

Classroom Connections & Additional Activities

1. Brainstorm a list of rain's benefits. **SCI**
2. Review Babushka's explanation of how to estimate one's distance from a storm. **MATH** **SCI**
3. This story takes place in a rural setting. Using pictures as clues, discuss the setting. Rewrite the story in an urban setting. **SS**
4. Create a "Sound Poem" about the storm using repetition. It might look (and sound) like the following:
 Crackle! Crackle! Boom! Crash!
 Crackle! Crackle! Boom!
 Lightening Zip!
 Crackle! Crackle! Boom! Crash!
 Crackle! Crackle! Boom!

Add movement by having students use big, brave actions for loud sounds. Instruments may be added to mimic the sounds. **LA** **MUSIC** **PE**

5. Create a "Stormy Day" picture by using a crayon resist technique. Students can color a picture depicting a rainy scene on a rainy day. Stress the importance of pressing hard with the crayon to color darkly and completely. When finished, lightly brush the picture with diluted black tempera paint. The crayon should resist the paint. **ART**

Thunder Cake

Patricia Polacco
 1990
 New York: Philomel Books

COURAGE

USA/Russia
 Reading time: 9 minutes

CONCEPTS

Courage
 Trust
 Love

SUMMARY

On a sultry summer day, a young girl learns to overcome her fear of thunderstorms with the help of her loving Babushka, her Russian grandmother. The little girl musters up courage to complete each task required to bake a "Thunder Cake" and turns the frightening thunderstorm into a celebration. Among Polacco's intensely colored illustrations are many warm intergenerational portraits. Her fine details also offer a glimpse into Babushka's heritage.

OBJECTIVE

The student will be able to define and discuss courage and trust as they apply to this story. The student will recognize courageous behavior in self and others.

After the Story

Thunder Cake

DISCUSSION

1. In the story, what was the little girl most afraid of? Why did she come out from under the bed? What did Babushka decide to do during the storm? How did making a Thunder Cake help the girl overcome her fears?
2. The little girl had to be brave so she could help her grandma. What did she need to do (enter the dark dry shed, climb the trellis, face the chicken)?
3. How did Babushka know what to do? Do you think she may have been afraid of thunder when she was a little girl? What are some things that frighten you? What do you do when you are afraid? Who helps you when you are afraid?
4. One way Babushka helped the little girl was by saying "I'm here, child." How can you help someone else to be brave?
5. Does being brave mean you don't feel afraid? How can you act bravely even if you feel afraid on the inside?

ACTIVITIES

1. *Pass the Courage:* The goal is to pass "fear" around the circle and watch it change to courage as children keep facing their fear over and over. Form a circle. Ask the children to think of something they are afraid of. Use an object such as a soft ball to represent the fear. Pass the ball in a circle. As each child gets the ball, he/she can act out being afraid (body curled, short breath, scrunched down). The next time around the circle, the children have done it before, so they are not quite as fearful – they can act a little less afraid. After several rounds, children should appear to be unafraid, and can act excited, courageous, and confident (tall, breathing open, etc.). Now that children have faced their fear, have them return to their seats and make a "Badge of Courage" to wear.
2. List people whose jobs require them to be brave (local police, firefighters, doctors and nurses ...). Invite someone to come into the classroom to talk about their work. After the visit students might want to make a Badge of Courage and write a thank you note for the guest.
3. Make a bulletin board where students can place pictures of people who have shown courage. Pictures from magazines, newspapers, or original drawings can form the collage. Adaptation: a bulletin board outside the classroom can display the "Hall of Heroes." Invite students from other classrooms to contribute.

EXTENSION

1. Ask grown-ups at home to tell you something they were afraid of as children and explain how they got over their fears. With their permission, share with the class.
2. Send home the Heartwood Family Newsletter on Courage.

WRAP-UP

In My Heartwood Journal draw a picture of one of your heroes doing something brave.

VOCABULARY

ingredients
luscious
dry shed
trellis