

A Unit for:

***Alexander and the
Terrible, Horrible,
No Good, Very Bad Day***

By Judith Viorst

**Unit Designed by Casey Mahaffey
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Unit Theme: Dealing with frustration and anger / Anger management / Feelings

Grade Level Designed for: 3

Related Standards:

English/Language Arts

3.1.4 - Determine the meanings of words using knowledge of synonyms (words with the same meaning), antonyms (words with opposite meanings), homophones (words that sound the same but have different meanings and spellings), and homographs (words that are spelled the same but have different meanings). [Relates to Words for Literature Wall.](#)

3.2.2 - Ask questions and support answers by connecting prior knowledge with literal information from the text. [Relates to Comprehension Questions.](#)

3.2.3 - Show understanding by identifying answers in the text. [Relates to Comprehension Questions.](#)

3.2.6 - Locate appropriate and significant information from the text, including problems and solutions. [Relates to Comprehension Questions.](#)

3.3.4 - Determine the theme or author's message in fiction and nonfiction text. [Entire unit deals with the theme of the book.](#)

3.5.5 - Write for different purposes and to a specific audience or person. [Relates to Writing Activity.](#)

3.7.3 - Answer questions completely and appropriately. [Relates to Comprehension Questions.](#)

3.7.5 - Organize ideas chronologically (in the order that they happened) or around major points of information. [Relates to Graphic Organizer or Semantic Map.](#)

3.7.9 - Read prose and poetry aloud with fluency, rhythm, and timing, using appropriate changes in the tone of voice to emphasize important passages of the text being read. [Relates to Choral Reading.](#)

3.7.14 - Make descriptive presentations that use concrete sensory details to set forth and support unified impressions of people, places, things, or experiences. [Relates to Art Activity.](#)

Science

3.5.3 - Construct tables and graphs to show how values of one quantity are related to values of another. [Relates to Math Activity.](#)

3.4.1 - Demonstrate that a great variety of living things can be sorted into groups in many ways using various features, such as how they look, where they live, and how they act, to decide which things belong to which group. [Relates to Interactive Chart or Display.](#)

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BOOK BOX

Description: A book box contains key objects from the story/lesson being read. These objects can act as good visual aids for many different types of learners. Boxes should be colorful and should obviously accompany the story/lesson (i.e. The title of the story should be pasted on the front of the box.).

Materials: Choose five or more key items from the story/lesson and collect or make replicas of these items to place in the box. The items I chose for *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* are gum, Australia, a white shoe, a white piece of paper, and lima beans.

What you will need for this book:

- A pack of chewing or bubble gum
- A map of Australia or a globe with a star pasted on Australia
- A plain white tennis shoe
- A plain white piece of paper
- A bag/can of lima beans

Steps:

1. Collect the objects listed above.
2. Place the objects in the box you have chosen. For this book, some sort of suitcase would be best.
3. Decorate the box. For this book, the title could be pasted on the front of the box. You could also make signs that say “Australia or Bust,” “Australia Bound,” or “I wish I was in Australia.”

Why these items are important when reading *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*. . .

Gum – The first bad event that happens to Alexander is waking up with gum in his hair. This item serves as an example of an everyday object turning into an unfortunate event.

Australia – Every time something bad happens to Alexander, he wishes that he were in Australia. He seems to have a fixation with this continent. This tells the students that lots of people have places they would like to go or go to in their minds when they are having a bad day.

White shoe – When Alexander goes to the mall with his family to buy shoes, they are out of the style he wants so he gets stuck with ugly white ones. This item represents another event that can turn bad. Most of the time getting new shoes is exciting, but some days everything goes wrong.

White paper – At school, Alexander’s teacher did not like his picture of the invisible castle. However, from the looks of it, Alexander didn’t put very much effort into creating an invisible castle.

Lima beans – Alexander had lima beans for dinner, and he hates lima beans. Everyone has a certain food that they don’t like. However, sometimes things we don’t like are good for us.

RELATED LITERATURE

More books by Judith Viorst:

1. *Alexander, Who's Not (Do you hear me? I mean it!) Going to Move* By Judith Viorst
Recommended reading age as suggested by publisher: 4-8
Viorst, Judith. *Alexander, Who's Not (Do you hear me? I mean it!) Going to Move*. New York: Aladdin, 1998.
2. *Alexander, Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday* By Judith Viorst
Recommended reading age as suggested by publisher: 4-8
Viorst, Judith. *Alexander, Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday*. New York: Aladdin, 1987.
3. *Absolutely Positively Alexander: The Complete Story* By Judith Viorst
Recommended reading age as suggested by publisher: 4-8
Viorst, Judith. *Absolutely Positively Alexander: The Complete Story*. New York: Aladdin, 1997.
4. *Rosie and Michael* By Judith Viorst
Recommended reading age as suggested by publisher: 4-8
Viorst, Judith. *Rosie and Michael*. New York: Aladdin, 1974.

