



I'm Trying to Love Spiders

Written and Illustrated by Bethany Barton

Strength Builder: Written to be read aloud, this funny book will encourage students to face their fears.

MATERIALS

- *I'm Trying to Love Spiders* (leader's copy and copies for students)
- Student Workout Books
- Writing paper, crayons, and pencils
- Independent Reading Library
- Chart paper or whiteboard

SESSION 1

STRENGTH: Confidence

POWER UP

Welcome

Greet students by name as they enter. Ask them to put away their personal items and gather together.

Read-Aloud Time

Leader: Tell students that this will be a week to discuss the theme of Confidence. Say: *Confidence is the feeling that you can think independently and express your ideas with assurance. This book is about facing fears, and how even pretending to feel confident can help you feel strong. The book I'm Trying to Love Spiders is light and funny, and is meant to be read aloud and performed.*

Read the book aloud. Ham it up with this one. Show trepidation and panic at appropriate times. Talk about the narrator's strategy for feeling confident. Say: *The narrator is obviously terrified of spiders, but still says things like, "Spiders are cool," and "Maybe I should focus on what spiders are good at...like eating bugs!" This is a strategy for feeling confident. Sometimes, we can trick our brains into feeling confident by speaking with confidence about those things that make us afraid.*

Model the strategy. Say: *I'm terribly afraid of heights. Write "heights" on the board. Say: So, if I were using this strategy on my next hike, I might say, "I LOVE being up this high. I can see for miles up here."* Write these sentences under the word "heights" on the board.

Students Try It: Ask students to think of something that they fear and write this fear in their Student Workout Books. (Examples: dogs, being alone, the dark.) Then give students time to write a few "confident" statements for the next time they encounter this fear. When done, ask students to practice these words of confidence by saying them aloud to a partner.

WORK OUT

Independent Reading Time

Guide students to choose Independent Reading activities from their Student Workout Books, and help them select appropriate books from the Independent Reading Library that match their chosen tasks.

COOL DOWN

Group Time

Choose an activity from the Songs and Games menu.

SESSION 2**SKILL: Buggy Superpowers****POWER UP****Welcome**

Greet students by name as they enter. Ask them to put away their personal items and gather together.

Read-Aloud Time

Leader: In the book, *I'm Trying to Love Spiders*, the narrator decides to focus on the spider's superpowers in order to feel more confident about them. Say: *Spiders have eight eyes and they spin webs. These are their superpowers that set them apart from other bugs. Focusing on the positives is a way to flip our thinking to reduce our fear and feel stronger.*

Think of a bug that scares you and write about its "superpowers." Say: *I'm afraid of bees. When they come near me, I feel like I am going to get stung. So, I can decide instead to focus on their superpowers.* Write this on the board: "Bee Superpowers." Then write: *Bees make honey and pollinate flowers.* Then read the

sentence aloud. Say: *Those are pretty amazing superpowers. I feel better already.*

Students Try It: Give students time to select a bug or other "critter" they fear and to write a few of its superpowers in their Student Workout Books. Encourage students to read their sentences aloud afterward, since the act of doing so will help encourage confidence.

WORK OUT**Independent Reading Time**

Guide students to choose Independent Reading activities from their Student Workout Books, and help them select appropriate books from the Independent Reading Library that match their chosen tasks.

COOL DOWN**Group Time**

Choose an activity from the Songs and Games menu.

SESSION 3**ENGAGEMENT: I'm Trying to Love****POWER UP****Welcome**

Greet students by name as they enter. Ask them to put away their personal items and gather together.

Read-Aloud Time

Leader: Say: *Although the book I'm Trying to Love Spiders has nonfiction elements, the fictional style of the illustrations, captions, and text add humor to the book.* Show a few examples of this humorous style in the book. (Examples: *Hides in plain sight by looking like bird poop. Yuck!*, or *Me + Spiders 4eva.*)

Students Try It: Students will work to illustrate the bug they wrote about in the previous

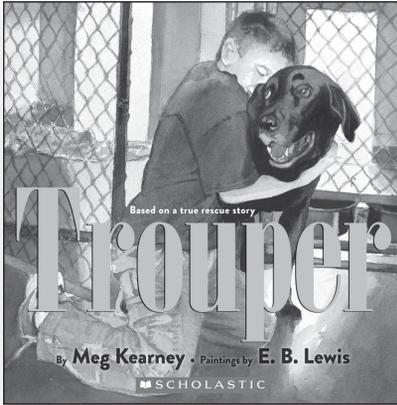
session, using the same comic style of Bethany Barton. Encourage students to include humorous text and captions in their illustrations.

