

Using Stories and Folktales to Teach Students Character Traits

Grades: 2—6

Learning Objective: Students will learn what character traits are, be able to identify character traits, and find portions of textual evidence to support them.

Introduction

- Introduce the class to the concept of a character trait. Explain that a **character trait** describes the behavior or attitude of a person.
- Give an example: *If someone has a ‘character trait’ of being kind, he doesn't say mean or hurtful things about others.*
- Tell students we will find evidence about the ‘character traits’ of characters in the story, “The Monkey and Buzzard”, by discussing the actions of characters in the story.

Classroom Activity - I

Read the following story to the class. **Story: MONKEY AND BUZZARD**

It was a very hot day. All the animals hid from the sun in the tall trees, tall grass and cool water. Everyone hid from the sun except the Monkey. Monkey sat out in the sun looking up at the sky. The other animals said “Look at Monkey sitting in the hot sun, he must be dumb.” Everyone laughed and made fun of the Monkey and called him names.

The Monkey heard them but he said nothing, he just kept looking up in the sky at the Buzzard. He saw Buzzard fly round and around, lower and lower to the ground. He heard the Buzzard when he went over to the Squirrel. “Hello Squirrel, how are you doing today?” Buzzard asked.

Squirrel said, “It is too hot to live.” Buzzard replied, “I can take you up in the sky for a nice cool ride, just get on my back.”

Monkey saw the Squirrel get on the Buzzard’s back. The Buzzard flew high in the sky and threw the Squirrel off his back. When the squirrel fell to the ground, Monkey saw the Buzzard eat the Squirrel.

Next day, it was hotter than the day before. The animals saw Monkey sitting out in the sun. “Look at Monkey!” they yelled, “He is still sitting in the hot sun. He must be crazy.” They all laughed.

Monkey heard the animals talking and laughing at him, but pretended he didn’t hear them. He kept his eyes on the sky. He saw the Buzzard come back and go over to Rabbit.

“Hello Rabbit, how are you doing on this beautiful day?” Buzzard asked.

Rabbit moaned, “Oh Buzzard, It’s too hot to live. We are going to die.”

The Buzzard said, “Don’t worry about thing. I can take you up in the sky for a nice cool ride. Just get on my back.” Rabbit got on the Buzzard’s back. Buzzard flew high in the sky and threw Rabbit off and ate him. No one saw it but the Monkey.

The third day was hotter than the days before. Monkey was still sitting in the hot sun. Animals were still making fun of Monkey. “Look at that foolish Monkey, he is crazy.”

Buzzard flew down to Monkey. “Good morning Monkey.”

Monkey yelled, “Get away from me.”

Buzzard said, “But I am your friend. I just want to take you for a ride. It’s a very hot day, but it’s cool up in the sky. All you have to do is get on my back.”

Monkey smiled, “Okay that is very nice of you. Monkey got on the Buzzard’s back. Buzzard took off; he flew way up in the sky. Then Buzzard started flying faster and faster, then dived down toward the ground and tried to throw Monkey off his back, but Monkey put his tail around the Buzzard neck and started choking him, “You better straighten up and fly right” yelled Monkey.

The Buzzard shouted, “You tricked me.”

“Yes, I did,” said Monkey. I saw what you did to my friends. Now go away and don’t come back.” Monkey eased his grip so that the Buzzard could land. When Monkey got off the Buzzard’s back, Buzzard took off and never came back.

The moral of the story is -- never make fun of others, they are smarter than you think.

Classroom Activity 2

Discuss the story (who, what, where, conflict) and actions of the characters in the story (buzzard, monkey, rabbit, and squirrel) and list their character traits.

For example: Why did the animals make fun of the Monkey? Was the Monkey doing anything funny or wrong or unkind? Why did Monkey not speak up when the animals made fun of him? Describe the character traits of the Buzzard and the Monkey.

Positive Traits Example

observant	honest	confident	humble	kindly
optimistic	responsible	caring	accepting	loyal
independent	encouraging	understanding	gracious	dependable

Negative Traits Example

unkind	pretentious	jealous	greedy	domineering
judgmental	rebellious	Disrespectful	cruel	hostile
impatient	arrogant	bossy	inconsiderate	lazy

Have students fill out character traits chart

Characters	Traits:	Evidence/Actions
Buzzard	<i>Dishonest, sly</i>	<i>he tricked squirrel</i>
Squirrel		
Rabbit		
Monkey		

Classroom Activity 3

Have students write examples of how we show kindness, respect, or understanding, etc. to each other through our actions.

Classroom Activity 4

Have students write two short stories: (1) A personal experience when they were kind, respectful, etc. to someone; and (2) When someone was unkind or mean to them, how did they feel?

Review and Closing

- What is an example of a character trait? What isn't?
- Why do you think it's important to be able to identify character traits in a story or people?