



## Dragons Can't Spell

**Lesson Plans** Aligned to the Alberta Program of Studies

**Lesson #: 1**

**Grade Level: 3**

**Lesson Title:** Comprehension Questions & Talking about Anxiety

**Subject:** English Language Arts

**Expected Length:** Approximately 50-65 minutes

### Learning Objectives:

1. Students will orally answer comprehension questions related to “Dragons Can’t Spell”
2. Students will make inferences and predictions related to “Dragons Can’t Spell”
3. Students will begin to think about anxiety and how it affects their thoughts and bodies
4. Students will begin to think about the differences between nervous feelings and anxious feelings

### Materials Needed:

- “Dragons Can’t Spell” picture book
- Assessment Check Sheet (See Appendix 1)
- Chart paper or board to write on
- Venn Diagram (See Appendix 2)

### Specific Outcome Statements: ELA

1

- 1.1 (a) connect prior knowledge and personal experiences with new ideas and information in oral, print and other media texts
- 1.1 (c) explore ideas and feelings by asking questions, talking to others and referring to oral, print and other media texts

2

- 2.1 (a) share ideas developed through interests, experiences and discussion that are related to new ideas and information
- 2.1 (d) apply a variety of strategies, such as setting a purpose, confirming predications, making inferences and drawing conclusions
- 2.2 (e) connect portrayals of characters or situations in oral, print and other media texts to personal and classroom experiences
- 2.2 (h) make inferences about a character's actions or feelings

### Introduction (Before You Read “Dragons Can’t Spell”):

Approx. Time Needed (10 minutes)

- Before you begin reading the story, ask the students a variety of questions that are related to the story’s themes and ideas - (keep in mind that it would be a good idea to pre-read this book before jumping into it with the students). These introductory questions will help the students to connect prior knowledge and experiences to the plot points and character dilemma. Here are some ideas of questions you can ask:
  - Have you ever had a silly dream?*
  - Have you ever had a nightmare? How did you feel after you woke up? Did you tell someone about your nightmare?*
  - Have you ever felt nervous about doing something new? How did you get those nervous feelings to go away? (If the students are having trouble thinking of new experiences, give a few examples of situations that might cause nervousness at their age): a new baby entering the family, participating in a play, or competing in a Track & Field event.*

### Reading the Story - Comprehension Questions:

Approx. Time Needed (10-15 minutes)

- As you begin reading through “Dragons Can’t Spell”, keep the students engaged and thinking by asking open-ended questions. Here are some ideas of questions you can ask:
  - Why is Jimmy having a nightmare? What is his nightmare about?*
  - How would you feel if you had forgotten how to spell?*
  - What do you think of Jimmy’s plan to send Fire Breath to school in his place? Can his plan work?*
  - Why doesn’t Jimmy want to go to school? Have you ever felt like not coming to school? What helped you decide to come to school after all?*
  - (As Fire Breath is walking down the sidewalk) How do you think Fire Breath is feeling?*
  - (As Fire Breath is looking up at the school and as he’s sitting in Jimmy’s seat) What kind of emotion/s is Fire Breath feeling? What clues are given to show you how he feels?*
  - Is Fire Breath really at school or is this happening in Jimmy’s imagination?*
  - What do you think the word “anxious” means?*
  - Jimmy thinks that something bad is going to happen when he says “oh no...” What do you think is going to happen?*
  - What makes Jimmy decide to go to the spelling bee after all?*

- *What prize does Jimmy win? Why is he giving it to Fire Breath? Is it okay that Jimmy didn't win 1<sup>st</sup> place? How do you feel when you win second place instead of first?*
- *How do you think Jimmy was able to overcome his anxious feelings?*

*\*Depending on the energy levels of your students in this moment, you may want to complete the next portion of the lesson at their desks. However, if they are still sitting and paying attention, feel free to complete it as a whole group activity.*

**Venn Diagram & Nervousness vs Anxiousness:**

Approx. Time Needed (25-35 minutes)

3. After reading “Dragons Can’t Spell”, create a Venn Diagram of Jimmy and Fire Breath’s feelings and anxious symptoms. First, discuss the bodily feelings of anxiousness: Ask:
  - *What does your body feel like when you’re feeling anxious or nervous?*
  - *Can you think of a time you were anxious and your body started to feel different? What happened and how did your body feel?*

Explain that Jimmy and Fire Breath both felt anxious, but they felt anxiety in different ways. For this next question, feel free to display their answers in a large Venn diagram (as a whole group activity) comparing the two different reactions (refer to the chart below). You can also hand out a small Venn Diagram to each student, if you want the students to complete it individually. Ask:

- *How does Jimmy’s body show anxiety, and how does Jimmy imagine Fire Breath’s body showing anxiety? Do they react differently?*

