



Thank You, Mr. Falker **by Patricia Polacco**

Why This Book Matters

Thank You, Mr. Falker highlights the power of perseverance and kindness, and the impact caring teachers can have on a child's life. The story follows Trisha, a young girl who struggles with reading and writing and feels discouraged by her difficulties. With Mr. Falker's support and understanding, she learns she has dyslexia and discovers strategies that help her succeed. The book provides an opportunity to discuss empathy, determination, self-confidence, and the importance of recognizing individual strengths.

Comprehension Focus

- Author's message / central idea
- Character development
- Cause and effect
- Identifying challenges and solutions
- Understanding themes of perseverance and support

Before Reading

- Show the cover and ask: What do you think the title Thank You, Mr. Falker means?
- Discuss briefly: Have you ever found something difficult to learn? How did you feel? Has someone ever helped you learn something that was difficult?
- Introduce key vocabulary as needed (e.g., dyslexia, perseverance, encouragement, confidence, support).

During Reading

Pause strategically to promote active thinking:

- What challenges is Trisha experiencing?
- How do Trisha's feelings change throughout the story?
- What actions do family members and teachers take to help her?
- How does Mr. Falker make a difference in Trisha's life?
- What clues help readers understand that Trisha is intelligent even though she struggles with reading?
- Encourage students to explain their thinking using details and examples from the text.

After Reading

- What is the main message the author wants readers to understand?
- How did Mr. Falker help Trisha overcome her challenges?
- What character traits helped Trisha persevere?
- Why is it important to recognize that people learn in different ways?
- What lessons can readers apply to their own lives?



Extension Activity

Students may:

- Create a character map showing how Trisha changes from the beginning to the end of the story.
- Write or dictate a thank-you note to someone who has helped them learn or grow.
- Draw and label examples of people who support learning at school and at home.
- Share a personal experience about overcoming a challenge.

Teacher Reflection

- Did students identify the author's central message using evidence from the text?
- Were students able to explain how Trisha changed throughout the story?
- Did students understand the cause-and-effect relationships between support, perseverance, and success?
- How did discussion support students' understanding of empathy and individual learning differences?

Writing Prompt

In Thank You, Mr. Falker, Trisha faces many challenges but does not give up. Think about a time when you learned something that was difficult for you.

- Write about a challenge you faced and explain:
- What made it difficult
- How you felt
- Who helped you (if anyone)
- What you learned from the experience
- Use details and examples to explain your thinking.

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