

GREAT JOY

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By Kate DiCamillo

Ages: 4-9

Themes: Feelings, Compassion, Friendship, Holidays, Community, Giving

Running Time: 9 minutes

SUMMARY

During the week before Christmas, the organ grinder and the monkey appear at the corner where Frances lives. During the day she watches as the organ grinder plays and the monkey dances. Above the noise of the traffic and the people, sometimes she could hear the lonesome notes of their sad, dream-like song. Frances wonders where they sleep at night. In the meantime, she prepares for her role in the Christmas pageant. When the night of the pageant comes, Frances finally finds the right way to open her heart to welcome two important guests into the community celebration.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will define community and identify ways to build a strong community.
- Students will make inferences to compare and contrast characters.
- Students will define and brainstorm ways to practice compassion.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Introduce the word *compassion* to students. Break the word into parts *com* and *passion*. Tell students that *com* is a prefix that means “together” and that *passion* is a base word that means “a strong feeling.” Ask them to brainstorm what it means when those two word parts are put together. Create a shared definition with the class for the word *compassion*. Then, ask students to share stories about times when they have witnessed or practiced *compassion*. Finally, have students draw a picture representing what *compassion* means to them. Tell students that they will be watching a movie about *compassion*. Encourage them to look and listen for which character shows the most *compassion*.

Discuss community with the students. Ask students how they define community. Write down all of their ideas on the board or chart paper. Create a class definition of community. Have students bring in pictures of their communities or ask them to share something special about their communities. Finally, ask students if they have ever seen anything or anyone in their communities that didn't seem to belong. Why didn't those people or things belong in their communities? How did the people in the community handle this? Tell students to pay attention to how different characters in the movie think about and treat the organ grinder and the monkey who show up in their community.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Guide students through making inferences about the community that Frances lives in. Replay parts of the movie that show Frances' neighborhood and apartment. Ask:

- What do you notice about the streets around Frances' building?
- What do you notice about the people in Frances' neighborhood?
- What do you notice about the rooms in Frances' apartment?
- How do the people in Frances' community act toward the organ grinder?

Based on students' answers, complete this sentence in various different ways:

“Frances' community is _____.”

Then, discuss with the children how Frances used *compassion* to open her community to an outsider. Ask students if something like that has ever happened in their community.

Use a Venn Diagram to guide students through comparing and contrasting Frances and her mother. Guiding questions:

- What questions does Frances ask her mother?
- What do these questions show you about Frances?
- How does Frances' mother answer her questions? What do these answers show you about her mother?
- Do you think that Frances' mother would have invited the organ grinder to the pageant? Why or why not?
- At the end of the movie, can you notice a change in Frances' mother? How can you tell that she has changed?

Organize a community service project for your class. Begin with a discussion about giving and reaching out to others in need. Stress that even people who have very little themselves can usually find a way to give, and that giving does not always mean the giving of material objects or money. Share stories that emphasize this theme. *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein is one possibility. Then, provide students with several options for service projects the class could do. Some ideas are:

- Volunteering at a soup kitchen during lunch one day
- Reading stories or poems to people in an assisted living facility
- Walking around the neighborhood picking up trash and/or planting flowers
- Organizing a canned food drive

Give the class the opportunity to discuss and vote on a project of their choice.

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