

Interdisciplinary Ideas

LANGUAGE ARTS

1. Interview a grandparent or other older adult about his or her life. Prepare by talking about interviewing techniques (see *Teacher's Guide, Activities and Resources*). Summarize the information and share your writing with the special person you interviewed.
2. Write a letter to a grandparent or other older adult that is both cheerful and serious. Illustrate and mail your letters.

* Visit www.heartwoodethics.org and choose Teaching Heartwood, Culture Keys, for more on the history, culture, and geography of this book.

SOCIAL STUDIES

1. In groups of three or four, research the demographics of aging in the United States (Keyword: aging). Looking at statistics for the older adult population (people over 65), what predictions can you make about the kinds of resources they will need in the future?
2. Design a group home for the elderly you might want to live in someday.* Consider needs of residents and visitors, both able and disabled. Write a paragraph explaining your design.

3. Research ways older adults continue to be productive citizens. Take pictures of senior citizens in your community on a job or doing volunteer work (with permission from your subjects). Display your photographs with appropriate captions on a bulletin board.

SCIENCE

Research the sweet pea. (Keywords: gardening, plants, sweet pea) Find out characteristics and growing conditions (e.g., soil type, color, height, seed propagating time, hardiness, exposure to the sun). Draw or paint a cover for your report.

Sunshine Home

Eve Bunting
1994
New York: Clarion Books

HONESTY

USA
Realistic Fiction
Reading Time: 8 minutes

CONCEPTS

Honesty
Love
Loyalty
Empathy

SUMMARY

Tim and his parents visit Grandmother, who is in a nursing home recovering from a fall. Hiding their true emotions, everyone pretends to be cheerful until Tim helps them to share their feelings honestly. The artist's touching watercolors enhance the story by expressing human emotions and the realities of life in a nursing home.

OBJECTIVES

The student will be able to define and discuss honesty, love, and hope as they apply to the story. The student will recognize honesty in terms of expressing true feelings.

After the Story

Sunshine Home

DISCUSSION

1. Why is Gram staying in a nursing home instead of Tim's house? What are Tim's concerns about visiting her? How does Dad reassure him?
2. Why doesn't Tim want to bring Gram a LOVE balloon? What does Gram say about love? Why do Tim's feelings about the balloon change by the end of the story?
3. What are Tim's first impressions of the nursing home? Tell about sights and smells. What changes does he see in Gram?
4. What changes does Tim see in his mom? What does he think about pretending that nothing is wrong? What do you think? What reason does Gram give for everyone pretending?
5. How does Tim persuade his grandmother and parents to reveal their true feelings? What hopes do they share?
6. Do you think Tim's next visit will be different? How? Have you ever visited a nursing home? How does visiting help someone in a hospital or nursing home? Explain.

ACTIVITIES

1. Find your city or town on the world map.
2. With a partner, write examples of five Heartwood attributes in the story. Share with your class.
3. Write an outside/inside poem about yourself. Use the pattern "I seem to be... but really I am..." for each line of your poem. Describe how you seem to be on the outside and how you really are on the inside. Include your skills and strengths.
4. In groups of three or four, list ideas for making positive connections with people in a local nursing home (e.g., make and send art work). Choose one of the ideas. Create and implement a plan.

HOME CONNECTION

Ask family members to tell about a time they visited someone in a nursing home or hospital. Were they able to acknowledge difficulties and still cheer that person up? If so, how? With permission, share with your class.

JOURNAL

1. Reread p. 26. Write about "pretending" in the story and how it is related to love and honesty.
2. At the top of a sheet of paper draw a balloon with the word love inside and a string that extends to the bottom of the page. List ways to show love to a grandparent or older person.
3. If this story reminds you of an experience in your own family, write about it.

VOCABULARY

sweet pea
gaze
corridor

finch
empathy