More books related to the topic of dealing with frustration and anger:

5. *The Little Engine That Could* By Watty Piper
Recommended reading age as suggested by publisher: 4-8
Piper, Watty. *The Little Engine That Could*. New York: Platt and Munk Publishers, 1976.
6. *Mean Soup* By Betsy Everitt
Recommended reading age as suggested by publisher: 4-8
Everitt, Betsy. *Mean Soup*. Singapore: Tien Wah Press, 1992.
7. *When Sophie Gets Angry – Really, Really Angry...* By Molly Bang
Recommended reading age as suggested by publisher: 4-8
Bang, Molly. *When Sophie Gets Angry – Really, Really Angry...*. New York: The Blue Sky Press, 1999.
8. *Don't Rant and Rave on Wednesdays!: The Children's Anger-Control Book*
By Adloph Moser and David Melton
Recommended reading age as suggested by publisher: 9-12
Moser, Adloph and David Melton. *Don't Rant and Rave on Wednesdays!: The Children's Anger-Control Book*. New York: Landmark Editions Inc., 1994.
9. *How to Take the Grrrr Out of Anger* By Elizabeth Verdick and Majorie Lisovskis
Recommended reading age as suggested by publisher: 9-12
Verdick, Elizabeth and Majorie Lisovskis. *How to Take the Grrrr out of Anger*. New York: Free Spirit Publishing, 2002.
10. *Today I Am Lovable: 365 Positive Activities for Kids* By Diane Loomans
Recommended reading age as suggested by publisher: 9-12
Loomans, Diane. *Today I Am Lovable: 365 Positive Activities for Kids*. Tiburon, CA: H.J. Kramer Inc., 1996.

WORDS FOR A LITERATURE WALL

1. **Australia** – a continent in the South East hemisphere
It is important that the students know where Australia is located. Alexander is always referring to this continent. Students should be shown where it is on a map so that they understand that it is very far away.
2. **carsick** – a nauseous feeling from riding in the car too long
It is important that the students know this term so they can empathize with how Alexander felt in the carpool.
3. **cavity** – a decayed place in a tooth
It is important that the students know this term so that they can understand why Alexander was upset at the Dentist office.
4. **elevator** – a machine that lifts or raises
It is important that the children know this term so that they can understand the pain Alexander must have felt when his foot got smashed.
5. **horrible** – very bad; causing horror
It is important that the students know that this term is a synonym for bad.
6. **scrunched** – smashed; packed into a small area
It is important that the students know this term so that they can relate to how Alexander felt in the carpool.
7. **sneakers** – tennis shoes
It is important that the children know that this term is a synonym for tennis shoes. Many children have not ever heard the word “sneaker” used to refer to a shoe.
8. **tack** – a sharp object that sticks items to a board
It is important that the children know this term so that they can understand exactly what Alexander wants to happen to Paul.
9. **terrible** – very bad; causing terror
It is important that the students know that this term is a synonym for bad.
10. **third** – three spots from the beginning (first, second, third, fourth, fifth...)
It is important that the children understand what the term “third” stands for. If they did not know this, they would not understand why it is bad to be a third best friend (two other people come before you).

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Description: This activity is used to increase/trigger comprehension. Use various types of questions from the story to create discussions.

Materials:

- *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* By Judith Viorst

Steps:

1. Read the story.
2. Create questions that would foster comprehension.
3. Ask the questions to the students (in the form of a worksheet or a class discussion).

Sample Questions:

1. How much time was covered in our story? (How many days did it talk about?) And, where did our story take place? (Where was Alexander?)

(Acceptable answers: The story took place over the course of one day. Alexander went many places. He started out at home, went to school in the carpool, saw the dentist, shopped at the shoe store, visited his father's work, and came back home.)

2. What people in the story made Alexander have a bad day, and what did they do to him?

(Acceptable answers: Alexander made his own day bad by forgetting to take his gum out before bed. Mrs. Gibson let Becky sit by the window in the carpool. Mrs. Dickens didn't like Alexander's picture of the invisible castle. Paul said Alexander wasn't his best friend anymore. His mother forgot dessert. The dentist found a cavity in Alexander's tooth. His brother, Anthony, made him fall into the mud. His brother, Nick, said he was a crybaby. The shoe salesman was out of the kind of shoes that Alexander wanted. Alexander's father got mad at him for messing up the office. The people on television were kissing, and Alexander hates kissing. The cat did not want to sleep with Alexander.)

