



# Compassion Reading Lessons

## Grades 6-8

### Walk a Mile in Their Shoes

#### **Grade Level: 6-8**

Time: 5 or 6 hours (Depending on access to computers)

*Students will choose a country or society to research. They will need to access various websites or other research materials to find out information regarding the basic living conditions in the country.*

1. Have students pair up and choose a country to study. They should choose a developing nation such as: Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Kiribati, Lao PDR, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tuvalu, Uganda, Vanuatu, Republic of Yemen.

^ Next, students will research the country and try to answer the following questions: (see handout)

- *Do people in this society have enough to eat?*
- *Is there adequate housing?*
- *Do people have access to health care?*
- *How does this society provide adequate food, housing and health care?*
- *Do people in this society have equal access to education? What is the educational system like?*
- *Is medical care costly, universal, accessible, etc? What is the medical care system like in this society?*
- *Are there adequate employment opportunities? What kinds of jobs are available and who gets those jobs?*
- *Are all people able to participate in political decision making? How is the government decided? What is the government system? Explain this system*
- *What are some of the challenges this society faces in maintaining justice for all? Are people treated fairly?*

Note: Suggested links for students' research. The following web sites may be helpful to identify and guide research on a variety of world societies:

- A guide to global education: <http://www.globaleducation.edu.au>
- The world fact book from the CIA: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>
- Library of Congress country studies: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html#toc>

2 Ask students to describe examples and non-examples of "valuing diversity" and "defending human rights" that they learned about in their classmates' final products.

4. Students will create PowerPoint presentations or Posters/visuals to help explain the information learned about the country. Have students present their information to their group or to parents and other students during Family Night.



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**Country:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Poverty Rate:**

Do people in this society have enough to eat?

**Housing:**

Is there adequate housing?

**Health Care:**

Do people have access to health care? Is medical care costly or universal?

**Education:**

Do people in this society have equal access to education? What is the educational system like?

How does this society provide adequate food, housing and health care?

Are there adequate employment opportunities? What kinds of jobs are available and who gets those jobs?

Are all people able to participate in political decision making? How is the government decided? What is the government system? Explain this system

What are some of the challenges this society faces in maintaining justice for all? Are people treated fairly?

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### Heroes Mural

**Grade:** K-8

**Brief Description:** Students create a mural showing famous people regarded as heroes.

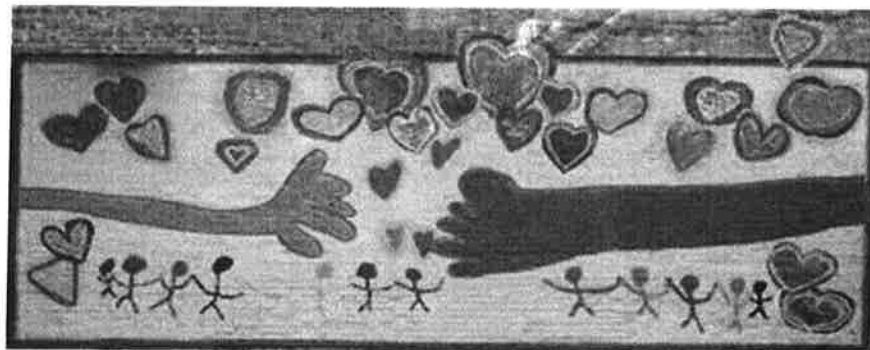
#### Materials Needed

- library sources or computer(s) with Internet access
- drawing paper or construction paper
- a roll of large paper (brown or white)
- student-selected art materials (crayons, markers, paint, etc.)
- glue

#### Lesson Plan

1. Explain the meaning of the word *mural*. If possible, show students examples of murals from art books or other sources.
2. Explain to students that they are going to create a mural showing pictures of famous heroes. Assign each student a famous hero. Have students research pictures of heroes from school texts, library sources, or online sources.
3. After students have completed their research, have students draw and color their pictures on drawing or construction paper.
4. Have students cut out their pictures. Unroll the large paper to the length desired. Have students paste the pictures in different places on the roll. Display the mural on a classroom wall or in a hallway.

Suggestion for younger students: Have students work together as a group to research the pictures of famous heroes or provide the pictures that students use as models for their illustrations. Assist students when cutting and pasting pictures on the roll.





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### Heroes in History ABC Book

#### Grade 3-8

**Brief Description:** Students create an ABC book about heroes in history.

#### Materials Needed

- teacher-selected resources and student-researched library or online sources
- computer(s) with word-processing program or writing paper
- different colored construction paper
- drawing paper
- glue
- scissors
- markers or crayons
- chalkboard and chalk or chart paper
- hole punch
- brass fasteners or loose-leaf rings
- computer(s) with Internet access (optional)

Complete this activity over two lessons.

#### Lesson 1

1. Ask students to name famous people in history we recognize as heroes. Write students' responses on the board or on a chart. Ask students which names on the list they would include if they were to going to write a book about different heroes.
2. Check off students' responses. Ask students to tell the first letter of the last name of each person they mentioned.
3. Write the letters of the alphabet on the board. Check off the letters associated with names suggested by students.
4. Tell students that they are going to create their own ABC book of heroes. The book will include some names on their suggested list plus others that are added to complete the alphabet. (For younger students, you may want to omit the letters Q, X, and Z.) You might share with students a few previously published ABC books from the school library.
5. Let students choose a letter of the alphabet or assign each student a letter. Students will research a hero in history whose last name begins with that letter.
6. Have students write a short biography about the person and draw a picture of the person.
7. Let students use teacher-selected or student-researched library sources or online sources to complete their research. Give students a few days to complete their research, write their biographies, and draw the illustrations.

#### Lesson 2

1. Let students paste their biographies and pictures onto different colored construction paper. Let one or two students arrange the pages in ABC order. Ask students to create a title for the book.
2. Punch two or three holes on one side of each page. Assemble the pages using brass fasteners or loose-leaf rings.



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#### Lesson Four: When is it a challenge to be compassionate?

Students will

- Demonstrate and awareness that scientific research has ethical implications.
- Identify challenges that a scientist might face.
- Defend or oppose a scientific investigation.
- Understand the concepts of ethics and scientific investigation.

**Critical Question: What are the ethical implications of scientific investigation?**

#### Discussion:

Identify what students already know about scientific investigations and the implications they have had to the world. Draw students' attention to things that they use in their daily lives that are a result of science and research. Share with students several scientific advancements such as the Internet, pasteurized milk, soda pop, and ask/discuss:

- *How has this advancement improved life?*
- *Were there any ethical implications during and after the research stage?*
- *What are some possible concerns that people still have?*

Have students research and read information about the Manhattan, and discuss the implications of nuclear research as a class.

#### Activities:

Have students work in small groups to discuss one of the following questions and prepare a presentation for the rest of the class on the various implications of their chosen scientific advancement.

What are the implications of:

- getting and using stem cells for research?
- a person donating their body to science?
- the methods of getting hydrogen to fuel the Hydrogen fuel cells?
- researching racial differences?
- using pesticides like DDT?
- killing animals to be used in research?
- using animals for research?
- diverting a river to construct a hydro dam?
- genetically modifying foods?
- copyrighting medicines?



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### **Wrap-up:**

Have a student-moderated discussion on the implications of being a scientist. Be sure to address some of the following questions:

- Would a compassionate person encounter challenges working as a scientist?
- Should a scientist be personally responsible for the aftermath of their work?
- Is science truth?
- Does a scientist need to consider social issues and concerns?
- Does a scientist need to be as ethical and compassionate as another human being or does the pursuit of science allow them to ignore their ethical side?



