

**INTEGRATING CHILDREN'S LITERATURE WITH CHARACTER  
EDUCATION IN AN ELEMENTARY SETTING:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS**

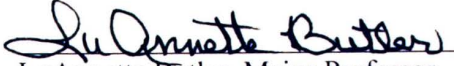
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**JANET HARRIS**

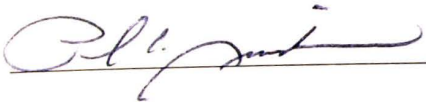


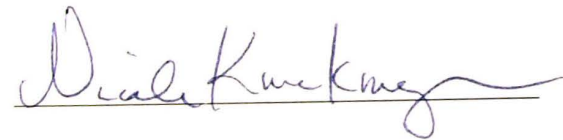
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a field study entitled "Integrating Children's Literature with Character Education in an Elementary Setting: Implications for School Counselors". I have examined the final paper copy of this field study for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Education Specialist, EdS.

  
LuAnnette Butler, Major Professor

We have read this field study and  
recommend its acceptance:





Running head: CHARACTER EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Integrating Children's Literature with Character Education in an Elementary Setting:

Implications for School Counselors

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## Integrating Children's Literature with Character Education in an Elementary Setting: Implications For School Counselors

Children's literature is a powerful tool with as much versatility in its potential as there is variety in texts. Avenues for usefulness are limitless. While the value of a good book can be universally applied, the benefits of a good children's book are specific to the needs of young children. Oral reading provides opportunities for natural development of language as a child hears the language used, develops attention span, hears pattern and rhythm of speech, and is provided with modeling of verbal expression. When the element of written language is incorporated into the experience through the use of printed words, the child begins to form understanding of left to right progression in reading, make associations between letters, sounds, and words, and develop a connection between print and meaning. When illustrations are included in the reading of a story, the child attaches visual cues, which further enhance meaning. Awareness of art mediums begins to develop, along with an appreciation for styles, colors, textures and dimensions of artistic expression.

Aside from addressing developmental needs and providing natural learning for beginning readers, high quality literature also exposes children to a wide variety of topics. Differences in cultures and geographic regions are seen throughout the pages of children's books. Imagination is fueled, analytical devices are implored, and a plethora of information is spread out for children to feast upon. Whether it is learning about life in the city or life on the moon, getting a puppy or going to school, the animal kingdom or a kingdom where fairy tales are made, a children's book brings to the reader (or listener) a perspective that is new. From this perspective, children will grow to create their own stories from which both verbal and written expression is born. Jalongo (2004) believed that the ability to respond to stories and to express oneself through creative story



writing is a defining characteristic of human beings. Hence, we see yet another reason to place great value on the use of children's literature.

### *Integrating Children's Literature with Academic Subjects*

Educators have long since recognized the value of using children's literature as a venue for teaching academic subjects, particularly in elementary schools, where this practice is widely accepted and adopted. The use of trade books to teach content areas (math, reading, language, science and social studies) has proven to spark interest, increase participation, and heighten understanding of concepts. Trade book, picture book, and children's literature are interchangeable terms used to represent a storybook written specifically for children that incorporates illustrations to help convey meaning. While varying sources may make reference to any or all of these terms, there is no significant difference in their meaning.

*Using Trade Books to Teach Mathematics.* Moyer (2000) described the connection between math and children's books as natural by pointing out the opportunities provided for discussion and investigation of math concepts that are found in so many books. Examples are provided to include introduction and exposure to money, counting, measurement, geometry, addition/subtraction and even multiplication/division. Moyer also suggested that books show children the origins of mathematics, contributions made by various cultures and the evolution of math as we know it. Such concepts may not be understood or even taught through the use of a textbook alone, but a child's interest and knowledge are both increased when informal learning occurs within the natural context of a story.

Making connections between content areas and the real world is a critical aspect of learning any subject. This is especially true for math, which can be intimidating to both children and adults. Moyer (2000) stated that children's books often allow the reader to see mathematics

within the context of daily living, which provides a familiar context in which to explore foreign concepts. This context is what makes learning natural to the extent that children may not even realize they are learning. Moyer also provided a discussion of the use of illustrations to present math concepts and problem solving. Children are entranced by pictures and will make connections to the written text all by themselves. Problem solving and other higher order thinking skills are developed as the reader seeks to analyze a math concept presented in the text by looking for clues in the illustrations. Moyer believed that reading and math skills are both strengthened as children use picture books to build connections between these core subjects.

To further illustrate the integration of trade books with math concepts, Moyer (2000) provided an elaborate example of an actual classroom experience. The math lesson began with a teacher reading aloud, *The Doorbell Rang*, by Pat Hutchins (1986). In this story, two children had a dozen cookies that they were sharing. Every time they decided how to divide the cookies between them, the doorbell would ring and another child would arrive, causing them to have to revise their math problem. Following the reading, each student was given a bag of twelve pretend cookies, represented by twelve yellow hexagon shapes from a set of pattern blocks. The students immediately determined that theirs were lemon cookies, making a transfer of knowledge from the text to the real world.

Several activities followed including the modeling and writing of mathematical equations, retelling of the story sequentially, identifying a hexagon by the number of sides and computing the total number of sides represented on a given number of cookies, comparing of the hexagon shape with other shapes, manipulating the shapes to produce patterns and new shapes, writing of number sentences, and creating a storyboard to model the division of cookies based on the number of children present in each incidence. Students were engaged in oral discussion with



peers in small groups. The combined efforts of the group proved to be beneficial as problem solving strategies were also combined and therefore enhanced. Vocabulary was developed as the teacher modeled correct terminology for what the students were actually doing as they manipulated their cookies. The actual story was revisited several times as students worked to recreate the events accurately. In the initial explanation of this lesson, Moyer (2000) stated that the objectives were to provide students with opportunities to use concrete and pictorial representations to show understanding of division while demonstrating ability to think and communicate mathematically. These objectives were accomplished easily with the integration of children's literature and math.

By providing a means through which students can acquire an understanding of math concepts, educators can provide resources to meet the growing demand for future mathematicians (Murphy, 2000). Anxiety about mathematics begins in very young children and often continues through adolescence and adulthood. This fear of math can inhibit an individual, limit career options, and cause deficiencies in the function of everyday life. Murphy also stated that visual representations provide a learning source that may be required for acquisition of knowledge among those who are visual learners. Children's books incorporate the use of visuals to convey abstract concepts. Additionally, Murphy discussed the idea that statistically there are certain ethnic and cultural groups that are more likely to be successful in mathematics. He suggested that children could become immune to this bias through the use of high quality children's books which present minority groups as main characters in positions that challenge biased ideas.

The assessing of trade books to be used in math lessons is an important factor in determining how beneficial the integration will be. While acknowledging the wide spread use of

this teaching strategy, Halsey (2005) pointed out that the books used must offer the best qualities in both math and literature, outlining specific criteria for making selections. Included in the criteria is visibility of the mathematical element in the story line, how effectively the mathematics are presented and the overall literary quality of the book. This author provided support for integration of math and literature by stating that the mathematical perspective found in trade books increases students' comprehension of the literature while simultaneously providing much needed meaning to math for young children.

*Using Trade Books to Teach Science.* In much the same way that math can be intimidating to students, science can be intimidating to elementary school teachers. Barton (1999) reported that teachers commonly view science as being a separate entity because of the unique qualities of the content. The author outlined similarities between science and literature and provided suggestions for integrating the two areas. Once multifaceted characters are identified and analyzed, Barton believed that cultural elements will surface, which are easily paired with science concepts. These concepts can be expanded upon through the use of exploratory activities to produce students who are thinking, doing, and talking real science.

The knowledge of science deficits among students in this country is wide spread. Included in Barton's report are nine scientific concepts that are recommended for introduction at the elementary school level, which may begin to address the academic need. Systems, models, variation, change, diversity, and scale are among these concepts. A specific example is given for teaching another concept, structure and function, through the use of the popular children's book entitled *Something From Nothing* (Gilman, 1992). Cultural elements in this book are apparent as students make comparisons between a young boy and his grandfather. A connection follows as students are led to discover the importance of the physical structure of a blanket given to the boy



by his grandfather and how the changes in this structure over time affected the function of the blanket. An exploratory activity follows involving the making of a paper twirler, the modification of that twirler, which represents the change in structure, and the affect these changes have on the function of the twirler. Barton (1999) suggested that the level of student comprehension of this science concept was greatly enhanced through the use of the trade book.

In addition to connections made through the complexity of characters in picture books, Rop and Rop (2001) suggested that student interest and curiosity is perked when literature is combined with science objectives. Students become motivated to investigate the concepts presented during read aloud sessions of their favorite stories. Furthermore, questions begin to arise as exposure to scientific thought causes children to ponder the origin, direction, function, makeup, or potential of a newly discovered agent. Children's books are increasingly more detailed in their descriptions of plant and animal life as seen in true to life bizarre behaviors and traits presented in a fictional format. Whether it be spiders that eat fish or insects that build homes with air conditioners, trade books provide a concentrated view, exaggerated illustrations, and amazing factual demonstrations of the science found in our natural world (Rop and Rop, 2001). Utilizing this resource to motivate students in elementary science classes may increase the number of science majors in colleges and the number of scientists in our future.

*Using Trade Books to Teach Social Studies.* If there is one subject that generates negative responses from the general population of elementary school students it is social studies, which is typically defined in terms of history or geography. The reasons behind this lack of love are typically traced to some synonym of the word "boring". More than likely it is the method or style of presentation that causes young children to turn a deaf ear. Palmer and Burroughs (2002) discussed the role of children's literature in the teaching of social studies and suggested

modifying the format of instruction by using picture books to introduce a specific topic.

Additionally, these authors reported that interest level of students is piqued, learning the material becomes less of a struggle and retention of information is increased. The use of trade books as an instructional tool in social studies can ignite a spark in young readers that may encourage them to delve into the textbook in search of more detailed information.

Specific examples are provided for a social studies unit on the Civil War. Palmer and Burroughs (2002) outlined the use of designated trade books to introduce the concept of slavery, the Underground Railroad, and the conflict within a nation that now seems too horrid to imagine. Picture books bring the stories alive and help students to see that the characters are representative of real people. Vocabulary is introduced within the natural context of a story and concepts are unfolded in a manner that elicits understanding. One such book, *The Strength of These Arms*, by Raymond Bial (1997), compares the lives of the plantation owners with those of the slaves working on the plantation. Children see the degradation of a group of people that inspires them to follow their path to freedom. While they probably know that all of the slaves were eventually freed, the unfolding of events will be discovered as instruction transfers back to the social studies textbook. Even then, references made back to the trade book provide motivation for students to attend and make connections that can only be described as learning.

After conducting studies with students for the purpose of developing interest in an unpopular subject, previous research supports the integration of children's literature with social studies. Roser and Keehn (2002) served as instructors and observers in two fourth-grade classrooms for 6 weeks. Specifically, they were researching the communication skills and acquisition of knowledge among students as they studied the Texas Revolution using children's literature as the primary instructional tool. Students read and discussed biographies, historical



fiction, and a variety of picture books. This study's results of the literature based instruction produced favorable comments from both teachers and students. After the six week unit ended, students were still electing to read trade books that related to Texas history. The learning that began through literature, continued long after the teaching was routed to another topic. Language skills were also seen to improve during this unit as exchanges between students provided opportunities for journaling, analyzing thoughts of others, investigating specific topics of interest, and building of conversational abilities, all within the social studies unit (Roser and Keehn).

