

## Extension Activity

Based on *Arlene On the Scene* school presentation  
(Students do *not* need to have read the book in order to complete activity.)



Grades: 3-5

Purpose: To reinforce main ideas from presentation and book: self-image, empathy, embracing difference

### Measurable Objectives:

- 1) Core Curriculum: Students will answer questions to demonstrate understanding of text, referring to the text when answering questions and when drawing inferences (grades 4-5).
- 2) Students will demonstrate understanding of the concept of self-image by identifying character traits about themselves.
- 3) Students will demonstrate understanding of empathy by making appropriate statements in response to classmates' presentations.

Time: 30-45 minutes

Materials: Self-Image worksheet; Reading Excerpt; Colored pencils/crayons for drawing (optional)

### Method:

- 1) Pass out the reading excerpt from *Arlene On the Scene*. Have students either read to themselves or read aloud as a class taking turns.
- 2) Use the following questions as discussion guidelines, asking students to use text examples:
  - a. *What did Arlene expect Joey's presentation to be about?*
  - b. *What was Arlene's image of Joey? Use descriptive words to identify Arlene's opinion of Joey's personality and character.*
  - c. *Before he even started speaking, did Joey's body language match Arlene's image of Joey? Why or why not?*
  - d. *How did Joey's classmates react to learning this "new side" to Joey?*
  - e. *How did Arlene's image of Joey change after hearing his presentation?*
  - f. *Give examples of empathy from the text.*
  - g. *Does empathy always have to be shown through words? Is Carlos' gesture empathy?*
- 3) Review the main ideas from the presentation:
  - a. Self-image is made up of many parts. No one part defines you.
  - b. What others think of us affects our self-image.
  - c. That's why it's important to practice empathy. Empathy is when you are able to understand the thoughts and feelings of another person.

- 4) Hand out the Self-Image worksheet. Review the directions.
- a. Students are to write/draw a characteristic of themselves that most other kids know.  
Examples:
    - good baseball player
    - likes horses
    - youngest in family
    - likes wearing Nike sneakers
    - eats salami sandwiches every day for lunch.
  - b. On the back side of the sheet, students are to write/draw one or two things that their classmates don't know about them. These can be positive or negative.  
Examples:
    - something you do well but people don't know--singing, puzzles, handstands
    - something you don't do well--ice skating, dancing, handwriting
    - something surprising that you do like--watching Sesame Street with your younger brother, spinach, wearing a tie
    - something surprising that you don't like--recess, fingerpaint, chocolate
- 5) When students have completed both sides of the worksheet, invite individuals to share with the class, first the front side then the back.
- 6) Tell the audience that they have a job to do as well. They are to practice empathy, just like the kids in *Arlene On the Scene*. Explain that two common ways to practice these concepts are to ask questions and use reflection (reflect back to the speaker what she has said to show you understand). Give examples.
- a. Questions: Ask for more detail; ask where that character trait comes from; ask about the speaker's personal experiences.
  - b. Reflective statements: That's great! Wow, cool. That sounds hard. Must be tough. I never knew that about you; thanks for sharing.
- 7) Reinforce examples of empathy as they happen. **Reflective listening and empathy takes practice, like anything else, and the more we practice the more it will happen automatically.**

# Excerpt from *Arlene On the Scene*

By Carol Liu, with Marybeth Caldarone



*In the book *Arlene On the Scene*, Arlene's fourth grade class was given an assignment called "Precious Things." They were told to bring an item from home that was very special to them and tell their classmates about it. The students remarked that this sounded a lot like "show and tell" from their kindergarten days, but their teacher said that she expected the students to choose something with special meaning to them, such as a gift from a favorite relative or an object that reminds them of a special event in the past. With each presentation, Arlene and her friends learned something about each other that they never knew, something that surprised them. Here's an example, from Arlene's point of view:*

Joey was up next for the Precious Things presentations. I sat back to enjoy what I was sure was going to be an interesting speech, probably one making Joey look like the king of the world.

Joey shuffled to the front of the room and turned his body toward the class, but then he looked right down at the floor. Well, that was weird. I had never seen such a slouchy king. Then Joey slipped one hand into the pocket of his baggy pants, and with the other hand, he held up a worn army jacket in front of his face.

Joey began, "This is my army jacket that—"

"Joey," Ms. Merrily called, "please hold your Precious Thing to the side, honey. We can't see you."

Joey huffed out a sigh. He moved the army jacket just slightly to his right and stuffed his hand deeper into his pants pocket.

"This is my army jacket," he began again. "My great-grandfather gave it to me. Gramps fought in World War II. He was in D-day, which was one of the biggest battles in history. No one thought the Americans could win, but they did because they were tough and smart and brave. Gramps drove a tank and got shot at. But he survived, and he told me all about it. He gave me this jacket. To keep."

Then there was silence. When Ms. Merrily figured out that Joey was finished, she remarked, "That's a great story, Joey. Does anyone have any questions?"

"Does it have any bullet holes in it?" Carlos wanted to know.

(continued on back)

“No. I said, he was in a tank.”

“Do you have your gramps’ dog tags?” Adam asked. He’s a collector. He probably wanted to buy them from Joey.

“Yup. He gave me those too. I have all his army stuff.”

“So Joey, can you tell the class why this jacket is special to you?” Ms. Merrily asked.

“Cuz it’s from my gramps. He gave me this jacket to help protect me. It keeps me warm, and it’s very thick, so if something came flying through the air at me, I would be safe in this jacket.”

I pictured tiny objects zinging in from the ocean and onto our playground, and all of us falling to the grass in pain, all except for Joey in his oversized army jacket. I thought I should get one of those.

“You’re lucky to have this gift from your great-grandfather,” Ms. Merrily said. “He must be proud to see you wearing it, even if it is, well, so big for you.”

“He’ll never see me wear it. He’s dead.” Joey sucked in a breath, and then looked down quickly, shoving his hand as far as it would go into his pocket. He pressed his chin to his chest and walked quickly to his seat, slamming his body into his chair and hugging the jacket with both arms.

“Thank you, Joey, sweetie. That was a wonderful presentation. And I’m sorry to hear about your gramps. He sounds like a wonderful man. I know it must be hard for you to talk about him to the whole class.”

Everyone stared at Joey. Joey answered with silence as he buried his face in his jacket. Carlos leaned over and patted his friend gently on the shoulder.

Poor Joey, I thought. Maybe he isn’t such a Tough Guy after all. Maybe there’s another side to him, just a regular dude who loved his gramps.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## **MY SELF IMAGE IS MADE OF MANY PARTS**

**Some you can see, like this:**

**My best-known character trait**

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Draw a picture if you can.

(Now turn over!)

# **MY SELF IMAGE IS MADE OF OTHER THINGS TOO**

**Some parts you can't see, like these:**

Write here and/or draw below.

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