



CHARACTER BUILDING ACTIVITIES

SOMMER-TIME STORIES

ANDROCLES AND THE LION

Story Description



Androcles lives a miserable life as the slave of a cruel and unjust master. Even though runaway slaves face the death penalty, he flees to the nearby woods. There Androcles delights in his new-found freedom. He also makes an unusual friend: a lion with an injured paw. The two live together happily, but the lion gets captured, and shortly afterwards Androcles, too. Androcles is punished by being fed to a lion.

Androcles prepares to die, glad that he has enjoyed a few weeks of freedom. To his surprise, the ferocious lion doesn't attack. It's the lion he helped! The emperor, amazed at what he observed, frees both Androcles and the lion. Androcles then spreads the message that everyone should appreciate their freedom and that slavery should be abolished. This retelling of Aesop's classic fable demonstrates the importance of freedom and friendship.

Major Objective

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

- Citizenship: having the rights, privileges, duties, and responsibilities of where you live
- Appreciation: valuing or regarding highly; an expression of gratitude
- Fairness: free from bias or impartiality; not showing favoritism or treating anyone unequally

Story Time Interaction

Read the story, *Androcles and the Lion*, and then write these three character traits on the interactive whiteboard: citizenship, appreciation, and fairness. Define and discuss these character traits.

Discuss the characters:

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| Androcles | The slave master |
| Another worker | The lion |
| The boy, girl, and mother in town | |
| A young man | The soldiers |
| The emperor | Two neighbors |

Activity Objectives

To use the following activities to reinforce the character traits of citizenship, appreciation, and fairness. To guide students to consider the importance of compassion, courage, diligence, friendship, honesty, kindness, loyalty, perseverance, proper work ethic, and self-discipline.

Don't Let Anger Explode

Discuss the fact that Androcles was able to control his emotions and actions. He did not get angry at the slave master. It is important to have self-discipline and not let your temper get the best of you. Instead, you should deal with problems before they get out of control. If you lose your temper, it only causes more problems and gets you into more trouble. Conduct the following science experiment to show the problems that come from "blowing your top." This project should be done outside or in an area that is easy to clean up. You will need soda pop in a clear bottle. Shake the bottle of pop up a lot. As you are shaking the pop, explain that life has its shake-ups, too. Life's shake-ups are times when you feel a lot of pressure. For example, perhaps teasing from a brother or sister shakes you up, or maybe you feel that you're not being treated fairly. (Use examples of things that upset your students). Next take the top off the bottle and soda pop and fizz will fly everywhere. Explain that when you lack self-discipline, you are just like the bottle of soda pop. Just as the pop flying everywhere makes a mess and causes problems, you make messes and have problems when you lack self-discipline. Also, discuss strategies students can use to help control their anger. For example, students can count to ten when they get mad or go in another room away from the person aggravating them.

If You're Angry, Sing This Song

Discuss how important it was for Androcles not to show anger to the slave master. He had to use a lot of self-discipline. To help students remember to use self-discipline, teach them the following song (If You're Angry and You Know It). Sing it to the tune of If You're Happy and You Know It, Clap your Hands.

If you're angry and you know it,
Take three breaths.
If you're angry and you know it,
Take three breaths.
If you're angry and you know it,
Then your face will surely show it.
If you're angry and you know it,
Take three breaths.

If you're angry and you know it,
Count to ten.
If you're angry and you know it,
Count to ten.
If you're angry and you know it,
Then your face will surely show it.
If you're angry and you know it,
Count to ten.

If you're angry and you know it,
Talk it over.

If you're angry and you know it,
Talk it over.
If you're angry and you know it,
Then your face will surely show it.
If you're angry and you know it,
Talk it over.

If you're angry and you know it,
Sing this song.
If you're angry and you know it,
Sing this song.
If you're angry and you know it,
Then your face will surely show it.
If you're angry and you know it,
Sing this song.

The Giggle Game

Have students play the Giggle Game to show their self-discipline. One person is designated as "it." A few students will try to get the person who is "it" to giggle or laugh (making silly faces, telling jokes, etc., but no one can touch him). Once the person who is "it" laughs, let someone else be "it." Make sure everyone gets a chance to either be "it" or be the ones who try to make him laugh. Then talk about how hard it was not to laugh.

The Turtle Technique

Discuss which is harder—controlling laughter or controlling anger. Explain the turtle technique to children for controlling anger. First, they should STOP and take a break. This means no yelling, hitting, or kicking. Second, they should act like a turtle and go in their shell. They take three deep breaths and do some positive self-talk like "It will be okay." Finally, they should think about what happened, why they are mad, and what to do about. They need to decide what to do based on consequences (what will happen). Then they can come out of their shell and explain in words what their decision is. They might say: "You took that toy from me, but I'm going to have more fun with this toy." Give some scenarios and have students role play what to do using the turtle technique.

Heroes in History

Share the following biographies about some very courageous people in American history.