3. Did anything good happen to Alexander? Did anything bad happen to Alexander? Name/List as many bad things that happened to Alexander as you can.

(Acceptable answers: It didn't seem like anything good happened to Alexander, but he did get to eat. He does have friends. And, everyone has bad days, even in Australia. Lots of bad things happened to Alexander. List: Gum in hair, tripped on skateboard, dropped sweater in sink, no toy in cereal, smashed in carpool, teacher didn't like his picture, sang too loud, forgot sixteen, not Paul's best friend anymore, no dessert in lunch, cavity, closed foot in elevator, fell in the mud, got called a crybaby, got scolded, had to buy ugly shoes, messed up father's office, lima beans for dinner, kissing on television, bath too hot, soap in eyes, marble down drain, had to wear railroad-train pajamas, no pillow, no night light, bit tongue, cat didn't want to sleep with him)

4. What did Alexander's mom say at the end of the story that made him feel better? Why would this make him feel better?

(Acceptable answers: She said that some days are just bad, even in Australia. He should feel better knowing that everyone has bad days and that tomorrow should be better.)

5. Why do you think Alexander wanted to go to Australia?

(Acceptable answers: He wanted to go to Australia to get away from things. He was having a bad day so he felt like he wanted to go really far away from home.)

INTERACTIVE CHART OR DISPLAY

Description: Interactive charts allow students to get hands-on experience while learning about the book/theme (being used with a unit) at the same time. For this particular book, the students will be matching Australian animals with their descriptions on an interactive bulletin board.

Materials:

- Paper to cover bulletin board
- Blown up copies of pages 41 and 42 (these pages are templates of animal pictures and matching descriptions of the animals) in *A Guide to Using Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day in the Classroom* By Diane Porteous
- Reduced copies of pages 41 and 42 to use for an answer key
- Border for bulletin board (related Australian theme or any solid color)
- Stapler
- Sticky Velcro
- Access to a lamination machine
- Crayons
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- Letter cut outs for bulletin board title (“I Think I’ll Move To Australia”)
- Access to an Ellison machine
- Small bag/basket/pocket with Australian theme

Steps:

1. Make copies of pages 41 and 42 (animal pictures and descriptions) big enough to be seen on your bulletin board.
2. Color pictures of animals.
3. Cut out colored pictures and descriptions of animals.
4. Glue pictures and descriptions of animals to construction paper slightly larger than actual picture/description (as to create a boarder around the picture/description).
5. Cut out “I Think I’ll Move To Australia” on an Ellison machine.
6. Laminate all pictures, descriptions, and cut out letters.
7. Cover entire bulletin board with paper (light brown would create the illusion of sand).
8. Place bulletin board border around entire bulletin board (Australian theme would be best. You could also use trees, animals, maps, dark brown, or any solid colored border.).
9. Place the title at the top of the board.
10. Staple laminated animal pictures to bulletin board, leaving enough space for descriptions of animals to be placed underneath or beside pictures.
11. Place a small piece of sticky Velcro under or beside each picture (staple once for extra support).
12. Staple a bag/basket/pocket with an Australian theme in lower right hand corner of bulletin board.
13. Place a small piece of sticky Velcro on the back of each description.
14. Place all descriptions in the bag/basket/pocket previously stapled to the bulletin board.
15. Make a small answer key for the bulletin board.
16. Staple the answer key to the lower left hand corner of the bulletin board.
17. Cover the answer key with a picture/map of Australia so that it can be lifted up (to reveal answers).

GRAPHIC ORGANIZER OR SEMANTIC MAP

Description: For this activity, we will be sequencing events. For other activities, a Venn diagram or timeline might be used.

Materials:

- Sequence strips from pages 18 and 19 of *A Guide for Using Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day in the Classroom* By Diane Porteous – one copy for each child or group of children (see attachment for template)
- Sentence strip chart – or – enough space so that the children can spread out and place their sequence strips in order
- Crayons (enough for entire class)
- Scissors (enough for entire class)

Steps:

1. Make enough copies of the sequence strips for the entire class.
2. Give directions to the class (color strips, cut strips, place in order with events happening first at the top and events happening last at the bottom).
3. Pass out the sequence strips, crayons, and scissors.
4. Allow the children enough time to color, cut, and place the strips in order.
5. Ask the students to raise their hands when they are finished.
6. Check all students/groups work.
7. When all groups are finished, go over the order of events as a class. Place the sequence strips in the sentence strips chart as you explain (or allow the students to explain) which events happened first and continue until all events are on the chart.

