



**Handout**  
**Developing a Growth Mindset by Living Inside a Story**  
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Note: Focusing on **identity** and **growth mindset**, this cross-curricular unit includes reading, writing, listening, speaking, visual art, science, drama and dance and is suitable for early elementary. Children learn best through whole brain learning which involves all parts of the brain. Especially young children, learn best through discovery, play and story. This unit models this pedagogy with an emphasis on **social and emotional learning (SEL)**.

**Overview:**

- **Before the story**
- **Characters and Setting**
- **The Problem**
- **Solving the Problem**
- **Debrief and Application**

**Before the story...**

**Warm-up with Learning Games:**

Develop essential skills such as:

- Self-regulation
- Collaboration
- Negotiation
- Listening
- Resilience
- Problem-solving
- Focus
- Collaboration

**Clip of the Forest:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8myYyMg1fFE>

Have students listen closely so they can replicate the sounds later.

**Thunderstorm Soundscape:** snapping, hands rubbing, pat knees, stomp feet, pat knees, rub hands, snap fingers. Record and listen to it.

### What do you know about beetles?

Beetles can be beneficial to human economics by controlling the populations of pests. The larvae and adults of some species of [lady beetles \(Coccinellidae\)](#) feed on [aphids](#) that are pests. Other lady beetles feed on [scale insects](#), [whitefly](#) and [mealybugs](#).<sup>[154]</sup> If normal food sources are scarce, they may feed on small [caterpillars](#), young [plant bugs](#), or [honeydew](#) and [nectar](#).<sup>[155]</sup> [Ground beetles](#) (Carabidae) are common [predators](#) of many insect pests, including fly eggs, caterpillars, and wireworms.<sup>[156]</sup> Ground beetles can help to control [weeds](#) by eating their seeds in the soil, reducing the need for [herbicides](#) to protect crops.<sup>[157]</sup> The effectiveness of some species in reducing certain plant populations has resulted in the deliberate introduction of beetles in order to control weeds.

Swifts and other **birds**, such as insectivorous mammals as **bats**, **reptiles**, **frogs**, and other **insects** may act as beetle predators. Some beetle predators feed particularly on beetle larvae, although many beetle larvae that feed on plants and in the ground probably are distasteful to **birds** and other predators.

**Drawing:** Look closely at the picture. Look closely. Make sure you draw the six legs, etc. Draw a beetle on a blank name tag. First character is a little brown beetle (see picture from Sherry.) They have two sets of hidden wings. Put on our first beetle drawing (name it.)

### The story begins... (establish characters and setting)



#### [How Brazilian Beetles Got their Gorgeous Coats](#) by

Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss

**Long long ago in the Brazilian forest, a little brown beetle was trudging along a path in the jungle,**

**Teacher in Role (TIR)** as mother beetle: instructs her children once she gathers them around:

You are beetles. Very soon you will go out in the forest. We have been here together for a long time but ...you have to find your own food; there are leaves you should eat; things you should look for (information about the beetle is shared based on Science...the Brazilian forest) (Fold arms up...little stubs)...you must grow those wings, so eat your leaves and seeds so you can grow strong wings.

**Oh, and look out for the rat...be careful!!! He is tricky and sneaky...rats really love beetles for lunch and it's their favourite thing.**

Now go to bed my little beetles. Tomorrow is a big day.



### **Creative Play:**

**Music: 'Silver' from Colours by [Soundtrack Performance Group](#)**

You are waking up. It is morning. You are hiding under a leaf. You wiggle and stretch. You feel scared but hungry. You **munch** on the leaf you are sitting on.

Then you **creep** around the leaf to look out for...the things mother told you to look out for...birds that might want you for breakfast; other insects and frogs. At night you have to look out

for bats because they like to eat you too.

You **creep** on top of the leaf and **munch** on it. You are curious and **creep** down the plant and onto the ground. Nothing seems to be around so you decide to walk quickly. You see a beautiful world around you...

You are hungry and look for another leaf. You can't find one. But there are other things you can eat. If you can only remember what they are. So many things are dangerous. (Only when you can't find leaves you know you can eat caterpillars, young plant bugs or nectar from flowers.)

Look out! I sense something is coming...

