



CHARACTER BUILDING ACTIVITIES

SOMMER-TIME STORIES

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THE TOWN MUSICIANS OF BREMEN

Story Description

Individuals with sunny attitudes understand that the ending of one opportunity in life often opens the door for a new one. Carrying big loads of grain is easy for young donkeys, but what happens when they get too old to be of use? One old donkey takes off on a journey of rediscovery, picking up an old dog, cat, and rooster along the way.

Intending to combine their musical talents to start a band, this lively crew finds another surprising way to benefit the community. With kindness for one another and good teamwork, they reap great rewards for a future full of happiness.

This charming retelling of a classic Brother's Grimm fable emphasizes the significance of kindness, teamwork, and never giving up.



Major Objective

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

- Teamwork: working together toward a common goal or purpose
- Helping and Encouraging Others: Giving physical help along with words of encouragement
- Civic Virtue: showing moral goodness in carrying out the responsibilities related to the community where you live

Story Time Interaction

Read the story, *The Town Musicians of Bremen*, and then write these character traits on the interactive whiteboard: teamwork, helping and encouraging others, civic virtue. Define and discuss these character traits.

Discuss these characters:

Donkey	Rooster	Dog
Cat	Robbers	Police
Mayor		

Activity Objectives

To use the following activities to reinforce the character traits of teamwork, helping and encouraging others, and civic virtue. To guide students to consider the importance of using your talents, having goals, friendship, self-esteem, perseverance, and courage.

What Are Your Goals?

The Bremen musicians' first goal was to make a band. Their next goal was to scare the robbers away. Finally, their goal was to help catch the robbers. Discuss with students the importance of making goals. Explain that some goals are short-term, like what you will do today or this week. Other goals are long-term, like what you will do in a year, five years, or ten years. First have students write down their goals for this year, in five years, in ten years, and life goals. Then have them look through magazines and find pictures that represent their goals. It is best to have a variety of magazines and catalogs available. Next they will cut and glue the pictures to construction paper or a poster and label them with the goal name and how long until it will be achieved. For example, if someone's life goal is to become a doctor, she should write "Life Goal—Become a Doctor" next to a doctor picture. If someone's five-year goal is to learn to play the piano, they should cut out and glue a piano picture on a poster and write "5-Year Goal—Play the Piano". If a picture can't be found to represent a goal, a picture can be drawn or printed from the Internet. Display the posters on a bulletin board or in the hall.

Use Your Tool

Bring in various tools such as a hammer, saw, screwdriver, drill, tape measurer, etc. Ask students to explain what each tool does. Some tools cut a board in half, another tool helps nail it together, another tool screws boards together, another tool measures a board, another drills a hole, and another sands a board to make it smooth. However, each tool is needed in order to build a house. Next explain that people are like tools in that people have different purposes or talents. Some people can sing well, others are good athletes, and others are good at math and science. Have students help list talents that they and other people have. Be sure to include talents like being a good listener, smiling at people, being a giver, etc. Also, remind students that they are not too young, too untalented, or too anything! They can do something to help others. Even Helen Keller, who was blind and deaf, helped others. She travelled around the world speaking about the needs of the physically disabled. Here is just one of her inspiring sayings: "I am only me; but still I am one. I can't do everything, but still I can do something. I will not refuse to do something I can do."

Bunches of Balls

Bring in a variety of balls (or have students each bring one in)—tennis ball, basketball, volleyball, soccer ball, racquetball, Super Ball, ping pong ball, bowling ball, softball, baseball, Nerf ball, football, golf ball, handball, rubber ball, etc. Discuss what each ball is used for and

why each is needed for its sport. Talk about how it would not work to try to golf with a bowling ball or play volleyball with a ping pong ball. Let students come up with funny combinations. Remind students that we are all different with different talents just like these balls. Some people are good listeners and others are encouragers. Everyone is important and everyone can do something important to help others.

What Will You Do?

The Bremen musicians were kind and showed civic virtue by helping catch the robbers and by entertaining the townspeople with their music. What are some acts of kindness you can do for your classmates, your teacher, your family members, your friends, and your community? Here are some suggestions in case students have difficulty thinking of some: write a nice note, hold the door, write a thank you note, help a student organize his desk, say “please” and “thank you,” give a compliment, play with someone new at recess, help someone carry something, make a welcome card or welcome kit for a new student, pick up trash, write a letter or card to a soldier or vet, clean your room, make get well cards for someone in the hospital, make a thank-you card for a fireman or police officer.

Be an Encourager!

