



# CHARACTER BUILDING ACTIVITIES

SOMMER-TIME STORIES

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## THE UGLY PRINCESS

### Story Description

This lovely tale tells the story of Princess Isabella, who is greatly loved by her parents. Isabella is happy and carefree until she overhears girls making fun of her large nose and ears. Miserable and ashamed, she quits playing and hides in the palace. Nothing can sway Isabella's feelings of ugliness and sadness until an old woman reminds her that giving love to others brings deep happiness.

Isabella listens and helps unfortunate people in the kingdom. Through her unselfish actions, she gains self-esteem and grows into a happy, compassionate adult. When it comes time to choose someone to marry, she looks for a wise and kind husband, rather than focusing on appearance.

Readers of this illuminating story learn how Isabella gains self-esteem by loving others and how she finds the ideal suitor.



### Major Objective

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

- Self-esteem: having a positive opinion of one's self
- Kindness: having a desire to do good to others
- Respect for Parents: valuing one's father and mother by making their desires and counsel important considerations

### Story Time Interaction

Read the story, **The Ugly Princess**, and then write these character traits on the interactive whiteboard: self-esteem, kindness, and respect for parents. Define and discuss these character traits.

Discuss the characters:

|              |                    |
|--------------|--------------------|
| Isabella     | The king and queen |
| The old lady | Jezreal            |
| Steven       |                    |

### Activity Objectives

To use the following activities to reinforce the character traits of self-esteem, kindness, and respect for parents. To guide students to consider the importance of being content, encouraging and helping others, respecting wisdom, showing compassion, forgiving, being diligent, and respecting others.

## Who Are You?

Isabella was a happy child until she allowed what others said about her to affect her feelings. Isabella was too focused on her outward appearance. Very few people in this world can be considered outwardly perfect. Many people don't like their nose, their mouth, their feet, their height, their weight, their hair color, their skin color, and so on. Even if there is nothing wrong with their physical attributes, people tend to never be satisfied with how they look. Isabella was miserable until she found happiness in helping others.

Like Isabella, we must all realize that we have value and can make valuable contributions to others. To help students get to know themselves better, have them fill out the ABC's of Me:

A—Here is an activity I would like to do \_\_\_\_\_.

B—My favorite book is \_\_\_\_\_.

C—The coolest thing I've ever done is \_\_\_\_\_.

D—The most difficult thing I've ever done is \_\_\_\_\_.

E—The most exciting thing I've ever done is \_\_\_\_\_.

F—The thing I most forget is \_\_\_\_\_.

G—My biggest goal is to \_\_\_\_\_.

H—The person I most want to help is \_\_\_\_\_.

I—I am interested in \_\_\_\_\_.

J—My favorite job would be to \_\_\_\_\_.

K—I'd like to know how to \_\_\_\_\_.

L—I love to \_\_\_\_\_.

M—If I won a million dollars, I would \_\_\_\_\_.

N—I would be nervous to \_\_\_\_\_.

O—I want to go to the ocean because \_\_\_\_\_.

P—If I had a parrot, I would teach it to say \_\_\_\_\_.

Q—I am quick when I \_\_\_\_\_.

R—I respect people who \_\_\_\_\_.

S—My favorite snack is \_\_\_\_\_.

T—I'd like to travel on a \_\_\_\_\_.

U—I've never understood why \_\_\_\_\_.

V—I would like to visit \_\_\_\_\_.

W—When I wake up, I'm \_\_\_\_\_.

X—If I had X-ray vision, I'd look at \_\_\_\_\_.

Y—This always makes me yawn: \_\_\_\_\_.

Z—If I could be a zoo animal, I'd be a \_\_\_\_\_.

Next students will make life-size paper dolls of themselves. Trace the outline of each student on butcher paper. Then students will draw and color the face, clothes, and shoes. They can also cut the paper doll out. If possible, display the student paper dolls in the hallway, or they can take them home and put them up in their rooms.

## **A Recipe for Happiness**

Isabella was very unhappy because two of her friends had talked about her big nose and ears. Her parents tried to encourage her and make her feel better, but she still was depressed about it. She finally decided for herself that helping others would make her happy. One of our most famous presidents had a saying about this: “Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be”—Abraham Lincoln. What does that mean? Allow students to share their thoughts on it.

Isabella discovered the secret to real happiness when she decided to help needy children. Ask students to help you make a list on the board of ways to show kindness. Then have students create a recipe for happiness. Here is one example: one cup of manners, two cups of kindness,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of doing things for others, a pinch of smiles,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of encouraging words. Mix them all together and do them every day! Then they can write it nicely on white paper, cut around it with decorative craft scissors that are often used in scrapbooking (if available), and then glue it on construction paper for display. Finally, challenge students to do at least one kind act each day. Occasionally throughout the year ask students to share about a kind act they or someone else has done.

