text structure) *Jodie tells Mackey what Calvin said about wishing he could just blend in for once. It is because Jodie shares this comment with Mackey that Mackey has the idea to shave his head—and get his fellow soccer players to shave their heads—for Calvin’s first day back at school.*
- 3. What do you think Jodie means when she says she’s not the girlfriend type?** (critical thinking) *Jodie is likely referring to stereotypical or old-fashioned ideas about what girls and girlfriends are like: someone who giggles a lot and enjoys “girly” things like flowers, jewelry, wearing dresses, etc. She might also be suggesting that having a boyfriend was not something she particularly wanted or gave much thought to.*
- 4. Explain what Jodie means when she says the walk with Mackey felt good but also bad.** (character) *Jodie means that it’s a relief to have Mackey to talk to, but doing so makes her feel guilty—she seems to feel that it’s not fair that she has someone to talk to in a way that Calvin doesn’t, and that it’s wrong or selfish for her to be complaining when Calvin is the one who’s sick.*
- 5. Describe how Jodie, Mom, and Dad are acting during breakfast. Why do you think they are acting this way?** (character) *Jodie, Mom, and Dad are acting very cheerful—more cheerful than any of them actually feels. In other words, their cheerfulness is forced. It is likely they are acting this way because they think it will make Calvin feel better about his return to school, which he is not looking forward to. Perhaps through their cheerfulness, they are also trying to reassure themselves that everything is OK.*
- 6. Why is Jodie hoping people will treat Calvin like he’s invisible?** (character) *Calvin told Jodie directly that he wished that when he returned to school, he could just blend in. He is dreading everyone staring at him and whispering about him, or even simply paying attention to him in an effort to be helpful, as a guidance counselor might do. Jodie is wishing for her brother what he is wishing for himself—that people would let him just blend in.*
- 7. How does Calvin feel at the end of the story? How does Jodie feel? How do you know?** (character) *At the end of the story, Calvin feels surprised and then relieved and grateful to be swept into the group of other bald-headed boys at school, as you can tell from the way his mouth hangs open before he smiles and the way he then says “Yeah” and goes into the school as part of*

the bald-headed group. Jodie feels deeply moved and grateful to Mackey and his friends for thinking about Calvin and doing the perfect thing to make him feel supported as he returns to school. Mackey figured out a way to give Calvin his wish of blending in. Jodie says she cannot move; you can infer that this is because she is so overcome with emotion.

3. Write (20 minutes)

1. Have students use the **Featured Skill Activity: Character** to help them respond to the writing prompt on page 15 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page:

Consider the story's title. Why will Jodie love John MacFarlane Jr. until the day she dies?

2. Alternatively, have students choose a task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of 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.)

Connected readings from the Scope archives

Fiction about families coping with a crisis:

- ["Don't Break Tradition"](#)
- ["Aftershocks"](#)

A real-life story about a girl who shaved her head to support a friend going through chemo:

- ["Why I Shaved My Head"](#)