

"Autobiography in Five Short Chapters"

A great activity for the second or third day of school! Students will

- complete a close read of the poem**
- watch a YouTube video version**
- answer questions about it**
- relate it to their own lives and the school year ahead!**

This is a character building lesson as well as a poetry lesson!



ELA Core Plans

Teacher-Written Standards-Based Lesson Plans

Thank you for purchasing this teaching unit! We hope you love it as much as we do!



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(Except for your own classroom)



DO NOT POST ONLINE.

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ELA Core Plans

Teacher-Written Standards-Based Lesson Plans

Autobiography in Five Short Chapters

Lesson Plan

1. Tell or show students the title of the poem – only the title. Have them write two questions inspired by the title. To generate interest, allow willing students to share their questions.
2. Distribute the poem. Tell students to take notes in the margins about what they notice and what they wonder. Tell them to pay attention to repetition. Allow them to highlight, write questions, and annotate as much as they can. Ask them to look for the deeper meaning. Give them about six or seven minutes to annotate.
3. Watch the poem on you tube. All students like to watch a video! 😊
4. Give out the handout with the questions to make sure students have a basic understanding of the poem. Before doing this, you could have students illustrate each “chapter” of the poem.
5. Discuss the questions.
6. Give out the *Think About It* handout or simply use it as a discussion guide. Brainstorm together with the students.
7. Now, students will make the theme of this poem personal by thinking about a “hole” in their own lives. Give out the handout with the pictures, and have students complete their own.
8. Allow willing students to share.
9. Finally, lead a discussion about how being mean and disrespectful to others can lead to “holes” this year in class. Allow students to complete their own “street signs” for the classroom using the handout. If you prefer, you could allow students to work with a partner or do them together as a class.

We hope you enjoy this lesson! 😊 Thanks! Shannon and Tammy

About the YouTube Video

There are a few videos of this poem on YouTube. Just go to the YouTube site and search for the title of the poem: *Autobiography in Five Short Chapters*.

Never view a video on YouTube in class without first watching it. These videos can change at any time and it is our responsibility to make sure the content is appropriate. The following link is one that we watch in our classes. Please preview it before showing it to your students.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIEJcLCRJM_Y

Autobiography in Five Short Chapters
by Portia Nelson

Chapter I.

I walk down the street.
There's a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost ... I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

Chapter II.

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in the same place;
but it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

Chapter III.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in ... it's a habit.
My eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

Chapter IV.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

Chapter V.

I walk down another street.

Autobiography in Five Short Chapters

Name _____

Date _____

What happens to the speaker in the first stanza? Answer using one sentence.

What is different in the second stanza?

What is different in the third stanza?

What is different in the fourth stanza?

How does the speaker avoid the hole in the sidewalk in the last stanza?

What could the hole in the sidewalk represent or symbolize in life?

Thinking symbolically, have you ever “fallen in the same hole” over and over again? _____

At first, you may just think that this poem is about a stupid person who keeps falling in a hole. However, it has a deeper meaning. In the box below, explain your thoughts about what this poem means about life. You can use examples to explain.

Autobiography in Five Short Chapters

Name _____

Date _____

What happens to the speaker in the first stanza? Answer using one sentence.

While walking down a street, the speaker falls down a hole, finds himself helpless and it takes a long time to get out.

What is different in the second stanza?

The speaker pretends not to see the hole.

What is different in the third stanza?

Falling in the hole is now a habit, and he admits that it is his fault. He gets out immediately.

What is different in the fourth stanza?

The speaker walks around the hole.

How does the speaker avoid the hole in the sidewalk in the last stanza?

The speaker walks down another street.

What could the hole in the sidewalk represent or symbolize in life?

Answers will vary . Problems, trouble, etc.

Thinking symbolically, have you ever “fallen in the same hole” over and over again? _____

At first, you may just think that this poem is about a stupid person who keeps falling in a hole. However, it has a deeper meaning. In the box below, explain your thoughts about what this poem means about life. You can use examples to explain.

Answers will vary.

Think about it...

This poem has a metaphor. The streets and the hole are metaphors. What exactly do they stand for? Interpretations can vary, but it seems that the hole is some problem that the speaker continuously faces, and the street is the gateway to that problem.

For example, perhaps the “street” could represent hanging out with a certain group of people. Each time the speaker hangs out with this group, he/she finds himself/herself in trouble.

