

LEADS

Lesson Plan

Author: Kate McGovern

Welcome Back, Maple Mehta-Cohen



WITS Connection: Look & Listen Explore points of view Act Did it work Seek Help

Story Summary:

Maple is a gifted storyteller and lover of books, she's just not great at reading them herself and has worked hard to make sure others don't find out. When Maple learns she'll need to repeat the fifth grade to work on improving her reading after being diagnosed with dyslexia, she fears what others will think. To solve her problem, she tells her classmates she's been kept back as a special assistant to their teacher. Eventually, the truth comes out and Maple is forced to face the fact that she has pushed away her new fifth grade friends with her actions, all while her older friendships seem to be slipping away too.



Welcome Back,
Maple Mehta-Cohen

Pre-Reading

Questions:

1. How do you usually feel before the first day of school? Or, doing something new in general?
2. Consider a time when you struggled with something in or out of school or felt like you couldn't do something as well as your friends, or other kids at school.
 - a. How did that make you feel?
 - b. How did you respond?
3. Have you or your friends ever outgrown something you and your friends once liked?
 - a. Do you think it's right to make someone feel like something they enjoy is *babyish*?
 - b. How might that make them feel?
4. How does it feel to make others proud of you?
 - a. Have you ever done something you aren't proud of to make others think good things about you?
 - b. How did that make you feel?
 - c. Would you do it again?



Welcome Back,
Maple Mehta-Cohen

While Reading

Questions:

1. Why does Maple like Ms. Littleton-Chan?
2. What tactics did Maple use to conceal her struggles with reading from the school and her parents?
 - a. Do you think Maple would be in a different situation if she had told her parents and teachers about her difficulties with reading sooner?
3. How do we see Maple's love for stories and books early in the story despite her difficulties with reading?
 - a. How is her love of stories part of her relationships with Marigold and Aislinn, and with her father?
 - b. How and why did Maple deceive Marigold and Aislinn over the summer?
4. Why does Maple lie to Jack, saying she's repeating fifth grade as a special assistant?
5. Why does Maple ask her father if her mom is disappointed in her (p.98)?
 - a. How does Maple react to his answer, and why?
6. What is difficult for Jack about starting at Barton?
7. How do the three students in Maple's reading group react when they find out she's been lying to them? How does Maple feel about deceiving them?
 - a. How would you react if you found out your friend was lying to you?
8. Why does Maple go to Ainslinn's birthday even though she's not invited? How does Aislinn react?
 - a. Why does Maple give Aislinn the charm bracelet?



Welcome Back,
Maple Mehta-Cohen

9. After the morning announcement with the tape that Aislinn made of Maple, Jack comments that the girls were pretty mean. Maple replies, “I don’t think it was really about me, you know? It was more about them” (p.264).
 - a. What does she mean? What does her observation reveal about her?

Activity:

1. Pause after Ainslinn’s birthday scene. Lead a discussion with the class:
 - a. How has the way Marigold treats Maple changed from the start of school until now?
2. Divide the class into small groups.
3. Guide each class to discuss how Marigold could have used LEADS to help Maple at the party. Ask them to align on the advice they would give Marigold as a caring friend.
4. Give each group time to share about their discussion and the advice they have for Marigold using some prompting questions:
 5. What did Marigold do/not do at the party?
 6. How could Marigold have helped Maple?
 7. Why does she get the charm bracelet back for Maple?



Welcome Back,
Maple Mehta-Cohen

Post-Reading

Questions:

1. How would you describe Maple and her relationships with her friends and family in your own words?
 - a. Why does Maple talk about herself in a negative way, such as having a defective brain?
 - b. What helps her feel better by the end of the story?
2. On p. 172, Nurse Marcus tells Maple she should assert herself.
 - a. What does he mean? Why does he suggest it?
 - b. What advice would you give Maple instead? Connect the advice to LEADS.
3. Why do you think it takes Maple so long to recognize that she is a gifted storyteller?
4. What sorts of things does Maple say are “Fine” or “Okay” in the story when they aren’t?
 - a. Why does she do that?
 - b. Do you ever do that?
5. How does Marigold change by the end of the book? How does that connect with the advice your group came up with?



Welcome Back,
Maple Mehta-Cohen

Activity:

1. Guide students through a reflective discussion about Mira Epstein-Patel and the story that Maple is writing about her.
 - a. How are Mira and Maple similar/different?
 - b. What aspects of Mira does Maple wish she herself had?
 - c. Are there any other characters in Maple's story that resemble people she knows?
2. Instruct students to write their own story with characters based on parts of themselves and the people in their lives. The story should focus on the main character learning an important life lesson.
3. Ask students to share 3 things about their story:
 - a. 1 way they are similar to the main character in their story
 - b. 1 way they are different from the main character in their story
 - c. The important life lesson the main character in their story learned