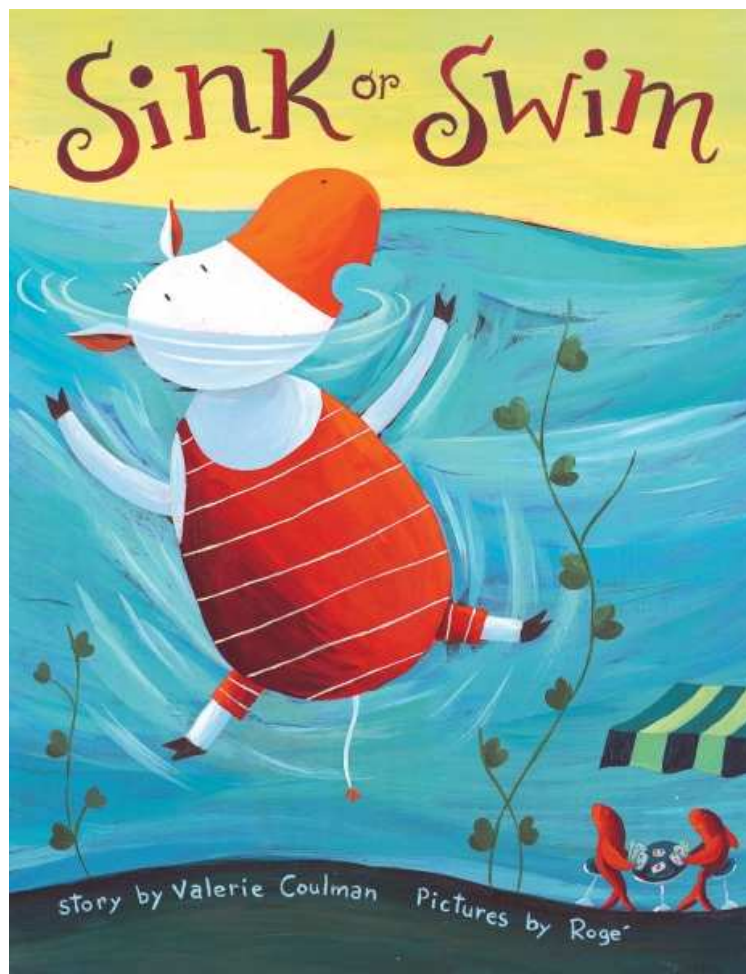


# Teachers' Guide and Lesson Plan for Sink or Swim



Guide written by: Kristin Gerchicoff, Christina Mallozzi, and Claudia Testa,  
McGill University

## Part One – Before Reading the Book

### Vocabulary words

- Complained (page 1)
- Meadow (page 2)
- Assured (page 3)
- Spluttered (page 8)
- Flippers (page 18)
- Hooves (page 18)
- Surfboard (page 24)
- Grinned (page 26)

**Activity:** Separating the words and definition on cue cards of different colors which will be given out to the students who will need to match the words with the appropriate definition. Word cue cards will be in one color and definition cards will be in another.

### Predictions

The title “Sink or Swim” suggests that the conflict of the story will deal with success or failure. The cover picture demonstrates that the story will involve a cow and his struggle with water. The back cover indicates that the characters will include a frog and ducks.

**Question 1:** What would you do if somebody told you that you couldn’t do something that you really wanted to do?

**Question 2:** What would you do if someone said something about you just because of the way you look?

## Part Two: While Reading the Book

### Questions:

#### Perseverance

1. Explain what perseverance means and give an example of it.
2. Has anyone ever told you that you couldn’t do something that you wanted to do?
3. Did you ever try to do something that was really hard but you kept trying anyway?

Students will work individually and answer the questions on a sheet of paper. They will be encouraged to discuss their answers with the rest of the class and then they will post their work on the bulletin board in the class.

## **Stereotyping**

1. What is a stereotype and give an example of it.
2. How does stereotyping affect how you treat someone?
3. How can you help to fight stereotypes?

Teacher will bring in examples of stereotyping from sources such as books, newspaper clippings, movie excerpts, etc. so that students fully grasp the concept of stereotyping. Teacher will then encourage students into a discussion using the aforementioned questions and examples. From this class discussion, students will then be able to do the following activities, for example, creating an anti-stereotyping banner.

## **Part Three: After Reading the Book**

### **Suggested Activity:**

The teacher provides each student with a sheet that includes the sentences of events that happen in the story that are scrambled. The students will have to cut each sentence and stick them into their copybook in the right order. They will then swap their finished work with their neighboring classmate in order for the sheet to be corrected as a cooperative activity.

