



# Grab and Go Lesson Plan

## Changing the World – One Mitzvah at a Time

 **The Anchor:** [Can Sophie Change the World?](#) - Nancy Elizabeth Wallace

In many classrooms, there's a natural build-up to February 14th—Valentine's cards, treats, and celebrations. While that single day often shines a spotlight on kindness, as students exchange Valentine's cards with each other, it also offers a perfect opportunity to widen the focus and think about how kindness can be something we practice **all month long**, not just on one day.

This lesson introduces students to the concept of **random acts of kindness**—small, quiet, thoughtful actions we can take every day that help someone, bring a smile to their face, or warm their heart. These acts don't have to be big or planned. Often, it's the simplest choices that make the biggest difference.

Using the book *Can Sophie Change the World?* by Nancy Elizabeth Wallace as the anchor, students are introduced to the Hebrew word “**mitzvah**,” meaning a good or kind deed. The story helps students see how everyday actions can ripple outward and positively affect others.

(And if you *are* looking for another February activity specifically connected to **Valentine's Day**, you can always check out my “**Heartprint**” lesson on my OLLI blog post [HERE](#).)

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### Materials

- Anchor Book: [Can Sophie Change the World](#) by Nancy Elizabeth Wallace (or share the YouTube read-aloud [HERE](#))
- Chart paper, screen, or whiteboard and markers
- Retell-Rethink and/or Transform templates (included)
- Mitzvah Flowers template (included)
- Kindness book list (included)

### 1. Introduction

#### Set the Context:

Tell students that you are reading a book to them shortly, but before you read, you want to talk to them about birthday presents (this should get their attention!)

#### Discussion Prompts:

- Do you ever start thinking about birthday presents before your birthday?

- How do birthday lists change over time? Do you want the same things this year as you wanted 2-3 years ago?
- Why do birthday lists change?

Explain that, as we get older, our interests change. Something you might want for your birthday this year, you may not want in a few years.

Create a “Birthday List” on the board with four columns: BABY, KID, GROWN UP, GRANDPARENT. Discuss and brainstorm possible presents for different ages. Record student ideas under each column. (i.e. baby-stuffie, kid - video game, etc.)

Ask students specifically about grandparents. Discuss - What might an older person want for their birthday? Why might it be harder to buy something for your grandparent? What gift have they given a grandparent?

## 2. Read Aloud

Tell the students you are going to be reading a book today about a girl who is trying to decide what to buy her grandfather for his birthday.

Write the word “mitzvah” on the board. Discuss possible meanings. (some may have heard of “bar mitzvah”).

Set intention:

- *Let’s read the book to find out what this word means and how it is connected to Sophie’s grandfather’s birthday present.*

Begin to read the story, pausing when Sophie’s grandfather tells her he wants her to change the world.

- *What do you think grandfather means? Sophie is only a child - how can she change the world? Discuss.*

Continue reading, pausing wherever you feel students may wish to discuss.

End the story and close the book.

## 3. End the Lesson

**SAY:** “So the story is over, but good readers know that just because the story ends, doesn’t mean our thinking does! Often, it’s the thinking that we do after the story ends

*that is the most important. Sometimes, we read books and we enjoy them or they make us laugh or give us information. But sometimes we read books that linger and can really change the way we think or how we act. When this happens, we say that the book “TRANSFORMED” our thinking. Not all books transform our thinking, but this one certainly did!*

Ask: *“What are you thinking about now? Has your thinking changed in any way, after reading this book? How did this book make you feel? Invite students to share their thinking.*

Model: *We started this lesson thinking about all the things we might want for our birthday and we listed a lot of “stuff” that you have to buy. But Sophie’s grandfather ended up asking for something completely different. He asked for Sophie to spread kindness for his birthday. And you can’t buy kindness in a store. We learned about Mitzvas - small acts of kindness - and we learned that mitzvahs matter! If everyone did one small act of kindness for someone else every day - think of how much kindness would spread!*

#### **4. Activities**

Pass out either “**Retell-Rethink**” or “**Transformed Thinking**” template. Explain, model and invite students to complete.

