

## **CCS / ELA / SS Alignment for *Quiet Please, Owen McPhee!***

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### **Life Lesson – Understanding the Power of Being a Good Listener to Communicate and Collaborate with Peers in Compassionate, Pro-social Ways**

Who among us has not been overwhelmed by a peer who talks a lot, interrupts others, and rarely stops to listen? Have you ever wanted to address a chatty peer but were too shy to do so? If you are the talker, how do family, friends, and peers react to you? If you are the listener, how do you react to the talker? For students in grades 3-6 and beyond, author Trudy Ludwig and illustrator Patrice Barton have crafted a wonderful story about "... the power of listening—not only with your ears but also with your heart." Readers will be charmed by and empathize with the talkative protagonist Owen McPhee. Young readers will also learn key social and emotional lessons from this self-directed child that they can apply in their efforts to become better listeners themselves.

The story also features other memorable characters including Isabella, a shy girl involved in a STEM bridge building project. Through Isabella, the author not only gives girls a voice in the male-dominated science and engineering arena, she also shows how team/group collaboration requires listening to others as a tool for building healthy relationships and succeeding in learning and life. Then there's Marcus, who can't get a word in edgewise whenever his friend Owen is around. And who cannot help but laugh as Owen tries to explain his life to Hannah, his faithful hound dog, who simply wants to just catch a Frisbee!

#### **FOR GRADES 3-6**

Teachers can use this narrative with its powerful graphic storytelling illustrations to make CCSS connections to Reading, Writing (including narratives, memoirs, explanatory, and research), Speaking and Listening (small group/whole class presentations) and Language skills. For grades 4-6, use of this picture book can inspire independent student research into online and print informational books about STEM/Engineering design process, listening, self-awareness, self-management, setting goals, social relationships, and empathy. This represents the range of reading and text complexity Reading Standards for Informational and Reading (CCSS ELA) and addresses knowledge (with posters, graphics, music, sound) to accentuate facts and details as part of the Speaking and Listening CCSS ELA Standard.

#### **Before reading or sharing the book cover of *Quiet Please, Owen McPhee!* to students:**

Conduct an initial student assessment: Have student responses recorded on an experiential chart which they can revisit after they've read the story. Teachers can choose the questions to ask from those listed below and select as many as are appropriate to target student reading and listening to the key themes of this story. (***CCSS ELA Speaking and Listening- Comprehension and Collaboration- CCSS Reading Craft and Structure***)

### Questions to Ask:

1. Have you ever been asked to stop talking? Why? How did you feel about being told to stop talking? What did you do in response to being told?
2. Have you ever wished a friend, family member, or adult would stop talking at you, so she or he could listen to what you had to say? What did you do to make that person listen to you? Were you too shy to do anything? If yes, what would you have wanted to do?
3. What negative consequences might there be if a child talks without stopping to listen? Can you list or describe three such negative or bad outcomes? In what parts of your everyday life- school, home, friends -is it particularly bad to talk and not listen? Can you explain why?
4. What jobs or family roles or friendships require someone who listens to others? Give one example from your own life.

Teachers or student recorders should note down the responses and quotes from peers. This should be a student-centered discussion, with no comments from teachers being made. Encourage students who are talented at illustration or graphic narrative panels/dialogue bubbles to contribute their visual displays on a separate chart and sign their names to it.

OPTIONAL QUESTION: Teachers might also ask students to privately record whether they consider themselves to be happy talkers or great listeners or some mix of both.

### During the class reading of *Quiet Please, Owen McPhee!*

**(CCSS ELA Reading for Ideas, Details- Craft and Style- Presentation of Knowledge and Research, CCSS Speaking and Listening- CCSS Language use of nuanced words)**

**NOTE:** As you engage students with the text, remember that the illustrations with quote bubbles and calendars count as CCSS required informational and learning on display documents.

### Questions to Ask:

1. Focus on Barton's illustrations- the cover design and the two insert pages before Ludwig's story begins: How can you tell just by looking at the illustrations that Owen talks a great deal? Explain by sharing details in the illustration. On the insert pages what activity is Owen NOT doing that needs to get done?
2. As the story begins with the text, ask the students to look at the print font and identify the word with the contrasting font (i.e., *loves*) that describes how much Owen enjoys talking. Next, direct them to the reaction of Hannah the dog in that illustration. What is Hannah's position saying about what she wants? Last, if grades 3 and above talk about the figurative language use of "more than earful," ask them to discuss how this particular phrase relates to Hannah, given

that she is a hound dog. ***(CCSS Reading for ideas, details and figurative language use. CCSS Speaking and Listening –engaging in whole group/student-centered discussions)***

3. As students follow Owen’s week in school, ask them to think about the below Big Question, which can be argued for or against, and the Breakout Discussion Question.

