

NAKED MOLE RAT GETS DRESSED

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by Mo Willems

Ages: 4-8; Grades: PreK-3

Running time: 9 minutes

Themes: Being Yourself, Individuality, Feelings, Acceptance, Self-confidence, Humor, Animals

SUMMARY

Wilbur may be a naked mole rat, but he does not like being naked! In fact, Wilbur has a keen fashion sense that offends his fellow naked mole rats. They simply cannot believe that a naked mole rat would dare to wear clothes! After much teasing and scoffing, the other naked mole rats decide to report Wilbur to Grand-pah, the oldest, wisest, naked mole rat of all. Grand-pah declares that he will make a proclamation, and everyone turns out to hear it. Will Wilbur be banished from the colony, or forbidden to wear clothes? Students will love Wilbur's courage to be himself, and the simple question that changes the naked mole rat colony.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will discuss acceptance and being yourself.
- Students will make text-to-self connections.
- Students will learn about naked mole rats.
- Students will design clothing that expresses who they are.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Brainstorm with students about what characteristics make them different or special. Write each student's name on one side of a T-chart, and write "Why I am special" or "How I'm different" on the other side. Guiding questions:

- What is something about you that makes you special?
- Why does this make you special?
- How are you different from your friends or family?
- What is unique about you?

Give students time to share with each other and the whole class. Record their answers on the chart. Tell students that they are going to watch a movie about an animal called a naked mole rat, who is different from all of the other naked mole rats because he

likes to wear clothes. Encourage students to watch and listen for the ways that the other naked mole rats treat Wilbur because he is different.

Find pictures on-line or in reference books about naked mole rats. Share these pictures with the students and ask: "Why do you think that these animals are called naked mole rats?" Share facts about naked mole rats, such as where they live, what they eat, and how they survive in their environment. Tell students that they will be watching a fiction movie about naked mole rats. Encourage students to look for the many differences between real naked mole rats and the ones in the movie, as well as for a few similarities (*teeth, no hair, live in colonies*).

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Lead a discussion with the students about acceptance and being yourself. First, generate a list of students' ideas about what it means to be yourself. Then, have students recall Wilbur's actions. How did Wilbur stay true to himself? What did the other naked mole rats do? Did Wilbur change? How did Grand-pah help Wilbur? After students' ideas have been shared, talk with students about ways that they can act to support and accept each other. End the discussion with a team-building activity. Team-building ideas:

- **Mix-Pair-Share:** Pose a question, such as, what is your favorite restaurant/book/movie/type of music/sport? Students walk silently and randomly around the room to music. When the music stops, they give a high five to a student standing near them. Anyone who cannot find a partner keeps his/her hand raised and the teacher assists in pairing up remaining students. Students then have one minute for both people to share their answer to the question. After a minute, students both give each other one compliment (with younger children, provide the compliment, i.e. "You are very interesting!"). Then students mix again to the music and repeat the process.
- **Pass the Hula Hoop:** Students join hands in a circle and must pass a hula hoop around the circle without disjoining hands. If they are successful, add another hula hoop or time them and let them race against themselves.

Have students make text-to-self connections with the movie by filling in the cloze sentence: I felt like Wilbur when _____ . Underneath the sentence, students should illustrate the experience that they had when they felt like they didn't fit in. Have students share their sentences and drawings and then ask them what happened next. Did you change? Did someone help you? What did you learn?

Invite students to wear their favorite clothes to school. Give each child a chance to stand up to "display" their favorite outfit and talk about why they like it so much. After the sharing time, provide students with children's clothing catalogs and magazines. Have them cut out clothing that they like and put together "outfits". Students can glue these outfits onto outline drawings of children. Extend the activity by giving the students parameters in which to work, for example: design an outfit for playing, going to school, a special occasion, etc.

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