### *Using Trade Books to Teach Writing*

Perhaps one of the more obvious portals for integrating children's literature is that of writing. As educators seek to identify motivators that will inspire children into creative writing, it seems only common sense that literature would provide a window into a world of possibilities. Indeed, McElveen and Dierking (2000) found that children's books provide precise examples of target skills that are addressed in writing instruction. Not only are the conventions of writing modeled in a context that is of interest to the student, but the use of rich language, elaboration, focus and organization of expressed thoughts can be easily siphoned from the pages of a trade book. The importance of word choice can be uncovered as a group of students discuss the depth of meaning conveyed through alliteration, metaphors, or personification within the text of a favorite story. McElveen and Dierking believed that students emulate these skills once their value has been heralded. Additionally, these authors felt that children who relate to topics or characters in picture books will discover a theme for their writing as they confirm their own experiences to be worthy of writing about. This benefit may far outweigh others as getting started, or deciding what to write about, is often the biggest hurdle for young children.

The importance of literacy, in general, has been highlighted in all areas of education in recent days. Research by Timothy G. Weih (2005) provided a close look at the influence of children's literature on student writing. Weih's findings included confirmation that the features found within the text of trade books are also seen in the original writings of students. Evidence is also documented that the influence of particular types of books can be directly identified in students' writing. The use of writing traits from stories was easily traced, even without the parallel being suggested in the writing assignment. Suggestions were made for a more deliberate approach that involves encouraging students to link their reading to their writing, which removes some of the intimidation presented by a blank page (Weih, 2005).

To summarize previously documented research regarding the integration of children's literature with academic subjects, the educational benefits of such practices are clear. Students' interest and motivation are increased. Learning occurs more naturally, producing greater levels of retention. Transfer and application of knowledge results from the use of children's literature in the teaching of any subject, as concepts are presented in a meaningful format. In short, the use of trade books as a teaching resource provides students with an opportunity to acquire skills without the mundane ritual of drill and practice, memorization, or teaching of concepts in isolation.

### *The Importance of Character Education*

The teaching of morals and ethics is a subject that has received increased attention in public schools over the past twenty years. Specifically referred to as character education, this practice incorporates deliberate instruction of desired traits, including but not limited to responsibility, respect, perseverance, self-control, fairness, caring, and citizenship. The absence of these traits results in young people who are irresponsible, disrespectful, selfish and without desire or motivation to change. Rayburn (2004) stated that school counselors are trained to help

students solve their own problems and suggested that they are also best suited for the teaching of moral behavior. School counselors are expected to provide support and guidance to students who struggle in school due to poor attitudes and unacceptable behaviors, which can be related to lack of character. Similarly, it is the school counselor who implements the character education program and seeks methodology that will produce the most life applicable view of moral behavior.

According to Muscott and O'Brien (1999), curriculum materials designed to enhance character education began to appear in heightened numbers during the 1990's. These materials were designed to address immoral behaviors of children and adolescents. Some state regulations began to require character education, with many states adopting specific curriculums. Support came from the government in the form of financial assistance, national coalitions, and even a statement from the President of the United States challenging all schools to teach character education (Muscott and O'Brien). As a result of the importance placed on the teaching of morals in schools, policies and mandates now require a deliberate effort to do so. Unfortunately, there is little accountability and no universally accepted assessment tool to help determine the effectiveness of any such program or curriculum. Additionally, Muscott and O'Brien suggest there are few guidelines that specify how morality training is to be conducted. The only common determination contends that student behavior reflects moral decline.

Rather than focusing on corrective behavior training, Rayburn (2004) believed that preventive training could help in the fight of moral decay. Undesirable behaviors may decrease, or never occur, if students are provided with intentional instruction regarding how and why to avoid such behaviors. Britzman (2005) reported that 43% of the high school students surveyed believed that lying or cheating was necessary in order to get ahead in life. The same survey



revealed that 38% had stolen from a store within the past year and 74% had cheated on a test. Morality relates to the judgment of behaviors as right or wrong. The data provided by Britzman suggest that the students in the survey are representative of the moral decay depicted by Rayburn, yet there remains some question as to the actual defining of specific values and morals.

The morals of society must be carefully scrutinized and school counselors must guard against portraying personal values to students. Sensitivity to cultural differences is critical in order to maintain respect and rapport in a counseling relationship (Britzman, 2005). However, with cultural sensitivity comes limitations for counselors in that they may have to be tolerant of behaviors falling outside of their personal definition of moral behavior. An example of this might be an Asian parent who disciplines their child by hitting the palms of the hands with a flat stick. While some may consider this unacceptable, others may consider it part of their culture. Ethical codes for school counselors can help guide judgment in some instances.

While some may argue that young children cannot comprehend the depth of an abstract concept such as moral integrity, Nobes and Pawson (2003) investigated the perceptions of morals as compared to conventions in 129 elementary school students. These researchers' findings provided evidence that conventions were viewed as pliable, due to the fact that rules may change depending on the authority figure or setting. Running in church provides an avenue to test the definition of conventions. While running to find a seat in church might not be acceptable, running down a hallway to a gym or class within the church building may be considered less of an infraction. Particular churches have varying degrees of acceptance, depending on the event attended or the adult authority figure. In contrast, morals were perceived by the children as unchangeable and permanently set, in that they had no choice but to abide at all times. Stealing

would be considered a moral standard in the eyes of the children from the study, because it is always wrong, in any setting or situation.

The development of a moral compass is the primary objective of a good character education program. As stated by Muscott and O'Brien (1999), a child with good moral character will be more productive in work and more capable of love. Increased work ethic and a concept of caring for others are strong goals for character education. Providing skills for developing interpersonal relationships can also be accomplished through character education. While moral deficit can be seen throughout society, it is the children who enter our school systems without acceptable societal standards that have the potential to be influenced by deliberate teaching of right and wrong. Even then, the skills must be modeled, or lived, within the context of the school setting to be most effective, which may require the support of administration, faculty, and parents (Muscott & O'Brien).

An opposing view is presented by Richard Pring (2001) who stated that programs intending to teach morals to children within the school environment are separated from their natural context and therefore do not make sense to children. Furthermore, teaching itself is depicted as an activity in moral judgment, as the instructor has the responsibility of deciding specifically what to teach and how. It is suggested that character education cannot be accomplished in isolation, but is more of an acquired understanding that can only result from gradual exposure throughout a lifetime. Pring continued with the idea that as children discover the value of knowledge, they will begin to value the specifics of language, writing, math, citizenship, perseverance and so on. There is no distinction made between the developing of moral concepts and academic concepts. For this reason Pring's study reflects the necessity of incorporating character education into the existing curriculum.

*Integrating Children's Literature with Character Education*

Given the recognized value of children's literature as a tool for teaching academic subjects and the importance currently awarded to character education, a marriage between the two seems only logical. Bryan (2005) presented a view of children's literature stemming from the use of fairy tales, which have been around for hundreds of years. Due to the influx of high quality trade books, the reading of fairy tales is not as common with students of today as in previous generations. Bryan feels that there is no coincidence between the decline in the use of fairy tales and an increase in the amount of immoral behaviors among children. Although these stories may present unusual and unnatural dilemmas for young children, they also present the indubitable triumph of good over evil. Perseverance pays off. Kindness is rewarded. Responsibility builds reputation. Respect is reciprocal. Citizenship is everyone's duty. Self-control brings satisfaction. All of these lessons can be learned, through example, in fairy tales.

Other versions of children's literature, specifically trade books, are equally beneficial in communicating concepts that will enhance the moral development of young children. Edgington (2002) stated that literature from every genre can be successfully paired with character education, including fiction, nonfiction, historical fiction, poetry, folktales, and picture books. Hidden in the pages of literature, an educator will not only find opportunities to introduce and reinforce academic subjects, but also discover built-in examples of desirable character traits. By taking advantage of their interest in a story, teachers and school counselors can present ideas in such a way that students may independently discover the benefits of acquiring and using character traits in their daily lives.

Bibliotherapy is closely related to the integration of children's literature with character education in that the same books can be used to guide young children through difficult times,



such as divorce, fear of storms, death of a loved one, or bullying. Many of these topics require the acquisition of character traits to aid in working through the presenting issue. A discussion regarding the use of trade books to help children cope with fears is provided by Nicholson and Pearson (2003). This study points out the importance of choosing books that portray fears with which children can identify and which emphasize the resolution of fear in the story. It is important to note that a child dealing with fear can also benefit from discussions of character traits such as perseverance, goal setting, and self control. Once taught, these skills may not only distract a child from their fear, but also empower them by providing a sense of control over their fearful situation. In this way, the character traits become part of the coping strategy and literature provides the instrumentation for positive change.

While educators have been teaching core values to students for as long as there have been schools in the United States, Edgington (2002) reported that 65% of the teachers surveyed admitted that they do not know how to tackle such a task. The subjective nature of character education causes many to depend on packaged programs, of which there are many to choose. Bryan (2005) complained that most programs designed for character education are only teaching children to abide by the rules, rather than the more desirable goal of developing intrinsic motivation to do the right thing. Students need reasons, examples, and proof that developing character traits will bring them the things they want in life. While not every children's book will provide this support system, many are overt in the presentation of moral issues.

A primary justification for integrating literature with character education is that picture books provide relevance into the lives of children (Edgington, 2002). Hence, knowledge gained from the use of a trade book is likely to be more meaningful to a child than if that same knowledge was acquired through other avenues. Since morality is something that educators hope

students will glean from the use of children's literature, it is important that no opportunity is missed, and that students remain on task. Interest and motivation come naturally when a picture book becomes the focal point of a lesson. The book becomes the hub around which all attention is focused. However, when the reading of the book has ended, the need for a new motivator is born. The problem remains with the specifics of what to do next and how to do it. While a seasoned teacher is more than capable of initiating a dialogue among students and guiding that dialog until students uncover a moral truth, there is far greater potential to be discovered for character building.

Research is plentiful in support of the use of children's literature to teach character education. What is lacking is the logistics of how to get the most out of every lesson. Specifically, teachers and school counselors need follow-up activities correlated with particular book titles that will provide students with additional opportunities to apply moral practices to their own lives. The appendix portion of this document provides a variety of such activities for the purpose of integrating children's literature with character education in the elementary school setting.

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## Appendix

## **“A Friendly Face”**

**Book Title: Leonardo the Terrible Monster**  
**Author: Mo Williams**

**Character Trait: Caring**  
**Target Audience: K-1**

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Materials needed: one precut circle for each student (approximately 5” in diameter), markers or crayons for each student, string for hanging (optional)

*This book shows the value of caring for others over thinking only of yourself. Leonard is a terrible monster, meaning that he is terrible at being a monster. He cannot scare anyone. He decides instead to befriend the boy that he cannot scare. In the end this makes them both feel much better.*

Prior to reading the book, talk about who is afraid of monsters and why. Make references to the movie *Monster, Inc.* and discuss how some of those monsters were funny and even friendly. Make a word web for “monster” on the front board and have students list things that make monsters scary. Next make a word web for “friend” and list things that make a person a good friend.

