

LESSON PLAN

These Lesson Plans are a culmination of schoolwide activities and classroom activities, ranging from grades K-12

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer

Submitted by Millie - Gainesville, Georgia

Objective:

Students learn about self-respect and having compassion for others

Grade Level:

Elementary

Scope:

Class Activity - up to several days

Materials Used:

Book: *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer* by Robert L. Mays
(the original story)

Song: *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* by Johnny Marks

Attached exhibits

Supplies for diorama

Optional song: *It's a Hard Knock Life* from the musical *Annie*

Procedure:

The purpose of this unit is two fold:

1. Character Lesson: Using the "original" story of *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* to explore the underlying reasons why Robert L. May depicts the main character, Rudolph, as an outsider (also see "Where in the world did Rudolph come from?" - Exhibit A)

2. Social Studies Lesson: To study the time and conditions when the story was written for comparison to the conditions of today

Whole group instruction:

(There are many whole group activities, each done separately for as many days as needed.)

Experience the Masterwork: Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer

1. Sing Johnny Marks' "Rudolph," originally written in 1949. Mr. Marks was the

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brother-in-law of the author of the “Rudolph” book, Robert Mays.

(Optional Arts-Based activity for the song... Make two large charts of the words to “Rudolph The Red-nosed Reindeer,” one to use to practice the song with the children, and one to cut up into strips of phrases from each sentence. Give these strips out to the class in random order and ask them to find the strip (or strips) that completes their sentence in the song. Then, have the class decide the correct order of the phrases. Your school music teacher would be an excellent partner for this portion of the unit.)

2. Students will experience the original “Rudolph” story written by Robert L. May in 1939 as read by the teacher or a storyteller. Point out the genre (poetry) in which the story was written.
3. The teacher will open a discussion about how the story and the song differ.
4. Share the information from the sheet “Where in the world did Rudolph come from?” (Exhibit A at the end of this unit) with the class and discuss the significant events in this account that “could” have influenced Mr. May when writing the story of Rudolph.
5. Show the pictures and talk about how the artwork differs from the computer-generated figures of today.

Questions for discussion:

(List on the dry erase board or chalk board)

1. How does the original story differ from the story you know?
(This can be a pretty substantial list)
2. What parts of the original story are the same as the story we know today?
3. Focus on the word “underdog.”
Discuss the meaning of being an “underdog.”
Re-summarize: Exhibit A -“Where in the world did Rudolph come from?”
Have copies of the exhibit available for “underdog” inquiry center.

Homework: Think about people who have been “underdogs” in history. Be prepared to discuss someone you think was an underdog and the reason why in class.

Inquiry Center One - Literacy:

Deepening Question:

Have you ever been treated like an underdog?

Finish the discussion about what it means to be an underdog and have students name people in history who were considered underdogs.

Literacy center: Writing a friendly letter.

Provide the following materials for the center:

1. The story of the underdog reindeer, Rudolph (Exhibit A and Exhibit B)
2. Writing Friendly Letters (Exhibit C)
3. Letter writing template (Exhibit D)

Inquiry Center Two - Social Studies:

Deepening Question(s):

1. How much do you think toys and clothing cost during the 1930's?
2. How has the cost for necessities (groceries/wages) changed since the 1930's?

Social Studies Center: Comparing 1930's to current prices

Provide the following materials for the center:

Worksheets from Exhibit E and F

1. Compare prices (Exhibit E)
2. Take This Sheet With You (Exhibit F)
3. Current catalogs with prices listed

This inquiry center would be a good opportunity for a field trip to a local restaurant to fill in the "now and then" food price sheet (Exhibit F). Give the children (in play money) the equivalent of what breakfast cost in the 1930's and let them see what could be bought on a modern menu for that amount.

This would be a great place to have an arts partner come to class and "role play" times and situations during the 1930's. A storyteller would be ideal to tell some of the stories and help students write their own similar tales depicting life at that time.

Homework: Ask the students to make their own "then and now" price lists of things such as vacations, automobiles, and home prices, then bring them to class.

Inquiry Center Three – Social Studies:

Deepening Question:

How do you think the size of houses today compares to the houses of the 1930's?

