



Polar Express Pajama Party Lesson Plan

An activity for teaching *The Polar Express* by Chris Van Allsburg

Explain to students that it is time for the Polar Express Pajama Party! When students are ready with their favorite bedtime toys and in their pajamas, ask them to get comfortable while you read them a 'bedtime' story.

While reading the story *The Polar Express* by Chris Van Allsburg, ask students questions about the setting, characters and plot. Emphasize the importance of the bell and what it means to the boy.

When the story is done, explain to students that it is now 'bedtime' and turn off the light. As students lie down for a moment, discreetly place the conductor's hat on your head. Turn the light back on and make the 'choo choo' sound of a train. Introduce yourself as the 'conductor' and ask the student to 'board' the Polar Express! (by lining up behind you in pairs). Give each student a provided 'train ticket' and tell them that they will have to give the conductor their tickets when they get off the train at the North Pole.

Explain to students that they must complete a few tasks before the train arrives at the 'North Pole'. Show students the three spaces on their tickets. Each time they complete a task at a station, they will receive a stamp or get the ticket punched.

Show students the "If I Were Santa Claus Station", "Pattern Express Station," and the "Silly Santa Station". Explain how to do the activities at each station before making the 'choo choo' sound again.

Travel around the room in a train-like formation a few more times before calling out "First stop!" Instruct the first group of students to get off at the "If I Were Santa Claus Station". Do the same for the remaining two stations.

Walk around the classroom as the 'conductor'. Give students encouragement by saying, e.g. "What an excellent drawing. You will surely make it to the North Pole!" etc.

Continue the exercise until the three groups have visited each station and have done each activity.

As the 'conductor', inspect the train tickets to make sure all students have completed each activity. Discuss the finished work to 'decide' whether the students are ready to go to the North Pole.

Exclaim that the students did a wonderful job at the different 'train stations' and are ready to go to the North Pole! Go around the classroom with the students following. Exclaim "We've arrived at the North Pole!" As student 'disembark', collect the train tickets.

At this time, ask students to wait 'in the center of the North Pole' (the circle time area). Sneak around a corner and put on either an elf hat or a Santa hat. Return and welcome the students to the North Pole! To celebrate a successful train ride on the Polar Express, give each student a small bell as a souvenir.

For the remaining class time, have a Polar Express Pajama Party! Play a few Christmas or winter-themed games and enjoy a winter treat, such as hot chocolate and gingerbread cookies!

Note: There are two additional worksheets (*If I Were an Elf...* and *After Reading Fun!*) which can be done during class time or for homework.