

A Guide for *The Nocturnals* Social Emotional Learning Connections

This Social Emotional Learning (SEL) guide features three books from **The Nocturnals Grow & Read Series** (*The Tasty Treat*, *The Slithery Shakedown*, and *The Chestnut Challenge*).

Each book is aligned to a different level of reading skills, which supports student development at a “just right” developmental level. The guide features three phases of instruction to engage students in a comprehensive understanding of a specific SEL theme. The books and guided activity themes are highlighted below.



★ Pre-Reading & Listening Activities

Timing: 15–20 minutes per question

This collaborative discussion can be blended into morning meeting or other whole-group opportunities. Students benefit from the conversations, which give them the opportunity to activate background knowledge, practice active listening, and generate new ideas.

★ Read Aloud & Activities

Timing: 20–25 minutes per activity

After students have read the book, this section can be used to check student understanding of the text and help them make social emotional connections to events and characters. Students often learn best about SEL themes by exploring the adventures, feelings, and outcomes of characters within a story.

★ Extend Social Emotional Learning

Timing: 20–25 minutes per in-class project

This section highlights hands-on crafts, community engagement experiences, and suggestions for home connections. The activity extensions provide a great opportunity for students to demonstrate understanding of the target SEL theme through creativity. In addition, involving community partners and families helps students make real-world connections to the importance of the social emotional outcomes.



The Nocturnals Grow & Read Series

by Tracey Hecht with Illustrations by Josie Yee

LEVEL 1



The Tasty Treat

SEL Theme: Kindness

In *The Tasty Treat*, Dawn the fox wakes up and goes looking for her friends, Tobin the pangolin and Bismark the sugar glider, to share a tasty treat—a pomelo! Using basic language, the book introduces the Nocturnal Brigade to emerging readers. (ISBN: 978-1944020-29-3)

LEVEL 2



The Slithery Shakedown

SEL Theme: Courage

The Brigade comes across a big bully snake who wants to eat Bismark for breakfast! Bismark is frightened, but he, Tobin, and Dawn stand up to the big bully snake by using their words. In the process, they find themselves some spec-tac-u-lar snakeskin capes! (ISBN: 978-1944020-17-0)

LEVEL 3



The Chestnut Challenge

SEL Theme: Honesty

The Brigade are playing a game of Chestnuts when Chandler, a conniving chinchilla, challenges Tobin for the title of Chestnut Champion. However, after a series of strange distractions occur, the Brigade begins to suspect that something is not quite right. Chandler is a competitive chinchilla . . . but could he also be a cheater? (ISBN: 978-1944020-17-0)

About the Author

Tracey Hecht is the author of *The Nocturnals*, the critically acclaimed middle-grade and early reader series. The American Booksellers Association chose her first book, *The Nocturnals: The Mysterious Abductions*, as a Kids' Indie Next List pick. In partnership with the New York Public Library, she created a Read Aloud Writing Program that is used nationwide in schools, libraries, and bookstores.

SEL Theme: **Kindness**

Pre-Reading & Listening Activities

Begin each session with a discussion to engage students in Social Emotional Learning themes. Use the prompts to provide students with an opportunity to discuss and make connections.



Discuss the definition of kindness.

Kindness is when you do nice things to show you care about the feelings of other people.

Question 1

What is kindness? Can you think of a time you were kind to someone? Provide one example.

Activity

Use the *Word Splash* ([reproducible](#)) to record words and examples related to kindness. Specifically, students should answer the question, "What does kindness mean to you?"

Question 2

What were some ideas related to kindness that we talked about earlier? (Allow students to reference the word splash.)

Activity

Ask students to act out the following scenarios:

- Someone is crying. How can you show kindness?
- A friend forgot to bring a pencil. How can you show kindness?
- You see someone using unkind words with one of your friends. What can you do?
- Someone gives you a present. How can you show kindness?
- Someone in your family has a lot of groceries to bring inside. How can you show kindness?

Read Aloud & Activities

This section can be used to select a focus for one day of reading or three days of reading with different repeated readings of the whole book.



Chapter 1

SEL Focus: **Mindfulness**

When we are mindful, we are aware of ourselves, our feelings, and those around us. (Mindfulness is referenced throughout the guide. Be sure to highlight this definition.)

Before Reading Text Prompt

As we read, let's pay attention to see if any of the characters are especially mindful or unmindful of those around them.

Check for Understanding During the Reading

- Why is Dawn awake at night? What is the special word for animals who are awake at night?
- Who is Dawn looking for?

SEL Example from the Reading

Dawn was aware of her friends and sought to find them. Sometimes we have to slow down and look around to notice who is present and who is not.

Reflect & Make a Connection

- Have you ever noticed someone who was missing from school or left out of a group?
- How could you tell they were feeling left out?
- How did you show you cared about that student? (Think about your actions and words.)

A Thought to Take with You . . . Today, take a moment to slow down, breathe, and notice your classroom and your classmates. Is everyone here today? Is anyone missing? You noticing someone else could make a difference in your community.

Chapter 2

SEL Focus: Empathy

We can allow empathy to help us care for others when we put ourselves in someone else's shoes and think about how they are feeling.

Before Reading Text Prompt

As we read, let's pay attention to see if any of the characters experience empathy for others and consider how their friends are feeling.

Check for Understanding During the Reading

- Who is feeling hungry? How does the author show us the character is hungry?
- Who suggests looking for a snack?
- Who does Tobin notice is missing?

