



Room In The Inn: The Impact of a Story

Lesson Plan 7th - 9th Grade

Curriculum Connections: Social Studies, English, Language Arts, Reading

Thematic Connections: Homelessness, Poverty, Friendship, Community, Responsibility, Tolerance, Self-Esteem

Overview:

The goal of this lesson is to introduce the concept of story as an impactful resource. It is important for this age group to learn story for the following reasons:

- Creates awareness of the impact of their actions and the actions of others
- Helps students begin to identify influences in their own lives
- Begins breaking down stereotypes of those who are different from them

Goals for this unit:

- Build an awareness for understanding impact
- Begin laying a foundation for acts of citizenship
- Provide tangible means for students to own and share their own story

In this lesson plan we've provided suggested videos, discussion questions, and an activity – we strongly encourage group discussion and the activity to ensure students are learning through participation.

Discussion Questions BEFORE Reading:

- What are some of your favorite stories? Why are they your favorites?
- Have you ever heard a story and had it impact you?
- Who are some people that have impacted your life? Or people that you look up to?
- Is there one specific story about them that has influenced who you are or what you do?
- Is there one story from your own life that has changed who you are?

Suggested reading and videos:

Read the [one-pager](#) about Room In The Inn's story then watch this short documentary about Room In The Inn's beginnings:

- [Watch](#) (27:45)

Discussion Questions:

- What stood out to you in the video?
- What challenged you?
- What gave you hope?
- What is Room In The Inn doing to live into its core values?
- Where are you being called to get involved?

Read the book *Because* by Mo Willems

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zXyACysDrl>

Discussion Questions:

- How did the story all begin?
- Where did the story lead?
- How was the “special guest” impacted by the the “because”?
- Most of the time we do not realize the impact of our small actions. What small actions of others have led to big things in your own life?
- What small things can you do to impact the world around you?

Suggested Videos:

Watch this TED Talk about “The Danger of a Single Story”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9lhs24Izeg> (19:17)

Discussion Questions:

- How can a story be a “danger”?
- How do the stories we tell ourselves about others impact the way we view them?
- Chimamanda says the power of the “single story” is the power to turn a people group into one thing, or a stereotype. She uses the examples of stories others tell about Africans and the stories she has been told about Mexicans that have created an image that all people living in those places are one thing. Chimamanda reminds us that this is an incorrect way to view people from any place. At Room In The Inn, we face the same issue when people from outside our community first encounter our friends who use services on our campus. Often people have an image of what homelessness looks like and automatically apply that image to everyone they assume is experiencing homelessness. For us who are in community with those experiencing homelessness, we know that those stereotypical images are just not accurate. What stories have impacted your image of people experiencing homelessness?
- Chimamanda shares why she believes stories matter. What do you think about stories? How do they matter?
- What impact does your story have on others around you? How do you want it to impact others?
- Check out these [“Dangerous Stories”](#) from our community at Room In The Inn.

Activity Options:

Writing:

- Have students write down a [“dangerous” story](#) from their own life.

Interactive:

- Organize a Mix It Up Lunch. A Mix It Up Lunch allows students to explore people beyond their exclusive cliques by socializing with students from a variety of groups and backgrounds. Mix It Up is a project of www.tolerance.org. Every year thousands of students sit in lunchrooms with students from different groups and backgrounds as a way to reduce social boundaries and stimulate ongoing dialogue about this issue.

Here are Tips for this activity:

- Encourage students to sit with different people by:
 - Invite students to draw alphabet letters (or colors or numbers, etc.) as they enter the lunchroom, then have them sit at corresponding tables.
 - Hand out treats (lollipops, playing cards, etc.) as students arrive, then have them sit at corresponding tables.
 - Assign tables based on birthday month or season.
 - Assign tables based on the first letter of the student's first name.
 - Use random hand stamps or raffle tickets (or colored bracelets, buttons, etc.) to assign seats.
- Support conversations between students by:
 - Placing conversation starters at each table. These can be tied to a theme - "What is your favorite sports team?" Or, be more general and ask, "Find five things you all have in common."
 - Place a survey on each table for students to compare their answers about books, hobbies, games and/or sports etc.
- Lead the group in the ["Visible & Invisible"](#) activity

Service Opportunities:

- Have students host a cold weather supply drive or a coat drive. Email Room In The Inn at volunteer@roomintheinn.org for more information and access to media kits.
- Check out the [Room In The Inn Amazon Wishlist](#) and host a donation drive.

