

NCSS notable trade book lesson plan

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Love

by *Matt de la Peña*

Illustrated by Loren Long

Notable, 2019

G.P. Putnam's Sons

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Book recommended for 1st grade–5th grade.
Lesson recommended for 1st grade–3rd grade.

Book summary

Love is about the journey from childhood to adulthood in which innocence is gradually lost. However, not all is lost as the reader comes to see that love is there every step of the way. From birth to adolescence to adulthood, love carries us through life—even at times when everything else seems lost. No matter where we go or what circumstances we must face, love allows us to rise above.

NCSS themes

- (4) Individual development and identity
- (6) Power, authority, and governance

C3 framework standards

D2.Civ.8.K-2. Describe democratic principles such as equality, fairness, and respect for legitimate authority and rules.

D2.Civ.9.K-2. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions while responding attentively to others when addressing ideas and making decisions as a group.

D4.6.K-2. Identify and explain a range of local, regional, and global problems, and some ways in which people are trying to address these problems.

D4.7.K-2. Identify ways to take action to help address local, regional, and global problems.

Materials

- (1) *Love* by Matt de la Peña
- (2) Wooden blocks
- (3) Legos
- (4) Foam blocks
- (5) Bristle blocks



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- (6) Four large, opaque totes with matching lids (all of which should be the same size)
 - (7) Random group selector (i.e. popsicle sticks or an online spinning wheel)
 - (8) Empathy worksheet for each student (provided in [Appendix 4](#))
 - (9) Drawing materials (i.e. pencils, markers, crayons, and colored pencils)

Big ideas

- (1) Authors and illustrators work together to give meaning to a book through the connections they create between the words and illustrations.
- (2) Individuals face different experiences and challenges throughout their lives which can create unfair circumstances.
- (3) When individuals witness unfair circumstances, they can offer help through compassionate and empathetic actions.

Objectives

- (1) **Exploration:** Students will answer comprehension questions related to the characters, illustrations, and overall tone of the book.
- (2) **Development:** Students will use the given materials to work together toward a common goal.
- (3) **Expansion:** Students will analyze the circumstances of a given situation to determine the relative level of justice present and to identify how various circumstances affect a person's attitude and actions.
- (4) **Expansion:** Students will relate the in-class simulation to real-world people and situations and describe possible ways to show these people love and empathy.

A note to the teacher before beginning the lesson

Before beginning the lesson, ensure that all four totes have been filled with the designated amount of each material:

- (1) One tote is filled with wooden blocks.
- (2) One tote has four handfuls of Legos in it.
- (3) One tote has eight foam blocks in it.
- (4) One tote is filled a quarter of the way with bristle blocks.

If these materials are not available, similar building materials can be substituted. Close each tote with its corresponding lid so the materials cannot be seen by the four groups of students. The group that chooses the tote with the wooden blocks will most likely complete the challenge first. The groups that choose the tote with the Legos and the tote with the foam blocks will not have enough building materials to complete the challenge. The group that chooses the tote with the bristle blocks will most likely complete the challenge in second place as these blocks are smaller than the wooden blocks.

Exploration

Estimated time to complete: Approximately 15 min. (varies based on class discussion time)

Objective: Students will answer comprehension questions related to the characters, illustrations, and overall tone of the book.

Assessment method: Student observation

- (1) Show the students the front cover of the book and read the title, author, and illustrator (De La Peña and Long, 2018). Ask the students what they think the book will be about. Then show the students the back cover. Ask them if they think their predictions are still true or if they want to change their predictions.
- (2) Read the entire book to the students (De La Peña and Long, 2018). Afterward, discuss what the story was about and how the overall tone of the story changed from the beginning to the middle to the end (see *Love* discussion questions in Appendix 1).
- (3) Read the book a second time to the students (De La Peña and Long, 2018). Before beginning, prompt students to study the pictures on each page. Take your time reading, asking students about the pictures as you read (see *Love* discussion questions in Appendix 1).
 - **Example:** After reading pages three and four aloud ask the students, “Do these pictures match the tone or the feeling of the words I just read?” Reread the pages, emphasizing the positive tone. Ask the students, “How do the words make you feel?” Give wait time for students to think and then allow them to share. Ask the students, “Now what about the pictures? What do you notice?” Give wait time for students to think and then allow them to share. Finally ask, “How do those photos make you feel? Is this feeling the same or different than the words?”

Assessment: Students should be given ample time to think and respond to the comprehension questions. Students should verbally share their thoughts during the group discussion. They are then assessed on their ability to recall events in the story and interpret the author’s word choice with the illustrator’s picture choice. Students’ emotions that are elicited by the book do not necessarily have to be the same. The goal is for students to work on recognizing the effects of word and picture choice on the overall tone and mood of the book.

Development

Estimated time to complete: Approximately 10–15 min.

Objective: Students will use the given materials to work together toward a common goal.

