

PRIVATE EYES*

Lesson Plan

Elementary level students



A film by
NICOLA LEMAY

A NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA PRODUCTION



* Fomanticous / Ben Bahanz

Lesson Plan

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Overall objective

Enable students to understand and accept differences through their encounters with young Matthew, who is visually impaired and is learning how to discover the world by making maximum use of his other senses. This lesson plan is designed to assist educators in developing activities to engage their students before and after watching the film *Private Eyes*, directed by Nicola Lemay.

Target audience

Elementary level students, ages 5 +

Target subject areas

Languages, Science and Technology, Math, Arts and Culture

Lesson plan summary

This lesson plan will encourage students to think about what makes people different and will lead them to consider how individuals choose to react to differences. In the film *Private Eyes*, Matthew is a blind boy who is hunting for his birthday gift on the day before his birthday. Using his other senses, Matthew navigates his daily activities while trying to guess what his gift may be. By observing the special nature of his daily chores and hobbies, students will become aware of the fundamental role that his senses play in his life; they are directly linked to the development of Matthew's autonomy, connection to the world around him and acquisition of knowledge. Watching *Private Eyes* will enable students to better understand the lifestyle of individuals coping with blindness.

They will gain awareness of the factors that motivate blind people to maximize their sensory skills in order to function in the world. On a more general level, students will share their perceptions of diversity with their peers and become more open to and accepting of differences.



Start-up and preparatory activity

The Gift

Approximate duration: 60 minutes

Start-up: Tell your students that you're going to introduce them to super Matt, the special detective who is conducting an investigation in Nicola Lemay's film *Private Eyes*. Explain that he is looking for a birthday gift and that, before watching the film, you want to know what each student would like to receive as a birthday gift. Divide the class into teams of 4 to 6 students to carry out this activity.

Step 1: Each team finds out what types of birthday presents its members would like and writes this list out on the board. Together, the teams determine which gifts are the most frequently requested and include the most popular in their final selection.

Step 2: Assign one popular gift to each team and ask students to write what they would do with the gift if they received it. Write the information on the board.

Step 3: Watch the film *Private Eyes* with your students.

Step 4: Use the following questions to get the students' first impressions:

- What did the first few images in the film tell you about Matthew?
- What images in the film caught your attention most? Why?
- What was the first thing you noticed about Matthew's life?
- How does Matthew identify the objects that surround him?
- Why did the director decide to make this film in black and white?

Step 5: Using the information gathered in Step 2, ask your students to say which sense is the most closely linked to the gift that was assigned to their team. Would the gift be appropriate for Matthew? End the discussion by querying your students about the importance of developing each of their senses in order to learn.

Wrap up the activity by asking your students to make an assessment of what they have learned.



Activity 1

The Investigation

Approximate duration: 60 minutes

During this activity, students will handle an object without seeing it and then describe it so that their team members can guess what it is. They will discover the importance of accuracy in verbal communication and develop a descriptive vocabulary. They will become aware of the complexity and limitations of the sense of touch.

Material for each group: A box that is open at both ends so that students can fit their hands inside it, various objects (teabag, exotic fruit, USB key, eraser, magnet, an object that the students aren't familiar with) and a stopwatch.

Roles to assign in each team:

- The **witness** watches over the progress of the guessing game, ensures that the rules are followed so that none of the students can see the object and then gives the box to the witness in the next team.
- The **detective** handles the mystery object, describes it, guesses what it is and leads the other team members in their attempts to guess it.
- The 2 or 3 **investigators** ask questions and try to guess the mystery object based on the detective's descriptions.

Step 1: Use the following questions to query your students about the importance of the sense of touch for Matthew:

- Is it easy to determine what an object is simply by handling it?
- Can we learn how to touch?
- What information can we get from using our sense of touch?
- Is touch the most important sense for Matthew?

