



## CREATING CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

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**SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL:** 1 – 4

**LENGTH OF TIME:** Two 30-minute sessions or one one-hour session

### GOALS

- To create a more welcoming classroom.
- To use literature to help students understand what makes them and other students feel welcome or unwelcome in school.

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will identify behavior that makes someone feel excluded.
- Students will apply that discussion to their own experiences.
- Students will be able to name examples of biased and/or hurtful behavior that makes them feel left out.
- Students will identify what they can do to help make their classroom more welcoming.

### ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- CCSS RL 2.1 Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text. RL 1.1, 3.1 and 4.1.
- CCSS RL 3.3 Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events. RL 1.3, 2.3, and 4.3.
- CCSS SL 3.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. SL 1.1, 2.1 and 4.1.

### EDUCATORS' NOTES

This lesson is designed to help students not only develop empathy for what it means to be different for Chibi, the main character in the book, but also to develop empathy for students in your classroom or school whose experiences may be different from others. It is also designed to help students make connections to their own lives.

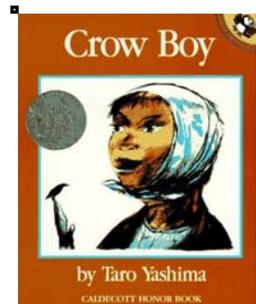
This lesson is based on the teaching experience and lessons of Beverly Braxton. To read a full account of how she used this book in her classroom to build community and create empathy among her students see her article, "Creating Classroom Community," in *Rethinking Our Classrooms, Vol. II*.

**MATERIALS:** Chart paper, markers for charts.

**REQUIRED BOOK:** *Crow Boy*, Taro Yashima.

### ACTIVITY

Read the book *Crow Boy*, explaining to the students that it is a story about a boy who feels very different and left out. While you are reading it, ask them to think about what made him feel left out and then what made a difference for him to help him feel better.



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- In a group discussion, identify the behavior that made Chibi feel left out.
    - What happened in the first part of the story that led to Chibi feeling left out and unimportant?
    - What kinds of unspoken messages did Chibi get from his classmates and previous teachers that indicated what they thought of him?
  - When you ask these questions, help the students identify specific behaviors. For example, if students say, “They didn’t like him,” ask them to give a specific example that shows that. This leads them to point out how children teased him or how his classmates didn’t play with him at recess.
  - To get students to empathize with Chibi ask some of these questions:
    - How was Chibi made to feel?
    - How might you feel if you were Chibi?
    - Why might you feel that way?
  - To help students examine how prejudice and other bias affects them, ask some questions that help them reflect on their own experiences.
    - Has anyone experienced being or feeling left out, either here at school or in other areas of your life?
    - What kinds of things do other people do that make you feel left out?
  - What kind of classroom do your students want to be a part of? Ask your students the following question and record their answers on chart paper so that you and your students can refer back to it.
    - What other things could students in the story have done to make Chibi’s experience better at school?
  - Then, either as a full class discussion or in small groups, have students discuss how they would like their class to be. If you have a full-class discussion, use chart paper to record ideas. If you have students break into small groups, have them write down their ideas and then share them with the whole class. Ask them to not only identify what things other people could do but also to identify what things they could do to create a more welcoming classroom.

## ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- Can students list examples of feeling welcome and unwelcome?
- Can students identify ways to make their classroom more welcoming?

## ADDITIONAL BOOKS FOR STUDENTS

*Chrysanthemum* or *Crisantemo*, Kevin Henkes

*One*, Kathryn Otoshi.

*Each Kindness*, Jacqueline Woodson.

*The Sissy Duckling*, Harvey Fierstein

*The New Girl ... and Me*, Jacqui Robbins and Matt Phelan.

*Wings*, Christopher A. Myers.

*Adapted from “Creating Classroom Community,” by Beverly Braxton, in Rethinking Our Classrooms, Volume 2: Teaching for Equity and Justice, 2001 (pp. 163-166). See [www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org)*