CHORAL READING

Description: Choral reading comes in four basic styles. In echo form, a leader reads each line and the group repeats each line together. In leader and chorus form, the leader reads the major parts while the group reads the repeated chorus. In small group form, a part of the text is assigned to each group, and each group reads aloud the part that they were assigned. In cumulative form, the group builds as you go through the piece (more readers are added with each line/phrase). For this book, we will choral read “The Alexander Rap” in small group form.

Materials:

- A copy of “The Alexander Rap” from page 26 of *A Guide for Using Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day in the Classroom* by Diane Porteous (one copy will be needed for each student)
- A transparency of “The Alexander Rap”

Steps:

1. Pass out copies of “The Alexander Rap” to each student.
2. Read the rap aloud to the students. (It can be placed on the overhead projector at this time.)
3. Tell the students that they will be divided into eight groups and each group will recite/rap a section of “The Alexander Rap.”
4. Divide the class into eight groups.
5. Tell the students to gather in their groups.
6. Assign each group a section from the rap.
7. Tell the groups that they must practice how they will present their part of the rap. They may make a beat to accompany their part by making sounds, snapping fingers, clapping hands, talking in a beat, etc.
8. When all groups are finished, go through the room and allow all groups to present their sections (in order). Repeat this several times (increasing speed each time) until it sounds like one continuous rap.

WRITING ACTIVITY

Description: Writing activities should be independent work. They should relate to the theme or story being read. Writing activities include journals, book making, story writing, “Mad-Libs,” fill in the blank type worksheets, etc. For this book, we will be doing creative journal entries.

Materials:

- Copies of page 24 in *A Guide for Using Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day in the Classroom* by Diane Porteous (one copy will be needed for each student). Note: This page can be modified if you wish to pick the topic for the children or if you wish to change the directions.
- Journals or journal paper for each student

Steps:

1. Decide if you would like the children to choose their own topics or if you would like to assign a certain one.
2. I would like my class to choose from topic numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, or 7.
3. Pass out topic ideas and journals/journal papers.
4. Tell the children to follow the directions and write journal entries (at least one half page) for the topics assigned or chosen.

SOCIAL STUDIES ACTIVITY

Description: In order to work other areas of study into literacy, teachers can take parts of literature and expand upon them to make social studies, science, math, or other types of lessons. For this lesson, children will be making travel brochures for the places that they wish they could be when they are having a bad day.

Materials:

- Access to a library or the internet
- Sample travel brochures from a travel agency (more is better). Try to find brochures for Australia.
- Construction paper folded into thirds
- Crayons
- Markers

Steps:

1. Explain to the students that they will be creating travel brochures for places they would like to visit when they are having bad days.
2. Show the children sample brochures (including brochures of Australia).
3. Give the children a few days for research, allowing enough class time to visit the library and use the internet.
4. Give the children class time over the following two days (after research time is up) to work on their brochures.
5. Brochures that do not get finished in class should become homework.
6. During the entire process, students should understand that brochures are meant to attract people to certain locations. They should try to make people, who see their brochures, want to visit those particular places.
7. When all brochures are finished, conduct a class presentation where each student is given the opportunity to share his/her brochure.

MATH ACTIVITY

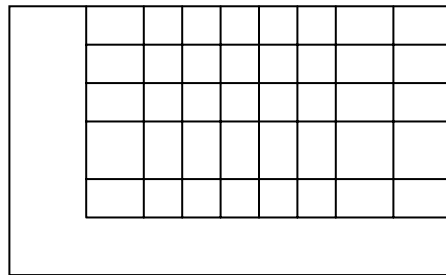
Description: In order to work other areas of study into literacy, teachers can take parts of literature and expand upon them to make social studies, science, math, or other types of lessons. For this lesson, we will be making a class chart to see who has the same shoes as Alexander and what other types of shoes are found in our classroom.

Materials:

- A large piece of vinyl or plastic (a shower curtain works best)
- Overhead markers/Dry erase markers
- Permanent markers
- A copy of *A Guide for Using Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day in the Classroom* by Diane Porteous (activity on page 11)
- Access to a chalkboard

Steps:

1. Draw a large grid on the shower curtain with permanent marker. Leave room at the bottom and on the left side of the grid for labeling. Make the rest of the grid with eight inch squares.



