

**LESSON:** *Give Me A Little Sign*

**GRADES:** 1-4

**SUBJECT AREAS:** Language Arts, Life Skills

**ESTIMATED TIMES:** Two 45 minute sessions

- I. **Summary:** *Maya & Miguel* is about diversity of all kinds. Tito befriends a new boy, Marco, who is deaf. Marco starts to teach Tito some American Sign Language (ASL) and they decide to do a project together for the school's "Contraption Convention." But when Tito who is learning English makes some pronunciation mistakes in school, he decides he doesn't want to do the project anymore (since it involves public speaking). Only when he sees how Marco persists in getting across what he wants to say - even when people misunderstand him at first - does he realize the value of practice and determination, and decides to go ahead with the project.

This lesson focuses on conversation methods that children may use when meeting a person from another culture, or someone who speaks a different language. Students will be exposed to American Sign Language, learn basic signs from the episode, and learn to finger-spell their names.

The episode shares the barriers most deaf students face when confronted by moving to a new school and entering a mainstreamed classroom. Marco is accepted into the group, and each child works diligently to communicate with him as clearly as possible. Tito explains to his friends that talking loudly to a deaf person will not help him/her "hear" what is being said. The teacher explains that over-enunciating words will not help a deaf person read lips any better. It goes a step further to connect the language barriers that Marco faces and similar obstacles that Tito encounters.

When meeting someone for the first time who is deaf or hard of hearing, a hearing child may have many questions and may even be afraid to try to communicate. The episode gives tips on how a hearing child can positively interact with a deaf child. The show also clearly displays and outlines basic ASL words and how to fingerspell. Viewers are shown that American Sign Language is a complete language and equal to all other languages.

## II. Objectives:

- Students will converse with others using appropriate conversation methods including American Sign Language.
- Students will create a message using a comic strip.
- Students will be given opportunities to express feelings about their own experiences with language and culture.

## III. Materials:

- *Maya & Miguel* episode *Give Me a Little Sign*
- Lesson printout: *Create a Comic!*, pens, crayons or markers
- Printout: *American Sign Language Alphabet*

## IV. Background:

In 2003, The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) estimated that about 2 to 4 of every 1,000 people in the United States are "functionally deaf." However, NHIS found that if people with a severe hearing impairment are included in the aforementioned data, then the number is 4 to 10 times higher. This means that approximately 28 million Americans are either deaf or hard of hearing.

Many deaf persons use sign language. Sign language by itself is not a universal language. Each country has their own sign language, much like the thousands of languages spoken by hearing people all over the world. American Sign Language is used in the United States. Like any spoken language, ASL has its own rules of grammar, and it changes over time to accommodate the needs of its native users.

A sign language interpreter is a hearing person who knows both English and ASL. The role of the interpreter is to act as a "go-between," with the deaf person using ASL and the hearing interpreter using spoken English; he or she translates the communication of each into the primary language of the other.

## V. Procedure:

(Session One)

1. Ask children to think about how they meet and greet someone that speaks another language or is from another culture. Do they smile at each other?

Say their own personal name and use physical gestures to communicate if they don't speak the same language?

Allow students to share what they think "culture" represents. "Culture" is usually defined as learned behaviors common to a society, and it may include manners, dress, language and systems of belief. Deaf persons who use ASL are a group of persons who share a common means of communication (sign language) that provides the basis for group "cohesion" and "identity;" this is often referred to as "Deaf Culture."

Students may want to name some parts of their cultures. For younger children, ask them to name what kinds of foods they eat and clothing they wear. Write their answers on a chart to discuss.

2. Introduce the *Maya & Miguel* episode *Give Me a Little Sign* by asking a few questions before viewing:

- Maya and Miguel's cousin Tito meets a new friend named Marco who is deaf. What do they know about deafness? Is anyone in their family deaf or hard of hearing? Explain the difference.
- Imagine what it might be like to lose some or all of your hearing. How would you communicate?

