



OUR BEST SELVES

Lessons on Social-Emotional Learning With ELA

BUILDING EMPATHY THROUGH PERSPECTIVE-TAKING

GOAL: Students will practice taking another person's perspective with empathy.

TIME: One 40-minute class period

MATERIALS: Character Activity Sheet, students' independent reading books or a book that the class is reading together

LESSON STEPS:

1. Tell the class that today's lesson will be focused on *empathy*—understanding someone else's feelings and experiences. As an opening activity, guide students to sit with a partner. Ask students to interview a partner about a time when they experienced a certain emotion (e.g., frustration, worry, pride, excitement).
 - Make sure to discuss guidelines for a respectful conversation, such as active listening, asking open-ended questions, and using kind words.
 - Provide specific questions to help guide the conversation:
 - When did you feel this emotion?
 - What was the situation?
 - Who was involved?
 - How did you deal with this feeling?
 - Explain that when someone shares something personal, we want them to feel safe and supported. Remind students to thank their partners for sharing their stories.
 - After the interviews are complete, give students the option of sharing something new they learned about their partners. Explain that listening carefully to others can help us build empathy. Tell students when we read, we get a close look at characters' experiences and feelings about those experiences, which can also help us build empathy.
2. Have students choose a character from a book that the class is reading, or ask students to choose a character from their independent reading books.
3. Distribute the **Character Activity Sheet**. Have students respond to the prompts. You may wish to model responding to the questions with a character that



is familiar to all students. (For example, the *Ugly Duckling* is teased for looking different from the rest of the ducks. He feels hurt and lonely, which would be on the blue part of the Mood Meter. He shows this when he cries by himself and even runs away from home. It seems like his mother understands somewhat because she tries to comfort him. The rest of the characters don't understand because they continue to tease him even though it hurts his feelings.)

4. After students have finished writing their responses, invite them to share what they learned with a partner. How can empathy help us be better readers? How can empathy help us in our own lives?
5. Wrap up by inviting students to “take your learning with you!” Encourage students to practice perspective-taking in their conversations at home or with friends outside of school and see if it changes the way they see a situation or person.

MY NAME _____

MY MOOD TODAY (CIRCLE)




CHARACTER
ACTIVITY
SHEET

READ WITH EMPATHY



EMPATHY is understanding and sharing other people's feelings. Understanding other people's feelings starts with looking at situations from their perspective. When you read, you can grow your empathy skills by paying close attention to what a character is feeling.

DIRECTIONS: Choose a character in a book you are reading. Write your answers to the following questions as you empathize with the character. Use evidence from the text in your responses.

Title of Book: _____ **Name of Character:** _____

1. What is an event in the book that causes the character to have a strong emotion?

2. How does the character feel? Use specific emotion words to describe the feeling.

3. How do you know that the character is feeling that way? Identify clues in his or her expressions, thoughts, words, actions, or appearance.

4. Do other characters understand how the character is feeling? How do you know?

5. How do you think you would feel in that situation? Would your response be the same as the character's response?

6. What could the character do to be more comfortable with this feeling? What would you do to support the character?

REFLECT: Write your responses on a separate sheet of paper.

1. How did empathy help you understand the story better?
2. How can empathy help you understand yourself and others better?

