

Junior Teacher Ideas for *No More Empty Smiles*

Written by Jan G. Hansen
Illustrated by Jennifer Falconer



A Pre-reading Activity

Using the same tone of voice as usual, but in another language, say something like, “How would you feel if you came to school and your teacher talked to you like this?” Ask students how many understood you. Many students will put up their hand despite not knowing the language. We want to belong so much that we pretend to understand when we don’t. For a newcomer, it is worse than it was for you just now, because the teacher and most students are always talking gobbledegoop.

Class Discussion After Reading

What country do you think Henning came from? (Children will name countries from which they know immigrants or where there are current conflicts). How did Henning feel when other students reacted to his lunch? No matter where we come from, we all want to fit in. Did you, a family member or a friend move to Canada? Tell us your story. How could this story, or yours, be different if more people were welcoming? What can we do to make people feel welcome in our class? In our school?

Idioms

When Henning tells the story you can tell that he is not completely familiar with English. For example, he does not use contractions. There is only one idiom in the story (his words washed over me) because the meaning of such sayings are not always clear. List some sayings and ways that they could be misinterpreted if they were taken literally (eg. everyone’s eyes were on me, I gave him a piece of my mind, the baby screamed her head off, my feet were killing me, run that by me again.).

Describe A Picture

Pair up and sit back to back. Give one student a simple picture and the other a blank paper. One student describes the picture and the other draws it from the description. How successful were you? How does it feel to know that words are not enough to communicate what you have to say.

Making Inferences From The Story

Write a short story to about a part of the story that is not told in the book. You could write about Henning’s father starting to work in this new country, or about Henning’s mother who could not talk with her neighbours, or about why Henning’s father moved to a new country. You will have to make up parts, but make your story fits with the information in the book.



For more ideas visit www.gooseneckpress.ca

© Jan G. Hansen