

The Romanian Builder

ISBN 978-1-84717-105-4 hb

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Teaching Guide

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RATIONALE AND THEMES

The plot in this story focuses on the issues surrounding diversity. The diversity is viewed through the filter of Joe's enthusiasm and curiosity. Joe learns to adapt to the differences between himself and Radu and together they achieve a fulfilled and sustained relationship.

Their relationship inevitably enriches Joe and equips him with new and transferable skills which he is able to use in school.

The themes are SPHE based and include

- Celebrating diversity
- Using talents and gifts
- Recognising talent in others
- Appreciating other's contributions
- Supporting others
- Tolerance
- Friendship

SUMMARY

When Radu, a Romanian builder arrives to build Joe's playground, Joe's initial reaction is disappointment. Radu does not speak English and it seems that all of Joe's important questions about how being a builder will remain unanswered.

However, with a little creativity, Joe and Radu are able to communicate, sharing their lunches with each other every day as they build the playground and a friendship.

When the building work is completed and it is time for Radu to leave, Joe's distress at losing his friend is soothed by the gift of a new, real builder's measuring tape that Radu leaves for him.

The measuring tape reminds Joe of Radu, their friendship and the playground that they built together and he decides to take it to school to show the teacher.

At school, the teacher introduces Edgar, a new Estonian pupil, and Joe uses Radu's measuring tape to forge a new friendship. In the process discovering that you don't need a shared language to communicate when you have a shared interest.

APPROACH

In the story, diversity is presented as an opportunity to share and learn something new. Joe's relationship with Radu is based entirely on sharing.

An effective approach to using the book would be to highlight

how everyone has something worth sharing and underline the dignity in being able to learn from each other.

The themes and plot offer a wealth of SPHE opportunities across the broad spectrum of diversity, from cultural to ethnic.

Whole class activities could include circle time, peer group discussions, debates, hot seating, etc.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- (Read pp 15) Joe learned lots of things from Radu. Can you remember something that you have learned from someone else?
- (Read pp 25) When Radu left Joe a gift of a measuring tape, what do you think he was trying to say to him?
- (Read pp 27-31) How do you think Edgar felt before and after he met Joe? What words would you use to describe his feelings?

ACTIVITIES

1. Fáilte Mór

(Read pp 9 - 10) Joe is reluctant to approach Radu because Radu does not speak English; however Joe's mother encourages him to be friendly anyway.

Working in small groups of two or three and without any talking, how many ways you can find to show someone that you want to be friends? You can write these in a list or draw a picture.

2. An Important Job.

(Read pp 16) Joe was able to help Radu and this made him feel important. Can you work in small groups and make a short list of three jobs that you can do at home or in the classroom, to help either your mum and dad or teacher.

Draw a picture of yourself doing one of the jobs and explain why you think it is important and how it makes you feel when you have completed it successfully.

3. What I have learned about Romania?

Just by looking at the book it's possible to get a feel for Romanian folk art traditions. Get the children to look at the patterns on pp 9 (wallpaper), pp 14, (ground pattern), pp 19, pp 23, pp 26-27, pp 31-32, and as framing devices on other pages.

This artwork was deliberately created by The Cartoon Saloon to reflect design elements common in Romanian handicrafts: egg

painting, pottery, rug making, fabric dyeing etc. These are often quite intricate, involving stylised flowers and other symbols that are repeated to create a continuous pattern.

Class project: Either for Easter or as Christmas tree decorations, the children could try to replicate some of the patterns on blown eggs (or hard-boiled eggs if they are not to be kept).

4. I Met Joe Today

(Read pp 27 - 31) When Edgar went home after school, his mum asked him how his day was. He decided to draw a picture of Joe and some of the things that they did together for her. He drew a very happy picture.

Could you draw the picture that you think he might have drawn for his mum to show her how happy he had been at school?

5. Can I help you?

(Read pp 28-31) Joe immediately volunteers to help when the teacher introduces Edgar to the class and they spend their time measuring everything in sight.

Create a little 'HELP' space on a wall and ask those children who are willing to offer help to someone else to write their names on a Post-it and stick it on the wall.

Allow anyone who then needs help to take the Post-it and

approach the named person for help.

