



Embodying Emotions

Use this activity to introduce your students to the story of *Aanika's Elephants* and prepare students for elements of a story that may evoke strong emotional responses.*

Materials Needed: *Aanika's Elephants* synopsis (p. 8), chart paper, markers

1. Gather students in a circle and tell them that they are about to embark on an emotional journey by exploring the synopsis of *Aanika's Elephants*. Divide the synopsis of *Aanika's Elephants* (p. 7 and 8) into bite-sized sections and read each section aloud. After each section, have a brief discussion about the action of the story and ask students what emotions they're experiencing as they listen.
2. Next, ask students to find their own space in the room. Then, as you re-read the synopsis, invite them to activate their emotions by becoming living statues, striking a pose representative of a unique feeling, emotion or range of emotions inspired by the synopsis. For example, if the story's tone sounds or feels mysterious, they might strike an inquisitive pose or perhaps cower in fear. Hold space for their imaginations to run free as they become a gallery of emotion-inspired sculptures.
3. Ask volunteers to share their chosen pose or sequence of poses with the group, explaining which part of the synopsis inspired their pose and why.
4. Next, point students to chart paper located in four different parts of the room, each labeled with different emotions (e.g., Sadness, Curiosity, Fear, Amazement).
5. Ask students to walk to the emotion that most accurately matches the pose they created. **Note:** *If students created more than one pose, you might choose to move through this step more than once.*
6. Invite them to stand near the chart paper that represents the emotion they expect to feel while watching *Aanika's Elephants*. As before, if students feel pulled to more than one emotion, hold space for them to move within that spectrum and facilitate a conversation about that range of emotions.
7. Gather the students back in a circle and invite a conversation about what the word sanctuary means to them and how they would create one in your classroom. Ask them questions like: *What would our shared sanctuary look and feel like? Is it a physical place in our classroom or is it taking a deep breath and feeling our own heartbeat? When might we use our sanctuary?*
8. Finally, remind them that, if or when they start feeling some of these strong emotions or feel overwhelmed either in the classroom or while seeing *Aanika's Elephants*, they can return to or think about their sanctuary to re-center themselves and feel calm.



NOTE FOR TEACHERS:

*This activity can be adapted to any text or performing art-viewing experience to honor and safely explore strong emotions that may be evoked.

Reflection Questions:



What about this activity stood out to you?

What was it like to explore emotions through gestures and poses?

What comes to mind when you think of the word "sanctuary?"