

3.10.5 Object Lesson Energiser

Brief description, and rules of the implementation of the learning activity

Object Lesson Energiser is a quick energiser in which the teacher uses a physical object to teach an abstract concept, capture attention, build connections, and introduce or reinforce it in an active, memorable way. Designed for students aged six to ten, this quick fifteen-minute activity actively builds peer connectedness. Children examine symbolic items, like a braided rope, and participate in discussions to map these physical objects to social relationships. By closing with a physical ritual and a shared commitment, students cement their understanding of community support.

Skill focus

- **Primary Skill Focus**
 - Connectedness
- **Complementary/Secondary Skill Focus**
 - Valuing people and nature
 - Emotional regulation
 - Flexibility
 - Curiosity, sense of wonder and openness
 - Creativity

Age group	Student number	Duration
6-10 years old students	whole class	10 – 15 minutes

Proposed step by step implementation of the learning activity:

This technique gets learners moving and connecting (like an energiser, or icebreaker) while anchoring an abstract idea in a tangible symbol (object lesson). Students briefly engage with peers, attend to the object's features, make personal or social links, and then map those observations onto the learning target - closing with a quick active reinforcement to cement meaning.

Running the activity

1. **Preparing the activity:** The teacher selects a simple concrete object whose features symbolically represent connectedness – for example:
 - A braided friendship rope (different coloured strands woven together),
 - A circle of paper people linked hand-in-hand,
 - A small globe with strings pinned to places showing where classmates' families come from,
 - A multi-coloured keychain of interlocked rings,
 - Or a bundle of small cards tied together with ribbon, each card representing someone or someplace.

- Prepare “connection mission” cards (e.g., “Find a classmate who likes the same thing as you.” “Ask someone in another class what helps them feel included,”), reflection stickers or tokens, and a simple ritual or gesture for the reinforcement (e.g., a “connection high-five” or adding a bead to a class string).
- 2. **Warm-up connection (classroom layer):** Kids pair up, say their name, share one thing they like about school or a friend, and do a small movement together (e.g., a thumbs-up handshake or a “connection clap”).
- 3. **Reveal the symbolic object:** The teacher shows the object without immediately explaining. Children look, touch, describe it in pairs or small groups: “What colours do you see?” “How does it feel?” “What is it made of?” “What does it remind you of?”
- 4. **Bridge discussion (school/community/global prompts):** In small groups, children answer guided questions using prompt cards: “Who in our class is like one of these parts?” “How do we help each other here?” “Who in another class or part of the school is connected to us?” “What outside person or place (neighbourhood helper, family far away) is part of our story?” They share briefly.
- 5. **Concept unpacking (teacher models and co-construct):** Teacher explains the intended symbolism (e.g., “Just like these braided strands become stronger together, we are stronger when we help each other and connect across our school and beyond”). Invite children to offer their own words or examples (“So when I share with a friend, it’s like adding another strand”).
- 6. **Active reinforcement ritual:** Each child performs a simple gesture (e.g., touches the object, adds a small paper link to a class chain, places a sticker on a connection board) and states one small action they will do to show connectedness (e.g., “I will help a new friend,” “I’ll say hello to someone from another class,” “I’ll ask my neighbour how they’re doing”).
- 7. **Optional quick debrief:** Whole group shares one thing they will remember when they see something like the object again (“I’ll remember the rope when I help someone because...”). Teacher collects a few and places them on a “Connection Reminder” display.

Indoor/Outdoor Classroom layout notes

Typically indoors but not limited to. Depending on the situation, the activity may require a spacious area, and the tables and chairs should be pushed against the wall. It can also be carried out perfectly outdoors, in a courtyard.

How does this learning activity develop the primary skill?

- Gets children focused, reduces awkwardness, and reminds them they are part of the same classroom community.
- Encourages observation and personal association; begins linking physical features to social ideas.
- Moves thinking outward – from self to class to school to neighbourhood – building awareness of layered relationships.
- Makes the abstract idea explicit and gives children language for it, reinforcing shared humanity.
- Encodes the idea in a physical ritual and links intention to action.
- Surfaces transfer, solidifies memory cue, and reinforces that connectedness continues beyond the moment.
- Increased sense of belonging or connection through shared warm-up interaction.

- Demonstrate empathy or valuing others (if the concept is people/nature oriented) via stated commitments or reflections.

What do we want to achieve regarding primary skill development (student understanding and/or behaviour)?

As a result of this activity, students will be able to:

- recognize that, as members of a team or class, everyone is responsible for the others.
- understand that everyone is needed to maintain a "strong network," regardless of their role.
- make simple analogies or connections between the object and their own lives or community.
- apply the idea to a new, related situation (e.g., naming a real example of supporting someone).
- actively listen to their peers, maintain eye contact, and consciously involve quieter peers in the activity.
- listen to peers and build on others' ideas (e.g., "I noticed that..., and that reminds me of...").
- follow through with the small commitment or gesture tied to the concept (e.g., verbal pledge, supportive action).

Suggested use, and practical subject-related examples

The activity can be used as a warm-up before any lesson or group work, or as an energizer during the lesson for 10-15 minutes.

