

FEATHERS

By Heather Forest

First Grade

Outcome:

Children will experience the character education values of kindness, responsibility, and decision making. Students will write to promote a connection between the spoken and written word. Students will increase vocabulary, as new words are presented throughout the story.

Materials:

Poem worksheet

Introductory Activity:

Seat students in a circle on the floor. Teacher informs students they will play a game of telephone. The teacher selects a particular sentence, whispers it to the nearest child and asks that child to pass on *exactly* what he heard to his classmate sitting next to him. Teacher instructs students that they may only ask their peer to repeat the sentence one time. The sentence is passed all around the circle until it reaches the last person, who shares what he heard. Assuming the sentence has changed, the teacher asks the students why the change has occurred. It is important for the teacher to highlight that no one had the intention of changing the sentence or altering its contents. Discussion should focus on how our words can often be misinterpreted, changed and misunderstood as they spread from person to person. Misinterpretations are not always intentional, but can have lasting consequences. Sentence length will vary from class to class.

Suggested Sentences:

1. Think before you speak an unkind word. (7 words)
2. Gossip, like feathers, can float out of our control. (9 words)
3. It is easier to refrain than to reclaim harsh words. (10 words)

Teacher Reading of Story:

While reading, the teacher should stop and explain any words in the book that might be new and/or difficult for the students. Addressing words in the context of the story increases student vocabulary through the utilization of synonyms. For example, "I'm going to read that sentence again and leave out the difficult word and see if you can fill in the blank with a describing word". Examples from the story may include, but are not limited to, the following sentences:

The wise old rabbi's gone *mad* indeed.

You have *soiled* my own good name.

What I said was in *jest*.

BUILDING COMPREHENSION:

Checking Comprehension:

- Who does the main character blame for carrying forth her words?
- Can you take back your words?
- Where does she take the pillow?
- How were the feathers scattered?

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Characterization:

- How can you tell if someone is happy or sad? (facial expression, attitude, posture, position in space)
- Based on the facial expressions of the main character, describe how she feels about her actions.
- Do you think her feelings change at any point during the story?
- Identify where her change in facial expression correlates with a change in her feelings.
- Compare and contrast the main characters expressions with those of the village people. Why do you think they often differ? (Their attitudes towards her actions appear to be very different.)
- Using the pictures, provide adjectives to describe different characters moods and personalities based on their body language.

Predicting Outcomes:

- Do you think the woman expects to be forgiven by the village rabbi?
- Based on the illustrations in the book, can you predict when this story might have taken place?
- When the rabbi assigns the woman her task, do you think she assumes it will be difficult or easy to accomplish?
- Do you think the woman and the rabbi have similar views of the task?
- Based on the woman's ability to complete the task, do you think she has learned a valuable lesson? Can you predict whether you think she will speak unkind words again?

Drawing Conclusions:

- Now that you have met the woman and the rabbi, how would you describe them?
- What was the task that the rabbi assigned to the woman? Was this a realistic task that could be effectively accomplished?
- Did the rabbi get his point across to the woman? Do you think he could have made the same point by using only his words, or was an assigned task required?
- This story is based on a traditional folktale. What parts of the story do you think might change as it is shared from family to family and culture to culture?

Sequencing:

The woman's personality goes through a series of changes as the story progresses. Can you identify a beginning, middle and end to the story and compare these sections of the story to the woman's personality? Identify the setting, problem and solution and retell them as they were presented in the book

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Follow Up Activity:

- After reading the story, ask the class why they thought it was difficult for the girl to collect all of the feathers that came out of the pillow.
- Highlight the comparison of our words and actions to the feathers that floated through the air.
 - Were her words misinterpreted? Why or why not?
 - Do we share similar views on things that are done in jest?
 - Are words tangible? Does something have to be tangible in order to be reclaimed? Can all tangible items be reclaimed?
 - Do our own personal opinions and experiences effect how we view certain situations?
- Instruct students to write a short poem illustrating their thoughts on the meaning of words.
- Supply the initial line of the poem.

Words like feathers float through the air
- Their poems may or may not rhyme.
- Poems need to be a minimum of four lines including the first line.
- Students may illustrate their poem or share their poems with the class.
- Highlight variations in student poems.

Extension Activities/Centers:

- Students can catch compliments from their teachers. Once caught, students will receive a feather with their name on it to be decorated and displayed.
- In a large or small group, have children use a “special” feather as a pointer during shared reading.
- Bulletin Board: During November, students can write (on a feather) why they are thankful and use this feather to “dress a turkey”.
- Science – researching different birds and their feathers.
- Closed writing technique: *If I were as light as a feather I would _____*.
 - Introduction would include questions such as:
 - How would you feel?
 - Where would you go?
 - Why would you do something?
 - Who would be with you?
- Encourage students to expand their writing and describe their experiences as a feather.
 - What did you see?
 - What did you feel?
 - Did you learn anything?
 - Was anything realized on your journey?
 - Do you have different hopes as a feather?

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Name _____ Date _____

Feathers

Words like feathers float through the air...

