



Character-Infused After-School Lessons

Sylvester and the Magic Pebble

<p>Grade Levels: 3-4</p> <p>Character Focus: Integrity, Respect, & Compassion</p> <p>Academic Content Area: English-Language Arts</p> <p>Lesson Duration: 40-50 minutes; lessons can be conducted over several days</p> <p>Author Comments/Notes: This lesson is setup for an after-school program, and can be implemented in 45-minute blocks. The lesson can also be modified to fit each program’s schedule. The lesson can also be modified to fit into the regular school day schedule.</p>	<p>Book Title and Author: <i>Sylvester and the Magic Pebble</i>, William Steig, Aladdin Paperbacks, ISBN: 0-671-66249-4</p> <p>Materials needed: <i>Sylvester and the Magic Pebble</i>, paper, pencil, crayons, markers, and Vocabulary Log, People Profile and Character Trading Card Worksheets.</p> <p>Implementation Strategies Used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Discussion ✓ Critical thinking ✓ Perspective taking ✓ Role-playing
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Lesson Summary

Sylvester and the Magic Pebble is about a young donkey, Sylvester, who quickly learns that being happy with what you have is more important than wishing for things you do not have. In this story, Sylvester finds a pebble that can bring him, “all his heart desires.” When he gets into trouble with one certain wish, all he wants is his family. Through a chance event, the problem situation is resolved. This character-based lesson delves into teaching children the importance of respecting themselves by being satisfied with what they have. It also teaches about the compassion and love parents have for their children.

Academic-Character Objectives

1. After having read the story the students will have greater knowledge of character traits such as integrity, respect and compassion.
2. Students will learn to become attentive listeners in order to develop critical thinking skills.

Into (*Motivation and set*)

1. Ask students if they ever got into a problem situation, and wished they had a magic way to solve the problem? Discuss the different situations offered. (Examples: not getting homework done on time, wishing it could magically appear in their backpacks when the teacher asks for it.)
2. Review the vocabulary they will hear: *Extraordinary, remarkable* (similar meanings); *ceased, vanished, gratified, startled; confused, perplexed, puzzled, bewildered* (similar meanings); *muttered, eventually, frantic, inquiry, longed, nook and gully, sorrow, alfalfa, concluded, “stone-dumb.”* Use Vocabulary Log.
3. Ask students what they think “stone-dumb” means. Ask them to really listen carefully for this expression in the story.
4. Ask students to carefully listen for character attributes in the story.

Through (*Lesson continues*)

5. When students are ready to listen attentively, tell them this story is about a donkey, Sylvester Duncan, who finds a magic pebble that helps him with one problem. The solution, however, leads to a bigger problem! Ask students to look for the bigger problem Sylvester has, and then discuss possible solutions.
6. Occasionally pause to identify vocabulary words, make clarifications and comments. Ask a couple of thought-provoking, open-ended questions based on the story to check for student understanding of the text.
7. Review: Ask the students to briefly recount the story and character lessons learned.
8. Description: After the story, ask the students to describe the characters.
9. Questions/ Discussion:
 - a. Do you think it was a good thing or a bad thing that Sylvester found the magic pebble? Why?
 - b. Describe how you think Sylvester felt locked up inside the rock? (List student answers on the board; write as many adjectives as they give you.)
 - c. Why do you think Sylvester’s parents put the magic pebble in an iron safe? Was that a good idea? Why or why not?
 - d. What would you have done with the magic pebble?
 - e. What might happen if people got anything they wished for?
 - f. What are some good things about wishes coming true? What problems might this cause?
 - g. In what ways has this story helped you?
10. Self-assessment: Ask students to think of something that they have wished for, and then tell why they were sorry their wish came true. (Teacher may first have to provide examples from his or her own experiences.)