SEL Example from the Reading

Dawn showed empathy when she noticed that Tobin was hungry and suggested that they find some food. Tobin was mindful that Bismark was missing. His awareness led him to feel empathy, and he sought out his missing friend.

Reflect & Make a Connection

- How can you tell how someone else might be feeling? (Hint: facial expressions, tone of voice, body language)
- Have you ever felt hungry before? This is a common feeling, and because we have probably felt it, we are able to imagine how another person might be feeling. What is another feeling you have felt before?



A Thought to Take with You . . . Today, take a moment to notice how someone else is feeling. You may notice that someone feels the same as you, or they may feel differently than how you are feeling. If you feel differently than someone else, you can think about a time when you felt the same way and ask yourself, "How would I want to be treated if I was feeling (e.g., mad, sad, frustrated, lonely)?"

Chapter 3

SEL Focus: Kindness & Sharing

When we consider others and share what we have with them, we can spread kindness.

Before Reading Text Prompt

As we read, let's pay attention to see if any of the characters use the action of sharing to communicate kindness.

Check for Understanding During the Reading

- What does Bismark offer to share with his friends? Why is this a helpful gesture?
- Who was hungry in Chapter 2 and is now excited to be eating the pomelo?

SEL Example from the Reading

Bismark showed empathy as he provided food for his friends; he was mindful of the needs of others. The group showed kindness in sharing the food and continuing to be aware of the needs of each friend.

Reflect & Make a Connection



- How do you feel when someone else shares with you?
- What is challenging about sharing? What makes us not want to share sometimes?
- What is a kind way to say "no" if someone asks you to share and you do not want to right now?

A Thought to Take with You . . . Today, take a moment and reflect on a time you were persistent or brave. It may be a memory from school or from home. Keeping a memory in mind that reminds you of a time you were brave can help encourage you in a moment when you are afraid. A way you can help a friend is to remind them of a time you saw them be brave.

Common Core State Standards: Engaging students in multiple reads of the text enhances both reading fluency and comprehension (Reading: Foundational Skills: R.F.2.4). In addition, while posing questions about the book, please prompt children to support their responses with evidence from the books (e.g., dialogue, key actions, illustrations) to enhance access to complex texts (Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RL.2.1).

Extend Social Emotional Learning

The activities below will support student understanding of the Social Emotional Learning theme through varied hands-on projects. The sequence of activities can be tailored based upon student interest.



Writing Connection



- Ask students to write a thank you letter to someone who has demonstrated kindness toward them. Remind students to include a clear explanation of the kind action, why it was special, and how it made them feel.
- It is not just important to be kind to others; we also need to be kind to ourselves by using affirming words. Ask students to share what they can say to themselves when something is really difficult—for example: “keep trying” instead of “I can’t do this.” Provide each child with a large popsicle stick and have them write a positive affirmation on each side. Ask the students to place the popsicle stick somewhere special as a reminder.

Hands-On Art Activity



- Create a kindness quilt to hang as a reminder of kind actions. Provide each participant with a paper square and have them write one important kind action/idea and draw a related illustration. Staple the squares together. Then, challenge students to try to use the ideas daily and praise the actions and words when they are demonstrated.
- *The Nocturnals* series provides a wonderful opportunity to discuss animals and kindness. Ask each student to select an animal (e.g., dogs, cats, birds, etc.) to care for and/or show kindness toward. Then, give students 3–4 blank pages and have them write a “how to” guide on kindness toward that animal. After students complete their sentences and/or illustrations, allow participants to share their ideas.

Community Connection



Children often benefit from completing a community service project that will have a positive impact on others. Some service ideas include cleaning a local park, donating old toys or clothes, bringing thank you cards to the local fire station or police department, or coordinating a visit to a nursing home to give a special performance.

Curriculum Home Connection



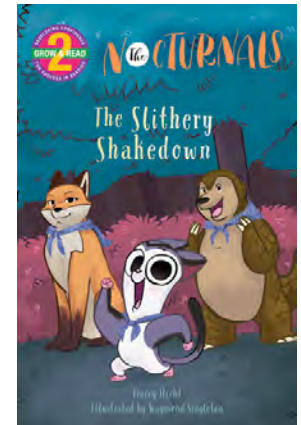
Extending the kindness discussion to homes is a great way to help participants make meaningful connections to being thoughtful. Have each child draw a kindness bucket and challenge families to fill the bucket with mini post-it notes that list kind actions they completed throughout the week. Examples include helping set the dinner table, saying thank you, and reading to a younger sibling.

LEVEL 2 *The Slithery Shakedown*

SEL Theme: **Courage**

Pre-Reading & Listening Activities

Begin each session with a discussion to engage students in Social Emotional Learning themes. Use the prompts to provide students with an opportunity to discuss and make connections.



Discuss the definition of courage.

Courage means to be brave during challenging situations or new experiences that may feel scary or difficult.

Question 1

What does it mean to show courage? Give an example of a time you were brave or courageous.

Activity

Use the graphic organizer to generate examples and non-examples ([reproducible](#)) of courage. Specifically, an example of courage may be telling someone to “stop” when they do something that is bothersome. A non-example of courage may be laughing at a joke that makes someone feel bad.

Question 2

How did the characters in *The Slithery Shakedown* show courage?
(Allow students to reference the examples and non-examples from the previous question.)