Read the book. Talk about how Leonardo felt when he could not scare anyone. See how many reasons for being sad the students can remember from Sam’s outburst. Ask the class why they think Leonardo decided to become Sam’s friend. Guide students to see that when Leonardo showed that he cared about Sam, they both felt very different and that the difference was better. Relate what we learn from this book to showing others that we care about them, too! Tell students that sometimes all that other people need to know that we care about them is a friendly face.

Distribute one precut circle for each student. Instruct students to make the scariest face they can to help Leonardo be a better monster. When all have finished, instruct students to make a friendly face on the back to show what happened when Leonardo showed Sam that he cared. Hang these from the ceiling, if possible, so that both sides can be seen.



# **“Be Happy”**

**Book Title: Poor Old Polly**

**Author: June Melser and Joy Cowley**

**Character Trait: Fairness**

**Target Audience: K-1**

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Materials needed: large bag of M&M's or other small candy

Ask students to share what they think fairness means. Ask them if they have ever said, “That’s not fair!”. Introduce and read the book. After the story, ask the class “what did Polly have in the end”? The answer is nothing. Even though she had many different things in the story, she ended up with nothing. Talk about how she may feel that this is not fair.

Allow a brief time for children to share things that have happened to them that were not fair. Tell the class that most of the time, things are not fair and that they will have many, many more things that will happen to them that are not fair. Give some examples of this, such as: you may get into trouble for something that you really did not do, you may have to do your work over if you lose it or don’t follow directions, or you may have to work and not get paid.

Go back to Polly. Discuss what she would have accomplished if she became angry as a result of her losses. Would the goose come back if she cried or kicked and screamed? Can she get back any of the other things that she lost? Relate to unfairness that we have experienced. If we get mad at others or throw a fit, it will not change the situation. Discuss what we can do instead of being upset when something is unfair. Guide the children to discover that the best thing they can do is take a deep breath and say “oh well, that’s not fair but there’s nothing I can do about it....I’ll just have to ..... or I can still be happy that....”. For example if there is only one cookie and 2 kids, you will probably break the cookie. Draw this on the board for them to see. If the cookie breaks unevenly (draw obvious distinction between the two pieces) and you are given the smaller piece, what should you do? It is not fair for you to get the smaller piece, but it is better than no piece at all.

Play a series of mini “games” where the winner gets one M&M. Examples include: see who can jump the highest, stand the stillest, wiggle the most, stand on tip-toes the longest, who has the lightest eyes, longest hair, or cleanest hands...etc. Continue until most have gotten an M& M and plan each “game” to provide different winners each time. Finally form a circle and have students stand holding one hand, palm up, toward the center of the circle. Put one M&M in each hand. See who can hold their arm out straight, with the M&M in their open palm, the longest. Sit down when arm drops or bends. In the end everyone sits down for final discussion.

Some got only 1 M&M, while others got 3 or 4. Is this fair? What should we do about it? If you cry will I give you more? The best thing that you can do is be happy. Have students raise their hands if they had fun playing the games. Tell them that sometimes when things are not fair, you have to find something else to be happy about.

# **“Go For the Goal”**

**Book Title: The Paper Bag Princess**  
**Author: Robert N. Munsch**

**Character Trait: Goal Setting**  
**Target Audience: K-1**

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Begin by reading the entire story aloud to the group. Define a goal as something that you can work to make happen. Lead in a discussion of these questions:

- What was the goal of the princess? (to marry the prince)
- What happened to the prince? (the dragon burned down the castle and took him away)
- Did the princess give up on her goal? (no, she followed the dragon to get him back)
- What can we learn from the princess? (never give up on your goal)
- What are some goals that you have for your life?

Tell the class that we are going to act out this story and they have a chance to be the dragon, the princess or the prince. Begin with the dragon auditions. Students wishing to “try out” will stand in a line. One at a time they will give their best “dragon roar”. Narrow down until one is chosen.

Next, audition for the princess. Again students will stand in a line and one at a time “call” for the dragon to come out of his cave in their best princess voice. (ohhhh Draaaaaagon!) Choose one.

Final auditions will be for the prince. Candidates will stand in a line, while the other class members vote and narrow to one.

Set the scene by designating one table, with the chairs removed, as the dragon’s cave. Whisper instructions to the ‘dragon’ about how to put the prince in the cave and where his path will be when he runs “around the world”.

Retell the story, having the assigned characters act out the events as they are told. The dragon blows his fiery breath on the castle, and flies away with the prince to throw him in the cave (under the table). The princess pretends to knock on the door and calls out to the dragon. The acting princess repeats the words as dictated from the book, while the dragon pretends to fly around the entire world, and burn down a hundred forest fires, before falling asleep at her feet. Encourage cheering from the crowd while the dragon is performing his tricks.

Finally when the prince comes out of the cave, he also repeats his line, as dictated from the book, before the princess skips off to live happily ever after.

Review and discuss what we learn from the princess:

- We must work hard to reach our goals!
- We must not let anything stop us, not even a dragon.

Repeat dramatization with new actors, as time allows. Continue to make reference to setting goals for our life and working to make them happen!



# **“Listen to Learn”**

**Book Title:** Listen Buddy  
**Author:** Helen Lester

**Character Trait:** Responsibility  
**Target Audience:** K-1

Discuss purpose of school as being “to learn”. Let students share things that they have learned about, as well as things that they hope to learn in the future. Have the class discuss the various jobs of the adults in the school and what their responsibility is in regards to learning. The teacher’s responsibility includes making sure that students understand what she is teaching. The principal is responsible for giving the teacher what she needs to teach with, such as books and paper. The custodians are responsible for keeping the school clean and the cafeteria workers are responsible for providing food for the students. If any of those people do not fulfill their responsibility, the students cannot learn.

Ask students to identify what their responsibility is in the learning process. After discussing their responses, tell the class that the most important thing they must do to learn is to be a good listener. It is their responsibility to listen when the teacher is teaching. Listening is the first step to learning, but listening can be difficult if you don’t know how to do it. Introduce the book Listen Buddy, by Helen Lester. Tell the class that Buddy did not know how to listen and it got him into trouble. Read the book, stopping to emphasize points and ask questions.

- “What did Buddy’s father have that was very big?”
- “What did he use his big nose for?” (have kids sniff)
- “What did Buddy’s mother have that was very big?”
- “What did she use her big teeth for?” (have kids chomp)
- “What made the scruffy varmint angry?”
- “Did Buddy learn to listen? How?”

Buddy learned to listen the hard way, by getting into trouble. After reading the book, tell the students that you are going to teach them a trick that will help them learn to listen. Model pointing your index and middle finger directly toward your eyes and saying “LOOK at the person speaking”. Next, hold both hands at your side parallel to the ground and pat the air twice while saying “STAY STILL”. Finally, model using pointing to your temple with your index finger saying, “THINK about what the person is saying”. Repeat until the class joins in with motions and words. Narrow down to speaking only words in capitals.

Role play by having a student come up to tell you a story. It can be a story about a vacation, movie or favorite pet. Sit still, facing the child, but look all around the room, under chair, etc while she/he is talking. Have kids tell you which step of being a good listener you missed. Practice doing and saying all three steps again. Repeat with another child telling you a story. This time look at the storyteller, but fidget in an exaggerated fashion while he is speaking (cross/uncross legs, stretch arms, cross/uncross arms, twist in seat, etc . . .) Have class tell you what you did wrong. Continue using different children as long as interest holds or time allows. Conclude with class standing to recite in unison, with hand motions, the steps to being a good listener: “LOOK - STAY STILL - THINK”

Remind students that their responsibility in learning is to be a good listener.



# “Practice, Practice, Practice!”

Book Title: Leo the Lightning Bug  
Author: Eric Drachman

Character Trait: Perseverance  
Target Audience: K-1

Introduce the word “perseverance” by writing it on the board. Let students help count how many letters are in this word. Explain that it means to keep trying when something is very difficult and you want to quit. Provide examples, such as learning to ride a bike or tie your shoes. While these things are very hard to learn, everyone is happy when they are finally able to do them. Introduce the book by saying that our story for today will help us to learn about our new very big word: perseverance.

This book comes with an audio CD, which provides auditory dramatization of the story. If available, this CD should be used to enhance the listening experience for the students. Otherwise, the story can be read aloud by the instructor.

*The story line follows the main character, Leo, as he strives to fulfill his purpose in life. He is the smallest of all the lightning bugs and the only one who has not been able to make a light. His mother tells him that with time and practice, she is sure he will make a beautiful light like the others. The majority of the story follows Leo through his practice and moments of frustration when the others are laughing at him. In the end, it is a lightning storm that inspires Leo's very own light to spark. Everyone is so proud of Leo and he learns the value of not giving up!*

After the reading of this story, allow students to share something that they are trying to learn how to do, or something that they would like to learn how to do, that is very, very, hard for them. Talk about the lesson that Leo learned and how he kept on trying, even when others laughed and he had to cry. Ask students to share what they did when something was too hard. Teach the class the words to the song below, to be sung to the tune of “Old MacDonald”.

*I can do it if I try - Practice, practice, practice!  
I'll keep trying, I won't cry - Practice, practice, practice!*

*I'll learn my letters  
Read my words  
write my name  
and do my work!*

*I can do it if I try - Practice, practice, practice!  
I'll keep trying, I won't cry - Practice, practice, practice!*

Refer back to the students who shared something that was very, very, hard for them. Ask if they would like for us to sing our song to help them out. Repeat for all that are willing or as time allows.

Remind students of our very big word: perseverance. Check to see if they know what it means.

# “Permanent Markers”

**Book Title: Purple, Green and Yellow**  
**Author: Robert Munsch**

**Character Trait: Self-Control**  
**Target Audience: K-1**

Materials needed: at least 10 permanent markers

Begin by introducing the character trait of “self-control” and allowing students to elaborate on what this means to them. Assign the task of watching for times in the story when the main character had good self control and times when she lost her self control.

*This is a story about a little girl named Brigid who, through a series of trust building exercises, convinces her mother to let her use permanent markers to draw pictures. In the beginning Brigid is very responsible and therefore has no problems. However, in time she begins to experiment by coloring on one fingernail with her markers. She thinks this is so pretty, that she colors all of her fingernails and part of her hands. Eventually she colors her face, bellybutton and almost her entire body. Since the markers were permanent and will not wash off, her mother calls the doctor to give her a pill, which only makes her invisible. Though a series of problem solving strategies, Brigid fixes her problem, sort of.*

Discuss the story with the students by having them retell the story with you, in sequential order, identifying the steps that Brigid went through causing her to get herself into such a mess. Stop several times to ask the students “was Brigid showing self-control?” Do this at the beginning of the story also, when they will have a chance to answer “yes”, and more frequently as the story goes on when they will have to answer “no” every time. See if the students can find the specific time when Brigid first lost her self control.

