

Civil Rights Lesson (Argument-based writing, civic engagement)

Objectives and outcomes:

- To familiarize students with vocabulary words (qualified, mistreat, injustice, encouragement, boycott, protest, fulfill, registered)
- To work on dramatic skills, especially use of voice and body to express emotions and convey character
- To bolster argument-based writing skills
- To relate historical civil rights struggles to children in an accessible way

Grade level: 3rd to 5th

Duration: 45 minutes

Materials needed: bear ears, pencils, colored pencils, paper

Special requirement: a second instructor in the room is highly recommended, though not absolutely necessary

I. Introduction (five minutes)

- A. Start by introducing potentially new concepts to students, telling them that the lesson will be taking place in Alaska, and the main characters are arctic foxes. Explain that arctic foxes are animals whose fur color changes based on the season.

II. Guided Narration of Casey and Simon story (ten minutes)

- A. Instructor narrates a story, and demonstrates actions and speech that characters make. Students act out the actions and speech of the different characters in the story at the same time, following the prompting of the instructor. Instructor should take longer quotations a few words or a phrase at a time to not overload the students.
- B. Tell the story, which is at the bottom of this document. Bolded are the vocabulary words specific to the class this lesson was written for. Instructor does not necessarily need to stick to the whole script, but this version has all of the main points that should be hit in the story.

III. Discussion (five minutes)

- A. Begin discussion by asking students what happened in the story to help with retention of the events.
- B. Ask students how they would feel if something like this happened to them to relate the content to their own lives
- C. Explain that the students are going to be writing speeches to the bear in the story to get him to change his ways

IV. Speech Writing (five minutes)

- A. Instruct students to write letters to the bear to convince him that he should let foxes eat at the restaurant.
 - B. Have students use at least four of the eight vocabulary words used in the lesson.
- V. Protest prep (five minutes)**
- A. After students have taken some time to write their speeches, tell them that they will be staging their own protest. On the backside of their speech, they should make a protest sign using colored pencils. Give suggestions of phrases that could go on a protest sign.
 - B. At this point, the instructor playing the bear should leave the room and the other instructor will help the students with their signs.
- VI. Protest/Teacher-in-role (ten minutes)**
- A. Second instructor will lead the protest, choosing a location for the salmon shop and having the students chant to get the bear to come out. The instructor playing the bear will come out, with ears in character, and have a conversation, calling on students and having them say their speeches.
 - B. Have as many of the students say their speeches as possible with time permitting. The bear should be somewhat resistant to letting foxes eat at his shop by asking students rebuttal questions, but eventually allows students to persuade him. (Some motivations I used as the bear character were that a few foxes came into the store one time and left a mess, and the bear wasn't able to use a broom to clean up because his paws were too clunky. Be creative!)
 - C. Ideally, students and the bear will reach a compromise after their conversation. The bear will eventually say goodbye to the students and remove the ears.
- VII. Wrap-up (five minutes)**
- A. Through guided questions, draw parallels between the fox/bear story and civil right struggles and acts of discrimination. Ask the kids again how they would feel if this happened, and use whatever civil rights context you find appropriate or necessary to draw these parallels.

Modification and differentiation

If another instructor is not available, the one instructor can simply lead the students to the protest, put on the ears and embody the bear. I found it generally worked better when I had an additional instructor to assist, but it is by no means a requirement.

The story doesn't necessarily have to be arctic foxes and bears.

Example of Casey and Simon guided narration

Casey and Simon, two arctic foxes, woke up one day after a long night exploring. They yawned and looked very sleepy.

Casey says to Simon, "Hey, did you hear about that new salmon place that those grizzly bears opened up?"

Simon said "I didn't. I could definitely go for some salmon right about now!"

Casey said, "well, we all know that grizzly bears love salmon almost as much as we do, so they're definitely **qualified** to make a delicious dish!"

Simon said, "I agree, let's do it!"

So they walked over to the Salmon Shop, and walked into the door, and went up to the counter.

Casey said to Simon, "do you want me to buy you your food?"

Simon said, "well, I *did* save your life that one time..."

Casey, "ugh, fine." So she put her paws up to the very tall counter, reaching up as high as she could and asked, "Can I get two salmon cakes please?"

The bear at the counter said, "Ugh. We don't serve your kind here."

Casey said, "Ha, ha. Funny joke."

The bear said, "I'm serious. You're foxes. Get out."

Simon yelled, "WHAT?! How could you **mistreat** us like this? This is an **injustice!!**"

Casey said, "come on, Simon. Let's go. We'll take our money elsewhere."

Casey drags Simon out, and they went back to their home

Simon says, "What can we do? I hate how they treated us in there."

Casey says, "Well, the first thing we can do is tell our friends what they did at that shop. That should give them some **encouragement** to **boycott** the Salmon Shop, and never eat there again."

Simon said, "That's a great idea! We could also **protest** by standing outside the shop with our friends and hold up signs."

Casey said, "I like that! But what do we want to change?"

Simon said proudly, "We want to make it so no business can discriminate against any species!"

Casey said, "Okay, I like that! How are we going to **fulfill** that?"

Simon said, “well, the election is coming up! We need to get all of our friends **registered** to vote, so that way we can all vote and make sure this law gets passed.”

Casey said, “Perfect! The last thing we should do is write a letter to the owners of the shop, and let them know why what they did wasn’t okay.”