

First Grade Takes a Test
Jim's Dog, Muffins
Tough Jim

Written by Miriam Cohen
Illustrated by Ronald Himler

These three stories involve the same first-grade class of students learning life skills by living together in a classroom.

Testing (stress and pressure and acceptance of individual abilities), grieving, and bullying are the main themes in these three titles.

Learning Engagements:

1. Text Set Inferences
2. Text-to-self Connections
3. Text Set Connections
4. Character Map
5. Life Skills
6. Artistic Representation
7. Text-to-text Connections

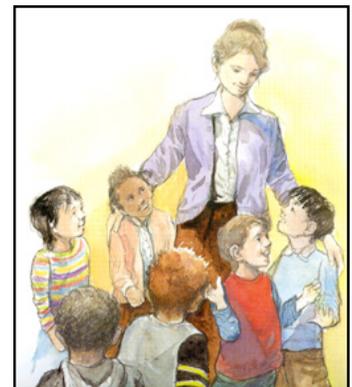
Learning Engagement #1: Text Set

Book Prompt: These three books were written by the same author, Miriam Cohen, and illustrated by the same artist, Ronald Himler. The stories were originally written and published in the 1970s and 1980s. Some of the print was changed, and all of the illustrations were revised in these new editions.

After reading all three books, make inferences about the author's and illustrator's motivation and interest in creating these books.

Evidence in the Text + Background Knowledge = Inference

- Why do readers think Miriam Cohen wrote these books?
What makes you think that?
- Why did Ronald Himler agree to illustrate these books?
What makes you think that?



Learning Engagement #2: Text-to-self Connections

Book Prompt: Each of these fiction books shares the experiences of first-grade children.

After reading each of these books, what text-to-self connections can readers make? Text-to-self connections are when readers can relate similar experiences from their own lives with those of the characters in the story.

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Readers can discuss as a whole class, small group, or in partners. They can write, draw, or perform to share their text-to-self connections in unique ways.

Book	Possible Questions to Prompt Text-to-self Connections
<i>First Grade Takes a Test</i>	Has anyone ever felt “dumb” in school? When? How did you change your feeling? Who helped you? How do you feel about taking tests?
<i>Jim’s Dog, Muffins</i>	Have you ever lost a pet? What were the circumstances? Have you experienced the death of a family member or friend? What did you do when you felt sad? Who helped you?
<i>Tough Jim</i>	Have you ever been bullied by another kid? When? How did you change the situation? Who helped you?

Learning Engagement #3: Text-to-text Connections

Book Prompt: All three of these books are about the same classroom of students and their teacher.

Use paper or webbing software to create webs of ideas about this class and their teacher. Use the following questions and questions of your own as prompts for sharing ideas:

- How do these students get along with each other in the classroom?
- How do they make decisions as a group?
- How does the teacher help them learn and work together?



Learning Engagement #4: Character Map

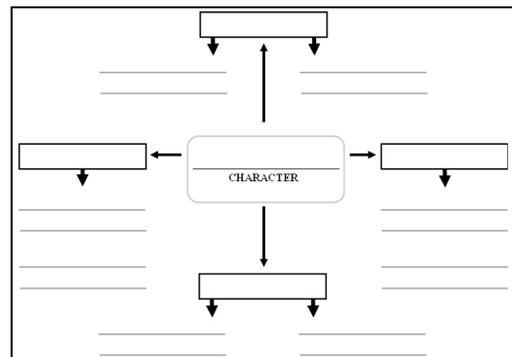
Book Prompt: First-grader Jim is a character in all three of these stories.

Using information from all three books create a character map for Jim.

To begin, write Jim’s name in the middle rectangle.

Brainstorm his strongest character traits. Write four of them in the bold rectangles.

Find two pieces of evidence from these three stories to support each of these traits. Make a note about each example on the lines below the arrows. Use abbreviations to tell in which book that example happened: *First Grade Takes a Test* (FGTT), *Jim’s Dog, Muffins* (JDM), or *Tough Jim* (TJ).



For a completed character map of Jim, see the educator resource at the end of this Teaching Tools: Curriculum Guide.

Access a downloadable Character Map at:

http://www.ala.org/ala/ourassociation/publishing/alaeditions/webextras/moreillon09294/Moreillon_supplement7F.doc

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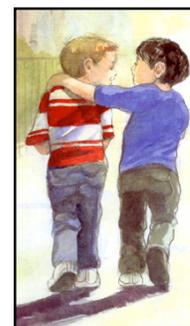
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Learning Engagement #5: Life Skills

Book Prompt: In each of these books, the first-grade students are learning important life skills and lessons.

