

No Place for Hate[®] Activity Library

Cultivating Courage: Leadership Lessons from *Don't Feed the Lion*

Lesson Plan and Overview

Don't Feed the Lion by Bianna Golodryga and Yonit Levi explores the story of antisemitism growing at Oakdale Middle School. The story begins with Theo Kaplan, a 13-year-old Chicago middle schooler and soccer captain. Theo's world is turned upside down when his soccer idol makes a viral antisemitic comment and later when Theo discovers a swastika drawn on his gym locker. Theo is left to grapple with his own reaction to the graffiti, along with the prejudice and apathy from his teammates and administration and the reactions from his family members. Joined by a new friend, Gabe; his co-captain and best friend, Connor; his younger sister, Annie and his parents and grandparents, Theo struggles through his initial desire to ignore the hate and focus on soccer and ultimately learns about the impact of bigotry on himself and his community. The middle grades novel *Don't Feed the Lion* can be used to spark a conversation with young people about different leadership styles and the importance of young people's leadership in the face of incidents.

Grade Level Grades 6-8

Learning Objectives

- Students will discuss and reflect on what it means to be a leader
 - Students will analyze leadership profiles of the main characters from *Don't Feed the Lion*.
 - Students will create and reflect on their own leadership profiles
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Materials Needed

- [Don't Feed the Lion: Leadership Profiles](#) (1 copy of each student)
 - Handouts: [Leading For Change: The Young Leaders of Don't Feed the Lion](#) and [My Voice, My Impact: My Leadership's Role in No Place for Hate](#) (1 copy for each student)
 - Writing implements
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Words You Might Use

It is important to ground any conversation about identity and experience through shared definitions. Consider the topic that you will be discussing with your students and ensure that terms are defined so all students approach the conversation from the same place.

Words You Might Use (Continued)

- **Antisemitism:** Prejudice, discrimination, or hostility directed at Jewish people. It is generally based on negative stereotypes, myths, or misinformation about Jews, Judaism, or Jewish identity. It manifests in harmful beliefs, attitudes, language, exclusion, harassment, and violence against individuals or Jewish communities.

Core Activity

- **Begin the conversation with a full-class discussion with students focusing on leadership.**
 - What does it mean to be a leader?
 - Does everyone “lead” in the same way? Why do you think that is?
 - What role does leadership play in ensuring our school is No Place for Hate?

Allow for several students to respond before transitioning to the next part of the activity.

- **Transition to *Don't Feed the Lion*:**
 - **If students have read *Don't Feed the Lion***
 - Suggested Script: *The novel Don't Feed the Lion centers around an antisemitic incident and the way it impacts different members of a school community. Each character has unique reactions to these events and for that reason, there's a lot we can learn about leadership by exploring their responses. In our activity today, we will analyze several characters from the novel and consider how we can use their experiences to become stronger leaders in our school community.*
 - **If students have not read *Don't Feed the Lion***
 - Begin by sharing a [summary](#) from *Don't Feed the Lion*.
 - Suggested Script: *The novel Don't Feed the Lion centers around an antisemitic incident and the way it impacts different members of a school community. Each character has unique reactions to these events and for that reason, there's a lot we can learn about leadership by exploring their responses. In our activity today, we will analyze several characters from the novel and consider how we can use their experiences to become stronger leaders in our school community.*
- **Leadership Profiles—*Don't Feed the Lion***
 - Break students into small groups of approximately 4. Distribute the [leadership profiles](#) to the students, along with the [Leading for Change: The Young Leaders of Don't Feed the Lion](#) handout.
 - Allow students 5-10 minutes to read the profiles in their small groups and record their thoughts on the accompanying handout.
 - After students have discussed in their small groups, facilitate a conversation where each group shares their key takeaways from the profiles.