Step 2: Assign roles in each team. Ask each witness to put an object that is known only to him/her in the box and tell the witnesses that they have to get their team members to guess what the object is. At the instructor's signal, the detectives in each team handle the object hidden in the box and describe it so that the investigators can identify it. Investigators can ask their team's detective questions for more clarification. The maximum time allotted for guessing the object is three minutes. It is important that the object remain in the box. When time is up, have teams exchange boxes, change team member roles and start the exercise again.

Step 3: Use the following questions to recap the activity:

- Which is easier: touching and guessing or just guessing based on verbal descriptions?
- Are there some objects that couldn't be identified? Why?
- Are the "eyes in our fingers" as efficient, quick and precise as the eyes in our head?
- If you were to lose one of your senses, how do you think your other senses would adjust? Would they?



Activity 2

The Message

Approximate duration: 120 minutes

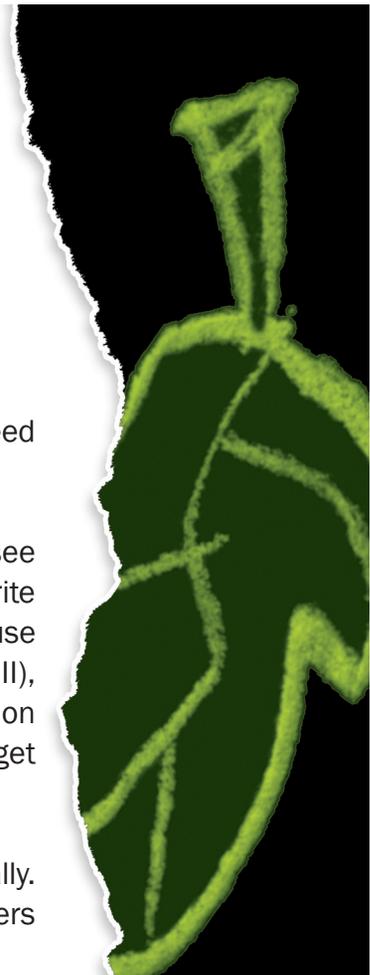
During this second activity, the students receive a message from Matthew. They need to answer him using his special method of communication.¹

Step 1: Invite your students to look at and touch the message Matthew sent (see Appendix I). Call their attention to the method of communication Matthew used to write to them. Tell them that Matthew reads with his fingers but that they will be able to use their eyes to read his message. Give the Braille code to each team (Appendix II), accompanied by a sentence from the message, or the entire message depending on the students' level, and ask them to figure out what Matthew wrote. Help them get started. For instance, decode the first sentence with them.

Step 2: Ask the students to read Matthew's message and answer his question verbally. Next, using the Braille alphabet – i.e., blacken the necessary points to form the letters needed – suggest that they answer him in Braille (Appendix I).

Step 3: Encourage students to comment on their experience and describe the strategies they used to decode and write in Braille. Invite them to determine the differences between the methods of communication used. Give them an opportunity to express their impressions and feelings about the experiences of young blind students.

1 Matthew's message at:
www.ecolejo.csmv.qc.ca/centre-de-documentation



Activity 3

Fragrances

Approximate duration: 45 minutes

In this activity, students will create fragrances with different smells and try to identify them.¹

Material for each group: 100 ml of 95% alcohol, a hermetic glass container, cotton balls and one of the following ingredients: 5 cinnamon sticks, 1 vanilla bean, 10 whole cloves, pine or other evergreen needles, citrus peels.

Recipe:

Pour 100 ml of 95% alcohol in the hermetic container, add **one ingredient** from the list of ingredients and shake the container on a regular basis. After one week, the fragrance is ready to be tested.

Step 1: Review the scenes in the film where Matthew uses his sense of smell to get information. Tell the students that each team will be creating a fragrance.

Step 2: Give each team a fragrance recipe. Ask the students to follow the recipe and write the fragrance of their concoction on a card.

Step 3: When all the fragrances are ready, the teams place their cards on a table. Next, they soak a few cotton balls with their fragrance and place them on another table. Each student tries to identify the ingredient used to make the different fragrances.