Provide the following material for the center:

1. 1930's bungalow description (Exhibit G)
2. Diorama Instructions (Exhibit H)

Have students bring in their shoeboxes to use for their diorama or they can use a sheet of folded construction paper. First talk about the 1930's bungalow and how they compare to the homes of today. (differences/similarities)

Questions for discussion:

What are some features of the 1930's bungalow that you really like?

What are some features of the 1930's bungalow you do not like?

What would be some advantages/disadvantages of ordering your home from a catalog like a new pair of shoes?

Original Creation:

Have students design and create their diorama. Remind the class to use their one page description as the "blueprint" for constructing their diorama (See Instructions – Exhibit H).

Display the dioramas around the classroom. Have each student read the one-page description of their diorama written before "construction" on the dioramas

began. Let the class guess which diorama is which student's after hearing the description

Reflect:

The teacher will lead a class discussion about the following:

1. What character traits did Rudolph exhibit?
2. What did we learn about the character of Mr. May?
3. What did we learn about the character of the management at Montgomery Ward?

Distribute 4 different colors of stars. Randomly walk around the room placing the stars on student's desks. Then ask students with:

Red stars: What was the most important thing you learned?

Blue stars: What would you like to see done differently next time?

Yellow stars: What is one thing you would like to learn more about?

Green Stars: What is one fact you will never forget?

(They don't all have to answer, but everyone will be reflecting (and thinking) on the answers to all of the questions.)

Optional activity:

A good activity to end this unit would be for the students to learn the song, *It's a Hard Knock Life*, from the musical, *Annie*. This song is sung by a group of orphans telling (singing) about their hard life in the orphanage. Use the song as a springboard to discuss "why" life seems so hard for these orphans in the 1930's.

This lesson plan was developed by Millie Corder as part of the Character Through the Arts grant, which is funded by the US Dept. of Education, Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools, No Child Left Behind.

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Exhibit A –

Where in the World did Rudolph Come From?

Origins: To most of us, the character of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer — immortalized in song and a popular TV special — has always been an essential part of our Christmas folklore. But Rudolph is a decidedly twentieth-century invention whose creation can be traced to a specific time and person.

Rudolph came to life in 1939 when the Chicago-based Montgomery Ward company (operators of a chain of department stores) asked one of their copywriters, 34-year-old Robert L. May, to come up with a Christmas story they could give away to shoppers as a promotional gimmick. (The Montgomery Ward stores had been buying and giving away coloring books for Christmas every year, and May's department head saw creating a giveaway booklet of their own as a way to save money.) May, who had a penchant for writing children's stories and limericks, was tapped to create the booklet.

May, drawing in part on the tale of *The Ugly Duckling* and his own background (he was often taunted as a child for being shy, small, and slight), settled on the idea of an underdog ostracized by the reindeer community because of his physical abnormality: a glowing red nose. Looking for an alliterative name, May considered and rejected Rollo (too cheerful and carefree a name for the story of a misfit) and Reginald (too British) before deciding on Rudolph. He then proceeded to write Rudolph's story in verse, as a series of rhyming couplets, testing it out on his 4-year-old daughter, Barbara, as he went along. Although Barbara was thrilled with Rudolph's story, May's boss was worried that a story featuring a red nose - an image associated with drinking and drunkards - was unsuitable for a Christmas tale. May responded by taking Denver Gillen, a friend from Montgomery Ward's art department, to the Lincoln Park Zoo to sketch some deer. Gillen's illustrations of a red-nosed reindeer overcame the hesitancy of May's bosses, and the Rudolph story was approved. Montgomery Ward distributed 2.4 million copies of the Rudolph booklet in 1939, and although wartime paper shortages curtailed printing for the next several years, a total of six million copies had been given by the end of 1946.

