



## Character Infused After-School Lessons

### Jack Can't Climb

<p><b>Grade Levels:</b> 3-5</p> <p><b>Character Focus:</b> Respect and Empathy</p> <p><b>Academic Content Area:</b> English-Language Arts</p> <p><b>Lesson Duration:</b> 30-40 minutes; lesson has several extensions</p>	<p><b>Materials needed:</b> Paper, pencil, and crayons. This lesson is based upon a scenario and does not require a book. Perspective Taking: Role Play Guidelines</p> <p><b>Implementation Strategies Used:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Academic content-based discussion (e.g., literature-based)</li> <li>✓ Role playing</li> <li>✓ Cooperative learning</li> </ul>
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#### Lesson Scenario

Jack, an eight-year old, Jack, and his family planned to go hiking at Joshua Tree National Monument in the California desert. That was their destination. Jack was looking forward to the trip because this year he was old enough for his dad to teach him to rock climb. He waited anxiously for school to end on Friday. The family of five that included a brother and a sister would be taking their camper to Joshua Tree on Saturday for a long three-day weekend featuring rock-climbing. On the way home from school, Jack decided to walk on top of the wall of a neighbor's home because it was fun! He slipped, fell to the ground and unfortunately broke his arm. He knew right away that he could not climb rocks with a broken arm and his fall would interrupt his trip plans.

#### Academic-Character Objectives

1. Students will understand what it means to take the perspective of another person, as measured by their ability to provide different endings to the story, discuss the story, and do extended activities.
2. Students will be able to answer clarifying questions (how, why) related to contextual elements of a story, as measured by teacher judgment.

### **Into** (*Motivation and set*)

1. Ask students if they know what respecting feelings means. Teacher will give a few examples, and will ask students for a few examples.
2. Explain the meaning of empathy (being able to feel or think like someone) and provide students with examples, e.g., feeling sorry for someone who has fallen off his bike, hugging a child who is crying.
3. Introduce vocabulary: *hiking, rock-climbing, unfortunate, disappointed, healed, destination, substitute, compromise, participate, responsible*

### **Through** (*Lesson continues*)

4. Read the scenario to the class.
5. Ask students to attentively listen to the story.
6. Review the story. Check for student understanding of the character concepts of responsibility and empathy.
7. Analyze the story and possible outcomes: (Use as many questions as time permits)
  - a. What was Jack looking forward to doing during the three-day weekend from school? Why was this a special camping trip for Jack? What is rock-climbing?
  - b. What unfortunate thing happened to Jack on his way home? Why was this a really big disappointment for Jack?
  - c. Was Jack responsible for the accident?
  - d. If you were Jack's mom or dad, what would you have said to him?
  - e. Opinions: Do you think the family should go camping even though Jack won't be able to rock climb?
  - f. Suppose the family postpones the camping trip for two months when Jack's arm would be healed. Do you think that would be a good idea? Why or why not?
  - g. What do you think Jack's brother and sister wanted to do? Why?
  - h. Suppose everyone in the family had empathy for Jack, and decided to go the same weekend, but change their destination. Where could they go where Jack could participate with a broken arm? Why would he be able to participate?
  - i. Decision-Making: Should the family change their destination? Should they change the dates they go on the trip? Should they just go and let Jack suffer the consequences of walking on the wall? Explain why you think so.
  - j. Would you have empathy for Jack if he said, "But it was an accident!" Why or why not?

### **Beyond** (*Application, extensions, and assessment*)

The following activities may be used on different days:

- Students make a comic strip, using calculator tape. They draw three cells:
  - a) What happens to Jack?
  - b) Jack telling his parents about his unfortunate accident
  - c) What Jack and the family finally do on the three-day weekend?
- Plan a three-day weekend with the class.
  - a) Determine the destination.
  - b) Provide an itinerary of each day's activities, including when and where they will eat, what they will see, and what time they will go to bed.
- Role Play (See Perspective Taking: Role-Play guidelines)

- a) Have someone play Jack and someone his parents. Jack comes home from school with a broken arm. What does he say to his parents? How does he act? What do his parents say to him? Do they punish him?
- b) Have someone play Jack, his brother, his sister, his mom and dad. Demonstrate what happens if they go to Joshua tree that weekend.
- c) Show what happens if they select another destination. Have the class select new destinations.

Written by Roberta Pantle



## Perspective Taking: Role-Play Guidelines

*“Perspective taking or role taking—the cognitive ability to discern another person’s point of view or emotional state—is a key ingredient of empathy, a sensitivity to the plight of others” (Beland 2003).*

**Because empathy sets the standard for our relationship with others it is a core skill in developing ethical values and bringing them to life. Empathy inspires one to act with care and justice. Perspective taking includes the cognitive ability to:**

- Recognize others’ feelings through physical, verbal, and behavioral cues
- Infer how others may be feeling by imagining oneself in their shoes (Beland 2003, p 10)
- Identify facial expressions and situational cues associated with different emotions
- Recognize different emotions within themselves
- Listen to others when they express their thoughts and feelings
- Practice taking the roles of others in the same or different situations
- Look for similarities between themselves and others.

**The strategies to provide these opportunities are wide ranging and differ with the age and developmental stages of students. They include but are not limited to:**

- Using literary characters and character analysis to have students put themselves in the character’s situation
- Reflecting on their own thoughts and feelings through journaling and pair share
- Using visual art to interpret thoughts and feelings
- Cooperative or collaborative learning activities where students practice the behaviors of respect and responsibility
- Using authentic problem-solving activities where students have to look at different perspectives, interviewing others to identify similarities
- Moral dilemma discussions
- Class meetings
- Role play (some versions of role play are called simulation).

*Using brief role play in the classroom supports the development of the behaviors associated with empathy, respect, responsibility, and integrity. Role play develops perspective taking and appeals to the kinesthetic learner as well. Linked to perspective taking, role play helps students understand social behavior, their roles in social interaction, and ways to solve problems more effectively. (Joyce & Calhoun 1996).*

**Role play situations can be generated from content area studies such as role playing a literary character, an historical person or event, as well as authentic issues of students. While there are many variations of the components of a role play the following is a basic guide.**

### **Elements of a Role Play**

#### **1. Set the context and the situation or scene.**

Keep in mind the students needs, interests, and developmental level.

Use situations that are authentic for the students; ask students for suggestions.

It can be a problem, a conflict, or an open-ended situation.

For younger students, identify or predict any language that may be needed.

To encourage role taking, ask students to remember how they felt and what they thought in a similar situation.

Start with simple situations and then move to more complex situations.

#### **2. Identify roles.**

Consider the abilities and personalities of the students.

Roles can be developed and suggestions made or roles can be open ended and allowed to evolve.

#### **3. Identify audience focus.**

To encourage active listening among the audience, a question or prompt may be given to the observers. Students can discuss, talk about, or write responses.

Norms of behavior for the audience may be reviewed.

#### **3. Follow up.**

After the role play, ask key questions of the role players as well as the audience that tap into the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of the role play. To develop perspective taking use questions such as:

Did you feel the same as \_\_\_\_? Why or why not?

What questions do you have for \_\_\_ about what happened?

What would you have done or said differently?

What would you have done or said the same?

What were you thinking or feeling about when you \_\_\_\_\_?

How do you know that \_\_\_\_ was feeling \_\_\_\_\_?

#### **4. Debrief the students.**

Review the different roles, the audience reaction, and remind children this is a role play.

*Finally, the role of the teacher in role play is one of “traffic controller” helping the flow of traffic and avoiding bottlenecks, but not telling individuals which way to go (Jones 1982 cited in Thompkins, p.5).*