Street = certain group of people
Hole = trouble

After multiple times of getting in trouble, the speaker still hangs out with these people. Until finally, he/she realizes that it is the group of people who are leading to the trouble, so the speaker finds a different group of people with whom to associate.

Street = certain group of people
Hole = trouble
Another street= new group of people

In the box below, brainstorm different “holes” that people can face. Beside each one, see if you can name a “street” – something that helps lead to the “hole”. One example has been done for you.

<u>Holes</u>	<u>Streets</u>
Debt	Buying things you shouldn't

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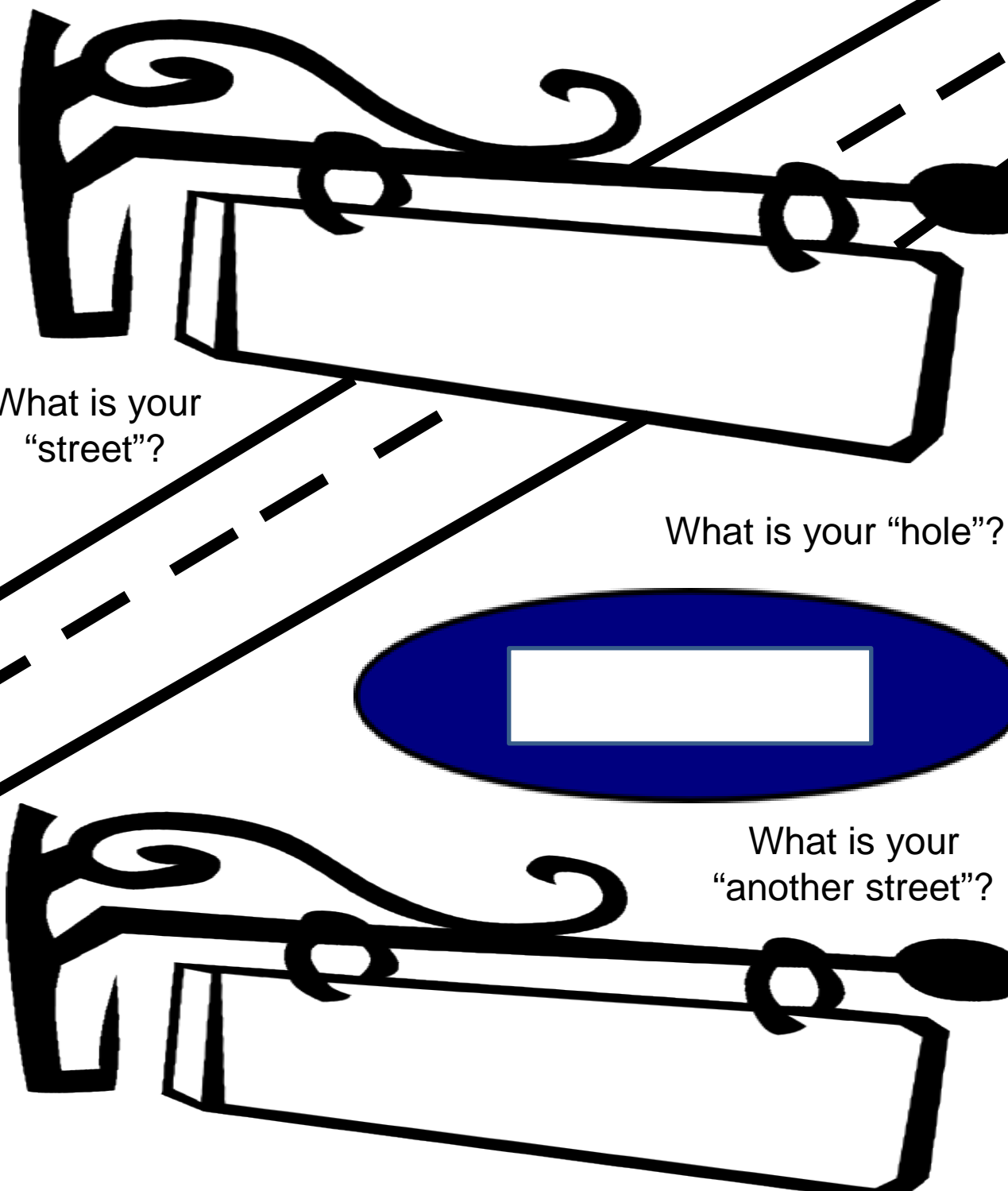
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<u>Holes</u>	<u>Streets</u>
Debt restriction smoking (addiction) being negative	Buying things you shouldn't lying peer pressure complaining

This new school year, you can start fresh. Think about something in your life that has been a “hole”. Maybe it’s been your attitude, your grades, your relationship with a parent or sibling. Maybe you have gossiped or talked about other students. Now, think about what the “street” may be that leads to that hole. What causes the behavior? Finally, think about what your “another street” could be. What could you do differently to avoid that “hole”?



