



MY RED BALLOON- LESSON PLAN

Activity Plan

Project Skills:

- Youth will learn about welcoming a loved one home

Life Skills:

- Learning to Learn
- Thinking Creatively
- Communicating with others

Grade Levels: K-2

Time: 1 hour

Supplies Needed:

- *My Red Balloon* by Eve Bunting (ISBN 1-59078-263-1)
- Craft Paper (large roll)
- Markers
- Stickers
- Buttons
- Markers
- Pencils
- Crayons
- Table clothes
- Scissors
- Glitter
- Tape and glue
- Other craft materials

Do Ahead:

- Read book to become familiar with the story.
- Make arrangements to display flat balloons.

BACK GROUND

Today's the day a little boy's Navy Dad comes home after being at sea. As an excited crowd waits for the ship, he holds a Welcome Home red balloon tied tightly around his wrist so that his father can find him on the dock. He loosens the string and sadly watches the balloon float away. Of course, his daddy still finds him and all is well.

WHAT TO DO

Activity: Read *My Red Balloon* by Eve Bunting

Have the youth look at the book jacket and have them tell you what they think the book is about. Read the book out loud.

While reading, show the youth the different illustrations in the book and allow the youth to share their ideas and questions about the different people the little boy meets and sees. After reading the book allow the youth time to share what they thought would happen when the little boy's balloon flew away.

Activity: Make a mailable hug

People must leave home for many reasons: a job, college, a trip. We always miss people we love, and it's often hugs that are the hardest to go without. We're making mailable or take-along hugs.

Youth should find a partner. Each person needs a sheet of craft paper large enough to reach from fingertip to fingertip when his or her arms are spread wide (width), the paper only needs to reach from crown of the head to the shoulder blades in height. Partners will take turns tracing one another on the large sheets of paper. Be sure to let youth know they should be careful while tracing and not touch the person or draw on their clothing. Instruct one partner to lie down on the paper with his or her arms spread wide (making a T, body and arms) the other partner will start tracing on one side just under the armpit. Follow the person's shape getting each finger and around the top or his or her head until the opposite side of the body has been reached, just under the armpit. Partners should switch roles.

Decorate the traced shape to look like the traced child. Remind youth to add accurate hair and eye color and perhaps their favorite shirt. When finished, assist youth in cutting around the outline of their bodies. Fold each traced person at the wrists, elbows, and shoulders (a fold at the neck may be necessary). This creates a realistic hug and will allow hugs to fit into a large manila envelope.

Youth and parents can address a manila envelope and place the mailable hug inside. Add an individualized note or a poem (ex. A Hug to You, Wrap these hands around you whenever I'm away so you can have a hug from me any time of day!). If a local VFW or Legion is willing to support the cost of postage for hugs to be mailed to service members, collect all addressed envelopes and mail.

Sources/Adapted From:

- Created by Laura Pettersen, 4-H Youth Development Project Educator, UW-Extension
- “Introducing a New Book” under “Helpful Hints” as adapted from the Michigan Team Nutrition Booklist, Michigan Team Nutrition, Family and Consumer Sciences, Michigan State University, 2002.

Activity: Design your own flat balloon

If time permits, youth can create a personal balloon for someone who has been gone/deployed. Help youth brainstorm sayings the balloons might have or shapes that might be appropriate (Missed you!, Good job!, Thanks!, Welcome Home!, star, heart, flag) Provide pieces of craft paper, crayons, markers, glitter, and other items. Assist youth in spelling, cutting, and general design. Once the balloon is finished, tape a piece of yarn to the balloon to serve as its string.

Balloons could be hung up in a public location or taken home by the participants.

TALK IT OVER**Reflect:**

Ask youth:

- What are some things that are difficult about having someone you love away from home/deployed?
- What ways did people in the book welcome the sailors home?
- How would you welcome someone home?

Apply:

- What are ways you show someone you miss them?
- What are ways you show someone you love them?

ENHANCE/SIMPLIFY**Enhance for Older Children:**

- Invite a service member to talk about their experience with deployment. He or she could share photos from the location they were stationed, talk about local customs, discuss differences or similarities in terrain, climate, sports, etc. If you choose to allow youth to ask questions, have them write them down on a note card and hand them in to be read by a facilitator who could filter questions for appropriateness if necessary. (questions should never be asked about shooting/killing)

Simplify for Younger Children:

- Not applicable

HELPFUL HINTS

Introducing a New Book

Use these basic pre-reading strategies to get students interested in a new book before reading it:

- Examine the cover to predict what the book will be about.
- Read the title of the book to, or together with youth.
- Identify the author and illustrator.
- Introduce important concepts and vocabulary words that might be confusing to youth prior to reading the book.

While reading:

- Stop at appropriate times to allow for participation and discussion.
- Encourage youth to interact with the text while listening to it. This helps them to understand and remember the important points.

After reading:

- Provide youth with time to reflect on the book.
- Ask them to describe their favorite part or to share something new that they learned in the story.

ADDITIONAL WEB LINKS

The following are websites related to Operation Military Kids and the 4-H Youth Development Program:

National Operation Military Kids Program:

<http://www.operationmilitarykids.org/public/home.aspx>

Wisconsin Operation Military Kids Programs:

<http://www.operationmilitarykids.org/public/home.aspx>

National 4-H Headquarters:

<http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/>

Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development:

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/index.cfm>



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