

Character Infused After-School Lessons

I Want to Read

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| <p>Grade Levels: 4-6</p> <p>Character Focus: Responsibility</p> <p>Academic Content Area: English-Language Arts</p> <p>Lesson Duration: Story and discussion takes between 50-60 minutes, depending on student maturity level and number of questions used for discussion. Each extended activity takes approximately 45-50 minutes.</p> | <p>Materials needed: Character Education scenario, paper or notebook, pencils, markers, crayons, dictionaries.</p> <p>Optional: Vocabulary Log, People Profiles, Character Trading Card Worksheets</p> <p>Implementation Strategies Used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Academic content-based discussion (e.g., literature-based) ✓ Role playing ✓ Moral dilemma discussion ✓ Problem-solving discussion |
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Lesson Scenario Summary:

During the 1950's in New York an immigrant Italian family, the Russos, owned a grocery store. The father, Mr. Russo, has a desire to make his grocery store business successful and his son, Gino has a love of reading. Gino reads children's stories, chapter books, comic strips, and the newspaper – anything he can get his hands on. His school, St. Angela's, has a Reading Club and he's the President.

In order to remain in the club, members have to read at least 300 pages each week. Gino likes to read almost all day every Saturday, but there's a conflict. His father wants him to help out in the store on that day. Gino tells his father that Saturday is his reading day. During the week, Gino is busy. He plays outside with his friends after school. After dinner, he spends the rest of the night doing homework, and watching TV on the new black-and-white screen television their father just bought the family.

Gino is really the only family member who is not scheduled to work in the store during the week. Gino's mom, Mrs. Russo, works in the store every day. Gino's big brother and sister work there after school. They alternate days. Mr. Russo is ambitious. He wants to have a successful corner store so his family can earn enough money to send the children to college. He needs more help on Saturdays now because the city put in new housing projects and the store has more customers on Saturday than in the past.

Gino has worked in the store in the summer when he has off from school. He already knows how to stock ice cream bars in the freezer and how to arrange soup cans on the shelves so they look appealing. He has experience restocking brown paper bags which he takes from the storeroom and stacks next to the check-out counter. He also sweeps the wooden floor, and keeps the glass on the front door clean and shiny.

When Gino's father asks him to start working on Saturdays during the school year, Gino is very disappointed. He does not want to cooperate. He does not think he can keep up with his reading. He likes being in the club and especially being the President. Mr. Russo is also disappointed. He knows he needs more help, but he can't afford to hire someone outside the family.

Students will explore the relationship between a father who wants to make his grocery store successful and his son, who loves to read. As you discuss the story with students, guide them to answers that allow Gino and his Papa to accept and to respect each other's needs, while working out a solution to the problem. Students explore positive character traits of Gino and Mr. Russo, the benefits of accepting differences, and make comparisons to their own passions and life experiences.

Academic-Character Objectives

1. Students will respect each other's opinions and thoughts, listen to the story and to each other with full attention, as measured by teacher observation.
2. Students will identify those characters in the story that are portraying positive behavior, and identify the positive character traits exhibited, as measured by creation of character trading cards.
3. Students will demonstrate *increased vocabulary* by identifying unfamiliar words, entering them into their Vocabulary Log and writing sentences with the words.
4. Students will create analogies during classroom discussions and compare or contrast their experiences with the story's theme.

Into (*Motivation, anticipatory set, setting the standard*)

1. Give the students some background information about the time period in which the story takes place. The 1950s was an era on the East Coast in which European immigrants often owned thriving small businesses, and worked hard to give their children a better life.
2. Tell them they will be hearing a story about a boy, Gino, and his father, who lived in those days. The father, an immigrant from Italy, wanted him to work in his grocery store on Saturdays, but this caused a problem for Gino. Ask them to listen for the problem.
3. Ask the students if there ever was something in their lives that they loved to do so much that they wanted to do it all the time, but they could not. Ask them to describe how they felt.
4. Introduce vocabulary. Review the following vocabulary with students: *immigrant* (newcomer to the United States), *thriving*, *scheduled*, *neighborhood grocery store*, *president*, *alternate*,

ambitious, earn, customers, housing projects (apartments built by the government that accommodate large numbers of residents,) *customers, restocking, appealing, disappointed, cooperate, bodega* (small grocery store), *dilemma, options, compromise.*

Through (Lesson development and procedures)

5. Read the scenario. Ask students to listen for new vocabulary words and for the problem that Gino had.
6. Discuss the story and its lessons. Use as many questions as time permits.
 - Who are the main characters in the story?
 - Explain the positive character traits of Gino and his family.
 - Identify what Gino liked to do (read) and what his father needed (a successful store so he would be able to send his children to college).
 - What problem does Gino have? (His father wants him to work in their store on Saturday, Gino's favorite reading day.)
 - What character traits were shown in the story? (Integrity, trustworthiness – wanting to follow through by Gino with his duties as a member of the Reading Club, perseverance by Gino in the pursuit of his reading passion; perseverance by Papa in his wanting to have a successful store so he can send all his children to college.)
 - Describe similar stories in the United States today where there was a conflict between a personal and family obligation.
 - Predict whether or not Mr. Russo's store would continue to thrive if he allowed Gino not to help at all on Saturdays.
 - Create an analogy between this dilemma in the Russo family and a similar situation in your life.
 - Does Gino have any other options to get his reading done? Can he compromise? Ask students to justify their opinions. (Giving up playing outside three school days a week, not watching television every night, reading on Saturday after he had worked in the store, reading on Sunday, etc.)
 - What compromise could Papa make? (He could agree to let Gino go home to read after he has finished his chores on Saturday.)
 - How might Gino feel when he starts having to work on Saturday? (Happy he cooperated, enjoyment of the work, disappointed he cannot read, etc.)
 - How might Mr. Russo feel when his children graduate from college?
 - How would you feel if someone you love asks you to give up a sport or change your schedule around?
 - Consider the benefits of compromise. What value was there for Gino because he compromised? (He respected his father; there would be enough money for college.)
 - Use the story to explain how respect is part of compromise. (The boy would respect and obey his Dad by working on Saturdays.)
 - Can you give examples of possible consequences if Mr. Russo gave in and hired someone else to work in the store on Saturdays?
 - Can you give an example of how something that you did not like being asked to do turned out to be a good thing?

