

Teasing and Self-Acceptance: a two-text unit for K–3

Two read-alouds, three short sessions, and the conversation they are built to start.

Charlie’s Time to Shine · Larry’s Hairy Dilemma

Grade band K–3 · **Time** three sessions of 20–25 minutes, ideally spread across two weeks · **Grouping** whole class

Frameworks addressed: Connecticut Components of Social, Emotional and Intellectual Habits (Components 1, 3, 4) · CASEL (self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills) · ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (M 2, M 4, B-SS 2, B-SS 3, B-SS 4, B-SS 8) · AASL Shared Foundation II, Include · CCSS Speaking & Listening SL.K.1–SL.3.1

Connecticut school climate: supports instruction under a district school climate improvement plan, C.G.S. §§10-222aa–10-222jj (P.A. 23-167 and 24-45), in force from the 2025–26 school year.

WHY THESE TWO TEXTS TOGETHER

Charlie is teased about his teeth. Larry is teased about his hair. Each is helped not by a parent or a teacher but by an adult from the neighborhood — a dentist, and a barber called Old Man Grady — who takes the problem seriously rather than telling the child it doesn’t matter.

Read singly, either is a story about one boy. Read as a pair, children can see the pattern for themselves: two different children, two different features, one shared feeling. That comparison is the point of the unit, and it is what makes the second session do more work than the first.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, students can:

- Name, using a feeling word, what a character felt when he was teased, and cite what in the text told them so.
- Identify at least one trusted adult outside their own household they could go to.
- Offer a peer a specific compliment that is not about appearance.

BEFORE YOU TEACH IT

Teach this unit when nothing is happening. If a child in the room is currently being teased about how they look, a read-aloud aimed at that situation lands as exposure, and every other child will know who it was for. Used preventively it builds vocabulary children can reach for later; used as a correction it costs you their trust.

SESSION 1 — CHARLIE’S TIME TO SHINE

Open (2 min). One sentence, no preamble: “*This is about a kid who got teased about something he couldn’t change.*”

Read aloud (8–10 min). Straight through, without stopping to explain.

Discuss (10 min).

- How did he feel when they said that? Not what he did — what he *felt*. What in the story tells you?

- Did anyone notice he was upset? What would noticing have looked like?
- He didn't tell his friends. Why might he have kept it to himself?

■ CT SEL Component 3, Identify and understand emotions of self and others (Empathy progression) · CASEL Social awareness · ASCA B-SS 4 · CCSS SL.K.1–SL.3.1

Exit ticket (2 min). On a sticky note: one feeling word for how Charlie felt. Collect them. You are looking for range beyond “sad” and “mad” — embarrassed, lonely, worried, small. The spread tells you where the class’s emotional vocabulary actually sits.

■ Formative check · CT SEL Component 3 · CASEL Self-awareness

SESSION 2 — LARRY’S HAIRY DILEMMA (about a week later)

Read aloud (8–10 min). No framing needed this time. Children will start making the comparison unprompted, which is what you want.

Compare (6 min).

- What is the same about what happened to Charlie and to Larry? What is different?
- Both of them got help from a grown-up who wasn’t in their family. Why might that be easier than telling someone at home?
- What changed by the end — the boy, or the way he saw himself?

■ CT SEL Component 1, Develop a positive self-concept · CASEL Self-awareness · ASCA M 4 · AASL II.C.2

That last question is the unit in one line. Most children will say he changed. Sit with the other possibility rather than supplying it — the ones who arrive at “he was fine the whole time” themselves are the ones who keep it.

Activity: Who is your Old Man Grady? (8 min). Each child names one grown-up, not in their family, they could tell something to. A coach, a neighbor, a bus driver, a librarian. Written or drawn, not shared aloud.

■ CT SEL Component 1 (trusting relationships with school-based adults) · ASCA B-SS 3, Positive relationships with adults to support success · CASEL Relationship skills

Collect these. A child who cannot name anyone is the single most useful piece of information this unit produces, and it is worth passing quietly to your school counselor or climate specialist.

SESSION 3 — CLOSING (15 min)

The thing they said. Children write or draw one thing someone said about them that stuck — no names, nobody shares. On the other side, one thing someone said that helped. The two sides make the argument without putting anyone on the spot.

■ CT SEL Component 4, Develop positive interpersonal relationships · CASEL Self-awareness · ASCA M 2

A compliment that isn’t about looks. Each child gives one to the person beside them. Harder than it sounds, and it is the skill both books are actually teaching. Model one first.

