

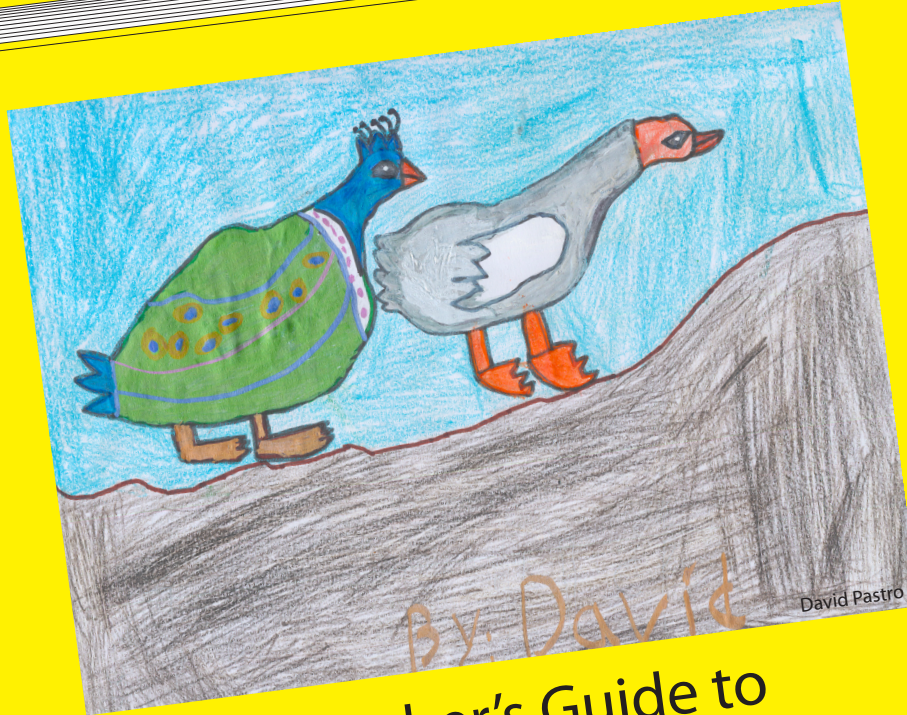
**T**

# Thoughtful Books

GRADE  
2+

TC<sup>2</sup>

**B**



A Teacher's Guide to  
**Feathers  
and Fools**  
by Mem Fox

Series Editor Mary Abbott  
Author Kera Borodkin & Jackie Copp

Literacy

Social  
Responsibility

# Note to parents and teachers

The Thoughtful Books Series makes use of exemplary children's literature to help young readers learn to read critically and to thoughtfully consider ethical matters. Critical thinkers rely on inquisitive attitudes, utilize thinking strategies, access background knowledge, understand thinking vocabulary, and apply relevant criteria when making thoughtful decisions. We refer to these attributes as intellectual tools. Each resource in this series features specific intellectual tools supporting literacy development and ethical deliberation. Teachers and parents can introduce the tools using the suggested activities in this resource, and then support learners in applying the tools in various situations overtime, until children use them independently, selectively, and naturally.

## Reading as thinking

Reading is more than decoding words. It is the active process of constructing meaning. Good readers understand this process as engagement in critical thinking. They employ specific literacy competencies as they engage with text, create meaning from text, and extend their thinking beyond text. The activities in this booklet help develop the following literacy competencies:

- *Accessing background knowledge:* Good readers draw on what they already know to establish a foundation for approaching new texts. In this case, students share their understanding of the ways people are the same and the ways they differ.
- *Finding Important ideas:* Good readers discriminate between details and key or important ideas. In this case, students identify unique qualities in the story and create a storyboard of the events leading to the destruction that occurs in the story. Good reader also use details and messages gleaned from the text to discern key ideas and themes that may not be explicit in the text. In this case, students identify the message or lesson of the story.
- *Synthesizing ideas:* Good readers think about and respond to issues and themes critically. In this case, students identify an act of tolerance that would change the story. They also examine the concept of "lessons" and connect the lesson(s) in the story to everyday situations..