Activity

Ask students to act out the following scenarios:

- Someone is speaking unkindly to one of your friends. How can you show courage?
- Your grandma wants you to try a new food that doesn't look very good. How can you demonstrate courage?
- Your teacher is showing a new math strategy that really confuses you. How can you show courage?
- Your friends want you to do something that you don't think is right. What can you do to show courage?
- You feel really nervous to talk about your project in front of your classmates. How can you show courage?

Read Aloud & Activities

This section can be used to select a focus for one day of reading or three days of reading with different repeated readings of the whole book.



Chapters 1–2

SEL Focus: **Feelings Change**

Feelings can change from moment to moment, like the weather. Sometimes we feel a strong feeling and we can get “stuck,” but often feelings don’t last forever. If we feel a strong feeling like frustration or anger toward another person, it can be helpful to stop, cool down, and breathe.

Before Reading Text Prompt

As we read, let’s pay attention to see if any of the characters experience a change in their feelings or emotions.

Check for Understanding During the Reading

- What feeling is Bismark experiencing at the beginning of Chapter 1?
- Why does he feel this way? Support your response with evidence.
- Does his “peeved” feeling change? What causes his feelings to change?

SEL Examples from the Reading

- In Chapter 1, Bismark is upset because he is not assuming the best of his friends. It’s okay to be frustrated, but being unkind to friends is a slippery slope toward a bigger problem.
- In Chapter 2, Bismark’s feelings have changed. We also see Dawn smiling at her friend and appreciating his boldness.

Reflect & Make a Connection

- How might the story be different if Bismark thought about the reason(s) his friends might be late? This is called assuming the best.
- How does Dawn respond to Bismark being bold and unique? How is this different than Bismark feeling frustrated that his friends aren’t more like him?

A Thought to Take with You . . . Today, if someone frustrates you, take a moment to slow down, breathe, and notice what is bothering you. Are you assuming the best of the other person? Is there a reason they may be acting the way they are? Remember: feelings can change like the weather and you might just need to pause first before you choose your next words or actions.

Chapters 3–4

SEL Focus: Boldness

Sometimes we need to use a bold, firm voice to communicate and protect another person. Speaking firmly can help us to communicate what we need and can help us care for others around us.

Before Reading Text Prompt

As we read, let's pay attention to see if any of the characters demonstrate boldness by using a firm voice to protect someone else.

Check for Understanding During the Reading

- What danger is Bismark facing? Describe.
- What does Dawn do to support her friend? How did it make Bismark feel?
- What caused the snake to back down and leave?

SEL Examples from the Reading

- In Chapter 3, Dawn and Tobin use a firm voice to put a stop to unkind words from the snake. They don't use unkind words in return, but they do clearly communicate that they plan to protect Bismark.
- In Chapter 4, the snake continues to threaten the friends until he realizes that they are unified and will not back down in fear.

Reflect & Make a Connection

- How would the situation with the snake have been different if they tried name calling or became physically aggressive toward the snake?
- What might this have done to the size of the problem they were facing?



A Thought to Take with You . . . Today, if you face a problem, decide if you need to use a friendly voice or a firm, bold voice to stop the problem. Sometimes you may only need to tell someone one time to “stop” doing something; sometimes you may need to speak more firmly and get adult help.

Chapters 5–6

SEL Focus: Mindfulness

When we are mindful, we are aware of ourselves, our feelings, and those around us. When we are mindful, we can stop and reflect on the present, as well as a past experience or memory.

Before Reading Text Prompt

As we read, let's pay attention to see if any of the characters become aware and mindful of their feelings as they consider what happened with the snake yesterday.

Check for Understanding During the Reading

- According to Dawn, what two feelings can you have at the same time? Do you agree? Why or why not?
- Where did the snakeskin come from? How is this similar to real snakes?

SEL Examples from the Reading

- In Chapter 5, the characters become aware of the fear they had and agree that it is okay to be scared and brave. Sometimes we can feel more than one feeling at the same time.
- In Chapter 6, the characters choose to do something to commemorate, or to help them remember, their brave actions. Sometimes when we are facing a challenge, it is important to think about another time when we showed persistence or bravery.

Reflect & Make a Connection

- Why do you think Bismark does not want to admit that he was afraid?
- Is it possible to be scared and brave at the same time? Why or why not?
- Can you think of a time when you were persistent or brave? How did you feel?

A Thought to Take with You . . . Today, take a moment and reflect on a time when you were persistent or brave. It may be a memory from school or from home. Keeping a memory of when you were brave in mind can help encourage you in a moment when you are afraid. A way you can help a friend is to remind them of a time when you saw them be brave.



Common Core State Standards: Engaging students in multiple reads of the text enhances both reading fluency and comprehension (Reading: Foundational Skills: R.F.2.4). In addition, while posing questions about the book, please prompt children to support their responses with evidence from the books (e.g., dialogue, key actions, illustrations) to enhance access to complex texts (Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RL.2.1).

Extend Social Emotional Learning

The activities below will support student understanding of the Social Emotional Learning theme through varied hands-on projects. The sequence of activities can be tailored based upon student interest.



