

Activities
My Grandma's the Mayor
By
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Hero Letter

Annie loved her Grandmother and looked up to her. She was a hero in Annie's eyes. Brainstorm the qualities that make a person a hero. Invite students to write down a list of people they think have some of those attributes—the person can be living or dead, real or fictional. Have each share one or two from their list. Ask them to draw a line under that list. Then ask students to think about problems or challenges they have in their lives and list at least three. Each student chooses one of the people and challenges on their lists. Students write a letter to their wisdom figure and include:

- One reason the student admires the hero
- An explanation of one problem the student has
- A request for help

After you share some of the letters, ask the students to take on the attribute they admired and pretend that they are that hero/wisdom figure and answer the letter.... For example, if Evan had written to Margaret Mead, Evan's second letter would begin... "Dear Evan," and end, "Sincerely, Margaret Mead." The letter should give Evan advice, suggestions and comments that Evan believes Margaret Mead might give. After sharing the letters, conclude with a short discussion on whether or not the students received good advice.

Community Talent/Job Quilt

A community is made up of all kinds of people with different skills and gifts that help create the fabric of the community that makes it work. Decide on the theme of the quilt (talents, jobs). Brainstorm possibilities. As a group, decide ahead of time whether the squares should be created horizontally or vertically. Each student takes one and illustrates it using glue and paper scraps on an 8 1/2 by 11" paper. Have the students decide on the criteria for the caption. Hole-punch quilt "squares" and connect with 2-inch lengths of yarn. For a longer lasting quilt, slip squares into sheets protectors before hole punching.

Community Book

Students brainstorm different areas of their community. Review the list together. Decide on areas that could be combined into a broader heading, or separated into smaller, more distinct parts. Groups of students work on illustrating and writing about their assigned part of the community.

Consider using a Folded Spiral Category Big Book format for the community book. Students can create a road running through the pages and when the book is fully opened, all the headings of the areas of the community are displayed.

I Can Help By....

Discuss how Annie helped her community. Have the students brainstorm ways they can help the communities they are a part of including their family, town, school, home, or faith communities. Each student creates a poster, a pop-up card or writes and illustrates a page for a collaborative book.

Reversible Book Discuss the difference between a ruler and a leader. Using the accordion book design (see activities for I Don't Have an Uncle Phil Anymore), students create a story entitled

"If I Ruled." On the other side, they write about the same circumstances only this time the title is "If I Led."

Journal Writing Springboards

If you were the mayor of your town, what would your community be like? What things would you do if you were in charge?

If you were going to have a special Grandma day—describe what it would be like. What would you do together?

Annie thought her grandma's job was going to be different than it turned out to be. Even her Annie-Grandma sleepover didn't unfold the way she'd thought it would. Write a list of times in your life that your expectations weren't met. Make another list of times your expectations were exceeded. Choose one and tell the story.

Annie could see that there were things that were fun about Grandma being the mayor. Make a list of things you don't like in your life. Next to each thing on your list, think of at least one good thing about it—look at the bright side and write it down.

Just before going to bed at Grandma's house, Grandma would tell Annie stories from Annie's mom's childhood—like when Annie's mom kissed her dad when he had shaving cream on his face. Every family has stories ...What stories do you tell? What stories does your family tell about you?

Grandma was proud of the way members of her community pitched in and helped after the fire. Pride is an emotion that's earned. What things have you accomplished so far that make you proud of yourself? That makes your family proud of you?

Discussion/Social Studies Integration

Annie starts the story by saying her grandmother isn't the same as other grandmothers. Most grandmothers aren't mayors. Up until recently, most mayors weren't women. Talk about stereotypes and how they apply to age, race, and gender. Discuss what impact stereotyping might have on a community.

Annie lived in a village that was run by an elected mayor and a board of trustees. Not all places have that same governmental structure. Discuss how your community is set up.

Marge Pellegrino's writing for children of all ages includes the books [*Too Nice*](#) and [*I Don't Have An Uncle Phil Anymore*](#) from [Magination Press](#). With more than 100 published articles in regional and national magazines and in anthologies including *Cup of Comfort for Women*, she facilitates workshops for school, agency and community organizations including the Tucson Writers Project, ArtsReach working with Native Americans, KARE agency for children raised by grandparents, and the Hopi Foundation's Owl and Panther: Writing from the Darkness program working with torture survivors and their children. She is on the artist roster of the Arizona Commission on the Arts. The teacher resource she co-wrote with Joan Daniels, *The Folded Spiral in the Classroom*, is available online at [Exceptional Student Store](#). You can contact Marge at margepellegrino.com.