## Ethical considerations

A second focus of the activities in this booklet is to help learners develop the intellectual tools they need to think critically about ethical considerations. It is important to teach the tools, often through modelling and illustrating with examples, and continue to apply the tools in a variety of situations over time, until learners internalize them. The following ethical consideration is addressed in this resource:

- *Tolerance of difference:* Critical thinkers are able to suspend judgment and demonstrate curiosity and interest in things that are unfamiliar. In this case, students explore the concept of tolerance and the responsibility to intervene in circumstances of intolerance.

# TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR: *Feathers and Fools*

by Mem Fox

## Critical question

What is the most important lesson in this story?

## Story

*Whoever You Are* by Mem Fox, Leslie Staub illustrator, Voyager (2001). Use this story as a lead-in if desired.

*Feathers and Fools* by Mem Fox, Nicholas Wilton illustrator, Voyager (2000).

## Summary

*Whoever You Are* is a simply written, vividly illustrated book showing how people all over the world are different and the same. Use these activities to introduce students to the idea of tolerance and celebrating differences. If students are familiar with these concepts, simply review them briefly and proceed to the introduction of *Feathers and Fools*.

*Feathers and Fools* is a beautifully illustrated and thought provoking story that tells what happens when a group of peacocks and swans are afraid of each other because of their differences. Use the accompanying activities to help children understand the concept of tolerance and the responsibility to take action in the face of intolerance.

## Main focus

### Literacy competencies

- accessing background knowledge
- finding important ideas
- synthesizing ideas

### Ethical considerations

- celebrating difference
- tolerance of difference

### Levels of involvement

Consider students' interest and their level of maturity to determine whether or not all three levels of after-reading activities are appropriate.

- *Exposure*: identify tolerant and intolerant behaviours.
- *Investigation*: investigate an action that would demonstrate tolerance and prevent the peacocks from becoming fearful.
- *Application*: identify the lesson in the story and represent it in some other way.

# Activities: Whoever You Are

## Session One

### Before reading

Introduce the concept of same/different

- Assemble the following materials: one lemon for each pair of students; one orange (if cost is prohibitive use another object such as shells or stones).
- Show students a lemon and an orange and ask how they are the same and how they are different. Record similarities and differences in a Venn Diagram.
- Show students two lemons that are obviously different in size and texture and brainstorm similarities and differences between the two.
- Point out that even though the lemons look very similar, each one is different and special in some way.
- Give each pair of students a lemon and ask them to look for special qualities. Their task is to get to know their lemon and identify its special qualities. Encourage students to examine their lemon carefully, with their eyes open and by feeling it with their eyes closed, noting its shape, texture, bumps, and special markings. Suggest to students that they compare their lemon to the one the teacher has to help isolate qualities. Ask students to discuss with their partner how their lemon is the same as the other lemons and how it is different.
- Organize students in groups of six by placing three student pairs together. Invite each group of six to put their three lemons in a bag and shake the bag. Remove the lemons from the bag and place them in front of each group. Ask each pair of students to identify their lemon by recognizing its special qualities.
- Check to see how many students found their lemon. Discuss whether or not one lemon is better than another. What is the good thing about difference?
- Remind students that in this activity they were looking for special qualities. Discuss with students how special qualities relate to people.

### During reading

Accessing background knowledge

- Show the cover of the book *Whoever You Are* and explain that this is a book about similarities and differences in people. Discuss ways people might be different and ways they are the same. Record ideas.
- As you read the story, add to the list of ways people are the same and different.

## Begin New Session

### After reading: exposure level

#### Develop the concept of tolerance

- Review the list of the ways people can be the same and different. Ask students if it is more important to notice how people are the same or how people are different.
- Introduce the term tolerance: “to be tolerant of others is to welcome the differences and delight in the sharing” (www.tolerant.org).
- Discuss with students what it means to welcome differences and delight in the sharing. Introduce the term “celebrating differences.”

