

# Empathy Through Senses

This lesson focuses on caring through empathy. Students will use their five senses to create a short story based on a piece of artwork that illustrates children experiencing different ups and downs in life throughout history.

**Caring Sub-Concepts**

Compassion, Empathy, Kindness

**Lesson Timeframe**

45 minutes

**Required Materials**

- ☐ “Maddie’s Fridge” by Louis Brandt
- ☐ Art images (4-6 copies of each OR projected within the classroom)
- ☐ Prompting Worksheet
- ☐ Lined Paper
- ☐ Pencils

**Standards Map**

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.

**Lesson Objective**

Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an introductory understanding of empathy using the five senses
- Develop empathy for scenarios depicted in art.

**Teacher Connection/Self-Care**

Pick one person in your community to empathize with and place yourself in their shoes for one day. Break it down by different locations and times. Compassion and empathy can only develop through practice.

**Tips for Diverse Learners**

- Allow students to dictate their answers.
- Pair students up to complete the activity together if needed.

**Share**

5-7 minutes

Using a ball of string, build a caring spider web.

- Starting with the teacher, the person with the ball of string says one kind thing about another person and then tosses them the ball of string while holding onto a piece of the string as well.
- The student will then choose someone else and repeat the activity. At the end of the game, everyone should be holding onto the string and you will have created a giant caring spiderweb!



## Inspire

7-10 minutes

### What is Empathy?

15-20 minutes

Explain that empathy is the ability to share and understand other people's feelings. This might sound confusing to students, but remind them that they actually do it almost every day in class.

#### Ask:

- Have you ever seen a friend fall down and get hurt? How might they feel? Can you imagine their pain?

Students will likely say they can do this because everyone has hurt themselves at least once. Explain that we can share and understand the pain in this example because we know what it feels like from our own experience. This is empathy.

### Empathy vs. Compassion

Sometimes something happens to others that we have never experienced. We can still show compassion, but we have to try very hard to put ourselves in their shoes. Trying to imagine what they are feeling can help us understand their feelings so we can show kindness and empathy towards them.

**Read Aloud**, "Maddie's Fridge" by Louis Brandt (10-12 min)

**Read Aloud Link:** <https://youtu.be/To07TjBnrNY?si=n6ka8Ms5wjcA-BwW>

After reading the story, review some of the similarities and differences between Maddie and Sophie:

- What struggles did Sophie have?
- What struggles did Maddie have?
- How did they help each other?
- How did it make you feel when Sophie broke her promise to Maddie?
- Have you ever had to break a promise to help a friend?
  - Trigger warning- this may bring up topics such as hunger, homelessness, etc. Be prepared to discuss these with kindness and empathy

Even though Sophie had plenty of food in her fridge, she was able to use empathy to put herself in Maddie's shoes. She knew what it felt like and did everything she could to help her friend fix her problem!



## Empower

20 minutes

Explain that students will explore empathy by creating a short story with a partner using the prompts provided based on a piece of art. Show the pictures below and read the brief title of each. Do not provide further discussion about interpretation. This will be done with their partners.

- You will need 5-8 copies of each work of art. If you cannot print them in color, you could project them within the classroom and assign a letter or number to each one.
- Assign each pair a specific painting. It is best to do this randomly by having them choose a card from a face down pile or roll a die for a corresponding number connected to one of the paintings.
- Review the prompts worksheet below:
  - What is happening in this painting?
  - What is the person/people in the painting looking at?
  - What might they hear?
  - What might they taste? Imagine they have just eaten.
  - What might they be touching or holding on to?
  - How are they feeling?
  - Encourage the pairs to use empathy to put themselves in the place of the person or people represented in the painting.

The answers should not be your personal interpretation, but rather an educated guess as to how you imagine the subject of the painting to be. Use the clues in the painting (colors, expressions, other items, etc.) to help you judge their experience.

Once the prompts are completed, one person of the pair will turn the writing into a combined paragraph.



## Reflect

5-10 minutes

Allow each pair time to read their paragraph aloud. (This can also be completed by the teacher).

### Ask:

- Which sense was the hardest to imagine? Why?
- Was it difficult to use empathy to put yourself in someone else's shoes? Why or Why not?
- How does empathy help us to better understand where others are coming from?



## Extension Ideas

- Combine this lesson with your art teacher and dive into art appreciation. Students can explore the components of art appreciation as it relates to kindness and empathy.
- Allow each pair to illustrate their story by recreating their work of art using their personal interpretation.
- At Home Extension: Have students interview a person in the home about a favorite childhood memory. Have each student report back their findings to the class!



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AS A RECOMMENDED  
PROGRAM FOR SOCIAL  
AND EMOTIONAL  
LEARNING.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning ([CASEL](https://casel.org/)) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the [CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs](#).

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>



**A Special Moment by Emile Munier**



At School Doors, 1897 by by Nikolai Petrovich Bogdanov-Belsky





Arithmetic by Frank Morrison



*Village in Michoacan* is a painting by Herk Schusteff which was uploaded on December 7th, 2013.



# Empathy Through Senses Worksheet

Use your imagination. Use empathy to put yourself in their shoes. What is happening in this painting?

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What might they see in front of them?

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What might they be hearing or listening to?

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What smells might be around them?

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What might they have just eaten?

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What are they touching with their hands and feet?

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How are they feeling?

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Once you have all the answers to these questions, you are ready to write your story. Simply turn each answer into a complete sentence. Here is an example:

Two friends are walking down the street back home. One friend is telling the other girl about her day at school. They see the chickens run across their oath. They smell the fresh tortillas cooking at the neighbor's house. They feel the rocks underneath our feet. They are hungry because we are just getting home from school. Her friend is feeling upset because a boy in her class pulled her ponytail and made fun of her.