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“Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley”

Written and Illustrated by Aaron Blabey

Activities developed for the Early Years

Themes Explored

Friendships and Opposites
Personal Attributes and Embracing Differences
Illustrations Convey Multiple Meanings
Friends Show Empathy and Care for Others
Friendship Heroes

Synopsis of Activities

This Early Years unit is designed to engage students in a sequence of activities that use a range of literacies which explore feelings, friendships and personality traits. The text, *Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley*, is the focus of this unit. Suggested activities promote participation through simple and effective strategies, using technology, process drama, graphic organisers and critical literacy. This unit allows for flexibility so teachers can select activities that best suit time, resources and students' needs and interests. Students are asked to make connections between the text and their own friendships, understanding that the best of friends can be different in almost every way.

1. Friendships and Opposites

Aim:

- Build the field knowledge about the chosen theme - friendships
- Analyse the characters' personality traits
- Recognise differences

Audience: Whole class

Time: One hour

Resources:

- Puppet
- Conscience Alley

Activity Plan:

- a) In a whole class situation, the teacher shows the book cover, reads the title and introduces the two characters on the cover as being good friends. The teacher poses the question, 'What does it mean to be a good friend?' Allow the students time to discuss the possibilities with a partner before opening up the discussion to the whole class.
- b) The teacher begins reading so the students can discover that people wonder why Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley are friends because they are so different. Continue reading to discover what these differences are and pause at page 13, 'Different in almost every way.'
- c) The teacher points out that good readers are always wondering what might happen next. Introduce a puppet who, just like the class, is wondering if Charlie and Pearl are 'suitable' friends or whether they should look for alternative friendships. The puppet is hoping for some advice from the class. Allow students to share their thoughts with classmates. This is an opportunity for students to rehearse their ideas before committing to a more public contribution. After some discussion, set up a 'conscience alley'. This is formed by marking two 3m parallel lines on a carpet. Students who believe Charlie and Pearl should remain friends stand along the right hand side of the alleyway. Students who believe that Charlie and Pearl are not suited and should find other friends stand on the left hand side of the alleyway. Both sides of the alleyway face each other. With the puppet, the teacher walks down the middle of the alleyway, inviting students from either side to express

their viewpoints. The students 'talk' to the puppet (not the teacher). Having heard all the advice, the puppet then expresses eagerness to read on to confirm or deny predictions.

- d) The teacher finishes reading the book. After reading, pose literal, inferential and evaluative type questions. For example:
- Literal Question - What did Charlie do to be a great friend?
 - Inferential Question - How do their differences help their friendship?
 - Evaluative Question - Were they suitable friends?

2. Personal Attributes and Embracing Differences

Aim:

- Build vocabulary bank - personal attributes
- Use developing vocabulary in discussion
- Recognise and embrace differences

Audience: Whole class to list attributes, partner work for process drama and individual for computer work

Time: One hour plus time for computer work

Resources:

- T chart
- Computers with internet access
- Camera and printer (optional)

Activity Plan:

- a) The teacher re-reads the text to renew interest and activate recall. After reading, the teacher leads a class discussion to create lists of character attributes for Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley. Use a T chart to help illustrate that many of their attributes are opposites. Talk may arise that Pearl's and Charlie's attributes may not be typical of a girl or boy. For example, Pearl likes to run amok, is strong and brave. Charlie is shy, has a good bedside manner and likes to knit. These role reversals are an important way to show that gendered stereotypes are just that – stereotypes.
- b) Continuing to focus on character analysis, small groups of students could visit <http://www.wordle.net/> to create a *wordle* specific to one of the characters.

- c) Alternatively, students could craft a biography for a chosen character, including a description of attributes and character likes and dislikes.
- d) The teacher directs the talk to the students' personal experiences. Just like the characters in the book, students are different to one another. The teacher scaffolds students to build vocabulary about personal attributes, for example, serious, imaginative, optimistic, disciplined or cautious. Focus on how one child can be both 'serious' and 'carefree' in different situations. The important point is that individual students should not be labelled as one-dimensional; everyone has different responses in different situations.
- e) To further develop an understanding of these new words, engage students in a process drama activity. One student becomes a lump of clay and a partner becomes the artist. With teacher assistance, the artist selects a word and instructs the clay to take certain forms to create a statue that is a visual and gestural expression of the selected attribute. Viewing this, the remaining students could then guess the selected word. As an optional activity, the statues can be photographed and displayed with the new vocabulary.
- f) As a culminating activity, individuals could craft their own personal *wordles* using personal attributes, including new vocabulary. Again, an alternative idea might be to craft autobiographies detailing personal attributes, likes and dislikes.

3. Illustrations Convey Multiple Meanings

Aim:

- Employ Blabey's techniques to produce a self-portrait
- Recognise and convey multiple meanings through illustrations

Audience: Whole class for discussion and individual for creating self-portraits

Time: One hour plus time to contribute to graffiti boards

Resources:

- Large sheets of plain and coloured paper
- Mixed media
- Individual *wordles* printed on card

Activity Plan:

- a) The teacher explains that the class is going to explore Blabey's acrylic and mixed-media illustrations and the techniques used to convey multiple forms of meaning. The techniques will then be used to create students' self-portraits. These self-portraits will highlight multiple attributes for each student.
- b) Initiate a discussion about the illustrations in terms of the author's intentions. Some example questions might be: What did he want you to know here? What did he want you to know about this character? How did he show when a problem occurred?

