

Empatico Skills Overviews & Mini-Lessons

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Description

This booklet is designed to support teachers as they help their students learn key social skills for interacting with others and building strong relationships, especially with people from different backgrounds and cultures. Practicing these skills can lead to a more meaningful Empatico experience within and between partner classrooms, and can help equip students with the skills they need to navigate differences with curiosity and kindness -- in the present and for years to come.

Each Empatico Skill section in this booklet contains:

- Specific components of the skill
- Tips for reinforcing the skill
- Activities to practice the skill within your own classroom (i.e., not to be done with your partner classroom)



Empatico Skills



Perspective Taking

See the world through another person's eyes by asking yourself: "What is life like for that person? What might be influencing how they perceive this situation? How can I relate to their experience to understand how they feel?"



Critical Thinking

'Think for yourself'

- Recognize that assumptions are not facts
- Ask yourself if you have all parts of the story
- Investigate new explanations with an open and curious mind



Respectful Communication

- Actively listen to the speaker
- Take turns speaking
- Respond respectfully and positively, even if you disagree



Cooperation

- Work together to achieve a common goal
- Everyone has a role and respects each other's ideas

Empatico Skills: Respectful Communication Overview & Mini-Lesson

The ability to actively listen and communicate respectfully with others can help students have a meaningful experience with their partner classroom and deepen learning of their partner's culture. This Respectful Communication Overview and Mini-Lesson is designed to help you teach and reinforce your students' respectful communication skills.



Components of Respectful Communication

- **Actively listen** to the speaker
 - Make eye contact and turn your body towards the speaker
 - Focus on what the person is saying (don't think about other things)
 - Show interest in what you're hearing by using nonverbal cues, such as nodding or facial reactions
- **Take turns speaking**, waiting until the speaker is done before responding
- **Respond in a respectful and positive manner**, whether you are agreeing or disagreeing with what was said

Tips for reinforcing Respectful Communication skills in the classroom

- **Model the skills:** In front of the class, have a practice conversation with a student (e.g., by asking what they did last weekend) and think aloud as you demonstrate the steps of respectful communication. Repeat with another student, but this time model what *not* to do by avoiding eye contact, looking bored, interrupting, etc.
- **Role-play:** Have students practice respectful communication, as shown in Mini-Lesson 1 below.
- **Display a collaborative classroom definition:** Work as a class to come up with definitions of respectful communication and how this skill can benefit students and apply to different situations. Write the definitions on a poster, and refer to (and revise) this list throughout the year as relevant situations arise.
- **Consider using a 'talking stick'** or other small object during discussions to signal turn-taking. When a student has the object, it's his/her turn to talk and everyone else listens.
- **Post a list of sentence starters** (or print on notecards for each student) that can help students respond respectfully and empathetically during conversation (see Empatico's list below, at the end of Respectful Communication Mini-Lesson 2).
- **Reframe negative comments:** If a student says something negative, reframe their response in a way that isn't hurtful (e.g., *'What you meant was that you don't agree with what was done'*) and prompt the student to consider why she/he reacted that way (e.g., *'Why do you feel that way? What would you have done differently? What are some other potential explanations/solutions/ways of doing this?'*). Also consider a [lesson in perspective-taking](#) to emphasize that we all have different perceptions of situations, depending on our past experiences and culture.
 - Review the [Teacher Tips for Intercultural Experiences](#) resource for additional guidance.

Additional Resources

Empatico provides two options for respectful communication activities on the following pages. For additional ideas on how to promote respectful communication skills, click the website titles below:

- ["Teaching your students how to have a conversation"](#)
- ["What is the SLANT strategy and how does it improve student achievement?"](#)
- ["Respectful Talk"](#) (video link)
- ["Creating a Culture of Peace in the English Language Classroom"](#) (see Chapter 4: Communication)
- ["Active Listening for grades 3-6"](#)
- ["Do you hear what I hear? 8 activities to improve listening skills"](#)
- ["6 strategies for teaching listening skills in the classroom"](#)
- ["Disagreeing Appropriately Lesson Plan"](#)
- ["Social Skill Lesson Plan: Disagreeing appropriately"](#)

Respectful Communication Mini-Lesson 1: What is Respectful Communication?

Note: This is a standalone mini-lesson that is separate from the Empatico interaction activities.

Teacher Preparation Notes

In this mini-lesson, students define what respectful communication means to them, then do a role-play exercise to demonstrate what poor communication and respectful communication looks like and how it affects others. Before the mini-lesson, arrange the room as if you're going to interact with your partner classroom, since students will be role-playing the exchange (for assistance, see the [Room Setup](#) resource).

Procedure (estimated time: 45 min)

- Gather initial ideas:** Ask students what they think respectful communication means, and write their ideas on the board. To help spark ideas, you might ask them: *Who do you know that is really good at respectful communication? What do you notice about their communication that makes you think that?*
- Set up for role-play:** Tell students they will now role-play the interaction with the partner classroom to demonstrate what respectful communication looks like, and how it affects others. Ask two students to act as representatives of your classroom and sit in the speaker chairs. Ask two other students to act as the partner classmates and sit across from the other students so that the two pairs are facing each other.
- Students act out poor communication:** Tell the two students who are representing your class that they should demonstrate what they think *poor communication* looks like -- you may want to give them hints (e.g., avoiding eye contact, fidgeting, looking bored, interrupting, etc.). Tell the rest of the class to also demonstrate poor listening skills of an audience (e.g., talking in the background, not looking at the partner classmates, etc.). Then tell the two pairs of students to start discussing a topic (e.g. your Empatico interaction topic, such as "weather", or a general topic such as "What did you do last weekend?").
 - After a few minutes of role-play, ask the students who played the 'partner class' how it felt to speak with a class who demonstrated poor communication skills. Ask both pairs of students how it felt to have a loud audience who was not paying attention to their conversation. Emphasize how poor communication skills can negatively affect others and damage relationships.
- Students act out respectful communication:** Tell the two students who are representing your class (or choose two new students) that they should now demonstrate what they think *respectful communication* looks like (e.g., eye contact, keeping body still, reacting with nods and smiles, taking turns speaking, paraphrasing, responding with respectful comments, etc.). Tell the rest of the class to also demonstrate respectful communication by paying attention and staying quiet. Then tell the two pairs to begin discussing another topic.
 - After a few minutes of role-play, ask the 'partner class' students how it felt to speak with class representatives who practiced respectful communication skills. Ask both pairs of students how it felt to have an attentive audience. Emphasize how respectful communication skills can help them have positive experiences and interactions with others.
- Conclude and reflect as a class:** Return to the original list of ideas students generated in the first step about what they think respectful communication is. Ask students if they have anything to add or revise, now that they've experienced this firsthand. Reflect on the role-play exercise by asking one or more of these suggested questions:
 - How did poor communication skills affect the partner class? How did they affect you and your learning?
 - Why is it important to practice respectful communication skills with others?
 - How can we improve our communication skills the next time we talk with our partner class?
 - Let's look at our poster of respectful communication. What are you good at? What can you improve?