WORK OUT**Independent Reading Time**

Guide students to choose Independent Reading activities from their Student Workout Books, and help them select appropriate books from the Independent Reading Library that match their chosen tasks.

COOL DOWN**Group Time**

Choose an activity from the Songs and Games menu.



Trouper

Written by Meg Kearney

Illustrated by E. B. Lewis

Strength Builder: This story will help your students observe kindness in action, as it manifests itself in the relationship between a human and a pet.

MATERIALS

- *Trouper* (leader's copy and copies for students)
- Student Workout Books
- Writing paper, crayons, and pencils
- Independent Reading Library
- Chart paper or whiteboard

SESSION 1

STRENGTH: Kindness

POWER UP

Welcome

Greet students by name as they enter. Ask them to put away their personal items and gather together.

Read-Aloud Time

Leader: Introduce the book *Trouper* to students and inform them that this book was chosen as a model for the Strength of Kindness. Display the front cover, and ask students to examine the picture and make a prediction about what the book will be about. Next, turn to the title page. Say: *If you have not already guessed, this dog is Trouper. The word trouper is used to describe someone who persists through difficult times without giving up or complaining. What do you notice about Trouper?* (Be sure students notice that he has only three legs.) *Why do you think Trouper might be a good name for this dog?*

Read the story, including the true biographical information about Trouper. Say: *This book was chosen for kindness lessons, yet there are some examples of unkindness in it. Who is not kind in this book? Why do you think these characters*

behave in unkind ways? How do you wish they would act instead?

Students Try It: Say: *Although there are some examples of unkind behavior, there are also examples of great kindness in this book. Which characters demonstrated kindness? How were they kind?* Direct students to jot down their responses in their Student Workout Book and share aloud. Ask: *Do you know anyone who has rescued a pet? Would you do so? Why or why not?*

WORK OUT

Independent Reading Time

Guide students to choose Independent Reading activities from their Student Workout Books, and help them select appropriate books from the Independent Reading Library that match their chosen tasks.

COOL DOWN

Group Time

Choose an activity from the Songs and Games menu.

SESSION 2**SKILL: Creative Comparisons****POWER UP****Welcome**

Greet students by name as they enter. Ask them to put away their personal items and gather together.

Read-Aloud Time

Leader: Reread *Trouper*. Revisit the pages that begin with “My heart was a cold, starless night—until your face shone through the bars like a mini sun.” Say: *The author makes some very unexpected comparisons here! Authors often make comparisons like this because they can deepen the reader’s understanding of the story.* Guide students to understand that Trouper’s mood was cold and dark. He was feeling sad because he had not been adopted.

Ask: *If you could compare yourself to an animal, what would it be, and why? I would compare myself to a bee because I am really busy and flit from activity to activity like a bee visits flowers.*

Students Try It: Have students think of an animal and why they are similar to it. Provide two types of sentence frames. Explain that the first is a simile, and the second is a metaphor. They may choose whichever types they like.

I am **like** a _____ because _____.

I am a _____ because _____.

Challenge students to create several comparisons, then share with the group.

WORK OUT**Independent Reading Time**

Guide students to choose Independent Reading activities from their Student Workout Books, and help them select appropriate books from the Independent Reading Library that match their chosen tasks.

COOL DOWN**Group Time**

Choose an activity from the Songs and Games menu.

SESSION 3**ENGAGEMENT: Puppy Playwriting****POWER UP****Welcome**

Greet students by name as they enter. Ask them to put away their personal items and gather together.

Read-Aloud Time

Leader: Revisit the pages in the story where Trouper names all of the dog friends in the shelter. Display their names for students to see: Hunter, Tugger, Digger, Dice, Big Bear, Sweet Girl, Curley, Boo, Trouper. Show the students some of the pictures that show the dogs, and ask them to imagine what the animals might say if they could talk. Model how to write this in play form. Explain how each heading identifies who is speaking. Important actions may be included in brackets.