#### Finding important ideas

- Listen to the music video of “Don’t Laugh at Me” from [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbBWsscli\\_4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbBWsscli_4).
- Read the lyrics of “Don’t Laugh at Me” by Steve Seskin and Allen Shamblin from <http://www.peterpaulandmary.com/music/f-22-11.htm> and identify ways people can be different.
- Add to the previous list, additional ways that people are the same and different.
- Discuss the message of the song with students. Ask students what the people in the song want (*to be included*).
- Explain to students that sometimes when people do not understand differences their actions hurt people.

#### Synthesizing ideas

- Using the list provided in Blackline Master #1, give students an example of an action (words and behaviours) that shows tolerance and one that does not. Discuss the difference between tolerant and intolerant actions.
- Identify criteria for a tolerant action (e.g., is kind, shows interest, does not judge or hurt feelings).
- Invite students, either as a class or in partners, to sort the list of actions provided in Blackline Master #1, into tolerant and intolerant actions. In partners, encourage students think of two other actions that demonstrate tolerance or celebrate difference (‘welcoming’ and ‘sharing’).

Blackline Master #1

Tolerant and intolerant actions	
“Ha ha, you can’t keep up.”	“You are not my friend.”
“Susie is a loser! Susie is a loser!”	“What do you really enjoy doing?”
“Come play with us, I’ll help you.”	“That’s really neat the way he figured out how to do that.”
“Hi John. What would you like to play?”	“Here comes John, let’s hide.”
“I wonder what Josh thinks.”	“What you are eating looks really interesting.”
“It is really weird that you can’t walk.”	“Can I see how you do that?”
“Don’t make fun of Susan. You wouldn’t like someone to say that to you.”	“How do you celebrate in your family?”
“Come and have lunch with us.”	“Come to the park with us.”
“Why does he dress like that? I don’t think we should talk to him.”	“Why do you wear that thing on your head? It looks really weird.”

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# Activities: Feathers and Fools

## Begin New Session

### Before reading

#### Introduce the story

- Review the definition of tolerance: “to be tolerant of others is to welcome the differences and delight in the sharing”.
- Review the examples of tolerant and intolerant behaviour and ask what can happen when people are intolerant.
- Show the picture on the cover of the book. Explain to students that this is a story of similarity, difference, and intolerance. Ask students how the peacock and the swan are the same and how they are different. Remind students that a Venn Diagram is a tool for recording ideas when they compare things. Record student ideas in a Venn Diagram.

### During reading

#### Read the story in chunks

- Ask students to listen for the feelings that develops between the peacocks and the swans.
- Stop reading after the first peacock muses about the swans. Ask students how the peacock is feeling (suspicious, fearful, judgmental). Point out that the peacock is being intolerant of the swans because they are different. Ask student what they think will happen next in the story.
- Read the next page and discuss what is happening. Ask what they think the plans might be. If the peacocks are fearful they might\_\_\_\_\_.
- Read the next page and ask students to identify those actions that add to the fear.
- Read to “Every movement made them tremble” and identify the feelings of the peacocks and swans.
- Read until “no one remained alive” and ask the students how they are feeling about what happened in the story.
- Ask if there is any hope in this story. Read to the end of the story.

#### Finding important ideas

### After reading: investigation level

#### Consider actions to change the outcome of the story

- Read the story again without stopping and review the events of the story as a class. Create a story board illustrating the events that lead to the destruction. Point out that a story board is a way we can record our thinking when we need to review events.
- Discuss with students the cause of the peacock’s fear.
- Invite students to pretend that they are one of the peacocks who listened to the first peacock. Point out that the students know something the peacocks do not. They know about tolerance as “welcoming and delighting” in differences.

