



## LESSON PLAN

# Why Are You So Quiet?

Story by Jaclyn Desforages

Art by Risa Hugo

**Genre:** Picture Book - Children's Fiction

**Themes:** self-esteem, self-reliance, emotions, feelings, girls, women, self-awareness, self-discovery, imagination and play, effective listening

**Story elements:** plot and character development, story arc, problem-solving, character growth, self-versus-self conflict, person-versus-person conflict, young female main character

**Suitable for:** Grades PreK–2, Ages 4–7

### Summary:

Into a world where it often seems nobody is listening comes a story that celebrates the power of silence.

*Everyone*, it seems, is concerned for Myra Louise. “Why are you so quiet?” Her teacher implores it, her classmates shout it, even her mom wonders it. So, in search of an answer to the tiresome question nobody will stop asking, she invents a listening machine. If the raindrops, or the crickets, or the dryers at the laundromat can tell her why they're so quiet, maybe Myra Louise can finally make everybody understand. But the more she listens, the less interested she becomes in finding any answer at all. Because Myra Louise comes to realize that all she really needs is someone else to listen alongside her.

With illustrations from Risa Hugo, Jaclyn Desforages's first picture book champions introversion and the value of being a listener, a thinker, and an observer in our increasingly loud world.





# BEFORE STARTING THE BOOK

These activities build the context, introduce the topic of the book, and establish prior knowledge and interest.

1. Before reading *Why Are You So Quiet?* take some time to have students be still and listen to the sounds around them. Instruct learners to listen to their breath as they take a big breath in and out. Repeat this 3-5 times. Have learners listen to the sounds around them with their eyes open. Now ask learners to close their eyes and repeat the process. Ask them to notice any new sounds that they can hear with their eyes closed.

Have students share how they feel when it is quiet. Note that all learners will likely have different emotions related to the quiet, thus leading learners to understand each other's differences.

2. Give students an opportunity to create their own "Amazingly Awesome Quiet Space." Prompt creative thinking by asking learners the following questions: What is the quietest place in your house? What do you like to do there? Does anyone else like this quiet place as well?

Using drawing tools or modeling clay, have learners create a quiet space that they would love. Ideas might include:

- Blanket fort
- Secret treehouse
- Bunk bed hideaway
- Beachfront swing
- Camping tent

Follow up by having learners share the characteristics of their "Amazingly Awesome Quiet Space." Note the similarities and differences that may arise.



# WHILE READING THE BOOK

These activities check on comprehension, stimulate interest, involve readers in reflection as they read, and encourage consideration of other readers' reactions.

1. Ask learners how they think Myra Louise feels when her friends and family keep asking her "Why are you so quiet?"
2. Ask learners how they would feel if they were asked the same question over and over again?



3. Ask learners to pop up, saying “Q!” each time someone asks Myra Louise, “Why are you so quiet?” Prompt learners to decide if they are feeling tired after all the jumping (questions).
4. Ask learners if they think Myra Louise was feeling tired after being asked the same question repeatedly. Or did she have another emotion?
5. Ask learners how they think Myra Louise feels on the last page of the book. Explain, using clues from the illustrations as support.



## AFTER READING THE BOOK

These activities inspire continued reflection and responses to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this text, and stimulate further extensions.

1. **YOU ROCK!** Learners will create and share compliment rocks with their classmates.
  - a. Ask learners to create or find rock-like objects (e.g., crumpling up a piece of paper tightly or collecting small rocks from a safe outside space). Put learners in groups of 3-4. Each learner will need one rock-like object for each other member of their group.
  - b. Next, ask learners to think about what each member of their group is good at. Remind them that Myra Louise was good at thinking, observing, reading, and creating. Ask them to think about the least obvious answers (e.g., kindness, jumping on one foot, smiling, setting the table, etc.).
  - c. Ask learners to write down (paint, color, label, etc.) one attribute per rock, for each other member of the group. Learners will then gift the rocks to each of their group members.
  - d. Give students time to read what they “rock” at and reflect. Give each learner the space to share their rock compliments with their own group members.

**Prompt: “I Rock at . . .”**

- e. Lastly, ask learners if they were surprised by any of the answers. Prompt them to think about attributes that they value in themselves that were not noted.
2. **QUIET CRITTERS** Have students think about creatures they might find in their neighborhood that are usually quiet (e.g., mice, squirrels, slugs). Where do they live? What are they skilled at in nature? What would they say to the world if they could?



Note: you may choose to have learners create paper plate masks to represent their quiet critter. They will then move around the room interacting with fellow quiet critters. Learners will be asked to share their reasons for being quiet and what they are good at.

**Prompt: “Hi, I am a slimy slug. I am VERY quiet. I am really good at moving slowly and eating veggies from the garden. Who are you?”**

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are only a start. They are designed to support the goal of helping students explore the story and their own creativity.

### 1. LEARNING STYLES

Have students research and explore all the different ways that they can learn. Introduce the following basic learning styles:

- Auditory – learning from listening (e.g., songs, stories, films etc.)
- Visual – learning from seeing (e.g., images, maps, infographics etc.)
- Kinesthetic – learning from touching and movement (e.g., building, sculpting, games)
- Reading/Writing – learning from reading or writing text

Ask learners to decide how they learn best. Ask learners to share examples of when they use their favorite learning style. Young learners will need concrete examples from the current day’s learning activities (e.g., Kinesthetic – creating 3-D shapes out of boxes).

You may then choose to use the four corners of the room to represent each learning style. Ask learners to move to their preferred learning style corner. Have fun with some learners not being able to decide which corner to move toward. This will facilitate a discussion about how many learners use a combination of learning styles.

### 2. BOOKS ABOUT STRONG FEMALE CHARACTERS

Have students think about any other books that they have read that include a strong female character, like Myra Louise, who needs to stand up for herself. Learners might enjoy a follow-up read with *The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert Munsch. Compare and contrast why each of the main characters had to stand up for herself and how she felt. Ask students to decide which character had to be stronger in their opinion. Students can try to find reasons from the story to support their decision. Note that there is no right answer here.