The post-war demand for licensing the Rudolph character was tremendous, but since May had created the story as an employee of Montgomery Ward, they held the copyright and he received no royalties. Deeply in debt from the medical bills resulting from his wife's terminal illness (she died about the time May created Rudolph), May persuaded Montgomery Ward's corporate president, Sewell Avery, to turn the copyright over to him in January 1947. With the rights to his creation in hand, May's financial security was assured. "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" was printed commercially in 1947 and shown in theaters as a nine-minute cartoon the following year. The Rudolph phenomenon really took off, however, when May's brother-in-law, songwriter Johnny Marks, developed the lyrics and melody for a Rudolph song. Marks' musical version of "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" (turned down by many who didn't want to meddle with the established Santa legend) was recorded by Gene Autry in 1949, sold two million copies that year, and went on to become one of the best-selling songs of all time (second only to "White Christmas"). A TV special about Rudolph narrated by Burl Ives was produced in 1964 and remains a popular perennial holiday favorite in the USA.

May quit his copywriting job in 1951 and spent seven years managing his creation before returning to Montgomery Ward, where he worked until his retirement in 1971. May died in 1976, comfortable in the life his reindeer creation had provided for him.

It might be fitting to close this page by pointing out that, although the story of Rudolph is primarily known to us through the lyrics of Johnny Marks' song, the story May wrote is substantially different in a number of ways. Rudolph was not one of Santa's reindeer (or the offspring of one of Santa's reindeer), and he did not live at the North Pole. Rudolph dwelled in an "ordinary" reindeer village elsewhere, and although he was taunted and laughed at for having a shiny red nose, he was not regarded by his parents as a shameful embarrassment. Rudolph was brought up in a loving household and was a responsible reindeer with a good self-image and sense of worth. Moreover, Rudolph did not rise to fame when Santa picked him out from the reindeer herd because of his shiny nose. Santa discovered the red-nosed reindeer quite by accident, when he noticed the glow emanating from Rudolph's room while delivering presents to Rudolph's house. Worried that the thickening fog — already the cause of several accidents and delays — would keep him from completing his Christmas Eve rounds, Santa tapped Rudolph to lead his team, observing upon their return: "By YOU last night's journey was actually bossed. Without you, I'm certain we'd all have been lost!"

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Exhibit B –

Inquiry Center One

The story of the “underdog” reindeer, Rudolph.

Talk the class through questions 1 and 2 before having each child write their own letter.

1. Have you ever been treated like an “underdog” or have you seen someone else treated like an “underdog?” Describe that situation.

2. What would you change about that situation?

3. Thinking back, have YOU ever treated anyone badly?

Write a letter to a person you feel you have treated badly. Be sure to include all five parts of a letter: heading; greeting; body; closing; signature

4. Reflection:

A. Look back at Mr. May’s “inspiration” for writing Rudolph (see “Where in the World Did Rudolph Come From?”).

Why do you think he wrote Rudolph as smaller and picked on by the other reindeer?

Did anything happen to Mr. May that might have influenced him?

B. As we have seen, times were hard in the 1930’s. Many of the things we use and take for granted today did not exist. Why do you think the department store Montgomery Ward gave “free” copies of Rudolph out to children?

Exhibit C -

Writing Friendly Letters

Friendly letters have five parts:

1. The Heading: The heading can include your address and the date. In casual, friendly letters your address is not necessary.
2. The Salutation or Greeting: This usually begins with Dear_____. The blank is for the name of the person you are writing. After you write the person's name you put a comma (,).
3. The Body: The body of the letter is the information you are writing in your letter.
4. The Closing: In the closing the first word is capitalized and you put a comma after the last word. Some examples of closings are: Sincerely, Your Friend, Love, Very truly yours.
5. Your Signature: This is your name. It goes under the closing

Exhibit D –

Letter Writing Template

Heading:

Salutation: (greeting)

Body

Closing,

Signature

Exhibit E -

Social Studies: Compare Prices

Look at the **Then and Now: Prices** table below.

In the left column is a list of women's clothing, men's clothing, games and toys and household goods. In the middle column, the price of each of these items is listed based on advertisements from 1930's. Some of those 1930's prices look pretty low compared to today's costs, don't they? Why?

Look at the **Then and Now: Wages** table.

Do people earn more or less now than they did in the 1930's? How do the prices compare to the wages?

In the NOW column for Prices table, write what you think the same item would cost today. Now look the item up in a current catalog. Where you correct?