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### Lesson Five: How can you be a hero of compassion?

#### Learning Objectives:

Students will:

- Reflect on what it means to be a global citizen.
- Demonstrate an awareness of how one's choices have local or global consequences.
- Present a plan for action to create change in their local or global community.

#### **Critical Question: How do our individual choices affect others?**

#### Discussion:

Have students discuss the following questions in pairs or small groups, then share their thoughts together with the whole class.

- Do we have a responsibility to work for the betterment of our society? Why or why not?
- What happens when we don't consider the repercussions of our consuming choices?
- How can our choices about the food or clothing we purchase make a difference in the world?
- What is an example of one change you could make today that might help to make a positive difference in the life of another individual in your school, local or global communities?

#### Refer to Kidzlit Kit: *The Book of Three* 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Set 2: reading # 1

##### **1. Suggested Activities:**

##### • **Introduction: *Being Yourself (Ongoing)***

**Materials:** butcher paper or large pad of chart paper, markers or writing materials, tape

- **Group Brainstorm:** In the book, a boy names Taran dreams of becoming a hero. Describe someone you think is a hero and why. Then list the names of people the kids think are heroes and heroines. Under a separate heading, ask the kids to identify qualities that make people heroes and heroines. Let the kids discuss which qualities are most important for a hero or heroine and why they think so.
- **Wall Chart:** List the kids' ideas on a piece of chart paper under the heading "Qualities of a Hero or Heroine". Tell the kids that as they read the book, they might want to think about Taran's progress in becoming a hero. After each reading session, invite them to add ideas to the chart under the following headings "Ways Taran Moves Toward Becoming a Hero" and "Ways Tran Moves Away from Becoming a Hero." Hang a separate sheet for each of the three headings on a wall where everyone can see them. You may need to add additional sheets as the kids read further.

##### **2. Reading (Chapter 1-5 pp. 9-62)**

- Read aloud to your group Pause occasionally for the kids' comments and questions about the book, its illustrations, or words they don't know.
- If you did the Introduction activity "Heroes and Heroines", invite the kids' to add their ideas after each reading session



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### 3. Discuss (10-15 minutes)

- What do you think of our “hero” Taran
- How do you think Taran changed since the beginning of the story? What makes you think so?
  - How has Prince Gwydion’s view of Taran changed?
- Why do you think Tarn changed?
  - How has meeting Prince Gwydion contributed to the change?

### 4. Cool Words

Invite kids to pick words they like or want to remember and write them in the Cool Words collections in their journal.

- Moldering tomes (p.12) old musty books
- Ponderous (p.13) heavy and hard to carry
- Concoction (p.18) mixture
- Oracular (p.18) wise and authoritative
- Destiny (p.18) fate; future events in your life
- Aloft (p.19) in the air
- Burrowing (p.20) digging into the ground
- Excavation (p.21) hole
- Thrashing (p.22) moving wildly
- Galloped in his train (p.23) rode fast in a line behind him
- Streamed (p.23) followed
- Avowed (p.28) declared openly
- Bard (p.34) wandering musician and storyteller
- Steeds (p.55) horses
- Gem-studded (p.59) decorated with jewels

### 5. Try This Activity!: *The Bards Sing* (10-15 minutes)

- Tell the kids that bards were traveling musicians who wrote poetry and sang songs about heroes. Have the kids become bards and write a verse or two about Taran’s adventures so far- in any style they want. (How about the “Taran Rap”?) Encourage the kids to incorporate new and interesting words (for example, destiny, bard, steeds) from the book into their poems or songs. (If they want to set their poem to music, it might be helpful to pick a familiar tune first and then write lyrics to accompany it.)





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### Extended Activities

#### **Characteristics of a Hero**

#### **Grades K-8**

**Brief Description:** Students complete a work sheet about the characteristics of a hero.

1. Begin the lesson by asking students what the word *hero* means to them. Write students' answers on the board.
2. Tell students to think about characteristics or personality traits that they think make someone a hero. Provide each student with a copy of handout What Makes a Hero? Have students complete the work sheet on their own.
3. When everyone has finished, lead a discussion of the students' work sheet answers.

For younger students:

Variation 1: Have students complete the work sheet together as a group.



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#### WHAT MAKES A HERO?

**DIRECTIONS:** *Directions: Read the statements below. Circle the word agree next to each statement that matches your opinion of what makes a hero. Circle the word disagree if the statement does not fit your opinion of what makes a hero.*

- |  |       |          |
|--|-------|----------|
| 1. A hero is brave and strong.                         | Agree | Disagree |
| 2. A hero is caring and thoughtful.                    | Agree | Disagree |
| 3. A hero is selfish.                                  | Agree | Disagree |
| 4. A hero is never frightened.                         | Agree | Disagree |
| 5. A hero wants to be rewarded for his or her actions. | Agree | Disagree |
| 6. A hero makes mistakes.                              | Agree | Disagree |
| 7. A hero is never silly.                              | Agree | Disagree |
| 8. A hero is dishonest.                                | Agree | Disagree |
| 9. A hero puts others before himself or herself.       | Agree | Disagree |
| 10. A hero stands up for himself or herself.           | Agree | Disagree |
| 11. A hero never gets angry.                           | Agree | Disagree |
| 12. A hero is always a popular person.                 | Agree | Disagree |

Use your own words to finish the sentence. In my opinion, a hero is someone who:

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Use your own words to finish the sentence. In my opinion, a hero is someone who:



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### Honor Your School and Community Heroes

**Grade:** K-8

**Brief Description:** Students create a special event or an award to honor a hero in the school and/or community.

#### Lesson Plan

- Discuss the kinds of jobs that people often associate as being heroic, such as police officer or fire fighter. Discuss the characteristics and actions of a hero.
- Ask students to think about people in their school and community who they think fit the characteristics of a hero or who have acted in heroic ways. List students' responses on the board or on a sheet of paper.
- Ask students to choose one of the people on their list. Have students create an event or an award to honor that person. Some suggestions:
  - Create a plaque for the person.
  - Invite the person to a special breakfast or lunch.
  - Develop a special program to honor the person. Hold the program in your classroom or other room in the school.
  - Write "thank you" letters to the person.
  - After students decide how they want to honor the person, let students work together to develop the event or award.

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#### Compassionate Consumer

Visit the Facing the Future web site ([www.facingthefuture.org](http://www.facingthefuture.org)) and have your class take their “60 second tour” to help them understand the connection between population growth, consumer choices and world poverty:

<http://www.popinfo.org/>

Ask students to create a journal of their consuming choices for a week. Have them write down the food they eat and where they think the food came from. Ask them to write down any purchases they make and where that item came from. Next have students research the labor practices in these countries and what efforts are being made locally or globally to help to improve these practices. Next, ask them to choose one of the following projects to present their findings:

- Create a poster or PowerPoint to share your findings with the class in a short presentation.
- Reflect on what it means to be a global citizen and write an essay about it. Think about the role of compassion and what it means to be a compassionate consumer.
- Make a plan to organize in the school community to make a positive impact by increasing your school's awareness on this topic. Choose one thing you can do immediately to increase awareness in your school and organize your classmates to carry out this goal.

