



Communicating with Empathy Unit

Grade 3 • Ages 8-9

TIME FRAME

Preparation: 5 minutes
Instruction: 30 minutes

MATERIALS

John Steptoe, *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*, New York: Amistad Publishers, 1987. Book reading can be watched on YouTube

RAK journals

[Kindness Concept Poster](#) for Compassion

LEARNING STANDARDS

Common Core: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.1, 1b-d, 2, 3; Colorado: Comprehensive Health S.3, GLE.2, EO.b, IQ.3; S.4, GLE.2, EO.a,b; Reading, Writing, Communicating S.1, GLE.2, EO.a,b,c; S.3, GLE.2, EO.a

[Learning standards key](#)

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters

Students will describe positive ways to communicate that show care, consideration, concern and empathy for others.

Lesson Background for Teachers

The Power of Empathy in Conflict Resolution http://www.monitor.upeace.org/innerpg.cfm?id_article=907.

Key Terms for Students

Consider writing key terms on the board before class to introduce vocabulary and increase understanding.

COMPASSION Being aware when others are sick, sad, or hurt and wanting to help.

MERCY Choosing to do good instead of bad to someone else.

ASHAMED Feeling shame or guilt for something you have done.

CONSIDERATE Thinking about the needs and feelings of others and acting kindly.

SELFISH Actions and thoughts that only serve your own needs.

PATIENCE Being able to do something or wait for something for a long time without getting upset or annoyed.

TIPS FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS

Students might benefit from:

- Having additional copies of the book to view in small groups.
- Seeing the book on the document camera.
- Reviewing RAK Problem-Solving Strategies.

RAK lessons teach kindness skills through a step-by-step framework of **Inspire, Empower, Act** and **Share**.

The **Share** step in the first lesson of each unit is intended to set the tone for teaching kindness.



The RAK paradigm is the framework for teaching and building kindness skills.



Resources

The Mirror Neuron Revolution: Explaining What Makes Humans Social
<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-mirror-neuron-revolution/>

Share (3 mins)

Share with a partner a time that you showed care, consideration, concern or empathy for someone else. Take turns so both students get the opportunity to share.

Inspire

Defining Terms and Book Reading (10 mins)

Write the following words on the board and their definitions: **Compassion, Mercy, Ashamed, Considerate, Selfish, and Patience**. You can refer to these words as you discuss the book. Also write the names Mufaro, Nyasha and Manyara on the board.

Note that the pronunciation of the names is at the beginning of the book. *Today we are going to read an African folktale from Zimbabwe about a king who wants to marry the most worthy and beautiful woman in the land. Mufaro is a man with two beautiful daughters, Nyasha and Manyara, who both want to be queen. As I read, listen for how each daughter talks and acts and how that impacts what happens.*

Explain that this book was awarded the Caldecott Medal, which was named in honor of the illustrator Randolph Caldecott and is awarded every year to the best picture book.

Read the book out loud, making sure to show the pictures to the students.

Optional Activity: Discovering Zimbabwe

Show students where Zimbabwe is on a map. Share information about Zimbabwe (what life is like for kids their age, what most people do for a living, whether people mostly live in cities or in the country, what kind of government they have, what foods they eat, the plants and trees, etc.) See the Discovering Africa Activity for a related research project and suggested websites

Empower

Discussion (10 mins)

After the story, ask some of the following questions, pointing to names on the board as needed:

- *What was your favorite part of the story? Why?*
- *This story is set in Zimbabwe, a country in Africa. How is Zimbabwe the same as or different from where we live? (Possible answers: The way the people dress, the trees and flowers, the buildings.)*
- *How does Manyara act toward Nyasha? (Possible answers: She is very unkind, she teases her sister, and tells her that kindness is a weakness.)*
- *As Manyara goes to see the king, what does she say to the boy? The old woman? The trees? (Possible answers: She tells the boy and old woman to get out of her way and laughs at the trees.)*
- *How does Nyasha show kindness to the boy? The woman? The trees? (Answers: She gives them food and tells them she is sorry they are hungry. The tree branches seem to bow down as Nyasha passes.)*
- *John Steptoe, the author, gives us a clue about which sister acts kindly and which does not. Any idea what the clue is? Wait for students to respond.*

Then say: *He uses the names! In the Shona language (a language from Zimbabwe in Africa), Mufaro means 'happy man,' Nyasha means 'mercy,' and Manyara means 'ashamed.'* Can anyone tell me what **mercy** means? (Possible answer: To show compassion or kindness to someone who deserves to be treated harshly or has committed an offense.) Do you think Nyasha showed **mercy**? Why or why not? What does it mean to be **ashamed**? Do you think Manyara felt **ashamed** at the end? (Possible answer: To feel shame or guilt.) Do you think those are good words to describe the sisters?

- How do you feel when people treat you kindly? How do you feel when people treat you unkindly?

Wrap Up (5 mins)

To gauge understanding of the material, choose from the evaluation and reflection questions as discussion, or writing or journal prompts. Consider providing additional time for deeper evaluation and reflection as needed.

Evaluation Questions

- What are some ways the characters showed kindness in this story?
- What do the words *ashamed* and *mercy* mean? Why were the sisters named that?
- What was this story trying to teach us?

Reflection Questions

- People may show kindness in different ways. What are some kind words that you would be comfortable saying to someone who was sad or hurt? What are some kind actions that you would be comfortable doing?
- What if the person doesn't want us to help them? How can we show respect to them?
- What is one thing you can do or say to show kindness to others?

Summary

Today we read a story about two sisters, Manyara and Nyasha, who acted very differently. Nyasha showed kindness to everyone she met on her journey, and ended up being picked to be the queen. It's important we always try our best to show kindness to those around us.



Act (2 mins)

Kindness Minute

Show kindness to someone in your class right now. Nyasha used such kind words. Turn to the person next to you and say something nice about who they are on the inside. Say something positive you notice about their character.

Kindness in Action

This week, help out at home in an unexpected way by doing a chore that you don't normally do. Write a short paragraph describing which household chore you helped out with and what the result was (ie. How did others respond and how did you feel?)