[The dog catcher dangles a steak in front of the pack.]

Hunter: Umm...steak!

Big Bear: I love a good steak!

Students Try It: Challenge students to write plays from the perspective of the group of dogs. They are to write lines as if the dogs could talk. They should choose two to eight dogs from the list to include as characters in their play.

WORK OUT**Independent Reading Time**

Guide students to choose Independent Reading activities from their Student Workout Books, and help them select appropriate books from the Independent Reading Library that match their chosen tasks.

COOL DOWN**Group Time**

Choose an activity from the Songs and Games menu.

WRITING WORKOUT: “Hire Me” Letter

Strength Builder: Super Readers are for hire in this Writing Workout where they write letters to apply for their dream jobs.

MATERIALS

- Writing paper, crayons, and pencils
- Student Workout Books
- Chart paper or whiteboard

SESSION 1

CHALLENGE: Students write letters to get hired for their dream jobs.

GET STRONG: The Best One for the Best Job

Leader: Introduce this Writing Workout focusing on persuasive letter writing. Say: *If you could have any job in the world, what would it be and why?* (Have students share their ideas.) *To get hired for this dream job, you will have to be qualified. What skills and personal qualities would be needed for your dream job? Turn and talk to a partner about what qualifications you would need.*

Students Try It: Say: *Once you have a dream job in mind, you need to convince someone to hire you. One of the best ways to persuade someone to do or believe something is to write a persuasive letter. In a letter, you can thoughtfully explain why you want the job and why you are the best one for the job. Before you start, I am going to wave my magic wand over you all and magically*

make all of the skills and qualities you need for your fantasy job already true! You are now fully qualified for your dream job. You just need to write a persuasive letter to apply. In your Student Workout Books, take planning notes as follows:

- Name your dream job.
- List reasons why you want this job.
- List all of the skills and personal qualities you now have to excel at this job.
- Bonus: Include one or more of the 7 Strengths in your list of qualifications.



SESSION 2**SKILL: Anatomy of a Letter**

Leader: Use the “Anatomy of a Letter” Graphic Organizer on page 89 in the Student Workout Books to examine the anatomy of a letter. Say: *To get ready to write your Dream Job letters, let’s look at the parts of a letter together.* You can refer to the sample advice in the right column, either reading it aloud or displaying it for students.

Guide students to examine the parts of a business letter in their Student Workout Books. Direct them to describe each part of the letter on the blank lines as follows.

Heading: Displays the recipient’s name and address and the date

Greeting: Addresses the recipient followed by a comma (friendly) or colon (business)

Body: Contains the information that the writer wants to share

Closing: Indicates the end of the letter

Signature: The writer’s name

Students Try It: Engage students in a shared writing activity, in which they help you compose a business letter applying for a dream job. Use this sample and the notes they took on the correct formatting and organization of the letter.

Your Full Name
Your Street Address
Your Town, Your State, Your Zip Code
Date

Full Name of the Recipient
Street Address of the Recipient
Recipient’s Town, State, Zip Code

Dear Full Name of Person You Are Addressing:

Use block formatting for your paragraph(s). In the body of the letter, introduce yourself and the topic and purpose of your letter. Make your point and provide relevant reasons, information, examples, and explanations for what you are saying. Be clear and respectful at all times.

You may include additional paragraphs if you have a lot to say. Tell the reader how to contact you. Let them know that you look forward to their reply.

Sincerely yours,

Optional handwritten signature here

Your Full Name

SESSION 3**ENGAGEMENT: Get Hired!**

Leader: Review the shared letter you and the class wrote during the last session. Together with the students, find and label the key parts: the heading, the greeting, the body, the closing, and the signature. Have students refer to their planning notes from the first lesson. Remind them of the required content for the letter:

- Name your dream job.
- List reasons why you want this job.
- List all of the skills and personal qualities you now have to excel at this job.

- *Bonus: Include one or more of the 7 Strengths in your list of qualifications.*

Have a few volunteers share their plans for their letters.

Students Try It: Have students compose their dream job letters, using the correct format for a business letter. When done, have students take turns reading their letters aloud with expression. The “employers” in the audience should compliment them with at least one thing they heard in the letter that made them want to hire the applicant.