



Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? - Digital Empathy in ELT

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A three-step plan to build empathy

Step 1. Prepare

Create a Safe Space

Lead by Example

Develop Emotional Competency

Step 2. Engage

Group Play

Storytelling

Immersion

Problem Solving

Step 3. Reflect & Act

Identify Shared Values and Differences

Instill Courage

Inspire students to become their best selves.

Enable Action

Show your feelings Tasks:

Task 1:

- Draw on the post-it an emoji that best describes your feelings now (choose from the Universal expressions of feeling).
- Share with the person next to you. Justify your choice.
- Keep this piece of paper throughout the day and check if your feelings change.

Task 2:

- Divide your group in pairs.
- Give each pair an emoji.
- Ask Ss to think of a short story or make up a dialogue based on the emoji.

Suggested Activity: Developing Empathy through Literature

- Read the following extract from Agota Kristof's novel, *The Notebook*. How can hunger be used as a control mechanism? How can a change of perspective change that?
- Which character could you identify with?

We have to do certain chores for grandmother, otherwise she doesn't give us anything to eat and leaves us to spend the night outdoors.

At first we refuse to obey her. We sleep in the garden, we eat fruit and raw vegetables. [...]

She goes off to market pushing her wheelbarrow, with the strap around her scrawny neck, which forces her head down. She staggers under the weight. The bumps and stones in the road make her lose her balance, but she goes on walking, her feet turned inwards, like a duck. She walks to the town, to the market, without stopping, without putting her wheelbarrow down once.

When she gets back from the market, she makes a soup with the vegetables she hasn't sold, and jams with the fruit. She eats, she goes and has a nap in her vineyard, or if there is nothing to do there, she returns to the house, she cuts wood, she feeds the animals again, she brings back the goats, she milks them, she goes out into the forest, comes back with mushrooms and beans, she bottles other

vegetables, waters the garden again, puts things away in the cellar, and so on until nightfall.

On the sixth morning, when she leaves the house, we have already watered the garden. We take heavy buckets full of pigfeed from her, we take the goats to the bank of the stream, we help her load the wheelbarrow. When she comes back from the market, we are cutting wood.

At the meal, Grandmother says:

"Now you understand. You have to earn food and shelter."

We say:

"It's not that. The work is hard, but to watch someone working and not do anything is even harder, especially if it's someone old." Grandmother sniggers:

"Sons of a bitch! You mean you felt sorry for me?"

"No, Grandmother. We just felt ashamed."

In the afternoon, we go and gather wood in the forest.

From now on we do all the chores we can.

- Read the following poem by Emily Dickinson. Whose point of view is expressed in the poem? What is the message conveyed in the last stanza?

I Had Been Hungry All the Years

Emily Dickinson

I had been hungry all the years-
My noon had come, to dine-
I, trembling, drew the table near
And touched the curious wine.

'T was this on tables I had seen
When turning, hungry, lone,
I looked in windows, for the wealth
I could not hope to own.

I did not know the ample bread,
'T was so unlike the crumb

The birds and I had often shared
In Nature's dining-room.

The plenty hurt me, 't was so new,--
Myself felt ill and odd,
As berry of a mountain bush
Transplanted to the road.

Nor was I hungry; so I found
That hunger was a way
Of persons outside windows,
The entering takes away.

Suggested Speaking Activity: In somebody else's shoes

The stigma of disease

Margie's best friend, Lily, was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy last year. Lily's life has remained mostly normal since her diagnosis, until now. The disease has progressed, making it difficult for Lily to raise her arms, so she is unable to participate in certain activities. Today in PE, she had to sit out and watch everyone else play basketball, her favorite sport. During warm-ups, Margie overheard Kelli telling her friend Jamie, "It's so unfair that Lily gets to just sit there and watch. What I wouldn't give to trade places with her today." If you were Margie, what would you say or do in this situation?

Suggested activity: Empathy and Self-awareness through story-telling

Ask your students to think of a book/story/ film that they liked. They can take a few minutes and close their eyes if they want. Ask them to narrate the plot in brief; then they should try and immerse in the story, take the identity of one of the characters and- taking turns- confide in the class an incident of their past: what happened, why

they acted in this way, how they felt, how they think they made the others feel. Also, if they would do it again, or if they have regrets; the class should take the role of the sympathetic listener, but they can also express their point of view, ask questions, or offer advice.

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