### **Language Arts:**

1) As a class discussion, students will share past experiences of a time when they've persevered. They will then be asked to put their thoughts on paper by going through a writing process. This process will involve writing a draft and final copy and then sharing it orally in front of the class. If they cannot think of a time when they've persevered, they will be asked to think about a time when one of their family members or a friend showed perseverance.

After hearing their stories, the class should be able to identify what each student's goal was and how it was achieved. The stories can then be posted on the bulletin board outside of the classroom where the rest of the school can read the stories which can also be a form of inspiration for others.

2) Building upon the drama activity students will be asked to write a short reflection on how they felt while being in each role, and how they thought they should have been treated or acted respectively.

Students will answer the questions individually and will be evaluated based on the depth of their answers and on their use of correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.

### **Math:**

1) Each student will be given a tally chart (see below). They will be asked to survey

their classmates to see which gender prefers certain subjects over others. They will then have to check off school subjects that each student likes. At the end of this activity, they will have to tally up how many checks they have for each subject by gender. A brief results discussion will follow the activity. Throughout the discussion, the teacher will ask the students whether they thought their responses to the survey were typical male/female responses and whether they thought the questionnaire was stereotypical in gearing the characteristics towards one particular sex or the other. The students will also be asked how they could have changed the questionnaire for it to have been less stereotypical.

The chart will be filled out and tallied individually and they will be evaluated on the completion and correct calculations of their chart. They will also be evaluated on their understanding of stereotypes.

<u>Likes</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Gym		
Math		
Science		
Art		
Reading		
Music		

2) Students will be given a balancing scale and various objects of different weight and sizes, where they will have to add or subtract objects until the scale reaches equilibrium. Students will work in small groups and will be evaluated on their effort and success of balancing the scale.

**Art project:**

1) Working individually, students can draw a picture of a time that they had to persevere. They will be evaluated on how well they used the space on their sheet, how creative they were and if they used the theme at hand.

2) Working in small groups, students will create a banner to promote the fight against stereotyping. They can use any material to create images depicting their message. They will be evaluated based on their creativity and originality.

**Drama:**

Students will be organized in pairs where one student will play the role of the portrayer

and the other will play the victim of stereotyping. They will be asked to perform two skits where they will each get a chance to play both roles.

Students will be evaluated on their understanding of stereotypes portrayed through their skits.

### **Rhymes:**

Students will learn this rhyme individually. It will be set to music and learned as a song which will increase chances that the rhyme be retained. They will be evaluated on how well they learn the rhyme.

#### Try, Try Again

'This a lesson you should heed,  
Try, try again;  
If at first you don't succeed,  
Try, try again;  
Try, try again.

Then your courage should appear,  
For, if you will persevere,  
You will conquer, never fear

The second rhyme will be done in a reader's theatre. In small groups, students will have to perform different lines and act out the song. This will also allow students to learn the rhyme. They will be evaluated on how well they learned their lines and how well they worked in a group.

#### Persevere

The fisher who draws in his net too soon,  
Won't have any fish to sell;  
The child who shuts up his book too soon,  
Won't learn any lessons well.

If you would have your learning stay,  
Be patient — don't learn too fast;  
The man who travels a mile each day,  
May get round the world at last.

### **Songs:**

Students will be asked to explain the message of the songs through class discussion and will be evaluated based on their participation.

- Song One: *Don't Laugh at Me*

Written by: Allen Shamblin & Steven Seskin

Performed by: Peter, Paul and Mary

- Song Two: *It's a Small World* (after all)

Written by: The Sherman Brothers

Performed by: Disney

**Gym:**

While playing basketball, students must learn a new technique such as dribbling. They must continue to persevere until they master the technique.

Students will be encouraged to work individually in order to learn the skill within a specified timeframe and will be graded according to their mastery of the technique.

**Extras:****Related Websites:**

<http://www.k12.hi.us/~mkunimit/perseverance.htm>

<http://www.peacekids.net/>

**Rhymes taken from:**

<http://www.enotalone.com/article/5512.html>

**About the author:**

Saskatchewan-native, Valerie Coulman, has degrees in both linguistics and theology, and volunteers regularly, working mostly with mothers and children, who both challenge and inspire her. Valerie is a member of both CANSCAIP and the CCBC. She loved reading so much as a girl that she used to sneak books into bed to read at night. She now writes about pigs and breakfast and dancing and log houses and all kinds of interesting things. And she still reads way past her bedtime.

**Author website:**

<http://www.valeriecoulman.com/>

**Publisher Website:**

<http://www.lobsterpress.com/>