After summarizing the importance of self-control, as seen in this story, ask the students if they think they have more self-control than Brigid. Tell them that they have a chance to prove it or to test themselves. Model how to draw a very small, very simple smiley face on the board or overhead. This smiley face is made only by drawing two dots and a smile. Point out that there is no nose, no ears, no hair, etc... Have students repeat several times: “dot, dot, smile”. Now model using a permanent marker to draw the smiley face on the tip of your index finger.

Remind students that they are being tested to see if they have more self control than Brigid. Remind them also that they are only allowed to draw a “dot, dot, smile” on the very tip of one finger. Pass out markers. You will only need 5 or 6, as students can pass them around when they finish. Tell them not to touch their smiley, but to blow it until dry.

Have a self-control check. If everyone passed, repeat by drawing another smiley face on the opposite finger and blow until dry. Take up markers. Model having the two “faces” talk to each other, as in finger puppets, about how proud they are that they were able to show self-control!



# “Strength in Numbers”

**Book Title:** Rooster Can't Cock-a-Doodle-Do  
**Author:** Karen Rostoker-Gruber

**Character Trait:** Cooperation  
**Target Audience:** K-1

**Materials Needed:** white butcher paper approximately 12 feet long, assorted art materials (watercolors, chalk, paint, glitter, markers, stickers, crayons, rubber stamps, etc...)  
**Advance Preparation:** print the word “cooperation” in huge bubble letters (2 feet tall) on butcher paper; provide art materials in containers to be used by groups of 2 or 3 students

*This story tells of a rooster with a sore throat. The presenting problem involves the fact that the farmer is not waking up because of the roosters inability to “cock-a-doodle-doo” and therefore the other animals are not having their needs met. Since everyone is suffering, the animals decide to work together to wake the farmer. An amazing display of cooperation follows as they form a pyramid that reaches to the farmer’s window. Even after the farmer begins his chores, the animals realize that he is too late and will need help to finish by sunset. Again the animals work together to shear the sheep, milk the cows, slop the pigs and gather the eggs. In the end, the rooster thanks his friends for their help, and they all go to sleep after a hard day’s work.*

Prior to reading the book, discuss with students how a big job that seems impossible can be done easily when everyone works together. Have the class to brainstorm and list examples of this. Guide students to discover that the word for “everyone working together” is cooperation. Talk about the full meaning of this word, adding to the definition the idea that everyone must be getting along without arguing or bossing each other. Read the book. Ask the class to tell you again what cooperation means, allowing them to add as many examples as they can think of.

Display butcher paper with the word cooperation outlined on it. Ask students if there is one of them that would like to color in all eleven letters to make a banner for the classroom. How long would that take? Could one person do a really good job on such a large task? What would be a better way to get the job done? Pair students with someone that they might not choose for themselves and remind the class that cooperation means getting along and working together. Pass out art materials, with additional reminders about our goal of no arguing or complaining. Continually cheer the workers on as they decorate the letters with polka dots, stripes, bright colors, or original designs. The partners must use the material given to them and agree on the method or style of the decoration before beginning. Since each pair will only have one letter to work on, they must be careful to make their letter the best that it can be.

Hang the banner in a prominent place in the class as a reminder that cooperation allows us to do great things that we could not do alone.



# “Thumbs Up”

Book Title: The King of the Pond  
Author: Carl Somner

Character Trait: Respect  
Target Audience: K-1

Lead class discussion of the difference between a good attitude and a bad attitude. Have students show a “thumbs up” for a good attitude and a “thumbs down” for a bad attitude. Provide several examples for students to rate as good/bad attitude. Read the following examples and add to them as interest holds.

“Austin’s teacher tells him that his number 7 is backwards on his paper and he has to try again to write it correctly. He gets angry and throws his pencil down.”

“Julie’s teacher tells her that her number 4 is backwards on her paper and she has to try again to write it correctly. She erases the number, looks at the calendar to see how a 4 looks, and then writes it again.”

“Christina is counting blocks when she decides that she wants to use the beads to count with. Allen already has the beads. This makes Christina angry, so she whines to the teacher that Allen always gets the beads and she wants them now.”

“Teena wants to use the counting bears to make a pattern, but Becca already has them. Teena asks Becca if she can share the bears or if she wants to work together to make a bigger pattern.”

Read “The King of the Pond” by Carl Somner, stopping periodically to show a “thumbs up or down” for Tombo’s attitude. When finished, list things that Tombo did in the beginning that showed a bad attitude: he was bossy, mean to others, and thought he was better than any of the other tadpoles.

Why did Tombo’s attitude change? How did he feel about the way he had treated others?  
Is a good attitude important for us to have at school? Why?

Tell the class that the most important thing we can do to get ready for class is to make sure we have a good attitude. This means being ready to learn, ready to work hard and do our very best. It also means to think about how other people feel and not just think about ourselves.

Practice with more “thumbs up” and “thumbs down” exercises:

- Bobby wants to be first in line
- Angelee is angry at Rachel and breaks her pencil tip off
- Caden laughs when the teacher says Michael’s paper is messy
- Morgan helps Tia tie her shoes, even though it makes them the last to get in line
- George only shakes his head when the others are making fun of Tim on the playground
- Adrian calls Chelsea “fatty” when she can’t fit into the little chair
- Jesse says “don’t list to him” when Adrian calls Chelsea “fatty”.

# **“What Can You Do?”**

**Book Title: The Little Engine That Could**  
**Author: Watty Piper**

**Character Trait: Citizenship**  
**Target Audience: K-1**

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Materials needed: 9x11 drawing paper and crayons for each student; pre-made train engine and caboose only slightly larger than drawing paper.

*This classic children's story tells of a brave little engine that pulls a train full of toys and good things to eat over the mountain where good little boys and girls are waiting. There are many other engines that pass by without helping the broken down train. Most of them have an excuse for not stopping, but the excuses only prove that they care for no one but themselves.*

Begin by telling the class that they are all citizens and that means they belong to a group. We are citizens of the United States, citizens of Tennessee, and citizens of our county. Finally, talk about how we are citizens of our school and even of our classroom. As citizens, we should care about our group and the other people in our group. Citizenship means that we work together to make our group the best it can be. Talk about how some people only think of themselves, but it is important for us to help other people any time we can. Display book and instruct students to find the good citizen in the story.

Read the book, stopping to discuss examples of both good and bad citizenship as the situations are presented in the story. When the story ends, lead in a discussion of the following questions: “Which character in this story showed the most responsibility? How did the children on the other side of the mountain benefit from this character? What important role did the clown play? How were the dolls and toys good citizens?”

Pass out one sheet of drawing paper to each student. Instruct them to draw a picture showing something that they can do to be a good citizen in the classroom. Students may also dictate responses for teacher to write beneath their drawing. Some students may write their own words.

Display student papers in a line on a long wall, such as in the hallway, with a train engine at the front and a caboose at the back. Include a banner or title announcing the arrival of the “Citizenship Train”.



# **“Chain Reaction”**

**Book Title:** That's What Friends Are For  
**Author:** Florence Parry Heide & Sylvia Van Clief

**Character Trait:** Caring  
**Target Audience:** 2-3

Materials needed: Prepare ahead of time: paper chain of connecting people figures to be cut by students (1 per child)

This lesson is well suited for the beginning of the school year.

Begin discussion of the importance of friendship. Talk about the class and how they will be together for an entire year. Even though everyone may not like everyone else, they can still be friends and help each other out. Begin with all students standing in a circle, holding hands. Pick a starting place and have the first person squeeze the hand to their left. That person, in turn does the same, and so on. Students will invariably watch the circle of hands to see where the squeezing is taking place. When the first person is reached, stop the game and gather for reading of the story.

Explain to the class that we have just participated in a chain reaction, meaning that one thing caused another, and another, and another, until everyone had been touched. In friendship, the person that you choose to help may not help you in return, but they may help someone else, which causes a chain reaction.

Read the book and discuss with students what the book had to teach us. Ask students to identify the main idea of this story. (We should always try to help a friend. Even if we are not able to provide what they need, we have proven our friendship.)

Have students list ways they can help and support each other this year. Record responses on the board.

Make a point of telling students that there will always be someone from another class who is rude or unfriendly, who makes fun or mistreats others. Within our class, it is important to support each other, stand up for each other, help each other and work together. Remind students that there will be times when each of them will need a friend and the best way to have a friend is to be a friend.

Model for students how to fold papers and cut along outside edges to create a paper chain of connected people. Have students cut out their chain of people figures and write on each one something that they are willing to do to help a friend in their class this year.



# "Cheaters Never Win"

Book Title: The Empty Pot  
Author: Demi

Character Trait: Honesty  
Target Audience: 2-3

Materials needed:

One per student: single sheets, folded in half, with the following problems printed on the front:

1. How many white stripes are on the American flag? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Who is on a five dollar bill? \_\_\_\_\_
3. If 3 boys ate 2 apples each and one boy ate 3 apples, how many apples did they eat? \_\_\_\_\_

Print the following answers on the inside of each folded sheet:

1. 7
2. Ben Franklin
3. 8

To begin this lesson, read these instructions aloud carefully and exactly:

"I am going to pass out a paper to each of you. There are 3 questions for you to answer. Write your answers on the front of the paper, beside each question. There are answers printed inside, so do not open the papers. We will discuss the questions when everyone is finished and then we can look inside together. Again, when you get your paper, read the questions, write the answers on the front beside the questions, and do not look on the inside. You may begin when you get your paper."

After all are finished, read the questions and give the correct answers, (6, Abraham Lincoln, 9). Ask students to look inside the folded paper and find the answers printed there. Point out that in the beginning you said there were "answers printed inside", but that you did not say they were correct answers. If anyone peeked inside, they were cheating, and cheating does not always get you what you want. Remind students of this as you lead in a discussion of what cheating will get you. Collect and destroy all papers used in this activity.

Read "The Empty Pot".

*This book tells the tale of an Emperor who seeks to find a successor to his throne. Because of his love for flowers, he uses a flower-growing contest to help him in his task. He gives a flower seed to all of the children who wish to be Emperor, with instructions for them to spend one year growing their flower. At the end of the year, the children are to return and the Emperor will make his choice.*

*Ping is the boy who grows the most beautiful plants in all of the land, but from the seed given to him by the Emperor, he grows nothing. In spite of Ping's efforts to provide the very best of growing conditions for his seed, at the end of a year his pot is empty. Ping is ashamed for the Emperor to see his empty pot since many other children present huge flowers. After carefully examining all of the flowers, the empty pot draws the attention of all when Ping is chosen to be the next Emperor. What the children did not know was that the seeds given to them by the Emperor had been boiled and were therefore unable to bring forth flowers. All of children that produced beautiful flowers had cheated in the contest. Only Ping, who had grown no flower, proved that he was honest, and thereby worthy of becoming Emperor.*

Close by reciting the title of the lesson: "Cheaters Never Win".

