

Additional Resources for Old Man and the River

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Activity: Communicating without Words

Grade Level: Preschool, Junior Kindergarten, Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 2

Learning Goals

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of how characters can use non-verbal communication to convey a message;
- Students will practice conveying emotion using their bodies;
- Students will understand that different cultures use different actions/gestures to communicate non-verbally.

Materials

- WeeFestival's "Old Man and the River"
- List of emotions (happy, sad, scared, etc.) or scenarios that would elicit an emotional response (first day of school, moving, losing a special item, etc.)

Introduction

After watching WeeFestival's "Old Man and the River", invite students to reflect on the performance:

- How do you think the Old Man felt at the beginning of the performance?
- How do you think the Old Man felt at the end of the performance?
- How could you tell?

Invite students to think about how they use non-verbal communication. Sample questions:

- How do you communicate without words?
Facial expressions, hand gestures, how you move your body
- What are some common gestures?
Shrug, hands on hips, finger to lips, shake head, nod head, make a face, smile, wink
- Different cultures speak different languages -- do you think different cultures also have different ways of communicating without words?
Some Indigenous cultures raise their eyebrows to say yes; some wrinkle their noses to say no; some point with their lips.

Activity

This can be a large group activity or in smaller groups. Have a list of emotions (i.e.: happiness, sadness, joy, anger, fear, excitement, etc.) or a scenario (i.e.: First day of school, winning a game, getting good news, losing a special item, etc.) for students to act out. Provide students with the emotion/scenario prompt and tell them that they will need to use their bodies to communicate that emotion/scenario. Give them a few moments to think about how they will act out the prompt, then give them ~30 seconds to demonstrate that prompt. As the students are playing, the teacher can be asking questions to encourage the development of their actions:

- How does your face look? Is your mouth smiling? Are your eyebrows raised?
- Where are you looking? Straight ahead? Are you looking at the ground?
- What is your body doing? Are you standing still? Are you sitting? Are you walking quickly or slowly? Are your arms in the air? By your sides? Are your arms crossed?

Provide opportunities for students to enact several different emotions/scenarios.

Consolidation

After students have participated in the activity, gather them together in a large group to discuss the activity. Some sample questions may include:

- Did you find it easy to act out how you were feeling without using words?
- Were you able to understand how your classmates were feeling?
- Did everyone act the same way?
- After this activity, were you able to better understand what the Old Man was communicating without using words?

Extension Activity

For older students: provide one student with an emotion/scenario prompt. Invite them to act out the prompt in front of their peers and have the peers guess what emotion/scenario is being communicated.

Activity: Relationship with the Natural World

Grade Level: Preschool, Junior Kindergarten, Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 2

Learning Goals

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of some elements of the natural world;
- Students will learn about relationships with nature using the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address as a framework;
- Students will identify some of the elements of the natural world in their community.

Materials

- WeeFestival's "Old Man and the River"
- Journal and pencil OR container for collecting outdoor objects

Introduction

After watching WeeFestival's "Old Man and the River", invite students to discuss what elements of the natural world (nature) they saw in the play. What was the Old Man's relationship with these elements? How did they change throughout the play?

- Possible elements: Sun, moon, stars; trees, leaves; river, fish; wind; dragonfly, etc.

Then, share information about the Haudenosaunee (Ho-den-oh-show-nee) Confederacy and their relationship to the natural world.

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy is a group of Indigenous nations that include the Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca, Cayuga, and Tuscarora. These nations have a very strong respect for nature. In fact, many members of these nations give thanks to nature daily! It is important for the Haudenosaunee to appreciate and acknowledge all natural things, including fellow human beings, the earth, the moon, stars, sun, water, air, winds, animals, and more.

Ask some questions for consideration:

- What do you think respect means?
- Why is it important to give thanks to nature?
- What things do you appreciate about nature?

Activity

Bring the students outdoors for a community nature walk. Nature walks can take place anywhere outdoors: a park, a ravine, the woods, or even in a city block! Invite the students to explore: what do they see in their environment? Are they able to see any animals, birds, or insects? Any water (lakes, rivers, creeks)? Any evidence of weather (wind, rain, sun, snow)? What plants do they see (grass, weeds, flowers, trees, bushes)? Invite students to either draw what they see in their journals or collect items in their containers.