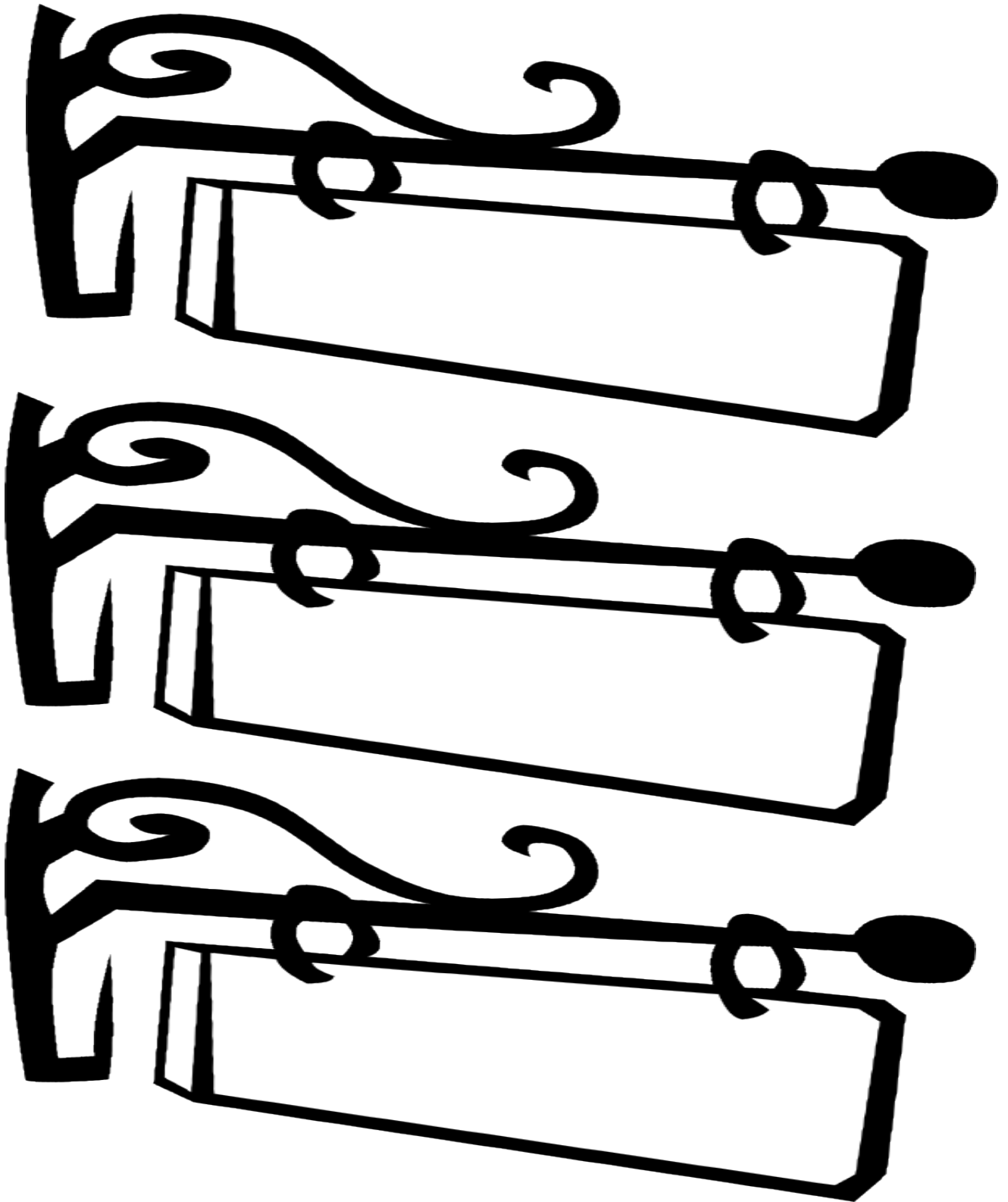
What is your
“street”?