This mini-lesson was adapted from Exercise 4.2.1 in "Creating a Culture of Peace in the English Language Classroom" by Alison Milofsky from the United States Institute of Peace.

Respectful Communication Mini-Lesson 2: Storytelling with Respectful Communication

Note: This is a standalone mini-lesson that is separate from the Empatico interaction activities.

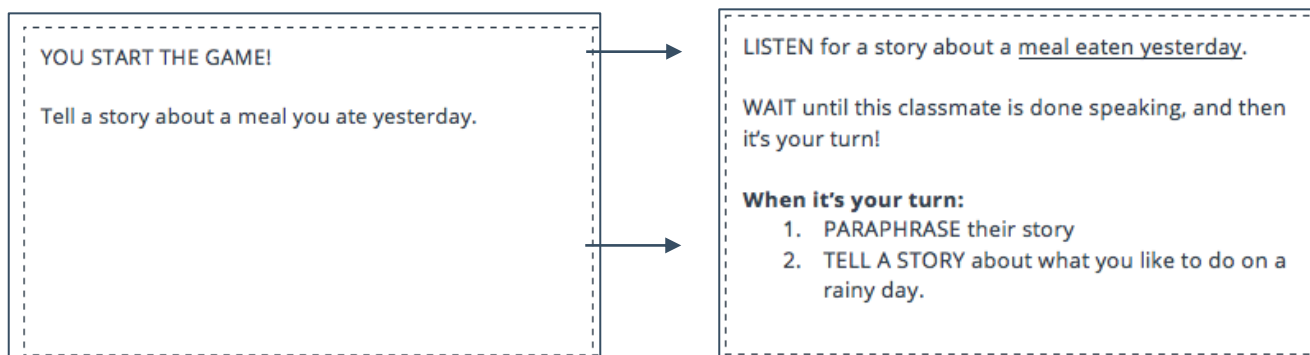
Teacher Preparation Notes

In this mini-lesson, students practice the components of respectful communication by telling stories aloud and practicing active listening, taking turns, and respectfully responding to their classmates' stories. Be sure to print out, cut, shuffle, and randomly distribute the "Respectful Communication Story Cards" (see below) before beginning the game. There are 16 cards, and each participating student should receive one card.

- If you have less than 16 students, only cut out and distribute the number of cards needed. *The cards are in a specific order, so if, for example, you have 10 students, use the first 10 cards.*
- If you have more than 16 students, you can either (a) select a small group of students to participate, (b) split the class into two or more groups and repeat the activity, or (c) make additional cards from the blank cards (see below).

Procedure (estimated time: 45-60 min)

1. **Describe the activity:** Have students sit or stand in a circle. Tell them that the purpose of this activity is to practice active listening by taking turns speaking and responding respectfully and positively. Each student will have an opportunity to share a brief personal story as prompted by his/her "story card."
2. **Distribute the cards:** Shuffle and distribute the "story cards" so that each student receives one card. Give students a minute or two to read their cards and think about their stories.
3. **The student with the card that says "You start the game!" will go first:** This student starts by following instructions on the card, while another student listens for that specific story and then follows instructions on his/her card, as show below:



- If needed, you may want to model the first 1-2 cards to show the type of stories you want to hear.
 - To increase the difficulty level, you can encourage students to provide more details with the "Five W's" (who, what, when, where, why) or ask students to also respond to stories using a sentence starter (see Empatico's sentence prompts on a separate page below).
4. **Continue until all participating students have shared a story:** The game continues as described above. Each student will need to pay attention throughout the activity to listen for the story described at the top of his/her story card.
 5. **At the end, reflect as a class:** Use some of these suggested questions to guide student reflection:
 - What did we do during this activity that showed we were actively listening and respectfully communicating?
 - What do you think we did well as a class during the activity?
 - How could we improve our respectful communication skills?
 - What did you learn today that will help you during the interaction with our partner classroom?
 - Do you think it will be easier or more difficult to communicate respectfully when talking to someone through a computer? Why?

Respectful Communication Story Cards

Cut along the dotted lines and distribute one card to each student.

<p>YOU START THE GAME!</p> <p>Tell a story about a meal you ate yesterday.</p>	<p>LISTEN for a story about a <u>meal eaten yesterday</u>.</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PARAPHRASE their story2. TELL A STORY about what you like to do on a rainy day.
<p>LISTEN for a story about a <u>rainy day</u>.</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PARAPHRASE their story2. TELL A STORY about what you did to celebrate your last birthday.	<p>LISTEN for a story about a <u>birthday celebration</u>.</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PARAPHRASE their story2. TELL A STORY about what you want to be when you grow up and why.
<p>LISTEN for a story about <u>what a classmate wants to be when he or she grows up</u>.</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PARAPHRASE their story2. TELL A STORY about the last time you played your favorite game.	<p>LISTEN for a story about a <u>favorite game</u>.</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PARAPHRASE their story2. TELL A STORY about what you did last year to celebrate your favorite holiday.
<p>LISTEN for a story about <u>celebrating a favorite holiday</u>.</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PARAPHRASE their story2. TELL A STORY about what you would want to say to a character from your favorite book or movie.	<p>LISTEN for a story about a <u>favorite TV, movie, or book character</u>.</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PARAPHRASE their story2. TELL A STORY about the last time you did something scary or challenging.

