



## THE HUNDRED DRESSES

By Eleanor Estes

Wanda Petronski, is ridiculed by her classmates for wearing the same faded blue dress every day. Wanda claims she has one hundred dresses at home, but everyone knows she doesn't and they tease her about this claim. One day Wanda does not return to school. Maddie, one of Wanda's classmates feels terrible about being a "silent bystander" and she resolves to "never stand by and say nothing again."



**WITS LEADS Connection:** Look and Listen, Explore Points of View, Act, Seek Help

### Questions and Activities

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#### PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to "fit in" with a group of people?
2. What does it mean to not "fit in" with a group of people?
3. What if you owned just one outfit - One dress or one pair of jeans and one shirt? What would that be like?



#### QUESTIONS DURING THE READING

##### CHAPTER 1 AND 2: LOOK AND LISTEN, EXPLORE POINTS OF VIEW

##### *Exploring Points of View ~ Seeing Beyond Our Differences*

The story opens with a vivid description of the main characters with a focus on Wanda - what she looks like and sounds like to the other children. While reading the story, ask students to fill in the *Looks, Sounds, I wonder?* handout.

After reading the first two chapters ask the students to use their *Looks, Sounds, I wonder?* handout to answer the following questions.

1. Wanda seemed different than the other children. Describe the different things the children saw when they looked at Wanda.  
Quotes from the chapters to reinforce students' answers.
  - *"Her feet were usually caked with dry mud."*
  - *"She lived in Boggin's Heights "no place to live."*
  - *"She always wore a faded dress that didn't hang right. It was clean, but it looked as though it had never been ironed properly."*
  - *"She sometimes twisted her mouth in a crooked smile."*
  - *"She didn't have any friends but a lot of girls talked to her."*
2. What does Wanda sound like to the other children in the story?
  - *"She was very quiet and rarely said anything at all"*

- *Wanda sounds like she lies because she claims to have 100 dresses and sixty pairs of shoes "all lined up in her closet."*
3. Based on what the children choose to look at and listen to they decide to "have some fun" with Wanda by playing the dresses game.
  4. Who is having fun with this game? *Peggy and some girls seem to be having fun with the game.*
  5. Who is not having fun with this game? *Wanda and Maddie.* How can you tell? While the girls were having fun *"Wanda would move up the street, her eyes dull and her mouth closed tight."* *"As for Maddie this business of asking Wanda every day how many dresses and how many hats and how many of this and that she had was bothering her."*
  6. What was Maddie afraid of? *Maddie was poor too. She was afraid that Peggy or the rest of the girls would be begin teasing her too.*
  7. Ask students to share their "I wonder..." statements from the handout. If prompting is necessary consider the following statements:
    - *I wonder why Wanda sat in the last seat in the last row in the back of the class with the rough boys.*
    - *I wonder why Wanda did not attend school.*
    - *I wonder why Wanda said she had 100 dresses.*
    - *I wonder why Wanda has no friends.*
    - *I wonder why Peggy keeps starting the dresses game with Wanda.*
    - *I wonder how Wanda feels about the dresses game.*
    - *I wonder why Maddie goes along with the game even though the game bothers her.*

### CHAPTER 3: EXPLORE POINTS OF VIEW, ACT, SEEK HELP

Read Chapter Three to the students. After reading events of the chapter (outlined below) ask students to fill in the feeling and thinking handout. Discuss the students' answers at the end of the chapter.

#### Chapter 3 Events

- *"Wanda slowly approached the group of girls. With each step forward, before she put her foot down she seemed to hesitate for a long, long time. She approached the group as a timid animal might, ready to run if anything alarmed it."*
- *"Everyone was talking to everybody else. Nobody said anything to Wanda."*
- *"Nobody talked to Wanda, nobody even thought about her being there."  
"I got a hundred dresses at home"*
- *"Hey kids!" She (Peggy) yelled, "This girl's got a hundred dresses."*
- *"Oh, I see, " said Peggy, talking like a grown-up person. "The child has a hundred dresses, but she wouldn't wear them to school. Perhaps she's worried of getting ink or chalk on them."*