Assessment method: Student observation

- (1) Divide the class into four equal groups. Introduce the totes to the students and have one member from each group pick a tote to use. Do not allow the students to open the totes yet. Have each group take their tote to an open space in the room.
 - It is best to have the totes lined up in an area of the room that is easily accessible to all students. Each group should collectively decide on a tote and take the tote they touch first. They cannot shake or weigh each tote. To determine which group gets to choose first, use a random group selector, such as popsicle sticks or an online spinning wheel.
- (2) Give the students the following challenge: using only the materials in the totes, you must build a tower that is **taller than the tallest person in your group**. The tower **must be able to stand on its own without support**. The first group to complete the challenge will get to choose a prize from the prize bin.

- (3) Have the students open their totes and begin working. As students work, take note of their comments. If the students begin complaining about the fairness of the challenge, tell them that they chose their tote and that there's nothing you can do to help them.

Assessment: Students should be given ample time to try to complete the challenge. Students will need to first decide who the tallest person in their group is. Then, they must start to build their tower. Students are assessed on their ability to cooperate with the members in their group. This includes choosing the person who gets the tote, talking through a strategy, allowing all members to provide ideas, and allowing all members to build a portion of the tower.

Expansion

Estimated time to complete: 15–20 min. (varies based on class discussion time)

Objective 1: Students will analyze the circumstances of a given situation to determine the relative level of justice present and to identify how various circumstances affect a person's attitude and actions.

Objective 2: Students will relate the in-class simulation to real-world people and situations and describe possible ways to show these people love and empathy.

Assessment method: Student observation and student work sample

- (1) End the challenge by having students gather in a circle somewhere in the room. Announce the winner of the challenge. If students complain, ask them why they are complaining. If students do not complain, ask the class if they thought the challenge was fair. Complete a discussion about the various unjust elements of the challenge (see **Fairness discussion questions in Appendix 2**).

● **Example questions:**

- “Why don't you think this challenge was fair?”
- “Which group had the easiest time? Why?”
- “Which group had the hardest time? Why?”
- “Was it fair for me to give you this challenge and then give some groups an advantage?”
- “How did this challenge make you feel?”
- “What could you have done during the challenge to make it more fair for each group?”

- (2) After talking about the challenge, relate it to real-world circumstances and complete a discussion about situations in life (see **Real-world discussion questions in Appendix 3**).

● **Example questions:**

- “Do things like this sometimes happen in the real world? What are some examples?”
- “Have you ever been in an unfair situation? What was it like, and how did it make you feel?”
- “If you were going through a hard time, would you want other people to help you?”

- “Are there things we can do to help people who are going through difficult or unfair situations?”
 - “What did our book show us we could do?”
- (3) Introduce the empathy worksheet (see [Appendix 4](#)) to the students and explain how to complete the handout. Students should draw and explain an unfair situation in the box. Then students should explain what they could do to make the situation better. Allow students to complete the handout in class. During this time, prompt students to think about how they would feel if they were going through that situation and how they would want others to help. **Relate this back to the concept of love and the characters’ actions from the book.**
 - (4) Once all of the students have completed the empathy worksheet, give time for students to share their completed handout with the class. Allow students to ask and answer questions based on the situations and solutions presented. **After this discussion, collect all of the empathy worksheets as an assessment method.**

Assessment: Students should be given ample time to discuss the fairness and real-world discussion questions. During this time, students will be assessed on their abilities to delineate fair and unfair situations as well as appropriate responses to those situations. Students will also be assessed on their abilities to understand unfair situations in the real world and how those unfair situations affect everyday life. The **empathy worksheet** can be collected to assess students’ abilities to recognize actions of love and empathy when encountering unfair situations in the real world.

Assessment

The following are assessments from the lesson that align to the standards and objectives:

- (1) *Introduction:* students’ verbal answers to comprehension questions
- (2) *Development:* students’ actions of working together to build a tower
- (3) *Extension:* students’ discussions and empathy worksheet
 - **Fairness discussion mastery indicators**
 - Students notice and identify the inequality and inequity in the challenge.
 - Students provide valid reasoning as to why the challenge was unfair. This includes the fact that the group with the Legos and the group with the foam blocks did not have enough materials. This also includes the fact that the students are different heights. Because of this, the groups’ towers had to be different heights to win the challenge.
 - **Real-world discussion mastery indicators**
 - Students identify examples of unfair situations in the real world. This could include bullying, positions in line, availability of money and food, etc.
 - Students identify unfair situations they have experienced and how those situations made them feel.
 - Students identify solutions to help remediate unfair situations, including showing love to those around them. These solutions should be plausible actions that the students can take themselves. This could include being a friend, sharing, offering encouraging words, caring for others when they’re sick, etc.

