

The books of good and bad

Author: Sara Stanley





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Stimulus for enquiry

A set of fairytale character cards (pictures) or figures (toys or puppets) depicting a dragon, king, evil queen, big bad wolf, witch, ogre, prince, knight and so on

Thinking emphasis

Thinking about how characters behave and why; understanding the concepts that underlie the general ideas of 'good' and 'bad'

Skill focus

Justifying a choice; agreeing and disagreeing with other choices; recognising and introducing concepts building conceptual capacities

Preparation

- 1. Make sure children are familiar with fairytale genre through story and role play experiences.
- 2. Prepare two books by folding a large sheet of paper in half. Write 'Big Book of Good' on the cover page of one and 'Big Book of Bad' on the cover of the other.
- 3. Provide small pieces of paper for children to draw on. You will also need glue and pens.

Presentation

Introduce the characters (pictures or figures) and explain that the children will be helping to make two books about good and bad characters.

Conversation and thinking time

Allow thinking and talking time in pairs or small groups. Ask children to tell each other everything they know or think about the characters and to decide whether they think they are good or bad. Ask children to draw and name the characters if they are able.

Thinking together activity

- Bring the class back to the circle. Ask children one at a time to place their drawing or character (card or figure) inside their chosen book giving their reasons why.
- Allow all children to contribute and encourage them to say whether they agree or disagree with the book chosen. Then each child's drawing – or a representation of the figure drawn by the teacher – can be stuck in the appropriate book.

Building

Ask the children to say what it is that they think makes the characters in each book either 'good' or 'bad' (some may be both). In the book, next to the drawings, write any concepts contained in the children's answers – for example, jealous, angry, magic and appearance.

Last words

Ask the children to review which concepts are mostly associated with 'badness' and which with 'goodness'.

Follow-up thinking

Allow children to play with, and sort, figures or cards into 'good' and 'bad' groups. Display the finished books in the book area for the children to share and talk about.

- Did the children focus on the behaviours of characters?
- Could they explain why the behaviour could be seen as good or bad?
- Could the children see where there was agreement and disagreement about the behaviours of characters?
- Did the children understand the idea of concepts being associated with types of behaviour?



Royal invitations

Nursery & Reception

Author: Sara Stanley



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Stimulus for enquiry

Pictures of fairytale characters on cards; pens and large paper; an invitation from an imaginary king requesting help from the children to decide which fairytale characters should be invited to his Royal Party and why

Thinking emphasis

Identifying behaviours of fairytale characters; thinking about what constitutes good behaviour

Skill focus

Making a decision and justifying it; making a persuasive argument; working as a community member to reach agreement; listening to others; being sensitive to disagreement

Preparation

Ensure children are familiar with fairytales. Allow opportunities for role-playing and hot-seating as fairytale characters. Write the letter from the king.

Presentation

Simply read the letter asking the children to help.

Conversation and thinking time

When children agree to help, take out the fairytale character cards – one at a time from a bag – and talk with all the children about who the characters are and what they might be like. Allocate each child a card of their choice. Explain that they will be speaking on behalf of their character to give a reason why they should be allowed to attend the Royal Party.

First words

Ask for volunteers. Question others why their character should be allowed to attend the Party.

Building

- Encourage children to add to each others' reasons why characters should be allowed to attend.
- Encourage them to give reasons why any of the characters should not be invited – for example that they might have behaved badly in the past.
- Encourage children to wonder if there are reasons why characters might have behaved badly? For example is the wolf really bad if he ate the pig because he was starving? Do dragons know they are scary and can they help it? Can witches still do bad spells if they leave their wands at home? Was the giant right to have been cross when Jack stole his gold?

Last words

Ask the children which characters they found hardest to recommend inviting. Were there any that they thought were not good enough to be invited?

- Did the children treat each other with respect?
- Did they try and help each other find reasons for and against?
- Did they listen carefully to each other?
- Could they begin to empathise with characters?