Respectful Communication Story Cards – Continued

<p>LISTEN for a story about <u>a scary or challenging experience</u>.</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PARAPHRASE their story 2. TELL A STORY about what you did last weekend. 	<p>LISTEN for a story about <u>what a classmate did last weekend</u>.</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PARAPHRASE their story 2. TELL A STORY about the last time you did your favorite outdoor activity.
<p>LISTEN for a story about <u>an outdoor activity</u>.</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PARAPHRASE their story 2. TELL A STORY about a family tradition that you want to continue as you get older. 	<p>LISTEN for a story about <u>a family tradition</u>.</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PARAPHRASE their story 2. TELL A STORY about your favorite animal or an animal you wish could be your pet.
<p>LISTEN for a story about <u>an animal or pet</u>.</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PARAPHRASE their story 2. TELL A STORY about what you did last year during your favorite season. 	<p>LISTEN for a story about <u>a classmate's favorite season</u>.</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PARAPHRASE their story 2. TELL A STORY about your favorite belonging or possession.
<p>LISTEN for a story about <u>a classmate's favorite belonging or possession</u>.</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PARAPHRASE their story 2. TELL A STORY about someone in your family whom you admire. 	<p>LISTEN for a story about <u>a classmate's family member whom they admire</u>.</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PARAPHRASE their story 2. TELL A STORY about your favorite song and why you like it.

Blank Story Cards

<p>LISTEN for a story about:</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PARAPHRASE their story2. TELL A STORY about:	<p>LISTEN for a story about:</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PARAPHRASE their story2. TELL A STORY about:
<p>LISTEN for a story about:</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PARAPHRASE their story2. TELL A STORY about:	<p>LISTEN for a story about:</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PARAPHRASE their story2. TELL A STORY about:
<p>LISTEN for a story about:</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PARAPHRASE their story2. TELL A STORY about:	<p>LISTEN for a story about:</p> <p>WAIT until this classmate is done speaking, and then it's your turn!</p> <p>When it's your turn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PARAPHRASE their story2. TELL A STORY about:



Paraphrasing

- I think you're saying that...
- In other words, you believe/think that...

Giving your opinion

- I believe/think/feel that...
- From my perspective...

Checking for understanding

- Can you explain _____ again?
- What did you mean when you said _____?

Agreeing

- I agree with _____ because...
- I want to add to what you said...

Disagreeing

- I understand your point of view, but I respectfully disagree because...
- I'm not sure about _____, can you tell me why you think that?

Showing empathy and understanding

- I see why you feel/think that way because...
- I hear what you're saying, can you tell me more?

Empatico Skills: Perspective Taking Overview & Mini-Lesson

The ability to understand another person's perspective is beneficial for all forms of social interactions and relationships, including helping students have a meaningful interaction with their partner classroom. This Perspective Taking Overview and Mini-Lesson is designed to help you teach and reinforce your students' perspective taking skills.



Components of Perspective Taking

There are multiple steps involved with strengthening perspective taking skills:

1. **Recognize differences:** Recognize that others can have different thoughts, feelings, and knowledge than you.
2. **Understand influences:** Understand that someone's immediate circumstances, past experiences, beliefs, and culture can influence their perceptions and feelings. There is often a reason behind someone's actions that we cannot see.
3. **Relate to another person's perspective** by thinking about their unique circumstances, experiences, beliefs and culture to see the world through their eyes. Try to find commonalities with your past experiences to relate to their experience and feelings, even if they are different from what you would feel yourself in that exact situation. Ask yourself: *"What is life like for that person? What might be influencing how they perceive this situation? How can I relate to their experience to begin to understand how they feel?"*
 - Example: Your friend hates cake and is upset that she was given cake for her birthday. Even though you would be happy in her position, you can still relate to her experience by remembering a time when you were given a food you didn't like.

Tips for reinforcing Perspective Taking skills in the classroom

- **Develop skills through role-play:** Role-playing exercises, including acting out skits or puppet shows, can strengthen perspective taking skills as students get into the mindset of another person to understand their thoughts and feelings.
- **Practice while reading stories or watching movies:** Help students understand how each character might feel or think during a specific situation, and show how they can have different perspectives based on having different knowledge, preferences, experiences, or culture than others. You could also ask students how the story might have been told differently if told from another character's point of view (e.g., see [The True Story of the Three Little Pigs](#), as told from the wolf's perspective).
 - You can practice these tips while reading the opening story during the ["Ways We Play"](#) Empatico activity
- **Consider other perspectives during conflicts:** Whether conflicts are between peers or between characters in a story, help students understand how and why each side perceives the situation differently and, in the case of peer conflict, guide them toward a solution that acknowledges both perspectives.
- **Reinforce when meeting people from different backgrounds:** Perspective taking skills are especially important during cross-cultural interactions, as people likely have very different perceptions of the world (which makes these experiences so interesting!). Be sure to encourage perspective taking when students are learning about other cultures or ways of life, for example, when they are preparing to interact with their partner classroom.
 - For additional tips related to this, see our [Teacher Tips for Intercultural Experiences](#) resource.

Additional resources

Empatico provides two options for perspective taking activities on the following pages of this overview. For additional ideas on how to promote perspective taking skills, click the website titles below:

- ["How to Teach Perspective-taking"](#)
- ["Teaching Perspective-taking through Pictures"](#)
- ["Multiple Perspectives: Building Critical Thinking Skills"](#)
- ["Stand in my shoes - Empathy Lesson"](#)
- ["7 Ways to Teach Perspective Taking and Stretch Students' Empathy Muscles"](#)
- ["Teaching Empathy through Role-play"](#)
- ["Lesson in Understanding Empathy"](#)

Perspective Taking Mini-Lesson 1: Same situation, different perspectives

Note: This is a standalone mini-lesson that is separate from the Empatico interaction activities.

Teacher Preparation Notes

Before starting this mini-lesson, have the “Perspective Taking Mini-Lesson Handout” (see below) ready to distribute or display on the projector. You may also want to post an emotions list for students to reference ([click here](#) for an example) and have “Tom’s Story” (see below) ready to display on the projector.

