

But It's Just An Apple

Book #3 in the series from
The Little Guiding Light Books

About the Book

Synopsis, themes & key message

What is this book about?

There are so many trends children see in the world, it is easy to get swept up in the crowd. When everyone goes crazy over a famous apple—pushing, shoving, and taking pictures of it—it can feel like you have to join in just to fit in. But the main characters see it differently. They step back and use their own brains rather than blindly following the crowd. Through their story, young readers learn a truth that can shape how they move through the world: you don't have to bend and pretend to follow a trend. Sometimes, thinking for yourself is the bravest, most powerful choice a person can make.

CORE THEME

Independent Thinking & Self-Confidence

SEL FOCUS

**Self-Awareness
& Responsible Decision-Making**

GRADE BAND

PreK - Grade 6

CASEL SEL Framework Alignment

Standards-based connections for school adoption

CASEL COMPETENCY

Self-Awareness

Encourages children to notice their own thoughts and feelings when pressured by a crowd or a trend.

CASEL COMPETENCY

Self-Management

Models pausing to think and choosing intentional action over blindly following what everyone else is doing.

CASEL COMPETENCY

Relationship Skills

Demonstrates navigating group dynamics and staying true to oneself, even when others are pushing and shoving for the same thing.

CASEL COMPETENCY

Responsible Decision-Making

Shows that evaluating a situation with your own brain, rather than following a trend, is a smart and ethical choice.

Before Reading

Activating prior knowledge and building curiosity

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Look at the cover. What do you notice about the apple? What might the people around it be doing?
- 2 The title says, "But It's Just An Apple." Why do you think people might make a huge deal out of an everyday object?
- 3 Have you ever wanted something or done something just because everyone else was doing it? How did it feel?
- 4 What does it mean to "follow a trend"? Is it always a good idea to do what the crowd does?

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

The Kindness Ripple

Teacher, draw a simple, everyday object on the board (like a rock or a stick).

Tell the class: "Imagine everyone in the world suddenly decided this rock was the coolest thing ever. People are taking pictures of it and pushing each other to see it."

Ask: "How would that make you feel? Would you want the rock just because everyone else did?"

Write student answers around the drawing.

Ask: "What if you looked at it and realized it was just a regular rock? Would you still pretend it was special?"

Tell students: "Look how easily a simple object can turn into a crazy trend. Let's see if the characters in our story use their own brains when faced with a famous apple."

Revisit The Trend Test AFTER reading.

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Learning Objectives

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

LITTLE GUIDING LIGHT BOOKS

INDEPENDENCE

- Confidence starts with noticing when a crowd is just following a trend.
- You don't need to do what everyone else is doing to be important.
- Thinking for yourself can change your whole perspective.

CRITICAL THINKING

- Understand the difference between popularity and reality.
- Connecting to the characters' choice to step back when others pushed and shoved.
- Inspired to use their own brain before joining a crowd.

DO

- Identify one way to show independent thinking this week
- Practice stopping, noticing, and evaluating a situation before joining in.
- Reflect on how it feels to not "bend and pretend."

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Vocabulary & Key Concepts

Pre-reading and during-reading word work

INTRODUCE BEFORE READING

Trend

A popular behavior, style, or activity that many people follow for a short time without thinking.

Crowd

A large group of people gathered together, sometimes acting the exact same way.

Pretend

To act like something is true when it is not, often just to fit in with others.

Independent

Thinking or acting for yourself, not relying on what everyone else does.

Choice

An act of picking one option from a set of possibilities; deciding for yourself.

Pause

To stop for a moment and think before taking action.

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During Reading

Think-alouds, stop and notice moments

PAUSE & ASK

When the crowd first goes crazy over the apple:

""Why is everyone pushing and shoving? Is the apple really that special?"

When others keep following the trend:

""Why do you think people keep taking pictures of it? Are they using their own brains right now?"

When the characters decide to step back:

"Why do you think the girl and her brother chose not to act like the rest of the crowd?"

After the crowd's reaction is clear:

""Did the characters have to 'bend and pretend' to fit in? Do you think they made the right choice?"

THINK ALOUD PROMPTS

Model for Students

I notice everyone is pushing, shoving, and taking pictures. Have you ever seen a crowd all doing the exact same thing and felt like you had to join in too?

