



PRINTABLE LESSON

The Rude Donkey

A lesson in what pushing in actually costs



One complete lesson from The Sing Me a Fable Lesson Book

Ages 4 to 8 . Printable . 26 lessons in the full book

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The Rude Donkey

Fable R from Sing Me a Fable – a lesson in what pushing in actually costs

AGE	LENGTH	SUBJECT	GROUP
4–7 (Pre-K to Year 2)	30–40 minutes	PSHE · SEL · Speaking	Whole class, then pairs

Learning objective

Children understand that politeness is not a rule imposed by adults but a faster, easier way of getting through a crowded place, and can say what rudeness costs the rude one.

You will need

The fable, read aloud

Two chairs or a taped line

A stopwatch or phone timer

A basket of small objects

Poster R to colour

The narrow gap is two chairs a shoulder's width apart, or two lines of tape on the floor.

Before the story

4 minutes

Set up the narrow gap. Ask two volunteers to stand on opposite sides and both cross at the same time. Say nothing else – do not tell them how.

Then ask the class: “What just happened? Was there a rule about it?”

Most pairs sort it out politely without being told. That is the lesson arriving before the story does.

Read the fable

5 minutes

Read fable R aloud. Barnaby pushes to the front of the lunch line, shoves across the bridge, and knocks the basket flying. Read it straight, without a disapproving voice – the story does not need your help.

Talk about it

10 minutes

1. Barnaby got to the front of the line first. So did being rude work?
2. On the bridge, both animals ended up stuck. Who was in a hurry, and who ended up waiting longest?
3. When the basket spilled, nobody helped Barnaby pick it up. Nobody was told not to. Why did nobody move?

Question 1 is a trap and children fall into it happily. Yes, he got there first – then ask what happened next, and keep asking until somebody works out that he ate alone.

Main activity: The narrow bridge, timed

12 minutes

This is the fable's second scene, run twice, with a clock. The clock does the arguing for you.

1. Six children, three on each side of the gap. Everyone must get to the other side.
2. **Round one – the Barnaby way.** Nobody may speak. Everybody goes at once. Time it.
3. Write the time on the board.
4. **Round two – the polite way.** They may speak. Anything is allowed except pushing. Time it.
5. Write that time beside the first. Do not comment on the difference.

Ask: “Which way was faster? So is ‘after you’ about being nice, or about being quick?”

Round one will be slower, every time. If your six are unusually well behaved and round one goes smoothly, that is a better result still – ask them why nobody pushed when nobody had told them not to.

Plenary

4 minutes

“Barnaby was first in the line and last to be helped. What would you tell him, if he asked you why?”



Play it together

Put the game on the board. At every choice, stop, let the class vote, then press the card they chose.



Scan to play

OPEN IT

singmeafable.com/arcade/the-rude-donkey

UNLOCK WORDS

WAITING FOR

CHOICES

6, about 2 minutes of play

Level 1 · The lunch line shove



Cutting the Hay Line

- A Trample Bunny's toes and grab all the hay!
- B Say 'Excuse me' and step to the back of the line! ✓



The Water Trough Grab

- A Splash water in Goat's eyes!
- B Say 'May I please have a turn?' and wait! ✓

Level 2 · The narrow bridge



The Bridge Standoff

- A Shove Duck into the river and march ahead!
- B Step aside onto the wide rock and say 'After you!' ✓



The Dropped Acorn Basket

- A Kick the basket into the bushes!
- B Say 'I'm sorry!' and help scoop the acorns back in! ✓



The last level, and what to ask

The tick marks the choice that earns the stars. Keep this page to yourself while the class votes.

Level 3 · The blizzarding mountain



Stuck in the Snowbank

A Keep shouting 'HURRY UP OR I WILL BITE YOUR EARS OFF!'

B Shout 'HELP ME PLEASE! I'M SORRY FOR BEING RUDE!' ✓



Sharing the Warm Barn

A Run in and kick everyone away from the fire!

B Knock gently and say 'Thank you for letting me join you!' ✓

Ask at every choice

Before pressing: "Which card would you press, and why?"

After it plays out: "What changed because of that choice? What would the other card have done?"

How it joins the lesson

The main activity, **The narrow bridge, timed**, takes the same lesson off the screen and into the room. Play the game first, so the class has already watched both kinds of choice play out before they make one themselves.

Every choice plays out and nothing is timed, so a wrong vote is something to talk about, not a failure. Stars at the end of each level show how many right choices the class made.



Six moments, two ways each

The fable's own scenes, turned into choices the class can argue about.

THE MOMENT	THE BARNABY WAY	THE OTHER WAY
The lunch line is long and he is hungry.	Push to the front.	Join the back and talk to whoever is there.
Two animals reach the water trough together.	Get there first, drink long.	"You go — I'll wait."
The bridge fits one at a time.	Walk on and expect the other to move.	Say who goes first, then go.
Somebody's basket spills on the path.	Step over it and carry on.	Stop and pick some up.
The barn is warm and somebody is outside in the snow.	Take the warmest corner, say nothing.	Move over and make a gap.
Somebody asks him for something, badly.	Snap back at them the same way.	Answer properly anyway.

The last row is the hardest and the most useful. Rudeness invites rudeness, and the only place that chain stops is with somebody choosing not to pass it on.

Two questions worth landing

- **Did it actually work?** Barnaby is first in the line and eats alone. First is not the same as winning.
- **Who is doing the waiting?** On the bridge, the one in the biggest hurry causes the longest delay.

Neither question mentions manners. That is deliberate — children have heard "be polite" and stopped hearing it. They have not heard "it is slower".

Watch for this

Rudeness is the trait children are most often accused of and least often shown. If your class treats Barnaby as simply bad, they have learned nothing they did not know on Monday.

The version worth reaching is that Barnaby is in a hurry, and being in a hurry is exactly what makes him slow. Every child recognises being in a hurry.

Adapting for your class

Age 4 · Pre-K. Do the gap crossing with two children, twice, and stop there. No stopwatch, no table — at four, the bodies remember it and the clock means nothing.

Ages 5–7 · K to Year 2. Run it as written. The timed rounds are the heart of it and this is the age where a number on the board settles an argument.

Ages 7–8 · Year 3. Give them the last table row on its own: somebody is rude to you first. Ask whether being rude back is fair, and whether fair and useful are the same thing.

Mixed ages: older children run the stopwatch and announce the times. Being the timekeeper stops them dominating the crossing.

What children take away

- **Politeness is efficient.** Round two beats round one on the clock, and the clock is not an adult's opinion.
- **Rudeness costs the rude one.** Barnaby is first and alone; nobody has to punish him.
- **Somebody has to stop it.** A rude answer to a rude question keeps it going. That choice belongs to them.

If you have more time

- **Colour the poster.** Ask where Barnaby is going in such a hurry.
- **Sing it.** The fable's song with on-screen words runs about 90 seconds.
- **Play it.** The browser game runs the same six moments — the lunch line, the trough, the bridge, the spilled basket, the snowbank, the warm barn — two choices each.