Complete the category matrix below. By leaving various parts of this matrix blank, educators can ask readers to provide examples or to name the life skills exhibited by the characters in these stories.

More proficient young readers can create their own matrices.



Book	Life Skills	Example
<i>First Grade Takes a Test</i>	Respect: There are different ways to show you are smart.	The teacher reminded the students they can build with blocks, read books, draw pictures, have good ideas, or be a kind person. The test doesn't measure these.
	Kindness: Treat people the way you want to be treated.	Children had hurt feelings when others called them "dummy."
	Cooperation: Helping other people and working together feels good.	Jim and Paul fixed race cars; Margaret helped George with math.
<i>Jim's Dog, Muffins</i>	Kindness: When friends are sad, reach out to them.	The class wrote a letter to Jim. Anna Maria and Paul showed kindness to Jim to try to make him feel better.
	Patience: Sometimes people need time to deal with their feelings.	The teacher told Anna Maria that Jim needed more time to grieve. Paul was patient with Jim when he said he doesn't want any pizza.
	Responsibility: People must take responsibility for their feelings.	Jim was able to share his sadness and his good memories about his dog with Paul at the end of the story.
<i>Tough Jim</i>	Organization: Planning helps make events run more smoothly.	The children planned their party and their costumes.
	Creativity: Using creativity makes life interesting.	The children's costumes were creative.
	Courage: It is difficult to stand up to a bully.	Jim told Zoogy he didn't want to fight.

Learning Engagement #6: Artistic Representation

Book Prompt: These books offer developmentally-appropriate examples of primary-age children practicing life skills.

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Use poster board or heavy construction paper, crayons, and collage materials. Choose one of the life skills from one of the books: cooperation, courage, creativity, kindness, organization, patience, respect, or responsibility. Illustrate that skill with something meaningful from the artist's own life or school experience. Display posters prominently.

Learning Engagement #7: Text-to-text Connections

Book Prompt: These stories are about life skills and can be used to support character education curriculum.

There are several picture books in each of these broad themes that can be shared along with the *First Grade Takes a Test* (testing stress and pressure, accepting individual differences), *Jim's Dog*, *Muffins* (loss, grieving, or death), and *Tough Jim* (bullying).



Recommended Fiction Picture Books about Testing:

The Biggest Test in the Universe by Nancy Poydar (Holiday House, 2005)

Hooray for Diffendoofer Day by Dr. Seuss with some help from Jack Prelutsky and Lane Smith (Knopf, 1998)

Jamaica and the Substitute Teacher by Juanita Havill, illustrated by Anne Sibley O'Brien (Houghton Mifflin, 1999)

Madison's Patriotic Project by Vanita Braver, illustrated by Carl DiRocco (Star Bright Books, 2007)

Testing Miss Malarkey by Judy Finchler, illustrated by Kevin O'Malley (Walker, 2000)

Recommended Fiction Picture Books about Loss, Grieving, or Death:

A Dog Like Jack by DyAnne Disalvo-Ryan (Holiday House, 1999)

Granddad Bill's Song by Jane Yolen, illustrated by Melissa Bay Mathis (Philomel, 1994)

I Remember Miss Perry by Pat Brisson, illustrated by Stéphane Jorish (Dial, 2006)

Six Is So Much Less than Seven by Ronald Himler (Star Bright Books, 2002)

The Tenth Good Thing about Barney by Judith Viorst, illustrated by Erik Blegvad. (Atheneum, 1977)

Recommended Fiction Picture Books about Bullying:

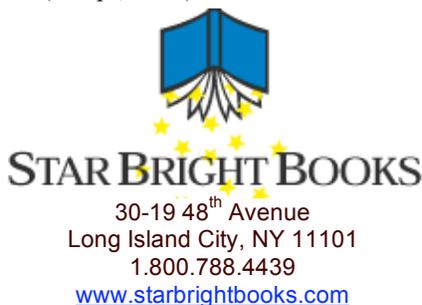
Hooway for Wodney Wat by Helen Lester, illustrated by Lynn Munsinger (Houghton Mifflin, 1999)

The Little Wood Duck by Brian Wildsmith (Star Bright Books, 2006)

The Owl and the Woodpecker by Brian Wildsmith (Star Bright Books, 2006)

The Recess Queen by Alexis O'Neill, illustrated by Laura Huliska-Beith (Scholastic, 2002)

Willy the Wimp by Anthony Browne (Knopf, 1984)



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