

THUNDER CAKE

K-3

Written and Illustrated
By Patricia Polacco

Published by The Putnam & Grosset Group

Story Summary

Patricia Polacco retells this story of her childhood. Grandma senses that a storm is coming and sees her granddaughter hiding under the bed. Grandma convinces her that the storm is far away and that they will have time to make a thunder cake before it arrives. Grandma teaches her how to anticipate the thunder---count to ten when you see the lightning. Grandma keeps her very busy with many tasks; it takes some work to make thunder cake. What could be a frightening experience turns into a wonderful one for this grandmother and granddaughter.

Objectives

1. To acknowledge that we all have fears.
2. To develop coping mechanisms for dealing with fears.
3. To develop empathy for others who may have fears.
4. To learn appropriate ways to seek help in dealing with fears.

Before viewing the video

Tell the children that they will be seeing a video that is a true story. The author, Patricia Polacco, was a young girl in Michigan and spent a good deal of time on her grandma's farm. Her Grandma came from Russia and she called her Babushka. This young child feared the sound of thunder more than anything. This is the story of how her Grandma—her Babushka—helped her overcome her fear of thunderstorms. As you watch this story, think of things that you have feared. Who helped you overcome your fear? Do you still have some fears that you would like to work on?

Questions to ask after viewing the video

1. At the first sign of thunder, the child huddles with her grandmother. How does Grandma convince her that it is O. K. to let go?
2. How does counting when she sees the lightening help the child be less fearful?
3. While it continues to thunder, the child keeps very busy. What are some of the things she needs to do?
4. At first the child crawled under the bed when she heard the thunder. Why do you think she agreed to do all of the things her grandma asked her to do?
5. All the while that the child was gathering ingredients, Grandma was close by. Why do you think she stayed close by?
6. As they waited for the cake, Grandma explains to the child that she is really brave. How did Grandma help the child overcome her fear of thunder?
7. Why do you think the thunder cake was so perfect?
8. How did the child feel about the storm when it finally arrived?

Activities

1. Encourage a creative writing group activity by having each child complete the sentence "I feel frightened when..." Combine all of the responses in a list to demonstrate the variety of fears we have. Have a discussion about how Babushka helped her grandchild. Who do you think might help you with your fears?
2. Have the children engaged in a discussion, "How I used to feel about thunder" and "How I feel about thunder now." Ask how this video has changed their feelings about thunder.
3. Tell the story of Thunder Cake in a classroom bulletin board. Have the children look at the different kinds of clothing this grandmother and the child are wearing. Look at the farm animals and the objects in the house. Incorporate these in your display.
4. Look at the recipe for thunder cake. If facilities permit, have the children bring the ingredients to school to make and enjoy their own thunder cake.