**How the Characters Reacted to Anxiety**

Jimmy's Reactions	Same Reactions	Fire Breath’s Reactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Woke up worried</li> <li>• Had nightmares</li> <li>• Wanted to avoid the spelling bee, and thought of excuses</li> <li>• Forgetfulness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worried expressions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• His stomach started to gurgle</li> <li>• His mouth felt dry</li> <li>• He was sweating</li> <li>• He felt gassy and needed to burp</li> </ul>

### A Discussion about Nervousness vs Anxiousness:

- At your student's age level, it's not crucial that they fully grasp the differences between anxiety and nervousness. Rather, it's more important for them to learn coping skills when dealing with either feeling (anxiousness or nervousness). However, it's still a good idea to begin the conversation as to their differences so that as they mature they can start to recognize the different feelings. Coping skills will be addressed in Lesson 2.
- Feeling anxious is like feeling nervous, but the main difference is that a person often feels nervous towards something specific - like having to try something new, and anxiety doesn't always happen with something specific. Anxiety can happen at any time, even if there's nothing to feel anxious about. Anxious feelings often last longer than nervous feelings.

#### Assessment - Check Sheet:

*\*Check Sheet Tips: Obviously you can't be in two places at once, so if it's just you in the classroom, and you need someone to check whether the students are engaging with questions and personal experiences, record your story time with a video camera and play it back later. If you have a teaching partner or educational assistant, he/she could complete the Check Sheet recording.*

#### Assessment Check Sheet

Choose 1-3 specific outcomes (from the outcome chart on the first page of this lesson) that you'd like to assess. Write the outcome number on the left-hand side and the student names in the diagonal boxes. Then, assess away!



## Dragons Can't Spell

**Lesson Plans** Aligned to the Alberta Program of Studies

**Lesson #:** 2

**Grade Level:** 3

**Lesson Title:** How Can We Overcome Anxiety? Finding the Right Skills.

**Subject:** Health & Life Skills

**Expected Length:** Approximately 50-65 minutes

### Learning Objectives:

1. Students will orally answer comprehension questions related to “Dragons Can’t Spell”
2. Students will begin to think about (and practice using) a variety of coping strategies to overcome anxiety

### Materials Needed:

- Chart Paper or Whiteboard
- Assessment Check Sheet (See Appendix 1)
- YouTube Video: Jessica's "Daily Affirmation"
- Journal Entry Sheet (See Appendix 3)

### Specific Outcome Statements: Health & Life Skills

W

- (3.2) improve and practise positive health habits; e.g., lifting and carrying book bags/backpacks, maintaining good posture

R

- (3.1) recognize the effects of sharing positive feelings on self and others; e.g., express appreciation to self and others
- (3.3) develop, with guidance, strategies to deal with stress/change
- (3.4) develop, with guidance, effective communication skills and strategies to express feelings; e.g., appropriate expression of anger

### Introduction – Recap of “Dragons Can’t Spell”:

Approx. Time Needed (5 minutes)

1. Pick a student to begin a retelling of “Dragons Can’t Spell”. Then pick more students to continue the recap until the entire story has been retold.

### Connecting Anxiety to the Concept of Stress:

Approx. Time Needed (5-10 minutes)

2. Ask: *Does anyone remember what the word anxiety means?* Feel free to remind the students that anxiety is very much like nervousness, but you might feel more things happening inside your body, and you might feel it at different times throughout the day. Ask:
  - *Can anyone give an example of a time you felt anxious?*
  - *How did Jimmy and Fire Breath react to anxiety? What things happened inside their bodies?*

Explain that when we experience stress in our life we might start to feel anxious feelings. You might feel stressed if you got up late and had to rush to school. You might feel stressed if you have to write a test or complete a large science project. There are many examples of things that can make a person feel stress. Ask the students: can anyone give an example of something that might make you feel stressed? (Again, it’s not crucial that students at this age fully understand anxiety, nervousness, and stress. It is more important to introduce the language so that they know how to express their feelings.)

### Brainstorming ways to Reduce Anxiety:

Approx. Time Needed (10-15 minutes)

3. Students will brainstorm ways to help reduce feelings of anxiousness, especially when they are feeling stressed. Write down their answers on chart paper, or on the whiteboard, so they can refer to them during the last portion of the lesson. Here are some questions to help get the conversation started:
  - Jimmy was able to defeat his anxious feelings. Ask: *How was he able to overcome his anxious feelings and go to the spelling bee after all?* Here are some ideas to get the students thinking:
    - Jimmy had practiced for the spelling bee, and he didn’t want all that practicing to go to waste. (“He had practiced, memorized, and studied the words for too long!”)