# **“Don’t Be a Wolf”**

**Book Title: Badness for Beginners**  
**Author: Ian Whybrow**

**Character Trait: Citizenship**  
**Target Audience: 2-3**

Materials needed: chalkboard or overhead for group writing activity

*Mom and Dad Wolf work very hard to teach their children to be big and bad in this book chocked full of non-examples for students. Going out to dinner becomes a fiasco as the two wolf cubs exercise extreme rudeness in public, as well as cause hazardous injuries to both of their parents. Still the wolf family prides itself on being disrespectful to others and working to make the world around them a dangerous place for all.*

Read the book straight through then start back at the beginning for a class discussion of each page. Between the two reads define citizenship within the context of this story. Discuss things that good citizens do such as pick up trash, help others in need, and correct dangerous situations before someone gets hurt. During the discussion and review of the book, have students identify more appropriate behaviors for the wolf family in each scene.

Draw a word web on one side of the board or overhead for the “Wolf Family.” Have students provide examples of behaviors that we might expect from them in various situations, such as school or at the movies. Possibilities are limitless so encourage students to be creative in their responses.

Draw another word web on the opposite side of the board or overhead for “Our Class”. Again have students provide examples of behaviors that are expected from this group. Make comparisons between the two groups when possible.

Wrap up by reviewing the book and looking for any behavior in the wolf family that would be acceptable at our school. This would include praise from the parents when their cubs do what is expected and failure to be ‘bad’ from Little Wolf in a couple of incidences. Challenge students to do everything they can to be the opposite of the Wolf Family!

# **“Don’t Bite the Hook”**

**Book Title: Simon’s Hook**  
**Author: Karen Gedig Burnett**

**Character Trait: Respect**  
**Target Audience: 2-3**

*This book provides the telling of a story within a story, as Grandma Rose attempts to help Simon deal with teasing from his peers. She relates what she calls a “fish story” about some fish who get “caught” when they “bite the hook”. “The hook” is symbolic of teasing and “biting” represents certain reactions to the teasing. The fish story is told in cartoon format, complete with bubble conversations. It is important to read all of the cartoon bubbles and discuss each scenario presented by the fish. Because of this added element in the reading, this book is a lengthy read, but one that holds the attention of children.*

After reading the book, check for understanding of the symbolism by asking these questions:

- What does the hook represent?
- What does “don’t bite the hook” mean?
- How does a fish get caught?
- Why did the fishermen go to another place to fish?

Review and have students list the 5 things to do when someone “throws a hook”.

- 1- Ignore the hook
- 2- Agree with the hook (don’t argue)
- 3- Distract the fisherman (change the subject)
- 4- Laugh or make a joke
- 5- Stay away from the hooks (swim in another part of the sea)

As time allows, have individual students role play with these 5 methods of dealing with teasing. Use a puppet to “throw the hooks” and have students respond with the method that is assigned to them. Use volunteers only, and make sure everyone knows that we are just practicing what we learned. Audience members are assigned with the task of identifying which method was used to keep from biting the hook.

Remind everyone that it is ALSO important not to throw hooks at others. This means that we should be careful not to tease or put down others.



# "Don't Bug Me"

**Book Title:** Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears  
**Author:** Verna Aardema

**Character Trait:** Responsibility  
**Target Audience:** 2-3

**Materials Needed:** Play-doh that has been rolled into 2" balls – one per student

*This African Tale traces the fate of a mosquito and his annoying behaviors. The story begins with the mosquito telling a "big lie" to the iguana, who cannot bear to listen, so he plugs his ears with sticks. Not only can he no longer hear the mosquito, but neither can he hear his friend, the python, when he speaks a cheery "good morning". Because his greeting is not returned, the python becomes fearful that the iguana is upset with him and scurries into a hole to hide. The hole happens to be home to the rabbit family. Panic takes over and spreads to other jungle animals until a baby owl is killed in the ruckus. Mother owl is so saddened that she cannot bear to wake the sun and the night continues for far too long. The lion calls a meeting of the jungle council to investigate the cause of the endless night. In the end, it is the mosquito that is found to be responsible for the sorrow of all. Specifically, it is uncovered that his annoying behavior sparked a chain of events which led to the endless night.*

Read the book and discuss what the mosquito did to cause so much trouble. While he was intentionally trying to "bug" the iguana, he did not realize that his behavior would affect so many others.

Provide each student with a ball of play-doh and instruct them to create a small bug. While they work, talk about things that other people do that "bugs" us. Make sure that no names are given, just behaviors. Try to focus on annoying behaviors that occur in the classroom. Record student responses on the front board or overhead for all to see. After 3 or 4 minutes, have students hold their bug in the palm of their hand and stop playing with the play-doh.

Take a minute to look at all of the bugs and comment on how they are alike and different. Refer to the list of annoying behaviors that the class gave and ask students if they have ever done any of these things. Select one behavior that is common for many, such as "blowing in my face". Talk about what it would be like if we could end that one specific behavior – permanently – in the classroom. Since we now know what "bugs" each other, and since we have seen what happened when the mosquito intentionally tried to "bug" the iguana, we should all be able to avoid doing the behaviors listed on the board. Suggest that it is our responsibility to try to get along with others and not intentionally do things that we know "bugs" someone else.

Tell the class that we are going to "squash" the bugs so that no one will purposely "bug" anyone else. Allow the play-doh bugs to represent this squashing as the bugs are transformed back into smooth balls. Remind students periodically to "squash the bugs" as annoying behaviors begin to surface.

## **“Funny Versus Fair”**

**Book Title: Don't Laugh at Me**  
**Author: Steve Seskin & Allen Shamblin**

**Character Trait: Fairness**  
**Target Audience: 2-3**

Ask students to share what they know about bullying. Accept all responses and allow some discussion. Ask how they think bullies choose whom they are going to pick on. Discuss the fact that anyone could be bullied for some reason or another. Give examples as too short, too tall, too fat, too thin, eyes, nose or ears too big or too small, too rich, too poor, kind of clothes or shoes you wear, etc. Basically define “bullying” as doing anything to make another person feel bad about themselves.

Ask how it feels to have someone laugh at you. Allow time for all who want to respond. Have students raise their hand if they have every laughed at someone else. Ask students, “Why do you think we laugh at others, when we know that it makes them feel bad?” “Is there anything FAIR about this type of behavior?”

Begin reading Don't Laugh At Me, by Steve Seskin & Allen Shamblin. Stop with each page to discuss how the character feels. Next, have the class pretend that they are that person and work together to list some things that we would WANT someone to say to us if we were that person. For example: If we came to school tomorrow wearing new glasses, what would we want someone to say to us? Continue in this pattern for each page of the book. Encourage responses that do not involve a compliment about how they look, such as, “I bet you're glad you can see better now that you have glasses”, instead of “Your glasses look so cute”. Also remind students to be sincere in their statements.

Ask the class: “What is it that people really want, when they feel that they are different from others?”. Make a visual reference to the front of book for desired response of “Don't Laugh at Me”. Consider fair treatment of others as being the way you would like to be treated if you were in their situation.

Tell students to listen for one key phrase that they think is most important, besides the title, as you play the CD of the song, which accompanies the text. Flip through the pages as the song plays. Allow for discussion at the end.

Restate this phrase from the song and book: “don't get your pleasure from my pain”. Encourage discussion of what this means and how we can make FAIRNESS our goal.



# "I Wish For You"

Book Title: **Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse**  
Author: **Leo Lionni**

Character Trait: **Caring**  
Target Audience: **2-3**

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## Materials Needed:

Chalkboard or Marker Board to record student responses  
Pre-cut star shapes, 4-6 inches, one per student (light colored paper)  
Markers  
Plain paper and pencils

*This book shows the sacrificial love of a true friendship. Alexander is a "real" mouse who is friends with a toy mouse. When he is granted one wish, Alexander gives up his own desires and makes a wish for his friend to become real. In the end, both benefit from the granted wish as their friendship discovers new possibilities and adventures.*

After reading this book, allow the students to provide feedback on what Alexander did for his friend. Brainstorm to list other things that he could have wished for. Write student responses on a huge cloud shape drawn on the board. Discuss how these things would have benefited Alexander and compare with the benefits he received from the wish he actually made. Allow students to vote on whether or not Alexander's wish was a good choice. Point out that even though the wish was for someone else, it ended up being good for him too!

Provide some think time for students to decide upon a wish that they would make for another person. Recipients may be family members, friends, or classmates. Instruct students to practice writing their wish on plain paper for editing. Monitor and provide help as needed. Provide cut out star shapes for transfer of wish using brightly colored markers. The final wish should include the name of the person receiving the wish, as well as the person making the wish. Examples below:

"I wish Carlee could have a puppy for her birthday." Becky

"I wish my brother's team would win the championship game." Daniel

"I wish Mrs. Thomas would not be sick anymore." Ryan

Encourage students to make wishes that they know the person would make for themselves and not wishes that are selfish. Post stars on a bulletin board entitled "I Wish For You." Remind students that we show that we care about others when we think of others before we think of ourselves. Discuss why caring for others is so important.



## “Painted Feelings”

**Book Title:** Angry Dragon  
**Author:** Thierry Robberecht

**Character Trait:** Self-Control  
**Target Audience:** 2-3

Materials needed: one set of watercolor paint set for every two students, baby food jars or cups of water, white drawing paper.

*This book shows the love and support of parents when a little boy becomes very angry. There is also a visual image depicted of what anger looks like from inside the boy, including his thoughts and feelings. The anger begins when the boy's mother tells him “no”. He becomes so angry that he feels himself turn into a dragon, complete with fiery breath and sharp teeth. There is nothing that the dragon wants. All of the usual things that the boy loves, the dragon hates. He cannot be comforted by his stuffed animals or any of his toys. He cannot feel the touch of his mom or understand what his parents are saying, because dragons do not understand people language. Finally the boy's tears put out the dragon's fire and he finds his parents waiting for him.*

Read this book through and then discuss what happened to the boy. Guide students to talk about how the boy felt when he was a dragon. Why did he become a dragon? Ask students if they have ever been so angry that they felt like a dragon. Why do some things only make us a little bit mad when other things make us dragon mad? Tell the class that when we feel dragon mad, there are two important things we must remember. First, we must not hurt ourselves. Second, we must not hurt others. Next, ask the students to name some things that we can do to get our anger out without doing these two things. Allow for ample discussion time and monitor to make sure students understand appropriate responses and inappropriate responses.

Provide drawing paper for each student and a watercolor paint set for every two students to share. Instruct the class to only paint designs in colors that represent the angry dragon on the left side of the paper and the peaceful boy on the right side of the paper. Explain that the designs will not necessarily be pictures, but wiggly lines, a series of shapes, or blended colors, for the purpose of representing a feeling. Before they begin, encourage students to spend time thinking about what type of design and what colors would be best on each side.

When all are finished and paintings are drying, read the book again. Allow students to share their thoughts about this activity. What colors or designs did they choose for anger? Encourage explanations of their choices. Remind students that there is no correct answer to this question.

In closing, review the two things that we must not do when we feel dragon mad. We must not hurt ourselves and we must not hurt others.

