

The Thoughts That You Think

Book #4 In The Series From The Little Guiding Light Books

LITTLE GUIDING LIGHT BOOKS

About the Book

Synopsis, themes & key message

What is this book about?

Children experience big thoughts every day, and sometimes their brains tell them things that are negative or simply not true. It is easy to feel overwhelmed and let those negative thoughts take over. The Thoughts That You Think helps young readers navigate this by showing them that they are the captain of their own ship. By taking the wheel, children learn to distinguish between negative and positive self-talk. Through this story, readers discover an empowering truth: they can recognize when a thought isn't true and actively steer their minds toward positivity and confidence.

CORE THEME

**Positive Self-Talk &
Mental Empowerment**

SEL FOCUS

**Self-Awareness
& Self-Management**

GRADE BAND

PreK - Grade 6

CASEL SEL Framework Alignment

Standards-based connections for school adoption

CASEL COMPETENCY

Self-Awareness

Encourages children to identify their thoughts and recognize when their brain is saying something negative or untrue.

CASEL COMPETENCY

Self-Management

Models the ability to "take the wheel" and regulate emotions by steering thoughts toward a positive direction.

CASEL COMPETENCY

Relationship Skills

Demonstrates that understanding our own thoughts helps us communicate our feelings more clearly to others.

CASEL COMPETENCY

Responsible Decision-Making

Shows that choosing to focus on true, positive self-talk is a healthy and empowering choice.

Before Reading

Activating prior knowledge and building curiosity

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Look at the cover. What do you notice about the character? What does it mean to be a captain?
- 2 The title says, "The Thoughts That You Think." Where do our thoughts come from? Can we control them?
- 3 Have you ever had a thought that made you feel sad or scared, but later you realized it wasn't true?
- 4 What does it mean to steer a ship? How could you steer your own mind?

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

The Captains Wheel

Teacher, draw a large ship's steering wheel on the board.

Ask the class: "Who drives a ship?" (A captain). "What happens if the captain lets go of the wheel?" (The ship goes the wrong way or crashes).

Tell the class: "Our minds are just like ships, and our thoughts are the waves. Sometimes the waves are rough and scary."

Write a few common negative thoughts outside the wheel (e.g., "I'm not good at this," "Nobody wants to play with me").

Ask: "If you are the captain of your brain, how do you steer away from these rough waves?" Write positive counter-thoughts inside the wheel.

Tell students: "Let's read and see how the character in our story learns to become the captain of their own thoughts."

Revisit the Captain's Wheel AFTER reading.

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Learning Objectives

What students will know, feel, and be able to do

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KNOW

- Fear is a natural emotion
- Bravery and fear can coexist
- Our thoughts influence our actions

FEEL

- Validated in their own fears
- Inspired to take courageous steps
- Connected to the story's character

DO

- Identify personal fears
- Name one brave action to take
- Practice positive self-talk

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Vocabulary & Key Concepts

Pre-reading and during-reading word work

INTRODUCE BEFORE READING

Fear

An unpleasant feeling caused by something unknown, dangerous, or frightening.

Courage

The ability to do something that frightens you; choosing to act in spite of fear.

Brave

Ready to face and endure danger or pain; showing courage.

Feelings

Emotional states or reactions we experience inside our bodies and minds.

Choice

An act of picking one option from a set of possibilities; a decision.

Power

The ability or capacity to direct or influence your own thoughts and actions.

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During Reading

Think-alouds, stop and notice moments

PAUSE & ASK

When the big, negative thoughts first appear:

"How do these thoughts make the character feel? Are these thoughts actually true?"

When the character feels overwhelmed:

"Who is driving the ship right now? The character, or the negative thoughts?"

When the character remembers they are the captain:

"What choice does the character make here to take back control?"

After the character steers toward positive thoughts:

"How did changing their self-talk change the way they feel?"

TEACHER THINK-ALoud PROMPTS

Model for Students

I notice the character's brain is telling them something that isn't true. Have you ever had a thought that made you feel bad, and you just believed it right away?

I notice the negative thoughts are like big waves trying to push the ship around. That makes me feel a little scared for the character.

The character didn't just give up. They grabbed the wheel! They remembered they are the captain of their own mind.

I'm going to remember this: When my brain says something mean about myself, I don't have to listen. I can take the wheel and steer toward a positive, true thought instead.

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After Reading

Deepening comprehension and personal connection

RECALL

What were the negative thoughts trying to do in the story?
What did the character have to become to take control of the ship?
What kind of thoughts did the character steer toward at the end?

INTERPRET

Why do you think the author used a ship and a captain to talk about our brains?
What is the most important message about the things our brains tell us?
How is the character's mindset different at the end of the story?

CONNECT

When have YOU had to steer away from a bad thought?
What is a positive thought you can tell yourself when you are having a hard day?
What would you tell a friend who is believing a negative thought about themselves?

