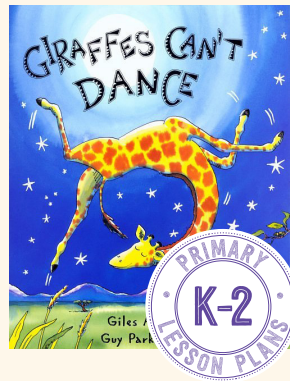


Giraffes Can't Dance

by Giles Andreae and illustrated by Guy Parker-Rees

Themes

Encourage others
 Kindness
 Do your Best
 Self-Esteem
 Confidence



Gerald the giraffe wants nothing more than to dance like the other animals. His legs are too skinny and his knees buckle when he tries to prance, twirl and dance. At the Jungle Dance, the animals are very unkind to Gerald and make fun of his dance moves. Cricket's encouraging words help Gerald the Giraffe learn to dance to his own music.

Key Vocabulary

Munching: chew or eat in a noisy way
Buckled: to bend or collapse because of too much weight
Prance: to move with high steps, lively and proud
Waltz: a dance where couple takes three steps together
Tango: a dance where couple make long pauses in difficult poses
Elegant: graceful and nice looking
Clumsy: moving in awkward ways, falling, bumping into things
Sneered: to laugh at someone with a look on your face that isn't kind
Clearing: an opening in the trees that allow you to see the sky
Swaying: little movements back and forth
Hooves: hard covering on animal feet
Shuffling: sliding your feet on the ground without lifting up your foot completely
Swishing: move quickly with a soft noise
Boogies: to dance fast
Entranced: to look at with wonder and amazement

Tricky Phrases

Froze Up: can't move- as if frozen – usually from fear
Rooted to the spot: can't move as if your feet have grown roots into the ground and are holding you in place

Discussion Starters

1. Describe what happened when Gerald tried to dance? *His knees buckled and he fell on his head. Why did he have those problems? Crooked knees and thin legs - that's the way giraffes are built.*
2. Why did he want to dance?
All the other animals were dancing at the yearly Jungle Dance. He wanted to join in and be part of the group.
3. How did Gerald feel when he first arrived at the dance? Why did he feel that way?
He felt sad because he knew he couldn't dance as well as the other animals.
4. When have you felt like Gerald - wanting to do something that EVERYONE else could do and you weren't very good at it?
Answers will vary – allow for discussion to develop empathy and connection to Gerald's feelings. Remind students that when they do their best it might not be the same as someone else's best. It doesn't matter if you do YOUR best!

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5. **The other animals were unkind when it was Gerald's turn to dance. Describe what they did and said that was unkind.**
Lions roared when they saw him coming, animals sneered, called him clumsy, said he couldn't dance, called him a fool, said he was weird.
6. **How did it make Gerald feel when they were unkind to him?**
He lost confidence, agreed with their thoughts and words, and accepted their words as truth. Discuss in depth, encouraging students to not believe it when someone says something unkind about them. Just because an unkind person says it doesn't make it truth.
7. **Cricket treated Gerald very differently from the other animals. What did he do and say to be kind to Gerald?** *Recognized difference as not being wrong or bad – just different. Encouraged Gerald to dance his own way to different music.*
8. **How did the kind, encouraging words change how Gerald felt?** *He danced without falling, smile on his face, did moves he never did before, felt wonderful. Cried with joy, "I am dancing!"*
9. **How did the other animals respond to the dancing Gerald?** *Watched in amazement, surprised at first and then celebrated with him. They complimented him with kindness – He's the best dancer we've ever seen. They tossed flowers to him to say he was a great dancer.*
10. **How was Gerald kind and encouraging to the animals when they asked him how he learned to dance like that?** *He could have been unkind and just said he was better than them but instead he encouraged them by saying We ALL can dance when we find music that we love.*



PRINTABLE:
 Writing Prompt

Writing Prompt

Draw a picture of YOU and Gerald happily dancing. Write a sentence with encouraging words for Gerald.

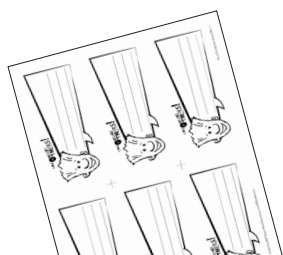
Activities

Dance Moves

Put on some gentle music and ENCOURAGE your students to listen to the sounds and move with the music. Use some of the movement words from the text and ask kids to *sway, shuffle, skip, prance*, etc. During the dancing, be sure to extend kind words of ENCOURAGEMENT to each and every student, recognizing their unique differences and acceptance. Describe the smiles and positive attitudes you see on student faces when they are being encouraged. At the end, have students describe how they felt – dancing in their own way and hearing kind words. Remind them that kind, encouraging words feel good – when you receive them AND when you give them to someone else.

