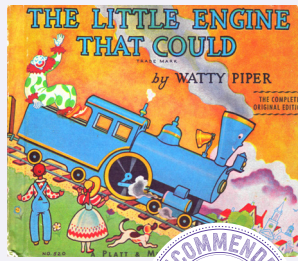


The Little Engine that Could

by Watty Piper

Themes

Never Give Up
Determination
Confidence
Positive Thinking
Risk-Taking
Encourage Others



This classic children's story reinforces the power of positive thinking and hard work through the character of a little blue steam engine. Young children will love the brightly colored illustrations and easily connect to the characters and their message of "never giving up" to accomplish a goal. This is an ideal book to read at the beginning of the school year to direct your students to an "I think I can!" attitude when talking about reading, math, writing or other kindergarten skills they will learn throughout the year!

Key Vocabulary

Rumbled: move forward with a sound like thunder in the distance
Merrily: happily, joyfully
Jerk: sudden motion, and uneven tug
Steadily: in a regular, even way
Snorted: noisy breathing, often to express dislike
Indignantly: feeling or showing anger
Weary: tired

Train Vocabulary

Hitched: train cars join together at the hitch
Roundhouse: round building where trains are repaired or can be turned around
Engine: the first car on the train that has the power to pull other cars
Berths: a sleeping bunk bed on a train
Dining cars: train car just for eating
Parlor cars: train car for sitting and talking
Plate-glass windows: large sheet of glass
Passenger Engine: pulls train cars with people rather than boxes and crates of things
Freight Engine: pulls train cars with boxes or crates of things
Switching Engine: used to move trains to a different track

Use a toy train, photographs or illustrations in the book to help students understand specialized vocabulary.

Discussion Starters

1. What was the happy little train loaded with?

Toy animals, dolls, toy clown, engines, airplanes, tops, picture puzzles, books, oranges, apples, milk, spinach, peppermint drops, lollypops. **NOTE:** In 1930, when this classic book was published, jack-knives were listed too. The image can easily be covered with a white sticker and the word should not be read to students if it is still included in your published book.

2. Where was the train going?

Over to the other side of the mountains to deliver toys and food to good little boys and girls.

3. What was the problem?

The train came to a jerk and the wheels wouldn't turn any more. The train couldn't get over the mountain. Show a picture of a **valley** and **mountain** to illustrate the problem. Explain that the wheels were not broken; it just became hard and it took more effort to get up the steep mountain.

4. How did they try to solve the problem?

First, they asked a shiny new engine for help. **Did it help? Why not?** Thought they were too important to carry toys. **How did the little train and toys feel?** Sad.

Second, they asked big strong engine for help. **Did it help? Why not?** Thought they were too

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PRINTABLE:
Kid Writing

PRINTABLE:
Adjective Images

This activity can be an ideal transition activity when lining students up for lunch, recess or meeting the bus!

important to carry toys. **How did the little train and toys feel?** *Very sad.*
Third, they asked the dingy, rusty old engine for help. Did it help? Why not? Too tired. Must rest. How did the little train and toys feel? Very, very sad. Ready to cry. Note that the sadness got worse with each no. Have you ever felt that way?
Fourth, they asked the little blue engine for help. Did it help? Not at first, but the blue engine saw tears and thought of kids not getting toys or food so it decided to try and help.

5. What helped the little blue engine get over the mountain?

Positive thinking, 'I think I can' (never gave up), helped the engine to keep trying. The clown, animals and dolls smiled and cheered, which encouraged the engine (encourage others)!

Writing Prompt

Draw a picture of the little blue engine going up the mountain. Include details from the story! Trace over letters "I think I can" and "Never give up."

Activities

Class Project or Bulletin Board

Together, brainstorm a list of what the students will learn (or have learned already) in kindergarten! Add to the list, as you enthusiastically explain kindergarten or their transition to 1st grade. Like the little blue engine, they need to *think they can*. Post the list in the classroom.

Create a **'Think I Can'** bulletin board in your room. Include a mountain and valley, car trains, with room to add pictures of students, and engines that pull the cars up the mountain with the phrase *"I think I can."* Move the train further up each week. Eventually, have it go over the top and add the phrase *"I thought I could"* as students grow and learn in kindergarten!

Oral Language Development

This story is a *great* example to use when teaching adjectives. The describing words used for the engines and toys provide great examples of one and two word adjectives. Help develop oral language by working with students to come up with *other* words that describe the nouns in the story. Insert the new adjectives into the short story (provided in the printable) to create an innovation of *The Little Engine That Could*. Consider introducing synonyms - other words that can be used to describe the same things.

Brain Break: Student Train

Have student line up to make the train. Select a student to be the engine. Using the list of things they will learn in kindergarten or first grade, have the engine choose **one** thing they really want to be able to do this year.

Start the train:

1. Slowly move legs in small steps... Kid engine says, "I want to _____ (something from the list). I think I can, I think I can, I think I can!"
 2. Have the rest of the room whisper cheer... "Never give up, Never give up, Never give up!"
 3. Move a little faster, with the kid engine saying, "I THINK I CAN, I THINK I CAN, I THINK I CAN!" with more excitement.
 4. Response from class... "NEVER GIVE UP, NEVER GIVE UP, NEVER GIVE UP!"
- Repeat with different 'kid engines' each day!

Resources

Accelerated Reading Quiz:
5477

Name: _____

Directions: Draw a picture of the little blue engine going up the mountain. Include details from the story! Trace over letters.



I think I can.

Never give up.

Oral Language Development based on *The Little Train that Could*

Help develop oral language by working with students to come up with OTHER words that describe the nouns in *The Little Engine That Could*. Insert the new adjectives into the short story provided to create an innovation of the story.



Choose new adjectives:

Little train _____ train
Happy little train _____ train
Jolly load _____ load
Toy animals _____ animals
Long necks _____ necks
Blue eyes _____ eyes
Yellow curls _____ curls
Brown eyes _____ eyes
Brown bobbed heads _____ heads

Little toy clown _____ toy clown
Big golden oranges _____ oranges
Red cheeked apples _____ apples
Creamy milk _____ milk
Fresh spinach _____ spinach
Wonderful things _____ things
Good little boys & girls _____ boys & girls
Little blue engine _____ engine

Insert your new describing words into this story and reread to the class!

The _____ train rumbled over the tracks. She was a _____, _____ train for she had such a _____ load to carry. There were _____ animals, giraffes with _____ necks, dolls with _____ eyes and _____ curls, dolls with _____ eyes, and _____, _____ heads and the funniest _____ toy clown you ever saw. But that was not all. Some of the cars were filled with all sorts of good things for boys and girls to eat - _____, _____ oranges, _____, _____ apples, bottles of _____ milk for their breakfast and _____ spinach for their dinners. The little train was carrying all these _____ things to the _____, _____ boys and girls on the other side of the mountain. All of sudden she stopped with a jerk. She tried and she tried, but her wheels would not turn. Here comes the _____, _____ engine, maybe she will help us. I'm not very big, said the _____, _____ engine but *I THINK I CAN. I THINK I CAN. I THINK I CAN.* And she hitched herself to the little train. She tugged and pulled and pulled and tugged. *I THINK I CAN...I THINK I CAN...I THINK I CAN....*Up, up up. Faster, faster, faster they climbed until they reached the top of the mountain. HURRAY! And the _____, _____ engine smiled. "I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could."