

**Title of Lesson:**

Analyzing the Disability Perspective in [The Wonderful Life of a Fly Who Couldn't Fly](#) (Lozoff, 2002)

**Search terms:**

Disability studies, disabled character, picture book with text, adapted picture book, individualized general curriculum, insect, reciprocal teaching, comprehension, question guide, K-12, modified, respect

**Date of Creation:**

June 2020 (original unpublished 2006)

**Creator of the Lesson:**

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**Grade Level:**

1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> general curriculum; 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> as applied to teaching younger learners about disability; and K-high school adapted or modified general or independence curriculum

**Subject:**

Reading, Literature

**Time Duration:**

Minimum of 2 days

**Summary of Lesson:**

Analysis and Critique of Literature (Literature Comprehension; Disability; Vocabulary Application)

Students will analyze the story of a disabled character in a picture book applying disability studies tenets, particularly DSE 2 privileging the voices of disabled people. Students will read and apply comprehension techniques (predicting, summarizing, clarifying, and questioning) to a children's book about a Fly born without wings.

Using elements of [reciprocal teaching](#) (predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing), students summarize the story and interpret the main character's intention and voice as a disabled character. Additionally, generalization and application of prior knowledge; reinforcing learned vocabulary; comprehension; recall; sequencing; creating adapted book and alternate ending.

In the process of reasoning and skill development, students will talk about what they see and how they feel. Large group, small group, and one-on-one discussions will allow students to clarify their understandings of the issues/events and questions to then summarize their findings, content, feelings, and ideas in the final product of adapting the book and rewriting the ending in they chose.

### **DSE Alignment:**

DSE 1. Contextualize disability within political and social spheres.

- I can read, write, or speak about disability.
- I can notice if my needs and wants are being heard or those of disabled peers (Dinero, 2006).
- [For older learners] I can determine how disability or difference in literature impacts the character and how it might impact groups in society.

DSE 2. Privilege the interests, agendas, and voices of people labeled with disability/disabled people.

- I can see myself or others I know with disabilities in the character or the perspective of the author of the book.
- I can listen and value the work of disabled characters, scholars and disabled peers.

DSE 3. Promote social justice, equitable and inclusive educational opportunities, and full and meaningful access to all aspects of society or people labeled with disability/disabled people.

- I can seek out and select books about difference, diversity, or disability in my school and in my community that avoid inaccurate or negative stereotypes.
- I can develop ideas to interrupt oppression and increase inclusive practices in my school through analyzing literature.
- [For older learners} I can identify if the books that are available are mostly about nondisabled people, disabled, or people without differences.

DSE 4. Assume competence and reject deficit models of disability.

- I can view disability as natural.
- I can avoid judgement because it is not natural (Dinero, 2019).
- I can make connections to disabled characters (text-to-self, text-to-world)
- [For older learners] I can express, discuss, or debate the topic of disability without negative opinion or judgement. I can argue the importance of a disability perspective (i.e., such did the Fly when explaining she was happy and never not sad that she never once flew).

### **Lesson Objectives and Assessments:**

Objectives:

- Students will analyze the story of a disabled character in a picture book applying disability studies tenets.
- Students will apply comprehension techniques (predicting, summarizing, clarifying, and questioning) to understand the perspective of the disabled character (a fly born without wings); applying the comprehension techniques will aid in decision-making on an ending that matches the main character's statements.

### **Assessment 1:**

Discussion-describe disability in a neutral to positive way. Check for accuracy of any events in order. Provide an interpretation. Create adapted accessible summaries of each page in [plain language](#). Create a modified or additional ending based on facts/statements from the main character in the book.

### Success Criteria:

- I can predict what will/should happen next.
- I can communicate questions about the story.
- I can think of ways to change the ending based on facts from the main character's quotes.
- I can identify advocacy and empowerment vocabulary.
- I can identify characters, setting, plot, and theme (people, places, things, happenings and why or what does it mean).
- I can apply comprehension strategies: predictions, summarize, clarify, and questioning.
- I can identify my attitude and feelings toward disability.
  - I can identify my attitude and feeling toward oppression of people with disabilities.
- I can make connections from the text to my school community and respect the ideas and statements of my peers, including my peers with disabilities.

### Teacher Guide:

Anticipatory Set (Prior to beginning of the lesson):

### Preteach Vocabulary:

- Consider preteaching advocacy vocabulary to then have students apply those terms and make connections to text and world (see Appendix).

