

Skill Area(s):
 Perspective Taking
 Problem Solving

Willie The Wisher

Level: intermediate, advanced

Goal: learn how to use problem solving and perspective taking skills.

Materials needed: Willie the Wisher and Other Thinking Stories

Activity: Talk with the children about using their brains to solve problems that may be related to themselves or to others. Help them to realize that all people have problems or situations that come up that need to be solved or fixed. Start by choosing a story and read the description about the character(s) presented at the beginning of the book. Then, reading the story the way it's written, try to stay on track, and use the questions embedded in the story to ask the children. Try to use pacing and emphasis to facilitate thinking, think along with the children, make the children feel good about their answers, and keep a light touch (don't go to into depth about any one question or problem). The stories at the beginning are fairly simple and progressively get more difficult. The stories are short and can be used along with other lessons or alone.

More information about thinking stories:

You may be wondering what is a thinking story? A thinking story is a kind of "think-along". The stories are real stories, designed to be read by an adult to children, but the children do not merely listen and enjoy. As a story unfolds, the children are asked questions that prompt them to think ahead of the characters in the story- to spot what is wrong with what a character has done or said, to anticipate what is going to happen as a result, or to think of other possibilities that the character hasn't considered.

The characters in the stories are special. All have highly individualized ways of thinking, and the children learn to recognize them. The troubles that these characters have with thinking are troubles that children themselves often have, but in the stories they are presented in such exaggerated form that the children can hardly overlook them. The children retain their peculiarities throughout, but later stories present increasingly subtle or complex problems for the children to deal with. The problems never become "brain busters," however, or anything approaching that. From beginning to end, the stories are written to provide light-hearted intellectual fun rather than matter for serious cogitation.