

STORYKEEPERS HOMESCHOOL

The Mingles in Wilderland

MULTI-AGE LESSON 1

Gifts and Calling The Value of Purpose

Vocation, Contribution, and Common Purpose



Learning Modules for Four Age Levels:

Lower Elementary • Upper Elementary • Middle School • High School

One story. Four levels of challenge. One complete family packet.



FAMILY GUIDE

Lesson 1 at a Glance

Everything needed for all four age levels is contained in this packet.

The Big Idea

BIG IDEA

You were made for something. The question is not whether you have gifts — everyone does — but whether you will use them for what they were intended. Vocation is the word for this: the work that matches the life. Your gifts matched to your purpose.

STORY ANCHORS

Chapters 12, 23, 54, and 63

THE THREAD THROUGH THE STORY

Timbit says, “I want my life to mean something.” At his father’s workbench comes the challenge, “If not you, who?” Horatio later tells the Mingles they are in the right place, at the right time, with the right resources. By Chapter 63, the group’s different abilities become part of the answer: no one creature can do everything.

WHERE IT APPEARS IN THE BOOK

Chapter 12	Timbit: “I want my life to mean something.” The refusal to let reaction - anger, loss, circumstance - become identity.
Chapter 23	The still-small-voice call scene at his father’s workbench: “If not you, who?”
Chapter 54	Horatio commissions the small: “You are in the right place at the right time, with the right resources.” This answers Timbit’s “We’re all just plain people.”
Chapter 63	Different creatures bring different gifts; one can do what another cannot. The Mingles conclude, “We will succeed or fail together.”

Learning Objectives by Level

LOWER ELEMENTARY Grades 1–3 · Approx. ages 6–9 • Name one thing Timbit, Pippin, Quill, and Snicker are good at. • Match a simple need with a character who could help. • Say why that character’s strength fits the need. • Notice that a team needs different kinds of helpers.	UPPER ELEMENTARY Grades 4–5 • Name a strength shown by each Mingle. • Match a strength to a need. • Explain why no single gift fits every problem.
MIDDLE SCHOOL Grades 6–8 • Use story evidence to identify a strength and a limitation. • Assign roles so contributions complement one another. • Revise roles when circumstances change and defend the revision.	HIGH SCHOOL Grades 9–12 • Distinguish talent, preference, role, and vocation. • Analyze how ability, need, limits, and choice interact. • Defend a claim about whether having a gift creates responsibility, including a counterargument.

How to Use This Lesson

A simple multi-age rhythm

1. Begin together with the Shared Family Launch. It takes about 10 minutes.
2. Then each learner moves to the level that fits best. Use the level that matches the learner, not merely the learner's age.
3. Run the levels simultaneously or on different days. They share one Big Idea but use different kinds of work.
4. End together with the Family Roundtable. Each learner brings one finding from their own level.

What Each Level Needs

LEVEL	MATERIALS
Lower Elementary	Character Helper Cards, Need Cards, optional buttons/coins/blocks as markers, crayons or pencil, Draw & Tell page
Upper Elementary	Character Gift Cards, Need Cards, pencil, Student Reflection
Middle School	4 small household objects as markers, scrap paper or sticky notes, Team Planning Sheet, Student Reflection
High School	Book or chapter notes, Case Matrix, Position Memo page, pencil

Start Together

10 minutes · All ages

Before Anyone Splits Into Levels

Read or briefly recall the four story moments below. Do not turn this into a lecture; the purpose is simply to put the same idea in everyone's mind before the age-level activities begin.

Chapter 12: Timbit says, "I want my life to mean something."

Chapter 23: At his father's workbench comes the question: "If not you, who?"

Chapter 54: Horatio tells the Mingles they are in the right place, at the right time, with the right resources.

Chapter 63: Different creatures bring different abilities. The group will succeed or fail together.

Ask Everyone the Same Two Questions

- Is a gift mostly something you HAVE, or something you USE?
- When does being good at something become important to somebody besides you?

For Lower Elementary: ask simply, "What is each Mingle good at? When could that help?"

KEEP THE QUESTION OPEN

Do not force a single family answer yet. The four age levels will approach the same Big Idea differently and return to it at the end.

Who Can Help?

Concrete, visual, oral learning for younger siblings

LEVEL OUTCOME

Name at least one strength shown by each Mingle, match simple needs with reasonable helpers, and explain at least two matches using “____ can help because ____.”

Home Educator Guide

WHY THIS LEVEL LOOKS DIFFERENT

- Directions are read aloud by the adult.
- Children point, place, draw, and talk more than they write.
- The activity uses simple cause-and-effect: “Who can help? Why?”
- Do not require the child to learn the word “vocation.” The concept is enough: people are good at different things, and those strengths can help.

