

## LESSON PLANNING ARTICLE

# Those Tear-Me-Apart, Put-Me-Back-Together, Never-Be-the-Same-Again Blues

## Subjects

Arts & Humanities

- Language Arts

Health

- Mental Health
- Our Bodies

Social Studies

- Psychology



Return to [Teaching @ Tolerance](#) Lesson Article

## Grades

- Pre-K
- K-2
- 3-5
- 6-8

## Brief Description

This powerful activity illustrates how words can hurt -- or heal.

## Objectives

Students will

- discuss what it might be like to be the new person in a group.
- choose the correct words for an apology.
- learn a vivid lesson about how unkind words can hurt others.
- write a paragraph to explain what they learned from the lesson.

## Keywords

prejudice, tolerance, intolerance, feelings, mean, bully, violence, self-esteem

## Materials Needed

- mural or construction paper (brightly-colored paper is best)

## Lesson Plan

This activity will drive home to kids of all ages the power words have to hurt - or to heal.

### Before the lesson.

Using craft or construction paper, trace and cut out a life-size silhouette/outline of a person. To avoid gender- or race-specific figures, you might want to cut the figure from green or blue paper.

### Introduce the lesson.

Gather students in a group and introduce them to their new "classmate." (You might give the figure a name such as Greenie or Bluey to avoid any association with a real person.) Explain that new students often have difficulty fitting in because they are entering a situation where groups of students have already formed bonds of friendship. Point out that some people will automatically put up barriers to a new student, deciding quickly -- without even trying to get to know him or her -- that they dislike the new student.

Ask students to imagine that Greenie (for example) has just come into a classroom where bonds already have formed; the atmosphere is very unwelcoming. Invite students, one at a time, to say something mean to Greenie. They will have to use their imaginations, because Greenie has no specific features they can pick on. The teacher might even start the ball rolling by saying something like "We don't want you here, Greenie," or "We don't like people who are different from us," or "Your hair is a mess, Greenie." Each time a mean thing is said to Greenie, the teacher rips off a piece of Greenie's body and hands it to the person who made the comment.

When ripping, rip large chunks; it will need to be obvious to students where each chunk fits into the whole if they are to piece Greenie back together.

After everyone has had a chance to say something mean to Greenie, it's time to start taping Greenie back together. Invite each student who said something mean about Greenie to come up and use tape to reattach his/her piece of Greenie in its proper place. As each piece is reconnected, the student must apologize to Greenie for the mean thing that was said. (You might have younger students model in advance some of the words they might say when making an apology.)

When the torn body is fully repaired -- no matter how hard the students have tried to piece him back together -- Greenie will not look the same as when students met her/him for the first time. Ask questions to lead students to the understanding that, although some of the damage has been repaired, Greenie will never be exactly the same. His feelings were hurt, and the scars remain. Chances are those scars will never go away.

Hang Greenie on a wall as a reminder of the power words have to hurt. Greenie's presence will serve as constant reinforcement of a vivid lesson in kindness.

## Assessment

Have students write a paragraph to explain in their own words what lessons they learned from this activity.

## Lesson Plan Source

Education World

## Submitted By

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