■ CT SEL Component 4 · CASEL Relationship skills · ASCA B-SS 2 · B-SS 8

HOW YOU’LL KNOW IT WORKED

Three look-fors, none of which need a rubric:

- **Session 1 exit tickets** show feeling words beyond sad and mad.

- **Every child names an adult** in session 2. The ones who can't are your follow-up.
- **Compliments in session 3 are specific** and about something other than appearance. "You let me go first" counts. "You're nice" does not, and is worth pushing on.

DIFFERENTIATION

- **Kindergarten and early first grade:** drop the compare questions in session 2 and keep the read-aloud plus the Old Man Grady activity. Give a feeling-word bank of six pictures for the exit ticket.
- **Emerging English speakers:** the exit ticket works as a drawn face. Pre-teach three feeling words before the first read.
- **Third grade:** add a written response — what would you have said to Charlie if you had been there?
- **A child currently being teased:** tell them before the lesson that it is coming and that it is not about them. Being surprised by it in front of the class is the failure mode.

FOR THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

- Shelve and display the two together — they circulate better as a pair than apart.
- Neither uses the word bullying, which makes them easier to hand to a child who would refuse a book that did.
- Works as a counselor referral shelf title: a child can borrow one without announcing anything about themselves.
- Both authors are Connecticut writers, which places them in a local-author display alongside the rest of the AcuteByDesign list.

■ AASL Shared Foundation II, Include · II.A.1 · II.D.2

SENDING IT HOME

A short note to families, if you want one: *"We read two books about children who were teased about how they look. If your child mentions it, the most useful thing you can say is 'that sounds like it stung' — and then let the silence do the work. Offering to fix the feature tends to end the conversation."*

■ CT SEL Component 4 · CASEL Relationship skills

FULL STANDARDS MAPPING

This mapping is AcuteByDesign's own. It has not been reviewed or endorsed by the Connecticut State Department of Education, CASEL, ASCA or AASL. Check it against your district's framework before citing it in a plan.

FRAMEWORK	STANDARD OR COMPONENT	WHERE IT SITS IN THE UNIT
Connecticut — Components of Social, Emotional and Intellectual Habits (K–3)	Component 1 — Develop a positive self-concept (Self-awareness progression; trusting relationships with school-based adults)	Session 2 compare questions; Who is your Old Man Grady?
	Component 3 — Identify and understand emotions of self and others (Empathy progression)	Session 1 discussion and exit ticket

FRAMEWORK	STANDARD OR COMPONENT	WHERE IT SITS IN THE UNIT
	Component 4 — Develop positive interpersonal relationships	Session 3, both activities; the family note
CASEL	Self-awareness — understanding one’s own emotions, thoughts and values and how they influence behavior across contexts	Exit ticket; “the thing they said”
	Social awareness — understanding the perspectives of and empathizing with others	Session 1, questions 1–2
	Relationship skills — establishing and maintaining healthy and supportive relationships	Old Man Grady; the compliment activity
ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors	M 2 — Sense of acceptance, respect, support and inclusion for self and others in the school environment	Whole-group framing; session 3
	M 4 — Self-confidence in ability to succeed	Session 2, final question
	B-SS 2 — Positive, respectful and supportive relationships with students who are similar to and different from them	Compliment activity
	B-SS 3 — Positive relationships with adults to support success	Who is your Old Man Grady? — the central activity
	B-SS 4 — Empathy	Session 1, questions 1–2
	B-SS 8 — Advocacy skills for self and others and ability to assert self, when necessary	Session 1, question 3; third-grade extension
AASL National School Library Standards	Shared Foundation II, Include — demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to inclusiveness and respect for diversity in the learning community	Library display and collection notes
	II.C.2 — Contributing to discussions in which multiple viewpoints on a topic are expressed	Session 2 compare discussion
	II.D.2 — Demonstrating interest in other perspectives during learning activities	Paired reading across both sessions
CCSS Speaking & Listening (Connecticut Core Standards)	SL.K.1 / SL.1.1 / SL.2.1 / SL.3.1 — Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade-level topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups	All three sessions; sub-point (a), agreed-upon rules, matters most in session 1

Charlie’s Time to Shine and Larry’s Hairy Dilemma are published by AcuteByDesign, an independent publisher in Marlborough, Connecticut. Both are available through Ingram. This unit is free — copy it, print it, and send it to whoever it would help. acutebydesign.com