SET UP

- Print the Character Helper Cards and Need Cards.
- Cut the Need Cards apart. Character Helper Cards may stay on one sheet or be cut apart.
- Optional: use four buttons, coins, blocks, or toy figures as movable character markers.
- Keep the Draw & Tell page aside until the activity is finished.

TEACH THIS FIRST — 3 TO 5 MINUTES

Remind the child: Timbit invents. Pippin protects and makes brave choices. Quill notices things others miss. Snicker quietly finds out useful information. Say: “Nobody has to be good at everything. A good team needs different kinds of helpers.”

RUN THE ACTIVITY — 20 TO 30 MINUTES

1. Meet the helpers. Read the four Character Helper Cards aloud and name one thing each Mingle is good at.
2. Read one Need Card aloud and place it in the middle.
3. The child points to or moves the Mingle who could help best.
4. Use the sentence frame: “____ can help because ____.”
5. For some cards ask, “Could somebody else help too?” More than one answer may work.
6. After several cards, use a Challenge Need and build a team of two or more helpers.

CLOSE THE LEVEL

When the activity is complete, give the Draw & Tell page. A younger child may dictate while the adult writes. Save it for the Family Roundtable.

Character Helper Cards

Read aloud. Keep as one sheet or cut apart.

TIMBIT

INVENTOR

Good at making things and finding ways to fix problems.

PIPPIN

PROTECTOR

Good at being brave, noticing danger, and helping others feel safe.

QUILL

OBSERVER

Good at looking closely, noticing clues, and asking questions.

SNICKER

SCOUT

Good at moving quietly, listening, and finding out useful information.

Who Can Help? — Need Cards

Cut apart. Read aloud one at a time.

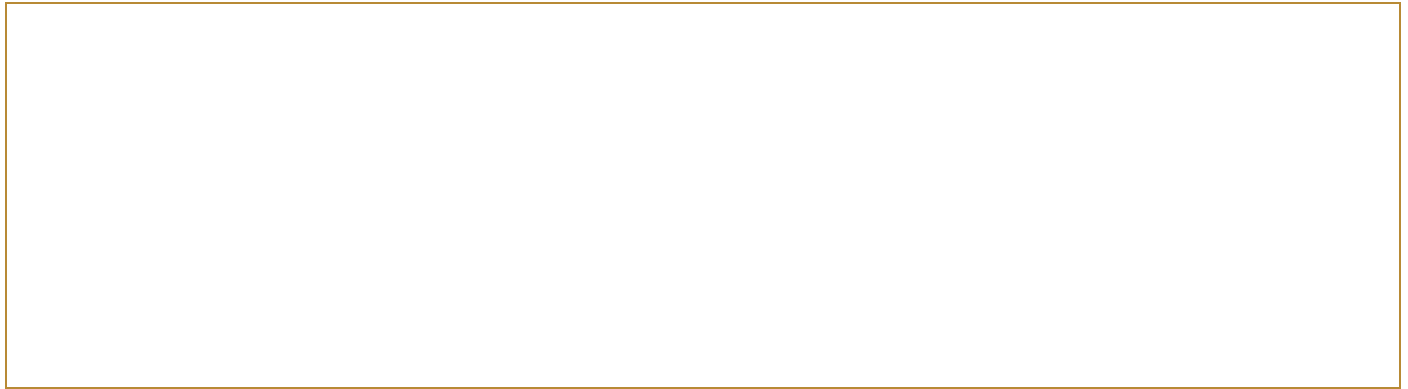
Something broke. We need a new idea for how to fix it.	A younger friend is scared and needs someone calm and brave nearby.
There are tracks on the ground. We need someone to look closely and tell us what they notice.	We need to know what is happening nearby without making a lot of noise.
The group has a problem nobody has solved before.	Someone may be walking toward danger and needs help making a safe choice.
Everyone looked at the same place, but somebody missed one small clue.	The Mingles need someone to listen carefully and bring back useful information.
CHALLENGE A friend is lost. Which TWO helpers could work together?	CHALLENGE The group must make a plan, notice clues, and keep everyone safe. Build a team.
CHALLENGE Something strange is happening and nobody knows why. Which helpers should start?	CHALLENGE Pick any two Mingles. Make up one simple need they could solve together.

LOWER ELEMENTARY

Draw & Tell

Use after Who Can Help? For younger children, the adult may write the child's words.

Draw one Mingle helping with something.



Tell me about your picture:

_____ is good at _____.

That helps when _____.

A team needs different helpers because _____.

Optional family connection

Ask: "What is one thing you like helping with at home?" A drawing or spoken answer is enough.

FAMILY CLOSE

Say together: "We do not all have to be good at the same things. We can help in different ways."

