



Teacher's Guide

to the Rag Man Project:
for Elementary School Students

Goals of the Rag Man Project:



1. To encourage understanding that other people who might look or act differently are human beings who have positive feelings just like those of your students. To counteract the fear (of the different other) that children are often taught through the media.
2. To teach the “green” concepts of reduce, recycle, and reuse.
3. To encourage dialogue between students and other people of the community.

Art:

1. Bring in old dress-up clothes and let children alter them to become “new clothes.”
2. Make collages using rags.
3. Have children bring things from home that would otherwise be thrown away (toilet paper rolls, lint from clothes dryers, used wrapping materials, etc.) and use them for art projects.
4. Ask artists from the community to come into the classroom to tell and/or demonstrate how they use “found objects” in art.



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Writing:

1. Collect magazine photos of people of different races, gender, ages, cultures, and people with physical disabilities. Have children choose a picture and write or tell a compassionate story about that person.
2. Write a limerick about someone different from you using the phrase:
There once was a girl/boy from . . .
3. Write a letter to someone in your community who is different from you.
4. Have students write letters to the editor of the local newspaper telling about their experiences and feelings about people who appeared to be different from them, but were really wonderful people.
5. Invite writers from the community to speak to the students about how they develop "characters" in their writing, and how they need both "good and bad" sides to them.

Social Studies:



1. Invite someone from an older generation to talk to the class about what it was like when he/she was a child.
2. Invite a person with a disability to class to talk about the daily obstacles in his/her life.
3. Set up the blue eye/brown eye experiment, where one group is valued and the other group is devalued, just by the color of their eyes. Discuss the resulting feelings.
4. Bring monopoly play money to class and hand it out unevenly. Then let the children buy stickers and crayons and such with the play money. At the end talk about what it was like for those who had less play money, and for those who had more. Did they begin to treat one another differently?



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Science:

Ecology:

1. This story is a wonderful way to introduce the ecological concept of reduce, reuse, and recycle. Discuss what happens to students' clothes when they grow out of them. (Garage sales, to cousins or siblings, used for cleaning rags, rag rugs?)
2. Sponsor a garage sale, or a swap-your-clothes event.
3. Help make your school a "green" school by starting recycling, reducing, and reusing projects.

Physics:

1. Suggest that students collect broken toys. Each child could take one or two home and, along with their parents and/or grandparents, try to fix the toy and make it look like new. The toy could then be sold at the garage sale. This assignment would encourage children to work with parents, and they would learn to use some of the old fashioned simple machines of physics.
2. Discuss how a wheeled cart (a simple machine) makes it easier to carry things than a backpack.

Botany:



1. Compare the different qualities of the cloth in the old clothes that students bring in. Can it be used as a cleaning rag (nylon, linen, cotton, polyester?) What plants (or non-plants) do these textiles come from?



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Math:

1. The money made on the garage sale can be added up, and then the children can decide where they want to donate it (to an organization in their town to help people who are different, or to Goodwill, which recycles clothing?)
2. If they want to donate to more than one organization, then they need to "divide" the money between organizations.

Reading:



1. Go to the library and have the children check out books about famous people. Ask them to think about and report about what makes them different from "normal" people.
2. Read the poems of Shel Silverstein and discuss how his characters are far from "normal." Is that okay? Who says what "normal" is?
3. Have your students volunteer to go to the kindergarten and/or first grade classes in your school and read *Ballad of the Rag Man* aloud to the younger children.

Music:

1. Help the class write a simple song about someone who is different, but is important.
2. Find (and sing) folk songs that illustrate this.
3. Discuss how rock musicians dress and lead their lives. Are they more like "normal" people, or the Rag Man?



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Physical Education:



1. Have children bring used sports equipment for a sports swap, or encourage them to repair equipment and bring it for a garage sale.
2. For one month, have the children's physical education period be confined to sports that use only re-used and recycled sports equipment.
3. Use *Ballad of the Rag Man* for a jump-rope rhyme.