#### **rap-up:**

Have students calculate their carbon footprints throughout the year and make small changes to help decrease it:

<http://www.carbonfootprint.com>



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### The Story

#### Compassion and the Individual

#### Read to students:

Tenzin Gyatso; The Fourteenth Dalai Lama

#### The purpose of life

ONE GREAT QUESTION underlies our experience, whether we think about it consciously or not: What is the purpose of life? I have considered this question and would like to share my thoughts in the hope that they may be of direct, practical benefit to those who read them.

I believe that the purpose of life is to be happy. From the moment of birth, every human being wants happiness and does not want suffering. Neither social conditioning nor education nor ideology affect this. From the very core of our being, we simply desire contentment. I don't know whether the universe, with its countless galaxies, stars and planets, has a deeper meaning or not, but at the very least, it is clear that we humans who live on this earth face the task of making a happy life for ourselves. Therefore, it is important to discover what will bring about the greatest degree of happiness.

#### How to achieve happiness

For a start, it is possible to divide every kind of happiness and suffering into two main categories: mental and physical. Of the two, it is the mind that exerts the greatest influence on most of us. Unless we are either gravely ill or deprived of basic necessities, our physical condition plays a secondary role in life. If the body is content, we virtually ignore it. The mind, however, registers every event, no matter how small. Hence we should devote our most serious efforts to bringing about mental peace.

From my own limited experience I have found that the greatest degree of inner tranquility comes from the development of love and compassion.

The more we care for the happiness of others, the greater our own sense of well-being becomes. Cultivating a close, warm-hearted feeling for others automatically puts the mind at ease. This helps remove whatever fears or insecurities we may have and gives us the strength to cope with any obstacles we encounter. It is the ultimate source of success in life.

As long as we live in this world we are bound to encounter problems. If, at such times, we lose hope and become discouraged, we diminish our ability to face difficulties. If, on the other hand, we remember that it is not just ourselves but every one who has to undergo suffering, this more realistic perspective will increase our determination and capacity to overcome troubles. Indeed, with this attitude, each new obstacle can be seen as yet another valuable opportunity to improve our mind!

Thus we can strive gradually to become more compassionate, that is we can develop both genuine sympathy for others' suffering and the will to help remove their pain. As a result, our own serenity and inner strength will increase.

#### The need for love

Ultimately, the reason why love and compassion bring the greatest happiness is simply that our nature cherishes them above all else. The need for love lies at the very foundation of human existence. It results from the profound interdependence we all share with one another. However capable and skillful an individual may be, left alone, he or she



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will not survive. However vigorous and independent one may feel during the most prosperous periods of life, when one is sick or very young or very old, one must depend on the support of others.

Inter-dependence, of course, is a fundamental law of nature. Not only higher forms of life but also many of the smallest insects are social beings who, without any religion, law or education, survive by mutual cooperation based on an innate recognition of their interconnectedness. The most subtle level of material phenomena is also governed by interdependence. All phenomena from the planet we inhabit to the oceans, clouds, forests and flowers that surround us, arise in dependence upon subtle patterns of energy. Without their proper interaction, they dissolve and decay.

It is because our own human existence is so dependent on the help of others that our need for love lies at the very foundation of our existence. Therefore we need a genuine sense of responsibility and a sincere concern for the welfare of others.

We have to consider what we human beings really are. We are not like machine-made objects. If we are merely mechanical entities, then machines themselves could alleviate all of our sufferings and fulfill our needs.

However, since we are not solely material creatures, it is a mistake to place all our hopes for happiness on external development alone. Instead, we should consider our origins and nature to discover what we require.

Leaving aside the complex question of the creation and evolution of our universe, we can at least agree that each of us is the product of our own parents. In general, our conception took place not just in the context of sexual desire but from our parents' decision to have a child. Such decisions are founded on responsibility and altruism - the parents' compassionate commitment to care of their child until it is able to take care of itself. Thus, from the very moment of our conception, our parents' love is directly in our creation.

Moreover, we are completely dependent upon our mothers' care from the earliest stages of our growth. According to some scientists, a pregnant woman's mental state, be it calm or agitated, has a direct physical effect on her unborn child.

The expression of love is also very important at the time of birth. Since the very first thing we do is suck milk from our mothers' breast, we naturally feel close to her, and she must feel love for us in order to feed us properly; if she feels anger or resentment her milk may not flow freely.

Then there is the critical period of brain development from the time of birth up to at least the age of three or four, during which time loving physical contact is the single most important factor for the normal growth of the child. If the child is not held, hugged, cuddled, or loved, its development will be impaired and its brain will not mature properly.

Since a child cannot survive without the care of others, love is its most important nourishment. The happiness of childhood, the allaying of the child's many fears and the healthy development of its self-confidence all depend directly upon love.

Nowadays, many children grow up in unhappy homes. If they do not receive proper affection, in later life they will rarely love their parents and, not infrequently, will find it hard to love others. This is very sad.

Children grow older and enter school, their need for support must be met by their teachers. If a teacher not only imparts academic education but also assumes responsibility for preparing students for life, his or her pupils will feel trust and respect and what has been taught will leave an indelible impression on their minds. On the other hand, subjects taught by a teacher who does not show true concern for his or her students' overall well-being will be regarded as temporary and not retained for long.

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Similarly, if one is sick and being treated in hospital by a doctor who evinces a warm human feeling, one feels at ease and the doctors' desire to give the best possible care is itself curative, irrespective of the degree of his or her technical skill. On the other hand, if one's doctor lacks human feeling and displays an unfriendly expression, impatience or casual disregard, one will feel anxious, even if he or she is the most highly qualified doctor and the disease has been correctly diagnosed and the right medication prescribed. Inevitably, patients' feelings make a difference to the quality and completeness of their recovery.

Even when we engage in ordinary conversation in everyday life, if someone speaks with human feeling we enjoy listening, and respond accordingly; the whole conversation becomes interesting, however unimportant the topic may be. On the other hand, if a person speaks coldly or harshly, we feel uneasy and wish for a quick end to the interaction. From the least to the most important event, the affection and respect of others are vital for our happiness.

Recently I met a group of scientists in America who said that the rate of mental illness in their country was quite high—around twelve percent of the population. It became clear during our discussion that the main cause of depression was not a lack of material necessities but a deprivation of the affection of the others.

So, as you can see from everything I have written so far, one thing seems clear to me: whether or not we are consciously aware of it, from the day we are born, the need for human affection is in our very blood. Even if the affection comes from an animal or someone we would normally consider an enemy, both children and adults will naturally gravitate towards it.

I believe that no one is born free from the need for love. And this demonstrates that, although some modern schools of thought seek to do so, human beings cannot be defined as solely physical. No material object, however beautiful or valuable, can make us feel loved, because our deeper identity and true character lie in the subjective nature of the mind.

#### **Developing compassion**

Some of my friends have told me that, while love and compassion are marvelous and good, they are not really very relevant. Our world, they say, is not a place where such beliefs have much influence or power. They claim that anger and hatred are so much a part of human nature that humanity will always be dominated by them. I do not agree.

We humans have existed in our present form for about a hundred-thousand years. I believe that if during this time the human mind had been primarily controlled by anger and hatred, our overall population would have decreased. But today, despite all our wars, we find that the human population is greater than ever. This clearly indicates to me that love and compassion predominate in the world. And this is why unpleasant events are news, compassionate activities are so much part of daily life that they are taken for granted and, therefore, largely ignored.

So far I have been discussing mainly the mental benefits of compassion, but it contributes to good physical health as well. According to my personal experience, mental stability and physical well-being are directly related. Without question, anger and agitation make us more susceptible to illness. On the other hand, if the mind is tranquil and occupied with positive thoughts, the body will not easily fall prey to disease.

