



About the Book

Step by step, the legendary Johnny Appleseed crossed our nation back before it was filled with phones ringing, planes flying, and cars racing. And with each step, with each apple seed that he planted, he showed the world that the smallest of deeds can give birth to great good.

With a compelling text by Esmé Raji Codell and inspired artwork by Lynne Rae Perkins, this beautiful picture book gives readers a new way to see John Chapman and his achievements. If you plant one small seed every day, what good will you grow in the world?

About the Author

Esmé Raji Codell is an author, passionate teacher, and “certified radiologist” who has written several books for children, young adults, parents, and educators, among them *It’s Time for Preschool!* and *Educating Esmé: Diary of a Teacher’s First Year*. She writes a popular blog called “The Planet Esmé Book-A-Day Blog,” in which she explores and critiques children’s literature, and she runs a literary salon for parents and teachers. Her personal philosophy: “Children’s trade literature is our best hope for equalizing education in America.” Esmé Raji Codell lives, writes, and teaches in Chicago, Illinois.



About the Illustrator

Lynne Rae Perkins is the creator of several acclaimed children’s books. She was awarded the Newbery Medal for her novel *Criss Cross*, and its companion, *All Alone in the Universe*, was named an ALA Notable Book and ALA *Booklist* Editors’ Choice, among other honors. She has written and illustrated six picture books, including *Snow Music* and *Home Lovely*, both Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor Books. Lynne Rae Perkins lives with her family in northern Michigan.

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USE WHAT YOU HAVE

Class Activity

Divide the class into small groups of 3–4 students. Give each group a bag of various items (e.g., Popsicle sticks, paper clips, tape, wooden cubes, cardboard, rubber bands, index cards) and ask them to work together to create a single object. They might create a model of a larger invention, or they might actually create a working object. Ask the students to be resourceful, creative, and collaborative, and remind each group that they can use only the items given to them in the bag.

Discussion Prompts

- After groups have shared their creations, discuss the process. Was it difficult to have limited resources? What made you successful (or not successful)?
- John Chapman acquired his seeds from owners of cider presses who were going to throw them away. What things that are usually thrown away can we use? When we finish with an item, like an empty juice bottle, what else can it be used for?
- Is it difficult to use what you have instead of finding or buying new things to use? Talk about the pros and cons of each option.

Take-Home Activity

Challenge your students to work with their families and come up with five ways they can change their habits at home to “use what they have.” For example, instead of using sponges or disposable cloths for cleaning jobs around the house, they can use rags made of T-shirts that have been outgrown.

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SHARE WHAT YOU HAVE

Class Activity

Again divide the class into small groups. Give each student a small amount of one art item (e.g., foam shapes, textured or metallic paper, sequins) and instruct them to create individual collages. They can trade with the others in the group, share, or combine art materials as they create their own collages. When finished, display the artwork in a “Collage Museum” in the classroom so everyone’s artwork can be seen and enjoyed.

Discussion Prompts

- How did your group work together? How did it feel when someone shared with you? How did you feel when you shared with someone else? Were you more successful when you shared or when you used only your own art material? Why?



- How did John Chapman affect the lives of the pioneers? Why was it important that settlers on the frontier learn to share with one another?

- In addition to sharing material possessions, John Chapman also liked to share stories. What else can you think of that can be shared even though it isn’t a physical object?

Take-Home Activity

Ask students to find ways to “share what they have” at home. Can they donate coats, toys, or food to an organization collecting materials for those in need? Or can they motivate their communities to share by organizing a drive themselves (with help from their families, of course)?

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RESPECT NATURE



Class Activity

Take the class outside for a nature walk. Have students bring along a clipboard or small notebook to record five things they observe in nature that they might not have noticed before.

Discussion Prompts

- What did you see on the walk? How did it make you feel? How is the natural world different from our man-made one? Why should we protect the natural world? *How* can we protect it?
- How did John Chapman respect nature? Describe his relationship with nature and the world around him. What does his respect for nature teach us?
- What is your own relationship with nature? Do you have the respect for

nature that John Chapman worked to inspire? Can you think of things you can do or changes you can make in your daily life to be more respectful of nature?

Take-Home Activity

After discussing the many benefits of planting, have students make a plan to plant at home. Ask students, along with their families, to think of one item they can plant, the way John Chapman planted apple seeds and fennel. Perhaps they can grow a potted herb plant in the kitchen, or maybe they can start a small garden in the yard (or a community garden!) and plant vegetables to eat and share.



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Class Activity

Describe a scenario that focuses on a conflict. Examples might include someone being excluded on the playground, someone making fun of a classmate's lunch or clothing, or two children who each want to play with the same friend at recess. Have volunteers act out the scenario for the class. Then have students brainstorm about ways to resolve the conflict.

Discussion Prompts

- How do you feel when someone is treating you disrespectfully? How do you feel when you see others treating a classmate disrespectfully? What can you do to help solve these conflicts? Is it important to be an active problem solver instead of a bystander? Why or why not?

- How did John Chapman interact with the different communities across the frontier? How did he create relationships with the Native Americans and the pioneers?
- Can you think of other people—historical figures or people who are alive today—who publicly advocate peace over war? (Examples: Martin Luther King, Jr.; Gandhi.)

Take-Home Activity

Encourage each student to come up with a rhyme or code phrase inspired by John Chapman's technique for warning of impending attacks. They can use their code phrase with their families and friends to signal everyone to calm down or to call for a truce during tense times.



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YOU CAN REACH YOUR DESTINATION BY TAKING SMALL STEPS



Class Activity

Ask each student to set a goal for him- or herself and record it on a pledge sheet. Examples might include saving up for something, achieving something in sports, learning to tie shoelaces, etc. Then ask students to plan how they will take small steps to achieve their goals. Revisit these goals periodically and have students evaluate and record their progress.

Discussion Prompts

- How will you achieve your goal? Can this be accomplished quickly, or will it take a while? What happens when you work on your goal a little bit at a time?
- How did John Chapman plant apple trees all across the country? Where and how did he travel? Did he accomplish his

goal all at once? How long did it take? Are people still working toward his goal today?

- As a class, come up with a list of character traits your students would like to see in themselves. Then have students come up with examples of how they would demonstrate each of these qualities.

Take-Home Activity

After the students have set their goals, ask them to draw a set of sequential images—either in comic-book form or another format of their choosing—illustrating the small steps they plan to take and the achievement of their goals.

Guide created by Sue Ornstein, a first-grade teacher in the Byram Hills School District in Armonk, New York.

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