

Hey, Little Ant - Compassion

EXPLANATION:

Hey, Little Ant is a story about a boy and an ant. Authors Phillip and Hannah Hoose present a boy's many reasons why he should squish an ant and an ant who makes a persuasive plea for survival. Should the boy squish the ant or show compassion?

GRADE LEVELS: 1–3

STUDENT GROUPING: Whole group and small group activities

ACTIVITY LENGTH: 40–60 minutes

CASEL CORE COMPETENCY: *SOCIAL AWARENESS*

- Taking others' perspectives
- Demonstrating empathy and compassion
- Showing concern for the feelings of others
- You can learn more about the CASEL framework [here](#)

SCOPE OF TASK:

Compassion involves feeling emotions such as kindness, empathy, respect, and sympathy. It is the desire to help people, and it involves action. The actions taken are meant to help or support another person.

1. Activate students' prior knowledge about ants. Ask students what they know about ants and what they normally do when they see one. Questions could include:
 - What do ants do?
 - What role do ants serve in nature?
 - Should you kill ants or other insects? Why or why not?
2. Show students the book *Hey, Little Ant* by Phillip and Hannah Hoose. Ask them what they think the book might be about.
3. Read the book, or click on the link to hear the story narrated:



4. The book finishes with the narrator asking questions: "Should the ant get squished? Should the ant go free? It's up to the kid, not up to me. We'll leave that kid with the raised up shoe. What do you think that kid should do?" Ask the students how the story should end.

5. Unpack the story with the students, raising questions such as:
 - What are some of the reasons the boy gives for squishing the ant?
 - Do you think they are good reasons? Why or why not?
 - What are the reasons the ant gives for not being squished?
 - Do you think they are good reasons? Why or why not?
 - Can you think of any other reasons for squishing the ant? What are they?
 - Can you think of any other reasons for not squishing the ant? What are they?
 - Are they good reasons? Why or why not?
6. Break the students into small groups and present the task:
 - The group chooses a stance—to squish the ant or to not squish the ant.
 - Five reasons must be written to justify the group’s choice.
7. After they have written their five reasons for or against squishing the ant, the students regroup to share what they have written. Allow time for students to ask each other questions about their reasons and to respectfully agree or disagree. Some questions that can be posed to initiate discussion could include:
 - Does the boy like the ant? Why or why not?
 - Who in the story thinks ants should be squished?
 - What do you feel for the ant?
 - How do you feel when insects are hurt?
8. Introduce (age-appropriate) vocabulary words connected to compassion: respect, consideration, care. Add these to a word wall.
9. Make connections between how we treat ants, insects, and other animals and how we treat our friends:
 - Do we show compassion to our friends? When?
 - Is there a difference between how we treat animals and how we treat people?
 - When should we show compassion/respect/care for others?
 - How do we feel when we show respect and care for others?
 - How do others feel when they receive compassion?
10. Complete the activity by deciding why compassion is important for the class—these statements can be written on a poster for the classroom wall for future reference.

RESOURCES:

- Chart paper
- Pens
- Word wall

Hoose, H., & Hoose, P. (1998). *Hey, Little Ant*, Tricycle Press.

Online video: “The Kindness Curriculum- Hey Little Ant, Read by Alyssa Healy,” sourced from:
<https://youtu.be/pYXVoPoWWWQ>

