

CROW BOY

Crow Boy

by Taro Yashima (Viking)

Themes: Japanese Culture/The Five Senses/Tolerance

Level: Grades PreK-4

Length 13 minutes, iconographic

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Acceptance

Grade Level: K-3

Running Time: 13 minutes, iconographic

Summary

CROW BOY, the film, is true to the book, CROW BOY, by Taro Yashima. The story takes place in Japan, where a boy nicknamed Chibi hides under the schoolhouse on the first day of school. As the school year progresses, the other children learn that Chibi is afraid of the teacher and the other students who poke fun at his strangeness. Chibi spends most of this time alone, and entertains himself by studying the tiniest of details, including the wood grain of a desk, the cloth of a boy's shirt and, of course, all of the sights available through the classroom windows.

When Chibi reaches the sixth grade, he is fortunate enough to have a teacher who appreciates his ability to use each of his five senses to learn about the world around him. One day, the teacher announces that Chibi will imitate the voices of crows as his talent show performance. Everyone is amazed as they listen to Chibi imitate mother, father and baby crows, crows calling to each other happily, etc. As the children listen, they come to realize that Chibi must live in a place that is very isolated and far away, as that is the only place where he could have heard these crow sounds.

With a greater understanding of Chibi and the distances he had to travel by foot each day to get back and forth to school, the children come to appreciate him and regret thinking him strange and treating him unfairly.

The story ends with the children occasionally meeting in the village since the end of school, and respectfully calling Chibi by a new name, Crow Boy.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will explore Japanese culture.
- Children will understand that they can learn many things by using their five senses.
- Children will learn to respect individual differences.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Share the book CROW BOY with children.

Talk with children about the ways each of them is similar to, and different from, their classmates.

Encourage children to discuss their favorite classroom activities, sports, things they like to do at home, etc., as a way of helping them understand the ways in which they are similar, and, at the same time, unique individuals.

Take a listening walk outdoors with children. Encourage them to use their ears and listen carefully in order to identify the many different sounds they hear. Later, take a touching walk, a seeing walk, and a smelling walk. In each case, have children identify those things they can feel, see or smell as they explore the outdoors. When children are ready to view the video, tell them that the boy in the story, Crow Boy, is someone very special because he explores the world with each of his five senses all the time. Encourage children to watch the video closely to discover just what Crow Boy learns about the world by using his senses and what a special individual Crow Boy is.

After Viewing Activities

Have children dramatize the story of Crow Boy. After the dramatization, ask the child who portrayed Crow Boy:

- How did you feel when the children teased you and called you names?
- How did you feel at the end of the play?

Ask the children who played Crow Boy's classmates:

- How do you feel about the way you treated Crow Boy?

Talk with children about the importance of showing caring and compassion toward others.

Discuss the signs of Japanese culture that were evident in the story. Ask:

- How were the homes, style of dress, signs, vehicles, etc. different from what we see in our country?
- What would you like most about living in Japan? Least?

Later, try to visit a museum with objects representative of Japanese culture available for children to explore. As children explore the exhibits, encourage them to try and identify objects they may have seen in the video.

Talk with children about the printed words and signs they saw. Ask:

- Does Japanese printing look like ours?
- How is it different?

If possible, share some documents, signs, or other written materials printed in Japanese, with children and display them in the classroom. Provide children with black crayons and construction paper that they can use to invent their own letters. Have children describe their symbols and the letters they represent to their classmates.

Other films and videos about Japanese culture are available from Weston Woods include:

THE STONECUTTER by Gerald McDermott
SUHO AND THE WHITE HORSE written by Yuzo Otsuka & illustrated by Suekichi Akaba

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MOON MAN by Tomi Ungerer

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