

LESSON: Wings of Kindness

Story Reference: *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Humane Heroes Volume I*, Story 11, "Saving Giant Birds After They Are Hurt"

Lesson Description: Students read about the rescue efforts of a man in Florida who saves wild cranes who often have been injured by people. Through group collaborative discussion, students discern the need to promote kindness to animals. Students engage in a mirroring exercise that helps them become attuned to others through movement. Students design a promotional message to advocate for kindness to animals.

ELA Alignment:

- Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text.

Lesson Objectives:

- Compare and contrast empathic responses to injured animals. Identify the examples of empathy shown toward mistreated wild birds in the story "Saving Giant Birds After They Are Hurt."
- Create a message to promote kindness to wild animals.

Vocabulary:

- Empathy

Materials:

- Two-column chart comparing examples and non-examples of empathy
- 8" x 2.5" template for a rectangular promotional message

Introduction: Define "empathy" (5 minutes)

- Ask students if they are familiar with the concept of empathy. Invite students to share what empathy means to them. Share some of the following examples if students do not fully understand the concept:
 - A man finds a bird with an injured wing in his backyard and imagines how scared it might feel. He takes the bird to an animal hospital.
 - A student falls and scrapes his knee on the playground. Another student notices the fall and remembers feeling embarrassed when she once fell down. She comes over to see if the injured student needs help. She walks him to the school nurse.

- Based on the examples, have students define empathy. Student responses may include the following:
 - Empathy is when someone understands and shares another person's feelings.
 - Empathy is when someone knows how another person is feeling.
 - Empathy is when someone cares about how another person is feeling.
- If time permits, lead students through a mirroring activity to practice empathy. See Optional Mirror Activity at the end of the lesson.

Read and Analyze: Identify examples and non-examples of empathy (15 minutes)

- Prior to reading, tell students to look for examples of empathy shown to the wild birds in the story. Direct students to read "Saving Giant Birds After They Are Hurt."
- After reading the story, have students refer to a two-column chart that is drawn or projected on the board. Label one column "Examples of Empathy" and the other column "Non-Examples of Empathy." For the left column (Examples of Empathy), have students identify events from the story where empathy was shown to the wild birds. For the right column (*Non-Examples of Empathy*), have students describe actions from the story that did not demonstrate empathy. Record student responses in the appropriate column. Lead a class discussion about the examples and non-examples of empathy.
- Have students reflect on the following questions:
 - *What are some actions people do that can harm wild birds?*
 - *What are some ways wild birds can be positively affected by the actions of humans?*
 - *How can people show empathy to wild birds by respecting their environment?*

Guided Practice: Design an animal kindness bumper sticker (15 minutes)

- Explain that many people are working to make the world a better place for animals. For example, more than 100 years ago, American Humane, an organization that helps animals, created "Be Kind to Animals Week®." Have students brainstorm a list of ways to help more people be kind to animals.
- Direct students to work in small groups to design and illustrate a bumper sticker with a promotional message that advocates kindness and empathy toward animals. Stimulate the groups by asking guiding questions, such as the following:
 - *What might motivate you to practice empathy and kindness toward animals?*
 - *What message or image might cause someone to feel empathy toward animals?*

Closing: Share and reflect on empathy (10 minutes)

- Ask each group to share their bumper sticker with the class and explain how their message will inspire others to show kindness and empathy toward animals.
- Ask students to reflect individually or as a class on the following questions:
 - *How might you practice empathy and kindness toward animals?*
 - *In what ways can you practice empathy and kindness toward other people around you?*

Optional Mirror Activity: Practice empathy (10 minutes)

- Explain to students that they have to pay close attention to others in order to practice empathy.
- Lead students in a mirroring activity with the following instructions:
 - Ask students to find a partner and direct the pairs to spread out around the room so that everyone has space to move.
 - Direct each pair of students to face each other and follow instructions. Explain that the goal of this activity is for the following student to perfectly mirror the movements of the leading student. Students will take turns leading while their partner mirrors their actions. Drawing from this lesson's story about wild cranes, provide the following examples of movement actions:
 - Bow to each other
 - Jump up
 - Use your arms as wings
 - After all the students have experienced leading, suggest that they try to continue mirroring each other without designating a leader or using words.
 - After the activity, ask students to reflect on the following questions:
 - *What did it feel like to mirror your partner?*
 - *What did it feel like when your partner mirrored your actions?*
 - *What did you notice about mirroring when no one was leading?*
 - Explain that we acknowledge and understand the feelings associated with others' experiences when we mirror them. For example, you do not yawn shortly after somebody else yawns simply because you suddenly realize you are tired. You are demonstrating a form of empathy when you see somebody yawn and yawn in response. The same is true when someone is injured and you feel sorrow for that person. In your mind, you are able to mirror the pain they might feel.

Humane HEROES Bumper Sticker

