

THE RESTRICTED ADVENTURES OF RAJA

EMPATHY EBOOK

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BOOK 1: BECOMING ROVER

TIME: 40 minutes (reading and discussion - 20; activity - 20)**MATERIALS:**

- A digital device with wifi and projector (alternatively, print copies of eBook)
- 8 1/2 x 11 sheet of drawing paper or cardstock for each student
- Board or chart paper

KEY CONCEPTS

- What emotions do cats and dogs express? How can we tell?
- How are cats, dogs, and people different? How are cats, dogs, and people the same?
- What choices do we have when we see someone upset or in trouble?

BEFORE READING:

Write these questions on the board for students to think about while you read and project the graphic novel:

- Can dogs and cats feel emotions? If so, how can we tell?
- What choices do we have when we see someone upset or in trouble?

Clarify Vocabulary

- What is a conversation? (Talk between two or more people in which thoughts, feelings, and ideas are expressed.) On page 9, what does AJ mean by a “dog conversation”?
- What is a responsibility? (A task or job you are expected to do.) What does it mean to “take responsibility?” (To act independently or to do your job without being asked.)

Ask students to think about the questions you wrote on the board as they listen to the story.

DURING READING:

Project the e-book onto a screen. Read the story aloud and make sure all the children can see the illustrations. Ask one question at a time at the specified page numbers, being careful not to ask so many questions that you lose their attention to the story. Generally asking three to four questions during the reading serves as a good guideline.

- On page 9, how do you think AJ feels in this picture? How can you tell?
- On page 13, how do you think Raja feels in this picture? How can you tell? What does Raja’s body language look like? (body low to the floor/leaning away from AJ, ears moved to the side and tucked back)
- Why do you think Raja hides? Would anyone like to share a time when you feel scared? What do you do?
- On page 17, how do you think Belle feels in this picture? How can you tell? What does Belle’s body language look like? (body low, ears down, side eye, tail tucked)
- On page 26 (choose any of the frames with Meg, the girl), how do you think Meg feels in this picture? How can you tell?

AFTER READING:

Review the story's illustrations with students and ask to reinforce and extend their understanding of the text.

Ask:

- Why do you think AJ wants a dog at the beginning of the story? Do you think people can be friends with an animal? What does that friendship look like?
- Can cats feel emotions? If so, how can we tell? Go back to page 13 and review Raja's body language.
- Can dogs feel emotions? If so, how can we tell? Go back to pages 17-19 and review Belle's body language.
- Why does Raja go through the book portal to Earth even though it's restricted? What choices do we have when we see someone upset or in trouble?
- Rutherford is accused of not taking responsibility (something that is your job or duty to deal with). Do you agree? If so, why do you think he's not taking responsibility? What are ways you act responsibly in your life?

ACTIVITIES:

Emotion Game

- Pair students up. Ask them to take turns acting happy, sad, scared, or mad. To help them act, ask them to think of something that recently made them feel each of these emotions. Have one partner make observations about what the second partner's face looks like.
- Optional: Have the students share what this was like. Was it harder to act or describe the emotions? Were any emotions harder than others?

Practicing Responding with Empathy

- Pair up students. Ask them to imagine their best friend has just told them they don't want to play with them and have them take turns with their partners acting sad about this. Have their partner respond to their sadness. Ask the students to share as a class what their partner did when they acted sadly.
- Then, repeat the activity, this time, have the students practice "just being with the person," saying sincerely, "I'm sorry that you are sad," or "It's OK, I'm here for you." Or they can just touch a shoulder or arm if they feel like they are sharing some of their partner's sadness, too. Tell them not to say anything else. (If this activity is too difficult for them, you could also model this with another teacher or adult.)
- Then, have the students share as a class which responses they liked the best. Have them compare the two experiences.
 - For example, if they gave advice or told their partner things like, "Don't be sad," or "At least I'm still your friend," during the first round, ask the students what it was like to be given advice versus just feel like someone was there; that they were not alone; they were "being felt."
- Guide the students towards understanding that the goal of responding empathetically is to not give advice, but simply to help someone "feel felt." Empathy is connecting with someone. Nonverbal communication, like just touching a shoulder or arm or mirroring another's emotional state can also communicate empathy, that you are paying attention; that you "see or feel" with another. For a video to help understand empathetic responses, visit [this link](#) or paste this URL into your browser: bit.ly/EmpathyResponses.

ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED):

Friendship Book

- As a class, ask students to share stories of animals they have been friends with or animals they imagine being friends with in the future. Ask them what they think makes a good friend and write these qualities on the board.
- Give each student an 8 1/2 x 11 piece of drawing paper or cardstock. Invite students to illustrate a real or imaginary friendship between themselves and a cat, a dog, a person, or another animal, showing at least one of the qualities of friendship on the board. Bind all of the pages together and create a title page for this class book.

Compare and Contrast

- Draw a chart on a board or chart paper, using the sample template below.
- Pick 1-2 basic emotions (happy, sad, fear, anger) and list it as the emotional state. Use a different chart for each emotion, and compare how cats, dogs, and people show this emotion. Review the chart together, referring to pictures in the story that show this emotion.
- After this activity, discuss how students might feel and what students might do (what behaviors would they respond with) if they came across an animal or person displaying the behaviors in the chart.

Emotional State: _____

	People	Dogs	Cats
Eyes			
Ears			
Mouth			
Body			
Other behaviors			

AT THE END OF THE LESSON:

Ask students to reflect on these questions. Try this with the whole group, in a sharing circle, or ask students to fill out index cards.

- How did you feel about today’s book and discussion?
- Did today’s book and discussion change how you think about anything in your life?
- What did you learn from today’s book and discussion that you didn’t know before?

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