But of course it is also true that we all have an innate self-centeredness that inhibits our love for others. So, since we desire the true happiness that is brought about by only a calm mind, and since such peace of mind is brought about by only a compassionate attitude, how can we develop this? Obviously, it is not enough for us simply to think about how nice compassion is! We need to make a concerted effort to develop it; we must use all the events of our daily life to transform thoughts and behavior.

First of all, we must be clear about what we mean by compassion. Many forms of compassionate feeling are mixed with



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desire and attachment. For instance, the love parents feel of their child is often strongly associated with their own emotional needs, so it is not fully compassionate. Again, in marriage, the love between husband and wife - particularly at the beginning, when each partner still may not know the other's deeper character very well - depends more on attachment than genuine love. Our desire can be so strong that the person to whom we are attached appears to be good, when in fact he or she is very negative. In addition, we have a tendency to exaggerate small positive qualities. Thus when one partner's attitude changes, the other partner is often disappointed and his or her attitude changes too. This is an indication that love has been motivated more by personal need than by genuine care for the other individual.

True compassion is not just an emotional response but a firm commitment founded on reason. Therefore, a truly compassionate attitude towards others does not change even if they behave negatively.

Of course, developing this kind of compassion is not at all easy! As a start, let us consider the following facts: Whether people are beautiful and friendly or unattractive and disruptive, ultimately they are human beings, just like oneself. Like oneself, they want happiness and do not want suffering. Furthermore, their right to overcome suffering and be happy is equal to one's own. Now, when you recognize that all beings are equal in both their desire for happiness and their right to obtain it, you automatically feel empathy and closeness for them. Through accustoming your mind to this sense of universal altruism, you develop a feeling of responsibility for others: the wish to help them actively overcome their problems. Nor is this wish selective; it applies equally to all. As long as they are human beings experiencing pleasure and pain just as you do, there is no logical basis to discriminate between them or to alter your concern for them if they behave negatively.

Let me emphasize that it is within your power, given patience and time, to develop this kind of compassion. Of course, our self-centeredness, our distinctive attachment to the feeling of an independent, self-existence, works fundamentally to inhibit our compassion. Indeed, true compassion can be experienced only when this type of self-grasping is eliminated. But this does not mean that we cannot start and make progress now.

#### **How can we start**

We should begin by removing the greatest hindrances to compassion: anger and hatred. As we all know, these are extremely powerful emotions and they can overwhelm our entire mind. Nevertheless, they can be controlled. If, however, they are not, these negative emotions will plague us - with no extra effort on their part! - and impede our quest for the happiness of a loving mind.

So as a start, it is useful to investigate whether or not anger is of value. Sometimes, when we are discouraged by a difficult situation, anger does seem helpful, appearing to bring with it more energy, confidence and determination.

Here, though, we must examine our mental state carefully. While it is true that anger brings extra energy, if we explore the nature of this energy, we discover that it is blind: we cannot be sure whether its result will be positive or negative. This is because anger eclipses the best part of our brain: its rationality. So the energy of anger is almost always unreliable. It can cause an immense amount of destructive, unfortunate behavior. Moreover, if anger increases to the extreme, one becomes like a mad person, acting in ways that are as damaging to oneself as they are to others.

It is possible, however, to develop an equally forceful but far more controlled energy with which to handle difficult situations.

This controlled energy comes not only from a compassionate attitude, but also from reason and patience. These are the most powerful antidotes to anger. Unfortunately, many people misjudge these qualities as signs of weakness. I believe the opposite to be true: that they are the true signs of inner strength. Compassion is by nature gentle, peaceful and soft, but it is very powerful. It is those who easily lose their patience who are insecure and unstable. Thus, to me, the arousal of anger



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### Grades 6-8

is a direct sign of weakness.

So, when a problem first arises, try to remain humble and maintain a sincere attitude and be concerned that the outcome is fair. Of course, others may try to take advantage of you, and if your remaining detached only encourages unjust aggression, adopt a strong stand. This, however, should be done with compassion, and if it is necessary to express your views and take strong countermeasures, do so without anger or ill-intent.

You should realize that even though your opponents appear to be harming you, in the end, their destructive activity will damage only themselves. In order to check your own selfish impulse to retaliate, you should recall your desire to practice compassion and assume responsibility for helping prevent the other person from suffering the consequences of his or her acts.

Thus, because the measures you employ have been calmly chosen, they will be more effective, more accurate and more forceful. Retaliation based on the blind energy of anger seldom hits the target.

#### **Friends and enemies**

I must emphasize again that merely thinking that compassion and reason and patience are good will not be enough to develop them. We must wait for difficulties to arise and then attempt to practice them.

And who creates such opportunities? Not our friends, of course, but our enemies. They are the ones who give us the most jubile. So if we truly wish to learn, we should consider enemies to be our best teacher!

For a person who cherishes compassion and love, the practice of tolerance is essential, and for that, an enemy is indispensable. So we should feel grateful to our enemies, for it is they who can best help us develop a tranquil mind! Also, it is often the case in both personal and public life, that with a change in circumstances, enemies become friends.

So anger and hatred are always harmful, and unless we train our minds and work to reduce their negative force, they will continue to disturb us and disrupt our attempts to develop a calm mind. Anger and hatred are our real enemies. These are the forces we most need to confront and defeat, not the temporary enemies who appear intermittently throughout life.

Of course, it is natural and right that we all want friends. I often joke that if you really want to be selfish, you should be very altruistic! You should take good care of others, be concerned for their welfare, help them, serve them, make more friends, make more smiles. The result? When you yourself need help, you find plenty of helpers! If, on the other hand, you neglect the happiness of others, in the long term you will be the loser. And is friendship produced through quarrels and anger, jealousy and intense competitiveness? I do not think so. Only affection brings us genuine close friends.

In today's materialistic society, if you have money and power, you seem to have many friends. But they are not friends of yours; they are the friends of your money and power. When you lose your wealth and influence, you will find it very difficult to track these people down.

The trouble is that when things in the world go well for us, we become confident that we can manage by ourselves and feel we do not need friends, but as our status and health decline, we quickly realize how wrong we were. That is the moment when we learn who is really helpful and who is completely useless. So to prepare for that moment, to make genuine friends who will help us when the need arises, we ourselves must cultivate altruism!

Though sometimes people laugh when I say it, I myself always want more friends. I love smiles. Because of this I have the problem of knowing how to make more friends and how to get more smiles, in particular, genuine smiles. For there are many kinds of smile, such as sarcastic, artificial or diplomatic smiles. Many smiles produce no feeling of satisfaction,



## Compassion Reading Lessons

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and sometimes they can even create suspicion or fear, can't they? But a genuine smile really gives us a feeling of freshness and is, I believe, unique to human beings. If these are the smiles we want, then we ourselves must create the reasons for them to appear.

#### **Compassion and the world**

In conclusion, I would like briefly to expand my thoughts beyond the topic of this short piece and make a wider point: individual happiness can contribute in a profound and effective way to the overall improvement of our entire human community.

Because we all share an identical need for love, it is possible to feel that anybody we meet, in whatever circumstances, is a brother or sister. No matter how new the face or how different the dress and behavior, there is no significant division between us and other people. It is foolish to dwell on external differences, because our basic natures are the same.

