



Elementary Lesson: Teaching Peace through Literature and Song

Lesson Purpose:

How can our positive and negative behavior affect others who we perceive as different from us? Through reflection on the story *Thank You, Mr. Falker*, students explore empathy and respect for diversity of people and talents. The students relate the definition of philanthropy to the treatment and respect of others. They learn a song and create new songs to share with others their new understanding of these themes.

Duration:

One Forty-Minute Class Period

Objectives:

The learner will:

- discuss the words respect, diversity, teasing, bullying.
- reflect on personal experiences with positive and negative behaviors.
- discuss what it means to serve

Service Experience:

Students may sing songs to spread a message of kindness and respect for the varied talents and experiences of all students.

Materials:

- read-aloud copy of *Thank You, Mr. Falker* by Patricia Polacco (see Bibliographical References).
- large drawing/construction paper (11 x 14)

Instructional Procedures:

Anticipatory Set:

Introduce yourself and tell briefly about your experience serving as a YACer.

Tell the students that as a YACer, your job is to be philanthropic by sharing money (treasure). The definition of philanthropy is "giving time, talent, or treasure and taking action for the common good."

Tell that that being kind to someone who is lonely or reading to a second grader or teaching baseball to a team in the community are examples of philanthropy because they are sharing time or talent for the common good. With this definition in mind, ask students to raise their hands if they are philanthropists. Ask for a few examples of sharing time, talent, or treasure for the common good.

1. Share with students the quote by Plato, "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle." Ask the students what kinds of "hard battles" people could be fighting. Give examples,

such as someone may not have enough to eat, someone's parent may be ill with cancer, or someone may be struggling to learn to read and feels embarrassed about it.

2. Listen to their ideas and discuss how they treat people when they know they are going through these hard things. Ask them what the quote tells them to do if they don't know what others are facing. Ask them what their classroom would be like if everyone treated each person with kindness and respect.
1. Introduce the book *Thank You, Mr. Falker* to the students. Tell them that this book is based on a true story about a girl who was fighting a hard battle, and other children were not kind to her about it. In fact, they teased her because they saw her as "different."
2. Read the book aloud or share the YouTube reading (see Bibliographical References). Ask them partway through the book to name some of Trisha's strengths and qualities, the good things in her life. Ask how they feel about the way the other children are treating her.
3. After reading, discuss how different people (family, classmates, teachers) behaved toward Trisha and what effect their behavior had (positive and negative).
4. Define philanthropy as "giving time, talent or treasure and taking action for the common good."
5. Ask the students for words to describe Mr. Falker and his personal qualities. Discuss how Mr. Falker was a philanthropist (ways he shared his time, talent, or treasure).
6. Ask the students if everyone in the classroom is the same, looks the same, has the same beliefs, and has the same talents and strengths. Discuss whether classroom diversity (in ability, interests, appearance, experience) makes a stronger or weaker community and why.
7. Teasing and bullying can be shown with looks, neglect, unkindness, and gossip. Ask the students what they think they can do to change how people treat one another.
8. **Reflection Activity:** Give each student a sheet of drawing paper. Tell them to make a quick drawing or write thoughts related to treating people at school with kindness, such as one of the following:
 - My talent that may contribute to the good of all
 - Someone else's talent
 - A kindness I noticed
 - A kindness I can share
9. Play the song "I Think You're Wonderful" by Red Grammer (1-2 times) for the students while they write/draw. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPg7i9nIEf0> Give them a copy of the lyrics, and sing along on the chorus:

Chorus of "I Think You're Wonderful"
I think you're wonderful. When somebody says that to me
I feel wonderful as wonderful can be.
It makes me want to say the same thing to somebody too.
And by the way I've been meaning to say, I think you're wonderful too.

Bibliographical References:

- Polacco, Patricia. *Thank You, Mr. Falker*. Scholastic Paperback, 1998. ISBN: 043909836.
- YouTube reading of *Thank You, Mr. Falker* by actress Jane Kaczmarek
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abN2aP_Dzd0
- "I Think You're Wonderful" YouTube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPg7i9nIEf0> by Red Grammer