Cages

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Stimulus for enquiry

Pictures from two books by Anthony Browne, one showing an orangutan in his enclosure at the zoo (from 'Zoo', Red Fox) and one showing Hansel in the witch's cage (from 'Hansel and Gretel', Red Fox

Thinking emphasis

To use empathy; to consider human and animal rights

Skill focus

To look for similarities and comparisons between two pictures

Preparation

Allow the children time to play with model zoos. Talk about experiences of visits to the zoo. Share photographs and look at a range of information books and story books about zoos and wild animals.

Presentation

Show children the two illustrations from the books without the words of the stories. Ask them to look for things that are the same or different in the pictures. You may need to provide clarification that the orangutan is in a zoo enclosure.

Conversation and thinking time

Allow children to look closely at the two pictures. Ask them to compare similarities or differences. Allow children to discuss their ideas in pairs or small groups. Reception children may wish to draw their thoughts. If so, you or another adult could scribe their words.

Question-making and airing

Bring children back to the circle and ask them to share a question or statement about the pictures. Record these thoughts on a large sheet of paper.

Creating a question around a theme

Ask whether anyone can offer a question that would sum up the ideas that have been most keenly talked about so far. With less experienced children ask for a statement and model how to turn it into a question or group of questions.

First words

Ask children to discuss the 'new' question in pairs or small groups and then share their thoughts with the class.

Building

Ask children to put themselves into the position of the characters in the pictures. Encourage discussion about the characters' feelings and reasons for those feelings.

Last words

Revisit the question. Ask children to show whether they have reached a decision on any of the answers given. Use voting cards (double-sided cards with 'agree' and 'disagree' symbols) or by standing up to agree and remaining seated to disagree.

- Were the children able to see any similarities such as the orange peel on the floor?
- Could they comment on differences such as size and appearance of the enclosures?
- Were they able to put themselves in the position of the trapped characters and show empathy? Could they give reasons why the characters are in enclosures? Could they perceive inequality or injustice?
- Were children able to make a decision and vote on the final question?



Monster at school

Nursery & Reception

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Stimulus for enquiryA large drawing of a monster

Thinking emphasis
Should we judge from appearance
only?

Skill focus

Sharing ideas; listening as part of a group; making a decision; revisiting a question after dialogue

Preparation

Draw a monster with a closed mouth (no teeth), three arms, four legs and a tail. Ensure that it looks neither friendly nor frightening.

Presentation

Explain to the children that you have a difficult decision to make. You met a monster on the way home last night and he asked if he could come to school tomorrow? Show them the drawing.

Making a decision

Ask children to vote on their answer to this question using double-sided voting cards (yes/no) or with a stand up or sit down vote.

Conversation and thinking time

Ask those children who voted 'yes' to form one group and the children who voted 'no' to form another. Allow the children a few minutes to share their reasons within the groups.

First words

Bring the groups back to the circle. Ask the children with the majority vote to share their reasons first. Then ask children in the minority group to share theirs. What would be the good things and the bad things about having a monster at school?

Building

Introduce further possible information about the monster to see if any of it would change the children's thinking. For example, what if this monster smelt really bad? What if the monster was so small he could fit into a pocket? What if this monster was really clever?

Last words

Review the main ideas put forward and then revisit the original question. Ask the children to show their answers using voting cards. (Double-sided cards with yes/no symbols) or by standing up to agree and remaining seated to disagree.

Have any children changed their answers? If so, ask them to explain.

- Were children able to make a decision and vote on the question at the beginning and the end?
- Could they recognise if anyone's thinking changed in response to new information?
- Did all children get a chance to speak both in the smaller groups and the larger community?
- Were you able to introduce information that enabled children to see from a different perspective?
- Did the children question the concept of 'monster'?



Perfect people

Nursery & Reception

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Stimulus for enquiry
Play-Doh people and a letter from the
'Planet Leader' (see below)

Thinking emphasis What is a person?

Skill focusFirst thoughts; clarifying ideas

Letter from the planet leader

Dear people,

I am giving you a very important job. I am going on holiday and need you to carry on my work. You must create some people for my new planet but they must be the very best people in every way.

Please let me know all about the people you make for me. I have given you some people-making material. Please create carefully. We cannot risk any mistakes.

Thank you,

Leader Soaky-Teas of Planet Plato

Preparation

Allow time for children to explore books and stories about a variety of people.