After watching the episode ask the following questions:

- How did the children in the episode interact with Marco at the beginning? What changes were made so they could improve their communication?
- Was Marco accepted by the group? Have you ever seen someone who wasn't accepted by a group? How did it make you feel?
- Watch a couple minutes of the episode with the sound turned off and with no captions. What can be understood without sound? Some persons with a hearing loss will read lips or speech read, but it is extremely difficult to lip read televised images, even when there are live characters. (To learn more on captioning, visit the Captioned Media Program: <http://www.captionedmedia.org/>.)

3. Do the students in your class know any American Sign Language? Where did they learn it? Do they speak to their friends using ASL? Explain that they are going to learn how to spell their names using ASL, and they can use that to greet one another or a new friend.

Tell the students that when meeting someone who is deaf or hard of hearing, they may use the following etiquette so others may view signs clearly: Have the children draw in the air with their finger a rectangle from their waist to shoulders to head. That will provide space for the signs.

After reviewing the printout, *The American Sign Language Alphabet*, model for the class how you finger-spell your name. Pass out the printout and allow children time to find the letters in their name and practice on their own for a few minutes. Next, pair up children in the class, and let the children introduce themselves to one another as if for the first time using the new ASL alphabet they have learned. The children may want to spell other words as well.

(Session Two)

4. Introduce the activity by reviewing a few points from the video presentation of *Give Me a Little Sign*. What words did the children in the show learn in American Sign Language? Make a list. How did Theo know some ASL, and where did he learn it? Ask if anyone remembered how to sign some of the words the children learned. You may review certain parts of the video, and provide time for students to practice on their own.
5. Use the printout *Create a Comic!* after discussing the signs from the video. The comic strip has Miguel signing the phrase *I Like Soccer!* in squares on the page, similar to a comic strip. The strip is drawn so children may color as well. On a separate downloadable page, several other sports are represented using ASL signs (e.g., basketball, skating and gymnastics). Students can make their own comic, starting with the pre-drawn phrase "I Like" and cutting and pasting in other sports. If students are unfamiliar with writing in a comic style, you may bring in comics with appropriate subject matter from your

weekly paper as a model. Younger students may color the comic and practice signing the phrase with each other. After all are completed, think about putting them on bright colored paper and display so others may read and enjoy!

**VI. Assessment:** Students should successfully demonstrate American Sign Language identified from the episode, oral discussions and demonstrations. Students should actively participate in written communication using the comic strip.

**VII. Extensions in Learning:**

- Provide book resources in the classroom for children to read and learn more about American Sign Language including the books: *My First Book of Sign Language* by Scholastic and illustrated by Joan Holub (Ages 4-8), and *You Can Learn Sign Language* by Jackie Kramer & Tali Ovadia (Ages 8-12).
- Use the printable, *Create a Caption!* Read a brief description of captioning and why and how it's used. Look at six scenes from the *Give Me A Little Sign* episode. Then, choose from captions written at the bottom of the page (out of sequence) and match them up with the correct ones. Or, write your own. Then, create your scenes and captions, using the blank boxes provided.

**Related National Standards** (These are established by McREL at URL: [http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/.](http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/))

**Language Arts**

- Understands the main idea or message in visual media (e.g., pictures, cartoons, weather reports on television, newspaper photographs, visual narratives)
- Uses a variety of nonverbal communication skills (e.g., eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, posture)
- Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media
- Uses drawings to express thoughts, feelings and ideas
- Writes for different purposes (e.g., to entertain, inform, learn, communicate ideas)

## Life Skills

- Converses with others using appropriate conversation techniques (e.g., taking turns speaking, listening actively, contributing ideas)
- Uses and responds to nonverbal communication (e.g., raising hand, smiling back at others)
- Demonstrates sensitivity to cultural diversity (e.g., personal space, use of eye contact, gestures, bias-free language)

Scholastic Entertainment has collaborated with the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP) while developing materials for the episode.

Reference: *You Can Learn Sign Language* by Jackie Kramer & Tali Ovadia, Scholastic Inc.

For resources including deaf education and captioning:

<http://www.captionedmedia.org/>

[www.deafed.net](http://www.deafed.net)

<http://www.gallaudet.edu/>

<http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/InfoToGo/index.html#especiallyforchildren>

<http://www-static.cc.gatech.edu/program/cats/>

<http://www.nichcy.org/>