

Empathy Through Senses

This lesson focuses on caring through empathy. Students will use their five senses to create a short story based on a piece of artwork that illustrates people from another culture/country. Note: this lesson could easily be split into two 20 minute lessons if needed. Simply end the first lesson after the Inspire Read Aloud story.

Caring Sub-Concept(s)

Compassion, Empathy, Kindness

Lesson Timeframe

45 minutes

Required Materials

- Malala's Magic Pencil* by Malala Yousafzai
- Art images (6-8 copies of each OR projected within the classroom)
- Prompting Worksheet
- Lined Paper
- Pencils

Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.



**DESIGNATED BY CASEL
AS A RECOMMENDED PROGRAM
FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.**

See last page for details.

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Demonstrate an introductory understanding of empathy using the five senses
- Develop empathy for scenarios depicted in art.

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Compassion and Empathy go hand in hand. When you experience that tug of compassion, you are often able to express empathy simultaneously. Last week we focused on paying closer attention to the frequently forgotten in your community. This week, the challenge goes even deeper. Pick one person in your community to empathize with and place yourself in their shoes for one day. What is their day like? What struggles might they encounter? What might be the highlight of their day? If possible, try and live one day the way they would. If this isn't possible, try visualizing the day or journaling about it. Compassion leads us to feel emotions. However, true empathy allows us to place ourselves squarely in the place of the other person, with their highs and lows, their struggles and their celebrations. This simple exercise can help you practice empathy more readily with all different people both locally and internationally.

Tips for Diverse Learners

- Allow students to dictate their answers.
- Pair students up to complete the activity together if needed.



Share

5-7 minutes

Using a ball of string, build a caring spider web.

- Starting with the teacher, the person with the ball of string says one kind thing about another person and then tosses them the ball of string while holding onto a piece of the string as well.
- The student will then choose someone else and repeat the activity. At the end of the game, everyone should be holding onto the string and you will have created a giant caring spiderweb!



Inspire

What is Empathy?

15-20 minutes

Explain that Empathy is the ability to share and understand other people's feelings. This might sound confusing, but you actually do it almost every day in class. Have you ever seen a friend fall down and get hurt? How might they feel? Can you imagine their pain? Yes, of course we can! Everyone in our class has hurt themselves at least once. We know that pain. We can share and understand their pain because we know what it feels like from our own experience. This is empathy. Sometimes something happens to others that we have never experienced. We can still show compassion, but we have to try very hard to put ourselves in their shoes. Trying to imagine what they are feeling can help us understand their feelings so we can show kindness and empathy towards them.

Read Aloud “*Malala’s Magic Pencil*” by Malala Yousafzai (10-12 min)

YouTube link for read aloud <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSrC-GNbjQg>

After reading the story, review some of the similarities and differences in Malala’s culture and ours:

- What are some things that you and Malala have in common?
- What was the biggest change you noticed in her culture after the dangerous men came to her town?
- How did it make you feel to find out that Malala and the other girls were banned from going to school?

The ability to put yourself in Malala’s shoes even though our education here has never been restricted in your lifetime is what empathy is all about!



Empower

20 minutes

Explain that students will explore empathy by creating a short story with a partner using the prompts provided based on a piece of art. Show the pictures below and read the brief title of each. Do not provide further discussion about interpretation. This will be done with their partners.

- You will need 5-8 copies of each work of art. If you cannot print them in color, you could project them within the classroom and assign a letter or number to each one.
- Assign each pair a specific painting. It is best to do this randomly by having them choose a card from a face down pile or roll a die for a corresponding number connected to one of the paintings.
- Review the prompts worksheet below:
 - What is happening in this painting?
 - What is the person/people in the painting looking at?
 - What might they hear?
 - What might they taste? Imagine they have just eaten.
 - What might they be touching or holding on to?
 - How are they feeling?
 - Encourage the pairs to use empathy to put themselves in the place of the person or people represented in the painting. The answers should not be your personal interpretation, but rather an educated guess as to how you imagine the subject of the painting to be. Use the clues in the painting (colors, expressions, other items, etc.) to help you judge their experience.
- Once the prompts are completed, one person of the pair will turn the writing into a combined paragraph.



Reflect

5 minutes

Allow each pair time to read their paragraph aloud. (This can also be completed by the teacher).

- Which sense was the hardest to imagine? Why?
- Was it difficult to use empathy to put yourself in someone else's shoes? Why or Why not?
- How does empathy help us to better understand where others are coming from?



Extension Ideas

- Combine this lesson with your art teacher and dive into art appreciation. Students can explore the components of art appreciation as it relates to kindness and empathy.
- Allow each pair to illustrate their story by recreating their work of art using their personal interpretation.
- At Home Extension: Have students interview a person in the home about a favorite childhood memory. Have each student report back their findings to the class!

RAK Notebook Prompt (See RAK Notebook Project in the Respect unit for more details):

- Write the word CARING down vertically on a piece of cardstock and glue it into your notebook.
- Using each letter as the first letter of a word, describe what you have learned during this unit.
- Remember to incorporate the helper concepts: self-care, helpfulness, gratitude, compassion, and empathy.

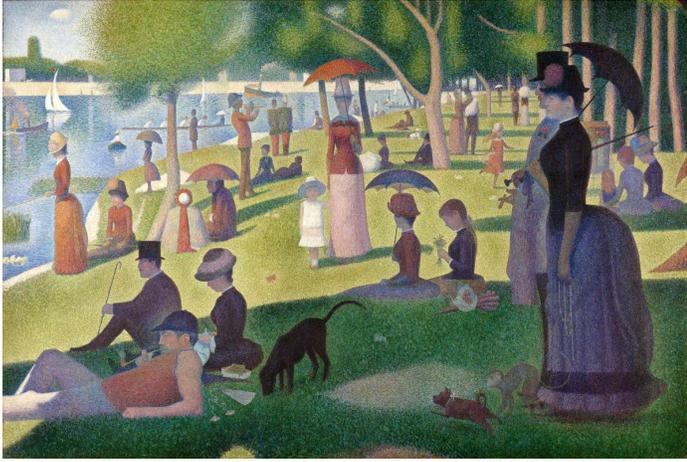


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AND EMOTIONAL
LEARNING.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs.

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>



A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte
Painting by Georges Seurat



Grand Mother with Baby
Painting by Patrick Kinuthia



Mona Lisa
Painting by Leonardo da Vinci



Father and Son
Painting by Xie Dongming

Use your imagination. Use empathy to put yourself in their shoes. What is happening in this painting?

What might they be looking at?

What might they be hearing or listening to?

What smells might be around them?

What might they have just eaten?

What are they touching with their hands and feet?

How are they feeling?

Once you have all the answers to these questions, you are ready to write your story. Simply turn each answer into a complete sentence. Here is an example:

We are watching an exciting boat race. We are looking at the sailors as they race by us. We hear the cheering on both sides. We smell the bread in our picnic baskets. We have just finished our sandwiches with meat on them. Our feet are touching the grass and our hands are holding our umbrellas. We are feeling excited because our team has just won!