

Who's in Charge?

Companion Text: If You See the Moon, by Zia Wells

Subject Area & Grade Level: Social Studies, 1st Grade

Materials: A guest speaker in a position of authority

Objectives

After this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify authority figures in their lives
- Determine what criteria an authority figure uses to make decisions
- Evaluate a decision of an authority figure

Introduction

Read the story once without stopping. Then, return to and reread pages 25 and 26. Ask students who they think the people are who are pointing at Cirra and Nimbu, and telling them to come down. After allowing for other suggestions, posit that they are the authority figures, or “elders,” of the village. Point out that whoever they are, they clearly believe that they are in charge of Cirra and Nimbu. Define “authority figure” as “a person who is in charge of other people.”

Procedure

Pair students up and have them work with their partners to name as many authority figures as they can, along with a description of what they govern. When it seems that students have run out of ideas, have them share their ideas and write a list on the board. Your list could include the following authority figures and their purviews: principal/school, mayor/city, president/country, pastor/church, imam/mosque, police chief/police department, chef/cooks, parents/children, teacher/students, and manager/employees.

Discussion

Invite your principal, your mayor, police chief, or other authority figure to be interviewed by your class. Have students prepare written questions ahead of time, and preview them yourself. Questions should be about decision-making, using authority responsibly, or specific decisions the student knows the authority figure to have made. Ask your guest to explain what or who it is they govern, to give a brief description of how he or she makes decisions, and the give an example or two of a difficult problem he or she had to solve as an authority figure. Then, allow students to ask any of their prepared questions that have not been answered. Either with the speaker present, or after he or she leaves, allow students to question and evaluate the decisions made by the speaker. Discuss the balance between responsibility and authority.