#### **Extension Activities (Optional)**

##### **Mitzvah flowers**

Create **individual** or **class** "Mitzvah" flowers. Brainstorm possible ideas for mitzvahs they could practice at home, school, and in the community during the month of February. As each student completes a “mitzvah” they could add a petal to their flower. Students can choose to draw and color their own “EARTH center or color the one provided)

Alternatively, you could create a class flower with each student contributing a petal for one act of kindness. Display the "mitzvah" flowers in the classroom or outside in the hallway.

##### **Read Alouds**

Help promote “a month of kindness” by sharing some of the kindness books listed on page 8.

# Retell - Rethink

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

**RETELL: This story is about...**

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**RETHINK: This makes me think about...**

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# Transforming My Thinking

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**BEFORE READING - My first thoughts about birthday presents:**

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**DURING READING - On second thought...**

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**AFTER READING - My transformed thought about birthday presents...**

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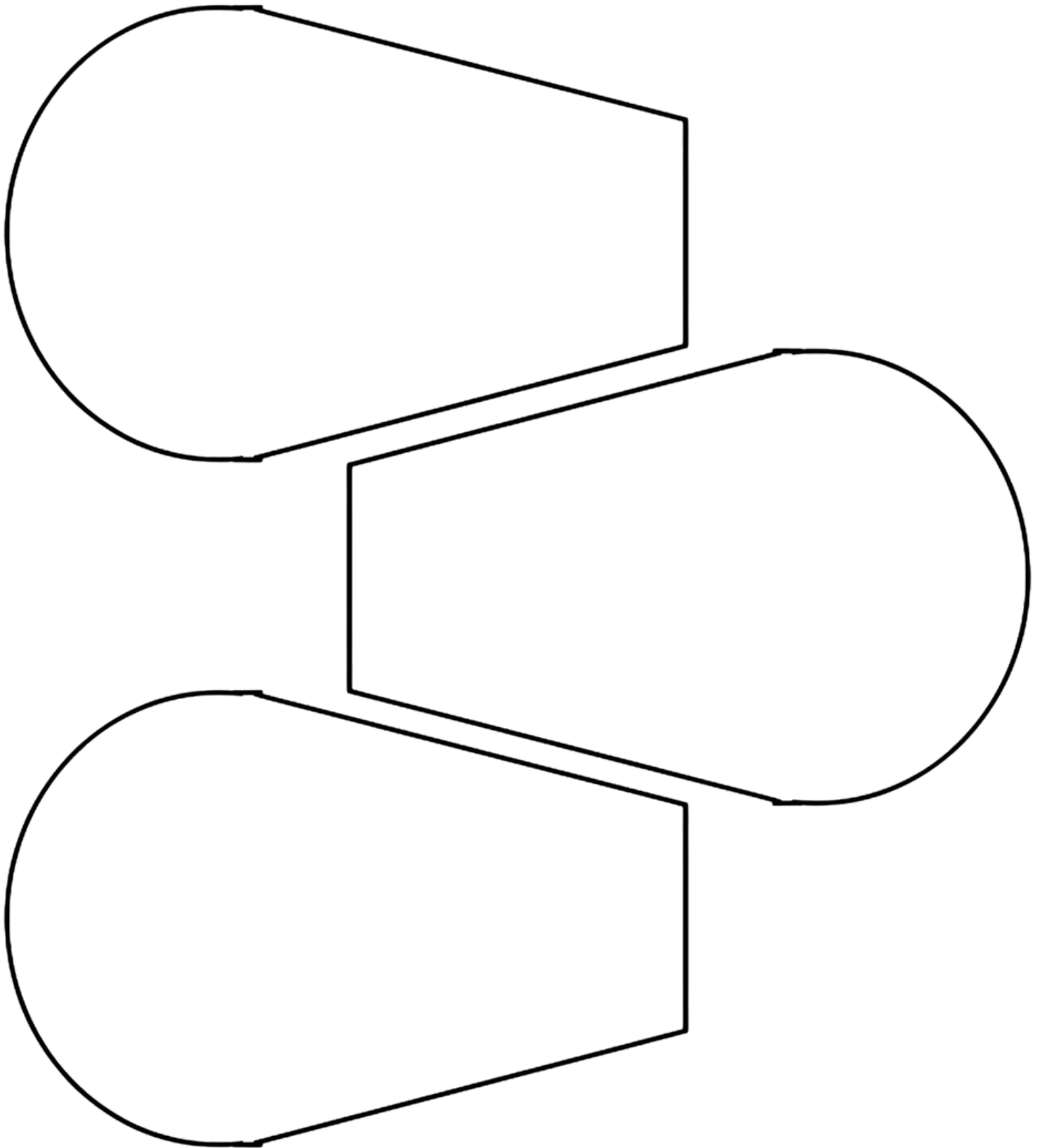
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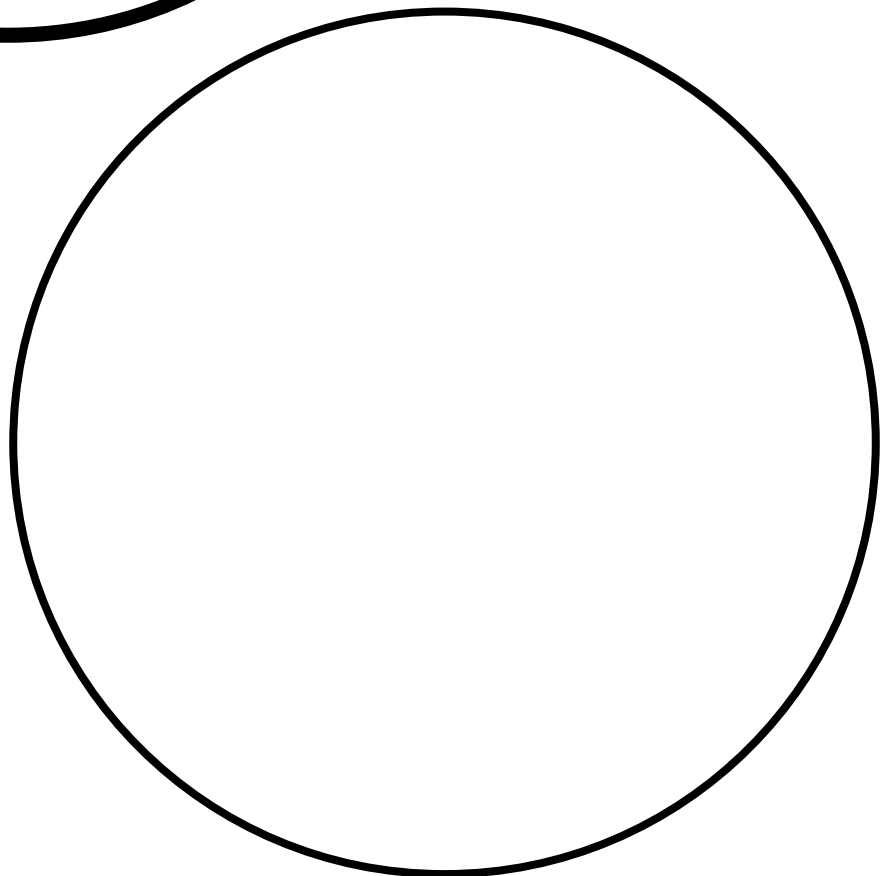
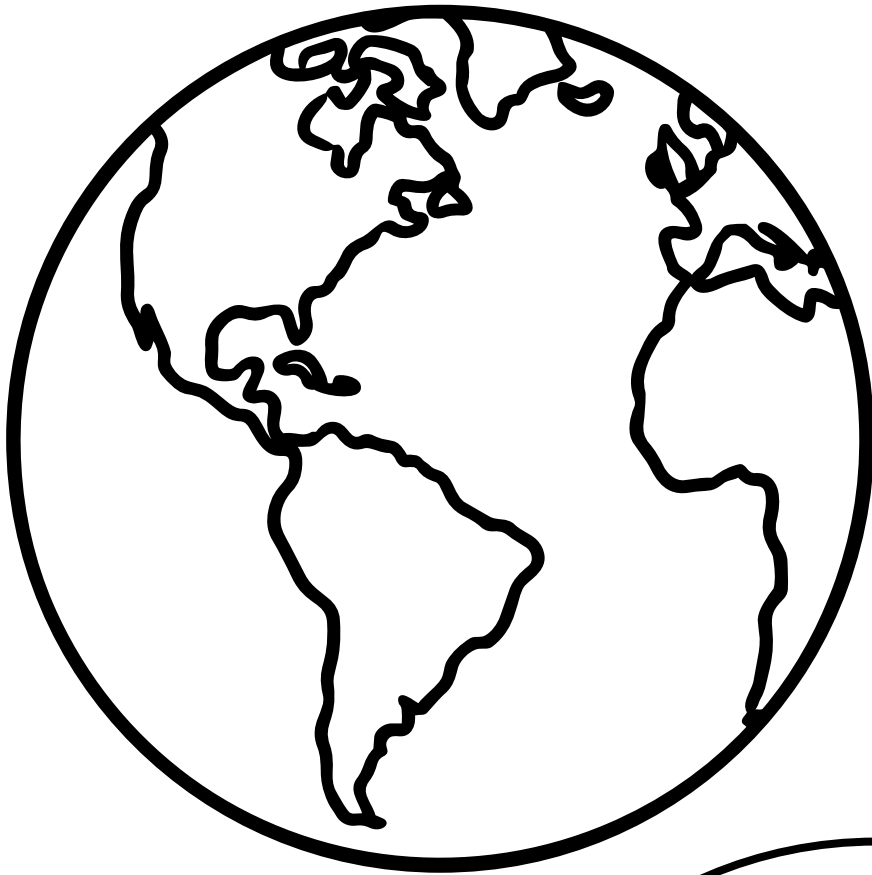
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# Mitzvah Flower Petal