This is more easily managed if the 'Help Wall' is themed i.e. Playground Buddies / Help with Maths etc, and there is a strict time limit for the help. (A five minute timer can be used)

6. My Friend

Joe becomes friends with Radu and then with Edgar. Could you pick someone that you are friends with and draw a picture of them? Can you find six good words or phrases to describe them and why you like being friends with them? You can write the words beside your picture.

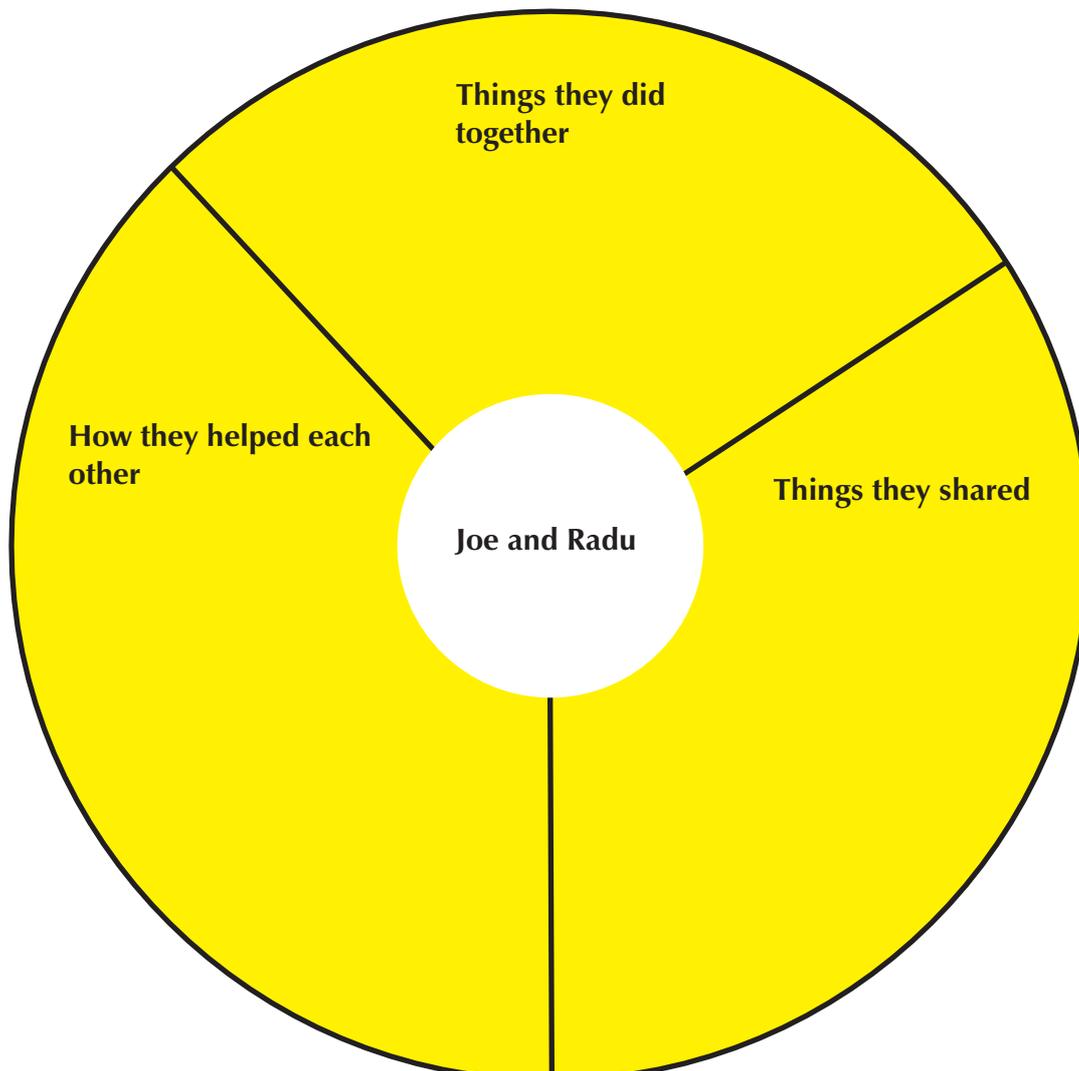
7. The Friendship Wheel.

Joe and Radu became friends because they did things together; helped each other and shared what they had.

Could you complete the friendship wheel to show how they were friends?