Writing Connection



- Think of a character in another book, movie, or television show who you believe is courageous. Compare your selected character to one of the animals in *The Slithery Shakedown*. How are the characters similar and/or different? How did each character show courage? Write a brief paragraph that explains how each is courageous and include an illustration to highlight each character.
- Within communities, people can make a difference by sharing new and innovative ideas. Write a letter to a local politician (e.g., mayor, school board representative, council person) with a courageous idea that you believe will make your community better. Be sure that your letter includes a discussion of a current problem and why your idea addresses the problem.

Hands-On Art Activity



- Create a courageous collage using recycled magazines. Look for images that you believe show something or someone being courageous. Be prepared to share why you picked each image for your collage.
- Use the Helping Hands ([reproducible](#)) to illustrate five ways you will demonstrate courage. Write your idea on each finger and decorate the hand to display.

Community Connection



Bullying is when someone uses unkind words or actions to hurt others. Create a banner with a statement and illustrations to explain how we should treat others. The message should be a positive statement that goes against bullying. Hang the banners to remind everyone in the community about being courageous and taking a stand against bullying.

Curriculum Home Connection



With a family member and by using online and text-based resources, research a famous or historical figure who you believe did something courageous. Design a mini-poster that highlights the individual's life, courageous actions, and the ways the actions made a positive impact on society.

LEVEL 3 *The Chestnut Challenge*

SEL Theme: **Honesty**

Pre-Reading & Listening Activities

Begin each session with a discussion to engage students in Social Emotional Learning themes. Use the prompts to provide students with an opportunity to discuss and make connections.



Discuss the definition of honesty.

Honesty is telling the truth and doing the right thing.

Question 1

What does it mean to be honest?
Why is it important to be honest with others?

Activity

Write the following words on the board: *fair, dishonest, responsible, integrity, sneaky, unjust, stealing, genuine, trustworthy, unreliable*. Ask students to explain which words are synonymous with honesty and which are different and to provide a rationale.

Question 2

Based on our discussion, how did the characters in *The Chestnut Challenge* demonstrate honesty?
(Allow students to reference the words from the previous question.)

Activity

Ask students to act out the following scenarios:

- You break your aunt's favorite vase. What should you do next if you are being honest?
- You hear someone tell a lie about one of your friends. What should you do?
- You have homework that is really hard. When your dad asks if you have homework, you say, "No." What is a better way to handle the situation?
- You find ten dollars on the playground. What should you do to demonstrate honesty?

Read Aloud & Activities

This section can be used to select a focus for one day of reading or three days of reading with different repeated readings of the whole book.



Chapters 1–2

SEL Focus: Patience

Sometimes we practice patience when we wait on other people, and sometimes we practice patience toward ourselves. Patience helps us to be persistent as we try again, and again, in the learning process.

Before Reading Text Prompt

Today as we read, let's pay attention to see if any of the characters struggle to be patient with others or with themselves.

Check for Understanding During the Reading

- What feeling is Bismark experiencing at the beginning of Chapter 1?
- How does he feel when he loses to Tobin? Support your response with evidence.
- Why doesn't Bismark want Chandler to play?

SEL Examples from the Reading

- In Chapter 1, Bismark first gets impatient with Tobin and then impatient with himself. He is having trouble accepting that he did not win and has decided to call himself unkind names.
- In Chapter 2, Dawn is patient and willing to give Chandler a chance to join them in playing. Bismark is not so sure about including another person. Bismark is upset because he is not assuming the best of his friends. It's okay to be frustrated, but being unkind to friends is a slippery slope toward a bigger problem.

Reflect & Make a Connection

- Do you think Bismark calling himself names like "loser" and "failure" was kind? Why is it important to be kind to ourselves?
- How do you feel when you lose a game?
- What strategies help you to relax and try again when you have not done your best the first time?

A Thought to Take with You . . . Today, if something frustrates you, take a moment to slow down, breathe, and notice what is bothering you. Patience is something we learn over time, and when we are patient with ourselves, we can also be patient with others.

Chapters 3–4

SEL Focus: Mindfulness

When we are mindful, we are aware of ourselves, our feelings, and those around us.

Before Reading Text Prompt

As we read, let's pay attention to see if any of the characters are especially mindful or unmindful of those around them.

Check for Understanding During the Reading

- How is Tobin feeling at the beginning of Chapter 3? What dialogue or illustrations show his feelings?
- What does he decide to do about the challenge from Chandler?
- Why does Chandler tell the group to turn and look in the opposite direction?

SEL Examples from the Reading

- In Chapter 3, Dawn continues to show patience and support for her friend. She is not pushing or pressuring Tobin to compete, but Bismark is.
- In Chapter 4, Bismark continues to urge Tobin that he must win. He is not showing much patience for his friend, and the game is becoming less fun for everyone.

Reflect & Make a Connection

- Have you ever felt like someone was putting pressure on you to do something and it made the activity or task less fun? Would you rather have Dawn or Bismark by your side when you were facing a challenge?
- What helps you to focus and do your best when you are nervous?
- How can you help others to stay calm and have fun?

A Thought to Take with You . . . Today, if you notice someone is nervous or anxious, think about words and actions you can choose to support them. When we are mindful of the feelings of others, we can make choices that help shrink our friends' problems rather than making them grow.



Chapters 5–6

SEL Focus: Compassion & Patience

When we consider the feelings of others and give them time to try again, we demonstrate compassion and patience to see change happen in other people.

Before Reading Text Prompt

As we read, let's pay attention to see if any of the characters demonstrate compassion and patience toward a character who has made a wrong decision.