Suggested extension activities

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- (1) Complete other lessons that focus on equity, such as the Shelf Lesson (Song, 2020) and the Band Aid Lesson (Lotts of Learning, 2019).
- (2) Read other children’s books that focus on empathy and justice, such as *We’re All Wonders* by R.J. Palacio (2017), *Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodland (2012), and *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña (2015).
- (3) Conduct a community outreach project with a local food bank, homeless shelter, or rescue center.
- (4) Have students think of a time when they were going through a rough situation and what other people did to help them. Then have them write a short story explaining the situation.
- (5) Have students sort fair and unfair situations and brainstorm ideas to make the unfair situations better for everyone involved.
- (6) For older groups, take the concept of equity one step further to incorporate controversial topics that center around social justice, such as individual rights, immigration, or economic welfare.
 - With these concepts conduct debates, fish-bowl discussions, dramatizations and more.

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(The Appendix follows overleaf)

Appendix 1:
(Source: Author's own creation/work.)
Love discussion questions

- (1) What feeling is present at the beginning of the book?
 - Love
- (2) Is this feeling present throughout the entire book?
 - Yes
- (3) At the beginning of the story, how did the characters feel?
 - Happy/joyful
- (4) In the middle of the story, were the characters still happy or did their feelings change?
 - Their feelings changed from happy to scared.
- (5) How did the characters deal with this fear?
 - Their friends and family showed them love to help calm their fears.
- (6) What is love?
 - Love is an action. It is caring for your family members when they are sick. It is playing with friends. It is the rustle of leaves and the beauty of nature. (Answers may vary based on individual experiences.)
- (7) Do these pictures match the tone of the words I just read?
 - Pages 3–4 and 5–6: No, the words are joyful, but the pictures are sad.
 - Pages 19–20 and 31–32: Yes, the words are nerve-wracking, and the pictures show hard-working characters.
- (8) How do the words make you feel?
 - Answers will vary.
- (9) What do you notice about the pictures?
 - On pages 3–4, there is a homeless man and a child in a wheelchair.
 - On pages 5–6, there is a broken-down truck and a mom cleaning dishes.
 - On pages 19–20, the dad is leaving really early in the snow, and the boy has burnt toast.
 - On pages 31–32, it's raining. Some people look sad while others are hugging. They are all gray. The umbrellas are colored. The parents are watching the little boy walk away. The parents and the child are shown in color too.
- (10) How do the pictures make you feel?
 - Answers will vary.
- (11) Do the words give you the same feeling as the pictures?
 - Answers will vary.

Appendix 2:
(Source: Author's own creation/work.)
Fairness discussion questions

- (1) Why don't you think this challenge was fair?
 - Answers may include but are not limited to:
 - They had more materials.
 - Their tallest person is shorter than the others.
 - Their materials were larger.
- (2) You chose your own tote, so why are you blaming me for making it unfair?
 - Answers may include but are not limited to:
 - You put the materials in the totes.
 - You knew which totes had more materials.
 - You made the challenge.
- (3) Which group had the easiest time? Why?
 - The group with the wooden blocks had the easiest time because they had the most materials and these blocks were the largest.
- (4) Which group(s) had the hardest time? Why?
 - The groups with the foam blocks and the Legos had a difficult time because they didn't have enough materials to complete the challenge.
- (5) How did this challenge make you feel? (Reference students' comments and actions that were noted during the **development stage**. Probe students as to why they made these comments and acted a certain way.)
 - Answers may include but are not limited to:
 - Angry
 - Sad
 - Frustrated
 - Not capable
 - Betrayed
 - Glad (those who won)
 - Excited
- (6) Was it right for me to give you this challenge and then give some groups an advantage?
 - No, I was setting the class up for failure.
- (7) Is there something you could have done while working to make the challenge more fair for all of the groups?
 - The groups could have shared materials or combined.

Appendix 3:
(Source: Author's own creation/work.)
Real-world discussion questions

- (1) Do things like this sometimes happen in the real-world? What are some examples?
 - Yes, people are put in unfair situations almost every day (including but not limited to):
 - Being last in line
 - Having to ride the bus rather than drive a car
 - Working two jobs to pay for bills
 - Getting bullied
 - Not having enough to eat
- (2) Are people often put in hard or unfair situations? Explain.
 - Yes, life is not always fair. Every person goes through something difficult at least once in their life.
- (3) Have you ever been in an unfair situation? What was it like, and how did it make you feel?
 - Answers may vary.
- (4) How do you think people feel when they are treated unfairly?
 - Answers may include but are not limited to:
 - Upset/angry
 - Sad
 - Frustrated
 - Worthless
- (5) If you were going through a hard time, would you want other people to help you?
 - Answers may vary.
- (6) Are there things we can do to help people who are going through difficult or unfair situations?
 - Answers may include but are not limited to:
 - Share
 - Encourage them
 - Be a friend
- (7) What did our book show us we could do?
 - Show love to all of those around us.
- (8) What does love look like?
 - Answers may include but are not limited to:
 - Being a friend
 - Sharing
 - Being a shoulder to cry on
 - Sitting with others at lunch
 - Talking to people
 - Caring for people when they're sick

Appendix 4:
(Source: Author's own creation/work.)

Empathy worksheet

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Name: _____

Be Fair and Care

What is an unfair situation you have seen at school or in the community? Explain and draw the situation in the box.



What could you do to make this unfair situation better?

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