

I Want my Hat Back

By Jon Klassen (2011)

Walker Books.

Ages 5-16

Activities by Sue Lyle

HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS for getting pupils to engage with the story in preparation for P4C and for developing their appreciation of the concepts of lying, stealing and justice. Ideas have been inspired by Philip Cam's latest book: *Teaching ethics in schools: a new approach to moral education*. P4C is about how we should live and that is what ethics is all about. The activities to accompany *I want my hat back* can stimulate ethical enquiry in the classroom.

Activity 1: Share the story

Read the children the book and make sure they get a good, long look at the illustrations. Ask the children to take some individual time to reflect on the story and ask them: *What were you thinking about when you were listening to that story?* Ask them to share their ideas in pairs and report back to the class.

Activity 2: Thinking about the characters in the story

The following suggestions can be used with any book where characters have behaved badly and/or well. After reading the story and/or performing the script (see activity 3) ask the children to consider:

- *Were there things you liked about how the characters behaved in the story? What things were they?*
- *Were there things that you didn't like about how the characters behaved in the story? What were they?*

Again children can share their thoughts in pairs or small groups before feeding back to the class.

Activity 3: Making and Reading a Script

Following the reading of the story and exploration of characters, the children can make their own scripts to explore the story more. Ask pupils in groups to create a script to read aloud (see our E-Book on Readers Theatre for more ideas). Children read from their finished script and don't act out the story but use as much expression in their voices as possible and consider using music or other sound effects to mark time or for transitions between events. There are 9 parts in this story. Divide the class into groups with 9 participants each as far as possible (children can take on 2 roles if necessary). Allow time for the children to practice their script before performing it to the class. Discuss and reflect on the performances with the children as a whole class.

Activity 4: Generating questions

Phillip Cam suggests a useful strategy to help children generate ethical questions and provides the following question starters. I have added the last three questions to link specifically to the characters in this story.

Randomly assign children into groups of 4. Give them one of the question starters and ask them to make up a question about the story by completing the following:

1. Was it right that.....?
2. Is it good to.....?
3. How bad was.....?
4. Would it have been better if.....?
5. Ought the bear to have.....?
6. How else could the bear have.....?
7. Should the rabbit have...?

Children pass their questions onto another group so every group has another group's question. Ask each group to spend 5 minutes discussing the question and then pass the question on. Repeat this 2-3 times to allow the children to explore the questions in their groups.

Activity 5: Concept stretching

A substantive concept in the story is lying. The rabbit that has stolen the bear's hat lies to the bear at the beginning of the story by saying he has not seen the lost hat (even though he is wearing it). At the end of the story the bear denies he has seen a rabbit wearing a hat (he has now wearing his recovered hat). Key questions to explore would include:

- *Is it always wrong to lie?*
- *Can you have good lies?*
- *Are white lies OK?*

To explore the concept of lying I recommend using a 'concept line'
<http://p4c.com/articles/conceptlines>.

Procedure: Using a skipping rope or equivalent to form a concept line and place a card saying 'good lie' on one side of the rope and 'bad lie' on the other. Read the statements below in turn and ask the children to choose where to stand. If they are not sure they can stand on the rope. Ask the children to give reasons for their choices and encourage them to change their minds as they listen to each other. Those standing on the rope should be encouraged to make a decision as they listen to the reasons given by their classmates.

- Your favourite grandmother knits you a jumper for Xmas – you hate it – you say you love it. *Good lie or Bad lie?*
- A wicked queen asks who is the fairest in the land – she is not – but if you tell her she is not she will chop your head off – you tell her she is the fairest in the land. *Good lie or Bad lie?*

- Two school bullies come and ask you were two small boys are. You know where they are (to the left). You point to the right and say they went that way. *Good lie? Bad Lie?*
- You hate vegetables except potatoes. Your mum mashes up some parsnip and put it in the potato and tells you she has made your favourite vegetable potato – you eat it up. *Good lie? Bad Lie?*

Children I have used this exercise with very frequently come up with the following ideas:

- it is OK to lie to prevent hurting someone’s feelings
- it is OK to lie to save your own life or to protect others
- it is always wrong to lie
- good people don’t lie
- honesty is always the best policy

If your children put forward similar ideas, ask them look for counter examples when these ideas might not be the best ones to apply.

Activity 6: Drama

At the beginning of the story the bear has the following conversation with the rabbit (who is wearing a hat):

Bear	Have you seen my hat?
Rabbit	No. Why are you asking me?
	I haven’t seen it.
	I haven’t seen any hats anywhere
	I would not steal a hat
	Don’t ask me any more questions
Bear	OK. Thank you anyway.