Check for Understanding During the Reading

- What does Bismark catch Chandler doing? How does Bismark feel about the discovery?
- How does Chandler feel about being caught cheating? How can you tell he feels this way?
- What advice does Dawn offer Chandler? Do you agree with the advice? Why or why not?

SEL Examples from the Reading

- In Chapter 5, the characters become aware that Chandler is cheating in the game. Dawn gives him a chance to admit that he has been playing unfairly.
- In Chapter 6, the characters choose to give Chandler another chance to play the game. This choice communicates patience and hope for change in others, even if they made a wrong choice previously.

Reflect & Make a Connection



- Dawn and Tobin talk to Chandler about his choice to cheat. How would the story have been different if they told Chandler he could never play with them again?
- Have you ever given someone another chance? Has anyone ever given you a second chance to try again when you made a mistake?
- How does it feel to receive a second chance?

A Thought to Take with You . . . Today, take a moment and reflect on a time you were given another chance to learn something, to fix something, or to apologize and repair a friendship. It may be a memory from school or from home. Keeping a memory of when you were given a second chance in mind can help you to have compassion toward others.

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Extend Social Emotional Learning

The activities below will support student understanding of the Social Emotional Learning theme through varied hands-on projects. The sequence of activities can be tailored based upon student interest.



Writing Connection



- Create an acrostic poem using the word honesty. Each letter in honesty should represent an idea related to telling the truth or doing the right thing.
- Use the *tangled web* ([reproducible](#)) to consider the impact of dishonesty on others. Place the following in the web: 1) a dishonest choice, 2) the consequence of the choice, 3) the impact of the choice on others, and 4) a better or alternative choice.

Hands-On Art Activity



- Design a comic strip with a clear beginning, middle, and end that shows a character who demonstrates honesty. The story should have an evident problem and a solution that gives a positive message about honest actions.
- Allow each participant to create a flower using craft materials. The flower should have a statement or illustration that highlights one way to show honesty. For example, the message may be in the middle of the flower or on the petals. After the flowers are complete, place them all together to create an honesty garden.

Community Connection



Explain to students that there are many people in our community who must demonstrate honesty and integrity every day to help others. Visit a local community helper (fire station or police station). During the visit, ask the community helpers about their daily work, ways they make a difference, and why they must demonstrate honesty on a daily basis.

