

CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL MUSICAL THEATRE TEACHER'S COMPANION

THE ISLAND CLUB



Description of story:

Claire and the popular girls position themselves at their school's cafeteria entrance every day and decide who will be "allowed" to sit with them. The rules for a seat at their table are strict and few make the grade.

At the "unpopular table," Alexa and her friends silently wonder what life would be like if they were part of that elite group.

When Byron, who is commonly considered a nerd, passes the popular table, the girls humiliate him in front of his classmates. Alexa comforts him and invites him to eat lunch at her table.

School wide, anger and resentment toward the "popular" girls grows, and Alexa takes action. She starts a club where everyone is welcome and calls it the "Island Club." Before long, the only students who aren't members of the Island Club are Claire and her friends. In fact, when one of the "popular" girls says something nice about the Island Club, she is immediately banished her from their table. Alexa quickly offers her a seat at her table, and the girl immediately accepts. By taking action, and not sitting on the sidelines, Alexa literally turns the tables on the "popular girls."

Description of the Lesson:

All students will relate to their own experiences with "popular" and "unpopular" groups. This lesson will help them understand how social groups are defined and structured, and how such groups influence the behavior of their members. Through literacy-based activities, student-facilitated discussions and educator-led follow-ups, students will not only learn of social structures and how decisions are made within and between groups, but they will come to understand that through compassion they can stomp out one of the more sinister bullying behaviors – exclusion.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Objectives:

1. A deeper understanding of “popularity” and what it means in school and in society.
2. Insights into our need to be included in a group and how groups structure the behavior of their members
3. A close examination of the students’ personal behavior within their groups and how it has affects other people.
4. To become aware of, and sensitive to, anti-social and/or bullying behaviors, and how to react when such behaviors are present.

SEL Compliance Checklist

This lesson addresses all five SEL competencies as defined by the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL):

- ✓ Self-Management
- ✓ Self-Awareness
- ✓ Social Awareness
- ✓ Relationship Skills
- ✓ Responsible Decision-Making

Literacy Prompts (to facilitate conversation and/or writing):

1. Is it important to be “popular”? Why or why not?
2. Describe the rules of Claire’s group and the “benefits” its members received.
3. Maya Angelou famously wrote, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” Discuss the range of emotion Byron must have felt after being humiliated by Claire and treated with compassion by Alexa. Have you ever felt such a range of emotion?
4. It took courage to start the Island Club. Is there another character in the play who was courageous? If so, how?

Anchor Questions (larger, essential questions that guide students to reflect on their learning):

1. What is popularity and why is it important to us?
2. Why do we form social groups and how can we make those groups more sensitive, compassionate and inclusionary?
3. When we see something that doesn’t sit right with us, what actions can we take?