



# perseverance

A Character Education Lesson Plan for Educators and Parents  
based on the book ***Bella Basset Ballerina***

Recommended for 1st - 3rd grade students



# What to Teach

## Story Overview

**B**ella Basset is a hound who sees a performance of the Royal Borzoi Ballet Company and dreams of becoming a ballerina. She soon finds out that there is a big problem: she's not the right kind of dog to be a dancer. But that doesn't stop Bella. She thinks, "*I may be low to the ground, and I may belong on the farm, but I'm going to dance.*" She finds an instructor named Monsieur Boris who sees her potential, agrees to teach her, and sends her off to the Big City, where all kinds of animals can dance. She returns to Fideaux Falls, home of the Royal Borzoi Ballet, as a famous Basset ballerina.



## The Meaning of Perseverance

**T**he word **perseverance** is "the act of persisting in a state, enterprise or undertaking in spite of counter influences, opposition or discouragement." It is used interchangeably with the word **persistence**.

## The Role of a Mentor

**I**n the story, Bella finds Monsieur Boris, who agrees to take her on as a student even though she is not the graceful Borzoi who is perfectly suited to dance. Finding a coach or teacher who believes in us can help us persevere to reach a goal. A parent can be a mentor.

## The Right Attitude

**B**ella's positive attitude helped her to keep going when others might have given up trying to dance. There are many things that require a great deal of practice, often accompanied by frustration, to succeed. Children might have examples that include learning to do a cartwheel, play a sport, play a musical instrument, ride a bicycle, or understand something at school that doesn't come easily.

## Ask Students

1. Bella perseveres in her pursuit of the dream of becoming a dancer. Can you give an example of something you have worked hard for, and a time when you haven't given up, even when you were discouraged?
2. Bella perseveres in spite of many obstacles. Her mother and Mademoiselle Ada both tell her that Bassets can't dance; she has to work hard in her dance classes while she keeps up with her chores; she goes to the Big City by herself; she tries out for several parts before she gets a chance to dance. Can you remember a situation when you kept going through many obstacles? What were they?



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3. Monsieur Boris is Bella's mentor, a teacher who encourages her to work hard, develop her talent, and pursue her dream. A teacher, a coach, or a parent can be a mentor. A teacher could help you learn to read better, or a soccer coach could help you learn new skills to improve. Can you name someone who is a mentor to you?

4. It is helpful to maintain a positive attitude when you persevere in something. What are some of the things you can say to yourself to keep going when it is tempting to give up? An example: "This is hard, but I'm going to keep trying because I know I can do it!"



## Lessons for Older Children

### *Phonemic Awareness*

**B**ella Basset Ballerina can offer many opportunities for phonemic awareness (41 phonemes, opportunities to blend phonemes and manipulate sounds: *sw-eet, st-age*) and word recognition (high frequency words: *the, to, you, her, don't.*)

### *Vocabulary and Concept Development*

**I**n the area of vocabulary and concept development, **Bella Basset Ballerina** exposes students to new and intriguing words that contribute to vocabulary and concept development in three major areas.

#### Infrequent and Rare Words

Students need exposure to infrequently used and rare words in order to acquire vocabulary. Bella illustrates verbs of motion. For instance, one might *walk* through piles of leaves. Bella "...*bounded* through crunchy leaf piles..."