What is your “hole”?



What is your
“another street”?

Streets to Avoid In Order to Have
a Safe and Happy Classroom



Streets to Avoid In Order to Have
a Safe and Happy Classroom

Sample Answers



Bullying

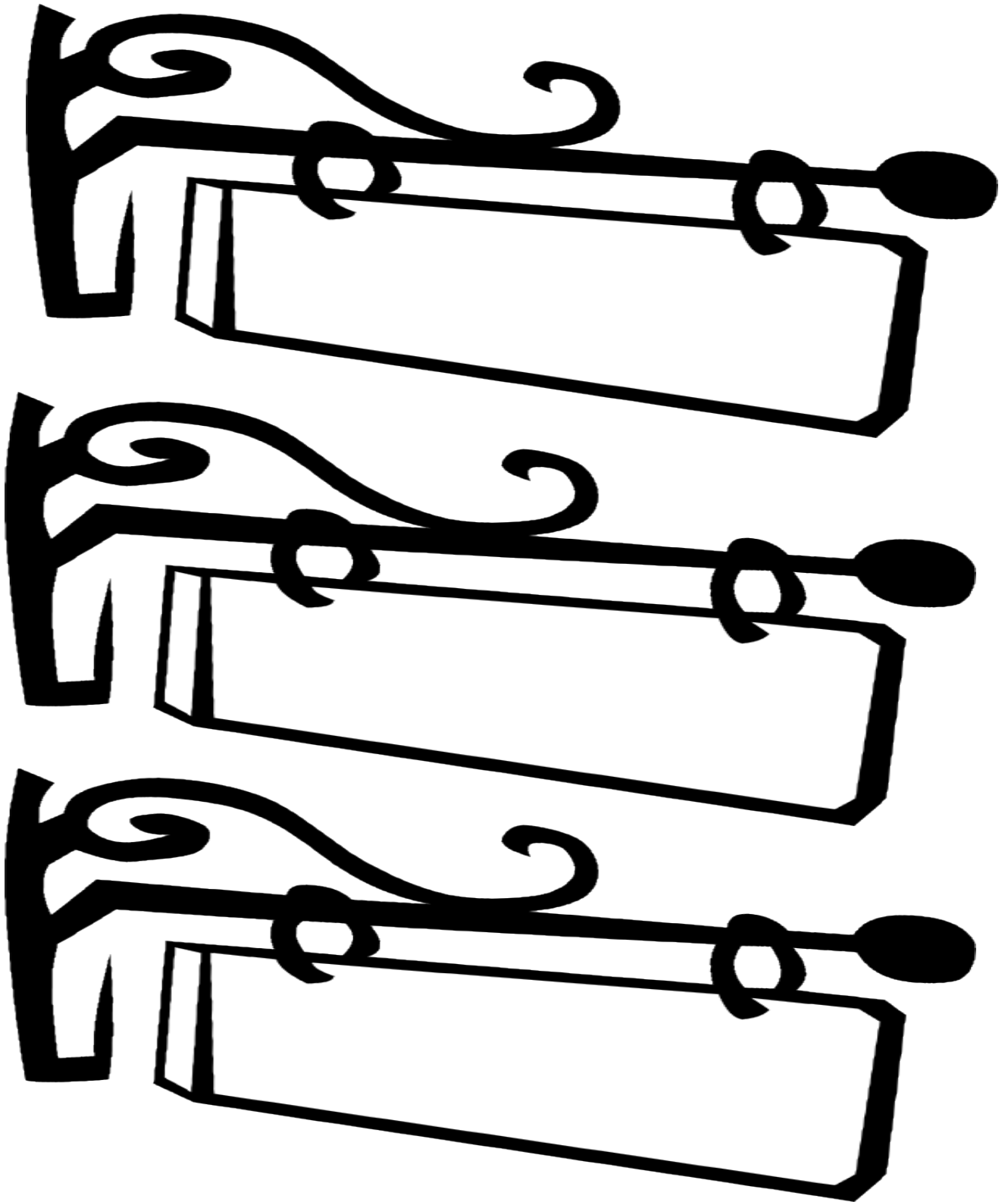


Disrespect



Rudeness

Streets to Travel In Order to Have
a Safe and Happy Classroom



Streets to Travel In Order to Have
a Safe and Happy Classroom

Sample Answers



Kindness



Self-Control



Cooperation

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Happy Teaching! 😊

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