### General:

- Do a picture walk—first view of book without reading it. These questions may also be used in subsequent readings. Then read the book in large groups. (If reading to an older audience, frame the questions for themselves and consider how younger learners would/could interpret what they see). For example:
  - What do you see?
  - Who do you see?
  - How does it make you feel? Have you ever felt like that?
  - What happened?
  - Did the Fly \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_?
  - Who is talking?
  - Why did \_\_\_\_\_?
  - What might happen next?
  - First \_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_?
  - Does the Fly \_\_\_\_\_?
  - What do you think will happen on the next page?

### **Lesson Progression (How will the lesson unfold/develop?):**

Instructional Activities: Potential discussion questions/probes/leads/prompts based on student knowledge, direction, and reflection.

**Specific\* (embedded modeling reciprocal teaching comprehension questions).** Read the book again in small groups (or large groups if small groups are not an option). Analyze the story using the discussion prompts (avoid discussion of disability as pity; or redirect to see disability as natura):

- Pg 2-6 Are all flies born with wings? Is a fly *supposed* to have wings?
- The fly does not have wings, is that good, why? Is that bad, why?
- Can a fly be a fly without wings?
- Pg 5 How did the fly feel when she saw she didn't have wings? Why did she cry? (was it because everyone else was flying or she didn't know she could do other things)
- Pg 9 Why did Fly think, "I'm of no more use than this stone."
- Pg 9-13 What made the fly happy? Does the fly need wings to be happy? Do people need (legs) to be happy?
- Pg 15 What can the fly do if she can't fly? What can you do if you couldn't (insert sensory)?
- Pg 15, 16 The fly decides not to cry over things she can't do. What are things you can't do; and that's okay because what are some things you love to do.
- Pg 18 What does ashamed (e.g., embarrassed/negative) mean? How could Fly feel? Prompt for--What does proud mean (tried your best/did great)?
- Pg 21 Why does Mama Fly love Fly if she doesn't have any wings?
- Pg 22 What does Mama Fly tell Fly to love?
- Pg 23 "The answer is love," what does Mama Fly mean? (love yourself/you are valuable...)
- Pg 25, 26 What is Fly doing? (What does the fly do since she's not flying?)

- Pg 28, 29 Why do the baby flies like her, look up to her? (note if they say respect, same, equality, any advocacy vocab; prompt for that if they do not).
- Pg 31 "I'm truly not sad that I never once flew." How does she feel that she never flew? (confirm she said she did NOT feel sad)
- Pg 35-38 When the wind comes what happened to Fly? Why is she smiling--but I thought she said she wasn't sad she didn't fly... Do you think she needed to fly?
- Pg 37 Ending--The Fly said she had a happy life and was not sad she never flew? Why does she fly in the sky at the end? If you could write the ending, what would happen? (Or a more direct lead if discussion does not progress): The ending is wrong, that is not what the fly said she wanted. She said she was happy she never flew. Make the ending right, make it match what she said; what would the fly do, or what would happen to the fly? What would she like to do?
- (Multiple means of expression/independent practice) Create a pg 39.
- At end of project, if student hasn't mentioned diversity: Think about the fly (or the garden), what is diversity?
- Probe receptively for advocacy vocab. i.e., Do you see (respect, diversity?) Tell me/Show me/Touch the picture of \_\_\_\_\_.
- What was your favorite part of the story? Tell or touch your favorite part/picture.
- Extended discussion—depending on student-direction (where they go with this):
  - What is disability?
  - Who has a disability?
  - Did the fly have a disability?
  - What was her disability?
  - And how did she feel about it? [at first confused, but then happy]
  - Since she had a disability, what accommodations are helpful for her?

NOTE: A focus is to hear the student's perspective and provide that disability can be a neutral and positive concept. People with disabilities provide various perspectives (i.e., a fly without wings is still a fly).

Review the vocabulary words: support, diversity, respect, choices, disability (although not specifically stated in the book, it is clearly implied).

### **Closure (How will the lesson be wrapped up?)**

Group discussion after individual writing (multiple means of expression). Rewrite the ending of the book individually and then discuss as a group their interpretation of the ending and how they rewrote or added a page to the story so that the disabled character's voice/perspective is respected or applied.

Discuss decisions/decision-making about how they summarized and adapted the book. Discuss decisions for accessibility in adapting the book. Summarize the story by adapting each page with the main idea using symbols and/or print. [Optional activity, decide as a large group the final group effort of adapted summaries for each page, and the alternate ending]

Homework: Find a different book with a disabled character. Analyze if their voice is respected and heard and discuss the importance.