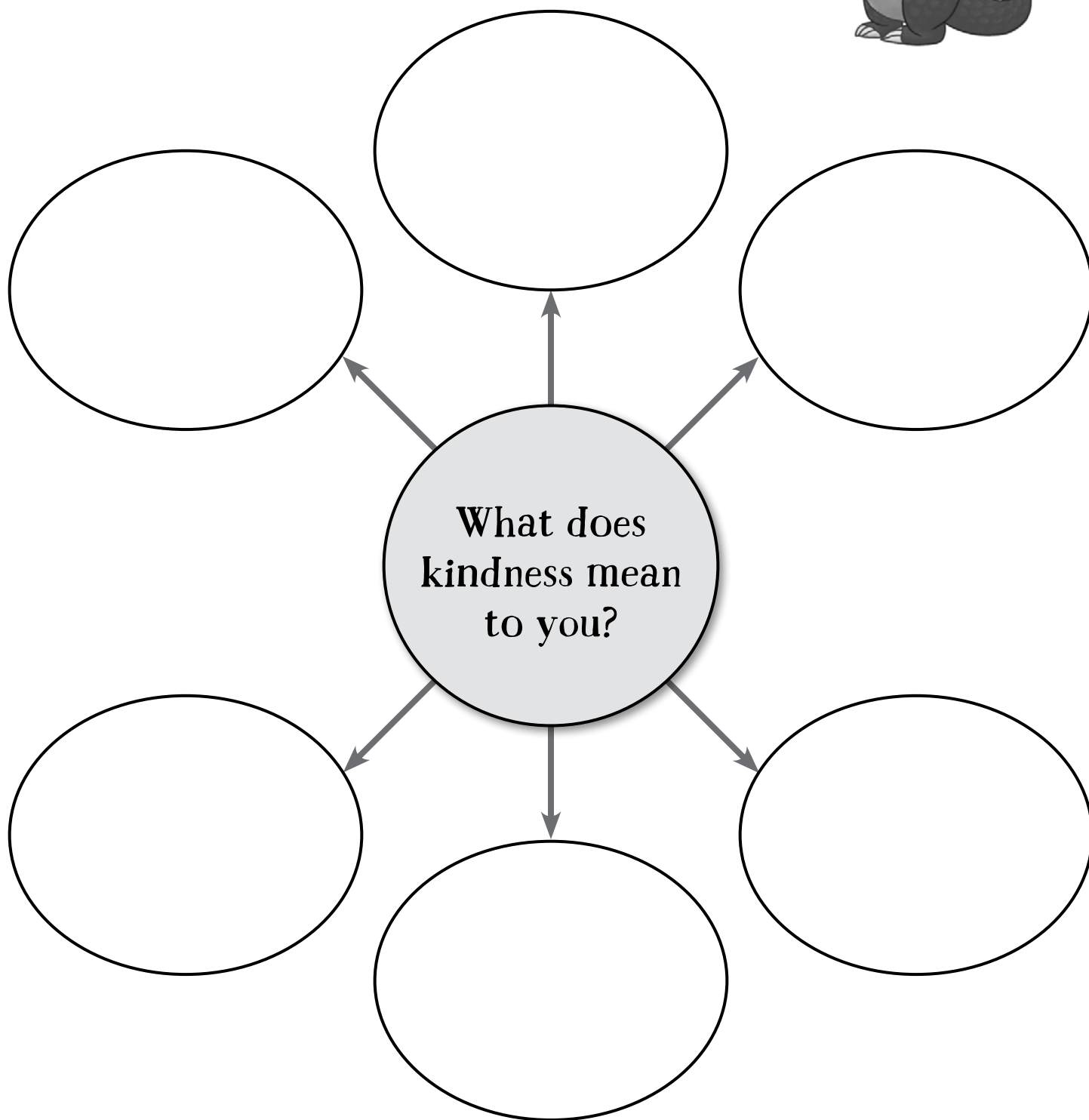
Curriculum Home Connection



With a family member, discuss two to three ways you can set a positive example at home and/or in school. Then, spend the week modeling the behavior. Every evening, talk about how it felt to model the behavior and why honesty is important at home and school.

The Tasty Treat Word Splash

Directions: Place words, actions, or examples related to kindness in the empty spaces around the circle.



The Slithery Shakedown

Directions: Use the graphic organizer to give examples and non-examples of courage.

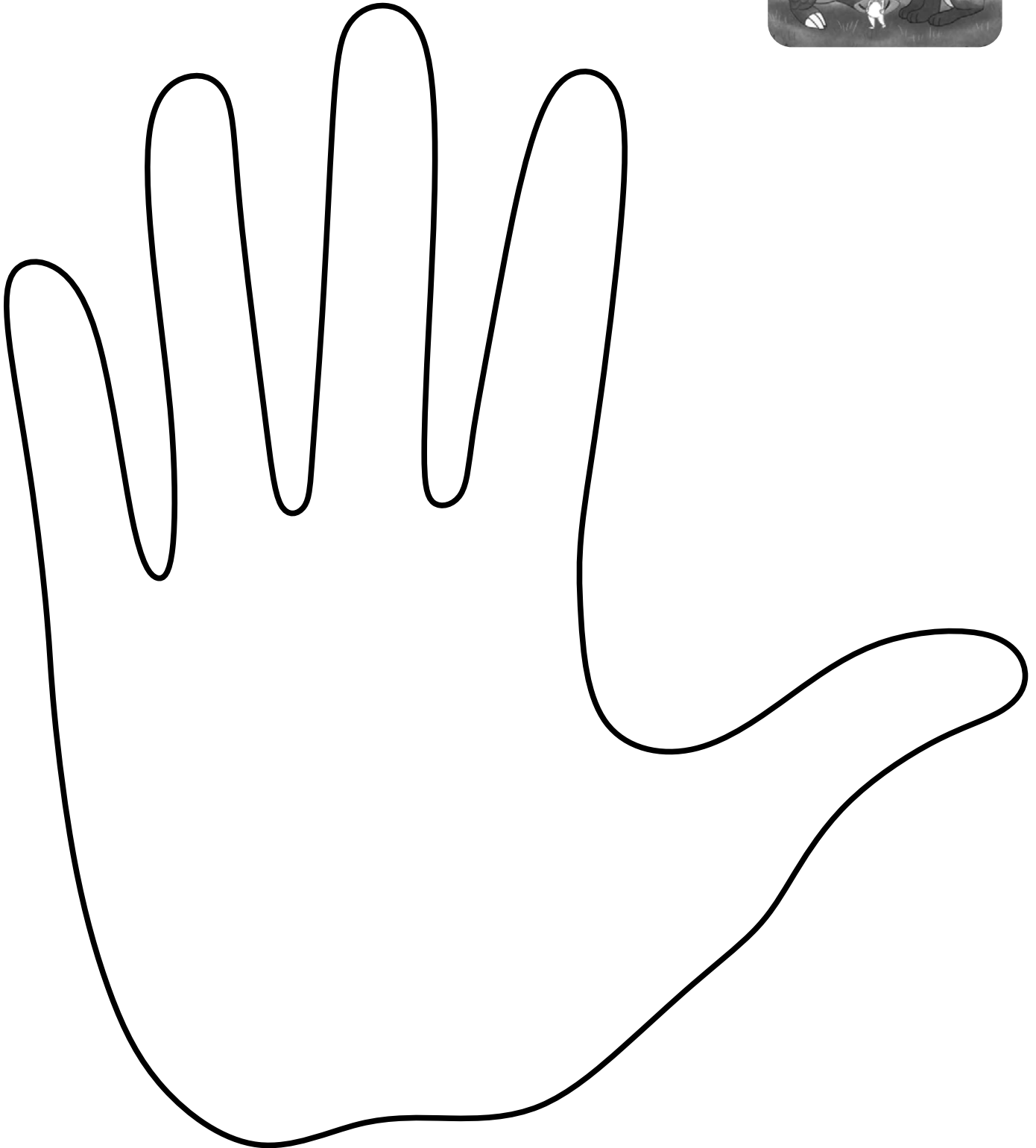


Courage

Afraid

The Slithery Shakedown

Directions: Think of five ways you can show courage. Write one idea on each finger. Then illustrate one of your ideas in the center of the hand. Finally, cut out the hand and display it.