Consolidation

Once back in the classroom, invite students to share what they have drawn in their journals or collected in their containers. Emphasize that everything in our environment works to support each other. Ask some follow up questions:

- What do we see in our environment?
- Did anything you see in our environment surprise you?
- Why is it important to take care of plants? Animals? Insects? Each other?
- Does the environment help us with anything?
Plants for food, rain to water the plants, sun to help plants grow, etc.
- What can we do to take care of our environments?

Activity: Being a Good Friend

Grade Level: Preschool, Junior Kindergarten, Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 2

Learning Goals

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the behaviours that make someone a good friend;
- Students will recognize and accept differences among themselves and the classroom community;
- Students will learn about how the Haudenosaunee Confederacy came together in peace and friendship;
- Students will collaborate to create a classroom community project that tells a story of working together and friendship.

Materials

- WeeFestival's "Old Man and the River"
- Whiteboard/blackboard/chart paper
- Fabric squares, fabric markers, fabric glue, etc. **OR** squares of paper, markers, etc.

Introduction

After watching WeeFestival's "Old Man and the River", invite students to discuss what they think makes a good friend. Ask prompting questions and record answers on a whiteboard/blackboard/chart paper:

- What is a friend?
Someone you like to have fun with; you care about them, they care about you.
- What are your favourite things about your friend/What are examples of good friend behaviour?
Sharing, making others feel welcome, giving, saying thank you, being a good listener, caring, hugs (with permission), taking turns, politely asserting boundaries
- How can we show these behaviours at school? At home?
- What is something a friend has done for you? What have you done for a friend? How did it make you feel?
- Do your friends need to be exactly like you? How are your friends different? How do our differences make us better as a group/community?
Everyone has their own unique gifts!

After identifying what is a good friend, reflect on "Old Man and the River". Invite the students to answer the following questions:

- Was the Old Man a good friend?
- What made the Old Man a good friend?
- If you didn't think the Old Man was a good friend, why do you feel that way?
- How did the Old Man make new friends?

Activity

Share the brief story of the creation of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy:

A long time ago, there were five nations -- the Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca, and Cayuga -- that fought all the time. They fought so much and so often that their nations were not able to take care of themselves -- they spent all of their time fighting! Then, a person called Peacemaker came and told the nations if they stopped fighting and became friends, they'd be able to work together to protect and care for each other. They'd be healthy and happy. The five nations agreed and planted a big tree, called the Tree of Peace, to symbolize their friendship.

Explain to the students that the Haudenosaunee, especially the Mohawk, are known for making quilts. Quilts are individual pieces of fabric that are sewn together to make a large blanket. Show some example pictures of quilts (see Appendix).

Tell students that they will be working as a class to make a quilt. Each student will be given a square to decorate. They will be able to draw a picture relating to friendship: being a good friend, doing an activity they like with a friend, etc. Each square will be a part of the larger quilt, showing how individual stories/interpretations of friendship makes a strong community!

Consolidation

After the students have made their individual squares, invite them to work as a group (with teacher assistance!) to put the quilt together. What materials might work best to put the pieces together? Is it easier to put it together on the floor or on a table?

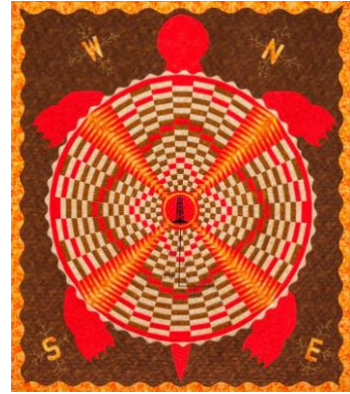
Once the quilt is assembled, invite the students to look at the quilt. What do they like about the quilt? What does it say about their classroom community?

Extension Activities

- Drama extension: acting out scenarios of good friend behaviour
- How do you show people you care? (Could be a journal activity, a drawing activity, or an acting activity)

Appendix

Quilt examples:



Bio



Krysta Sero is a Kanien'kehá:ka woman of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, living in Toronto. She is a mother, an Early Childhood Educator, and an Indigenous Knowledge Resource Teacher at the Royal Ontario Museum. Krysta holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Multiculturalism and Indigeneity and a Bachelor of Education from the Waaban Indigenous Education program at York University. She posts sporadically on Twitter: @satahontsatat