### **Required Materials/Equipment:**

- The picture book, *The Wonderful Life of Fly Who Couldn't Fly* (Lozoff, B, 2002).
- Word processing document or GoogleDoc; scanner or ability to upload pictures of each book page into Slides or PPT to then add the adapted text/symbols to each page.
- Accessibility ideas (follow IEP and best practices in UDL): Accessible software (such as providing Word Prediction, Boardmaker Plus, [Core Vocabulary](#) Board to represent text, etc.); tactile object representation of main nouns, verbs for visual supports; magnifier; fidget/stim objects; other

### **Extensions/Practice (Continuation of Engagement):**

Upon completion of the adapted picture books (their interpretations for symbol representation, summary, main idea, and optional rewrite of ending) and research into themes and understanding of disability, the culminating topic will include direct instruction and discussion in reading comprehension, advocacy vocabulary representations in the book, and disability as diversity.

**References:**

- Dinero, A. (2006). Lesson plan: *The wonderful life of a fly who couldn't fly* by Lozoff, B. 2002. [Stiggins Assessment For Learning KRSP Lesson Plan](#) Illinois School District 109. Parts of this lesson plan were originally developed and implemented in 2006 in a junior high multi-subject classroom with learners with Intellectual Disabilities, Autism, and Multiple Disabilities.
- Lozoff, B. (2002). *The wonderful life of a fly who couldn't fly*. Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing Company, Inc. 1571742867 (ISBN13: 9781571742865)

**Bibliography:**

Bales, K. (2020). *How to boost reading comprehension with reciprocal teaching*. "reciprocal teaching is an instructional technique aimed at developing reading comprehension skills by gradually empowering the students to take on the role of the teacher. Reciprocal teaching makes students active participants in the lesson. It also helps students transition from guided to independent readers and reinforces strategies for comprehending the meaning of a text" (para. 1).  
<https://www.thoughtco.com/reciprocal-teaching-definition-4583097>

Blaska, J. (2003). *Using children's literature to learn about disabilities and illness*. New York: Educator's International Press, Inc. The author points out the need to incorporate books with characters with disabilities into early childhood curricula. "Books serve as mirrors for children to see characters who look like themselves and have feelings and experiences similar to their own" (p. 5). She explains how important the earliest literary experiences are and how they help form children's overall development. This book provides 4 chapters of annotated bibliographies on children's books about disability and illness. She further provides some discussion outlines and activities.

Gill, C. J. (2001, Spring). What is the "social model of disability" and why should you care? *Alert*, pp. 6-9. Chicago: University of Illinois at Chicago. The author, a professor at UIC Chicago and disability studies scholar, brings attention to conflicting theoretical models of disability as discussed by disability studies scholars. She outlines the existing understandings of disability framed in the two theoretical models; the social/minority group model of disability, and the medical/deficit model of disability. The social model of disability understands that disability is experienced in social or historical context by social situations; it is a social construct. The medical model of disability is the understanding that disability is an internal problem within the individual that only represents a deficit. The focus of this newsletter article was to bring exposure to how disability has been viewed and people with disabilities treated and conceptualized in history, policy, employment, and education. This article helps to bring down barriers in understanding disability from an internal problem to an external socially constructed understanding.

Lozoff, B. (2002). *The wonderful life of a fly who couldn't fly*. Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing Company, Inc. This is a story of a fly born without wings and her experiences. This 38 page picture book does an excellent job of addressing a narrative of disability and diverse abilities. It works on taking the focus off of a 'label' or internal issue, and placing the focus on (social/external issues or opportunities) enjoying life and respecting (and celebrating) diversity of experiences. For students with disabilities, it provides a representation and topic that may be reflective of themselves. There are few books that accurately portray/represent disability in a neutral or positive way (without pity). For nondisabled students, it neutrally showcases various bodies and abilities and valuing diverse experiences. With the right discussion, this book can lend a helpful start to disability/diversity awareness/multiculturalism (as disability in the framework of diversity and culture). It is a very interesting springboard for a social construct or diversity discussion. This book can provide interest for all ages. The illustrations are engaging and pleasant. My students rewrote the ending because they felt the fly did not want to fly but was happy in its own body.

Saunders, K. (2004). What disability studies can do for children's literature [Electronic version]. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 24(1). The author discusses the lack of scholarly consideration in both disability studies and children's literature that obstructs each field being better informed by the other. She uses excellent examples of recent dissociation such as the disability entry in *The Cambridge Guide to Children's Books in English* (2001) in which some prominent authors descriptions of protagonists being "imprisoned" in their wheelchairs, "wheelchair-bound" and "crippled" indicates that the affirmative language preferred by disabled people has been overlooked and suggests that their analysis may not have been informed by other contemporary ideas about disability. Saunders further explains that disability scholars are concerned that writers are still using medical conditions to generate conflict and emotion. She does acknowledge that progress is being made. She speaks to critical analysis being informed by the social model of disability and that it may decrease inaccuracies about disability in children's literature.