# **“Team Toss”**

**Book Title:** The Great Fuzz Frenzy  
**Authors:** Janet Stevens & Susan Stevens Crummel

**Character Trait:** Cooperation  
**Target Audience:** 2-3

Materials needed: two yellow tennis balls

*Cooperation is the key to this story as a group of prairie dogs inherit a yellow tennis ball that was dropped into their underground world by a playful puppy. The prairie dogs are unsure what to do with the foreign object until someone discovered that it is covered in fuzz. It is the fuzz that causes a fuss because everyone wants a piece of it. The spirit of cooperation is born when their leader is carried away by an eagle who thinks the fuzz covered creature would make a nice meal. The prairie dogs work together to save him and discover that they are much safer without the fuzz in their world.*

Read the book, taking ample time to share and discuss illustrations. Talk about how the ball was an unexpected treat that turned into a cause for conflict. Guide students to discover that the saving power in the story was the eventual willingness of the prairie dogs to cooperate with each other. Compare this to problems that we have in our classrooms, families, and various teams.

Divide class into two groups and have each group form a circle. The circle should be 15-20 feet in diameter. Designate one person per group as the leader and give this person a tennis ball. All other group members are to raise one hand. The leader then gently tosses the ball to someone who on the other side of the circle. When a person has the ball thrown to him/her, they put their hand down, making it clear to the rest of the group that they have already received the ball. That person then tosses the ball to someone across from them who has their hand up. This procedure continues until all hands are down. Repeat this for the purpose of establishing a pattern. Each person must remember who tossed the ball to him or her and whom they tossed it back to. The exact sequence must be repeated for the remainder of the activity, which eliminates the need to raise hands later. Allow the two teams to race for practice. Once the sequence is well established, the game begins!

Designate a name for each of the two teams and keep score of which teams finishes the tossing sequence first. Stop between each set to discuss various elements of cooperation. It is important to note that anyone is likely to drop the ball, causing a delay in time and possible loss of a point. What is the outcome of becoming angry with this person versus forgiving and encouraging them? What about the person who makes a bad throw? What part does the way we talk to each other play in cooperation? Working together requires eye contact, communication and concentration. What about attitude? Guide students to discover these elements with each passing round. Ultimately, student should be able to see that the more they cooperate and encourage each other, the more points they will score.

Continue play until time runs out or until a preset point limit is reached.



# "Think for Yourself"

Book Title: Epossumondas  
Author: Coleen Salley

Character Trait: Self-Control  
Target Audience: 2-3

Materials needed: two paper sacks, problems & solutions provided on individual slips of paper;

Talk with the class about self control. Discuss what this means in as many different situations as possible. Most students will think of controlling their hands or their bodies or their choice of words. Are there times that we get the wrong directions, even from adults? What should we do then? Suggest that if we think for ourselves, we may be able to solve some of our own problems. Read the book.

*This book teaches that common sense will guide us more in life than simply doing everything that we are told to do. When Epossumondas goes to visit his aunt, she sends presents home with him, but they always seem to arrive in poor condition. When he carries the cake tightly in his hand, his mother tells him he should have carried it on his head to keep it from getting smashed. The next day he carries his gift, butter, on his head as his mother told him. When the butter is melted all down his face, she says he should have cooled it in the water. He remembers this advice the next day when the gift is a puppy. The story continues to show how Epossumondas needs self control in making his own decisions about what would be best in each situation.*

Allow some time for the class to talk about the trouble Epossumondas had. Even though he followed instructions and did what he was told, he never did the right thing. Talk about how other people will sometimes not everything about our problem and therefore may give us some bad advice. Use the problems and solutions printed below to demonstrate how self control is sometimes better than letting others tell us everything to do. Pick a different student each time to select a problem and a solution from the bags. Read them and discuss whether or not the solution was a good one for the problem.

## Problems:

- You left your homework at home.
- You forgot your ice cream money.
- You got mad at your friend and called them a name and now you are sorry.
- You spilled chocolate milk all over your pants at breakfast.
- Your teacher wrote a note to your mom and you don't know what it says.
- You lost your dad's favorite hat when he let you wear it at the ballpark.
- The kid who sits next to you at lunch has bad manners and it he makes you not want to eat.

## Solutions:

- Go to the nurse to see if she has some clothes you can wear or call your mom
- Too bad, so sad...just stick it out and learn from your mistake.
- Tell him that you want to be his friend.
- Spend your recess time doing your homework.
- Ask your teacher if you are in trouble.
- Ask to be moved to another seat.
- Talk to the guidance counselor about your problem.



# **"Wall of Trust"**

**Book Title: The Wolf Who Cried Boy**  
**Author: Bob Hartman**

**Character Trait: Honesty**  
**Target Audience: 2-3**

**Materials Needed:** set of one inch wooden cubes or small blocks

Read the book and relate to the famous story of "The boy who cried wolf". Ask students what we can learn from the book and make a list of responses on the board. Point out that the first "trick" was quickly forgotten, but after awhile, trust was completely gone.

Initiate class discussion of trust and honesty. Ask students to list reasons why it is important to be able to trust someone. What would it be like if no one trusted you? Relate conversation to a workplace environment, such as a bank, garage, or hospital. Why is trust so important for the people who work in these places?

Display a set of building blocks. Tell the students that each block represents something that you can do to make others trust you. Go around the group and have individual students share something that they have done to show they are honest and can be trusted. Each time place a block in the center of the floor. Gradually add blocks to build a wall-type structure.

After the wall is sufficiently built, ask the students what happens when we tell just one lie. For example, if you tell mom that you ate your green beans and she finds them in your napkin in the trash, (remove one block in the middle), what happens to the trust she has in you? (it weakens) What if you promise to wear your coat outside and dad sees you playing in just a t-shirt? (remove another block) What if your mom tells you to pick up your toys and she finds them all stuffed under the bed? (remove block). These are all ways that you can weaken the trust that someone has in you.

Continue with examples until the wall falls down. Discuss how hard it is to build back trust once it is lost. Compare a weak wall with one that has completely fallen. Which one would be easier to repair and why?

Honesty means doing what you say – even when no one is looking. It also means telling the truth, even when it is hard or when it may get you into trouble.

Conclude by telling students to remember the wall falling down to help them think about building trust. If the wall is still standing, but weakened by broken trust, what can you do to make it strong again? As time allows, have students share things that they will do to help build trust with their parents and teachers.

# "Who Are You?"

Book Title: Mouse Count  
Author: Ellen Stoll Walsh

Character Trait: Responsibility  
Target Audience: 2-3

Materials Needed: Prepare ahead of time an information card to include spaces for full name, address, home phone number, cell phone number, parents' names, birth date, and name of school. Provide one blank card per student.

*Within the pages of this story, students will see how a group of mice let down their guard and found themselves caught by a hungry snake. Fortunately, the mice worked together to devise a plan and were able to escape. Read the book, stopping to discuss the predicament of the mice and what they did to cause their own problems.*

After reading the book, lead the class to make a comparison between the mice and themselves. What lesson can we learn from the mice? Accept all responses. Restate the fact that the mice were watching for danger when they first went out to play, but they later fell asleep and were unaware that the snake was coming for them. Compare this with the responsibility we have to be aware of our surroundings at all times. Briefly talk about predators, or people who kidnap children. This could happen at the mall, park, movies, ball field, skating rink, etc... Remind students that it is their responsibility to watch for danger or suspicious looking people wherever they go. If they see someone that makes them feel uncomfortable, they should tell an adult or move to a safe place.

Another responsibility we have is to be able to help ourselves when we are in a dangerous situation. Ask students to raise their hand if they can tell you their complete address. Choose two or three students to recite their address. Repeat for birth date, home phone number, parents' cell phone number, parents' names, and name of our school. Only call on a few students for each question, making sure that everyone has a chance to respond. Briefly discuss reasons why children need to know these things. Examples include situations involving child abduction/kidnapping, getting lost, or being in an accident. Tell the class that knowing their personal information is just one way of being prepared for emergencies and that it is their responsibility to be able to help themselves in this way.

Distribute prepared information cards. Explain that they are to fill it out with their parents and return it tomorrow. It is important for parents to fill out the card so that all of the information is correct and up to date. The goal is for students to keep the card in their desk for two weeks, practicing the information when they have spare time. At the end of two weeks, give out treats for those who have learned their own personal information.

Make a point of telling students that their personal information is private and they are not to share it with anyone unless they are in an emergency situation, such as being lost or in an accident. Take this opportunity to discuss Internet safety and how it is crucial that they not put this information on their computer. Remind students of the snake and the mice. Tell them that many "snakes" trap their "mice" when they get their name, phone number or address off of the Internet.



# "World Records"

Book Title: **Tibby Tried It**  
Author: **Sharon and Ernie Useman**

Character Trait: **Perseverance**  
Target Audience: **2-3**

Materials needed: computer with Internet access or copy of Guinness Book of World Records

Define perseverance as continuing to work towards a goal even though problems get in the way. Ask students if they ever had to work really hard at something, wanted to give up, but kept trying until they made it. Allow for brief share time.

Next, ask students if there is something that they would like to do that they are not very good at, such as ice skating, basketball, or math. Remind the class that every single person is different, and while there is something that everyone can do, there are even more things that we cannot do. Perseverance means don't give up until we find the things that we do well or improve on things that we want to do better.

*Read the book, Tibby Tried It, stopping periodically to discuss how Tibby was never afraid to try new things and he kept going, even when others laughed at him. In the end, although he did not learn to fly, like everyone thought he should, he used the other skills he had learned to do great things.*

Ask the class, "What made Tibby great in the end?" The answer: perseverance, or the fact that he never gave up trying.

Use the computer to access [www.guinnessworldrecords.com](http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com) or use a hard copy of the actual book.

Read age appropriate selections, which demonstrate the trait of perseverance. Avoid entries that might be difficult for the students to comprehend, such as "Highest Paraglider". Read instead entries that kids can relate to, such as "Longest Distance Walking on Hands", which happens to be 870 miles.

Continue as time allows. The interest of students in this topic will surpass the allotted time. After several examples are shared on varying topics, wrap up the discussion by asking students how the record holders were able to do accomplish their goals. It was not because they tried it a few times, but rather because they persevered, or kept trying without giving up! Mention that some of the records have already been broken and that there are people working right now all over the world to beat the current records.

Close the lesson with a reminder that perseverance is the key to success. This is true for ice skating, basketball, math, and any other area of life that we pursue.



# "A Picture of Prejudice"

Book Title: **Smoky Night**  
Author: **Eve Bunting**

Character Trait: **Fairness, Respect**  
Target Audience: **4-5**

Materials: drawing paper and crayons for each child, 4 or 5 small pieces of charcoal, newspaper

Introduce this book by showing a few illustrations and asking students to predict what this story is about. Check for understanding, then define these words: riot, shelter, and prejudice.

*The story line takes the reader to the scene of a riot and eventually a fire. Both are representative of hate crimes. The main character is a boy named Daniel. In the beginning he also harbors ill feelings for a neighbor, but through the events in his own life he sees what prejudice can do and how unfair it is. There are sensitive issues presented here which provide much opportunity for discussion.*

Read the story. Lead in discussion of the following questions:

- What do you think the riot was about?
- What race or ethnic background do you think the rioters were?
- What race or ethnic background do you think Daniel and his mom were?
- What race or ethnic background do you think Mrs. Kim was?
- Compare how Daniel and his mom felt about Mrs. Kim with how the rioters felt.
- Did Daniel and his mom do anything to cause the fire in their apartment?
- What part did prejudice play in this story?
- What did the two cats teach Daniel?
- Is prejudice real today? Give examples.
- Compare prejudice with fairness.