Ask the children to work in pairs and act out the dialogue. Then ask them to work in small groups and brainstorm in response to the following question:

- *What’s the rabbit feeling in this dialogue?*

Ask each group to report back. Junior classes usually identify guilt, defensiveness, embarrassment and other emotions to describe the rabbit’s feelings. Useful questions to follow up this could include:

- *Why is the rabbit being defensive?*
- *Do we feel guilt when we lie?*
- *Why? Why not?*
- *If he had found the hat and kept it rather than intentionally stealing it – would we change our mind about how we think the rabbit is feeling?*
- *Why? Why not?*

Activity 7: Role-play

After the bear realises that the rabbit has stolen his hat he is angry and he shouts at the rabbit: 'YOU. YOU STOLE MY HAT'. On the next page the rabbit (still wearing the bear's hat) and the bear are looking at each other – there is no dialogue. Scan this page and display it on the white board. Ask the children to work in pairs and prepare a script of the conversation they think the rabbit and bear might have had.

Set up a role-play in the round – children sit on the floor in a circle. Ask for a volunteer pair to move to the middle of the circle and perform a role-play for the class based on their script. After they have been given a chance to get into their role-play, any one of the other children can move into the middle and tap either one of the children on the shoulder, swop places with them and continue with the role-play using ideas from their own script. Carry on swapping places until all children who want to have a go have had one.

Activity 8: Developing conditional reasoning using 'If... Then'

This activity introduces children to the language of conditional reasoning. Sitting in a circle ask the children in pairs to use the conditional 'If ... then' using the starters below:

- **If** the rabbit had said he found the hat **then** ...

Ask the children to take up this response and consider the new consequences:

- **If** the... (taking up the *then* answer) **then**...

Keep on going until the children run out of ideas. Then introduce a different 'If... then':

- **If** the rabbit hadn't told a lie... **then**...
e.g. If the rabbit had said he had found the hat then he might still be alive

Carry on as before:

- **If** the... (taking up the *then* answer) **then**.
e.g. If the rabbit was still alive then...

Activity 9: Considering consequences

After bear has confronted the rabbit we see him sitting alone with his hat on. Another animal strikes up a conversation that leads us to suspect he has eaten the rabbit. Remind the children of their role-play of the imaginary conversation between the rabbit and the bear – what could have happened in the actual conversation that lead to the bear eating the rabbit? Ask the children the following questions:

- *Do you think there was a conversation between the rabbit and the bear if there had been a conversation before the bear ate the rabbit, what would they have said to each other?*

Ask the children to consider what the bear might say to justify eating the rabbit. Ask them to discuss in groups of four:

- *Can the bear justify eating the rabbit to others, including rabbit's friends?*

Activity 10 Enquiry

At this stage the children will be well prepared to formulate their own questions for enquiry and they will usually devise a question linked to the concepts of lying, stealing, revenge and justice. During enquiries facilitators try to use questioning to help the children explore the issues raised.

The following questions are substantive questions that might be useful for the teacher to introduce during the enquiry if they links to the children's ideas. I find it is helpful if, as part of my planning, I think about the kind of questions it would be useful to ask to help the children engage with the concepts.

- *The rabbit could have said he'd found the hat and given it back – this might still have been a lie. Are some lies worse than others?*
- *The bear was so sad about losing his hat ('My poor hat. I miss it so much.')*
Does feeling bad justify doing something wrong?
- *Is revenge sweet?*
- *How does the bear feel after he has eaten the rabbit?*
- *How else could the bear have responded?*
- *Is it hard sometimes to be good?*

Activity 9: Hot-seating

After the enquiry display the page from activity 6 on the whiteboard and then put the children into small groups and ask them to plan questions they would like to ask either the rabbit or the bear.

Hot-seating – volunteers take the role of the rabbit and bear and the class ask them questions.

I Want My Hat Back is a picture book by Jon Klassen. Bear is looking for his hat, and goes to the creatures of the forest in turn asking whether they've seen it. His later book This Is Not My Hat is unrelated. My tropes are gone. I want them back. Bears Are Bad News: While very polite, the Bear is easily angered. Up to and including killing whoever pissed him off. Big Heroic Run: The Bear running to where he knows the hat is. Bullying a Dragon: A rabbit steals from a bear. Disproportionate Retribution: Rabbit stole Bear's hat. I Want My Hat Back book. Read 2,885 reviews from the world's largest community for readers. A picture-book delight by a rising talent tells a cumulative tale. The bear's hat is gone, and he wants it back. Patiently and politely, he asks the animals he comes across, one by one, whether they have seen it. Each animal says no, some more elaborately than others. But just as the bear begins to despond, a deer comes by and asks a simple question. A picture-book delight by a rising talent tells a cumulative tale with a mischievous twist. The bear's hat is gone, and he wants it back. Patiently and politely, he asks the animals he comes across, one by one, whether they have seen it. Each animal says no, some more elaborately than others. Use I Want My Hat Back by Jon Klassen to inspire your class. Try out some of our teaching ideas and activities! Write a prequel to the book. Why did Rabbit decide to steal Bear's hat? Did he intend to steal it or did he just find it without its owner? Write a sequel to the book. What happens to Bear next? Read the sequel to the book, This Is Not My Hat. Which do you prefer? Why? Computing. Use a painting program to design a new hat for Bear / Rabbit. Could you retell the story in the form of an animation? Watch this example