Procedure (estimated time: 45-60 min)

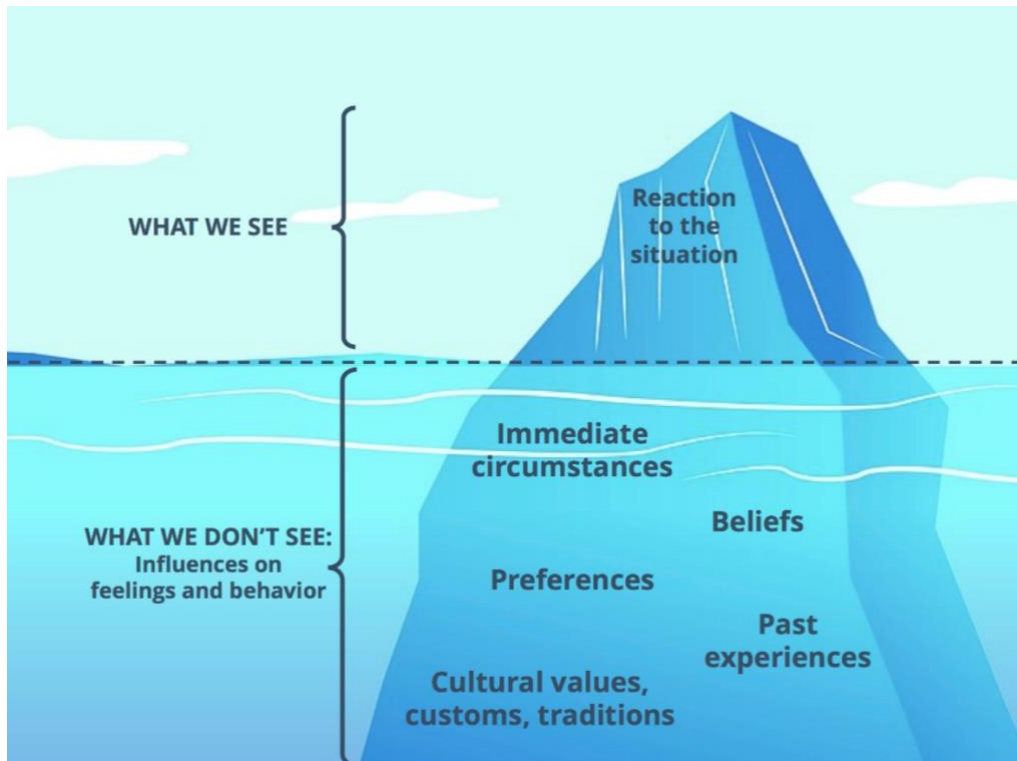
1. **Give instructions:** Explain to students that first you will read through the handout together and they will fill in the left-hand column about their own feelings (“ME”). Next, they will listen to a story about a kid their age named Tom, and then fill in the right-hand column about Tom’s feelings (“Tom”).
2. **Handout – My feelings (“ME” column):** Display the handout on a projector, and read it aloud with the class. After reading each situation, pause and ask students to imagine how they would feel if that were happening to them, and write down their feeling (“I feel ____”) and reason (“because...”). You might want to ask students to fold the paper in half vertically, so they can only see the “ME” column.
3. **Read “Tom’s Story”:** Remind students to listen carefully to the story for details about Tom’s life that might influence how he feels about the situations described on the handout. Then, read the story aloud.
4. **Handout - Tom’s feelings (“Tom” column):** Read through the handout again. You might want to ask students to fold the paper in half vertically, so they can only see the “Tom” column. Pause after reading each situation to:
 - Ask students how *Tom* might feel about that situation and why. Refer back to the story if needed, and discuss as a class.
 - Then ask students to look on their handouts to see if they had different feelings than Tom about each situation, and if so, raise their hands. Call on students to explain why they think Tom feels differently than they do. Guide them toward understanding that people can have different feelings about the same situation because of different past experiences, preferences/interests, immediate circumstances, or cultural influences (see answer suggestions below).

NOTE: After discussing Situation 5, ask students: “How do you think Tom would feel if it was cooler outside and he was feeling energetic? Would he still be frustrated that his friends wanted to play with him?” Demonstrate how someone’s feelings about a situation can change from one day to the next depending on immediate circumstances.

Suggested answers:

- Situation 1: Tom feels scared/worried/angry because of HIS PAST EXPERIENCE when a dog attacked his sister.
- Situation 2: Tom feels sad/uncomfortable/guilty/resentful because HIS CULTURE does not eat meat.
- Situation 3: Tom feels excited/curious/happy because of HIS INTEREST in becoming a doctor when he’s older.
- Situation 4: Tom feels disgusted/disappointed/mad because of HIS PREFERENCE for avoiding blueberries.
- Situation 5: Tom feels frustrated/annoyed because the IMMEDIATE CIRCUMSTANCES of being hot make him frustrated; he’s too tired and hot to play, so he’s annoyed that his friends are trying to make him run around.

5. **Conclude with a discussion on perspective-taking:** Explain to students that the only part of a situation we can actually see is the person's reaction, but there is usually a lot going on *under the surface* that influences on how this person perceives the situation, as we saw with Tom (see the iceberg image below for a visual understanding – you might want to display this for students or draw it on the board). To better understand another person's perspective, we need to think about all these hidden influences of the iceberg and ask ourselves: *"What is life like for that person? What might be influencing how they perceive this situation that we can't see? How can I relate to their experience to understand how they feel?"* For example, although a student might feel happy about blueberry cake while Tom feels disappointed, the student can still relate to Tom's experience by recalling how she felt when she was given food she didn't like in the past.



Optional extension exercise: Responding to Tom with empathy

Responding with empathy means expressing to someone that you understand their feelings and their personal perspective. To practice this skill, have students consider how they could respond to Tom's reactions with empathy. This can be done in a discussion format or through role-play where one student pretends to be Tom and another student practices what they might say and do to show they understand how Tom feels (include both verbal and nonverbal communication cues to convey empathy). For example: *"Tom, I can understand why you are upset about receiving a cake that you really don't like. I know how it feels to be given food that I dislike. That must be disappointing, especially on your birthday."*



Perspective Taking Mini-Lesson Handout

Name _____

Situation 1: Your family gets a dog as a pet.

