



The Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation
 Teacher Tips & Lesson Plans
www.MattieOnline.com



Lesson or Activity Plan Title:
**Our Loving Tribute for
 Mattie J.T. Stepanek
 (Book Publishing)**

Alba Romero – Peace Certified Classroom
 Spring, 2014

Are you Peace Certification Program Participant(s) (yes no
 Season Spring Year 2014
 Is plan related to an outreach activity created by Mattie's Foundation?
 (yes no (If yes, which one: _____)

Name of Educator or Individual: Alba L. Romero

Your role (e.g., teacher, counselor, parent, aide...) Teacher

Name of classroom/school: Morningside Elementary School

Location (city, state, country): San Fernando, California

Name of Lesson or Activity Plan: Our Loving Tribute for Mattie Stepanek – Book Publishing

Subject /content area(s): 1 – Language Arts 2 - Art

How is this lesson related to Mattie's poetry or peace message (e.g., which poem, quote, book, etc): Related to Mattie's message of peace and Heartsongs in general (many poems and activities were are part of the plan.

Recommended age/grades/developmental level: Ages 9-10 (4th grade), and also higher grades (5th-12th grade)

Who created this plan: Teacher created plan, students helped shape the plan.

Lesson/Activity Objectives: Students will be able to understand that Mattie is optimistic in his views on life despite his illness and he uses perseverance to make his three dreams a reality. Also, that he believes in and has hope for a peaceful world. Additionally, their art will be symbolic of all that he represents. To accomplish this, students will create a one inch decorated border and their final product must include his "Heart songs" symbol.

Relationship to State Standards (if applicable):
 (Note: These are fourth grade CA standards)

Writing Standards:

With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.

Visual Arts

2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Students apply artistic processes and skills, using a variety of media to communicate meaning and intent in original works of art.

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Materials needed:

Letter to Mattie: Writing paper for (first and final draft), pencil, red/blue pens for proofreading, revising, and final draft. I would also have them use a dictionary, a thesaurus, and Handbook of cursive letters as resources for their final drafts.

NOTE: see “Letter Template” below

Art Activity: White, unlined copy paper (Portrait or Landscape), pencils to sketch first, markers to outline and color. Student Treasures requires that students color with markers only, no highlighters.

Length of activity (minutes, days, weeks...): We were able to complete letters/art pieces in class and for homework as needed. I provided the writing paper and pens, but some students didn't have markers to use at home so they just had to borrow mine in class. As for the Computer Lab, my class was scheduled to go daily from 11:15 – 11:40.

Number of students/classes impacted: All students in class; students/staff throughout school with display and assembly and announcements.

Preparation steps before lesson/activity: I recommend that final drafts be completely edited before students start the final publishing step. Also, keyboarding lessons are useful. There are free websites that don't require passwords. We would have finished faster if I had taken this step

Modifications (for students with disabilities, ESL...) Teacher models Mattie letter template for all students to follow along. Once first drafts are completed with proofreading and revisions, then students may participate in peer/teacher editing. I have peers offer one compliment and one suggestion for improvement. Peers must also sign off as “Read By:” followed by their first name.

Please describe how the lesson or activity was introduced and carried out.

-What was said and done first, next... -Specific steps in the lesson/activity...-Discussion questions and extension activities...

-Closure or follow-up discussion or activities... -Any evaluation of the lesson/activity (what/who/how)... etc...

OVERVIEW:

- Ms. Romero introduced Mattie to her students using Mattie's books, video links from Mattie's website, information about Mattie from his website, poetry readings, and conversation and discussion.
- The students learned about Mattie as a person, and as a poet and writer, and as peace advocate. Ms. Romero and her students reached out to Mattie's mom (Jeni Stepanek, who runs Mattie's Foundation) to share their activities and that they were inspired by Mattie's life and message.
- Dr. Stepanek responded, and after learning that many of the students in the class were Spanish-speaking, invited them to help her in furthering her Spanish skills. They began exchanging e-mails in both English and Spanish. Ms. Romero also helped the students with letter-writing skills, and sent an package of letters from the students (all penned in Spanish) and artwork to Dr. Stepanek.
- The students also created a “hero tribute book” for Mattie, in which they wrote letters about how Mattie inspired them in learning and in life. Ms. Romero helped them “publish” the book (hardcover binding through a specialty company) and sent a copy to Mattie's mom.

Introduction to students:

Teacher introduces Mattie through Oprah interview video (about 10 min) and displays “Heartsongs” books. My collection has been available to students for the past five years and I'm happy to report that they still look like new. They really appreciate having access to them and they have taken great care of them.

Steps in the lesson/activity:

Complete letter by using all the steps of the Writing Process. Complete their Art Design as instructed so that it can be uploaded to the publishing website.

Discussion questions:

What Life Lessons can we learn from Mattie?
How did he show bravery throughout his life?
How are you similar to Mattie?
Why is it important to believe in and work towards peace?
What would you say to Dr. Jeni Stepanek if you had the opportunity?