**Hide!** freeze (look, look, look) and run

### **The problem in the story...**

**Suddenly a big black rat ran out of a hole in a tree and snickered at the little beetles.**



**TIR as Rat: music: 'Greed' from States of the Soul from [Soundtrack Performance Group](#)**



Wearing a dark cape makes a big entrance/movement... (kids are intimidated by the rat); What did your mother tell you about me? Huh? Huh? (improvise briefly and leave)

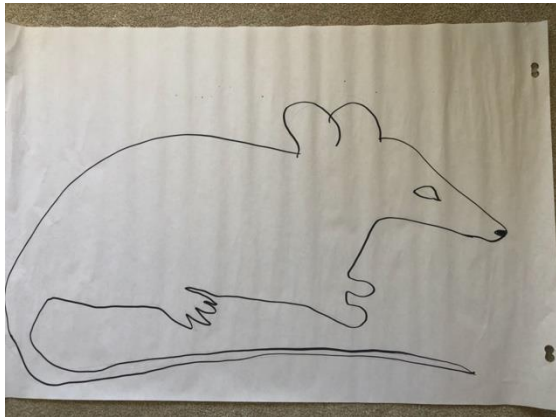
**"O ho!" he said to the beetles, "How slowly you crawl along. You move so slowly and you have**

**six legs. I run lightning-fast with just four legs. You'll never get anywhere in the world. Just watch me and see how fast I can run."**

**The big black rat dashed to the end of the path to show off his speed. He wheeled around, and ran back to the place where the little beetle was**

slowly crawling along at only a tiny distance from where the rat had left her.

“Don’t you wish that you could run like me?” taunted the big black rat.



**Role on the Wall Rat:** outside: What does he look like? What is he like? What do you know about the rat?

The beetle is polite and has very good manners. Listen to what he says to the rat. “You surely are a fast runner,” replied the little brown beetle politely. Her mother had taught her to always be polite and a polite beetle never boasts about her

accomplishments. The little brown beetle never bragged about a single thing she could do. She just kept creeping along the path.

**Hot Seating:** Teacher in Role (TIR) as the rat hot seated by the students. *Back story: I am the youngest of 15 brothers and sisters; my father is not around; everyone is always running around looking for food and when they are home in the nest they are climbing over each other or sleeping. The way I get heard is by making myself look big and important. So, I talk in a loud voice, tell everyone how good I am and put others down so I feel good enough.* **This activity builds**

**empathy and can spur a great discussion with the rat...e.g. students giving the rat suggestions on how to feel better about himself and how to make friends...**

**Retell:** Once the teacher returns, students retell what happened.

Then they decide what they would like to do next. E.g. write a letter inviting the rat to play...Acknowledge all responses with a polite, “Thank you.” Follow-up.

**Role on the Wall:** What is the rat really like? Fill in the inside of the rat.

**Beetles Eavesdrop** on the rat and parrot talking (could invite a student to read the part of the parrot, in yellow):



A beautiful green and gold parrot in the mango tree overheard Rat teasing Beetle. The parrot said, "Rat, I think it might be interesting if you challenged the beetle to a race."



"Why would I want to race beetle? It wouldn't

be much of a contest. What would I possibly have to gain?"

"What if I give the winner a brightly colored coat as a prize? The winner may choose any colors they like for the new coat. You both have such dull coats. That might be an exciting prize."

"I'd like a yellow striped coat like a tiger" said the Rat.

"I'd like a beautiful bright colored new coat too" said the beetle.

The big black rat laughed long and loud. "You talk as if you thought you could win the race" teased the rat.

### Personalize the Characters:

**Ms Beetle:** was feeling confident and following everything her mother told her. She was even repeating the growth mindset words in his mind.

**Mr Rat:** was also feeling confident but only practicing a short time for the race. He also told himself how easy it would be to win from a tiny beetle. He was quite boastful in what he said to himself – solicit ideas from the children (e.g. I can win from this little, hard-shelled insect. I only have four legs and he has six. He will just trip over his own legs. Who does he think he is...)

### Solving the Problem...

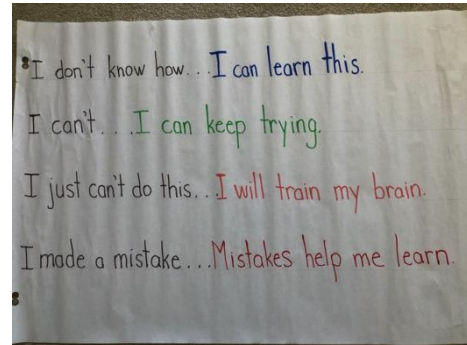
**Training for the Race:** Music: 'High Road' and 'Getting Enough' Ultimate Music Variety from [Dr. Eric Jensen](#)

- The Rat was seen training everywhere. He was practicing the start sequence, the ending lean, eating healthy foods that would give him energy and getting lots of sleep. He was even seen on TV doing his training.
- The Beetle practiced the (students do this) On your mark, get set, go sequence; finish by leaning into the finish line; don't look over your shoulder during the race...*insert photo*
- The Beetles trained. They also did push-ups and sit-ups and jumping jacks. Go to the centre, everyone copies it, back out.

