

MR. PEABODY'S APPLES

By Madonna

One Saturday, Mr. Peabody, a beloved teacher and baseball coach, finds himself alone on the ball field. He wonders where everybody is until the bat boy, Billy Little, shows up. Billy tells him that another student, Tommy Tittlebottom, saw Mr. Peabody taking apples from the market and spread a rumour he was a thief. Mr. Peabody then shows Tommy that what matters is the truth — not how things appear — and that we must choose our words carefully to avoid hurting others.



WITS LEADS Connection: Explore points of view

Questions



PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Take a look at the cover of the book. What do you notice about it? What is the setting? Who is involved?
2. What do you think *Mr. Peabody's Apples* is about?
3. What does it mean to say that words have power? What kind of power do they have? *Good, bad, depends on how they are used.*
4. Have each student say one thing they like about the student to their right. Discuss how these positive powerful words made students feel.



POST-READING QUESTIONS

Literary Devices

1. What adjectives would you use to describe Mr. Peabody's character? *Begin by giving an example on the board, such as generous, inclusive, kind, friendly, encouraging, dedicated, considerate or well-liked.*
2. The feather pillow is a metaphor. What does the pillow represent? *Mr. Peabody's integrity, truth, reputation, etc.* What about the feathers? *People, gossip, etc.*
3. What do you think the illustration on the last page symbolizes? *There are a few feathers still out which means that most, but not all, people in Happville know Mr. Peabody is not a thief. Although the pillow is together, the stitching shows it is still damaged just as the power of words damaged Mr. Peabody's reputation.*

Perspective Taking

1. How did the perspectives of the children and Mr. Peabody differ in the situation?
2. On page 28, what did Tommy understand? *He had to tell people he was wrong and Mr. Peabody was not a thief.*

Problem Solving

1. Problem solving was weak in this story. Where did it need improvement?
2. Identify a bystander who took action in the story. What were the actions of the bystander?

Comparing *The English Roses* and *Mr. Peabody's Apples*

1. On page 20, it says: "It doesn't matter what it looked like. What matters is the truth." How can you apply this statement to *The English Roses*? In *Mr. Peabody's Apples*, an action was judged. In *The English Roses*, a person was judged. In both cases, the judgment was made without knowing all the information. Looking at a situation from a different point of view can change it drastically.
2. What were the differences between people's perceptions and the truth in *The English Roses* and *Mr. Peabody's Apples*? In *The English Roses*, Binah was perceived as living a charmed life. In truth, Binah had no mother and worked hard. In *Mr. Peabody's Apples*, when someone thought he didn't pay for an apple, they jumped to the conclusion that he stole the apple. In truth, Mr. Peabody had paid for the apple. In both cases, problems occurred due to a lack of information.
3. How are both stories similar? Not enough information was known to make a judgment and so characters were misinterpreted. When the situation was looked at from a different perspective, feelings and thoughts about the characters changed. Both books also show forms of bullying. *The English Roses* showed relational bullying with the isolation of Binah while *Mr. Peabody's Apples* showed verbal bullying with the spoiling of Mr. Peabody's reputation.

Activities



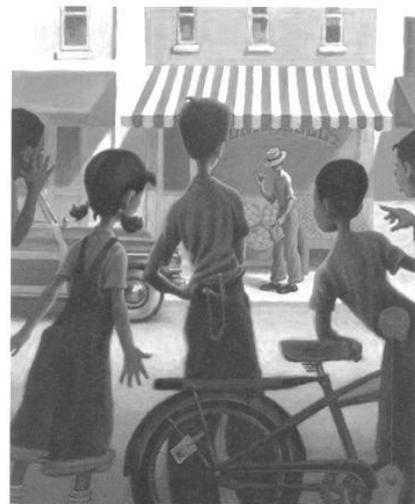
1. WORDS, FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS FROZEN TABLEAU

Discussion

Before reading page 12 of the book, stop and explain that you are going to do an activity to help students get inside the characters' thoughts by recreating the illustration through role play. Remind them that the characters' internal thoughts or feelings may match what they say or could be different from or even opposite of what they say publicly.

Exercise

- Show students the illustration on page 12 of the book where Mr. Peabody is seen taking an apple without paying for it (see right).
- Select four students to play the roles of Tommy, his two friends and Mr. Peabody, keeping in mind what the characters are saying but also what their feelings and thoughts are.
- Say "ACTION" to bring the tableau to life with students playing the scene based on what they think it is about.
- Say "FREEZE" to stop the action and select a student in the tableau to share what his or her character is thinking and feeling.
- Repeat the exercise with different groups.





2. PREDICTING WHAT WILL HAPPEN

Exercise

- Stop reading after page 13 of the book when the rumour about Mr. Peabody gets out and give students a piece of paper and five minutes to write down how they think the story will end. What are Mr. Peabody, Tommy and Billy going to do?
- Finish reading the story before asking students to share their responses.



3. POWER OF WORDS

Exercise

- Divide students in groups of three and give them five minutes to role play a scenario that demonstrates the “power of words” to make people feel good about themselves.

Discussion

After the role playing exercise discuss the positive and negative power of words. Remind students that a very common form of bullying is relational aggression.

Notes:



WHAT KIDS SAY: What did you like about the story *Mr. Peabody's Apples*?

- “It told us what some kids do by accident. They think others do things that are opposite.”
- “If you see someone do something, don’t judge or prejudge their first move. You’re not always right!”
- “When you do something wrong, you have to pay the price.”
- “Not everything is as it seems or looks.”