Have students draw a picture of something that is representative of them or their life. This could be their house, family member, a pet, favorite toy, place they like to go, or even a picture of themselves. Set aside an area with 2 or 3 small pieces of charcoal on a piece of newspaper. As the pictures are finished, have students go to that area one or two at a time and let someone else color lightly over their picture with the charcoal. This represents how the prejudice of others can ruin what is important to you, and vice versa.

Form a circle with each person holding their picture for all to see. Discuss how unfair it was for Daniel to lose his things in the fire just because the rioters were prejudice. Compare how he must have felt with how the students feel looking at their own pictures. Encourage students to imagine their life being covered with hatred because of their background or family.

Remind students that all types of people can experience prejudice. Do we treat others unfairly just because we don't like who they are? As human beings, we should treat each other with dignity and respect. Begin a group list of some things that we can do to reduce or eliminate prejudice in our school.

# “Dear Someone”

Book Title: No Fair! Kids Talk About Fairness  
Author: Nancy Loewen

Character Trait: Fairness  
Target Audience: 4-5

Materials needed: blank paper and pencils for each student

*The format of this book is similar to the “Dear Abby” section found in the newspaper. The author poses as a thirteen year old advice columnist who receives letters from kids about the unfairness in their lives. Tina Truly is the penname for the young writer and her advice is right on track for guiding students through the unfortunate events presented in their letters. The young writers express feelings of jealousy, concerns over unfair rules, anger due to preferential treatment of siblings, desperation over the family’s financial woes and even questions regarding Murphy’s Law. Tina Truly provides multi-stepped action plans for surviving injustice. The book ends with a test from Tina to assess the readers’ ability to deal with unfairness.*

Read this book through, allowing for brief discussion at the end of each letter and response. Assign students to write their own “Dear Someone” letter and reference an aspect in their own life that they feel is unfair. Allow ample think time, as well as time to write the letters. Remind students not to sign the letter with their real name, but to end with a title that summarizes their problem, such as “Kid with too much homework” or “Dumped on Dude”.

Mix the letters and pass them back out. Students are to provide a written response to the letter they receive. Remind them to address the letter as it was signed, such as “Dear Kid with too much homework...” Students should never know who wrote which letter or who responded to which letter. After responses are written, take up letters and begin reading each letter, followed by the provided response. Lead in a class discussion of the letter, as well as a critique of the response. This part of the activity may be done on a separate day to enhance interest or help with time constraints.



# "Make Right Your Wrongs"

Book Title: A Day's Work  
Author: Eve Bunting

Character Trait: Responsibility  
Target Audience: 4-5

Materials needed: 1 bottle of liquid paper, 1 large eraser, masking or duct tape, 1 bottle of glue.

*In this story, a young boy helps his grandfather work all day long in the hot sun. When the boss returns to pay the old man, he finds that the workers did the opposite of what he wanted and the entire job was ruined. When he grandfather learns of his mistake, he offers to work again the next day, without pay, to correct his mistake. The young boy learns a valuable lesson about taking responsibility for your actions by admitting when you have done wrong and doing something to make it right again. There is a bonus lesson in this story about honesty, as it is a lie told by the boy that causes the misunderstanding regarding how the job was to be done.*

Read the book and lead students in a discussion of what the boy learned from his grandfather. Allow students to share stories of a time when they did something wrong and then tried to make it right again.

Display materials listed above one at a time and have students tell how each can be used to correct a problem or mistake. Divide class into four groups, giving each group one of the four items. Each group is to talk among themselves to create a problem that can be fixed with their item. Encourage them to make their pretend problem as big as possible. Each group will share with the class.

Following the group presentations, take a closer look at the 4 items. Work together as a class to identify ways "fixing" the problems stated below. Encourage use of the imagination by requiring one of the 4 items to be included, figuratively, in the fixing of the problem. Suggested solutions are provided below, but allow for flexibility in student responses. Remind students of their responsibility!

*You let a friend borrow your new video game and he did your homework for you.*

Use the eraser to erase this mistake. Your friend's work should go in the trash. Do the work yourself!

*You hear some other kids laughing at Kiera and someone calls her "fatty". She sees you laughing with them and is more hurt by your laughter than that of the others because she thought you were her friend. What can you do to make this up to her?* Use the glue to hold this friendship together by apologizing to her and use the tape to stick up for her the next time.

*Someone dares you to write on the bathroom wall. The principal finds out that you did it.* Use the liquid paper to cover this mistake. Offer to paint the wall or places in the school that need painting.

*You told your mom that you fed your baby sister. Now that you are in the car, she is crying. You know you told a lie and the baby is hungry.* Use the tape to hold this situation together a little while longer. Offer to feed the baby in the car or give her a small snack. Admit that you lied!

*Dad asked you to take out the trash, but you left it sitting by the door and a dog tore into it. Now there is trash all over the yard.* Use the eraser to get rid of this mess. Clean it up!



## "Pocket Change"

Book Title: **A Chair for My Mother**  
Author: **Vera B. Williams**

Character Trait: **Goal Setting**  
Target Audience: **4-5**

Materials needed: drawing and writing paper for each student, enough scissors and markers for every 3 or 4 students to share in a group

*This Caldecott Honor Book provides an example of hard times as a family struggles to recover from a house fire. Some of their immediate needs are met through the donations of friends and neighbors, but they have no real furniture and no comfortable place to sit down at the end of a hard day. The little girl, who is telling the story, begins to save coins in a big jar. Every night when her mother comes in from working at the diner, the girl counts change from the tip money and puts the coins into the jar. After a year of saving coins, the jar is finally too heavy to lift. When it is completely full, the family takes the coins to the bank to be turned into ten dollar bills. That day they shop for the softest, most comfortable chair that they can find. When the chair finally comes home, the little girl falls asleep in her mother's lap as they sit together in the new chair.*

Lead a class discussion of how this family is similar to our own and how they are different. Have the students imagine what it would be like to have no furniture and no place to sit in their own house. If everything was lost in a house fire, ask the class to name the things they would miss the most. Discuss how the chair benefited everyone in the family and allow the class to vote on whether or not the purchase of the chair was a good use of the money that had been saved. Discuss the story in terms of goal setting. What are some things that the family did that helped them reach their goal?

Briefly write out some basic math on the front board to show how many coins it would take to buy the chair. Since four quarters equal one dollar, it would take four hundred quarters to equal one hundred dollars. One thousand dimes equals one hundred dollars. Two thousand nickels equals one hundred dollars. Explain that the chair probably cost around three hundred dollars. This means that if the jar were full of nickels, dimes and quarters, it would take 400 quarters, 1000 dimes, and 2000 nickels to buy the chair. Discuss how long it might take to save this many coins. Ask the class to think about why the family choose this method to buy the chair. Help them to see that this was probably their only choice because they did not have the money to buy it.

Provide drawing paper and markers for groups of students to share. Assign students to draw a large jar shape on their paper and cut it out. While working on the jar, students are to think of something that is important enough to them that they would consider saving all of their change to buy it. Remind them that it would take a very long time, possibly several years for them to get enough coins to fill a large jar. Encourage students to think of something that would benefit others in their family, not just themselves. Talk about how it would feel to make such a purchase after working so long to save for it. Discuss what might happen if they ever decided to take money out of the jar before making the purchase. Have students write one or two sentences about what they would buy and why.

# "Quitters Never Win"

Book Title: **Winners Never Quit**  
Author: **Mia Hamm**

Character Trait: **Perseverance**  
Target Audience: **4-5**

Materials needed: set of encyclopedias, computers with Internet access, nonfiction books about famous people.

*Written by an Olympic Gold Medalist, this book shows the frustrations of world's greatest female soccer player. The text and illustrations provide a kid friendly view of Mia Hamm's childhood days playing soccer with her family. At one point, Mia becomes angry at the idea of losing and quits the game completely. Finally she discovers that she loves soccer more than she hates losing and she begins to play again. Her decision to get back in the game proves to be a good one as she goes on to become the youngest woman ever to play with the U.S. National Soccer Team, at the age of 15. Factual information regarding her awards and accomplishments is provided on the last two pages, along with an autographed photograph of Mia in the prime of her career.*

Begin by discussing famous athletes and allowing students to share the name of their personal favorite from any sport. Talk about what perseverance means and how the people we named must know the meaning of this word far better than we do. Speculate what their childhood might have been like. Did most of them play their sport as kids? When did their perseverance begin? Introduce Mia Hamm by reading the factual section provided at the back of the book, then read the entire book.

After reading the book, talk about how everyone wants to quit at some point. This applies to sports, schoolwork, chores, goals that we set for our selves, and even things that we once enjoyed. Perseverance is what separates the winners from those that aren't even in the game. Discuss "winners never quit" versus "quitters never win".

Assign students to spend about 10 minutes researching the materials provided for the purpose of locating someone famous who struggled with perseverance. The person may be a sports figure, world record holder, businessman, educator, historical figure, or any person with documentation of a struggle that ended in great success.

Websites:  
[www.inspirationalstories.com/perseverance](http://www.inspirationalstories.com/perseverance) and [www.perspectivesonyouth.org](http://www.perspectivesonyouth.org)

Conclude by having students briefly share their story of perseverance with the whole group.



# "Sacrifice"

**Book Title:** The Giving Tree  
**Author:** Shel Silverstein

**Character Trait:** Caring  
**Target Audience:** 4-5

**Materials Needed:** paper and plain envelopes for each student, pencils, rubber stamps or stickers

Conceal the book prior to reading, as many will recognize it and attempt to figure out what lies ahead rather than participate in the thinking exercises provided below.

Ask students to define sacrifice. Wrap up by stating that sacrifice means to give up something valuable or important for someone or something else considered to be of more value or importance. Point out that sacrifice is selfless, meaning that it causes you to think more of others than of yourself.

Next, have students think of people in their life that have made some type of sacrifice for them. Allow volunteers to share. Look for specific, rather than general examples. For each person who shares, ask them if they ever did anything to show or tell that person that they appreciate the sacrifice.

Finally, have students think of people in their life that they care the most about. Pause for a few seconds to allow think time. Ask them if they think these people really, really know how much they are cared for. Pause again. Are we willing to make sacrifices, or give up something important to us, just to show others that we care about them? Can we be selfless?

Most students will have heard or read The Giving Tree at some point prior to this lesson and having a purpose behind listening may help maintain focus. After introducing the book, but before reading it, encourage listeners to think of people in their lives that have shown sacrificial love for them or someone that they care enough about to make sacrifices for.

After reading the book, lead a group discussion of how great was the sacrifice made by the tree. Hopefully someone will point out that the tree was willing to give every single thing he had to the boy, even though the boy did not acknowledge or appreciate the sacrifices made for him. How and when are we like the tree? How are we like the boy?