I notice the crowd is going crazy over just a regular apple. That makes me feel a little confused. I wonder if the girl and her brother feel that way too.

They didn't try to bend and pretend just to fit in with the crowd. They just used their own brains and stepped back. Sometimes that takes a lot of courage.

I'm going to remember this: I don't have to follow a trend just because everyone else is. If a crowd is doing something silly, I can use my own brain and make my own choice.

After Reading

Deepening comprehension and personal connection

RECALL

What were the people in the story going crazy over?
What were the people in the crowd doing (pushing, shoving, taking pictures)?

INTERPRET

Why do you think the author wrote this book?
What is the most important message about trends?
How are the characters different from the rest of the crowd?

CONNECT

When have YOU seen a trend that seemed silly to you?
Who in your life is good at thinking for themselves?
What would you tell a friend who wants to do something just because "everyone else is doing it"?

CREATE

Draw a picture of a silly trend.
Write: 'I can use my own brain when...'
Create a class 'Think For Yourself' Wall with examples of trends vs. independent choices.

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Writing Extension Activities

Cross-curricular literacy connections

PreK-K

Draw Your Kind

Students draw a crowd of people doing one thing on one side, and draw themselves doing something uniquely them on the other side.

Grades 1-2

Sentence Starters

Complete the prompts: "I saw a trend when..." and "Instead of following the crowd, I used my brain by..." and "Next time everyone is acting crazy over something silly, I will..."

Grades 3-4

Letter to the Character

Write a friendly letter to the main characters. Include: what you admire about them, a time you felt pressured to follow a trend, and one idea for how your class can practice thinking for themselves.

Grades 5-6

Reflective Journal

Describe a time you followed a trend because of peer pressure. What did you do? After reading this story, what does it mean to not "bend and pretend"? How could that change the way you act 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 or wheel daily. Ask students to name their feeling when they try to fit in vs. when they are true to themselves. Connect to the book: how good does it feel to use your own brain?

2

Independence Talk Stems

Post sentence stems: "I decided not to follow the crowd when..." and "Using my own brain means I can..."

3

Trend Vs. Truth Wall

Create a class display where students post things that are just "trends" vs. things that are "true to them" on apple-shaped cutouts. Show that independence comes in all sizes.

4

The Thinking Pause

Teach a pause technique: breathe in for 4 counts, hold for 2, out for 6. Practice together as a class tool for managing the urge to jump into a crowd. To not blindly follow, breathe through it and use your brain.

5

Role Play Scenarios

Give pairs a scenario (everyone is laughing at a mean joke, or everyone is rushing to do the same thing). Practice asking: "Is this really a good idea?" Then act it out.

6

Independence Mentor Text

Compare with another read-aloud featuring a character who thinks for themselves. Use a T-chart: How is the peer pressure the same or different? What did each character choose to do?

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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: Why was everyone going crazy over the apple? What did the main characters do?
- Tell me about a time YOU felt pressured to follow a trend.
- What is one thing you love to do, even if no one else is doing it?
- How can our family support each other in making our own choices?

TAKE-HOME ACTIVITY

Use Your Brain Jar

Decorate a jar together as a family.

Each time a family member makes an independent choice instead of just following the crowd—big or small—write it on a slip of paper and add it to the jar.

At dinner once a week, take turns reading slips and celebrating each other's independent thinking.

Watch the jar fill up over the school year!

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Assessment & Reflection Ideas

Documenting growth in SEL competencies

Informal Assessment

- 1 Thumbs Up/Down/Sideways: Did the characters make a smart choice? Would you have done the same?
- 2 Exit ticket: Name one trend from real life and one reason you should think before following it.
- 3 Partner share: Tell your neighbor one thing you do that proves you think for yourself.
- 4 Class discussion observation checklist (teacher-facing).

Formal Assessment

- 1 Written response: The characters in this story taught me... (2-3 sentences minimum).
- 2 Illustrated independent-moment booklet with captions.
- 3 Rubric-based journal entry scored on depth, personal connection, and vocabulary.
- 4 Pre/post self-assessment: Rate how often you stop and use your brain before following a crowd (1-5) and explain why.

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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."

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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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