

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

SOCIAL SKILLS LESSON PLAN

CASEL COMPETENCY: RESPONSIBLE DECISION MAKING

SOCIAL SKILL: CONSIDERING CONSEQUENCES OF BEHAVIOR

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BOOK INFORMATION

Book title: The Composition

Author: Antonio Skarmeta

Illustrator: Alfonso Ruano

Publisher and date of publication: Groundwood Books, 1998

ISBN: 978-0-88899-550-6

Number of pages: 32

Reading level and interest level: 3-6

BOOK SYNOPSIS

Pedro is a boy who loves to play soccer, but he notices that his parents are always listening to the radio. One day Pedro watches as his friend's dad gets taken away by the military and his friend has to now run his dad's store. Pedro finds out that his friend's dad was arrested because he opposes the dictatorship. Pedro's parents are sad that night as they listen to the radio. Pedro finds out that his dad is against the dictatorship and his mom tells Pedro that children are not against anything because they just need to be children. The next day at school, their teacher has been replaced by a captain who says that they have to write a composition and whoever has the best one gets a medal from the dictator. The children have to write about what their family does at night. Pedro's friend tells Pedro that children can resist the dictatorship. A week passes and the town appears to be in mourning as others have been arrested. The children are told that another class had the winning student and Pedro gets a good grade on his composition. Pedro reads the composition to his parents, where it does not say anything about them listening to the radio and being sad and scared. The parents appear pleased at the end.

This book could be used to show students that sometimes a responsible choice is one that will protect their families. Students can understand that their choices may influence the happiness of their families. This could be especially good for American students to understand why there are refugees.

LESSON OBJECTIVE

The goal of this bibliotherapy lesson is for students to understand that what they choose to do has consequences that may affect others. Sometimes there is an obvious choice and sometimes it is not so obvious or easy.

LESSON MATERIALS AND ADVANCE PREPARATION

K-2 students materials:

- A piece of construction paper for each child
- Color markers, pencils, crayons, etc. for each child.

3-6 students materials:

- A piece of lined paper for each child
- A paper or pencil for each child

Advance preparation:

- Familiarize yourself with what a dictatorship is and how it is tacitly influencing characters in the book
- Because this book addresses lying for your family's safety, if you know there is a history of abuse for one of your students, perhaps choose another book so that the student does not interpret the message of the book as lying to protect those who abuse him.

KEY VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS

Disappointed: sad or displeased because someone or something has failed to fulfill one's hopes or expectations.

Header: A soccer move where a player hits the ball with his head

Dictatorship: An individual or group of people hold all the power without considering the wishes of the people they govern over.

Mass: A religious service for people of Christian faiths, usually Catholicism

Resistance: Where part of the population organize to withstand the occupying power

Composition: An essay

Priority: Something that is treated as more important than other things

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Tell the students that this book takes place at the beginning of a dictatorship. If they have the prior knowledge, reference other dictatorships such as Hitler's regime. Explain to the students what a dictatorship is (The very last page of the book has a simple and comprehensive explanation). Explain that this book has a character who has to make a difficult but important choice.

READ THE BOOK

POST READING DISCUSSION

Ask the students how Pedro's priorities changed throughout the book. Whereas before he was concerned with the perfect soccer ball, now he was concerned with what? How does his choices affect his new concern for resistance?

Some children may like the idea of being in a parade and wearing a sash, but Pedro did not. What would you choose if you were Pedro? Why?

How did Pedro's choice help his parents? What kind of hard choices have you had to make?

Explain to the students that this lesson is not intended to show that lying is OK, especially lying to protect someone who is hurting you. Rather, the lesson is intended to show that sometimes we have to make difficult choices that may not have an obvious best choice.

POST READING ACTIVITY

K-2: For students who have experienced trauma due to a dictatorship, have them draw a picture that the book reminds them of. Ask questions about what is happening in the picture.

3-6: Ask the students to pretend they are in Pedro's shoes and they are asked to write about what their family does at night knowing that the dictatorship is trying to find people in the resistance. Write a paragraph about what you would write if you were Pedro.

CLOSURE

What we choose to do might have consequences on others. Sometimes our choices are obvious and sometimes they are not. Throughout the week, pay attention to the choices you are given and think about what may happen with each choice. Pick one and report to the teacher what the consequences were.



“Sometimes the hardest thing
and the right thing
are the same.”

- The Fray