# Notable Trade Book Lesson

*Jake’s Best Thumb*

Written by Ilene Cooper

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**Jake’s Best Thumb** portrays a child who goes to Kindergarten still sucking his thumb. He is subsequently bullied for the habit. This lesson plan embraces building empathy among students in an effort to squelch bullying behaviors in the classroom. This lesson uses visual imagery, promoting positive conversation, and encouraging students to produce favorable comments about each other. The process of building a classroom community of acceptance is the end goal of this lesson plan.

| NCSS Notable Trade Book Title: | Jake’s Best Thumb  
Ilene Cooper  
Publisher Dutton Children’s Books  
Reading Level Ages 3-8  
32 Pages  
ISBN-10052547785 |
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book Summary:</td>
<td>Jake does not intend to give up sucking his thumb when he enters Kindergarten. He has mastered using just one hand and feels as if he doesn’t need the other. A Kindergarten bully, who calls Jake a thumb-sucker has issues of his own. This book examines bullying in a way that young children can understand.</td>
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<td>NCSS Standards:</td>
<td>Individual development and Identity</td>
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| Materials: | • Jake’s Best Thumb by Ilene Cooper  
• Spiderella Reader’s Theater published by Scholastic  
• Art supplies (paper, markers, pens, pencils, crayons, etc.) |
| Objectives: | 1. The students will formulate a definition for promoting peace.  
2. The students will describe how people show empathy for one another.  
3. The students will describe their self-image.  
4. The students will utilize appropriate alternatives to handling bullies. |
| Procedures: Exploration/Introduction: | Visual Imagery  
1. Have the children close their eyes and pretend to be on the playground. Ask them to pretend they are all taking turns on the slides, swings, and Merry-Go Round. Open your eyes.  
2. Discuss what you were doing on the playground. Think about and discuss how you were promoting peace with the other students. |
**Development:**

Assessment: Check for prior knowledge. Take notes.

1. Read: *Jake’s Best Thumb*
2. Discuss Jake and his classmates focusing on empathy for others.
3. Provide materials for each student to make a large paper hat.
4. Students will pass the hats around.
5. Each student will have 3 positive comments written on his or her hat about the student by the classmates.
6. The hats will then be returned to the students.
7. Following a grand conversation (see link below), students will write or draw how they feel about themselves. The drawings and hats will be displayed in the classroom.
8. Closure: Have students share their hats and how the positive comments make them feel. Discuss.

Assessment: Using anecdotal records record how students feel about themselves and others.

1. Provide copies of *Spiderella* for Reader’s Theater. After the production, have students compare and contrast the bullying behavior in *Jake’s Best Thumb* and *Spiderella*.
2. Have students brainstorm and record ways to identify and to stand up to a bully in their journals.
3. Using individual charts, ask the students to think about a time that they were bullied. Have students complete the chart. Write what happened in the first column. In the second column write how you handled the situation. In the third column, write an appropriate way to handle a bully that you have learned from this lesson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What happened?</th>
<th>What was your reaction?</th>
<th>What is an alternative reaction?</th>
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**Expansion:**
Assessment:

Use the following checklist to assess students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The students…</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formulated a definition for peace</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Formulated an opinion for showing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>empathy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Described their self-image.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilized appropriate alternatives to handling bullies.</td>
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Suggested Extension Activities:

- Start an anti-bullying campaign in your classroom by having students create *I Care* posters.
- Work with students to create safe places to talk and share your feelings.

Additional References and Web links


Web-based References


About the Authors

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