

Jacob's Eye Patch

By Beth Kobliner Shaw and Jacob Shaw

Illustrations by Jules Feiffer

About the Book

Jacob is wearing an eye patch on his right eye to help improve the vision of his left eye, and he is aware that this makes him look different. He doesn't mind people asking about the patch, but he doesn't want it to interfere with his trip to the store to get his long-awaited light-up globe! On the way Mom gets distracted by the questions of another well-intentioned parent asking about Jacob's eye patch, and Jacob becomes very impatient. Does his frustration stem from waiting, the thought of losing his much-desired globe, or the never-ending questions about his eye patch?

The illustrations show Jacob's eye patch, his mounting irritation, and finally a great explosion of emotion; in frustration, he rips his eye patch off. After more distractions, they arrive at the store to find his globe gone, and then thankfully he sees his sister holding the globe for him. At the store a little girl asks why he has an eye patch and he explains. She is wearing braces, and the story concludes with the thought that we all have things that make us different. The gentle resolution is that Jacob will tell you about his eye patch just, please, not when he is busy doing something else. This picture book is a great read-aloud and discussion book for K – 3 students.

Prereading Activities

The activities below particularly address the following Common Core State Standards: (SL.K.4) (RL.1.7) (RL.2.1) (RL.3.2,3)

1. In this story, children will encounter a young boy wearing an eye patch. Prepare the class by talking about what an eye patch is, and what it is used for. If possible, bring an eye patch into class so kids can see what it looks like. Ask if any of the children have seen someone with an eye patch. (Be prepared for them to make the connection with pirates wearing patches, but try to keep the discussion on people they have seen themselves.)

2. You may also want to discuss differences people may have. Some people look different because of an eye patch, or a cast on their arm, or because they have braces. Have the children describe other differences and what it was like seeing them. Possibilities include: eye patch, glasses, hearing aids, wheelchairs, crutches, and canes, to name a few. Being aware of special apparatuses for disabilities could be a lively discussion, and you may want to list differences on the board so you can refer back to them after the story.

Discussion Questions

The discussion questions below address the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.K-2.1,2,3) (RL.3.1,2) (SL.1.2)

1. What was one of the first things you noticed about Jacob? What else did you notice? Can you describe his eye patch? (What color is it? Which eye did it cover?)
2. If you saw Jacob walking on the sidewalk, would you want to ask him about his eye patch? What would you say?
3. Where were Jacob and his mom going? What were they going to get? What was the first thing that kept them from getting to the store? What else kept them from getting to the store? How did Jacob feel about this?
4. What did Jacob's brother, Adam, tell his friend about Jacob's eye patch? Did the friend believe that? Looking at the illustrations, what tells us about his reaction?
5. Did Jacob want to get ice cream? What was he feeling when he said NO NO NO? Was he feeling angry? Was it something else?
6. What did he say to the man at the ice cream store? Why would he say that?
7. Jacob was anxious to get to the science store. What does *anxious* mean? Can you describe it? Have you ever felt that? If so, how does it feel? Why was Jacob feeling so anxious?
8. Have you ever seen anyone else feeling the way Jacob did, and yelling that way? What did they do to show how they were feeling?
9. How did Jacob's mom, dad, sister, and brother show their understanding and caring for Jacob?
10. When they got to the store, what happened with the globe? How did Jacob feel then?
11. Another child, a little girl with braces on her teeth, was also interested in seeing the globe. What did Jacob think about her braces? Did he ask her about them?
12. What did Jacob tell her about his eye patch?
13. Does Jacob seem to mind wearing the eye patch? Does he ever take it off when he shouldn't? Does he wear it all the time?
14. Will the little girl wear braces forever? Are some differences permanent?
15. Do other people have things that make them different? Name some. Is it okay to ask them about these things? How would you feel if you were asked about something that others thought was different?
16. What would you do if you saw someone who had an eye patch now, after reading this story? Would you ask about it?

Postreading Activities

The activities below address the following Common Core State Standard: (SL.K-1.2,3) (SL.2.2,3,4) (RL.K.1,3) (RL.1.2,3) (RL.2.3,5) (RL.3.1,3)

1. Have children break into small groups, in order to better discuss what took place in the story. Have each group discuss the key concept of differences, how and when to talk about these differences. Allow children to talk about their own experiences with people who may have special needs, like an eye patch, crutches, glasses, a wheelchair, or braces. If the children have never had encounters with people who have differences, this is a great opportunity to talk about how to respond when they do experience them. Come back together and recap the key issues discussed in the small groups.

2. Children may or may not have firsthand experience with special-needs children and adults. Bring an assortment of real items, such as an eye patch, crutches, a wheelchair or walker, a cane, a hearing aid, or glasses to share in class. After reading the story of Jacob and discussing his difference, show the items to the class. Have them try using any that they can (you will probably want small groups and helpers for this activity, but it can be done with a large group by children taking turns). Discuss the experiences they had trying these items.

3. Have children use an eye patch, or make their own (print Make Your Own Eye Patch worksheet at www.jacobseyepatch.com/kit) in order to experience similar sensations to what Jacob felt. Have each child describe what it feels like to wear the patch, what they can see, how it is different from using both eyes, etc. After the children take their eye patches off, as a group discuss how it felt to wear the patch, even for a short time. How would it feel to have to wear the patch many hours a day, like Jacob did in the story? Would they like it if people were asking them about the patch?

4. This story has a note from the real Jacob and his mom. This is a time to talk with the children in class about real-life friends or acquaintances who have special needs. If there is a child in the class or school who is a special-needs child, you may want to talk with them first, before discussing this with the whole class. As Jacob shared in his note, “I felt embarrassed talking to people about my patch until one day in first grade. We were sharing stories about things we were born with that make us a little different, and I told my class about my patch . . . Afterward I realized it wasn’t so bad since almost everyone has something.” Use this opportunity to introduce a dialogue about sensitivity and feelings.

Guide written by JoAnn Jonas, MLS Librarian, Montessori school director, early childhood specialist, early literacy specialist.

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