Core Activity (Continued)

- To transition to the next part of the lesson, ask students: *How do you think this discussion of leadership relates to our goal of making our school No Place for Hate? Solicit several answers before transitioning. What does it mean to be a leader?*
- **Leadership Profiles—Leading for Change**
 - Explain to students that now they are going to have the opportunity to think about their own leadership style. Remind them that the characters of *Don't Feed the Lion* show us that there are so many ways to be a leader, and that they should consider what is most authentic and natural for them.
 - Allow approximately 10 minutes for students to complete their profiles through the [My Voice, My Impact: My Leadership's Role in No Place for Hate](#) handout.
 - If time allows, ask students to share their thoughts and ideas from the reflection questions:
 - How can I use my strengths as a leader to make my school No Place for Hate?
 - What supports do I need from my peers to grow as a leader?
 - What supports do I need from my teachers to grow as a leader?
- **Close by asking students:** *Now that we've explored different leadership styles and reflected on our own strengths as leaders, what are some steps we can take to continue to act as leaders to make sure our school is No Place for Hate?*

Optional Follow-Up/ Going Further

Note: These additional activities can be done as follow-ups to the core activity and they can also serve as an additional NPFH activity if the core activity is completed first.

- Now that students have completed the core lesson and reflected on their role as leaders, direct students to create posters to display around the school to remind the entire school community about the importance of being leaders for change in ensuring their school is No Place for Hate.
- After students have completed the core lesson and reflected on their role as leaders, engage students in ADL's digital mini-lesson on the [Pyramid of Hate](#). Ask students to reflect on, discuss and consider how their role as leaders can function in interrupting hate before it has the opportunity to escalate.
- Once students have completed the core lesson and reflected on their role as leaders, direct students to create a No Place for Hate guide for incoming sixth graders. Ask students to consider: what would you want students who are new to this school to know about our school community and culture? What would you want students who are new to this school to know about the role of No Place for Hate in our school community?

Home Connection

Share the middle grades novel *Don't Feed the Lion* ([view a summary](#)) with parents/caregivers along with the leadership profiles from this lesson.

- Ask students to share the leadership profiles they made with parents/caregivers. Encourage that they discuss how parents/caregivers can support young people in further developing leadership outside of school.

How Activity Meets NPFH Requirements

Students will reflect on how fictional young people responded to incidents of antisemitism in their community and school, and the leadership traits that they displayed in doing so. Students will engage in conversations about these different leadership styles and reflect upon their own leadership strengths and weaknesses. This will encourage students to consider how they can be leaders in contributing to a school community that is safe, inclusive and equitable.

Leading for Change: The Young Leaders of *Don't Feed the Lion*

The Social Media Warrior: Annie



Strengths: What are some of the positives of Annie's leadership style?

Opportunities: What are some of the ways Annie's leadership style could improve?

Key Takeaways: What did you learn about leadership from Annie? What would you like to keep in mind for your own leadership?

The Reluctant Activist: Theo



Strengths: What are some of the positives of Theo's leadership style?

Opportunities: What are some of the ways Theo's leadership style could improve?

Key Takeaways: What did you learn about leadership from Theo? What would you like to keep in mind for your own leadership?

The Eager Ally: Gabe



Strengths: What are some of the positives of Gabe's leadership style?

Opportunities: What are some of the ways Gabe's leadership style could improve?

Key Takeaways: What did you learn about leadership from Gabe? What would you like to keep in mind for your own leadership?

The Friend with his Head in the Sand: Connor



Strengths: What are some of the positives of Connor's leadership style?

Opportunities: What are some of the ways Connor's leadership style could improve?

Key Takeaways: What did you learn about leadership from Connor? What would you like to keep in mind for your own leadership?

My Voice, My Impact:

My Leadership's Role in No Place for Hate

Name:	
Who I Am: Think about: how do I identify as a person? Am I a sibling, a club leader, a sports player, a musician, etc.?	
Key Leadership Traits:	
Leadership Opportunities for Growth:	

Questions to consider:

- How can I use my strengths as a leader to make my school No Place for Hate?
- What supports do I need from my peers to grow as a leader?
- What supports do I need from my teachers to grow as a leader?

Draw some things that represent your identity.