- The beetle was practicing his “growth mindset” words too. Mother beetle read what beetle usually says and all the beetles read the growth mindset phrases in response.

**Growth Mindset (Preparing for Tunnel of Wisdom):**

**Underneath that brown shell are some wings that you have never used. Tell yourself the words that make them grow and you can win the race.**



The beetle is working on a growth mindset by changing some thoughts that go through his mind into growth mindset thoughts: TIR (with brown scarf) as beetle says the first part; the animals on the outside gives the growth mindset phrase.



I'm little...I am thoughtful  
 I'm not as big...size doesn't matter  
 I don't know how...I can learn this  
 I can't...I can keep trying  
 This is too hard...I will practice till I get it  
 I don't know...I will give it a go  
 This is good enough...is this my best work?  
 I just can't do this...I will train my brain  
 My plan didn't work...there is always a plan B  
 It's OK to not know...it's not OK to not try  
 I can't make this better...I can always improve  
 I'll never be smart...I will learn how to do this

I made a mistake...mistakes help me learn  
 I give up...I'll use a different strategy  
 I'm not good at this...what am I missing?



**Tunnel of Wisdom/Encouragement:** the parrot, the mother beetle and the forest creatures form two lines and the beetle walks through it hearing the growth mindset encouragement.

The parrot told them the finish line would be on top of the hill by the royal palm tree. She gave the signal to start, and they took off

through the forest.

**The Race:** (music: [Chariots of Fire theme](#)) all beetles move in slow motion.

**Reading:** could be read by different people playing the parts of the parrot, the rat and the beetle.

The rat ran as fast as he could. When he reached the royal palm tree he could hardly believe his eyes. There was the little beetle sitting beside the parrot. The rat asked with a suspicious tone. "How did you manage to run fast enough to get here before me?"

"Nobody ever said anything about having to run to win the race," as she drew out her tiny wings from her sides. "So I flew here instead, it's faster than running you know."

"What!!! I didn't know you could fly!!" snapped the rat with a grumpy look on his face.

"No one asked me what I could do," replied the beetle."

Parrot declared the beetle the winner. She said to the rat, "You must never judge someone by looks alone. You never know what gifts and talents someone may have."

Then the parrot turned to the brown beetle and asked, "What color would you like your new coat to be?"



"I'd like it to be black and gold, just like yours," replied the beetle. And since that day, Brazilian beetles have had gorgeous shells of green and gold. But the rat still wears a plain dull black coat.

**Party/happy dance** with coloured scarves or strips of coloured paper or streamers after they receive their coats.

Beetles do a **final run** through the forest (around the school?) with their new coats flying. (using happy, bouncy dance music)

**Music:** [Crazy Frog-Popcorn](#)

**The Parrot can say the following words of wisdom:**

The beetle taught us a valuable lesson...

Like a tiny acorn, every child is a mighty seed with everything he or she needs to become a fullgrown tree.

Children are wise and we should listen.

Children are creative and we should watch.

Every child has wings! Children don't care so much about winning but more about learning a new skill. We all have something we can do well. We all have wings!

**Debrief and Application**

**Reflection Out of Role:**

What was the rat like at the start line? What did he learn from the beetle?

Rat: it was all about winning; saving face; probably won't try another race as he might lose...with his mindset, it is lose/lose for everything for the rat

Why did the beetle win the race?

Beetle: has a growth mindset which brings a world of possibilities...

**Is there are lesson here for us?**

**Reinforce Lesson:** Every child has wings. We all have something we can do well. We all have wings.

**Video** of Brazilian beetles with green and gold coats.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJzmU2v-8r4>

**Extension:** picture book, "We're All Wonders" by R.J. Palacio

**Bio Poems:** could be done as a class poem

**BIO-Poem**





- Line 1:** First Name **Beetle**  
**Line 2:** One important Adjective **thinker**  
**Line 3:** Lover of **adventure, learning, friends**  
**Line 4:** Who hopes (3 things) **for wings,**  
**Line 5:** Who needs (3 things) **Who needs**  
**Line 6:** Who gives (3 things) **Who gives**  
**Line 7:** Who fears (3 things) **Who fears**  
**Line 8:** Who would like to see  
**Line 9:** Resident of  
**Line 10:** Last name

*Here is an example using Peter Pan:*

*Peter  
Fanciful  
Lover of childhood, adventure, Wendy  
Who feels trapped, restless, afraid of Captain Hook  
Who needs a mother, a shadow, love  
Who gives leadership, courage, friendship  
Who fears growing up  
Who would like to see Wendy remain with him  
Resident of Never Never land  
Pan*

Thank You

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