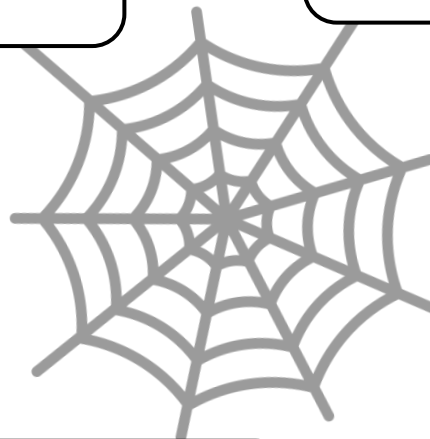
The Chestnut Challenge Tangled Web

Directions: Use the *tangled web* to consider the impact of dishonesty on others. Place the following in the web: 1) a dishonest choice, 2) the consequence of the choice, 3) the impact of the choice on others, and 4) a better or alternative choice.



Dishonest Choice

Consequence



Better Choice or
Alternative

Impact on Others

A Guide for *The Nocturnals*

Social Emotional Learning Connections

About the SEL Guide Writers

Dawn Jacobs Martin, PhD, has spent her career supporting students with disabilities through various roles as a practitioner, researcher, and Special Education Director. Currently, she is an Assistant Clinical Professor at the University of Maryland, College Park who continues to improve the academic outcomes for students with disabilities through teacher development, instructional design, and research in the areas of response to intervention, social support, and parent involvement.

Jennifer McCatharn is a doctoral student at the University of Maryland, College Park. She previously taught elementary-aged students in Southeast D.C. and later studied counseling as well as risk and resilience at Harvard's Graduate School of Education in the Prevention Science and Practice program. She currently supports social emotional learning in a part-time role at two charter schools in D.C. Jennifer's research interests include: executive function interventions, social emotional learning, reading development, student motivation, and teacher training.

About *The Nocturnals* Book Series

The Nocturnals by Tracey Hecht features three unlikely friends: Dawn, a serious fox; Tobin, a sweet pangolin; and Bismark, a loudmouthed, pint-sized sugar glider. The stories all play out in their nighttime world with teamwork, friendship, and humor in every adventure. The American Booksellers Association chose the first book in the middle-grade series, *The Mysterious Abductions*, as a Kids' Indie Next List pick. The series has both middle-grade and early reader books so that families with young children can share the reading experience together.

About the *Grow & Read* Series

Throughout this series, which was created under the supervision of reading specialists, children will develop confidence for success in reading while being delighted by traditional storytelling. The books are perfect for shared reading and reading aloud both in the classroom and at home. The *Grow & Read* Early Reader Program has free online printable storytime activities that help strengthen emerging readers' understanding of the SEL content in the books while instilling confidence and a lifelong interest in reading. Some of the featured activities and resources are a kindness game, an animal mask craft, sight word games, constellation charades, listening ears, and a Common Core Language Arts Guide.

The *Grow & Read* Program has eight critically acclaimed readers in the series: Level 1: *The Best Burp* and *The Tasty Treat*; Level 2: *The Moonlight Meeting*, *The Peculiar Possum*, and *The Slithery Shakedown*; Level 3: *The Kooky Kinkajou*, *The Weeping Wombat*, and *The Chestnut Challenge*, which is a Mom's Choice Awards® Gold Recipient.



About Fabled Films Press

Fabled Films Press is a publishing company creating original content for young readers and middle-grade audiences. Fabled Films Press combines strong literary properties with high-quality production values to connect books with generations of parents and their children. Each property is supported by websites, educator guides, and activities for bookstores, educators, and librarians, as well as videos, social media content, and supplemental entertainment for additional platforms.

Icon art on pages 7, 12, 17: pencil by Mikhail Listopadov/Noun Project; art by ProSymbols/Noun Project; community by Sergey Demushkin/Noun Project; home by ignition/Noun Project. Spider web on page 21 created by Made from the Noun Project.

THE NOCTURNALS KINDNESS GAME FOR USE WITH BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAMS

The following game is designed to support literacy skills and social and emotional learning (SEL) for K–Grade 2 students. Ideal for incorporating into bullying-prevention programs, the game concludes with a student-led exercise in identifying kind words and behaviors to promote a culture of kindness in schools and libraries.



GAME INSTRUCTIONS

TIME: 30 MINUTES

- 15 minutes: Read-aloud of *The Peculiar Possum*, by Tracey Hecht
- 10 minutes: The Nocturnals Kindness Brigade Game
 - 2 minutes: Setup
 - 8 minutes: Playing
- 5 minutes: Discussion of what kindness means to children, with the leader writing answers on the board

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- *The Peculiar Possum*, by Tracey Hecht
- Printable Nocturnals Kindness Brigade Game Action Sheet
- A board on which to write the concepts of kindness and unkindness during the discussion

READ THE BOOK ALOUD & PLAY THE GAME

- After reading the book, talk briefly about how the characters in *The Peculiar Possum* demonstrate both kind and unkind words and actions. Sometimes they act like friends; other times, they act like bullies. Then tell the children they will be playing the Nocturnals Kindness Brigade Game.
- Next, ask the children to spread out so that they have enough room to swing their arms without bumping other children.
- The game leader will read off the words on the Nocturnals Kindness Brigade Game Action Sheet, share the example, and then ask kids to act out the actions. The actions are designed to be completed in the order that they appear on the worksheet.