Sergeant Alvin York grew up in the hills of Tennessee. Like most of the mountain folk, York learned to hunt early and became a crack shot. As he grew to be a young man, he became wild, often drinking and fighting in bars. Finally, at the age of 27, he converted to Christianity and gave up his wild ways. Though he did not want to fight in World War I, he was not granted conscientious objector status. Then during his basic training, he talked to his superiors and decided that it would be the right

thing to do, so he would fight in order to save lives in the war. Indeed, that is what happened. During the last major battle of World War I, the Americans were attacked by the Germans who were using machine guns. York worked his way behind the German lines, sharp-shooting as he went. When it was over, he had killed 28 Germans and captured 32 machine guns and 132 Germans, including three officers. After the war York received numerous decorations including the Congressional Medal of Honor for his outstanding acts of bravery.

During the American Revolution in 1778, Mary McCauly (who became known as Molly Pitcher) went to the battlefield with her husband. Molly carried pitchers of water to the soldiers, often under heavy fire. When her husband was down and carried off the field, Molly manned his cannon. Though her skirt was shot and partially torn off, she persevered until the British retreated in defeat. The battle was viewed as a major victory for the American army. Molly had put her life on the line in order to serve her country in a time of need.

Audie Murphy was a war hero, movie actor, writer of country and western songs, and a poet. Audie was born on a sharecropper's farm in North Texas on June 20, 1924. He only went to school for five years and was orphaned at age 16. After being rejected by the Marines, Paratroopers, and Navy for being too small (5'5") and underweight (110 lbs.), he enlisted in the U.S. Army a few days after his 17th birthday. (His sister changed his birth certificate to make it look like he was 18). When he passed out during part of his basic training, his commander considered transferring him to cook school. Once overseas, Murphy fought in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, France, and Germany. When his good friend was killed by a German soldier who was pretending to surrender, Murphy marched forward and single-handedly took out the German machine gun and used it to wipe-out several additional Germans, earning himself the Distinguished Service Cross. Soon he won a Silver Star for clearing a machine gun position near Cleurie Quarry and another award for advancing to direct artillery near Le Tholy. In France, under heavy enemy fire and with only nineteen men remaining, Murphy ordered the survivors to fall back. As they withdrew, Murphy provided covering fire. With his ammunition gone, he climbed on a burning M10 tank destroyer and used its .50 caliber machine gun to kill dozens of Germans. Although wounded in the leg, Audie Murphy continued this fight for nearly an hour until his men began moving forward again. For driving the Germans from Holtzwihr, Murphy received the Medal of Honor on June 2, 1945. He earned a battlefield commission for his courage and leadership ability as well as citations and decorations including every medal for valor that America gives along with three French and one Belgian medal. Lieutenant Audie Murphy was the highest decorated soldier in American history, earning 33 medals, but he wasn't your typical war hero; he was small and boyish looking and had a shy and soft-spoken personality. After the war, Audie went to Hollywood at the invitation of movie star, James Cagney. He acted in 44 films and starred in 39 of them, most of which were Westerns. Murphy was voted the Most Popular Western Actor in America by the Motion Picture Exhibitors. In addition, he wrote the lyrics to 16 country and western songs. Sadly, Audie Murphy was killed in a plane crash near Roanoke, Virginia on May 28, 1971 at the age of 46. On June 7th he was buried at Arlington National Cemetery where myriads of beloved fans have visited his gravesite.

We're Thankful for Heroes Day

Discuss Memorial Day which occurs at the end of May each year. Explain that Memorial Day is a day to remember and honor war heroes who died in battle and also anyone who has served or is serving in the military. Develop a "We're Thankful for Heroes Day" for veterans and anyone on active duty in the military. Invite some veterans or active duty military personnel into the classroom. Have students sing a patriotic song such as the Star Spangled Banner or some other appropriate song. Then have the guests share stories and tell about their experiences in the military. At the end have students pass out thank you cards that they prepared prior to the guests coming.

Research Famous Heroes

Share the following quote by Eleanor Roosevelt: "You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop and look fear in the face... You must do the thing you think you cannot do." Ask students if they can think of anyone from history or current events who showed a lot of courage. Here are some famous people who showed a lot of courage: Christopher Columbus, Galileo, George Washington, Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela, Ruby Bridges, Gandhi, Amelia Earhart, Joan of Arc, William Wilberforce, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, Martin Luther King, Jr., Neil Armstrong, John Glenn, Charles Lindbergh, Susan B. Anthony, Clara Barton, Meriweather Lewis, Nathan Hale, and Jane Adams. Students will choose a courageous person, research, and write about him or her.

