

FIRST GRADE

Activity:	Expected duration:
What is a helper?	20-30 min
Learning goals:	
By the end of this lesson, students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• List several types of people they would feel safe with in several different situations• Think of alternative resources for help in an emergency aside from the police	
Guiding questions:	
How can we redefine the police in a way that makes them only one of several possible sources of help for young students? Who are some good alternative role models for students to turn to in times of need? How can we make sure students still feel safe, while avoiding glamorizing the societal role of police?	
Prep:	
Place paper and colored pencils/pens at tables.	
Instructions:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Gather students together to sit in a circle.2. Ask the students to define: What is a helper?3. Ask: Can you think of any examples of helpers that you've met in your community? (Possible examples: firefighters, crossing guards, teachers, pilots, doctors, nurses, librarians, judges, mail people, dog walkers, waiters, cooks, food kitchens, therapists, etc.) For each helper that is mentioned, ask the student to tell you what that helper does, and how to recognize them on the street—do they have a uniform?	

4. If/when a student brings up police officers, try saying something like, **Yes, that's right, police officers can sometimes be helpers, too! Often, you can ask a police officer for help in an emergency situation, like if you get lost and need to find your parent. But sometimes a police officer might not be around, or they might not make you feel safe, so who are some other people you might ask for help in that situation?**

Good alternative answers to this are mothers with children, public transit workers, and store owners!

5. If your students respond well to songs, try sharing the YouTube video [Sesame Street Everyday Hero Song](#).
6. Ask the students to go to the tables and use the paper and pencils/pens to draw a picture of any helper doing something good for the community. The helper can be someone they know—they can even draw themselves doing something nice for someone else!
7. After 15 minutes, call the students back to the circle and ask them to share what they've drawn. Try sorting out the drawings by helper type (e.g., government workers, people who regularly work with children, the food industry). Call attention to similarities between drawings in order to remind the students that they are a community, too.
8. If space is available in your classroom, consider hanging up the students' drawings of helpers!

Activity:	Expected duration:
Reading Something Happened in Our Town by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, and Ann Hazzard	30 min
Learning goals:	
<p>By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a whole-group discussion about police shootings • Discuss the book with a partner 	

- Share something they have learned and a way they can make a positive difference in the community with the class

Guiding questions:

How can we discuss police shootings with young children?

How can we talk about unresolved, present-day racism without making students feel terrified?

What is the nexus between truth and hope that we can realistically aim to teach in this lesson?

Prep:

Purchase *Something Happened in Our Town*, and read the “Note to Parents and Caregivers” at the end of the book. For in-depth prep before reading this book aloud to a class, read through “[Read Aloud Tips for Educators](#),” a resource which I have relied on heavily in culling together these materials. For more background information and tips about discussing difficult topics with young children, check out this [interview](#) with Dr. Celano, one of the authors.

Something to keep in mind is that this book will be received differently by students according to both their personal racial identity and their past exposure to conversations about race. It is important that you modify your approach based on the group you’re reading to, keeping in mind “the age of the students, the size and ethnic composition of the group, and the relationship of the reader to the group” (Read Aloud Tips).

Instructions:

1. Gather your students in a circle to get ready to read *Something Happened in Our Town*. Preface the reading by saying that if any students have any questions or comments to share during the reading, they should raise their hands.
2. If you think it would be useful for your students to do so before beginning with the reading, ask students for their definitions of all or some of these words:
discrimination, race, fairness, prejudice, racism, slavery
(Good kid-friendly definitions of these words can be found in the “Note to Parents and Caregivers” section of the book.)
3. Read aloud *Something Happened in Our Town*, making sure to stop every few pages and ask clarifying questions as scripted in “Read Aloud Tips for Educators.”
4. Pair up the students and have them discuss the following questions from “Read Aloud

Tips for Educators.”

What did you learn from this story?

Josh and Emma are trying to create a different, more fair pattern in their school.

How could you try to make a positive difference in your community?

5. Come back together as a class and ask each pair to share what they've discussed and their takeaways.