# Mitzvah Flower Center



## ♥ Favourite Kindness Anchor Books

[\*A World of Kindness\*](#) – Anne Featherstone

[\*What Does it Mean to Be Kind?\*](#) – Rana DiOrio

[\*The Can Man\*](#) – Laura E. Williams

[\*Somebody Loves You, Mr. Hatch\*](#) – Eileen Spinelli

[\*How Kind!\*](#) – Mary Murphy

[\*The Love Letter\*](#) – Anika Aldamay Denise

[\*Be Kind\*](#) – Pat Zietlow Miller

[\*The Kindness Quilt\*](#) – Nancy Elizabeth Wallace

[\*The Mitten Tree\*](#) – Candace Christiansen

[\*Plant a Kiss\*](#) – Amy Krouse Rosenthal

[\*The Day it Rained Hearts\*](#) – Felicia Bond

[\*Every Little Kindness\*](#) - Marta Bartolj

[\*Kindness Grows\*](#) - Britta Teckentrup

[\*Kindness Makes Us Strong\*](#) - Sophie Beer

[\*Kind\*](#) - Alison Green

[\*Dude. Be Nice\*](#) - Sarah Scheerger

[\*Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed\*](#) - Emily Pearson

[\*My Heart\*](#) - Corinna Luyken

[\*Kindness is My Superpower\*](#) - Alicia Ortego

[\*The Kindness Book\*](#) - Todd Parr

[\*A Sick Day for Amos McGee\*](#) - Philip C. Stead