Match the Gift to the Need

Concrete matching, explanation, and team contribution

LEVEL OUTCOME

Match at least eight needs to reasonable character strengths, explain three matches using strength + need, and explain why no single gift fits every problem.

Home Educator Guide

SET UP

Place the four Character Gift Cards face up. Shuffle the Need Cards. Keep the Student Reflection aside until the activity is finished.

TEACH THIS FIRST — 3 MINUTES

Say: “Today we are not deciding which character is best. We are asking a different question: what does this situation need, and whose strength fits that need?”

RUN THE ACTIVITY — 25 TO 35 MINUTES

1. Read the four Character Gift Cards together. Have the learner name the key strength on each card.
2. Turn over one Need Card and read it aloud.
3. Match the need to the character whose strength fits best. Challenge cards may reasonably use two characters.
4. Before moving on, require the sentence: “This need calls for ____ because ____.”
5. Continue through at least eight cards. Use all twelve if attention is strong.
6. For a challenge card, ask whether a different match could also work and what would change.

DEBRIEF

Ask: Which character helped with the most different needs? Was anyone useful for every need? What would the group lose if one character were missing?

CLOSE THE LEVEL

When the activity is complete, give the Upper Elementary Student Reflection. Allow 8–10 minutes. Save it for the Family Roundtable.

Character Gift Cards

Print one set. Cut on the center lines.

TIMBIT

INVENTOR / PROBLEM SOLVER

STRENGTH: Builds, tests, fixes, and tries again.

HELPS WHEN: The group needs a new idea, a tool, or a way to repair something that is not working.

PIPPIN

PROTECTOR / DECISION MAKER

STRENGTH: Notices danger, thinks about safety, and acts when others hesitate.

HELPS WHEN: Someone needs protection, a careful choice, or a plan that puts people before convenience.

QUILL

OBSERVER / EXPLORER

STRENGTH: Looks closely, asks questions, and notices details others miss.

HELPS WHEN: The group needs clues, careful observation, or help comparing what they know.

SNICKER

SCOUT / INFORMATION GATHERER

STRENGTH: Moves quietly, listens, watches, and brings back information.

HELPS WHEN: The group does not know enough yet and needs someone to find out what is happening.

Need Cards

Shuffle before use. Challenge cards may have more than one good answer.

NEED 1 Something important is broken, and the group needs a new way to make it work again.	NEED 2 A younger traveler is frightened, and the group needs someone to put safety first.
NEED 3 Everyone sees the obvious clue, but the group may be missing a small detail.	NEED 4 The group does not know what is happening nearby and needs reliable information before deciding.
NEED 5 The first plan failed. The group needs someone willing to rethink it, adjust it, and try again.	NEED 6 Two choices both seem possible. The group needs someone to slow down and compare the risks.
NEED 7 A clue does not make sense yet. The group needs someone to look carefully and ask a better question.	NEED 8 The group needs to learn what another group is doing without drawing attention.
CHALLENGE 1 TWO GIFTS MAY HELP A storm damaged a crossing. The group needs both a safe plan AND a practical way to solve the problem.	CHALLENGE 2 TWO GIFTS MAY HELP A traveler is missing. The group needs someone to notice clues AND someone to think about safety.
CHALLENGE 3 TWO GIFTS MAY HELP A strange device has been found. The group needs to observe it before anyone tries to understand or fix it.	CHALLENGE 4 TWO GIFTS MAY HELP The group faces a problem nobody understands yet. They need to learn more and then decide what kind of help is needed.

Student Reflection

Use after Match the Gift to the Need

1. Choose one Need Card. Which Mingle did you match to it?

2. What is that character good at, and why did that strength fit the need?

3. Choose one Challenge Card. Which two Mingles could help, and what would each contribute?

4. Finish: A group is stronger when...

Mission Design Challenge

Strengths, limits, roles, and revision

LEVEL OUTCOME

Build a team plan that matches strengths to mission needs, then revise roles when the conditions change and explain why the revision improves the plan.

Home Educator Guide

SET UP

Choose Mission A or Mission B. Gather four small household objects—coins, buttons, beans, paper clips—to stand for Timbit, Pippin, Quill, and Snicker. Give the learner the Team Planning Sheet and a few scraps of paper or sticky notes.

TEACH THIS FIRST — 5 MINUTES

Write NEED → STRENGTH → CONTRIBUTION. Ask why “I like this character” is not enough reason to assign a role. A useful role must answer a real need.

MISSION ROUND — 12 MINUTES

Place the four markers on the planning sheet. For each character used, write a specific job and a reason that links the job to the character’s strength. One character may be left unused if the learner can explain the tradeoff.