Ultimately, humanity is one and this small planet is our only home. If we are to protect this home of ours, each of us needs to experience a vivid sense of universal altruism. It is only this feeling that can remove the self-centered motives that cause people to deceive and misuse one another.

If you have a sincere and open heart, you naturally feel self-worth and confidence, and there is no need to be fearful of others.

I believe that at every level of society - familial, tribal, national and international - the key to a happier and more successful world is the growth of compassion. We do not need to become religious, nor do we need to believe in an ideology. All that is necessary is for each of us to develop our good human qualities.

I try to treat whoever I meet as an old friend. This gives me a genuine feeling of happiness. It is the practice of compassion.

#### ***Other Related Activities***

##### ***Week 1&2***

- *KWL Chart*
- *Compassion/Caring*
- *Caring for Others*

##### ***Weeks 3-8***

- *What do you Stand for-*
  - *Caring*
  - *Empathy.*
  - *Forgiveness*

##### ***Science***

- *Compassion Science Experiment*

##### ***Mathematics***

- *Kindness Campaign*



## Poetry Yuck

**Grades:** 1<sup>st</sup> -2<sup>nd</sup>

### What's the Story?

*Many students cringe at the thought of writing a poem. But once they perform this reader's theater, they will realize that poetry can be both fun to read and write.*

### Objective:

Students will deliver oral presentations and read passages fluently, focusing on the use of voice and tone as they read. Students will create original poems, using tips in the script.

### Heads Up!

While this script only has six roles, there are ways to involve all students.

- Ask some students to work on presenting sonnets.
- Others can create back drops, props, mask, etc.
- Switch out a different group kids to read Act 1, and then Act 2 and so on.
- During final presentation, students can be the audience and listen respectfully

### Materials:

- Poetry Yuck script books (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> grade Readers Theater Kit)
- Poetry Yuck Primary Sources (pages 32-43 or teachers Resource CD)
- Performance CD and CD player or computer with CD drive speakers (optional)

### Introduce the Literature:

Read the following sentence, taken from *The Tale of Custard the Dragon*, aloud to the students: "And the little yellow dog was sharp as Mustard, But the dragon was coward, and she called him Custard. Tell students that this is a verse from the story that is written as a poem. What did they picture as you read the sentence? What words rhymed? What made the sentence fun to hear? Tell the students that poetry is often difficult to write, but it can be fun, too. Read *The Tale of Custard the Dragon* to the students. Review the book with the class and make a list of words that rhymed throughout the story. Ask the class to use two of the words to make up their own original sentences. Their sentences should give a tip for how the other animals could help Custard not feel afraid. Allow students to share their tips with the class. Tell them that they have each just written a sentence that could be part of a larger poem called "Tips for Creating a Tough Custard"

# Poetry? Yuck!

## Kindness Lesson Plan

### Objectives

- **Fluency:** Students will deliver oral presentations and read passages fluently, focusing on the use of choral reading during the reader's theater performance.
- **Content Area:** Students will create original poems, using tips in the script.

### Summary

Many students cringe at the thought of writing a poem. But once they perform this reader's theater, they will realize that poetry can be both fun to read and write.



### Materials

- *Poetry? Yuck!* script booklets
- *Kindness Character Masks* (pages 38–43 or Teacher Resource CD) copied on cardstock
- copies of the Take-Home Script (Teacher Resource CD)
- PowerPoint® slide show (Teacher Resource CD)
- overhead transparencies of the poem and song
- Performance CD and CD player or computer with a CD drive and speakers

### Introduce the Literature

Read the following sentence, taken from *The Tale of Custard the Dragon* by Ogden Nash, aloud to the students: "And the little yellow dog was sharp as Mustard, But the dragon was a coward, and she called him Custard." Tell students that this is a verse from a story that is written as a poem. What did they picture as you read the sentence. What words rhymed? What made the sentence fun to hear? Tell students that poetry is often difficult to write, but it can be fun, too. Read *The Tale of Custard the Dragon* to the students. Review the book with the class and make a list of the words that rhymed throughout the story. Ask the class to use two of the words to make up their own original sentences. Their sentences should give a tip for how the other animals could help Custard not feel afraid. Allow students to share their tips with the class. Tell them that they have each just written a sentence that could be part of a larger poem called "Tips for Creating a Tough Custard."

### ELL Support



If ELL students struggle with the writing portion of creating a rhyme, allow them to create lines orally. Ask them to share these lines with the class, rather than write them down. Or, have students write a rhyme in their first languages and share their tips for a tough Custard in English or in the target language.

### Involving All Students

Choral reading is the fluency objective for this lesson, so it will be easy to include all students in a variety of ways. Assign groups of students a particular character, and allow them to practice reading that character together as a group before performing as a class. Or, assign only certain lines to read chorally. Meeting the Fluency Objective (page 34) offers further explanation for choral reading and implementation techniques.

## Reading the Script



1. Ask students how they feel about the assignment to write a poem. Do they shout with glee? Do they cringe at the thought? Allow students to share their feelings. Ask why some of them do not like to write poetry. Write their answers on the board. Explain that many other students feel the same way about writing poetry, but after reading *Poetry? Yuck!*, students will discover that writing poetry is easy and fun.
2. Provide a copy of the script to each student, give script booklets to small groups, or print copies of the *Take-Home Script: Poetry? Yuck!* Ask students what the title tells them about the script. Does the title express their feelings about poetry? Tell them that the title also expresses the feelings of two of the characters in the story.
3. Make a list of the six characters on the board from the *Poetry? Yuck!* script, describe each of the characters, and explain their roles in the script. As a class, create a short poem to introduce the characters. For example, "Mike and on have been given a task, so they find Chris and Nicolle with questions to ask." If time permits, students can write a character poem in small groups, rather than as an entire class. This activity may also be completed after the script has been read.
4. Before reading the script, ask students to go on a vocabulary scavenger hunt. Students will work in small groups to find the vocabulary words in the script. They may also write down words that are unfamiliar to them. Each group must find the meanings of the words in either the dictionary or glossary. The first group to explain the meaning of each word in their own words can be crowned the "vocabulary scavenger hunt winners." Encourage students to use the vocabulary words from the Content Area Connection on page 35 as well.
5. Assign the parts in the script. Allow students to read their parts silently to become familiar with the parts before the performance.



## ELL Support

Assign an ELL student to introduce the script by reading the setting and announcing the names of the characters. An ELL student can also state the main idea of the story. Also, write the main idea in the form of a simple sentence on a note card for an ELL student to read.





### Assigning Roles

Assign roles to students based on reading proficiency. When students practice fluency, it is important that they read materials at or below their reading levels so they can focus on accuracy, expression, and reading rate. If a student reads text that is too difficult, attention is focused on sounding out words and comprehension rather than fluency.