2. Gather the students into a large learning circle (having them sit on the floor).
3. Remind the students that in the story, Alexander was not able to get the shoes he wanted so he had to get plain white ones. Tell them that today they will be graphing what kinds of shoes are represented in our class (and how many of each type there are).
4. Tell the children to choose how they would like to categorize the shoes. They can choose brand (Nike, Reebox, etc.), color, types (tennis, dress, sandal, etc.), size, etc. Call on students to choose how you will graph.
5. Label the graph accordingly (using overhead or dry erase markers). If you chose brand, the y axis would have a number by each square (1, 2, 3, 4 . . .) and the x axis would have a brand by each square (Nike, Reebox, Adidas, etc.).
6. Have each child take off a shoe and place it in a corresponding square on the grid.
7. Record the results on the chalkboard.
8. Recreate the graph in a different way (color, types, size, etc.). Always use an overhead or dry erase marker so that a new graph can be made each time (after you erase marks from the previous graph).

ART ACTIVITY

Description: Art activities allow children to be creative and show comprehension of a book at the same time. Art activities include open mind portraits, dioramas, triaramas, quadraramas, paper quilts, mobiles, etc. For this book, children will be asked to complete a diorama depicting a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day that they have experienced.

Materials:

- Shoeboxes (Children will probably be able to produce their own, but if some cannot, the teacher should have several on hand.)
- Markers
- Crayons
- Scissors
- Glue
- Construction paper
- Clay
- Glue sticks
- String
- Other craft supplies (miscellaneous supplies that the teacher has or thinks should be provided)
- Copies of a directions worksheet (one for each child)

Steps:

1. The teacher should prepare a sheet of directions to pass out to the students.
 - Depict a bad day you have had.
 - Include a background.
 - Include at least one person.
 - Include at least one other object (animal, desk, bed, car, etc.).
 - Your name should be on the top of the diorama.
 - Be creative!
2. The teacher should also have a sample diorama to show the students when the project is introduced. Show this to the students as you begin to explain what they will be doing.
3. Explain to the children that they will be using shoeboxes (turned on their sides and sitting in their lids) to hold the diorama.
4. Explain that the inside of the box should be decorated (a scene should be made) to depict a bad day that they remember having.
5. Remind the students that all objects inside the diorama should be glued or tied down so that they do not fall out.
6. Allow several days of class time for the students to work on their projects.
7. Projects that are not completed in school work time should become homework.
8. The day that dioramas are due, time should be set aside to have a diorama presentation.
9. In the presentation, each child will show his/her diorama to the rest of the class and explain what happened during his/her terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day.

WEBQUEST

Description: The internet is a great tool that can extend learning in many different subject areas. In this activity, students will explore several internet websites to extend knowledge relating to the book and/or theme of this unit.

Materials:

- Access to the internet
- List of acceptable websites for the students to visit – one copy of the list for each student

Steps:

1. Search the web for sites that relate to the book and/or theme of the unit.
2. List the sites on a sheet of paper and pass it out to the class.

Websites relating to *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* or the topic of dealing with frustration and anger:

1. <http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/>
This site allows children to learn about and talk about subjects such as emotions, friends, family, school, money, etc.
2. <http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/misc/war.html>
This site talks about dealing with feelings, most recently including what feelings children might be having about the war in Iraq. (*Also includes a Spanish version which can be accessed through this address.)
3. <http://www.angriesout.com/index.htm#kids>
This is an interactive site for children and adults that helps with anger management.
4. <http://www.kennedy-center.org/programs/family/alexander/students.html>
This site offers Alexander games and an online adaptation of the book read by Judith Viorst.
5. http://www.spaghettibookclub.com/review.php3?review_id=3989
This site gives book reviews of *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by elementary students. Students could visit this page and then do their own review of the book.

CULMINATING UNIT ACTIVITY

Description: A culminating unit activity is a large-scale fun activity that wraps up the unit. There are many options for this type of activity including movies, presentations for parents, fieldtrips, guest speakers, plays, writing to the author, having a party, etc. For this particular activity, my class will have a guest speaker. The guest speaker will be a child therapist/psychologist who will give us a demonstration on how to handle our feelings.

Materials:

- The teacher will need telephone numbers of local child therapists/psychologists.
- Refreshments (cookies and punch)

Steps:

1. The teacher should contact a local child therapist/psychologist and set up a time for him/her to visit the classroom.
2. The teacher should explain to the therapist/psychologist the book that has been read and what needs to be addressed in the presentation (dealing with feelings, anger management, etc.).
3. The teacher also needs to buy refreshments so that the children have time to talk to the therapist and have snacks after the presentation.
4. Prior to the visit, it would be a good idea to have the children write thank you cards for the presenter that include pictures of Alexander and parts of his bad day.

Bibliography

1. Porteous, Diane. *A Guide for Using Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day in the Classroom*. Westminster, CA: Teacher Created Materials, Inc., 2004.
2. Viorst, Judith. *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*. New York: Aladdin, 1972.