

Lesson Plan: The Choices We Make & The Hearts We Share

Materials Needed:

- Book: *A Chair for My Mother* by Vera B. Williams (or a similar story about saving for a need)
- 10-15 small items to be used as "coins" (buttons, pebbles, or tokens)
- Several index cards or small pieces of paper
- Crayons or markers
- An empty glass jar or box ("Helping Hands Jar")
- Small slips of colored paper

1. Learning Objectives (The Goals for Today)

By the end of this lesson, Ryzer will be able to:

- Describe, in his own words, one difficult choice someone might have to make when they have limited money.
- Brainstorm and list at least two creative and kind ways to help people in his community.
- Demonstrate empathy by explaining how a character in a story might feel about a financial challenge.

2. Alignment with Standards and Curriculum (Why We're Learning This)

This lesson aligns with key social studies and character development standards focusing on:

- **Community & Citizenship:** Understanding that communities are made up of people with different circumstances and that we have a role in helping one another.
- **Basic Economics:** Introducing the concepts of needs vs. wants, scarcity (limited resources), and making choices.
- **Social-Emotional Learning:** Developing empathy, perspective-taking, and a sense of social responsibility.

3. Instructional Strategies & Activities (The Fun Part!)

Part 1: The Warm-Up Story (10 minutes)

1. **Read Aloud:** Sit together and read *A Chair for My Mother*. It's a gentle story about a family who loses their belongings in a fire and saves up their coins in a big jar to buy a comfortable chair.
2. **Guided Questions:** As you read, or just after, ask gentle questions to spark conversation.
 - "How do you think the family felt when they lost all their things?"
 - "Why was getting a new chair so important to them? Was it a 'need' or a 'want'?"
 - "What did you notice about how the family, their friends, and neighbors all helped each other?"

Part 2: The "Coin Challenge" Game (15 minutes)

1. **Setup:** Before the lesson, create 5-6 simple picture cards of items with "prices." Make the choices challenging!

- **Needs:** A warm coat (4 coins), a healthy lunch (2 coins), medicine (3 coins).
 - **Wants:** A new toy car (3 coins), a yummy cupcake (1 coin), a ticket to the movies (4 coins).
2. **The Challenge:** Give Ryzer **5 coins**. Explain that this is his budget for the day. He can't spend more than 5 coins.
 3. **Making Choices:** Lay out the cards. Ask Ryzer to "buy" what he thinks is most important. He will quickly see that he cannot afford everything. Let him talk through his decisions. For example, if he buys the warm coat (4 coins), he only has 1 coin left for a cupcake, but not enough for lunch.
 4. **Discussion:** After he makes his choices, talk about it.
 - "That was a hard choice! What did you have to give up?"
 - "How did it feel to not have enough coins for everything you wanted or needed?"
 - "How is this like the family in the story saving up their coins for one special thing?"

Part 3: The "Helping Hands Jar" (10 minutes)

1. **Introduce the Jar:** Bring out the empty jar. Say, "We've talked about how it can be hard when people don't have enough. The good news is, we can always help! This is going to be our 'Helping Hands Jar'."
2. **Brainstorm:** Together, think of real, simple, and kind things a 7-year-old can do to help others. Focus on acts of service and generosity, not just giving money. Write or draw each idea on a small slip of colored paper.
 - *Ideas:* Donate a gently used toy or book to a shelter, draw a cheerful picture for a resident at a nursing home, help a neighbor carry their groceries, share a snack with a friend, collect canned goods for a food drive.
3. **Fill the Jar:** As you come up with ideas, have Ryzer fold the slips and put them in the jar. Explain that this jar is now full of powerful ideas, and you can pick one to do together sometime this week or month.

4. Differentiation and Inclusivity (Making it Work for Ryzer)

- **For Support:** If the Coin Challenge is too abstract, use real items from around the house instead of cards (e.g., an apple, a favorite toy, his jacket).
- **For an Extension/Challenge:** Introduce a "surprise" card during the game, like "Your shoe broke! Pay 2 coins to fix it," to simulate unexpected costs and add another layer of critical thinking.
- **Student Voice:** The entire "Helping Hands Jar" activity is driven by Ryzer's own ideas, giving him ownership and empowering him to be a creative problem-solver.

5. Assessment Methods (How I'll Know He's Learning)

- **Formative (Observation):** I will listen carefully to Ryzer's reasoning during the "Coin Challenge" and his answers to the story questions. His ability to explain his choices shows his understanding.
- **Formative (Creative Output):** The ideas he generates for the "Helping Hands Jar" will serve as a direct assessment of his ability to apply the concept of helping others in a creative way.
- **Summative (Wrap-up Question):** At the end, I'll ask, "If you could tell a friend one thing you learned today about why helping others is important, what would you say?" His answer will summarize his main takeaway.