Approximate reading levels for the roles in this script are:

- ❖ Cassie: high 1<sup>st</sup> grade
- ❖ Jason: low 2<sup>nd</sup> grade
- ❖ Narrator: high 2<sup>nd</sup> grade
- ❖ Mike: high 1<sup>st</sup> grade
- ❖ Nicolle: low 2<sup>nd</sup> grade
- ❖ Chris: high 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

### Meeting the Fluency Objective

1. The fluency objective for this script focuses on choral reading to help students hear and internalize the fluent reading of a text. Choral reading especially helps struggling readers because they hear the text read fluently by other readers. The struggling reader also gains confidence because he or she does not have to read alone. To teach choral reading, read the following lines from the script:

**Jason:** “We’re doomed!”

**Mike:** “We should just join the circus!”

**Nicolle:** “The circus? What’s with you guys? Did your video game break?”

**Mike:** “No, worse! We have to write a poem.”

2. Ask two volunteers to be Jason, two to be Mike, and two to be Nicolle. Allow students to read their lines aloud with their partners. Ask if reading with another person is helpful. Explain that reading with others often helps students read more fluently as they hear others read the script with enthusiasm, correct phrasing, and correct tone. Tell students that choral reading—or reading the same lines with others—allows for a sense of community as well, because as one reads with others, one becomes a part of that group.
3. When assigning the parts, consider two ways of doing choral reading: Assign approximately four to five students to the same roles, or assign some students the same roles to be performed as choral reading. Also, allow individual students to perform a role without others assigned to that same part.
4. Allow students to practice the lines before performing the reader’s theater, or allow students to read the script as they listen to a recording of it. Tell them to read along with the CD and with their classmates who are assigned the same parts.





### Content-Area Connection— Language Arts

Poetry is often a subject that students do not like because they find it difficult to write and think it

is limited to certain subjects, such as nature. This activity encourages students to write poetry, using their personalities as a guide.

1. Tell the class that it is important to be kind to others, so this week will be Kindness Week. For Kindness Week, each student must write a poem about how to be kind to others.
2. Read the poem “All About Poems” again as a class. Ask the class to identify the tips the poet gives for writing a poem. List the tips on the board.
3. Tell students you also have a list of tips, or guidelines, that you would want them to follow as they write their poems. Write the following on the board:
  - A. Your poetry should show your personality. Are you funny? Then allow your poem to be funny! Are you serious? Allow your poem to be serious.
  - B. Your poetry can be about a topic or activity you enjoy, but it must also be about being kind to others. For example, a student who likes to skateboard might write a poem about helping someone learn to skateboard.
  - C. Your poem does not have to rhyme, but it may if you choose.
  - D. Use one vocabulary word from the script.
  - E. Have fun!
4. For guideline C, explain to students that there are many types of poems (e.g., haiku, limerick, acrostic). Students may choose to write whatever type of poem they wish.
5. Students write their poems and may also draw an illustration if they wish. Place students in small groups, and allow them to share their poems.
6. Finally, ask students what they now like about writing poetry. Is it better than they anticipated? What did they like best about the poetry their classmates wrote? What tips do they have for someone who dislikes a poetry assignment?



### ELL Support

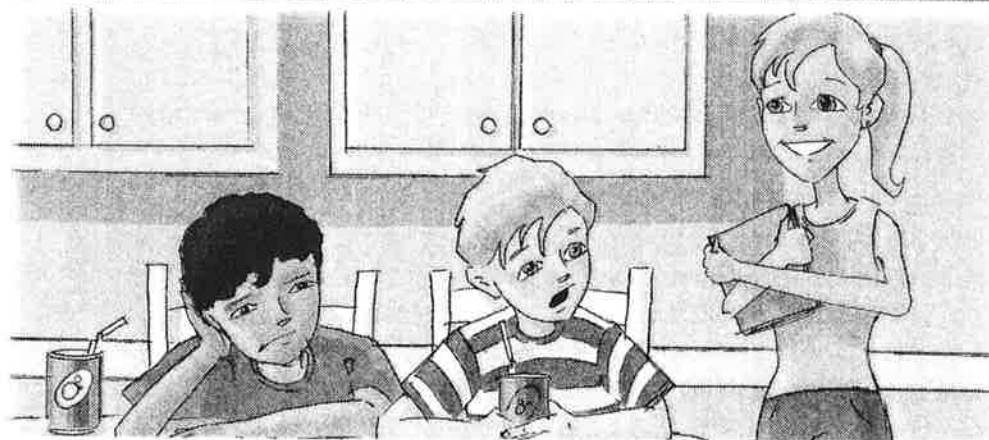
Allow ELL students to work together with other ELL

students to create poems so they can aid each other with the writing process. Also, encourage them to use a picture dictionary when writing poems to help with spelling and with vocabulary of the poems. ELL students may write picture poems. Students fold a piece of 8.5" by 11" paper into four or six squares. In each square, students draw a picture about kindness, leaving space to write below the picture. The students write single words or simple sentences that relate to the picture. The students take turns chorally reading each other's poems.



### Fine Arts Connection

1. The script contains a song and a poem: "Kindness is a Special Song" and "All About Poems." This song and poem are directly related to *Poetry? Yuck!* but are not limited to use with this script.
2. Review the various types of poetry mentioned in "All About Poems," giving examples of each.
3. Assign each small group a type of poem and a topic that is mentioned in the poem, such as "their favorite things," "the universe," or "why their feet are great." To include all students, require that the poem include one idea from each student in the group. Before writing the poem, each student in the group can suggest a few ideas to include in the poem.
4. Ask the groups to share their poems aloud, in a choral reading.
5. After completing the poetry activity, allow students to do a choral performance of the song "Kindness is a Special Song."
6. Then, ask students to share ways they, too, can spread kindness.



### ELL Support



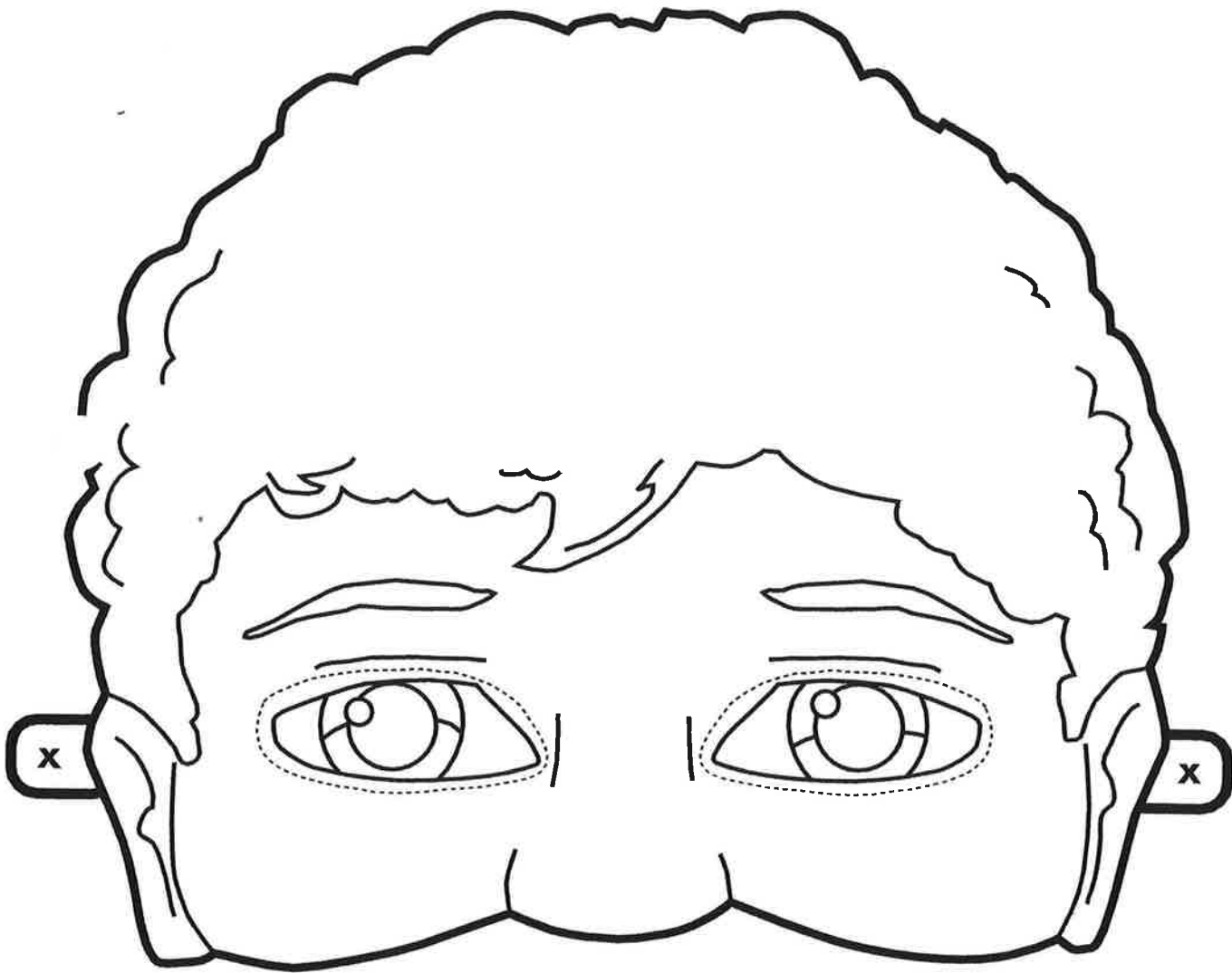
Group ELL students with higher-level students, or allow them to work in small groups with a teacher's aide so they have extra help and support to create their poems. Also, allow them to choose the type of poetry with which they feel most comfortable. When assigning topics to the groups, be sure that the ELL students in those groups have been exposed to some of the words related to the topic.



