

Open•Up

It's All in Your Viewpoint

Situations aren't always what they seem. Using a well-known fairy tale, this lesson explores what happens when we take time to consider the different ways a particular scenario might have developed.

Mental Health Highlight: Being able to understand events and even behaviors from another point of view is an essential element of mental fitness or good mental health. All too often we think there is one "right" interpretation of how something happened or we train our sights narrowly on the "truth." And there are plenty of times when things are true or when only one answer can be right. But there are many other times when it's more useful to find out why and how events unfolded the way they did.

Adapt this activity for any age group by adjusting the beginning story and by explaining the core concepts in a way that resonates with the age/maturity of your students. For middle school students or high schoolers you may choose to examine an event like the American Revolutionary War or the Civil War, or there may be a current event like a political protest or an ethical question that is being hotly debated. There are also many films that examine this concept. For younger children films like *Shrek*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Hoodwinked* are good examples. For older students films like *Bridge to Terabithia* and *Freedom Writers* would work well.

Keep in mind, the goal of this activity is not to resolve an issue or come to agreement. The focus is on listening to other points of view and learning that there are times when it's more important to appreciate why something happened the way it did.

Primary Activity	Additional Activity	Open•Up Activity
 Rethinking an Old Favorite	 Blow Down the House Scenes	 Write from a Different Viewpoint

Activity Key	
 Visual Arts	 Creative Movement and Music
 Experiential and Role-Playing	 Conversations and Discussion
 Creative Writing, Storytelling, and Drama	 Research/Service Projects

This activity was adapted from *MACMH's Children's Mental Health Classroom Activities*, Volumes 1 and 2, Combined and Revised.

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Situations aren't always what they seem. Using a well-known fairy tale, this lesson explores what happens when we take time to consider the different ways a particular scenario might have developed.

Objectives

- Appreciate that there can be many different perspectives regarding any given situation.
- Develop tolerance for the perspectives of others.

Materials

- 2 versions of the story *The Three Little Pigs*

Prepare in advance: Read and become familiar with a traditional version of *The Three Little Pigs* and an alternative version. For the alternative version, we recommend *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka.

NOTE: Although this lesson is based on *The Three Little Pigs*, you can easily adapt the lesson to any two versions of a story that demonstrate differing perspectives. Alvin Granowsky has several books that offer both the traditional tale and the tale from another point of view. For example, in the *Three Billy Goats Gruff*, Granowsky considers whether the Troll is just inviting the goats over for dinner to get to know them; and in *Jack and the Beanstalk*, he suggests that Jack is the "bad guy."

Core Lesson/Activity

Tell the class you are going to read a story that many of them might already know. As you read the story, ask the students to think about the characters and the choices they are making—are they making good choices or bad?

Read aloud a standard/traditional version of *The Three Little Pigs*.

Then divide the class into several teams and tell them that you're going to ask them a series of questions. Let them know that because only one answer will be accepted from each team, cooperation, teamwork, and good listening skills are essential. Now ask the students the following questions:

Which character did the wrong thing or made a bad choice?

Which character did the right thing or made a good choice?

If you had to pick one character who acted badly or did unkind things, which character would it be?

Record each team's results on the board or on an overhead and talk about the results.

Now read aloud the alternative version (the following questions are based on *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka). When you've finished, ask the students to meet with their teams again and agree on answers to each of these questions:

Why is the story called The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs?

What does the wolf mean when he says "I was framed?"

What was the Wolf's perspective of the 3 little pigs? Can you help him build his case?

What was the 3 little pigs' perspective of the wolf in this version of the story?

If you had to pick one character who acted badly or did unkind things in this version, which character would it be?

When all the teams have shared their answers with the class, talk about the varying perspectives represented in the two different versions.

While discussing the responses to the different versions, be sure to address the process each group used to agree on an answer. Did this process change over the course of the two group meetings? For example, the groups may have noticed that during the first discussion a greater variety of ideas were offered by a greater number of participants. During the second session, did any leaders emerge from the group? Was there less discussion needed to reach agreement? Have the students consider what happens to the free expression of opinions or ideas when everyone must agree on an answer.

Also have a discussion about the results. Are the ideas of the students in your class more similar or more different from each other? Are there any differences among gender? If the class has different ages groups, were there any differences considering ages?

Finally, have students get with their team and create a new version of *The 3 Little Pigs*. What new perspective can they bring to the story? If they are stuck for ideas, you may want to suggest that it could be told from the perspective of each of the pigs. If appropriate, have the groups share their versions of *The 3 Little Pigs* with the rest of the class.

Additional Activities



Write from a Different Viewpoint – Have the class select a story or tale with which they are all familiar. As a class, review the basic plot points, then list all of the characters on the board. Using first-person narrative, have each student rewrite the story from a viewpoint other than the main character's. (Even writing from a minor character's viewpoint can be fun!)

Here's an example –

Story:	The Wizard of Oz	
Characters:	Scarecrow	The Wizard
	Tin Man	Auntie Em
	Lion	Toto
	The Wicked Witch of the West	A flying monkey
	Glenda The Good Witch	The Mayor of Munchkin Land

Encourage students to read their stories aloud. Discuss similarities and differences.

 **Blow Down the House Scenes** – Could something that appears to be “bad” actually be good? Could the wolf’s ability to blow down a house be used for peaceful purposes? In small groups, have students create a scene in which the wolf blows down a house to help others. For example, perhaps the wolf is blowing on the pig’s house to put out a fire the pigs cannot see. Have groups perform their scenes for the rest of the class.

 **Exploring Intention** – Standing in a circle, ask everyone in the class to create a gesture that looks like blowing down a house. Select three gestures and put them together to make a short movement sequence. Have the class practice the sequence a few times.

Now have the class experiment by performing the same sequence with different intentions.

The wolf blows down the house because the wolf is ...

- hungry and hopes there is food inside.
- curious about what is inside.
- mean and wants to hurt the little pig.
- cold and can’t stop sneezing.
- playing a silly prank on the little pig.

Create a movement sequence about building a house. Again experiment with performing the same sequence with different intentions.

The little pig builds a house because the pig ...

- knows it’s almost winter and will be getting colder.
- wants to feel cozy and safe.
- wants to be left alone.
- enjoys building and decorating houses.
- wants to show off how much money he has.



Mrs. Moore’s students act out different reasons for blowing down a house. What reasons might your students have?