



Life Doesn't Frighten Me: Maya Angelou Lesson Plan



Lesson title:

Life Doesn't Frighten Me: Maya Angelou Lesson

Subject and topic:

ELA, emotions and character education

Grade level:

PreK- 2nd grade

Duration:

45 minutes

Lesson summary:

In this read-aloud of a picture book version of Maya Angelou's "Life Doesn't Frighten Me", students will learn about and discuss fear, what it means to be brave, and how to cope when feeling scared. Students will learn about Maya Angelou and selective mutism, which is an anxiety disorder that Maya Angelou experienced for 5 years during adolescence.

Standards:

- CC.1.2.PK.B Answer questions about a text..
- CC.1.2.PK.G With prompting and support, answer questions to connect illustrations to the written word.
- CC.1.2.K.L Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.
- CC.1.3.K.D Name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.
- CC.15.2.2.K With prompting and support, explain the importance of social connections such as friends and family.
- CC.15.3.2.O. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about various communication strategies used in diverse settings (classroom, home or social event).



Objectives:

- SWBAT define fear
- SWBAT apply coping skills to help combat fear
- SWBAT describe how people may communicate differently

Essential Questions:

- EQ1: What contributed to Maya Angelou's selective mutism and how did she overcome it?
- EQ2: How can I show bravery and courage when I am fearful?

Vocabulary:

- Maya Angelou
- Poetry
- Black History Month
- Emotional Regulation
- Selective Mutism
- Communication

Lesson procedures

Gather the children around for a read aloud lesson. Introduce the book and follow any storytime procedures you normally follow.

Pre-Reading Questions

- ❖ Who is the author of this book? How can we find out?
 - Give a brief biography of Maya Angelou. Example: "Maya Angelou was a writer. She wrote a lot about what it means to go through bad things and how to grow from them. When Maya was young, something really bad happened to her. Writing about the bad thing that happened to her helped make her feel better. She used her experience to help other people who also went through hard times!"
 - Optional: Precede this lesson with a reading of a book about Maya Angelou such as Little People, Big Dreams: Maya Angelou
- ❖ Who is the illustrator of this book? What does the illustrator do?
- ❖ What do we think this book will be about?
 - What clues can we use from the title or the cover?
- ❖ This book is about being scared. Have you ever felt scared before? What makes you scared?



During Reading Questions

- ❖ What do you think this is a picture of?
- ❖ How does this picture make you feel?
- ❖ Vocabulary check: Frighten
- ❖ When Maya says “I go boo, I make them shoo,” what do you think that means?
- ❖ “I make fun”: Does laughing at scary things ever help you feel less scared?
- ❖ Why do you think Maya might be scared of the boys and girls in her class?
- ❖ What do you think is Maya’s magic charm? Do you have something that helps you when you feel scared?

Post-Reading Questions

- ❖ Maya says that “life doesn’t frighten me at all.” Do you think that’s true? Or do you think Maya really feels scared sometimes?
- ❖ This book is about being scared, but it is also about being brave. What does it mean to be brave?
 - Does being brave mean you can’t also be scared?
 - Who do you know that is brave?

Activity

- ❖ Introduce the activity: “When Maya was a kid, something really bad happened to her and it made her so scared that she didn’t talk at all for 5 years! This is called selective mutism.”
 - How do you think Maya communicated without talking? Prompt with examples such as drawing, writing, motioning, etc.
 - Do you know anyone in your life who doesn’t talk? How do they communicate?
- ❖ “Maya used writing to help make her feel less scared. What do you do when you’re scared that helps make you feel better?” Write children’s answers on whiteboard/paper.
- ❖ “Maya had a brother who would always help her. Who helps you when you feel scared?” Write children’s answers on whiteboard/paper
 - What do they do to make you feel better?
 - What can your friends and teachers do to help you when you’re scared?



Related materials:

- Life Doesn't Frighten Me by Maya Angelou (a musical adaptation of this book can be viewed here: [Life Doesn't Frighten Me](#))
- Whiteboard or Large Paper
- Marker
- Optional: Picture book about Maya Angelou such as Little People, Big Dreams: Maya Angelou by Lisbeth Kaiser.

Evaluation:

Ask your students this question related to this lesson to gauge how much they learned.

Did this lesson help you understand that you might need help if you are scared?

Thank you for bringing the conversation about disability into your classroom.

Help us evaluate this lesson plan by visiting [our evaluation page to assess this lesson](#).

You will find an evaluation both for you and your students to complete there.

