

The Recess Queen

By Alexis O’Neill, illustrated by Laura Huliska-Beith
(New York: Scholastic Press, 2002)

Reading Guide by Jennifer Elsebaie, Hawthorne Scholastic Academy, Chicago

Summary

Mean Jean was the Recess Queen. No one could play without getting her approval until a new student, Katie Sue, came. Because she was too new to know that Mean Jean was the bully of the playground, Katie Sue dared to ask Mean Jean to play.

Initiating Activities

Activity One: Read story aloud. Conduct discussion using questions below.

Activity Two: Place students in groups of three or four and have them create and act out scenarios of how they should act and react to a bully on the playground.

Activity Three: Ask students to create a skipping poem based on the ones Katie Sue sang to Mean Jean. Students can chant their poems outside while they jump rope with their friends.

Activity Four: Complete a word sort based on the title of the story, The Recess Queen. In the word sort, students are given the title of the book scrambled; they create one-, two-, three-, and four-letter words out of the letters in the title. They then unscramble the letters to make the title. Word sorts can be downloaded from <http://www.pacifiedgepublishing.com>.

Discussion Questions

1. What is a bully? What are some things that bullies do?
2. Why are all the students scared of Mean Jean?
3. Why is Katie Sue not afraid of Mean Jean?
4. How do you think Mean Jean felt when Katie Sue asked her to play?
5. Have you ever been bullied on the playground? How did you stand up for yourself?

Follow-up Activities

Activity One: Create a “High Five” club in the classroom. When students see admirable behaviors performed by other students, they can write what they saw on a hand. At the end of the week, read the good deeds done and send home the hands to the students who showed great character that week.

Activity Two: Students can write an anti-bullying book that teaches a lesson to peers or younger students about how to be a good friend who does not bully.

Kindness Is Cooler, Mrs. Ruler

By Margery Cuyler, illustrated by Sachiko Yoshikawa
(New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007)

Reading Guide by Monica Zaragoza, Sawyer Elementary School, Chicago

Summary

A teacher tries to teach her students about kindness by setting a goal of doing 100 kind acts. All the students are involved and excited by this class project.

Initiating Activities

Activity One: Conduct a K-W-L activity to determine what students know about kindness and what they would want to learn more about this concept. Discuss with students how they feel when they are being kind.

Activity Two: Read the book aloud and conduct a discussion using the questions below.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Mrs. Ruler needed to teach kindness to the students?
2. Do you feel you are kind now?
3. What are some kind things you could do?
4. How do you think Mrs. Ruler and her class felt when their goal was reached?
5. Do you think the students will continue to be kind even after the goal was met? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activities

Have students create personalized kindness booklets documenting the kind acts that they do. Construct the books from self-adhesive notes, so that students can add a post-it page to their books every time they do a kind act. The page should list and illustrate the kind act completed. Post the books around the room. At the end of the year, students will be able to see all their kind acts and share some of them with the class.

Horace and Morris but Mostly Dolores

By James Howe, illustrated by Amy Walrod

(New York: Atheneum, 2003)

Reading Guide by Kalina Vnoucek, John T. McCutcheon Elementary School, Chicago

Summary

Horace and Morris but Mostly Dolores is about three mice that are best friends. Then Horace and Morris come upon a club for boys; because Dolores feels left out, she joins a club for girls. All three mice are unhappy with their new clubs and decide to start their own club where everybody is welcome.

Initiating Activities

Activity One: Ask students to start a list of traits that they would look for in a good friend. Discuss these traits, asking students to explain why they picked the traits that they listed.

Activity Two: Have students draw what they think good friendship looks like. The class can put all these pictures together to make a friendship quilt.

Activity Three: Have students write a paragraph about how they can be a better classroom friend.

Discussion Questions

1. What caused the conflict between Dolores and the two boys?
2. Why didn't Dolores like the girls' club?
3. How did the three friends solve their conflict?
4. In our class, are the boys friends with the girls? Are the girls friends with the boys? Why or why not? What can we do to bring both groups together?
5. What would you do if someone had a club and you could not join?
6. How can we work together to help everyone feel included in our classroom?

Follow-up Activities

Activity One: Students can share what they wrote in their paragraphs about being better classroom friends.

Activity Two: Have the students go to another class (preferably a younger one) to teach them how to be a good classroom friend.