Then and Now: Prices

WOMEN'S CLOTHES	THEN	NOW
Winter Coat	\$28.00	
Leather or Suede Purse	\$2.25	
Bathrobe	\$1.00	
Sweater	\$1.00	
MEN'S CLOTHES		
Broadcloth Shirt	\$1.00	
Wool Sweater	\$1.00	
Bathrobe	\$4.90	
Overcoat	\$18.50	
GAMES AND TOYS		
Sled	\$3.95 - \$8.95	
Ping Pong Table	\$23.50 to \$37.50	
Mechanical Toys	3 for \$.59	
Doll	\$1.95	
ITEMS FOR THE HOME		
Table Lamp	\$1.00	
Electric Sewing Machine	\$23.95	
Electric Washing Machine	\$33.50	
Gas Stove	\$19.95	
Movies	\$.10	

Then and Now: Wages

	Then	Now
Manufacturing Worker	\$16.89	\$500
Cook	\$15.00	\$236
Doctor	\$61.11	\$1800
Accountant	\$45.00	\$700
Teacher (extra credit)	?	?

Exhibit F –

A Comparison of Food and Candy Prices:

Below you will find the prices for certain foods in the 1930's. Please complete the form by filling in the price for the same food now.

	Then	Now
Breakfast	\$.25	
Includes 2 eggs, French fries, 2 slices of toast, coffee, apple pie		
Hamburger	\$.10	
Candy Bar	\$.05	
Ice Cream Cone	\$.05	
Cup of Coffee with Cream and Sugar	\$.05	

Exhibit G –

1930's Bungalow

1930's Bungalows Description:

Typical architectural features of the 1930's bungalow include a one-story or one-and-a-half story design, a broad low-gabled roof with wide overhanging eaves and a front porch that often extended the full width of the house. Most bungalows had a front porch, a living room, a dining room and a bedroom.

One way to buy a bungalow was to order a kit through a catalog. Saginaw and Bay City were centers for shipping the construction kits nationwide. The Sears-Roebuck and the Montgomery Ward catalogs offered bungalows. Ever heard of Montgomery Ward before? That's the store that commissioned Robert May to write the story of Rudolph.

Ask the class: What do you think life was like in the 1930's?
Do you think there were cars, airplanes, or television?
(Talk about this with your class before you do this activity.)

Here is a list of things that “could” have been invented in the year indicated on the side.

Put a check by the things that you think are correct and were invented in that year.

- _____ 1901: vacuum cleaner
- _____ 1902: air conditioning; automated tea maker
- _____ 1904: tea bags
- _____ 1905: plastic; windshield wipers
- _____ 1906: radio broadcasting
- _____ 1907: electric washing machine
- _____ 1908: coffee filter; water coolers; paper cups
- _____ 1913: Brillo pads; crossword puzzles
- _____ 1920: hair dryers; kiss-proof lipstick
- _____ 1921: robots; insulin
- _____ 1923: hearing aids
- _____ 1924: frozen food
- _____ 1925: television
- _____ 1926: liquid fuel rocket; pop-up toaster; aerosol sprays
- _____ 1927: Talking movies
- _____ 1928: iron lung; penicillin
- _____ 1930: jet engine; mechanical toothbrushes; Scotch tape
- _____ 1931: electric razor
- _____ 1932: parking meter; folding wheelchair
- _____ 1935: electric guitar
- _____ 1936: sun tan lotion; electric blanket
- _____ 1938: ballpoint pen; photocopying
- _____ 1939: helicopters; cloud seeding to trigger rain

*Teachers, lay a sheet of paper over this part before copying.
All items are listed in the correct year of invention

Exhibit H -

Diorama Instructions

First, write a one-page description of your home. Use this as a reference as you create your diorama.

Students will make a diorama with a shoebox or a folded piece of construction paper. Students should color the walls and flooring on paper to glue in the diorama as they appear in their own home. They may use construction paper, unlined white paper or any other materials in making their diorama.

The student's "shoebox place" should replicate the rooms in your house and their relative size. (In other words, the bathroom shouldn't be as big as the kitchen!)

Teachers: Let the students be as creative as they would like. This is an opportunity for them to succeed.

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