

The Invisible Boy: a roleplaying activity

- Empathy

EXPLANATION:

A simple act of kindness can transform an invisible boy into a friend. Trudy Ludwig's tale raises poignant life issues of friendship, belonging, empathy and acceptance, opening avenues for classroom discussion about ways to create classroom inclusion.

YEAR LEVELS: Years 4–6

STUDENT GROUPING: Group discussion and individual reflection time

ACTIVITY LENGTH: 60 mins approx.

LINK TO CURRICULUM:

The Arts: Sequence of content F-10

Sub-strand: Exploring ideas and improvising with ways to represent ideas

Drama

- Use voice, body, movement and language to sustain role and relationships and create dramatic action with a sense of time and place
- Develop skills and techniques of voice and movement to create character, mood and atmosphere and focus dramatic action

English: Sequence of content F-6

Strand: Literacy

- Listening and speaking interactions (Skills students use when engaging in listening and speaking interactions)

See also Personal and Social Capability learning continuum sub elements:

- Communicate effectively
- Understand themselves as learners
- Express emotions appropriately
- Negotiate and resolve conflicts

SCOPE OF TASK:

Brian is the invisible boy in the story. Nobody ever seems to notice him or think to include him in their group, game or birthday party. Then a new boy named Justin arrives and Brian and Justin begin to form a friendship.

1. Begin this activity by asking students if they know what empathy is (awareness of others' feelings and ability to see situations from alternate points of view). How does it feel when you see other people hurt or upset?
2. Introduce the book, *The Invisible Boy* to the whole group of students. Tell students that we are focusing on discovering the feelings of different characters in the story. Click on the link to hear the story narrated:



3. After the students have listened to the story ask them to share what happened. Prompting questions could include:
 - Who was the main character in the story?
 - What was happening to him in the story?
 - Why did he feel invisible?
 - What changed in the story?
 - How do you know what the characters might be feeling?

At this point of the activity try to make connections for the students with their feelings and the feelings associated with empathy.

4. Tell children that their task is to roleplay the section of the book when Ben felt invisible. Break into groups of 3 – 5 students. One student pretends to be the audience. Tell that student that when the roleplay is over you want him/her to report how they felt for Ben. If time allows swap roles in the roleplay so students can experience the different perspectives.

5. Once students have had 10 mins approx. to roleplay, bring the group back together. Ask them to explain:
 - How did they feel when they were 'invisible'?
 - What did the audience feel while watching Ben's rejection, loneliness and isolation?
6. Ask the students if they can think of other times when they have felt empathetic to other people or animals.
7. Give the students a Post it[®] note and get them to write down a time that they felt empathy. These memories can be stuck on a poster with the heading, "I show empathy when...."
8. To close the activity, ask the children to share what they wrote on the Post it[®] notes and displayed on the poster

Remind students: Empathy is important in almost every aspect of daily life. It allows us to have compassion for others, relate to friends, family and even strangers. When we can feel for others it has a positive impact on the world.

RESOURCES:

- Post it[®] notes
- Poster with heading "I show empathy when..."

Ludwig, T. (2013). *The Invisible Boy*, Random House.

Online video: The Kindness Curriculum- The Invisible Boy, Read by Carla Dziwoki sourced from <https://youtu.be/TOa3qwawCzw>