**a) Big Question:** Is it best during the school day to talk throughout lessons and lunch or is it better to listen to others speaking and react to what you learn by listening? Suggest that they jot down details from the story that support their arguments for or against. If “yes” or “no”...why? Support with at least three details. ***(CCSS ELA Reading for Information-Key Ideas and Details, CCSS Speaking and Listening, CCSS Writing Persuasive Essay – for grades 3-4, argument writing for grades 5-6; CCSS ELA Speaking and Listening-delineate a speaker’s argument-CCSS ELA Writing Make an argument)***

As the story is being read, challenge the students to answer that question given the outcomes/consequences of Owen’s talking each day. Do not comment on the students’ individual arguments. Instead, make certain that they detail visual data from the illustrations such as Splat!/Fizz of the science class or Owen’s overtaking Marcus’s conversation and other weekly details.

**b) Breakout Discussion Question:** After Owen is deserted at lunch on Wednesday, ask the students to talk with one another about their answers to the issue based on Owen’s week results so far. After they debate back and forth, continue reading the story and have them explain whether Owen accepts Marcus’s statement that he talks too much.

4. Challenge the students before completing the story to use the story narrative text and illustrations thus far to suggest what Owen can or should do on Thursday. Have them share ideas or picture illustrations of how he, on his own, can work to solve his problem. ***(CCSS-Writing a narrative that follows the craft and details of the text and illustrator team)***
5. Have the students share their story continuation ideas and post some. ***(CCSS Collaborative Speaking and Listening Collaborative Discussions reviewing key ideas of text and demonstrating multiple perspectives through reflection)***
6. As the story continues, have the students discuss which, if any, of their story continuation ideas were chosen by Ludwig and Barton.
7. Challenge students to see how Barton’s illustrations detail the shift in Ludwig’s storyline from Owen’s talk to his listening to others. ***(CCSS use of illustrations and informational documents to move the narrative along and support author craft purpose)***
8. Shift students’ focus from Owen who writes an apology note to Isabella, the STEM bridge project team member. Ask students how Isabella would answer the original question they focused on before reading the story about whether it is better to talk or listen during school and

why she would have a specific answer. Make certain they reference her words and the story told through the Stem bridge building project illustrations.

9. Have students follow the story through Friday and challenge them to detail how Owen’s class and social behavior has changed.
10. Conclude by challenging students to detail what informational document Owen uses to manage his own tendency to talk too much. Ask them if that is effective and how they can prove it by comparing the closing illustration and quote comment from Epictetus with the book’s opening two insert pages showing Owen and Hannah out on the grassy field.

### **Culminating activities:**

1. Have students revisit their initial questions. Ask them if their own ideas about talking and listening have changed or not changed after reading the story. Invite the students to share personal experiences, memoirs, or anecdotes from their own lives where talking too much has had bad consequences or listening to others has had positive consequences.
2. Invite a teacher of STEM into the classroom to explain and, perhaps with the school robotics or engineering team, detail how listening and collaborating are essential to diagram/prototype and refining skills which are part of engineering process. **(CCSS Speaking and Listening Skills)**
3. Encourage students to host their own class podcast featuring their comments on the need for listening and curbing too much talking. Invite the school guidance counselor, school administrators, teachers, PTA members, and other adults to be part of that podcast. **(CCSS Speaking and Listening – Collaborating and Collegial Conversation skills)**
4. Encourage students to do an author study of Ludwig’s other books--particularly *Sorry, Just Kidding*, and *Confessions of a Former Bully*. Challenge them to come up with a crossover project in which Owen can share his hard-earned expertise in learning how to control his talking too much with the key characters in these works whose talking hurts others.
5. Retell the story as a collaborative student team book from the perspectives of Hannah, Mr. Delgado, Isabella, and Marcus.
6. Encourage artists and graphic novelists to team up with others in the class to create a graphic novel or advice blog where Owen helps others “learn” to be better listeners and “fix” situations in which their talking has “hurt” others. **(CCSS writing for information and use of multiple texts to share ideas)**