As part of this discussion students may notice Blabey's use of:

colour	rosy red cheeks, plain dull backgrounds to make characters stand out, dull grey and blue colours to show emotions such as scared and cold, dull colours used on a page showing a problem followed by a colourful page showing the resolution
line	a wide long line for happy mouth and short thick lines for eyes and eyebrows, the focus is not on 'still life detail' but on emotion and feelings
simple shapes	a circular or oval head

- c) The teacher models how to select a handful of personal attributes (e.g. funny, serious, careful, carefree etc), some of the techniques discussed and materials to create a self-portrait of multiple attributes.
- d) Students create and display their own self-portraits. Below each portrait, display the student's *wordle* on a large sheet of coloured paper. This paper will act as a 'graffiti board'. Invite other students to write messages to that student on the graffiti board complimenting him/her on personality traits, for example, 'Your jokes always make me laugh'.

4. Friends Show Empathy and Care for Others

Aim:

- Make connections between the text and their own friendships
- Record images showing empathy and caring for others
- Produce a play

Audience: Whole class for discussion, individual to record images and small groups to craft plays

Time: One hour plus time for play performances

Resources:

- Computers with internet access
- Mixed media
- Paper and pens
- Easi-speak microphone

Activity Plan:

- a) The teacher displays the two pages in the text where it reads, 'When Charlie Parsley feels scared of scary things ... Pearl Barley makes him feel brave. She's his hero.' Invite the students to view and 'read' the illustrations to identify what actions Pearl takes. Have students make connections to their own lives by asking questions, such as 'Has anything like this happened to you?', 'How are you a friendship hero?' or 'Have you seen others being friendship heroes in class or in the playground?'
- b) After this discussion, have students create an image of one such personal experience. Some students may like to paint or draw their images, while others may prefer to create an audio narrative as a *Photostory*. Chris Goodson offers some advice on how to use *Photostory* in the classroom on <https://chrisgoodson.wikispaces.com/Photostory+in+the+Classroom>. Additional information can be found of the NLNW resources page.
- c) The teacher selects one image and demonstrates how to write a short play using a 'good/bad/good' structure.

Good	establish the setting, characters and situation
Bad	a problem arises
Good	problem is resolved

- d) After this modelled writing experience, select some actors to perform the short play.
- e) In small groups, students then create their own plays following the above sequence modelled by the teacher. After group performances, have the students record these as audio stories using an Easi-speak microphone or a microphone and *Audacity*. For more information on *Audacity*, visit <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>.

5. Friendship Heroes!

Aim:

- Capture others performing acts of kindness
- Present news broadcast or newspaper
- Understand and use attributes that promote friendship

Audience: Whole class, partner work for news reporting and wider school community for news broadcast

Time: Teachers use professional discretion in determining best time frames for taking photos, creating news reports, editing and presenting the final news broadcast or newspaper. If students are not familiar with the technology, teachers could team early years students with learning buddies from upper primary.

Resources:

- Teddy with cape
- Camera
- Paper and pens
- Video camera
- Editing program

Activity Plan:

- a) The teacher introduces a superhero character to the class. It could be a teddy with a superhero cape and a superhero name such as Captain Caring! Explain that Captain Caring is on the lookout for friendship heroes. Have students alert Captain Caring when they notice students coming to the rescue of others, just like the situations dramatised in the previous activity. Capture these situations on camera, such as, helping a friend to cross the monkey bars or tying a friend's shoelace.
- b) As a shared writing experience, the teacher leads the class in writing a news report. An example is 'Riley to the Rescue'. Create more complex sentences and scaffold the students through new vocabulary as well as recording feelings and thought processes.
- c) The students can then work in pairs to produce additional news reports. The photos and published news reports could be compiled to make a class newspaper. Alternatively, set up a classroom news broadcast

complete with reporters and camera crew. Film the reporters reading the published reports using an editing program such as *imovie*. This will enable a picture in picture effect, that is, vision that has the reporter in the foreground and the relevant class photos positioned in the background at the top right hand side of the reporter, just like a real television broadcast!

- d) Share the news broadcast with the wider school community through the school's blog site. See www.edublogs.org for a free user-friendly blog site for classrooms. This encourages students to understand and use attributes that promote friendships in their own lives. What a powerful way to convey a message of friendship and kindness to others!

Biographies:

Notes prepared by Amber Cottrell and Beryl Exley

Amber Cottrell is a Senior Teacher with Education Queensland and is currently a Preparatory Teacher and Year Level Co-ordinator at Waterford West State School in Logan City. Amber takes inspiration from her students, fellow teachers and QUT research team members. She integrates innovative and best practice ideas learned from these educational stakeholders with her current pedagogy. Amber is passionate about Language, Metalinguistics and the teaching of Critical Literacy and is always keen to share resources and skills with others. Amber thoroughly enjoys working in the Early Years and making learning fun for students and teachers alike. Amber's email address is acott15@eq.edu.au.

Beryl Exley is an experienced classroom teacher who now lectures in Language and Literacy at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Beryl enjoys working alongside and researching with talented teachers and is passionate about the teaching of grammar, spelling, reading and writing. She is also the Australian Literacy Educators' Association (ALEA) Queensland State Director and is an active member of the Meanjin (Brisbane) Local Council of ALEA. Beryl's email address is b.exley@qut.edu.au.

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