

“I Am” Poem

This is the first lesson in the Courage Unit and focuses on the courage to be our unique selves. Students will write “I Am” poems to highlight the things they think, feel, believe, wish, and dream. This is a great way to get kids to contemplate and celebrate the unique things about them while recognizing the courage it takes to be themselves.

Kindness Sub-Concept(s)

Vulnerability, Humility

Lesson Timeframe

30-40 minutes

Required Materials

☐ “I Am” poem template

Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.



**DESIGNATED BY CASEL
AS A RECOMMENDED PROGRAM
FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.**

See last page for details.

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Examine what it means to have courage about being yourself.
- Identify unique personal qualities through writing an “I Am” poem.

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Many people associate the term “courage” with being strong, standing up to oppression, and fighting for what is right. While all of these definitions do in fact refer back to various types of courage, there is yet another focus that is equally valuable: the courage to respond with kindness. This unit will focus on kindness as a form of courageous action. Your ability to infuse kindness into your daily life is the most courageous thing you can do for yourself. When your thoughts change, your behaviors change, which ultimately leads to a positive change in those around you as well. This kindness chain reaction starts with you! This week, write out one specifically kind thought about yourself and post it on your bathroom mirror. Repeat it to yourself aloud every single time you read it. At first this may feel awkward and unnecessary. However, the more you hear kind words out loud, the more likely you are to internalize them. How can you be kind to yourself today?

Tips for Diverse Learners

- For ESL students, the verbs are all simple and present tense, so ensure students are finishing the sentence with this in mind.
- Poetry is powerful when spoken; if you have access to the technology, students may enjoy recording their poems and hearing them spoken.



Share

5-7 minutes

In this unit we are going to talk about courage. Most of us probably think about courage in terms of being brave in scary situations. And that can be what courage looks like. Courage can look like other things too, though. What are some other definitions of courage?

Invite student response. Examples could include standing up for something you believe in, trying again after you fail, making new friends, going to a new school, or trying new things.



Inspire

5-7 minutes

Courage can also look and feel like simply being yourself; letting yourself feel sad when you are sad or happy when you are happy. Courage can be wearing the shirt you love even if you don't think others will like it, or getting a new and funky hair cut, or trying out for the play even though all your friends are doing music and sports.

Courage is knowing who you are and loving that.

Today we are going to investigate a bit about ourselves through writing. We are going to write I Am poems. Here is how an I Am poem works: An I Am poem has three stanzas or short paragraphs. The first two stanzas are five sentences long and the third stanza is six sentences. The first line of each stanza is the same, and the whole poem ends on that same first line.

Each line begins with "I" followed by a verb: I am, I hear, I see, I want, etc. You will each get a template to fill out, so don't worry: you won't have to remember all of this!

Let me read you a few examples:

Read some examples here:

<http://www.washington.edu/diversity/sea/seapoems/>



Empower

10-15 minutes

Okay, now you are going to write your own "I Am" poem. Think about all the things that make you unique and special. Think about what is courageous about you: what makes you feel strong and brave, or sad and happy. There is a line for everything cool about you.

Handout the "I Am" poem template and let students work on these.



Reflect

5 minutes

If students finish their poems, you could invite them to share, or you could read them out loud and the class can try to guess whose poem you read. Or, if they did not finish, collect them to let them finish another time (perhaps as an exit ticket or some other time-filler).

If these are too personal to share or display, ensure they make it into their final portfolios or other take-home work. It might be a nice piece to spark discussion at home.

Remind students that it takes courage to know yourself and to appreciate everything that makes you special and unique. There is no one exactly like you and there will never be another person exactly like you. This unit we will focus on how to be courageously kind to ourselves and to others.



Extension Ideas

- Students can bring their poems home to share with parents or guardians; they can also bring a blank template home for a parent/guardian to complete.
- Have students put a finger or thumbprint somewhere on the poem; as a science extension, study fingerprints and their unique properties. Hypothesize how no two fingerprints are the same and study how fingerprints are used for identification, technology, security, etc. This could be a fun way to round out science for the year.



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LEARNING.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs.

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>

“I am” Poem

I am

I wonder

I hear

I see

I want

I am

I feel

I touch

I worry

I cry

I am

I understand

I say

I dream

I try

I hope

I am