Closure or follow-up:

For homework, students share what they learned with family members. Those with Internet access can also show them the Mattie website (www.mattieonline.com). I also show them in class how they can sign up and become a Peace Club member. Those that accomplish this step are required to bring me a signed statement from a parent and I give them a photograph of Mattie and Mom in exchange as a reward/thank you.

Student reflections and responses:

This is exactly what their letter to Mattie is about. They really get that he was brave, wise, loving, peaceful, thoughtful, creative, and just all around amazing. The fact that he's a child himself makes his message even more powerful because he becomes someone they can relate to. To my delight, I have found this same level of understanding with my 6th graders as well as the 4th graders. Many become automatic fans, promise to pass on his messages, and keep him in their hearts forever.

Suggestions for replication/changes:

I recommend using Student Treasures (www.studenttreasures.com) and having students type final drafts directly onto the website if you choose the online version. I made the mistake of having them create a Word document first and then copying/pasting onto the website. This was a giant error on my part and something I definitely would not do next time. Many characters shifted and it was very time consuming to get everything in exactly the right place. If this happens (or anything else) as you are going through the process, please don't hesitate to call a representative to ask questions. Thankfully, I found their customer service representatives to be very knowledgeable and efficient.

The teacher is responsible for designing the cover, title, dedication, and "picture" page while each student can have two pages of their own – one for the writing and one for the art. The maximum amount of pages is sixty-six. This worked out perfectly in our case because I had thirty-three students. Next year, if possible, I'd like to be able to include a page that summarizes Mattie as a bit of a background for our audience.

As for the artwork, I scanned all of their pieces and uploaded them myself. This worked out just fine. I realized afterwards that it was not necessary to have them create a white space border on the edges of their art paper since I was able to manipulate the size of the uploaded image. Another option is to have students design their art directly onto the website using "stickers", or images, to select and drag onto their page. This might be something I would attempt next time. For those of you that prefer the traditional paper/pencil method, they will mail you a publishing kit once you notify them of a desired publishing date. This is great for those that don't have access to a class set of computers or even if you prefer to have the writing to be in their own penmanship to serve as a keepsake.

Other comments/feedback:

From start to finish, I would say this whole project took about six weeks. Once I submitted my book to be published, it only took about a week to have the final versions delivered to us. This was a sweet surprise, since I had been told it would take about three weeks to print and deliver. Just something to take into consideration as you select a publishing date.

Be aware orders are required to be submitted before the actual book is published. You are purchasing a copy of a hardcover book that hasn't been created yet. Students pay just under \$20 for their copy and teachers are offered four \$10 coupons that can be used as you wish. One extra copy will be printed free of charge for the teacher to keep as a "Teacher Copy". Extra copies can still be purchased afterwards at a slightly higher price, but also with an added shipping charge. Otherwise, the whole process is absolutely free.

Once we had the published books in our hands, my students took great pride in reading their page and showing off their art to our principal during his weekly Reading Club. They were very proud to be published authors like Mattie!! =)

SEE PHOTOS NEXT PAGES → → →

HeartsongBooks@gmail.com or 402 King Farm Blvd. #125, Rockville, MD 20850

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LETTER TEMPLATE created by Mrs. Romero:

- Students added their comments to the suggested statements.
- Students were also invited to share additional thoughts and comments.

Dear(est) (insert adjective) Mattie,

Our class was so touched by your interview with Oprah. I loved how you... You demonstrated such bravery when you... You and I are similar because... It is so important to believe in peace because... You inspired me to... I taught my family about you and they felt... Thank you for teaching me... I wish I could tell your mom... I will never forget you because...

(Closing)

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**Morningside Elementary School (California)
Ms. Romero's 2014 Fourth Graders**



**Sample letters and art
from Ms. Romero's
students**

MORE NEXT PAGE → → →

Morningside Elementary School (California) Ms. Romero's 2014 Fourth Graders



Mattie and his Mommy



Mattie and Oprah

DEDICATED TO
**Mattie, Ms. Stepanek,
 and our Families**

This project was a labor of LOVE for Mattie
 and all that he stands for. We will ALWAYS
 keep him in our hearts!! =)
Love, Ms. Romero and Fourth Graders

**"Remember to play after every storm!"
 Mattie J. T. Stepanek**

Our Loving Tribute
 for
Mattie Stepanek

"Love Boy"
 - Oprah Winfrey

By:
**Ms. Romero's
 Fourth Graders**

Dear Mattie,
 I hope you are
 happy and healthy
 and that you are
 still playing after
 every storm.
 I love you and
 miss you very
 much.
 I hope you are
 still playing after
 every storm.
 I love you and
 miss you very
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Dear Mattie,
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Sample pages from the Mattie Tribute
 book by Ms. Romero's 2014 Fourth Graders
 Morningside Elementary School (California)