<i>ME</i>	<i>Tom</i>
<i>I feel</i> _____	<i>Tom feels</i> _____
<i>because</i> _____	<i>because</i> _____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Situation 2: You are at your friend's house for dinner and his mom cooks a delicious beef stew.

<i>ME</i>	<i>Tom</i>
<i>I feel</i> _____	<i>Tom feels</i> _____
<i>because</i> _____	<i>because</i> _____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Situation 3: You are going to the doctor's office to get your medicine.

<i>ME</i>	<i>Tom</i>
<i>I feel</i> _____	<i>Tom feels</i> _____
<i>because</i> _____	<i>because</i> _____
_____	_____
_____	_____



Perspective Taking Activity Handout - Continued

Situation 4: You get a blueberry double chocolate cake for your birthday.

ME	Tom
<i>I feel</i> _____	<i>Tom feels</i> _____
<i>because</i> _____	<i>because</i> _____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Situation 5: You are outside on the playground with your friends, but it's too hot and sunny. There is no shade, and you are very sweaty and tired. Your friends want you to run around and play with them.
(Hint: Do not write "I feel hot and tired." What emotions do you feel?)

ME	Tom
<i>I feel</i> _____	<i>Tom feels</i> _____
<i>because</i> _____	<i>because</i> _____
_____	_____
_____	_____



Tom's Story

Tom is 9 years old, and he lives in a small town surrounded by beautiful mountains. He has brown curly hair with dark brown eyes the color of chocolate, and always has a bright warm smile. Tom loves to play football in the field near his house, but sometimes it's too sunny and hot to play there. If he is too overheated and sweaty, Tom becomes frustrated and angry, so it's not fun to play. On those hot days, Tom and his friends decide to play at another field on the far side of town, which is in the shade of the mountain. Tom likes this field because it's near the cow pasture, and he likes to watch the animals graze. Animals are very important to Tom's culture and are never eaten as food. In fact, his family only eats vegetables and fruits that they grow on their farm. Tom loves all the food they grow, except blueberries and blackberries, which taste really bad to him.

When Tom grows up, he wants to be a doctor. He still remembers the day he decided this: Two years ago, his sister was coming home from school and a vicious dog attacked her. She was badly hurt and rushed to the hospital. Tom was there too, and remembers everything the doctor did to help his sister. Since then, he has always wanted to become a doctor and appreciates every opportunity he gets to talk to new doctors.

Perspective Taking Mini-Lesson 2: See the world through another's eyes

Note: This is a standalone mini-lesson that is separate from the Empatico interaction activities.

Teacher Preparation Notes

- For this mini-lesson, you will bring in a few pairs of real eyeglasses/sunglasses *or* make fake glasses using paper and string so students can put them on and “see the world through another person’s eyes.” You will explain that each pair of glasses belongs to a different person, which could be anyone your students are familiar with (e.g., a character in a book or film, someone from your partner classroom, etc.). Write the name of each “glasses’ owner” on a piece of paper and place it next to the corresponding glasses. Arrange them around the room before beginning the a.
- Decide in advance the specific questions you want students to answer once they put on the glasses. Choose questions that will uncover the internal feelings, thoughts, and motivations of the glasses’ owners (e.g., *How did you feel when... Why did you decide to... What will you do if... How do you know that...*). These questions can be adapted to fit a number of different learning goals, including socioemotional learning, language arts, literature, and writing goals. You may wish to create a handout to guide students’ answers. See the example below.
- This mini-lesson can be done as a whole class (students rotate through glasses and say answers to the class), in student pairs or groups (say answers only to their partner/group), or independently (write down answers privately).

Procedure (estimated time: 45-60 min)

1. **Give instructions:** Explain to students that each pair of glasses belongs to a different person who has their own set of feelings, beliefs, knowledge, and preferences. They will soon put on the glasses and try to see the world from that person’s perspective. Remind students to consider what they know about the glasses’ owner’s preferences, immediate circumstances, personal experiences, and/or culture in order to understand how this person thinks and feels.
2. **Model:** Put on a pair of glasses to model the exercise. Think aloud, demonstrating how you will first look at the name to see who you are, and then close your eyes to truly imagine what life is like for this person and how she/he perceives the world. Use detailed imagery to help you get in the person’s mindset (e.g., *‘I am a small child who loves to play outside. It’s a hot sunny summer day, and I’m bored.’*). Then answer questions based on what you know about this person’s perspective.
3. **Facilitate the activity:** Using the activity structure of your choice, have students take turns putting on the glasses and seeing the world from that person’s perspective. Guide students through the steps of perspective taking.
4. **Reflect as a class:** Use some of these suggested questions to guide student reflection:
 - How did it feel to see the world through another person’s eyes?
 - Were there things you felt or did that were different from how *you* would have responded? Why would you have responded differently compared to the glasses’ owner?
 - How can we practice perspective taking skills during an interaction with our partner classmates?
 - Think of an example where you did not agree with the way someone reacted or behaved in a certain situation. How can ‘seeing the world through their eyes’ help you better understand their behavior?

Example: Using book characters from *Christina Katerina and the Box* for Activity 2

The teacher has started the Empatico [“Ways We Play” Empatico activity](#), in which her class reads *Christina Katerina and the Box*. The teacher writes the three character names (Christina, Fats Watson, and Mother) on a slip of paper and places them next to three sets of sunglasses. Here are some examples of the instructions and questions for her students for each character:

Christina:

Close your eyes and imagine you are Christina Katerina. Imagine you’ve just found a big box and you come up with very creative ideas for how to play with this box. Think about what you know about Christina and everything that happened in the story as you answer these questions:

- Why did you lock up Fats Watson in the castle?
- Why didn’t you get angry after Fats kicked down your castle?
- How did you feel when Fats knocked down the clubhouse?
- How did you feel when your mother tried to take the box away when it was your racing car?