The Bremen musicians encouraged one another, especially the donkey, and look at what a difference it made. Instead of sitting around feeling sorry for themselves because they were old, they were able to scare the robbers away, help catch the robbers, and entertain the townspeople with their music. Do the following activity with students to help them remember the importance of encouraging others with their words. We say that encouraging someone lifts a person up. Give each student a piece of string about five inches long, a quarter teaspoon of salt, and an ice cube. Students will put the salt on top of the ice cube and then put a curly-cue of string on top of that. After counting slowly to twenty, students slowly lift the other end of the string. The string should stick to the ice cube and lift it into the air. The string is like encouraging words; it lifts the ice up and encouraging words lift people up!

You Are Valuable!

At the beginning of the story, the animals thought that they no longer had any value because they were old and couldn’t do everything they had once done. However, by the end of the story they had helped catch the robbers and entertained the people with their music. Many times we think that we can’t do anything special, but that is not true. Use this object lesson to show students what we mean. Take a five dollar bill that is very worn out looking and crunch it up

into a little ball. Next try to smooth it out. Then soak it in a solution that is half water and half rubbing alcohol. Be sure to have a bowl of water on hand in case of an accident. You also need a candle and some matches. When the money is thoroughly soaked, lift it out with a pair of tongs. Light the bill with a match or use a prelit candle to light the bill. Hold it over the bowl until it burns out. Amazingly, the money has not been ruined and still has value. It can be used to buy something even though it was worn out, crunched up, and even burned. Everyone also has value. Even if you are not a famous singer, dancer, athlete, or actor, there are many valuable things you can do. Allow students a chance to name some things. If they struggle, here are some suggestions: smile at people; be a good listener; encourage others; give food, clothes, etc. to the needy; run errands for an elderly person; do small chores for people with special needs or the elderly; visit people in nursing homes; organize your class to sing or perform a skit at a nursing home; and so on. Students will discover that the people they help will be very happy and appreciative.

Lighten the Load

Explain this saying to students: Many hands make light work. It means that when many people help, the work seems lighter and not such a big job. If one person has to do all the work, it will take that one person a long time to finish the job, but if lots of people help, the job can be completed very quickly. To illustrate this point, have the class do the following activity. First spread about fifty flashcards, paper-clips, or other small items on the floor. Time one student while he picks them up one at a time. Another student can also be timed if you have time. Then time the whole class picking up the items together. Students will be surprised at the great difference in the time between one person or many people picking up the items.

Teamwork

The Bremen musicians worked together to scare the robbers away and to help catch them. Show students that teamwork is needed to ski across a room on duct tape skis. Place two strips of duct tape about four feet long on the floor with the sticky side up. Students step on the tape (with their shoes on) and then slide across the floor. The trick is that three or four students will do it together at the same time on the same tape. Students will have to move their left feet at the same time and then their right feet at the same time. It will take a lot of cooperation and teamwork. If desired, have races.

Friendship

Everyone wants a good friend. The best way to get a friend is to be a good friend. Students should remember that when making a

friend, they shouldn't just look for a fun or popular person, but look at the character of the person. Also, sometimes we should not have a friend for what the friend can do for us, but be a friend in order to help someone else. Here are some questions to ask students that should lead into a discussion about what really matters in a friend (character): Could you be a friend with someone who:

- is younger than you? Older than you?
- has different colored hair? Has different colored skin?
- talks loudly?
- acts weird or silly?
- is unpopular?
- is homeless?
- lies?
- has no toys?
- is the opposite gender?
- has a lot of toys?
- doesn't smell good?
- is a bully?
- is shy?
- has strange clothes or hair?

Sticky Friends

Show students a stapler, tape, glue, a nail, and a screw. Ask if they know how these items are alike. They all hold things together. People are also held together by friendship. Real friends stick together even when difficult times come. Sometimes another person will try to break up a friendship out of jealousy, but real friends will not let anything come between them. Next let students know that you are going to show them something that can stick paper together, and they may be surprised by it. Give each student two small pieces of regular copy paper about one inch by one inch. Then bring out a spray bottle of water and go around and spray their pieces of paper. Students can put the pieces of paper together and now they will stick together and all that did it was water! (Yes, they can be pulled apart). Finally, to remind students that friends stick together, play sticky ball tag. Wad up some duct tape into a ball. Throw it at one another to tag someone "it." Then that person is the next thrower.

Tying It All Together

The Bremen musicians showed us the importance of encouraging others and being positive, cooperating with others and working together, using your talents, being a good friend, making goals, and demonstrating civic virtue. They also helped us see that we have value no matter what others say. We just need to stop looking at ourselves and feeling sorry for ourselves; instead we must look around and find someone to help! We will feel better and so will the person we help.