

Title of Lesson: In Our Mothers' House by Patricia Polacco**Grade:** 3rd–5th grade**OBJECTIVES****By the end of the lesson, students will:**

- Identify “acceptance” as a key family/community value and as one of the story’s main ideas
- Define, recall, and discuss key family/community “accepting” and “neighborly” behavior
- Express the importance of accepting communities in writing

SFUSD STANDARDS

- **California Health Education Content Standards** 1 and 7 (Mental, Emotional and Social Health)
- **CCSS Reading/Literature:** Grades 3-5, #2 (Key Ideas), #4 (Craft & Structure)
- **CCSS Speaking and Listening:** Grades 3-5, #2 (Comprehension and Collaboration)

TIME

- **1 Fifty (50) minute lesson**

RESOURCES / MATERIALS NEEDED

- In Our Mothers' House by Patricia Polacco
- Whiteboard
- Marker
- Post-it notes
- Pencils
- Poster paper or Chalkboard
- Dictionaries
- In Our Mothers' House Worksheet

VOCABULARY

Define key words for discussion:

- **Acceptance:** The act or state of being supported or welcomed
- **Gay (K-2):** A term used to describe a person who has romantic feelings for another person of the same sex, usually used to describe a man.
- **Gay (3-12):** A term that can apply to either men or women who are physically and emotionally attracted to persons of the same sex. However, it is usually used to describe a man (e.g., “gay men”).
- **Heterosexual (K-2):** A person who has romantic feelings for someone of the opposite sex.
- **Heterosexual (3-12):** A person who is physically and emotionally attracted to a person of the opposite sex.
- **Homophobia:** Irrational fear of feelings of affection for members of one’s own sex, and / or hatred of those feelings in others.
- **Judge (Judging):** To have an opinion for or against someone or something
- **Lesbian (K-2):** A woman who has romantic feelings for another woman.
- **Lesbian (3-12):** A term used to describe women who are emotionally and physically attracted to other women.
- **Neighborly:** A term used to describe people who act helpful, friendly, or kind.
- **Prejudice:** A belief, usually negative about people within a given group (e.g., “people from California are all weird”).

Identify other words from the story that your students may not be familiar with (i.e., pediatrician, paramedic, etc).

CLASSROOM PROCEDURE

Ground rules: Introduce or review classroom rules in order to create a safe place for students to discuss the book. Students in the class may have same sex parents or know people who are gay or lesbian. Consider using the ground rules listed below:

- Respect other people in the class
- One person speaks at a time
- Everyone has the “right to pass” if s/he doesn’t want to talk
- Everyone will have a chance to speak

Pre Reading Think-Pair-Share Exercise

Have the students sit together on the floor, and get into pairs. Provide three post-it’s to each pair, and have them write 1 to 5 word responses to the following questions:

- Why are families important?
- What are important things that all families share?
- What is unique about your family?

Have each pair share out their response, and collect their post-its. On a large piece of poster paper (or whiteboard) organize responses by themes. Depending on students’ ability and

comfort, ask students to give examples of how these words/themes show up in their family, neighborhood or classroom?

Introduce the book: At the end of the activity, explain to students that the classroom is like a neighborhood with students acting as neighbors to each other; each classroom is part of the larger school community. Tell the students you will read aloud a story on what it means to show acceptance and behave neighborly.

Read

In Our Mothers House by Patricia Polacco

Class Discussion

Suggested discussion questions during and after reading “In Our Mothers’ House”:

- What makes Marmee and Meema’s family unique?
- How did Marmee and Meema show that they were accepting and neighborly?
- How did the other neighbors treat each other? Show examples.
- Compare Mrs. Lockner to Meema (or the other neighbors) in how they treated others.
- Why was Mrs. Lockner fearful?
- How would you respond to someone not being accepting and neighborly towards your family, like the Lockners?

Post Class Discussion Wrap Up

Review the class brainstorm list, “What is important to have in a family or neighborhood?” Ask the class if they would make any changes after reading the story.

ACTIVITIES

Group Activity

Assign each student the In Our Mothers’ House worksheet, and have students form groups of four (selecting a reporter). Students will work in groups to complete their individual worksheet.

The groups will work together to:

- 1) Create a group definition of acceptance
- 2) Provide adjectives that describe people who practice acceptance
- 3) Describe how they know, and show there is acceptance in the classroom and school

Give students 15 minutes to complete, and have students share out how they know/show acceptance. List student responses on a white board and review class responses.

OPTIONAL Homework: Writing about Accepting Communities Activity

- Inform students that they will write a paragraph about making an accepting community.
- Explain to students that we all have to work together to make everyone feel safe, cared for and accepted in our community. Ask, “Why is it important to make people/peers feel accepted in this school?”
- Next ask students why they think people judge those who are “unique”? How does it feel to be judged or left out?
- Finally, ask students “What can you do to create an accepting community at this school/classroom?” If needed, remind them how Marmee, Meema and the neighborhood created a welcoming community. Give them a few minutes to write, and then share out if time permits.
- To assist students, review the definition of accepting, neighborly, and other key words from the vocabulary. Keep the list visible for the students so they may copy key words for the sentence completion.

Closure and Wrap Up

Have students share how they will create an accepting and neighborly school.

ASSESSMENT

The objective will have been met based on individual participation in class discussion, activities and completed worksheet to assess if students’ grasped the main ideas/themes.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**Resources / Curriculum Links:**

Go to www.patriciapolacco.com/books/in_house/index.html and have students write an appreciation message on the e-postcard to a peer, family or staff member that has made them feel welcomed or loved.

In Our Mother's House

Complete the directions and
Answer the questions in the
boxes below.

Name: _____

Draw something unique at your school (use the back for more space).

Write your group's definition of the word
acceptance.

Write three adjectives that describe someone who
practices acceptance.

ACCEPTANCE

Give an example of how you know there is
acceptance in your classroom.

What is one thing you do to show acceptance to
other students in this classroom? How do you show
acceptance to students in other classrooms?