Fats Watson:

Close your eyes and imagine you are Fats Watson. Imagine your friend Christina found a big box and is turning it into fun ideas to play with. Christina is the boss of the box, and always has the greatest ideas. Think about what you know about Fats and everything else in the story as you answer these questions:

- Why did you kick down Christina’s castle box?
- Why were you upset about being vice president in the clubhouse?
- Why did you damage Christina’s ballroom box? Was it on purpose or on accident?
- How did you feel when you brought the two washer and dryer boxes to Christina’s to play with?

Mother:

Close your eyes and imagine you are Mother. Imagine you are a very organized, neat person and your daughter Christina just found a big box and is playing with it in your tidy front yard. Think about what you know about Mother and everything else in the story as you answer these questions:

- Why did you allow Christina to keep the box in the front yard?
- Why did you try to take away the box from Christina so many times?
- How did you feel when Christina and Fats brought the two new boxes from Fats’ house into your yard to make the ships?

Empatico Skills: Cooperation Overview & Mini-Lesson

Cooperation is a foundational life skill for students to develop as they learn to navigate relationships in the classroom, at home, and eventually, in the workplace. When students cooperate, they must consider each other's perspectives and experiences as they take on unique roles to achieve their common goal. Empatico activities provide many opportunities for student-to-student cooperation, including small group work in the classroom and during interactions with the partner classroom. This Cooperation Overview and Mini-Lesson is designed to help you teach and reinforce your students' cooperation skills within your own classroom in order to help your students have a meaningful Empatico.



Components of Cooperation

- **Work together to achieve a common goal:** Cooperation means working with others to achieve a goal together.
- **Contribute to the group goal:** You have a unique role to play. Without your contribution, the goal cannot be achieved.
- **Respect each other's ideas:** While working together, listen to each other's ideas and respond in a respectful positive manner, whether you are agreeing or disagreeing with what was said.

Tips for reinforcing Cooperation skills in the classroom

- **Display an actionable definition of cooperation:** As a class, generate ideas about what specific actions are involved with cooperation skills and write (or draw!) them on the board/chart paper to display for students to see throughout the year. Revise this list as necessary if relevant situations arise later on.
- **Set cooperative goals:** When you sense an opportunity to practice cooperation skills during a lesson or activity, have students come up with a cooperative goal, which they can work toward achieving together.
 - For example, goals for the partner class interaction might be: "learn about similarities and differences between our community and theirs," and "have a fun, positive experience together." Ask students: What is required to achieve these goals? Emphasize that each student has an important role (e.g., speakers cooperate with partner classmates during interactions, the audience limits distractions), and everyone must do their part to accomplish the shared goals.
- **Build classroom community with team building activities:** Set time aside for fun team building activities (particularly at the beginning of the school year) that require students to work together toward a common goal. These will help create a sense of community in the classroom, foster relationships, and build trust among students.
- **Designate unique roles for each student:** When students are working together toward a common goal, assign students roles that will support the whole group's collective task (rather than divvying up work into separate tasks). Provide or post a list of the behaviors and expectations for each role so students are aware of what they should do. Some examples of roles include: Facilitator (ensures everyone participates, reminders of timing, etc.), Materials Manager (hands out and turns in materials), Checker (ensures work is complete), and Reporter (reports on the group's progress or final product).*
- **Promote a 'better together' mindset through stories:** Read stories or books that emphasize teamwork and how it's better to cooperate than compete with each other (e.g., *The Fighting Mynahs*). Lead class discussions that help students link the cooperation concept to their personal experiences.
- **Reinforce cooperation during conflicts:** During conflicts between peers, help students work together to come up with a 'win-win solution' that meets each side's needs. Emphasize perspective-taking and respectful communication while promoting a cooperative mindset.

* For more information about designing group work and designating these roles, see: Cohen, E.G., & Lotan, R. A. (2014). *Designing Groupwork: Strategies for the Heterogeneous Classroom Third Edition*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Guidelines for Cooperation mini-lessons

You can teach and reinforce Cooperation skills in any activity that requires students to work together to achieve a common goal, by including a few key components before, during, and after the activity:

Before the activity[†]

- **Set clear goals** for the activity that emphasize cooperation.
- **Assign roles** so each student is involved in helping achieve the common goal(s).
- **Remind students of established class norms**, such as:
 - Share and take turns
 - Give everyone a chance to contribute
 - Do your part (fulfill your role) to contribute to the group goal
 - Encourage and help fellow group members
 - Cooperate rather than compete with each other (individuals do not ‘win’ in cooperative activities; it is a team effort)
 - Practice Respectful Communication (active listening, taking turns speaking, respectfully responding to others’ ideas/opinions)
 - Practice Perspective Taking (considering other people’s perspectives respectfully)

During the activity

- **Reinforce class norms and positive behavior**, and remind students of their common goal.
- **Support student roles to ensure they are fostering group cooperation as intended:**
 - **Listen and look** for specific role behaviors during group work (for example, you might hear Facilitators invite all students to participate in a discussion or look carefully at the Recorder’s notes/diagram to see where groups are in a task).
 - **Ask** students with specific roles for updates on the group progress or needs (for example, you might visit each group and ask the Materials Manager if they have all the necessary supplies for the task).

After the activity

- **Reflect:** Reflection is key for developing and learning to value cooperation skills. After the activity, ask students questions such as:
 - What was your experience like during this activity?
 - What cooperation strategies worked well? Which didn’t? What might you improve/change next time?
 - Why is cooperation important? (*encourage connections to personal experiences*)
 - How can we apply these skills to future situations in which we must work together to achieve a goal?
- *Optional:* Using students’ reflection answers, write a class definition and examples of cooperation skills on chart paper and display it in the classroom for students to refer to later on.

Additional resources

For more ideas on how to promote cooperation skills, click the website titles below:

- [“Thumb Wrestling: Competition Versus Cooperation”](#)
- [“Three Ways to Build Teamwork in Your Elementary School Classroom”](#)
- [“21 Fun Team Building Activities For Kids”](#)
- [“Tip Sheet: Debriefing Cooperative Games”](#)
- [“10 team building games that promote critical thinking”](#)

[†] These components were adapted from: Lai, E. R., DiCerbo, K. E., & Foltz, P. (2017). *Skills for Today: What We Know about Teaching and Assessing Collaboration*. London: Pearson. Available from https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/one-dot-com/one-dot-com/global/Files/efficacy-and-research/he/Collaboration-White-Paper_FINAL.pdf

Empatico Skills: Critical Thinking Overview & Mini-Lesson

Critical thinking skills can deepen students' academic learning and can benefit all forms of social interactions and relationships, including supporting perspective taking and conflict-resolution skills. This Critical Thinking Overview and Mini-Lesson focuses specifically on applying critical thinking skills to social situations, and is designed to help you teach and reinforce your students' critical thinking skills.