## **A Mirror Vs. a Window**

Bring in a mirror and an empty picture frame. The picture frame will be used to represent a window. First hold the mirror up and ask students what it is used for. Yes, it is used to look at yourself. Then hold up the frame and explain that this represents a window. What do we look at when looking out a window? Yes, we look at other people. We need to remember the window and look at others rather than look at ourselves like when people use a mirror. Martin Luther King, Jr. asked a very important question: “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” Remind student about who Martin Luther King, Jr., was and what he did for people in America. He courageously worked to gain rights and freedom for minorities (especially black people) in the United States, and he did it in a peaceful manner despite being arrested over 20 times and having his house bombed. He was able to make an enormous difference in many lives, and it cost him his life. He was assassinated in 1968 by a career criminal who was also an escaped convict.

## Keep Looking Up!

Have you ever heard the expression, “That will happen when pigs fly”? Since it is impossible for pigs to fly, this expression is referring to something impossible. Something else that is impossible for pigs to do is to look up to the sky. They don’t really have a neck, so they can only look downward into the mud. Some people are like this, they only look at the bad side of things, not at the good side. Their focus is down toward the mud and negative things in life. Instead we need to be positive and look upward. Helen Keller, a blind and deaf woman, said something about looking upward that we should remember: “Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadow. It’s what sunflowers do.” Show students pictures from the Internet of sunflowers growing towards the sun. Then help them make construction paper sunflowers and put them on a bulletin board facing a construction paper sun. Put the Helen Keller quote at the top of the bulletin board.

## A Rough Life Can Create Beauty

Bring in two rocks—one that is smooth and polished and one that is jagged and rough. Explain that the smooth stone has lived a rough life; it has faced many hard situations and problems. However, these hard times have knocked the rough edges off and smoothed it into a beautiful rock. On the other hand, the rough rock has lived a life of ease and pampering. It just sat around getting rain showers and mud baths and soaking up the sun. This kind of living did nothing for its rough edges. We need to remember that even though we may face hard times in our lives, these hard times can make us stronger, better people with good character. In addition, if we go through some hard times, we can help other people who are faced with similar circumstances.

To demonstrate the beauty that can come from hard situations or ugly circumstances, create a crystal garden from ugly charcoal or lava rocks. You will need: pieces of porous rock, charcoal, salt, laundry bluing, ammonia, food coloring, a glass bowl, and a small container. In the small container mix 4 tablespoons water, 4 tablespoons bluing, 1 tablespoon ammonia, and 2 tablespoons salt. Be careful not to inhale this mixture or allow students close enough to inhale it. Pour this solution over pieces of the charcoal and porous rock that are in the glass bowl. Then drop different colors of food coloring on the rocks and charcoal. Let the bowl sit for several days. In a few days crystals will begin to grow on the rocks. Don’t be concerned if some break off; they will keep growing. Students will be amazed at the beauty of the crystals, especially the fact that they came from ugly charcoal!

## **An Uplifting Snowball Fight**

Have students use a piece of scratch paper. Show them how to fold it in half and tear or cut it in half. On each half, students should write a compliment. Then they wad up the paper and repeat the process for the other half. When all students have completed the task, divided the class in half and have a “snowball” fight with the paper wads. After thirty seconds, yell, “Stop!” Each student should have two snowballs. If someone has more or less, the students with more can give one to a student with less. Then students take turns reading their compliments to the class. Students can discuss whether they think that they live up to the compliments. If they don’t, they can suggest ways to make the compliment come true. Here are some sample compliments you may want to share with students: You are an awesome reader! You show great effort! You are a good helper! You show great manners! You are a good encourager! You do good homework! You are very kind! You have a positive attitude! You do your best! You show sympathy to others! You can focus well! You can be really quiet! You are a great listener! You are great at following directions! You always raise your hand before speaking! You are very organized! You are a good friend! You are always on time! You help keep our room clean! You show respect to others! You show appreciation and say “Thank you!” You don’t interrupt! You take turns and share! You mind your own business! You are a team player! You don’t tattle! You don’t make fun of others! You don’t spread rumors! You say, “I’m sorry!” You aren’t bossy! Emphasize with students that it is important to praise behavior, not someone’s looks or talents.