Beyond (*Application, extensions and assessment*)

The following activities may be used as lessons on different days:

- **Vocabulary.** List the new words learned in the story. Add them to your Vocabulary Log.
- **Dramatic Play:** Ask students to act out the sentences in which they use new vocabulary
- **Empathy Discussion:** Divide students into two groups. One half will be rocks (no movement, unless moved by another force), and the other half will be the sights and sounds of Strawberry Hill: blowing wind, thunder claps, lightning, pouring rain, parents, lion, etc. (elements that have movement). Students then switch roles, so that everyone is able to feel Sylvester’s feelings as a rock, unable to move. After acting out the year Sylvester spent as a rock, discuss how it might feel to be a rock and be unable to respond to what is happening.
- **Journal Prompts:** Previous discussion questions may be used as journal prompts.
- **Role play:** Act out different role-play scenarios. Students act out the scenes and then talk them over.
 - a) Play out the story. You are Sylvester, and a hungry lion is stalking you. You use your magic pebble, and it works; however, you cannot get out of the situation because the pebble is outside the rock and you can’t touch it. Mr. & Mrs. Duncan are looking for you. Show what they do. Then show them having the picnic and the words they say to have Sylvester turn back into himself.
 - b) You get lost at a mall and can’t find your family. (Student and other people at the mall, e.g., security guard, store owner, custodian, customers.)
 - c) You are swimming in the ocean, and a shark begins circling around you. There is a lifeguard nearby. Show what happens.
 - d) You accidentally bump a wasp’s nest, and 50 angry wasps begin chasing you. Show how you would fend off the wasps.
- **Poster Activity:** “Missing Donkey” Give written and oral instructions to complete the missing donkey poster. Follow up activity: Share the posters.

Teacher Directions:

Show the illustration of Mr. & Mrs. Duncan at the police station (p.13). Have students make a “missing-person” poster that describes Sylvester and provides important information about his disappearance. Describe Sylvester on the poster. Brainstorm as a group what might be included in a missing-person poster.

Student Directions:

Sylvester disappeared into thin air! On your own, make a missing person poster (like those found in police stations) that shows and tells what Sylvester looks like as well as gives important information about him. Remember to include information on his disappearance. Make up something’s you don’t know about Sylvester, like age and weight.

- **Treasure Hunt-Character Wish:** Invite the students to participate in a game of Pebble Treasure Hunt, in which students will locate pebbles hidden by the teacher. Only one pebble is like the one in the story (smooth, red). The one who locates the Magic Pebble gets a prize, but is also required to state a character-based wish for the class.
- **Trading Card Activity:** See worksheet, Character Trading Cards
- **People Profiles:** See worksheet, People Profiles.

Written by Erica Chappell

Vocabulary Log

Name _____

Date _____

Story _____

Directions: First, list new words from the story. Then, list the page number on which the word appeared. Then write the dictionary definition. Finally, write a sentence using the word.

Word	Page Number	Define the word and use it in a sentence.
1.		_____
2.		_____
3.		_____
4.		_____
5.		_____
6.		_____
7.		_____
8.		_____

People Profiles

Name _____ Date _____ Story _____

Character name from the story	Which character trait best describes this person?	Example of positive character
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

List characters from the story in the first column. In the second column, choose a trait that best describes the character in the story. In the third column, give an example from the story describing how the character showed this trait.



Character Trading Cards

<hr/> <i>Name of Story</i> <hr/> <hr/> <i>Character in Story</i> <hr/> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 200px; width: 100%;"></div> <hr/> Character Trait	<hr/> <i>Name of Story</i> <hr/> <hr/> <i>Character in Story</i> <hr/> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 200px; width: 100%;"></div> <hr/> Character Trait	<hr/> <i>Name of Story</i> <hr/> <hr/> <i>Character in Story</i> <hr/> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 200px; width: 100%;"></div> <hr/> Character Trait
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Directions

1. *Front of card:* Draw a colorful picture of the character from the story. Then list the character trait that best describes this person. Example: respect
2. *Back of card:* Write an example of how this person portrays the character trait.

A Tip

Cards can be cut up, laminated, organized in binder sleeves and used as trading cards.