

CCS / ELA / SS Alignment for *Sorry!*

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Life Lessons - Learning the Value of a Sincere Apology & Making the Effort to Right One's Wrongs

In a culture where the word *sorry* is sometimes uttered or muttered with no sincerity or, even worse, never uttered at all, what a joy to find a single compelling story of a boy named Jack who realizes the importance of a sincere, heartfelt apology for a wrong. Even more wonderful is to have a child-centered narrative where the apology can be followed up by the child's actually righting, to a large extent, the wrong done. What's even better is the ability to model through this engaging story academic vocabulary, narrative/memoir writing, speaking and listening and argument /persuasive writing activities that model needed real life career and social manners. *Sorry!* certainly touches citizenship and career training while addressing CCSS ELA- K-12—making it a home run that hits into students' lives as caring persons.

FOR GRADES 2-6 **Before reading *Sorry!***

(ELA Speaking and Listening- Comprehension and Collaboration)

1. Begin a student-centered discussion by asking students when they have ever recently said, "Sorry." Ask them to tell what they apologized for and if they meant their apology or just said it so that they could go on to next thing to please adults or to get by/over what they did wrong. ***(ELA memoir- life storytelling)***
2. Allow the students to speak and, depending on what they have to say, list the items or incidents or interactions that ended in an "I'm sorry" apology. Next, after each of the listed items, events, or interactions, have the students, in T-Chart graphic form, list ways beyond the "I'm Sorry" words that they could apologize or make right the wrongs they have done.
3. Challenge them as a group to come up with as many ways to right the wrongs they have done in words or deeds.
4. Depending on their age and maturity level, have the children brainstorm as many synonyms or expressions of apology as they can.
5. List these on an experiential chart. ***(ELA Language- Nuances of word use)***

During the class reading of *Sorry!* ***(ELA Reading for information, word use, and details)***

Questions to ask:

How do we know that Charlie is not actually sorry for ruining Anna's school picture?

What words tell us he meant to do it? (“on purpose”)

In what ways do the Maurie J. Manning illustrations also help us understand that what he did was on purpose (e.g., crayon clasped behind his back; fingers covering his smile)? **(ELA interpretation of illustrations as well as words)**

BIG QUESTION 1 for discussion and for taking a stand –opinion/persuasive writing or talking: Is saying “Sorry,” when you don’t mean it, enough? Why or why not?

BIG QUESTION 2- If someone is genuinely sorry for having done something to you, should you forgive them?

Smaller question for story- Should Anna forgive her brother? What does the word *forgive* mean? Is it a synonym for *forget*? **(ELA Language and Reading –nuanced use of language- can be used for speaking and listening and in upper elementary grades- students can write explanatory essays about the meaning of forgive)**

BIG QUESTION 3- If your friend asked you to do something you did not feel comfortable doing, would you do it? Explain your answer.

What actions have you ever done “on purpose” that made you feel badly, even though you said you were sorry after you did them? Why did you still feel badly after having done them?

BIG QUESTION 4- Have you ever dropped one friend after you got another new one because the old one was no longer “cool” to be seen with? Now that you are reading about Jack dropping Leena, do you think someone should drop an old friend when he makes a new one?

In what ways does Mr. Marcus demonstrate to Charlie and Jack how to make right their wrong?

BIG QUESTION 5- While the destruction of Leena’s science project can be “righted,” can the idea of “making right your wrong” work for every case where you need to apologize or say, “I’m sorry?”

Activities after story reading:

Jack says that before he became Charlie’s friend he was “a nobody.” What does that mean? Have you ever felt like a nobody? What do you think can make you feel like a somebody? **(ELA Speaking and Listening-discussion, upper grades memory piece-; CCSS ELA - Reading the range of literature)** Introduce Emily Dickinson’s “I’m Nobody, Who Are You?” poem and consider how that message explains why Jack hesitates to challenge Charlie, even though he knows that Charlie is wrong.

What does it mean to be a “goody-goody”? Would you want to be one or not? Why yes or why no? **(ELA Reading –nuanced word use)**

FOR GRADES 4-6: Explanatory & Persuasive Writing

Leena yells at both Charlie, who purposely destroyed her science exhibit, and Jack, who stood by while it was destroyed. She says, “Sorry doesn’t cut it.” What does that mean? When is that true and when is saying that you’re sorry enough? Explain. **(Beginning of ELA Argument Writing and Counterclaim. Speaking and Listening discussion and debate)**

Culminating Activities:

Retell the story from another perspective. **(CCSS ELA Reading Craft and Structure)** Try telling it from Jack's mother's or Leena's or Mr. Marcus's or Mike's perspective.

Sequel: When Jack next sees wrong actions being done, will he just stand by or participate in the wrong doings? Why or why not? Explain how the end of the story shows that Jack will change. In what ways will Charlie change as well or will he not change? Write a story about them that takes place the next school year after the *Sorry!* story. **(CCSS ELA narrative story telling)**

Challenge students to create an APOLOGY- Sorry Alphabet book or poem or glossary with illustration. This will address on a grade- and age-appropriate level their Language and Nuances of word plus academic and special domain vocabulary and also serve as an introduction to a career in guidance or human resources or social services or mediation. Students can research for CCSS ELA Reading Range alphabet book formats and Gail Carson Levine's "Forgive me, I meant to do it." **(ALL CCSS ELA and Career preparation objectives)** Among the potential alphabet words might be:

A apologize

B buy into what you did

C courtesy

D do good

E effort,

F fault

G goal /grudge

H help heal

I I am responsible-identify wrong

J justice

K kindness

L lead do not be lead, look ahead to how action or words make someone else feel

M my fault , mean, mend

N noble, need to make it right

O open up

P punish

Q quickly

R redo or restore or right

S start again –Sorry Sincerely

T take time before you do or say something that will hurt

U use your words and Actions with care

V value others and treat them with the values you want to be treated by

W watch your words

X eXamine what you say

Y your words signal your character

Z zealously guard what comes from your mouth or actions

FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL READERS & BEYOND

Sorry! is an evocative children’s picture book that has the look of a work designed to engage children and their parents in focusing on necessary apologies and righting wrongs. How can or should this work be used with middle school students and beyond in a time period where teachers have to teach aligned to the academic CCSS ELA rigor and College and Career preparation?