- Jimmy didn't want the spelling bee to be ruined because he knew he could do it. He just needed to be brave.
- Ask the students (and write down their answers on chart paper): *How can you overcome anxious feelings when you're feeling like Jimmy? How can you help yourself feel less anxious when you're feeling stressed?*

### Practicing Ways to Reduce Anxiety:

Approx. Time Needed (15-20 minutes)

4. Now you will get the students to try out some anxiety-reducing methods. Explain that all these methods help you to feel better when you're feeling anxious.
  - Before you practice these methods, add them to the list of ways we can reduce anxiety.
  - Have the students stand up and find a space all their own. Have them extend their arms, and if they aren't touching anyone else, then they have enough space.

To defeat anxiety, you can:
5. **Stretch!** Practice a few stretches:
  - Reach your hands to the ceiling, and then slowly wave your arms from side to side as if you're a tree blowing in the wind.
  - Touch your toes and hold your position for 5 seconds.
  - Lie down on your back and extend your limbs as far as they can stretch.
6. **Dance!** Dancing helps your body feel great!
  - Play a fun song for the students and have them dance in their own ways.
7. **Breathe Deep!** Practice deep breathing exercises with the students:
  - 1 large breath in through the nose, and then slowly let it out through the mouth. Do this 3 times.
8. **Think Positively!** Thinking positive thoughts about yourself and what you can accomplish will help you feel great! Being positive and kind to yourself is very important to your health.
  - You can tell yourself: I'm brave! I can do it! I'm smart!
  - Play this amazing YouTube video: Jessica's "Daily Affirmation" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qR3rK0kZFkg>)
9. **Talk it Out!** When you're feeling anxious you can talk to someone about your feelings. For example, you can talk to your parents or a teacher – or even a stuffed animal! Talking to someone always helps!
10. **Use Your Senses!** To defeat anxiety, you can use your 5 senses: 5,4,3,2,1 Senses. This is a grounding technique. Grounding techniques help anxious feelings go away by connecting

to the moment and not thinking about the future. (Teachers: if you have students who struggle with anxiety, Google “Grounding Techniques for Kids”. There are many excellent resources out there.

- Have the students identify 5 things they see, 4 things they hear, 3 things they can smell, 2 things they can touch, and 1 thing they can taste.

### Journal Entry:

Approx. Time Needed (15-20 minutes)

4. Have the students go back to their desks to complete this next portion of the lesson. Students will complete a journal entry in which they respond to the following prompts on a fun journal template (Appendix 3):
  - Write about a time you felt anxious or nervous.
  - How did your body feel?
  - Did you do anything to help make yourself feel better?
  - Out of all the things you practiced today (stretching, dancing, breathing, being kind to yourself, talking to someone, and using your senses), which strategy made you feel the best?
  - Write 3 positive things about yourself.

### Assessment:

- Use the journal page to determine whether your students are beginning to understand the concept of anxiety and that doing certain things can help them feel better.
- Use the accompanying Assessment Check Sheet to determine whether your students can demonstrate an appreciation for their bodies (through participating in the movement instructions), and whether they can identify possible psychological and physiological responses to stress during the discussion portion of the lesson.





## Dragons Can't Spell

**Lesson Plans** Aligned to the Alberta Program of Studies

**Lesson #:** 3

**Grade Level:** 3

**Lesson Title:** Class Spelling Bee!

**Subject:** English Language Arts

**Expected Length:** Approximately 100-155 minutes

### Learning Objectives:

1. Students will learn how to deconstruct unfamiliar words to find patterns, blends, root words, prefixes, suffixes, and smaller words hidden within the larger words.
2. Students will learn various strategies to help them spell unfamiliar words.
3. Students will participate in either a participatory role in a spelling bee, or a contender role.
4. Students will show active listening and encouragement during the spelling bee.

### Materials Needed:

- 30 spelling words from the National Scripts Spelling Bee word lists (See: Preparation before the Spelling Bee section)
- Paper for spelling tests
- Alphabet tiles (optional)

### Specific Outcome Statements: ELA

4

- 4.2 (e) use phonic knowledge and skills and visual memory, systematically, to spell phonically regular, three-syllable words in own writing
- 4.2 (f) identify generalizations that assist with the spelling of unfamiliar words, including irregular plurals in own writing
- 4.3 (e) identify and set purposes for listening and viewing

### Preparation Before the Spelling Bee:

Approx. Time Needed – will vary

1. Before you begin the spelling bee, you will need to pick out a total of 30 spelling words that will be used throughout this lesson. It would be a good idea to check out the Scripps National Spelling Bee's current study words for third graders. Each year they compile a new list. It would also be a good idea for the majority of spelling words to be three syllables, as outcome 4.2 (e) asks that grade three students practice spelling three syllable words in their own writing. Keep in mind that if you have very strong spellers, you may need to take some words from the grade 4 or 5 Scripps Spelling Bee lists.
  - You will need 10 words for Step 3 of this lesson.
  - You will need 5 (more challenging) words for Steps 4 & 5 of this lesson.
  - You will need 10 words for Step 6 of this lesson – 5 spelling words (and 5 backup words).