GAME DISCUSSION & WRAP-UP

- Write the following concepts on the board and leave room to add notes during the discussion:

-Hurtful Concepts

1. Unkind Words
2. Disrespectful Words
3. Name-calling Words
4. Hurtful Words

- Kindness Concepts

1. Respect
2. Caring
3. Sharing
4. Standing Up for Yourself
5. Listening and Learning
6. Appreciation

- Briefly introduce guidelines for a kind, respectful discussion: one speaker at a time, with active listening, not just waiting silently for a turn to speak.
- Ask children how they felt about the characters' actions and messages. How did students feel while they were in different body positions? Did they feel off-balance after hearing unkind messages? Did they feel stronger and happier after hearing supportive, kind messages? Next, ask students if they thought of similar moments, both kind and unkind, from their own experiences.
- Review the Nocturnals Kindness Concepts on the board and ask students if they agree with all of the concepts. Can they give examples? What's missing? How do they act in kind ways in their own lives? Do they recognize kindness in others? Write down students' answers as they contribute them, using students' own words. Don't worry about repetition; the goal is to include all students and record their own words and ideas.

BONUS ACTIVITIES

1. In a separate exercise, create your own Kindness Code for your classroom or library based on students' ideas of what kindness looks like. You can use the downloadable Nocturnals Kindness Code Certificate Template to create a customized printout of your students' Kindness Code for children to take home.
2. After reading aloud other titles in *The Nocturnals Grow & Read* series (*The Moonlight Meeting*, *The Slithery Shakedown*), ask students to discuss examples of kindness from the stories.

The Nocturnals Kindness Game was created by *The Nocturnals* author Tracey Hecht in collaboration with children's literature specialist Gillian Engberg. It was reviewed by Joyce M. Grossbard, LCSW, who has over 35 years of experience providing child and adult psychotherapy

STANDARDS & COMPETENCIES

By playing this game with students, educators will be addressing the following standards and competencies:

Common Core English Language Arts: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.K.1-2.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.K.1.A- 2.1.A; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.K.1.B-2.1.B; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.K.2-2.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.K.3-2.3

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies: Self-awareness (identifying emotions, accurate self-perception, recognizing strengths, self-confidence, self-efficacy); self-management (impulse control, stress management, self-discipline, self-motivation, goal-setting); social awareness (perspective-taking, empathy, appreciating diversity, respect for others); relationship skills (communication, social engagement, relationship-building, teamwork); responsible decision-making (identifying problems, analyzing situations, solving problems, evaluating, reflecting, ethical responsibility)

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#kindnessbrigade

The Nocturnals Kindness Game Actions

INSTRUCTIONS: The game leader will read the concept words, share the example, and then ask kids to act out the actions.



WORD	EXAMPLE	ACTION
Respect	When Penny the possum says, “I’m pleased to meet you,” she uses polite words to show that she is happy to make new friends. Being polite and showing respect is one way to be kind.	Friends: Reach your right arm up high and keep it there!
Sharing	Dawn the Fox likes to be fair to everyone. She says, “These pomelos belong to everyone.” Sharing is a way to be kind and fair to everyone.	Friends: Raise your left arm up high. Stretch both those arms up and feel tall!
Caring	Tobin notices that Penny the Possum is scared, and he tries to make her feel better with kind actions: he stands by her, and he reaches for her paw. Seeing when others are feeling bad or scared and helping them feel better is part of kindness.	Friends: Let those arms down, wiggle around, and do a little dance!
Unkind Words	Bismark uses his voice to say unkind words to Penny the Possum: “I am not pleased to meet you. Not pleased at all.” Unkind words can make people feel wobbly.	Friends: Uh oh! Raise your right leg and try to balance on your left leg.
Disrespectful Words	Bismark uses an unkind voice to point out how Penny is different than him: “Penny smells different!” Words that aren’t respectful and make us feel bad about ourselves can make us feel less strong.	Friends: Oh no, this is hard. Continue to balance on your left leg, and clasp your hands behind your back!

WORD	EXAMPLE	ACTION
Name-calling Words	Bismark says to Penny, “You are not pleasant. You are peculiar!” Saying that someone is weird or peculiar is bullying and unkind.	Friends: Can you continue to balance on your left leg, keep your hands clasped behind your back, AND close your eyes?
Standing Up for Yourself	Penny the Possum says, “I’m not peculiar. I am simply a possum. And I am proud!” Standing up for yourself and others while still being respectful can be part of kindness.	Friends: Stand up tall again with eyes open and both feet on the ground!
Hurtful Words	Bismark says, “The way Penny hablos is downright bizarro!” It’s really hard to feel strong and steady when someone uses words that are mean-spirited and hurtful instead of kind.	Friends: Drop your chin down to your chest and slump your shoulders.
Listening and Learning	Bismark listens to Penny and Dawn, and he learns that that he has said unkind things. He says to Penny, “You are right. I owe you an apology.” Thinking about how our words sound to others and saying we’re sorry when we make mistakes is part of kindness.	Friends: Give yourselves a big hug and smile!
Appreciation	Dawn the Fox says, “None of us are exactly alike. But that doesn’t make us peculiar. That makes us unique.” Celebrating people’s unique qualities is a way to be kind.	Friends: Stand tall with your hands crossed over your chest. Take a deep breath and see if you can feel your heart beating.





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THE KINDNESS CODE FOR

(Fill in school name or classroom name)

We pledge to try to be our best with the
Nocturnal Brigade by doing the following:



Student Signature