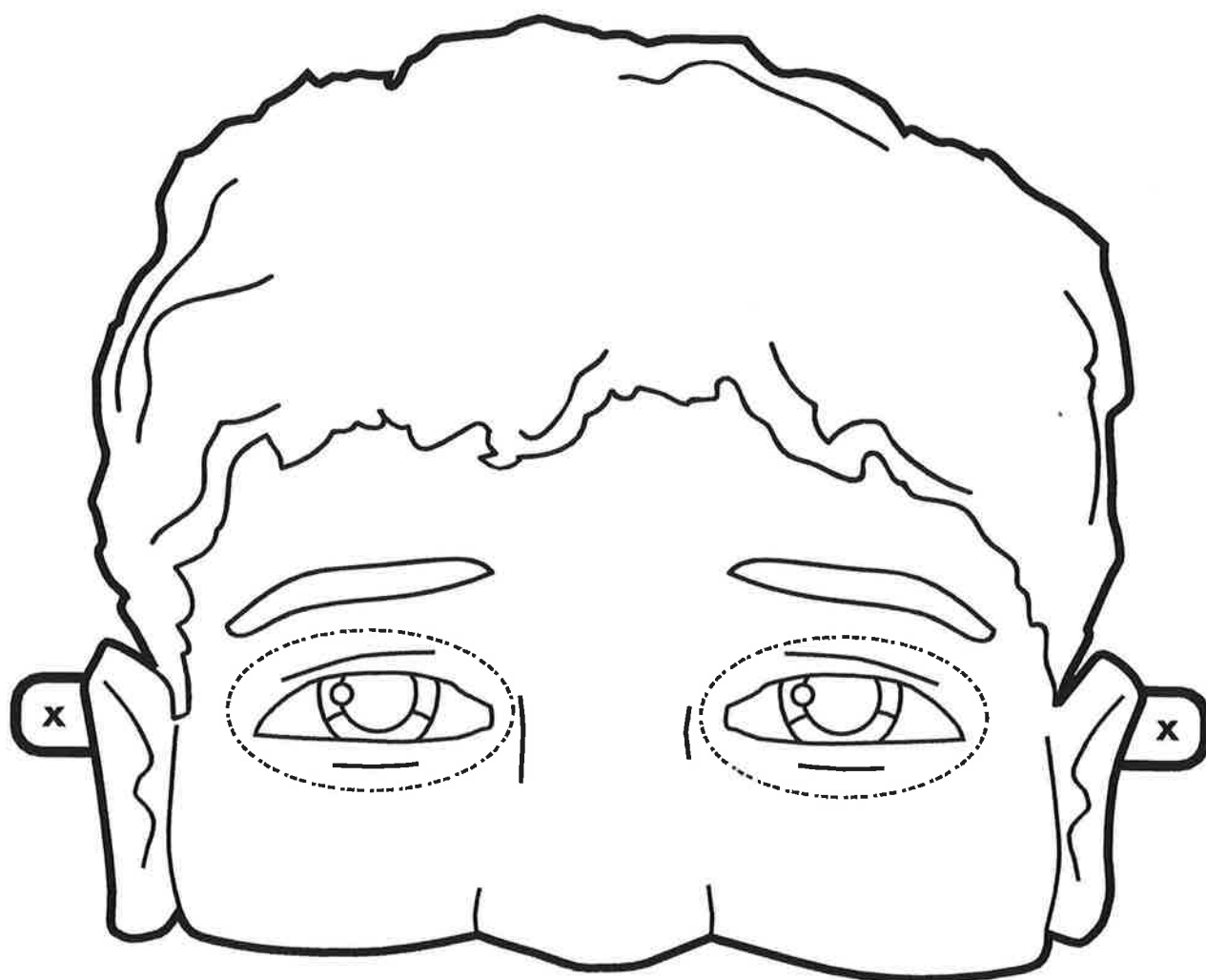
# Cassie



# Chris



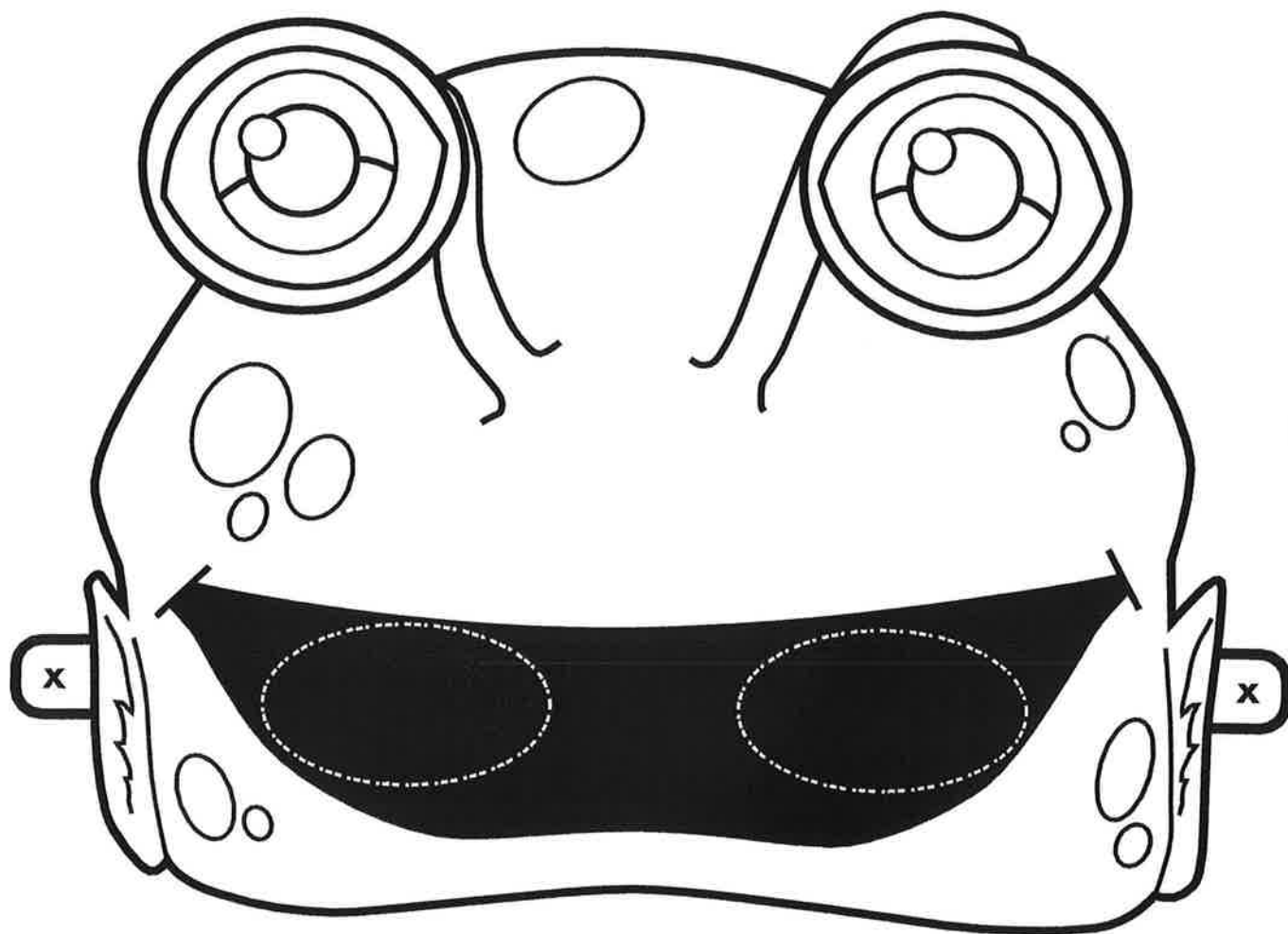
# Jason



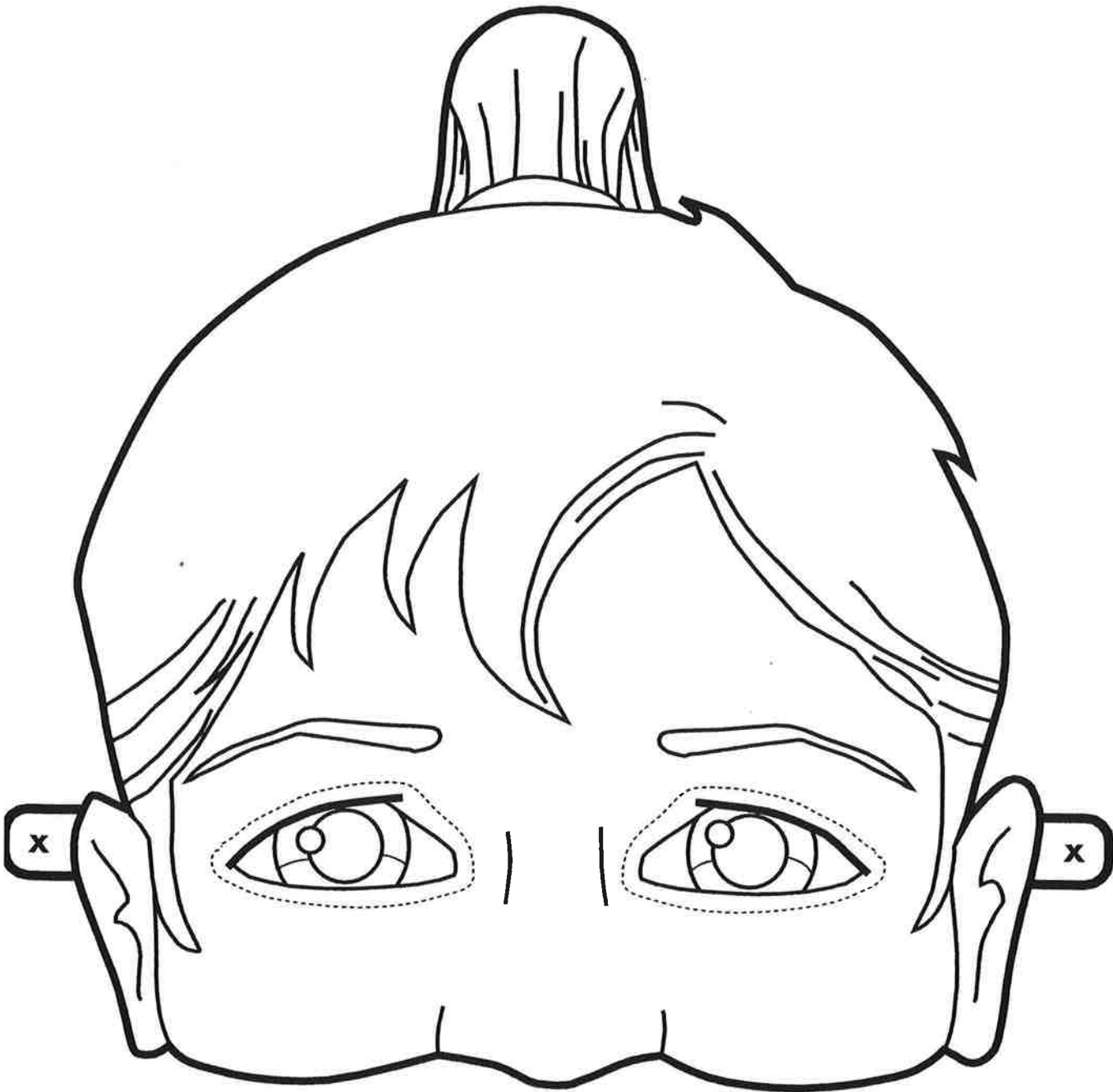
# Mike \_\_\_\_\_



# Narrator



# Nicolle





## Lucky the Firehouse Dog

**Grades: 1<sup>st</sup> -2<sup>nd</sup>**

### What's the Story?

*Firefighters play an important role in our community. But their job is not easy. A firefighter must do many things to prepare for his or her job. Lucky, the Firehouse Dog, takes a cat, Pumpkin, on a tour of a firehouse. Pumpkin learns all about firefighters and how they prepare for an emergency*

### Objective:

Students will deliver oral presentations and read passages fluently, focusing on the use of voice and tone as they read.

### Heads Up!

While this script only has six roles, there are ways to involve all students.

- Ask some students to work on presenting sonnets.
- Others can create back drops, props, mask, etc.
- Switch out a different group kids to read Act 1, and then Act 2 and so on.
- During final presentation, students can be the audience and listen respectfully

### Materials:

- *Community Heroes* script books (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> grade Readers Theater Kit)
- *Lucky the Firehouse Dog* Primary Sources (pages 44-55 or teachers Resource CD)
- Performance CD and CD player or computer with CD drive speakers (optional)

### Introduce the Literature:

Give each student a copy of the reproducible page, The Friendly Firefighter. Ask students to draw on their individual firefighter the equipment or items needed to fight fires. Allow them to share their drawings with the class. Divide students into three different groups. Give one group Daisy the Firecow. Give the next *Firefighters A to Z* and give the third group *Firefighters*. Students read the books in groups, choosing one student to read the book to the book to the group, or take turns reading. Ask students if they learned more information about items a firefighter needs, and have them add those to the drawing,