- *With this everybody fell to laughing and talking at once. Wanda looked stolidly at them, pursing her lips together, wrinkling her forehead up so that the gray toboggan slipped away down on her brow.*
1. Wanda may not be the only person who feels bad about the “fun” Peggy is having with Wanda. How does Maddie feel as this game continues? *Maggie is feeling uncomfortable.*
  2. Maddie suggests even if you are uncomfortable with the game “there wasn’t anything you could do about it.” Is this true? *No, Maddie or other bystanders could ask Peggy to stop the teasing. Maddie could talk it out or seek help from her teacher or another responsible adult.*

#### CHAPTER 4: ACT

1. Maddie continues to think about the dresses game she decides to write a note to Peggy to ask her to stop teasing Wanda. What do you think of this idea?
2. Maddie tears up the note before giving it Peggy. Why does she tear it up? *She was afraid that Peggy, the most popular girl in the school and Maddie’s best friend would begin to tease Maddie because she is poor and wears Peggy’s old dresses.*
3. If Peggy was truly a best friend would she tease Maddie about her clothing? *Best friends do not embarrass each other about their clothing or about being poor.*
4. Maddie wishes that Peggy would stop having fun with Wanda on her own accord. Before she destroys her note she says, “Oh well, what difference did it make?”
  - a. What difference does it make? *It could make a big difference. If Maggie sent the note the teasing may stop, Wanda may have returned to school. Maggie would not be distracted at school. There may be others in the school who are also bothered by the game too.*
  - b. How can Maddie make a difference in this situation? *Maddie can act despite her fears and give Peggy the note or talk it out with and seek help from with a responsible adult.*

## CHAPTER 5, 6, 7 EXPLORE POINTS OF VIEW, ACT

1. The class discovers that Wanda really did have 100 dresses all drawn, coloured and lined up in her closet. How does Maddie feel now? *Maddie feels awful because she knew that teasing Wanda was wrong and she "stood by silently and that was just as bad as what Peggy had done."*
2. Peggy says, "I never did call her a foreigner or make fun of her name. I never thought she had the sense to know we were making fun of her anyway." I thought she was too dumb. What do you think of this statement? Is it okay to tease people who may not understand what you are teasing them about or why?
3. Peggy and Maddie decide to look for Wanda at her home. Is this a good decision? *No, they were walking alone in a different neighborhood that was not their own and it was getting dark. They probably should have asked an adult to go with them.*
4. Before Maddie falls asleep that night she makes an important decision. "She was never going to stand by and say nothing again. If she ever heard anybody picking on someone because they were funny looking or because they had strange names she'd speak up. Even if it meant losing Peggy's friendship...she would never make anybody else so unhappy again." Why is this an important conclusion? *In order to act in a way that helps others it is important to decide what you are going to do before a difficult situation occurs.*
5. What else did Maddie realize about Wanda and her circumstances. *Maddie realized that because Wanda did not have a mother she may not have had help to wash and iron her clothes. This may have explained why she wore the same blue dress everyday.*
6. Peggy and Maddie decide to write Wanda a friendly letter to tell her how pretty her drawings were and ask questions about Wanda's new teacher and school. They did not apologize in the letter they just wrote it as any good friend and signed it with lots of "X's" for love. Wanda responded by writing a letter to the teacher and requested Maddie and Peggy be each given a drawing of one the hundred dresses.
  - a. Why do you think Wanda wrote a letter back to the teacher and not Maddie and Peggy? *Wanda may not have felt safe to directly communicate with Maddie and Peggy.*

7. What did Peggy think about Wanda's letter? *Peggy suggested that Wanda's response is her way of saying everything's all right.*
8. What did Maddie think of Wanda's letter? *Maddie felt sad because she would never see Wanda again and she "couldn't ever really make things right between them."* What do you think? Was everything all right? *Things may have been better but there is still hurt for Maddie and likely for Wanda too.*
9. How has Maddie changed? How has Peggy changed? *Maggie realizes that to be a silent bystander hurts everyone – including herself. It's hard to know how Peggy may have changed. She doesn't seem to express regret for her behaviour.*



## POST-READING ACTIVITIES

### *Look and Listen*

- Forms of Teasing

Discuss the different forms of teasing. Many students associate teasing with name-calling. Discuss the more subtle forms of teasing illustrated in the book such as exclusion or sarcasm.