'Encourage Others' Classroom Jar

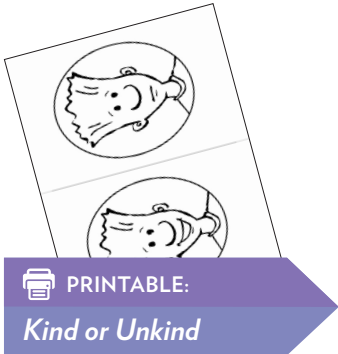
Create an ENCOURAGE OTHERS jar in your classroom. When you hear students encouraging others, add an entry to the jar with the student's name and what they said. (A printable page of entries is provided). Have a celebration when the jar is full and read out all the encouraging words heard in your classroom!



PRINTABLE:
 Encourage Others Jar

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KIND or UNKIND

Use NED Head puppets to explore encouraging versus unkind words. Make copies of the printable: one side has NED's smiling face, the other has NED with sad frown. Students can color, fold the paper in half (so heads back-to-back), and glue a popsicle stick between the folded paper. Optionally, cut ovals out before gluing.

As you describe the situations below and students can hold up which side of their NED head puppet shows how it makes NED feels when words are encouraging or unkind.



1. NED is struggling with a math problem and wants to give up. Someone says – just give up – you will never get it. How does NED feel?
2. NED is a very good artist – his work was just selected for the art show. Someone says: "Great work NED." How does NED feel?
3. NED is learning how to jump rope. He can't quite get the jumping right and keeps tripping on the rope. His friend tells him, "You almost had it – keep trying." How does NED feel?
4. NED knows he can sing a song but has forgotten the words. His classmates laugh at him but one friend encourages him to try again- *You can do it!* How does NED feel?

TEACHER NOTE: Make up cards from real situations you hear in the classroom or at recess. Use the NED head puppets to help your students understand how powerful their words can be – for good and for bad. Keep the puppets available in your class for teachable moments.

Puppet Stories

After reading the story give students a copy of the stick puppet printable (printed on card stock). Each character can be colored, cut out and glued onto a craft stick. When students have completed their puppets gather the group together to read the book one more time and act it out with their puppets. Then, pair students together to retell the story to each other on their own. Create innovations from the story where some of the animals can't do something. Use the puppets to tell the new story and show how the rest of the animals ENCOURAGE the others to overcome the obstacle.

Resources

For more info...

Accelerated Reading Quiz: 86381

Art project Idea:

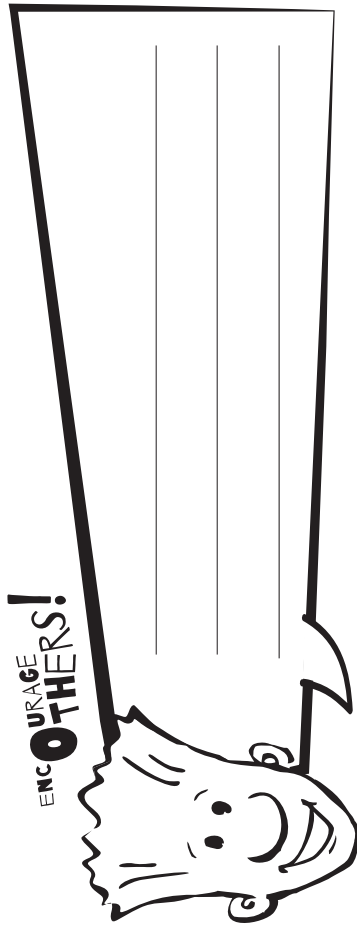
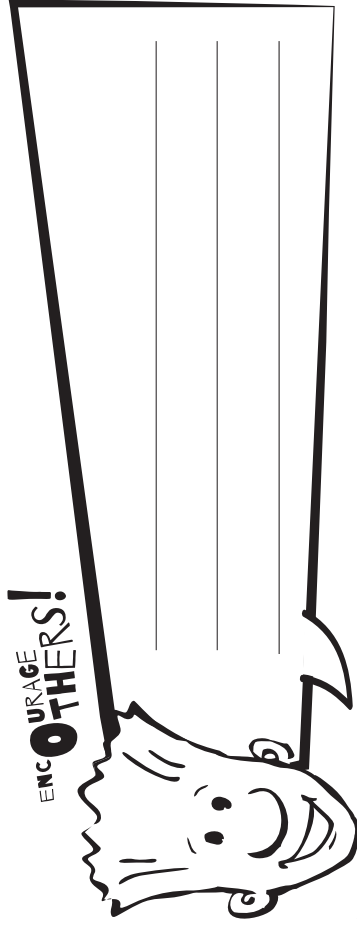
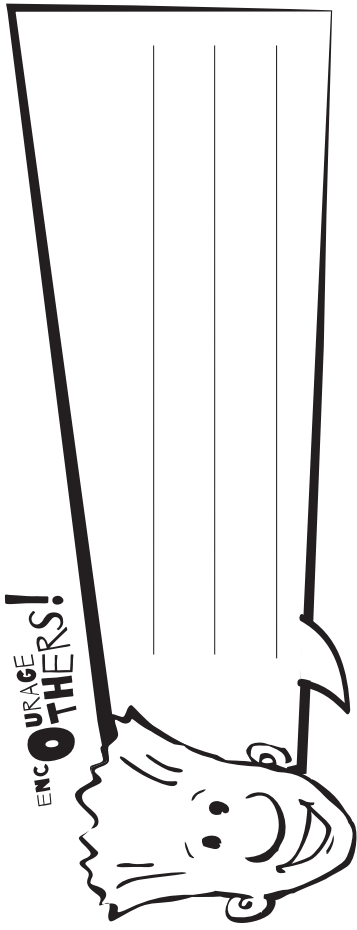
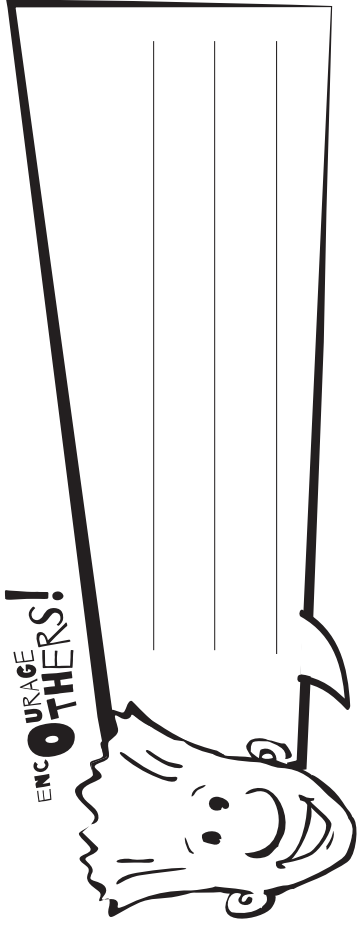
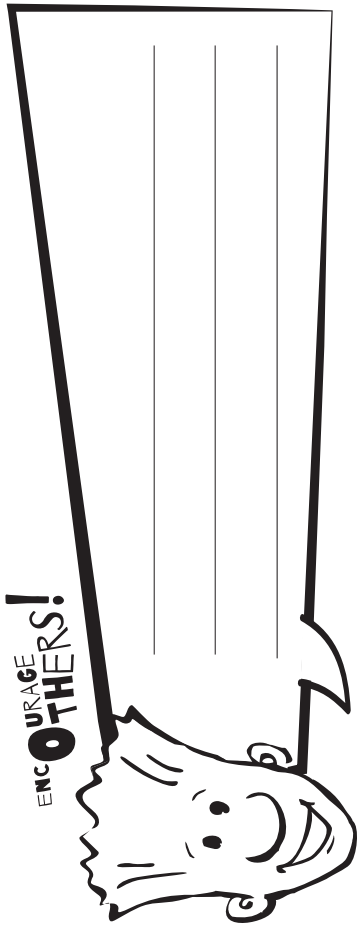
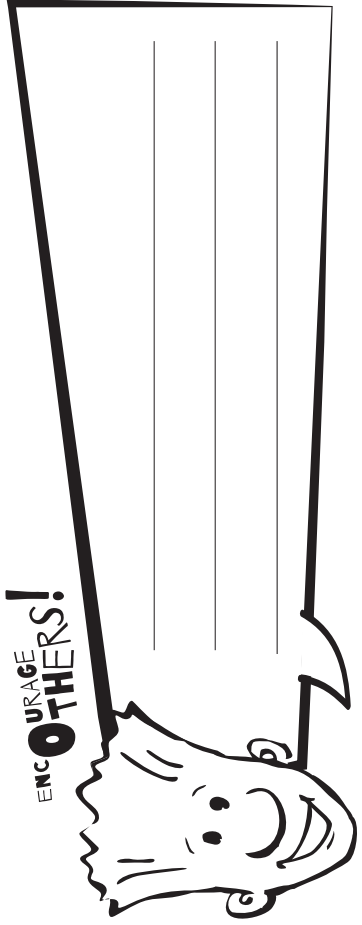
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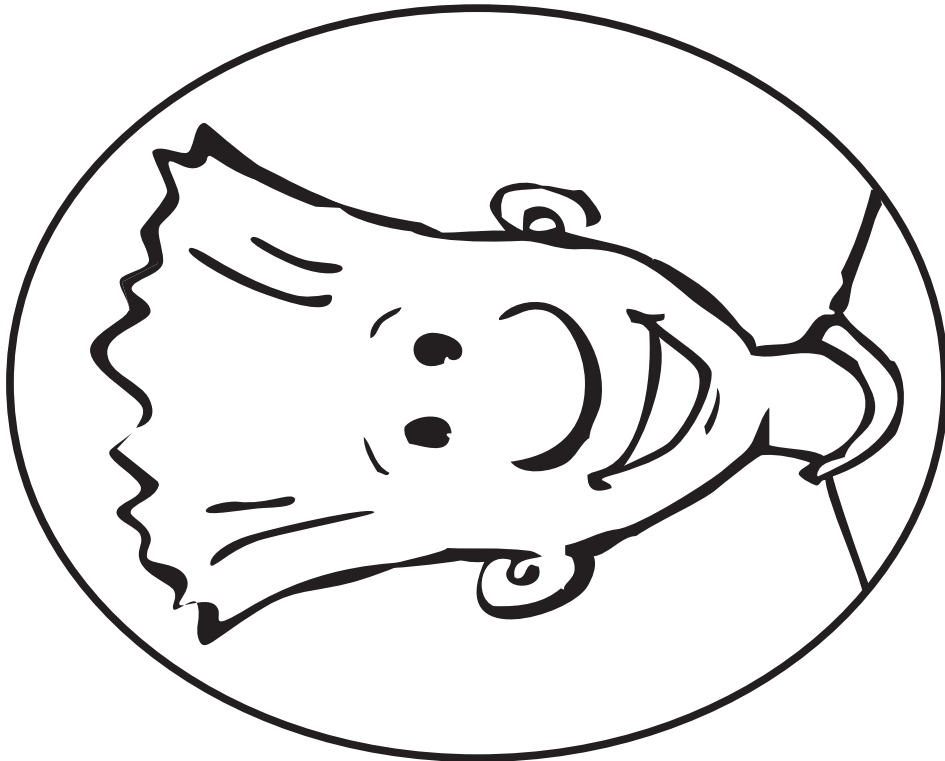
Directions: Draw a picture of YOU and Gerald happily dancing. Write a sentence with encouraging words for Gerald.



