

Loser Lesson Plan | Scholastic.com

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Subject Area: Language Arts

Book Summary

Maybe a little kid can get away with wearing a giraffe hat, yelling "yahoo!" all the time, and having giggling fits over a word like *jabip*. But as Donald Zinkoff gets older, the other kids realize what a *loser* he really is: clueless, clumsy, bad at school, and friendless. Fortunately, Zinkoff is so wrapped up in the amazing world around him that his good, innocent spirit survives — especially with the steadfast support of his parents. And by the end, Zinkoff proves that even a loser can be a hero.

Objective

Students will examine the point of view of the narrative voice in *Loser*, and will specifically focus on how the narrator's perspective affects the way the reader interprets the events and characters of the book.

Standard: *Understands point of view in a literary text (e.g. first and third person, limited and omniscient, subjective and objective)*

Before Reading

Review the essentials of the narrative voice with your students. Ask members of your class to explain the difference between first, second, and third person, limited and omniscient, and subjective and objective point of view. Can they give examples of each of these? What is the point of view in their favorite books? Which narrative perspectives do they like the best? Which do they like least? Why?

Looking Through Someone Else's Eyes

1. After your class has read *Loser*, ask them to define the narrative voice: What is the perspective — is it limited or omniscient, and is it subjective or objective? How many different characters' perspectives does the narrator give us? How do the different characters in the book view Zinkoff? How does Zinkoff view himself?
2. Have your students take out scrap paper and brainstorm about the following question: What if *Loser* were told from the first-person limited point of view of either Zinkoff or one of the other characters in the book, instead of third-person omniscient point of view? How would that change the tone of the book? How would that affect the way that the readers feel about Zinkoff?
3. Once students have brainstormed, assign them a creative writing exercise, in which they will retell a chapter or episode from *Loser* from the limited first-person perspective of Zinkoff or another character.
4. After the assignment is completed, ask them to share with the class the character they chose to write about and a summary of how the change in perspective changed the story. Were there any instances where several students wrote from the point of view of the same character? Did they come to the same conclusions? You can also have students take turns reading their stories out loud or trading them with other students to read.

Labels and Losers

1. Unfortunately kids get labeled with names like "loser" all the time in school settings. Lead your students in a classroom discussion, during which you ask them to explain the different "labels" that people get assigned. What does a kid have to do to get a label like "loser" in their school? How do

kids get the other labels they've mentioned? How do they think it would feel if people perceived them as that "label" every day? Do they think that the labels that people receive are accurate and objective, or are they based on people's subjective judgment? (Strongly emphasize that specific names will not be used in this discussion. Students should speak in general terms.)

2. In a journal-writing activity, ask your students to write about the limits of their own perspectives. What are some examples of times when they've jumped to conclusions about someone and been totally wrong? What are ways that people can expand their perspectives and keep their minds more open?

Other Books About School Misfits

Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key

by *Jack Gantos*

Joey Pigza has ADD and hyperactivity, and when his medication wears off he can't sit still; he is constantly out of control, much to the distress of his teachers and mother. With the help of a caseworker, a special education program, and an adjustment to his medication, Joey finally gains some control over his situation. Its sequel, *Joey Pigza Loses Control*, is also worth reading.

There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom

by *Louis Sachar*

Fifth-grader Bradley Chalkers is an insecure bully who is hated by everyone in his class. Because he has no friends, he talks to his collection of little pottery animals. All of this changes when a counselor named Carla Davis helps him gain confidence and when he befriends the new kid, Jeff.

The Chocolate War

by *Robert Cormier*

In this controversial modern classic that explores the dark side of high school, freshman Jerry Renault finds the courage to stand up for himself when he refuses to participate in the annual chocolate sale. At first he is admired, but eventually his peers — led by the sadistic Archie — cruelly punish him for going against the flow. For mature readers.

Other Books by Jerry Spinelli

Maniac Magee

Wrinker

Stargirl

There's a Girl in My Hammerlock

The Library Card

Crash

Who Put That Hair in My Toothbrush?

Jason and Marceline

Fourth Grade Rats

Do the Funky Pickle

Space Station Seventh Grade

Report to the Principal's Office

Knots in My Yo-Yo String: The Autobiography of a Kid

The Bathwater Gang

Tooter Pepperday

Teaching plan written by Beth Doty

- Subjects:

Literature, Reading Comprehension, Reading Response, Literature Appreciation, Creative Writing,

Journal Writing, Determination and Perseverance, Tolerance and Acceptance, Prejudice and Tolerance Experiences, School Life

- Skills:

Plot, Character and Setting, Point of View, Writing