Components of Critical Thinking

“Think for yourself”

- Recognize that assumptions and opinions are not facts -- they are personal interpretations
- Ask yourself if you have all parts of the story
- Investigate new explanations with an open and curious mind

Tips for reinforcing Critical Thinking skills in the classroom

- **Encourage students to ask questions and investigate to learn more:** Continually encourage students to ask “why” and “how” questions, and then help guide them through the process of investigating their questions and making conclusions based on what they learn. This is especially relevant in literacy and social studies lessons when students are trying to understand people’s behavior or cultural customs (e.g., *What do you think the main character will do next?... Let’s read to find out if you’re right!; Why do you think our society has that tradition?... Let’s investigate to test your hypothesis!*).
- **Make connections to real-life situations:** After reading stories or during historical/cultural studies, help students apply what they just learned to real-life situations or personal experiences by asking questions such as: *Where else have we seen this? When else might this happen? Has this ever happened to you? What would you have done in that situation?*
 - For example, if you’re reading a book about a character who misinterpreted someone’s actions and made the wrong conclusions, you could ask students to think about a time when someone assumed something about them that wasn’t true.
- **Model curiosity for testing one’s assumptions:** If you hear students stating their assumptions or opinions as if they are facts (e.g., *That’s a silly way to do things!*), reframe their comment to emphasize that is *their perspective* and encourage curiosity for investigating and learning more (e.g., *Yes that’s your opinion, but that might not be everyone’s opinion. We can investigate and learn more by responding with a curious mind: ‘Wow, I’ve never seen that before. I wonder what it’s like and why they do that.’ Class, what can we do to learn more about this?*).
 - If the assumptions/opinions are about your partner classroom, see our [Teacher Tips for Intercultural Experiences](#) resource for how to address this.
 - If it’s not possible to discover the objective truth (e.g., who can prove that blue is the best color?), turn to a [lesson in perspective-taking](#) to demonstrate that people can have different perspectives of the same situation.
- **Reference the [Ladder of Inference](#) (see separate page below) to promote critical thinking:** After teaching students about the Ladder of Inference, which explains how we should think carefully before making assumptions about other people, you might reference this graphic during relevant situations and encourage students to consider the critical thinking questions.
 - For example, while reading books/stories as a class, you might pause to ask students the reasoning behind a book character’s behavior. Since readers often know more than the characters, this is a great time to emphasize how missing information can lead to inaccurate conclusions and how it’s important to investigate and ask questions to discover the full story before taking action.
- **Recognize how one’s own learning has changed over time:** Support metacognitive critical skills by asking students to consider how their thinking has changed after learning something new. A great writing prompt for this exercise is: “I used to think _____ but now I think _____.”

Guidelines for incorporating critical thinking into existing lessons and activities

You can teach and reinforce Critical Thinking skills while reading almost any book or story, especially when the story involves characters making assumptions based on limited information (e.g., [Fish is Fish](#); [Seven Blind Mice](#)). To promote critical thinking, you can pause periodically while reading the story to ask students a few questions relevant to the critical thinking topics below:

1. **To understand character intentions:**
 - Why do you think the character did _____? Are there other explanations for this?
 - Why do you think the character assumed _____?
 - What was influencing the character when he or she decided to _____?
2. **To make predictions:**
 - Based on what you know about the character, what might he or she do next? Why do you think that?
3. **To encourage investigating new information:**
 - What could the character do to investigate whether his/her assumptions are true or not?
4. **To promote logical reasoning and cause and effect:**
 - If the character did _____, what do you think would happen?
5. **To apply knowledge to new contexts:**
 - When else have we seen this?
 - How can we apply this situation/lesson to our own lives?
 - When have you experienced something like this?
6. **To emphasize how perceptions/knowledge can change:**
 - How did your thinking change as you learned more about the situation?

Additional resources

For additional ideas on how to promote critical thinking skills, click the website titles below:

- [“Three tools for teaching critical thinking and problem solving skills”](#)
- [“Teaching Strategies to Promote Critical Thinking”](#)
- [“The 6 Types of Socratic Questions”](#)

Critical Thinking Mini-Lesson: The Ladder of Inference

Note: This is a standalone mini-lesson that is separate from the Empatico interaction activities.

Teacher Preparation Notes

- In this mini-lesson, students will read or listen to [*The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*](#) to learn how to recognize differences between facts and assumptions. If you prefer to use a different story, this mini-lesson can be adapted to fit any story in which a character makes incorrect assumptions because they were missing key information about the situation. (Note: if your students have never heard the original [*Three Little Pigs*](#) tale, you might want to tell that first. Be sure to explain that the two versions of the stories differ in many ways, including what the wolf says to the pigs and what he does in the end.)
- Your students will be referencing the “[Critical Thinking and the Ladder of Inference](#)” graphic on page 25 which is an age-appropriate Empatico adaptation of the original ‘ladder of inference’ model developed by Harvard Business School professor, Dr. Chris Argyris. You may want to display the Ladder of Inference graphic from page 25 during this mini-lesson by using a projector or hanging up/passing out a printed version.
 - The purpose of using the Ladder of Inference is to show students how to think critically about social situations before making assumptions about others. We want to avoid ‘running up the ladder too quickly’, because this can result in incorrect conclusions which can be hurtful to others.
- Before starting this mini-lesson, print copies of the [Ladder of Inference Student Handout](#) on page 26, or have students copy it on a piece of paper.
- You might consider incorporating relevant learnings from previous [lessons on perspective-taking](#), as the Ladder of Inference involves the ability to recognize that people can have different perspectives about the same situation.