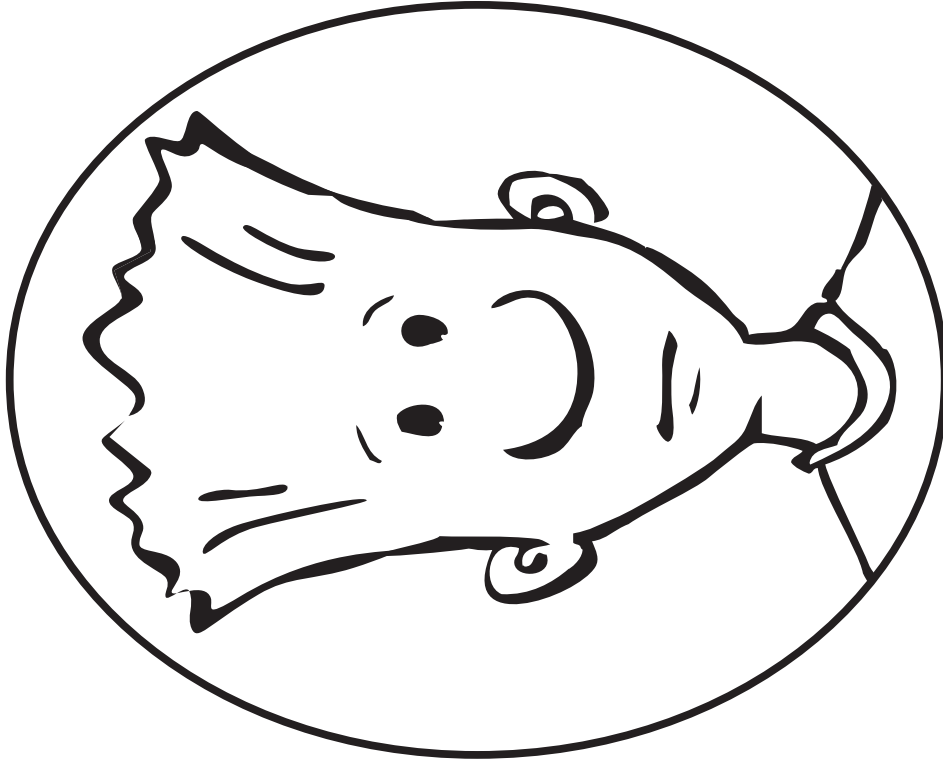
Encourage Others Classroom Jar

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kind



unkind

✂ Cut out

