

The Story of Ferdinand - Self-Acceptance

EXPLANATION:

The Story of Ferdinand by Munro Leaf is a book about a bull who would rather smell flowers than fight and is happy to embrace his differences. Ferdinand is caught between staying true to his nature and living up to others' expectations and stereotypes. The book helps facilitate discussions about conformity, individualism, and self-acceptance. Students can explore their uniqueness while acknowledging others' diversities.

GRADE LEVELS: 4–6

STUDENT GROUPING: Whole group discussion and pair activities

ACTIVITY LENGTH: 40–60 minutes

CASEL CORE COMPETENCY: *SELF-AWARENESS*

- Integrating personal and social identities
- Developing interests and a sense of purpose
- You can learn more about the CASEL framework [here](#)

SCOPE OF TASK:

Important Note: Along with self-acceptance, this book also has themes about animal rights, violence, and respect for others. Some of these themes may or may not be appropriate for certain cohorts of students and contexts; choose topics that align with the needs and experiences of each individual group. For alternative activities about self-acceptance, see grades 1–3 *Fish is Fish* and grades 7–10 “Who I Am” Collage.

1. Activate students’ prior knowledge by asking students what they know about bulls.

- What do they look like?
- Are they pets? Why or why not?

Bulls	Ferdinand

Create a two-column table on the board. In one column, list attributes associated with bulls. These could include: big, fierce, wild, farm animal—what new vocabulary words can be included?

2. Introduce the book *The Story of Ferdinand*, and tell the students that they are to pay attention to the character’s personality and nature—is he a typical bull?
3. Read aloud *The Story of Ferdinand*, or click on the link to hear the story narrated:



4. Ask the students to recap the story, and encourage them to share their opinions:
 - What happened to Ferdinand?
 - What was different about Ferdinand?
 - What is bullfighting in Spain?

5. In the second column in the table, list all the words that the students use to describe Ferdinand. Discuss the differences that can be noted between the two lists.
6. Ferdinand can be described as a sweet and peaceful bull, which is not normally how bulls are described. Introduce the word “stereotype,” and discuss how sometimes we presume things about people. Highlight the importance of not assuming things about someone until you get to know them.
7. Question the students about how they feel when they are different from others:
 - What makes people unique?
 - What are the characteristics that make them individuals?
8. Tell the students that we are going to explore the characteristics that make each one of us a unique individual.
9. Organize the students into pairs, and provide them with questions to answer to help them explore their similarities and differences. Questions can be created for the specific group of students but could include:
 - What is your favorite color?
 - What is your favorite food?
 - What sport do you like to play?
 - Do you live in a house or an apartment?
 - How many siblings do you have?
 - Where have you traveled?
 - What do you think is your most special feature?
 - What is your favorite book?
 - What makes you unique and different?
10. Ask students to report back to the group, identifying the unique characteristics they have discovered about each other.
11. Complete the activity by reflecting on how important it is to accept our and others’ differences, highlighting that it is important to be yourself and to celebrate uniqueness.

RESOURCES:

Leaf, M. (1936). *The Story of Ferdinand*. Grosset & Dunlap.

Online video: “The Kindness Curriculum- The Story of Ferdinand, Read by Tahnee Clark,” sourced from

https://youtu.be/_1EEFHd8D_s