- Introduce a new concept or unit in a memorable way (hook attention and create a mental anchor).
- Build classroom community / social-emotional learning (e.g., valuing others, empathy, teamwork).
- Refocus or re-energize mid-lesson when attention dips.
- Reinforce or review a previously taught idea by bringing back the symbol as a retrieval cue.
- Surface prior knowledge gently before diving deeper.
- Check understanding in a low-stakes way through students' analogies

General curriculum connection examples

- Science: Students pass around a sponge to explore absorption and compare it to how roots take in water, then act out parts of a plant growing.
- Math: A puzzle piece is used to show how all parts fit together in a number sentence, then students build their own math "puzzle" using blocks or drawings.
- Language Arts: A pair of shoes represents "walking in someone else's shoes" to discuss character feelings, followed by students acting out a short scene from a story.
- History/Social Studies: A worn backpack represents "carrying stories from the past," and students talk about what an object from long ago might tell us.
- Environmental Studies/Geography: A seed is used to talk about change and care for the Earth; students then plant their own seeds and share how they will take care of the planet.

Materials and tools needed for implementation

- Assorted everyday objects/props (small, tactile, varied textures/shapes)
- Container or “mystery box” for object selection
- Prompt/question cards (for linking object to lesson)
- Sticky notes (responses, quick reflections)
- Index cards or role cards
- Markers/pens
- Visual display space (whiteboard, flipchart, large paper)
- Timer/stopwatch (for pacing energisers)
- Music player or sound cue (for movement-based energisers)
- Space markers (cones, tape, zones) for activity layout
- Movement props (e.g., scarves, soft balls, hand signals)
- Reflection slips or quick exit ticket sheets
- Name tags or group identifiers
- Tokens/stickers or simple recognition items (optional)
- Safe open space for physical engagement
- Facilitator cue sheet or agenda (brief structure of the lesson/energiser)

Guiding questions

- What’s one question you have right now?
- What idea does this object stand for?
- How does the object show the idea in more than one way?
- What real examples do you see around us?

Tips and Tricks for dealing with challenges

Use sentence stems, such as: "This rope is like our friendship because...". For beginner groups, choose symbols that are extremely clear and concrete.

- **Challenge:** Students do not see, or have difficulty seeing, the connection between the object and the concept.
Tip: Use sentence stems, such as: "This rope is like our friendship because...". For beginner groups, choose symbols that are extremely clear and concrete.
- **Challenge:** Students treat the object as a toy and lose focus. At this age, children love touching physical things. When the teacher passes an object around, students often just play with it instead of focusing on the hidden meaning.
Tip: Use a "mystery box" to grab their attention. Before talking about the abstract idea, give them a dedicated 1-2 minutes of "discovery time." During this time, they can touch it, look at it, and describe its physical details. Only move on to the symbolic meaning after this step.
- **Challenge:** The abstract idea is too hard to understand for 6-7 year old beginners. They find it hard to connect physical details to social ideas.
Tip: Tailor the difficulty level. For 6-7 year olds, the teacher must model the connection very explicitly. Use pre-written sentence stems, such as: "This object reminds me of...". For 9-10 year old experts, you can let them choose their own symbolic objects and frame the connection themselves.

- **Challenge:** Too much noise when moving around. This activity requires open space. Students have to push desks away and move around the room. With young kids, this can easily become loud and chaotic.

Tip: Use clear markers on the floor (like coloured tape or small cones) so students know exactly where to stand. Use a timer to keep things moving. You can also use an agreed clear sound signal (like ringing a bell or clapping your hands) when you need everyone to stop and listen.

- **Challenge:** The commitment is quickly forgotten after the lesson. At the end of the activity, every child makes a small commitment (e.g., "I will say hello to someone from another class"). However, 6-10 year olds tend to forget this instantly during break time or the next lesson.

Tip: Close the activity with a visual and physical ritual to cement the memory. Create a "Connection Reminder" display together. Students can write or draw their commitments on sticky notes or reflection stickers and put them on the board. This can serve as a retrieval cue for the teacher in a later lesson

Design tips

- Choose objects whose features cleanly map to the concept; avoid mixed or culturally ambiguous metaphors.
- Keep the learning activity brief and dynamic: Aim for 5–10 minutes to spark interest without losing momentum.
- Combine talk and action: Pair reflection with a simple physical token/gesture to aid encoding.
- Reuse the symbol later as a retrieval cue (e.g., display the object when revisiting the topic).
- Avoid overloading with too many metaphors in one session—keep the symbol focused.
- Be sensitive to cultural meanings of objects; vet examples in context.

Difficulty level tailoring

Teachers can tailor the learning activity to three difficulty levels to meet students' needs.

- **Beginner learners (6-7 years old):** Use a very concrete, obvious symbol. Teacher models the connection explicitly. Students get sentence stems or fixed prompts, work in pairs or small groups with assigned roles, and do a simple, single-step action/commitment. Reflection is guided ("I notice..., I will...") with yes/no or fill-in-the-blank support.
- **Advanced learners (8-9 years old):** Use a symbol with a bit more nuance; students help generate the analogy. Small groups discuss guided open questions, compare ideas, and choose a related action. Teacher scaffolds but let us groups revise or extend their commitments. Reflection asks "what" and "why" and includes simple self-assessment.
- **Expert learners (9–10 years old):** Students select or adapt their own symbolic objects, frame the connection themselves, lead peer discussions, and design multi-part or sustained actions. Feedback (peer and teacher) informs iteration. Reflection is metacognitive - students articulate how their thinking is changing and set next-step goals.

Debriefing and Reflection questions

- How do people depend on each other in this activity?
- What is one thing I would try differently next time?
- What evidence do I have that I'm starting to value others or nature more?
- How do I explain the connection between the object and the idea in my own words?

- Why does this idea matter in our classroom or community?
- How did your group work together to show the concept?
- How do we depend on each other in this activity?
- What is one thing we would try differently next time?
- How do we explain the connection between the object and the idea in my own words?
- What feedback did you give or get, and how do I use it to improve?
- How do we help others remember or act on this learning?

