

Donkey Dancing

Teacher Notes

Suggested age range: 4–8 years	Suggested school levels: Early Years / Lower Primary
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Overview

Donkey Dancing is a warm and meaningful picture book about empathy, hidden sadness, and the power of helping others. At first, the donkey hides his sadness behind a mask, hoping no one will notice how he really feels. But true happiness cannot be found by pretending. Through the care and support of others, the donkey is finally able to let go of what has been weighing him down.

As the story unfolds, the wombat and the kangaroo also discover something important: helping someone else find happiness brings joy to them as well. The donkey's dancing becomes a joyful expression of relief, freedom, and restored happiness.

These teacher notes are designed to support discussion, reflection, and simple classroom activities that build empathy, emotional awareness, and kindness.

Key Themes

- Empathy
- Hidden feelings
- Sadness and happiness
- Friendship
- Helping others
- Kindness
- Emotional honesty

Learning Opportunities

This book supports learning in the following areas:

- social and emotional learning
- speaking and listening
- personal reflection
- classroom discussion
- creative response activities

Before Reading

Before sharing the story, invite children to think about feelings, empathy, and the ways people sometimes hide sadness.

You might ask:

- How can we tell when someone feels happy or sad?
- Do people always show their true feelings on the outside?
- Why might someone pretend to be happy when they are not?
- What are some ways we can help a friend who seems sad?

During Reading

As you read, encourage children to listen and look for:

- signs that the donkey is not truly happy
- how the other characters respond
- moments of kindness and care
- how feelings begin to change through the story

You may like to pause and ask:

- What do you notice about the donkey?
- Do you think the mask is helping? Why or why not?
- How do the wombat and kangaroo respond?
- How are the characters changing as the story continues?

After Reading Discussion Questions

- What happened in the story?
- Why did the donkey wear the mask?
- Was the donkey truly happy at the beginning?
- How did the wombat and kangaroo help?
- Why is empathy important?
- How can helping someone else also make us feel happy?
- What can we do when we think someone may be hiding their sadness?
- What does the ending show us about kindness and friendship?

Key Message

Sometimes people hide how they really feel. By showing empathy, kindness, and friendship, we can help others feel supported, understood, and happy again.

Classroom Activities

Feelings Discussion

Talk about ways people show happiness, sadness, worry, or relief. Discuss how faces, body language, and actions can sometimes reveal feelings, even when someone tries to hide them.

Draw the Change

Invite children to draw two pictures of the donkey: one while he is hiding behind the mask, and one when he is happy and dancing freely. Talk about what changed and why.

Helping Hands

Ask children to think of kind things they can do when a friend is sad. Write or draw these ideas on paper hand shapes and display them as a class kindness poster.

Role-Play Emotions

In pairs or small groups, act out simple situations where one character feels sad, worried, or left out, and another shows kindness and empathy.

Cross-Curricular Links

English

- oral retelling
- speaking and listening
- vocabulary linked to feelings and relationships

Personal and Social Learning

- empathy
- kindness
- friendship
- understanding emotions

Art

- drawing emotional moments from the story
- making kindness posters
- creating story response pictures

Extension Ideas

- Keep a class kindness journal for one week.
- Make a classroom chart titled Ways We Can Help Others Feel Better.
- Write or dictate a short sentence about a time someone showed kindness.
- Create simple masks and discuss why pretending can sometimes hide real feelings.

Home Connection

Encourage children to talk with family members about ways to notice when someone may need encouragement, kindness, or a helping hand.