Courageous Animals

Talk about how Androcles had a lot of courage. How did he show it? Some animals also show courage. For example, the mongoose is a very fast and courageous animal. If it meets a cobra, it doesn't run away, but instead fights to protect its family and home. The mongoose provokes the cobra to strike repeatedly, but of course, the mongoose dodges and avoids the strike. It does this over and over until it makes the final killing bite on the back of the neck when the snake is exhausted. Sometimes a mongoose will fuff up its fur so it looks twice as big as it really is. That's why it's not surprising that the cobra will wind up with a mouthful of fur. Plus, the mongoose's fur is so thick that the snake cannot bite through it. If the mongoose does get bitten, it has great tolerance for the snake's venom. In fact, the snake venom bounces off the muscle cells of a mongoose so that it is not affected. Mongooses became more widely known through Rudyard Kipling's story, *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi*, in which a mongoose saves a whole family from a deadly pair of cobras in India. If possible, allow students to watch the video, *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi*, or on the internet watch a mongoose kill a cobra. Then share and discuss these quotes on courage:

Courage is like a muscle; it is strengthened by use.— Ruth Gordon, American actress (1896-1985)

If you have the courage to begin, you have the courage to succeed.—David Viscott

There were all kinds of things I was afraid of at first, ranging from grizzly bears to “mean” horses and gunfighters, but by acting as if I was not afraid I gradually ceased to be afraid.—Teddy Roosevelt

Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear — not absence of fear.—Mark Twain

Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.—T.S. Eliot

America’s Symbols

Discuss symbols of America. First explain that a symbol is a picture or something you draw that stands for something else. For example, letters and numbers are symbols. Letters stand for sounds and numbers show how many. A heart is a symbol of love and the picture of a woman in a skirt is the symbol for the ladies restroom. Ask the children if they know of any symbols that stand for America and the freedom we have. Here are some that students may mention, but if not, you can list and explain them: the eagle, the Statue of Liberty, the Liberty Bell, the White House, Uncle Sam, and the American flag.

Next explain that today you will be learning about the American flag. Explain that when the first flag was made in 1776, only thirteen colonies (or states) existed, so the flag had thirteen stripes and thirteen stars. However, as our country grew and more and more states became part of our nation, they could not keep adding stripes, so they added stars instead. Show students pictures on the internet of some of the earlier versions of United States flags. Then look at the flag displayed in your room. Point out the fifty white stars on a field of blue and the thirteen red and white stripes. Note that there are seven red stripes and six white stripes. The red stripes are at the top and bottom. The color red stands for hardiness (the ability to withstand difficulties) and valor (bravery), white stands for purity and innocence, and blue stands for vigilance (alertness), perseverance, and justice.

Talk about the importance of showing respect for our flag because that shows respect for our country and all the people who have fought, some who even lost their lives to keep our country free. Explain that we show respect by standing at attention (not talking) with our hand over our hearts, looking at the flag, and saying the pledge. We also stand at attention with our hand over our hearts when the Star Spangled Banner is sung. The flag is displayed at schools, post offices, police stations, and other public places, and especially on holidays like Memorial Day, Flag Day (June 14th), July 4th, and Veteran’s Day. In order to show respect, the flag should not touch the ground, should not be used for clothing, curtains, or bedding, and should be folded in a special way.

Finally, discuss what freedom means. Allow students to share their thoughts. Explain and make sure they realize that in America we have freedom of religion, speech, due process (the government must treat us fairly and must follow the laws of the land), freedom to assemble, to bear arms (protect ourselves), to own property, to have a fair trial, and to vote. We also have freedom from torture, slavery, or forced labor. In addition, our founding fathers also believed in (as stated in the

Declaration of Independence): “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” We live in a great country and students need to realize that people in some countries must face persecution, unfair imprisonment, forced labor, unfair trials or no trials, and cannot own property or vote.

Make a Flag

Children will draw and color an American flag. Let them use a ruler, straight edge, or simply a strip of cardboard so the 13 stripes will be straight. The bottom can always be cut off to make 13 stripes. Younger students will probably struggle in drawing stars, so if possible, get some stick-on stars. (You will need fifty times the number of children, but they are usually inexpensive). Be sure the top and bottom stripes are red. There should be seven red stripes and six white stripes. If students are not exposed on a regular basis to the National anthem or even if they are, play it in the background while they work on their flags.

It’s Free!

Talk about the importance of being thankful and showing appreciation like Androcles did. Share this quote by Albert Schweitzer: “The greatest thing is to give thanks for everything. He who has learned this knows what it means to live. He has penetrated the whole mystery of life: giving thanks for everything.” Have students make a list of free things and things to do that are wonderful such as sunsets, oceans, lakes, flowers, animals, the sky, clouds, the moon, stars, trees, family, parks, walks, bike rides, skating, playgrounds, games, etc.

Role Play

Have two students act out a role play. One will pretend to be in jail and the other will pretend to be a mean jail keeper. Then have them switch roles. Afterwards asked them how it felt to be the prisoner. How did it feel to be the jail keeper?

For the second role play, have one student find a hurt cat (the other student). The student will show compassion on the cat and bandage up its hurt leg. Remind students to always be kind to animals and people. We never know when we may need our kindness returned. Again, treat others as you want to be treated.

Tying It All Together

If you use self-discipline to control your anger, you will be glad you did. Losing your temper can get you in all kinds of trouble. Also, remember to show appreciation to anyone who does something for you. It will make them feel good and they will be more likely to do something else for you. Live by the Golden Rule—treat others as you want to be treated.