## **Words Have Power**

Have you ever heard the saying, “Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me”? Although people’s words will not bruise or cut a person like sticks and stones can, words can greatly hurt a person’s feelings. In fact, when a person continually says mean things to another, it is called bullying. Bullying should not be tolerated in school and should not take place anywhere. Unfortunately, it does, and today people even use the Internet to bully others. Show students a toy boat or a picture of a boat with a rudder. Explain that the rudder is like a steering wheel on a car—it steers the boat. That makes it a very important part of the boat. It causes the boat to go where it needs to go. Your tongue is similar to a rudder; it has power and can cause someone to be happy or sad. Let’s make sure that our words are encouraging and lift others up.

Here is a science experiment that demonstrates the importance of lifting something up. You will need a clear glass or large-mouth jar, water, a hard-boiled egg,  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 cup of salt, and a spoon to stir the salt. Explain that we are like an egg that sinks or is sad when people say mean things. Carefully allow the egg to drop into the water in the

glass or jar (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  full). Explain that you are going to add salt to the water, which will be like encouraging words and will lift the egg up. You may need to stir the salt carefully so it dissolves in the water. (If necessary, you can remove the egg while stirring the salt in). That is why a larger mouthed jar is better than a narrow glass. You will probably only need  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of salt, but have more on hand in case it is needed. It will depend on the size of your jar and the amount of water in it. The salt will cause the egg to raise up to the top of the water. Be sure to correlate this to encouraging words.

## How Attractive Are You?

For this science experiment, you will need a blown-up balloon, unflavored gelatin, a wool sock, and a paper plate. Put the gelatin (a powder) on the paper plate. Take the wool sock and rub the balloon with it. This will create static electricity. Then hold the balloon over the gelatin, about 3 inches above it. The gelatin will be attracted to the balloon. It will actually be pulled from the paper plate onto the balloon. This is how it should be with people. If you are kind, encouraging, and positive, other people will be attracted to you and want to be around you. However, if you are grumpy, demanding, and bossy, your actions will repel people and they will avoid you.

## Picking the Right Friends or Spouse

Isabella was concerned about choosing the right man to be her husband or spouse. She knew that her husband would be the next king and would affect not just her life, but also the lives of all her people. She was wise enough to realize that her husband needed to be kind, wise, and have good character. Here is a trick to help students remember the importance of picking the right person. Hand out a penny, nickel, dime, and a quarter, but don't look at what coin each student has. Ask these students to hold the coins tightly in their fists. (You want the coins to be heated by their body heat so you can differentiate them from the others. It would also be helpful if another set of the same coins was stored in a cooler in ice or on an ice pack, but room temperature can work, too). Put your cold set of coins in a large paper bag. Ask one of the students to come up and replace a coin with his coin. If he has a penny, he takes the penny from the bag and puts his penny in. He doesn't say what he has and your back is turned while he does it so you won't know what he switched out. You then reach in the bag without looking and feel for the warm coin. You pull out the penny and students wonder how you did it. Have that student switch the coins back and then you can do it with another student. Continue until all 4 students have had a turn. When you are done, you can ask the four students if they know how you did it. They may have figured it out from feeling the cold coins. Remind students that you want this to help them remember how to pick good friends and one day a good spouse.

## THINK RESPECT

Isabella was very respectful to her parents. She sought their approval of her choice for a husband. In addition, Steven sought permission from her parents when he asked if he could marry her. This also showed respect for her parents. If students have trouble remembering to speak kindly and respectfully to others, here are two acrostics to display:

T is it true?  
H is it helpful?  
I is it inspirational?  
N is it necessary?  
K is it kind?

RESPECT  
Each other  
Self  
Property  
Environment  
Country  
Teachers

Finally, play the Respect Relay. Put the seven letters of RESPECT on cards, one letter per card. Have a set of cards for each team. Divide the class into teams of seven; if the class doesn't divide evenly by seven, put six or fewer students on a team and let some students take two turns. One student from each team will race down to the end, find the letter R and lay it out. The next student finds the E, and so on until the word RESPECT is spelled out. Teammates can help a student know what letter to pick. The first team to spell RESPECT and get back to the starting line is the winning team!

### Tying It All Together

Isabella allowed her friends to determine whether she was happy or not. Even her parents were not able to cheer her up. The only way she was finally able to be happy was when she stopped focusing on herself and decided to help others. We all need to do the same.

Isabella showed a lot of wisdom when she went to her father for advice on a spouse. She also used good judgment in looking for a husband who was wise, kind, and respectful. Steven's respectful attitude, kindness, and unselfishness caused Isabella's parents to approve of him for their daughter. It's character that counts!