CHANGE OF CONDITIONS — 8 MINUTES

Read the mission’s new condition. Move the markers and revise only the roles that should change. Keep the original plan visible so the learner can explain the revision.

DEBRIEF — 8 MINUTES

Ask: Which strength mattered most at first? Which became more important after the change? What is the difference between having a strength and knowing when to use it?

CLOSE THE LEVEL

Give the Middle School Student Reflection. Ask for one story connection and one explanation of a revision. Save it for the Family Roundtable.

Mission Challenge — Team Planning Sheet

Use Mission A or Mission B

MISSION A — FIND THE CAUSE

A settlement's water supply is dropping quickly. The obvious water source is still flowing, so the cause is not clear. The team needs careful observation, information from people nearby, a practical plan, and someone to notice risk.

CHANGE OF CONDITIONS: A resident reports seeing someone near the water channel after dark. The team must now investigate without creating panic.

MISSION B — MOVE SAFELY

A mixed group of travelers must reach the Refuge before nightfall. One route is shorter but poorly known; the other is longer but familiar. The team needs risk judgment, observation, coordination, and a way to solve an unexpected obstacle.

CHANGE OF CONDITIONS: A fallen tree blocks the familiar route. The team has less daylight than expected.

Team Plan

MINGLE	SPECIFIC JOB	WHY THIS STRENGTH FITS THE NEED
Timbit		
Pippin		
Quill		
Snicker		

Student Reflection

Use after the Mission Design Challenge

1. Which character's strength was most useful in your first plan? Explain with one story detail or lesson idea.

2. What changed in the mission? Which role did you revise, and why did that make the plan stronger?

3. Name one limitation that mattered. How did another person's strength help cover it?

4. Finish: A strength becomes a contribution when...

Vocation Case Conference

Ability, need, responsibility, limits, and choice

LEVEL OUTCOME

Distinguish talent from vocation, analyze two characters, and defend a nuanced claim about responsibility that includes limits and a counterargument.

Home Educator Guide

BIG QUESTION

If you are especially able to meet a real need, does that create a greater responsibility to act?

SET UP

Use the Case Matrix on the next page. This is not a career-planning exercise; it asks where ability, need, responsibility, limits, and choice meet.

PART 1 — CASE ANALYSIS — 20 TO 30 MINUTES

1. Choose two characters from Timbit, Pippin, Quill, Snicker, or Horatio.
2. For each, identify an ability, a desire or preference, a need the character encounters, a limitation or cost, and the response the character chooses.
3. Decide whether the character's contribution is best described as talent, role, vocation, or some combination. Support the judgment with story evidence.

PART 2 — TAKE A POSITION — 20 TO 30 MINUTES

Agree, disagree, or answer "It depends." State a principle, use two story examples, and address one counterargument.

PROPOSITION

When a person has an unusual ability to meet an important need, that person has a greater responsibility to act.

PART 3 — ADVISORY MEMO — 20 MINUTES

Write a 350–500 word memo to one character: what are you equipped to contribute, what need calls for it, what limits matter, and what responsibility is yours?

CLOSE THE LEVEL

Complete the High School Position Memo page. Bring one sentence from the memo to the Family Roundtable.

Vocation Case Matrix

Use at least two characters

QUESTION	CASE 1	CASE 2
Character		
Ability / strength		
Need encountered		
Limitation / cost		
Chosen response		

Interpret the Cases

For each case, is the contribution best understood as a talent, a role, a vocation, or some combination? Explain what makes the distinction.

Position Memo

Use after the case conference

Your Claim

I AGREE / DISAGREE / THINK IT DEPENDS with the proposition because:

Evidence

Story example 1:

Story example 2:

Counterargument

A reasonable objection to my position is:

My response is:

Advisory Memo

In 350–500 words, advise one character about what contribution is theirs to make—and what limits they should respect. Use the back of this page or additional paper.

COME BACK TOGETHER

Family Roundtable

10–15 minutes · All ages

One Question, Four Levels of Answer

Each learner brings one finding from their own activity. Do not require everyone to have reached the same conclusion.

Lower Elementary Share one Mingle and one way that character can help.	Upper Elementary Share one character gift and one need it fits.
Middle School Share one role you changed after the mission changed, and why.	High School Read one sentence from your position memo about responsibility and limits.

Discuss

- Does being good at something mean you must always be the one who does it?
- What changes when another person truly needs a strength you have?
- Why might a family, team, or community be healthier when different people contribute different things?

THE IDEA TO CARRY FORWARD

A gift is not valuable because it makes one person impressive. It becomes a contribution when it is used wisely in response to a real need—and when it works alongside the gifts of others.

Protect Delight

If the discussion is alive, stop there. The purpose of the packet is not to complete every blank. It is to let one story open the same important idea at several levels of depth.