

CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL MUSICAL THEATRE TEACHER'S COMPANION

THE NEW GIRL



Description of Story:

Lexi is the new girl in high school. She left her school in California to get away from gangs and violence and make a fresh start. She quickly finds out that her new school has its own challenges when she becomes the focus of some bullies. Chloe and her group of friends come to her rescue, and Lexi finds a place with them.

Lexi joins the theater club where she meets a boy named Jackson, and the two of them start to date. Jackson is a different race than Lexi, and Chloe feels that Lexi betrayed "her people" by dating outside her race. She demands that Lexi break up with Jackson.

Lexi is faced with the dilemma of having to choose between her heart and the friends who have protected her. In the end she chooses her heart, which gives her the courage to look beyond the bullies in her life and find true friends.

Description of Lesson:

Perhaps at no time in our lives is it as important to feel accepted as in middle and high school. This was especially true for Lexi, who was at once dealing with a new school, bullying behavior by strangers, and aggressive behavior by friends. Students will relate to these situations - moments where they have been ridiculed either by their group or by their peers as a result of their personal decisions.

The fundamental objective of this lesson is to teach students the value of being true to themselves. When Chloe and her friends pressed Lexi to break up with Jackson, Lexi stayed true to herself - to her own conscience and set of values.

Through literacy-based activities student-facilitated discussions and educator-led follow-ups, students will not only learn the importance of being true to themselves, but they will learn that hard, even painful decisions that hurt in the short term often prove to be the right decisions in the long term.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Objectives:

1. A deeper empathy and acceptance of personal and group identities.
2. Being sympathetic to others people's personal decisions and motivations, even if you don't agree with them.
3. A better understanding of your own true needs and balancing them with your responsibilities to your friends, parents and school.
4. An understanding of personal and group choices and seeing them in a broader context.

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. Why didn't Lexi decide to give up seeing Jackson and stay with her group? Have you ever had to do something that you didn't want to do because of peer pressure?
2. Did Lexi "get" something or "give away" something when she made her decision? Explain.
3. "Sometimes letting things go is an act of far greater power than defending or hanging on." – Eckhart Tolle
Write a short essay on what that quote means and include examples where you had to let something go.

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

1. Why might it be harder to take a stand against your friends than those who you may not know as well?
2. Does an understanding of your own racial identity help form your decisions? What about an acceptance and tolerance of another's race?
3. When we are put in a position where we have to make a difficult choice, what should guide us?