How We Agree to Disagree

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**The Hook**

For 5th Grade: Lebron James left Cleveland to go to another team. Northeast Ohio went ballistic. The tribes broke down into two basic categories: “It’s a job, he can do what he wants” and “I can’t believe that he did that to us.” Social media fed the flames of both sides. Some children were going to school and demanding that their peers burn any jersey with his name on it. Children were in tears and tribes were clearly divided. It was obvious to the teachers and staff that children were mimicking the thoughts and opinions of their parents and the media.

For 3rd – 4th: The Sneetches by Dr. Seuss

**Objective:** Use non-political stories/situations to teach students to use respectful and empathetic language when discussing controversial issues.

**Introduction:**

5th Grade: Read the Lebron scenario to students.

3rd – 4th Grade: Read “The Sneetches” aloud to students.

Main Lesson:

1. Tell students that we will be discussing how they felt about Lebron or the Sneetches, but first we need to learn how to have a respectful and empathetic conversation.

2. Review with students: What is an active listener?

3. Introduce vocabulary of “respectful” and “empathetic”. Use graphic organizer for each word.

4. Introduce phrases we could use during discussions with differing opinions.

Examples:

“I agree with what Bobby is saying, because…”

“I disagree with what Bobby is saying, because…”

“I agree with what Bobby is saying, but I also think…”

5. Ask students to brainstorm other phrases and share.

6. Role model for students what this conversation would look like.

Example:

Opinion: I think everyone should burn their Lebron jerseys!

Modeled Response: “I can see that you’re upset about …, but I feel …

Opinion: I think that the Sneetches with stars are more important.

Modeled Response: “I disagree, because…”

7. Choose two students to model the discussion, providing immediate feedback as they go along.

8. Have students pair up and model the discussion using respectful and empathetic language. Monitoring and giving immediate feedback when needed.

9. Bring all students back together and have them discuss an opinion such as “Should we eliminate French fries from the cafeteria because they are unhealthy?” “Should we get rid of the monkey bars because people are getting hurt on them?”

Extension – Introduce a lesson on debate, and have them research the topic and formulate pro and con opinions.