Provide plenty of paper and at least one envelope per student. Instruct students to think of one person to write a letter to. The person can be someone that has made sacrifices for them or someone that they care very much about. Encourage the letter to be brief, but full of meaning. Tell them that their writing should be selfless, focused on the other person, for the purpose of proving to them that you care.

Each letter should be placed in an envelope, sealed, and labeled with the recipient's name on the outside. Provide rubber stamps or stickers to decorate the envelopes. Students are to deliver their own letters. Acknowledge that this may be difficult to do, but that the sacrifice is minimal compared to what the other person has done. Ask the class how they feel after writing their letters and discuss how their letters will make the receivers feel.



# **“Sticks and Stones”**

**Book Title: Andrew's Angry Words**  
**Author: Dorothea Lachner**

**Character Trait: Self Control**  
**Target Audience: 4-5**

Materials Needed: drawing paper, markers, a paper shredder

*This book provides a visual image of what angry words look like. When Andrew uses his angry words, the cartoon bubble coming out of his mouth shows lightning bolts, dark clouds and a skull and bones. Unfortunately, Andrew passes his angry words to many other people in the story who use them and pass them on some more. Finally, Andrew is able to pick up nice words. When he begins to share them, wonderful things happened.*

Students can learn from this story that their words do affect others. They have control over the words they choose and the words they choose can help control others. Encourage discussion and testimony of this in the lives of students. Role play how angry words compare with nice words when you come home from school and are asking for a snack. Allow student to create other scenarios to role play the use of angry words and/or nice words.

Provide drawing paper and markers for students to create their very own angry words. Remind them that they are not to use real words, just squiggles, shapes, and colors. When they are finished, allow students to take turns shredding their papers. Talk about what the shredding represents.

Repeat this activity by having students illustrate their nice words on a clean sheet of paper. Save these to display on a bulletin board or in the hallway. Model how the use of nice words is contagious. Discuss the meaning behind the old saying, “Sticks and stones will break your bones, but words will never hurt you.” Challenge students to write a new saying that tells the benefits of using nice words. Collect these over the next several days and display along with the “nice word” pictures.

Examples:

*When anger hits you, watch what you say  
'cuz angry words never go away*

*Choose the nice words, or just keep quiet,  
You'll be happy and healthy with this 'nice word' diet.*

*When anger hits you, don't say something rotten  
'cuz angry words are never forgotten!*

# **“Tell Me Something”**

**Book Title:** Angel Child, Dragon Child  
**Author:** Michele Maria Surat

**Character Trait:** Respect  
**Target Audience:** 4-5

Begin the lesson by asking student to provide descriptive words for “angel”. Record responses on a board or overhead where all can see. Next, have students provide words for “dragon” and record those responses. Read the book.

Discuss how this story illustrates the importance of listening and how our viewpoints about other people change if we take the time to understand them better. Allow students to share personal stories relating to a time that their opinion was changed after getting to know someone.

Pick students in groups of two who are unlikely to have previously had a personal conversation with each other. Assign pairs to take turns listening to each other tell about their families. This may include cultural elements, family traditions, or background information. Encourage everyone to share something unique or unusual that others do not already know. Remind them to listen carefully and try to identify an aspect about their partner’s story that is important to that individual. The partner with the earliest birthday talks first. Stop after two minutes and allow the listener to become the talker.

Briefly allow volunteers to share something that they learned about their partner. When all have had an opportunity to speak, ask students if they formed a new opinion about anyone else in the class, based on what was shared. Review the adjectives given for angel and dragon. While these are vastly different, how different are the views of our classmates after only 2 minutes of learning about them? How much more could we learn to respect each other if we knew even more?

Discuss diversity within the group, including a wide range of backgrounds and interests.

Discuss again the importance of being sensitive and taking time to learn about people, their culture and their background, before making a judgment or giving them a label in our mind.



# "The Moral of the Story"

Book Title: Unwitting Wisdom: An Anthology of Aesop's Fables  
Author: Helen Ward

Character Trait: Citizenship  
Target Audience: 4-5

Ask students to share what they know about fables. Define a fable as a short story intended to teach a lesson. Explain that the "moral of a story" is the lesson learned within the context of the story.

Read the following fables found within this collection. Encourage students to listen for elements of citizenship within each story. Lead class discussion to identify the lessons we can learn from these fables and have students share how they can apply the lessons to their own lives. Suggestions follow, but allow for much flexibility in the student interpretation and application.

## *Sour Grapes*

*A fox spends all day trying to reach a bunch of grapes hanging on a vine just out of his reach. At the end of the day, the tired and hungry fox decides that the grapes must be nasty, disgusting and inedible.*

From the fable, we can see how something that is difficult or impossible for us to obtain, may become something that we completely dislike. We do not actually hate the once desired object, but we hate it that we cannot or do not have it. This is applicable to school work in that we may come to hate science if we are unable to make a high grade, when in fact, we would like it just fine if it were easier for us. Realizing this may help us to work harder to overcome our inability, or allow us to accept the ability that we have.

## *A Dinner Invitation*

*When a stork is invited to dinner at the fox's house, he is unable to eat because the food is presented in shallow dishes with no consideration given to the manner in which a stork must eat. In turn, the stork invited the fox for dinner and served the food in jars with narrow openings. Because of his short snout, the fox was likewise unable to eat at all.*

The principle behind this fable is closely related the golden rule. The stork felt it necessary to repay the fox's lack of consideration by making sure that he too left hungry. We can use this to show the importance of thinking of others in every situation and striving to respect viewpoints other than our own. It is particularly important to make sure that a guest of ours is comfortable before our own needs or desires are addressed.

## *Not Flying, but Falling*

*The turtle in this story feels that fate has been extremely unfair to him in that he is not equipped to fly. In his determination to change that fate, he convinces an eagle to lift him into the air, only to discover that without the eagle's wings, his fate to fall. This fable teaches us to focus on what we have and not what we want. Complaining about the unfairness in our lives will not bring change and there are some things that we cannot ever change.*

## *Fool's Gold*

*A man with the good fortune of having a goose that lays a golden egg every day becomes greedy and wants the goose to provide more and more golden eggs until he finds himself with none. The lesson learned here is that we must learn to be content, even thankful, for what we already have. Application for students involves being careful to not be envious of what other kids have, but to realize how much they already have and show appreciation for it.*

## *All Dressed Up*

*A particular bird desired most of all to appear to others to be important and popular. She went to great lengths to prove that she was something that she was not. This bird even collected the fallen feathers from other birds to create for herself a costume or sorts with the beautiful feathers from other birds. When her true identity was exposed, she realized she was very dull and plain. Here we can see the dangers of focusing on outward appearances. Our efforts to improve ourselves on the inside by working on our character will bring us the respect and acceptance of others.*

# "To Have a Friend . . ."

Book Title: Fibblestax  
Author: Devin Scillian

Character Trait: Caring  
Target Audience: Grades 4-5

Introduce this elegant picture book by discussing the illustrations. While they are soft in color, they are rich with detail to enhance the meaning of the story. Have students describe the picture on the front of the book before reading and make predictions about what the word "Fibblestax" may refer to.

Tell the class ahead of time that this is a rhyming book and have them try to identify what is coming next, according to the pattern of rhyme, by stopping periodically before the last word in each rhyming phrase.

While reading the text, stop once Carr has been introduced to allow students to give their opinions of him. Ask for justification of these opinions. Encourage the use of colorful adjectives.

*This story is about a pleasant young boy and a grumpy old man who end up in a contest to name the common things assigned them by the mayor of their town, such as "the drops of water that fall from a cloudy sky". While the man generally assigns a harsh sounding name, such as "droog", the boy always finds a softer, more peaceful name, such as "rain".*

*The deciding element in the contest involves the naming of "the feeling that makes you feel so good when a special friend near". While the old man says this is impossible for him to name because he knows not what the mayor is speaking of, the boy terms this feeling "love". In the end, the old man disappears and is never seen again, providing an opportunity to ask students to speculate on what might have happened to him.*

Refer back to the opinions the students formed of Carr early in the story. Have them share their feelings about him at the end. Make a visual list, on the board, of reasons why Carr could not give a name to that "special feeling".

Have the students imagine that the story had ended differently. Pretend that in the end, the boy and the old man became friends and the old man came to understand the word "love". Which ending is more true to life? In the real world do most people live "happily ever after" or disappear into the shadows?

Write on the board: "To have a friend, be a friend". Discuss what this could have meant for Carr.

Begin a list of specific things we can do to BE a friend to someone in the next two weeks. Examples may be simple things: say 'hi' to someone in the hall, lend a pencil or book, draw a funny picture, share a cartoon clipped from the newspaper, or sit beside someone new at lunch. Examples may involve more action: call someone on the phone, write a friendly note, stand up for someone who is being picked on, wait for someone getting off the bus or tell someone you want to be their friend.

Encourage students to write down things they are willing to do to be a friend to someone else and turn them in to a designated place. Pick a few to share, anonymously, in the next two weeks.



# "Toll for a Troll"

Book Title: **The Three Silly Billies**  
Author: **Margie Palatini**

Character Trait: **Cooperation**  
Target Audience: **4-5**

Materials needed: "Presenting Problems" (listed below) printed on individual slips of paper.

*This book incorporates characters from traditional fairy tales yet uses terminology and from current day situations. When three billy goats encounter a troll under the bridge and realize that they do not have enough money to pay his toll, they form a car pool. As they wait, there are others trying to cross the bridge that cannot pay the toll. The billy goats combine their resources with the bear family, Red Riding Hood, and Jack with his magic beans. Finally they all are able to cross when they are collectively able to pay the toll to the troll. The innuendos hidden within the context of this story add both meaning and humor.*

Ask students to define cooperation within the context of this story. Next, define cooperation within the context of our classroom. Ask students to name various situations in which cooperation is necessary. Make a list on the board of how cooperation changes things. (Increase in power, resources, ability, "know how", ideas, intelligence, strength, etc...)

Assign students to groups based on a number that they draw from a hat. There should be 4 or 5 students per group. Provide a "problem" for each group to solve using cooperation. Each person in the group must be involved in the solution. Allow approximately 10 minutes for discussion before having the groups present their solution to the class. Problems and solutions can be role played or explained verbally as long as everyone has a part. Each person must provide input regarding their contribution and no one is to "boss" the others or be overpowering in the discussion. This activity itself is to be a model of cooperation. Remind students to be respectful to each other.

## Presenting Problems:

GROUP #1: You are all at an office party with your parents and you don't know each other at all. There are also 3 other very small children who are tired, hungry and crying. All of the kids are sent to the basement and expected to watch a movie, but things are getting out of hand. What can you do to make things better for an hour or so?

GROUP #2: Your group is at a birthday party when a little sister throws up in the kitchen where the party was happening.

GROUP #3: You are at the baseball park with someone's dad when he discovers that he has lost the keys to his van. He says that he has been all over the park and has no idea when or where he lost them.

GROUP #4: At the end of a Science unit, you are assigned as a group to paint a mural of an ocean scene. You want to make sure that there are many different aspects represented so that you will make a good grade and you need a plan for sharing supplies, space, and ideas.