Step 4: Recap this exercise by inviting the students to think about the important role the sense of smell plays in discovering the environment around us. Get them to think about the activity by answering the following question: “What did this exercise help me discover about my way of learning?”

1 A more detailed experiment can be found at:
www.lesdebrouillards.qc.ca/client/page_experience.asp?page=5656 (in French)



Activity 4

Paths

Approximate duration: 60 minutes

In this activity, students will learn how to use markers to situate locations and will give a detailed description of the path used to get there.

Step 1: Invite students in each team to draw a path from memory that starts in the classroom and leads to a specific point in the school. For example, team 1 draws the path leading to the secretary's office and team 2 draws one that goes to the library. Tell students to draw the specific markers that can be found along the path.

Step 2: Encourage the students to use specific, descriptive vocabulary to explain their path to students in the other teams so that they can guess the destination.

Step 3: Recap the activity by exhibiting the students' drawings in the school hallways.

Recap activity

Approximate duration: 40 minutes

Ask your students to compare Matthew's daily life with that of a sighted child his age. Consider such factors as getting about, autonomy, learning, written communication, leisure activities, etc.

Objective sharing

After participating in the activities provided in this lesson plan, the students should be able to:

- Describe the differences in the way blind children and sighted children discover the world around them;
- Recognize the challenges that blind and visually impaired people face in adapting to the reality of sighted people;
- Grasp the importance of sensory perception in learning.

References

Webography

Activity 2: The Message

Matthew's message (*in French*): www.ecolejo.csmv.qc.ca/centre-de-documentation

Downloadable software for learning Braille:

www.masef.com/freewares3/brailleur.htm (*in French*)

www.ed2go.com/Classroom/PrintLesson.aspx?lesson=1&classroom=VJH8ewUNwRSOPrKI4vScCehGYvW10HRsyzqVMSR7Xhg%3D (*in English*)

Activity 3: Fragrances

Resourceful and really scientific. How about making a fragrance to develop your sense of smell?

www.lesdebrouillards.qc.ca/client/page_experience.asp?page=5656 (*in French*)

<http://free-science-project.blogspot.com/2009/02/homemade-perfume.html>
(*in English*)

Books

Biographies of Louis Braille:

Louis Braille: The Boy Who Invented Books for the Blind

By Margaret Davidson

Illustrations by Janet Compere

New York: Hastings House, 1972

Louis Braille, l'enfant de la nuit

By Margaret Davidson

Illustrations by André Dahan

Éditions Gallimard

(Collection Folio Cadet)



Appendix I

Hi,
Here is a message from Matthew. You will be able to read it by using the Braille code.
You will also be able to answer him by blackening the necessary dots to form the letters
that you need to write your message. Between each word, leave a blank cell. Your
message will be easier to read.

Matthew's message

Hi,
Here is a message from Matthew. You will be able to read it by using the Braille code.
You will also be able to answer him by blackening the necessary dots to form the letters
that you need to write your message. Between each word, leave a blank cell. Your
message will be easier to read.

Braille cells to answer Matthew

Braille cells to answer Matthew

Appendix II

Simplified Braille code

⠁	⠃	⠉	⠇	⠑	⠋	⠎	⠈	⠊
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
⠊	⠅	⠎	⠇	⠏	⠍	⠏	⠑	⠗
j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r
⠎	⠋	⠎	⠇	⠏	⠍	⠏	⠑	⠗
s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	ç
⠑	⠗	⠎	⠇	⠁	⠑	⠇	⠏	⠗
é	à	è	ù	â	ê	î	ô	û
⠑	⠗	⠎						
ë	ï	ü						

⠠	⠠	⠠
Period	Comma	Question mark
⠠	⠠	⠠
Exclamation point	Colon	Semicolon
⠠	⠠	⠠
Apostrophe	Cap Indicator of capital letter	Hyphen

