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CANDIICE

Dealing with conflict through picturebooks: Using Oliver Jeffers “The Hueys in It wasn’t me”

BRIEF OVERVIEW / DESCRIPTION

This learning activity helps children reflect more deeply on the reasons behind conflicts and develop empathy for others. After the activity they may hold more self-knowledge, the ability to respect other people’s perspectives and show socially responsible behaviour when interacting with others. Learners listen to a read-aloud picture book (available on YouTube) and explore the meanings through the pictures, words, and intonation. Learners brainstorm what factors may be behind conflicts. Using coloured notes, learners in pairs stick their ideas about the origin of conflict on the wall. Learners go around the classroom and listen to other classmates’ justification of their behaviour. Learners work with others to present a different ending to the story and generate a list of practical solutions to conflicts.

AGE RANGE:

6 – 12

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Arguing that people should always be respected
- Listening to other people’s opinions
- Expressing sympathy for other people’s suffering
- Developing perspective-taking
- Expressing a willingness to co-operate and work with others
- Showing ability to generate practical solutions to conflicts
- Expressing his/her thoughts on a problem
- Asking questions that show his/her understanding of other people’s positions
- Reflecting critically on his/her own values and beliefs
- Explaining how tone of voice, eye-contact and body language can aid communication

INSTRUCTIONS

Learners listen to a read-aloud story as a means to understanding meaning and stimulate discussion. The teacher may explore the title and the cover so that learners may anticipate what the story is.

The teacher is the mediator between the book and the learners. The teacher mediates meanings and emotions through the pictures, words and tone of voice.

Learners identify elements of conflict in the story, retrieving information from the reading aloud strategies, certain drawing elements and specific words and expressions.

Learners compare the characters’ reactions during the conflict with their own reactions when they disagree with someone. They discuss if they use the same strategies when they disagree with someone.

In small groups, learners brainstorm about the origins of conflicts and write them on the board. The teacher hands out sticky coloured notes to each learner. Learners think of some typical behaviours which cause conflict (discrimination, injustice, bullying, irresponsibility, differences, bad language, different opinions, values, cultures, religions, identities, lifestyles, different likes, offensive behaviour...). Learners write their reactions (action-emotion-reaction) on a coloured sticky note. They may use the form: “When somebody ...[Behaviour], I feel...[Emotion].and I might...[Reaction]..” They stick their ideas on the wall (eg bullying-sadness-crying and violence). Learners with the same coloured sticky notes get together to exchange their ideas.

Learners explain their behaviour to the classmate with the same colour. If learners hold the same opinion on the conflict (action-reaction), both have to suggest at least one positive alternative (solution). If learners hold different opinions, they are asked to ‘decentre’ from their point of view, listen to other people’s perspectives and find ways to alleviate the situation so that no-one feels hurt, discriminated or isolated. Each pair then presents their ideas to the class and produces some advice on dealing with conflicts around the school and elsewhere.

KEY POINTS/ QUESTIONS FOR DEBRIEF/DISCUSSION/ASSESSMENT

The picturebook triggers a discussion about conflicts.

Discussion questions:

- What are the most common causes of conflicts in daily life?
- What are the different emotional responses to conflicts?
- What are the different behaviours they have seen caused by conflicts?
- Without naming individuals – can they remember conflicts and what happened?
- What are their suggestions to alleviate conflicts?

EQUIPMENT / MATERIALS / SPACE NEEDED

Picturebook, coloured sticky notes, markers, computers and internet

TIME REQUIRED

Variable

PREPARATION

If this activity is conveyed in a foreign language, scaffolding is needed. Teachers should provide vocabulary beforehand.

VARIATIONS / OPTIONS / EXTENSIONS

- Video clips, art, murals, pictures, literary texts can be found to replace the example picturebook used here.
- Learners can also write a story about an argument. If digital equipment is available they may draw their own characters and illustrate the story using the digital application Book Creator.

MATERIALS/WORKSHEETS/LINKS/HANDOUTS

The picturebook suggested is “The Hueys in It wasn’t me” by Oliver Jeffers.

PICTUREBOOK CONTENT SUMMARY

The title of this book is very familiar to children: “It wasn’t me”. It is a sentence that children learn very early when they face trouble and don’t want to take responsibility. The Hueys look the same, think alike, and usually get along very well. But just once in a while they don’t. Gillespie, the main character, walks into a huge argument. He wonders why they are fighting. No-one remembers and no-one wants the blame for the row. Following a simple distraction, the argument is easily forgotten and they move on to have fun again.

Moral: It’s normal to be angry sometimes, but it is also good to let go of the anger and find positive learning.

Question: Is distraction always a good way to move on from a conflict?

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