CREATE

Draw a picture of yourself as the captain of a ship.
Write: 'I am the captain of my thoughts. I can steer toward...'
Create a class 'Positive Waters' wall with boats showing positive self-talk statements.

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Writing Extension Activities

Cross-curricular literacy connections

PreK-K

Draw Your Thoughts

Students draw a stormy cloud with a sad face on one side, and a bright sun with a happy face on the other. Draw a ship sailing toward the sun.

Grades 1-2

Sentence Starters

Complete the prompts: "A negative thought I sometimes have is..." and "Instead of believing it, I will steer my mind by thinking..." and "Being a captain of my mind means..."

Grades 3-4

Letter to the Mind

Write a letter to your own brain. Include: a reminder that you are in charge, a negative thought you are choosing not to believe anymore, and three positive truths you will steer toward.

Grades 5-6

Reflective Journal

Describe a time your brain told you something that wasn't true. How did it affect your actions? After reading this story, what does it mean to take the wheel of your own self-talk? How will you practice this skill this week?

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SEL Classroom Activities

Hands-on experiences to build courage and self-awareness

1

Feelings Check-In

Use an emotion chart daily. Ask students to identify if their current mood is being driven by a "true" thought or an "untrue/negative" thought. Connect to the book: Are you at the wheel right now?

2

Captian Talk Stems

"My brain is telling me..., but the truth is..." and "I am steering my mind toward..."

3

Thought Sorting

Create a T-chart on the board (Rough Waves / Calm Waters). Read out loud different thoughts (e.g., "I'll never learn this," "I can try again tomorrow"). Have students sort the negative self-talk from the positive self-talk.

4

Steering Wheel Breathing

Teach a calming technique. Have students hold an imaginary steering wheel. Breathe in for 4 counts while turning the wheel left (steering away from the bad thought). Exhale for 4 counts turning right (steering toward the good thought).

5

Role Play Scenarios

Give pairs a scenario (e.g., you made a mistake on a math test and your brain says you aren't smart). Practice identifying the untrue thought, and then act out what the "captain" would say instead.

6

Mindset Mentor Text

Compare with another read-aloud featuring a character overcoming negative thinking. Use a Venn diagram: What negative thoughts did both characters face? How did they each take back control?

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Family Connection

Extending the conversation beyond the classroom

Research shows that SEL skills are strengthened when families and schools work together. Use these prompts and activities to bridge the conversation at home.

CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR HOME

- Ask your child: What does it mean to be the captain of your own ship?
- Tell me about a time you realized a scary or sad thought you had wasn't actually true.
- What is a positive phrase our family can use when we feel overwhelmed by big thoughts?
- How can we help remind each other to "take the wheel" when we are having a tough day?

TAKE-HOME ACTIVITY

The Captian's Log

Staple a few pieces of paper together to create a small "Captain's Log" journal for your child.

Each night before bed, have your child write or draw one "rough wave" (a negative thought) they had that day.

Next to it, have them write or draw how they "steered away" from it by finding a positive truth.

Celebrate their ability to recognize untrue thoughts and take control of their mindset.

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Assessment & Reflection Ideas

Documenting growth in SEL competencies

Informal Assessment

- 1 Thumbs Up/Down/Sideways: Did the character let the negative thoughts win? Are you in charge of your own thoughts?
- 2 Exit ticket: Name one negative thought you sometimes have, and one positive thought you can replace it with.
- 3 Partner share: Tell your neighbor one thing a captain of their own mind does.
- 4 Class discussion observation checklist (teacher-facing).

Formal Assessment

- 1 Written response: The character in this story taught me... (2-3 sentences minimum).
- 2 Illustrated positive self-talk booklet with captions.
- 3 Rubric-based journal entry scored on depth, personal connection, and vocabulary.
- 4 Pre/post self-assessment: Rate how often you catch yourself believing a thought that isn't true (1-5) and explain how you can change that.

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About the Author & Little Guiding Light Books

Little Guiding Light Books is an independent children's book imprint dedicated to Social-Emotional Learning for PreK through Grade 6. All books are CASEL-aligned with accompanying Teacher's Guides.

"All of the books share a common thread -- empowering kids to understand that they hold the power to shape their own thoughts, control their own actions, and make their own choices. Each story is a step toward building stronger mental health."

Loved this guide? There's more coming soon.

Visit littleguidinglightbooks.com/for-educators for: • Additional SEL activity printables • Classroom posters featuring our book character • Early access to new book releases • Free SEL companion downloads

Following the store on TPT also helps you see new SEL companion guides the moment they're released — including upcoming titles *It's Just an Apple* and *The Thoughts You Think*.

Thank you for bringing The Little Guiding Light Books into your classroom. Every small act of teaching emotional resilience matters.

— Danny Baideme, Author & Illustrator The Little Guiding Light Books LLC | Lakeville, Minnesota

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