Could you organise yourselves into small groups of four or five and complete a wheel for your group?

THE FRIENDSHIP WHEEL



Class project

These activities can be undertaken as a whole class project. The focus of the activities is to explore compatibility and commonality within the class as a whole. During the activities the children will have the opportunity to identify several of their own attributes and interests and consider how many of these are held in common in the class.

The initial activity involves each child completing an individual grid detailing their own attributes and preferences:

ALL ABOUT ME

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Colour of my eyes | |
| Colour of my hair | |
| I'm good at | |
| I like to eat | |
| I like to read | |
| I like to watch | |
| I like to play | |
| I support | |
| I like to chill out by | |
| I would like to go to | |

The second part of the activity involves the children transferring the personal data on to class sized grids on the walls. The information can be written onto the grids or the children can use 'post-its'. For the class grids you can chose an appropriate criterion.

For example:

Hair Colour

| Black | Blond | Brown | Red |
|---------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| John Peter | Melik Layla | Ilse Salim | Kevin Caoimhe |

Circle time or class discussion can be used to develop the themes that while everyone has their own individual attributes and preferences, there are very many areas where there are common links.

ONE INTERESTING FACT ABOUT ME ...

Drama can be used to extend this information. Ask the children to group themselves using one criterion; then when they have been sorted into groups, ask them to find one interesting fact from anyone in the group and record it on a simple grid (See below).

Use another criterion to rearrange the groups and repeat the request for collecting an interesting fact.

This way they will build up a profile of interesting facts about people from different groups that they belong to in the class.

Class plenary can be used to report back and discuss how there are lots of ways to think about how we can group people and how many interesting things there are to discover about people irrespective of which group they belong to.

| Group | Name | Interesting fact |
|-----------|---------|---|
| Boys | Kevin | Kevin likes to go fishing with his dad. |
| Blue eyes | Chelsea | She has a black rabbit for a pet |
| | | |

THE ROUGH GUIDE

This activity is generic and easily lends itself to constructing a guide about any country. Start with the prompt

“If we were to have a new pupil joining us from Romania; could you make a simple country guide containing all the important information about their country so that you would be able to talk to them about some of the interesting places from their home?”

The initial part of the activity should include a class discussion / brainstorm to identify as many pieces of information as possible and where the gaps are in their knowledge. This will focus their research i.e. **‘What do we need to find out?’** This information could be displayed on the blackboard and the children tasked in small groups to assess and identify the essential information to appear on the Rough Guide. These could then be illustrated.

The children will have the opportunity to develop their thinking skills as they sort, assess and prioritise information and illustrations; and use a range of literacy and skills to present information that is easy to read and understand.

To develop the activity the children could be asked to consider how their guides might be used by someone who did not read English very well. There might also be an opportunity to introduce an appropriate range of foreign language vocabulary.

This activity will provide the opportunity for the children to research both factual and opinions based information to create a simple guide to Romania.

For country information on Romania you can try the following websites (*Note: Internet information on Romania is limited and not always suitable*)

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romania
- <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ro.html> (also found at tinyurl.com/romaniainfo)

There will be an opportunity for them to develop a range of

literacy skills as they attempt to make their writing brief, concise and interesting.

One classroom strategy could be to present the Internet materials as a whole class activity and the children to make their own notes on what they found interesting from the presentation. They could then use the notes as the basis for their guide. It can be an interesting strategy to have a delay of a few days between watching the presentation and then using the notes that were made during the presentation to complete the guide. This way the children have the opportunity to exercise their recall. This can be done in small groups to stimulate discussion on their recall of what they saw.

Class discussion on the differences between fact and opinion and the impression that these create when they are used; and the use of a simple template (**See below**) can offer the opportunity to explore how these literary forms are used.

ROMANIA

ROUGH GUIDE

FLAG

Country Facts

- Language
- Capital City
- Geography
- Climate
- Legends
- Etc

Picture

Picture

People say

As a peer assessment technique when finished, each group could apply the 5 x W framework to each other's guide to check if it gives enough information.

| 5 x W questions | DID YOU KNOW (Fact and information: concise and clear) | PEOPLE SAY (Opinion: comment or popular myth) |
|-----------------|---|--|
| WHO | | |
| WHAT | | |
| WHEN | | |
| WHERE | | |
| WHY | | |