Lead a discussion that examines why facing fears in a teasing situation can be difficult and why it is so important to talk it out or seek help with those fears. Common fears:

- Fear of being the next target (excluded or teased)
- Fear of losing a friend
- Fear of making the situation worse

Ask students to identify when it is important seek the help of a trusted adult.

### *Act*

- Courage

Ask the students to define courage. Present the following definition of courage: *"The ability to face and endure what is dangerous, difficult, or painful; the habit of overcoming fears by facing them rather than avoiding them."* Another definition of courage is knowing what is to be feared and what is not to be feared. Ask students to consider how courage is related to teasing. What fears must be overcome?

Ask students discuss the various incidents in the book that required courage by one or more characters. Students will fill out the Choices Involving Courage chart. They will record a brief description of an event in which courage is called for and indicate (by checking the appropriate column) whether the character in the event showed courage or fear.

One possible way to structure this activity is to ask students to add to the chart after each day's reading session. A whole class discussion could be held at the beginning of the next session to discuss the events identified during the lesson. Guide the students in recognizing the presence (or lack) of courage in the actions of all three girls.

- Hundred Dresses Game ~ Role Play

Ask students to work in groups to role-play a typical "Hundred Dresses" game and replace Maddie's typical behavior with a courageous response. After the students have presented their revised events to the class, discuss how Maddie's new choice would change the story.

- Advice for Maddie

Re-read Maddie's vow to act with courage in future situations (at the end of Chapter 6) Ask the students to consider what advice they would give to Maddie to help her keep her promise. Ask the students what they already do or can do to remind themselves to be courageous in difficult situations.

- Extension Activities for Courage

Read the book, *Courage* by Bernard Waber and discuss the types of courage illustrated in the story through this WITS lesson plan <http://www.witsprogram.ca/schools/books/courage.php>

- A Writing Activity ~ Maddie's Journal

Write a journal entry from Maddie's point of view about how she feels when Wanda moves away. How does it make her feel towards Peggy? Towards the other students? Towards Wanda? How does she feel about the way she and Peggy treated Wanda? What would she like to say to Wanda if she had the chance to see her again?

- Class Welcome Plan

After discussing the problems faced by Wanda as a new student in the school, ask students to create a New Student Welcoming Plan for the school or for the class. The plan may involve a project to ensure that any new students are immediately involved in school and classroom activities. This project might involve the creation of a Welcome Kit that could include an introductory letter, a classroom handbook, and a student profile booklet.

**The Hundred Dresses: Looks, Sounds, I wonder..?**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

In the chart below write words to describe what the students looked at and what they heard in the story.

In the “I wonder” column describe questions that you have about the characters or the events in the story.

Looks	Sounds	I wonder..?

## The Hundred Dresses: Feeling and Thinking

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Event	What could Wanda be feeling?	What could Wanda be thinking?
<p><i>"Wanda slowly approached the group of girls. With each step forward, before she put her foot down she seemed to hesitate for a long, long time. She approached the group as a timid animal might, ready to run if anything alarmed it."</i></p>		
<p><i>"Everyone was talking to everybody else. Nobody said anything to Wanda."</i></p> <p><i>"Nobody talked to Wanda, nobody even thought about her being there."</i></p>		
<p><i>"I got a hundred dresses at home"</i></p> <p><i>"Hey kids!" She (Peggy) yelled, "This girl's got a hundred dresses."</i></p>		
<p><i>"Oh, I see, " said Peggy, talking like a grown-up person. "The child has a hundred dresses, but she wouldn't wear them to school. Perhaps she's worried of getting ink or chalk on them."</i></p>		
<p><i>"With this everybody fell to laughing and talking at once. Wanda looked stolidly at them, pursing her lips together, wrinkling her forehead up so that the gray toboggan slipped away down on her brow."</i></p>		

**The Hundred Dresses: Choices**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Choices Involving Courage or Fear

Event	Courage	Fear

