

Thank you, Mr. Falker

K-5

By Patricia Polacco

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Spoken Arts Video 9487

Running Time: 20 Minutes

Story Summary

Little Trisha is overjoyed at the thought of starting school and learning how to read. However, right from the start, when she tries to read, all the letters and numbers just get jumbled up. And her classmates make matters worse by calling her “dummy” and “toad”. Then, in fifth grade, a new teacher comes - a real character! He sees right through the sad little girl to the artist she really is. When he discovers Trisha’s secret - that she still can’t read - he sets out to help her prove to herself that she can, and will!

The autobiographical **Thank you, Mr. Falker** is a story close to author Patricia Polacco’s heart. It is her personal song of thanks and praise to teachers like Mr. Falker, who quietly but surely change the lives of the children they teach.

Objectives

Children will watch a video about a child who was unable to read, and will discuss some of the consequences this had on the child.

Children will look at a picture, and guess what will happen next in the story.

Children will put a story into sequence, using beginning, middle, and end.

Before viewing the video:

1. Ask the class to look at either the cover of the book or the video. From the picture, ask them to guess what the story is about. What does the title mean? What will happen in the story?
2. Do you remember learning to read? What was it like? What was the first thing you remember reading?
3. Has there been anything in your life that although you tried really hard, you could not do it? How did that make you feel? How did others react to you?

Questions to ask after viewing the video

1. At the beginning of the story, Trisha’s grandfather drizzled honey onto the cover of a book. Why?
2. More than anything else, what did Trisha want when she went to school?
3. How did Trisha’s grandmother make her feel?
4. How did the other kids treat Trisha in her new school? How did they make her feel?
5. What did Mr. Falker think about Trisha?
6. How did Mr. Falker and Miss Plessy teach Trisha to read?
7. What does the title of the story mean to you now?

Activities

1. Ask the children to remember what they talked about before seeing this video. What in their lives has been so hard for them to do? Have them write a story about the challenges they have faced. Instruct them that the story should have a beginning, middle and end. Illustrate their stories, making them into a book.
2. Have the class write letters to their parents, inviting them to come into class to talk about a particular challenge they have faced in their lives.
3. From the picture on the cover of the book or video, the children tried to guess what was going to happen in the story. Have them each draw a picture with enough detail that others might guess what will happen next. Have the children try to guess the story of each other's pictures.
4. Trisha was teased and bullied by the other children in her school. How did this make her feel about herself? Ask if anyone in the class has ever been teased like this? What did they do? Ask the children to form into groups of three or four, and have them brainstorm stories in which someone is unable to do something really important, and gets teased. Act out these skits in front of the class.

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