



## Character Education Infused English-Language Arts Lessons



### Dear Mr. Henshaw

<p><b>Grade Level: 5</b></p> <p><b>Character Education Focus: Self-Respect</b></p> <p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>Students will read an excerpt from the novel <i>Dear Mr. Henshaw</i> and identify Leigh's demonstration of the trait of <i>self-respect</i>. By examining the main character's series of letters to Mr. Henshaw, students will analyze changes in Leigh's feelings throughout the story and understand how the author uses letters to reflect the character's growth and development. Students write letters to Leigh, and to themselves, regarding issues of <i>self-respect</i>. (Two or three 45-50 minute lessons)</p>	<p><b>Materials Needed</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <i>Cleary, B. (2003) Dear Mr. Henshaw</i> In J. Cooper &amp; J. Pikulski, <i>Houghton Mifflin Reading: A Legacy of Literacy Grade 5</i> (pp. 416 - 430). Boston, MS: Houghton Mifflin.</li><li>2. Notebook paper or journal</li><li>3. Chart paper or overhead transparencies</li></ol>
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### Academic - Character Education Objectives

Students will:

1. Identify the character trait of *self-respect* as exhibited by Leigh throughout the story.
2. Evaluate the author's use of letters to tell the story and discuss how the story would be different if this technique was not used.
3. Identify at least five conventions of letter writing.
4. Write a letter to Leigh commenting on his *self-respect* throughout the story.
5. Write a self-addressed letter regarding personal issues of *self-respect*.

### California English-Language Arts Standards Addressed

Reading

3.0 Literary Response and Analysis

- 3.3 Contrast the actions, motives (e.g., loyalty, selfishness, conscientiousness), and appearances of characters in a work of fiction and discuss the importance of the contrasts to the plot or theme.
- 3.7 Evaluate the author's use of various techniques (e.g., appeal of characters in a picture book, logic and credibility of plots and settings, use of figurative language) to influence readers' perspectives.

## Writing

### 2.0 Writing Applications

- 2.2 Write responses to literature:
- Demonstrate an understanding of a literary work.
  - Support judgments through references to the text and to prior knowledge.
  - Develop interpretations that exhibit careful reading and understanding.

## Listening and Speaking

### 2.0 Speaking Applications

- 2.3 Deliver oral responses to literature:
- Summarize significant events and details.
  - Articulate an understanding of several ideas or images communicated by the literary work.
  - Use examples or textual evidence from the work to support conclusions.

## Lesson Procedures

### **Part One**

- The teacher describes the purpose of the lesson, which is to use the story to identify the character trait of *self-respect* (*being good to myself and not putting myself down; taking care of myself*).
- The teacher tells the students they will listen to an excerpt from a story about a boy who learns to respect himself. Read the excerpt from *Dear Mr. Henshaw* aloud to the class.
- The teacher asks students to brainstorm ways they have given themselves *self-respect*. Record student responses on chart paper or an overhead transparency to be used later.
- Point out the elements of a friendly letter, including the date, salutation, body, closing, and postscript. Then ask students:
  - What kind of letters have you received? Who sends letters to you?*
  - What letters have you written? To whom did you send the letters?*
  - How many of you have kept letters that you have received? If so, why do you keep them?*
  - What is the purpose of a letter?*
  - What kind of information does Leigh include in his letters?*
  - Why do you suppose the author includes Leigh's letters?*
  - How do his letters help Leigh sort out his feelings?*
  - How does his correspondence change throughout the excerpt?*
- The teacher explains to the students that they will write letters to Leigh. The teacher then elicits information about the format of a friendly letter from the students through questioning. Use chart paper or an overhead transparency to record conventions of letter writing and the necessary elements to include.

### **Part Two**

- Students reread the first half of the excerpt from the story, *Dear Mr. Henshaw*, and take notes about Leigh's response to the events that occur.

7. Students share their notes with a partner. Ask the partners to discuss how Leigh's feelings about himself are affected by his interactions with his family, and the causes of Leigh's low *self-respect*. They must provide evidence from the story to support their opinions.
8. After an appropriate amount of time, or during the next session, the teacher explains that students will write a letter to Leigh. Before they write their own letter review all the parts of a friendly letter using the chart created during the first part of this lesson. The students can use the following list of items to include in a letter as a rubric for self-assessment.

Date  
 Salutation—*Dear* \_\_\_\_\_,  
 Indented paragraph  
 Body of letter—personal information  
 Closing—*Sincerely*,  
 P.S.—additional comments

9. With a partner, students select one of Leigh's letters to Mr. Henshaw and write a response to Leigh that includes words of encouragement.
10. Students reread the second half of the story and take notes about how Leigh's feelings change at the end of the excerpt; provide evidence from the story to support opinions.
11. With a partner, students select a second letter to Mr. Henshaw and write a response to Leigh that includes examples of the growth of Leigh's *self-respect*.
12. After the entire excerpt has been reread, the teacher reviews the list of ways students show *self-respect* to themselves which was completed during the lesson introduction.

**Part Three**

13. Ask students to take a few minutes to think about a time when they were not good to themselves, put themselves down, or didn't take care of themselves. Ask them to think about a time when lack of *self-respect* in their own lives changed to *self-respect*. Using the questions below as a guide, ask students to write about that experience in their journals.
  - *What are some ways you created more self-respect even though some bad things were happening around you?*
  - *What role did others play in how you felt about yourself?*
  - *What kind of advice would you give yourself the next time you are not respecting yourself?*
14. From their journals, students share ways they have changed from a lack of *self-respect* to being self-respecting.
15. Explain to students that they will be writing letters of encouragement to themselves. These will be similar to the ones they wrote to Leigh. As a check for understanding, revisit the discussion questions asked during the introduction:
  - *What is the purpose of a letter?*
  - *What kind of information does Leigh include in his letters?*
  - *Why do you suppose the author includes Leigh's letters?*
  - *How do his letters help Leigh sort out his feelings?*
  - *How does his correspondence change throughout the excerpt?*
  - *How does the use of letters help you understand Leigh?*

16. Students write a self-addressed letter of encouragement regarding issues of *self-respect*. Students share the letters with a partner or in a small group and help each other revise and expand on their thoughts.
17. The teacher may ask for volunteers to share with the whole class.

### Academic – Character Education Assessment

*Academic Assessment:* Teacher can formally assess students' knowledge and use of writing conventions using the criteria provided.

*Character Education Assessment:* Informally assess the students' responses in class discussion, noting students' ability to identify Leigh's traits of *self-respect*, analyze changes in Leigh's feelings throughout the story, understand how the author's use of letters helps the reader identify the character's growth and development, and use specific examples from the story to support their ideas during class discussions.

### Reflective Journaling Prompts

- The teacher reads aloud from the book *Dear Mr. Henshaw*, stopping at predetermined points for student reflection. Students respond in their journals to Leigh's letters or events in the story.
- Students may write in their journals about a problem they are having at school or with friends having to do with *self-respect*. Have them brainstorm friends, teachers or family members that may be able to help them with their problem. (Adapted from Houghton Mifflin Resource Writing Activity Theme 4).

### Extensions and Variations

Students read other books about correspondence. See "Thematic Book Lists" at <http://www.share2learn.com/thematicbooks.html>

Establish pen pals with students in another school or city.

Students can read *Strider* by Beverly Cleary the sequel to *Dear Mr. Henshaw*. Leigh Botts and a friend care for an abandoned dog they name Strider.

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