Presentation

This activity is best done in groups of 5 or 6 children at any one time, working around a table. Prepare enough Play-Doh for each child to form a model person. You may wish to provide different colours. Read the letter to them and ask them if they can make the perfect person. Join in this activity yourself.

Conversation and thinking time

Whilst the children create their 'people' chat informally with them about their ideas. Ask questions such as: 'What does the person need to look like?' 'What colour have they chosen?' 'What kind of a person is it?'

First words

As the models progress, ask the children questions such as:

- · Would it matter if your person had no arms or legs?
- Would it matter if your person had no eyes?
- Would it matter if your person had no heart?
- Would it matter if your person had no brain?

Allow children to express their ideas about what makes a perfectly-functioning person.

Building

- Introduce the idea that the person you have made might not be accepted by the leader because it is sometimes badly behaved. Can they suggest some things they might do wrong and so not be accepted?
- 2. Ask the children if they can help you 'fix' your person so it is perfect again?

Last words

Do the children think there can ever be perfect people? If so, is it possible that a perfect person could make mistakes or be different in some ways to other perfect people? If not, why not?

- Were all children able to participate and contribute their ideas and suggestions?
- Were children able to discuss the significance (if any) of physical appearance?
- · Were they able to develop their thinking about behaviour?



Am I real?

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Stimulus for enquiry
A life-size paper person

Thinking emphasis
What is a person? What makes
something real?

Skill focus

Clarifying ideas; identifying similarities and differences; recognising agreement

Presentation

Roll out a large sheet of paper and ask for a volunteer to lie down on it. Ask another child to draw around that person. Return volunteers to the circle.

Conversation and thinking time

Ask the children to think silently for one minute about whether this is a real person.

First words

Ask children to share their thoughts about this question. Can they prove their ideas are correct?

Building

Go through the following steps asking for the children's responses:

- Introduce the question: 'What can this person do?' Watch together to see if it can do the suggested things. If not, can the children explain why not?
- Introduce the question: 'Can we make it real? If so how?'
 The children might discuss the use of magic. If they
 do, suggest they try out some spells and ask why they
 haven't worked? If the children say it is not real because
 it has no face, get someone to add the details to see if
 this works? Again, ask: 'If not why not?'

Last words

Ask the children to explain the differences between the drawn-round figure and the actual person who was drawn around. Then ask them to give further examples of things that are not real and ask: 'Is everything a real something or other?'

- Were all children able to participate and contribute their ideas?
- Were children able to think about the differences between 'real' and 'not real'?
- Were they able to say whether they agreed with others about the answer to the original question?



Be my friend

Author: Sara Stanley





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Stimulus for enquiry A 'talking computer'

Thinking emphasis
What is a friend? What is thinking?
Can a computer think?

Skill focusMaking distinctions; identifying
characteristics; rethinking initial ideas

Preparation

Write a word-processed document with the text 'I want to be your friend. Will you play with me?' You will need to find out how to get your particular computer to read the text out loud using text-to-speech facilities.

Presentation

Open the document and explain that the computer would like to talk to the children. Use text-to-speech facilities to read the text out.

Conversation and thinking time

Ask the children to discuss, in pairs, if they should give an answer to the computer and, if so, what would it be: 'Yes' or 'No'.

First words

Bring children back to the circle and ask them to show their decisions about both questions using voting cards, or stand-up sit-down voting.

Ask those children who answered 'yes' to both questions to explain what they will do with the computer to be 'friends'?

Ask those children who answered 'no' to either question to explain why.

Building

Encourage all children to think critically about whether the computer really will be able to participate in any of the 'friendship' activities suggested. What couldn't it do? Would the computer need to be able to think in order to be a friend?

Last words

Ask the children to think about the following questions:

- Was the computer really talking?
- What is different about the way humans think and the way a computer 'thinks'? What is thinking?
- Are emotions important for friendship? Does a computer have emotions?
- Ask the children to re-vote on the same questions they thought about earlier. Has anyone changed their mind?
 If so can they explain why?

- Were the children able to think critically about the capabilities and deficiencies of a computer as a friend?
- Did children use facts or evidence to support their opinions when they agreed or disagreed?
- Was there any indication that children's thinking had changed? Could they recognise what had changed?