## Synthesizing ideas

- Read the first three pages of the story again and ask students to imagine they are one of the peacocks listening to the first peacock musing. Ask students to think about the need to speak out or act if they perceive intolerance.
- In partners, invite students to brainstorm what they would say to the first peacock to help him understand tolerance.
- Remind students that in deciding what to say they should think of what would cause the peacock to think differently, prevent the others from becoming fearful and change the outcome of the story.
- Invite students to share their action either in role play, written or verbal form.

## Begin New Session

### After reading: investigation level

- Invite students to retell the story using the story illustrations as cues.
- Ask students why they think the author wrote this story. Point out that some stories are written to entertain us and others are written to teach us something. This is also true about songs. The song “Don’t Laugh at Me” also tried to teach us something. These teachings are called lessons and are meant to help us solve problems in our lives. Point out that First Nations legends are also stories that teach lessons.
- Brainstorm possible lessons in this story and discuss how these ideas might relate to every day life. Pose the questions: “What is the most important lesson in the story?” “Why is this lesson important?” Identify criteria for an important lesson (e.g., use it frequently, offers helpful advise).
- Invite students to identify the most important lesson in the story and justify their decision. Use *Feathers and fools* (Blackline Master #2) to record their decision.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# **Feathers and fools**

*Blackline Master #2*

The most important lesson in this story is \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

This lesson is important because \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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## Assessment

- Use the rubric *Assessing tolerance* (Blackline Master #3) to assess students understanding of tolerant actions and plausible lessons.

## Extension

- Invite students to write a poem, a song, or a story or paint a picture that illustrates the lesson of the story.
- Begin a unit on First Nations legends to reinforce and expand the connection between stories and lessons.

# Tolerant and intolerant actions

"Ha ha, you can't keep up."	"You are not my friend."
"Susie is a loser! Susie is a loser!"	"What do you really enjoy doing?"
"Come play with us, I'll help you."	"That's really neat the way he figured out how to do that."
"Hi John. What would you like to play?"	"Here comes John, let's hide."
"I wonder what Josh thinks."	"What you are eating looks really interesting."
"It is really weird that you can't walk."	"Can I see how you do that?"
"Don't make fun of Susan. You wouldn't like someone to say that to you."	"How do you celebrate in your family?"
"Come and have lunch with us."	"Come to the park with us."
"Why does he dress like that? I don't think we should talk to him."	"Why do you wear that thing on your head? It looks really weird."



# Feathers and fools

The most important lesson in this story is \_\_\_\_\_

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This lesson is important because \_\_\_\_\_

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# Assessing tolerance

	Sophisticated understanding	Extended understanding	Basic understanding	Partial recognition	Pre-recognition
Identifies an action that demonstrates or teaches tolerance	Shows a clear sense of responsibility for using words and actions that demonstrate tolerance. Identifies responsive and appropriate solutions to intolerant situations.	Shows an emerging sense of responsibility for using words and actions that demonstrate tolerance. Is able to identify and offer simple ways to solve intolerant situations.	With support, shows an emerging sense of personal responsibility for using words or actions that demonstrate tolerance. Identifies words or actions based on examples from the story or discussions.	Can often repeat words or actions that demonstrate tolerance but tends to focus on own needs and wants. Needs encouragement to act in a supportive way.	Is unable to identify words or actions that demonstrate tolerance.
Identifies a plausible lesson in the story	Identifies a highly plausible lesson and clearly explains why it is important and how the lesson can be applied to his/her own life.	Identifies a plausible lesson and offers a simple explanation of why it is important.	Identifies a plausible lesson without offering an explanation of its importance.	Identifies a lesson that may not be plausible.	Cannot identify a plausible lesson.

Comments:

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Thoughtful Books is a project of The Critical Thinking Consortium. **TC²** is a non-profit partnership of school districts, faculties of education, teacher professional associations, and other educational organizations. Our aim is to promote critical thinking from primary to post-secondary education through partner-sponsored professional development, publications, and research.

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