



# CHARACTER BUILDING ACTIVITIES

## THE LITTLE RED TRAIN

### Story Description

Trapped high on a mountain by deep snow, hungry townspeople wait desperately for one of the three big trains to bring them food, but they all refuse to go up the mountain. Seeing the desperate situation, The Little Red Train and a family of brave helpers decide to go up the mountain in spite of the ridicule from the big trains. The Little Red Train and its helpers overcome severe obstacles and save the people from starvation.

In this exciting and vividly illustrated book, Carl Sommer shows the value of perseverance, compassion, and civic virtue, and children learn to sing the song of, Try! Try! Try!



### Major Objective

To define and present the following virtues so they can be integrated into the life of each student:

- Perseverance: continuing to do something until the obstacles are overcome and the task is completed
- Perseverance: continuing to do something until the obstacles are overcome and the task is completed
- Civic Virtue: showing moral goodness in carrying out the responsibilities related to the community where you live



### Story Time Interaction

Read the story, **The Little Red Train**, and then write these three virtues on the board: perseverance, compassion, and civic virtue. Define and discuss these virtues.

Discuss the main characters: The Little Red Train, the big trains, the Kinderfelds, and the people on the mountain.

### Activities

**Objectives:** To use the following activities to help reinforce the virtues of civic virtue, compassion and perseverance. To guide students to consider that working together can overcome obstacles and complete seemingly impossible tasks

## We Are a Community

**Goal:** To help students realize that we are part of the global community

**Lesson:** Define and discuss community. Community: a group of people who have close ties and common interests. Ask students what ties and interests make them a community. Point out that they are a small community (class) within a larger one (school) within yet another (district), etc.

Class–School–District–City–State–Nation–World

Together all of these groups make up an entire world. Each group is important. Similar to a puzzle, if one piece is missing, there is a blank space.

### Class Puzzle

Make a *class puzzle* to show the importance of each one to the whole.

Make a large class sign with grade or name (i.e., Grade Two) and divide each letter into pieces (i.e., 3 pieces per letter is enough for 23 students and the teacher). On the back, mark with the correct letter it matches and an arrow to show which way is up. Give each student a piece of the sign to color and decorate. Then have each student find his or her piece in the appropriate place in the puzzle. Point out that until all the pieces are together, the puzzle is incomplete.

### People Helping People

#### Social Studies/Map Reading Skills

**Goal:** To help students understand where they are in relationship to their town or city

**Class Discussion:** How people worked together when a disaster came to their town or city

**Step 1: Map:** Find a large map of your local town or city. Locate and mark the school on the map. If it is a city map, highlight other small surrounding towns. If it is a town, highlight various subdivisions and even let the students identify who lives where. Let students share if they have friends or relatives in the area being highlighted.

**Step 2: Define disaster**—something that causes great destruction. Discuss possible disasters that could happen or have happened in the past in their area. Emphasize how people in the community have helped each other to clean up, repair, get money, etc. Also emphasize the various teams who work together to help others, such as police personnel, firefighters, doctors, and hospitals. Explain that they are trained to help in emergencies, but they must also have the help of other members in the community to restore and rebuild the community.

Everyone must work together just as The Triumphant Train and the Kinderfelds did.

**Step 3: Make a Bulletin Board:** Put on the bulletin board news clippings and photos of people in various communities working together to overcome obstacles and to rebuild after disasters. These may be from any community in the world.

## Discovering the World

**Goal:** To help students discover how other people live in the world

**Student activity:** Explain to students that in order to get better acquainted with other communities around the world they are going to have a Multicultural Fair. Assign or let students choose a country that they would like to represent. Students may dress in the costume of the country represented, and they are responsible for setting up a booth about the country.

Booths may have pictures, books, and items that represent the country, i.e. music, instruments, dishes, pictures of ethnic food, pictures from the country, etc. The booths may be set up around the school so other students may see the displays.

## Singing and Word Games

**Goal:** To have the class learn and understand the song: *Try, Try, Try*

**Word Games:** After learning the song, divide the class into two groups. Write on the board: “**We’ll do our best and try**”. Each group is to see how many new words they can make from, “We’ll do our best and try.” One person in the group is assigned to write down the words. The contest should be which group gets the most words, and which group gets the longest word. If both groups have an equal number of longest words, the winner is the one having the greatest number of longer words.

For another word game, write on the board “**Perseverance**.” Explain how important this word is for success. Ask the class how the story of *The Little Red Train* taught about perseverance. As above, divide the class into two groups and have a contest to see how many words and the longest words they can make from the word “perseverance.”

## Game—Team Playing

**Goal:** To help students understand the importance of working together as a team

**Game:** Divide the class into two groups. Put one piece of wrapped candy on a paper plate for each student in the class. If the class is uneven, the teacher can be part of a group. Give each group a plastic

spoon. Decide how long the course should be, and put an empty plate at the opposite end. The students have to work in teams to win. At “go,” one student picks up a candy with the spoon and races to the other end. Hands are not permitted to touch the candy. If the candy drops, only the spoon can be used to pick up the candy. When the candy is placed into the plate, the student rushes back to his or her team and passes the spoon to the next player. The last one in the group to finish first determines the team winner.

This lesson is to teach the importance of a community working together. If one student goes purposely slow, it will affect the entire group.

### **Tying It All Together**

It is compassion that compels people to look for ways to help when disaster strikes. The Little Red Train and the Kinderfelds had compassion for the people on the mountain, and that is what made them keep on trying even when things were difficult.