- What do you have to consider when you want to do something, e.g., play sports? (Costs, convenience for family members, fairness to other family members, balance with your responsibilities and duties, how it affects other people in your life.)
- Is there a person in the story who is like you? How are you different from that same person?
- What lessons did you learn from the story? (Respect your parents when they ask you to cooperate; you might be surprised at the benefits for both of you, etc.)

Beyond (Application, Extensions, and Assessment)

- Review the story and the lessons learned before you conduct an extended activity or assessment. Review how compromise usually gives each person something that they want. Check for evidence of student understanding.
- **Discussion:** Ask the students to pair up. Students talk to each other about their personal interests such as what they like to do outside of school. Have students report about the other student's interests.
- **Journals:** Have students write in their journals about their interests.
- **Vocabulary:** Look up definitions in the dictionary. Write the words in a sentence. Use the Vocabulary Log.
- **Role Plays:**
 - a) The scene is in the store. Have a student play Gino stocking the shelves, putting the ice cream bars in the freezer, sweeping the floor, etc.
 - b) The scene is at home on a Saturday. Gino is reading. His father tells him he has to go to the store to work. Show Gino behaving respectfully.
- **Research:** Do research on Italy, Ellis Island, and the immigration wave of the early 1900s.
- **Character Worksheet:** See People Profiles Worksheet
- **Trading Card Activity:** Students will design a trading card of a person of character from the story using art materials. Have them describe and write why they choose this person to draw. See Character Trading Cards.

Written by Roberta Pantle

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

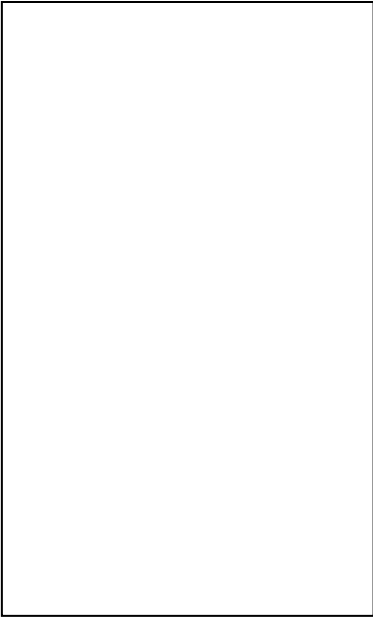
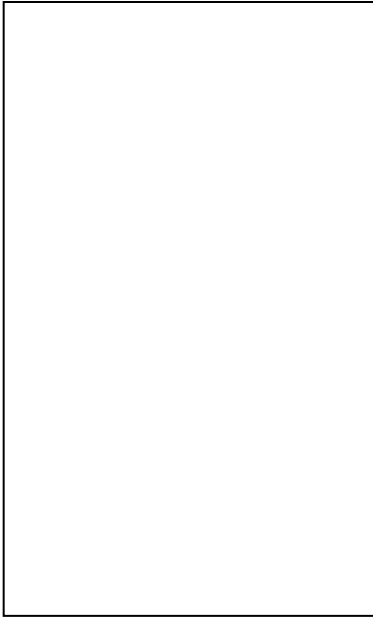
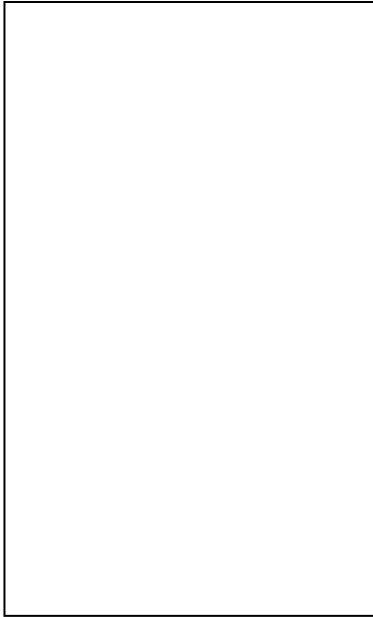
Name _____ Date _____ Story _____

| 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

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|--|---|--|
| <hr/> <i>Name of Story</i> <hr/> <i>Character in Story</i>  <hr/> | <hr/> <i>Name of Story</i> <hr/> <i>Character in Story</i>  <hr/> | <hr/> <i>Name of Story</i> <hr/> <i>Character in Story</i>  <hr/> |
| Character Trait | Character Trait | Character Trait |

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.