#### Incidental Word Learning

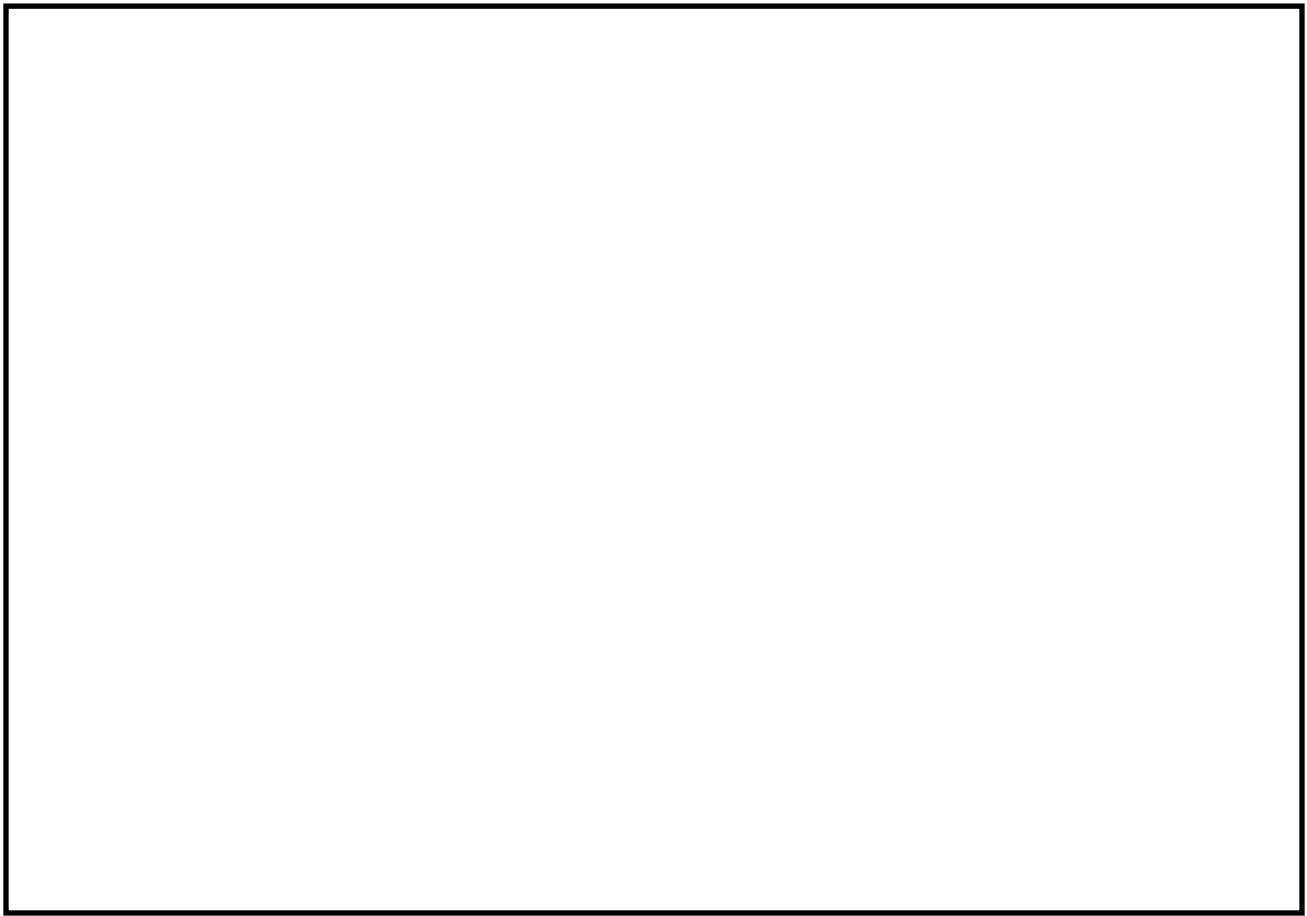
Early reading texts often make use of existing vocabularies of young children, but acquiring sophisticated vocabulary is important to expanding word knowledge and reading fluency. In **Bella Basset Ballerina**, children are exposed to a number of words and concepts that are not normally part of their everyday experiences, such as *hippodrome, ballet, opera house, town square.*

#### Building a Knowledge Network

Knowing a word involves connecting the word meanings to concepts, and linguistic knowledge about words. **Bella Basset Ballerina** provides an opportunity to build a schema related to the concept, "dog." Students build on their basic knowledge of dogs as animals. There are many different types of dogs: *Basset Hound, Chinese Crested, Poodle, Wolfhound, Borzoi, and Spaniel.* (Note that the illustrations on pages 7-9 allow students to see pictures of dogs in a variety of shapes and sizes.) There is specific information about dogs: *Bella is a Basset hound. She has short stubby legs and a stomach that scrapes the ground. Bassetts are good farm dogs; they chase moles and fetch while Borzois are tall and graceful.*



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*Draw a picture that shows you working hard to achieve something you want to do.  
Write a sentence about it below.*

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