Actually this picture book genre, replete with an afterword by renowned apology expert Dr. Aaron Lazare, a reflective persuasive essay by Ms. Ludwig, and a chart of Apology Do’s and Don’ts grounded in research by Lazare easily lends” itself to rigorous CCSS ELA and academic research. ***(CCSS ELA Reading for facts, details, craft and structure, integration of knowledge and ideas- CCSS ELA Writing informative /explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey relevant ideas, concepts and information through the selection, organization, n and analysis of relevant content)***

1. Have the students analyze this picture book format its key ideas and details about apologies. Make certain that, as discerning, mature middle school students, they consider not only the key details in the narrative of Jack and Charlie’s friendship, but also the ideas and details contained in the Afterword by Aaron Lazare, MD, and the author note. Students can also review the questions for discussion. After this review of ideas, details, structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (interpretation of the Manning illustrations), middle school students can write informative essays about how this picture book is crafted to include both a fictional story about apologies in a school and a family setting and also includes information from an expert that is directed at adult readers.

2. Challenge the middle school students to use their initial analysis of this elementary school audience picture book to shift the setting, characters, plot, situations, and language to their own middle school. ***(CCSS ELA Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences)*** Have them provide a conclusion that follows from the narrative events or experiences. Challenge them to work either in teams with one serving as an illustrator or perhaps as a digital photographer to re-author and refocus the life lessons about apologies that Ludwig includes in this work to address a middle school audience. Allow the students time to brainstorm situations from their own lives that merit an apology. If desired, they could also author short memoirs focusing on when they have apologized or felt that they merited an apology.

Students can author their own picture books or even digital photographed narratives taking the Ludwig story to the middle school climate.

3. Students can do short research on the works of Aaron Lazare and other psychologists. (**CCSS ELA Writing short research to build and present knowledge**) They can not only write informative pieces about his content, but also develop arguments for or against some of his key points: “Without an apology, there may be no forgiveness;” “the most common failing is inadequately acknowledging the offense;” and that “four parts of an apology can mend or heal a broken relationship.” While the Lazare afterword is cogent, students who are asked to write arguments with counterclaims (**CCSS ELA Writing arguments to support claims**) can find much to support or to disagree with in his essay. Students can also interview school guidance, psychology, deans, coaches, parents, and others to get insights and arguments for and against Lazare’s perspective.

4. Students might also do **CCSS ELA arguments** using Beverly Engel’s three R’s: Regret, Responsibility, and Remedy. They can interview school guidance, dean, security staff and others to see how these play out and perhaps also interview scouting leaders, coaches and parents. The result can be a school newspaper issue devoted to apologies.

5. Gail Carson Levine and William Carlos Williams are two poets who wrote “phony” apology poems where the speaker does mean to do the wrong, but says “I am sorry” anyway. To address the CCSS Range of reading standard, students could identify other “fake” apology poems or even books that focus on pivotal apologies as part of the plot. They could do a study of favorite literary work where apologies might have shifted the ending and plot significantly. **CCSS ELA and HISTORY research to build and present knowledge** could also focus on national and personal actions for which there can be no apology in the sense of righting wrongs, showing genuine remorse, and making amends (e.g., atrocities of Hitler, the current North Korean government, Armenian Genocide and deliberate murders or child abuse). This type of research will engage students in using multiple digital, print, and human sources to support analysis, reflection, and research.

6. Vocabulary acquisition and research into the richly nuanced vocabulary (**CCSS LANGUAGE**) of “sorry” can begin with students using the afterword and author note as a springboard for developing a glossary of apology words and terms. Among those found in initial two essays at the close of *Sorry!* are: interaction, reparations, acknowledging the offense, ineffective explanations, validating the offended party’s experience, dignity of the sufferer, restoration, transformative, communicate caring, referee hurt feelings, insincere apology, wrongdoers, genuine remorse, remedy, and responsibility for actions. Students can add to this glossary and perhaps illustrate or draw cartoons to go with it.

7. The list of Apology Dos and Don’ts at the end of the book is a fabulous essay jumping off point for students to agree or disagree or to write a persuasive essay advocating all or some of the pointers. They can use their life experiences thus far to react to the dos and don’ts. (**CCSS ELA Argument or Persuasive Essay writing**)

8. Many writers use a playlist of music as they write, which inspires or can initiate comments on the plot/characters. It might be fun for students to research songs that would fit for a digital playlist of this topic. To begin, Elton John’s “Sorry Seems to be the Hardest Word.” Connie Francis’s “Who’s Sorry Now” and Ciara’s “Sorry” come to mind.

Sorry--both the book and the word, are not just for impressionable elementary school children only. Some works, including those by Dr. Seuss, serve as exemplars of their type for children and are so applicable to adult living that adults use them as key texts. *Sorry!* is for all ages and can be used effectively to instill critical thinking skills in students grades 2-8.