Procedure (estimated time: 45 min)

1. **Define and distinguish between ‘assumptions’ and ‘facts’:** Lead a class discussion by asking students what they think ‘assumption’ means and what makes it different from a fact. Write your class’s definitions on the board/chart paper for student reference.
 - Guide students toward the understanding that an assumption is “a personal interpretation from your own point of view.” An assumption is similar to an educated guess or a hypothesis because it requires more information to discover whether it is true or false. People can have different assumptions about the same situation due to differences in past experiences, beliefs, and culture (this is a [component of perspective taking](#)). Be sure students know that it’s normal to make assumptions and they aren’t inherently bad - we just have to realize that they are only hypotheses so we should be open to other explanations.
2. **Introduce the Ladder of Inference graphic:** Display the Ladder of Inference graphic (found on page 25) and explain each part to students starting from the bottom, as you apply it to a specific example (see example box below for guidance).

Example of how to explain the Ladder of Inference

You might say: Today we're going to learn about the Ladder of Inference, which will show us how it's important to think carefully before we make assumptions about other people. I'm going to tell you a story about when I made conclusions too quickly and then we can discuss what I could have done to go up the Ladder of Inference more slowly. Here's my story: last week, I saw a student go into the library between classes. This is not allowed, so I had a talk with him about breaking the school rule and being disrespectful. However, after I had the talk, he told me he was actually holding the door for the librarian who was carrying an armload of books! He was really upset and hurt about this misunderstanding - it wasn't fair that he was accused of being disrespectful when he was actually being helpful. I apologized for my accusation and felt bad that I made conclusions too quickly. Now let's look at my story using the Ladder of Inference to see how I could have prevented this misunderstanding... [direct attention to the Ladder of Inference graphic]

At the bottom of the ladder is the observable evidence [point to the fingerprints on the graphic] – this is when I observed the student walking into the library. But I didn't have all the pieces to the story; there was missing evidence that I didn't know about, which was that the student was actually holding the door for someone [point to the fingerprints under the leaves on the graphic]. I didn't know about this fact when I ran up the ladder to make my conclusions. All I knew at that time was that the student went into the library, so I made the assumption that he was breaking the rules on purpose and was being disrespectful. I used my past experiences to interpret the evidence I saw (kind of like what a detective does), which is symbolized with this briefcase [point to detective and briefcase]. In my past experiences, I saw students go into the library between classes and they were in fact breaking the rules on purpose, so this is why I made those assumptions so quickly the next time I saw this happen. My assumptions then caused me to make the conclusion that he was being disrespectful and so I took action to confront him about breaking the rule, which was hurtful to the student since he didn't actually do anything wrong [point to top of the ladder].

Now let's now consider what I could have done to go up the ladder more slowly – to think more carefully about the situation before making assumptions. Let's start from the bottom of the ladder: What could I have done to make sure I got all the pieces of the story before making assumptions?... I could have asked the student **why** he went into the library. And if I didn't have the chance to ask the student right away, I could have practiced critical thinking by asking myself if there were other possible explanations for why he went into the library. I could have been open to these other explanations before taking action. So let's imagine that I did go up the ladder more slowly and I had asked myself these key critical thinking questions -- how do you think my actions would have been different?

3. **Read *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*:** Tell students they will now read a book about a wolf and three pigs, and afterward they will do an activity to consider how the last pig went up the Ladder of Inference. Proceed to read the book aloud to the class or [click here to watch the YouTube read-along](#). As students listen, ask them to think about how the third pig perceives the wolf's actions (i.e., look from the perspective of the pig).
4. **After reading, have students complete the Ladder of Inference Student Handout** in small groups or as a class, from the perspective of the last pig (Note: write this in the appropriate section of their handout: "I'm thinking from the perspective of: ____"). *Remind students to start from the bottom, since they're going 'up' a ladder.* See the suggested answers below:
 - **Evidence:**
 - *What did I observe?* I (the pig) observed the wolf blowing down two houses, and eating the two pigs
 - *Do I have all the pieces of the story?* No, I (the pig) didn't know the wolf had a cold and his blows were accidental sneezes, and that he just wanted a cup of sugar for his grandmother's cake
 - *How could I investigate more?* I (the pig) could have asked the wolf why he was at my house
 - **Assumptions** (of the pig): He is a mean wolf and he came to my house to eat me, too! (Reason: the pig has this assumption because of his past experiences showing that wolves are vicious and like to eat pigs)

- **Conclusions and actions** (of the pig): I'm not going to answer the door when he knocks. Instead, I'll be mean to him and then call the police and say he's a Big Bad Wolf!

5. **Discuss what could have happened if the pig had practiced critical thinking:** Ask students the following questions about a hypothetical situation in which the pig had practiced critical thinking:

- What could the pig have done to investigate his assumptions?
- If the pig had investigated his assumptions and discovered all the pieces to the story (that the Wolf had a cold and just wanted some sugar for this grandmother's cake), what would the pig's new conclusions have been? What new actions would he have taken?
- How would the pig's new actions have affected the Wolf? What would have been different?

6. **Reflect by connecting to personal experiences:** Reflect by asking students questions such as:

- Has anyone ever made an assumption about you that wasn't true? How did it feel?
- Have you ever made an assumption about another person that you later found out wasn't true? What could you have done to make sure you had all the pieces to the story before you made this assumption?
- How can we apply what we learned about the Ladder of Inference to future situations, if we find ourselves making assumptions about others before knowing the whole story?



Critical Thinking and the Ladder of Inference

Make conclusions & take action

- Did I run up the ladder too quickly?
- Are my conclusions based on *my own* investigations?



Make assumptions

- What are other possible explanations?
- How can I test my assumptions?



Observe the evidence

- What did I observe?
- What can I do to make sure I know all the important parts of the story?



START HERE









Ladder of Inference Student Handout

My name: _____ I'm thinking from the perspective of:

Remember to start from the bottom of the ladder and make your way up to the top!

Conclusions and actions	
	
Assumptions (Be sure to include <i>why</i> these assumptions were made!)	
	
Evidence	
1. What did I observe?	
2. Do I know all the important parts of the story? How can I investigate to find out more?	

↑ **START HERE!** ↑