### Step 1: Preparing for a Class-wide Spelling Test:

Approx. Time Needed (10 minutes)

2. Pick 10 of the least challenging words from your list of 25 spelling words. These words will act as whole-class words. Explain to the class that everyone will get to partake in a spelling test with these 10 words. The 10 people who score the highest will get to move to round 2. (Note: this lesson is more competitive in nature, and this would be a great time to talk about how we can act, no more matter what place we get). Remind the students that Jimmy didn't win first place, and that's okay!
  - Before you can conduct the whole-class spelling test, the students will get many opportunities to practice the 10 words. (See next section).

### Step 2: Learning to Spell the Class-wide Spelling Words:

Approx. Time Needed (will vary)

3. As a whole group, introduce the 10 spelling words by allowing the students to investigate the various parts of the words. These should be three-syllable words. Have them already written out on chart paper, or on the board.
  - Have the students try to find patterns, blends, root words, prefixes, suffixes, and smaller words hidden within the larger words. If you're using chart paper, you can have students underline or circle your prompts.
4. Next, have the students practice spelling the words individually. Here are some ideas:

- Rainbow writing: students will pick 5 colours and write each word out 5 times, using a different colour every time.
  - Word Construction: give each student a set of alphabet letter cards and instruct them to build each word using the letter tiles.
  - Spelling Triangle: Students will write the first letter of the word, and then under that letter, they'll write the first letter and second letter, and so on and so forth until they've written out the entire word. Lastly, they draw a triangle around it.
  - Paragraph Writing: Give the students the challenge of writing a paragraph about a given topic, but they have to include all of their spelling words in that paragraph. It also needs to make sense. This is a difficult, but fun challenge.
5. Have the students practice spelling the words to one another in partnerships. You may want to model this to show how they can encourage each other throughout the process.
  6. Allow students time to take their words home and practice with a guardian.

### Step 3: Whole-class Spelling Test: Finding the Trainers & Contenders

Approx. Time Needed (will vary)

7. Conduct the whole-class spelling test. Read the word, put it in a sentence, and read it again as students write down how they think the word is spelled. Do this for all 10 words.
  - After you've marked them all, congratulate the top 10 students and explain that they will be moving on to round 2. These students will be called the Contenders. You may need to explain what this word means.
  - At this point, your other students who didn't make it to round 2 might be feeling disheartened. Pull them aside in their own group and explain that they have a very special job. Each of these students will be paired with one of the Contenders, and their job is to help them learn their new (more challenging) words. They are going to be called the Trainers.

### Step 4: Introducing the Next Set of Words and Practicing How to Spell them:

Approx. Time Needed (will vary)

8. (Ahead of time, pick out 5 challenging words – you may want to take these words from the grade 4 Scripts Spelling Bee list.) Make sure each Trainer is paired with a Contender and have the Trainer deliver the words to the Contender.
  - Next, have them work together to read the words and practice spelling them. The Trainer can give them instructions, such as: Please write each word in rainbow writing. Then, the Trainer can check to see if the words were spelled correctly.
  - You can get creative here and instruct the Trainers how to properly train their Contenders.

- Allow enough time for the Contenders to take their words home and practice them with a guardian.

### Step 5: Contender Spelling Test:

Approx. Time Needed (will vary)

9. Conduct a spelling test with your 10 Contenders and the 5 challenging words that they've been practicing. You may want to do this a small group or pull-out, while the rest of the class is working on something else.
  - Mark the tests and pick the top 5 out of the 10. These top 5 will compete in a spelling bee in front of the class.
  - Pick 5 more spelling words that will be challenging to these students and allow them time to practice them in class and at home. You will also want to have 5 more backup words, just in case you have a tie, or they all get them correct. These backup words will be new to them.

### Step 6: The Spelling Bee:

Approx. Time Needed (will vary)

10. Before you have the spelling bee, you will need to teach your students how to appropriately listen and encourage one another. To make them feel as though they are the audience, put the desks aside, and arrange the chairs in rows. Explain that if a Contender gets a word right or wrong, it would be polite to lightly clap.
11. Have the top 5 Contenders come to the front of the room and one by one give them each a word. Say the word out loud, put it in a sentence, and then say it out loud again. Also, give each Contender the option to write it out first before they spell it out loud.
  - You will want to have some prizes ready for your winners.

### Assessment:

#### Assessment Check Sheet

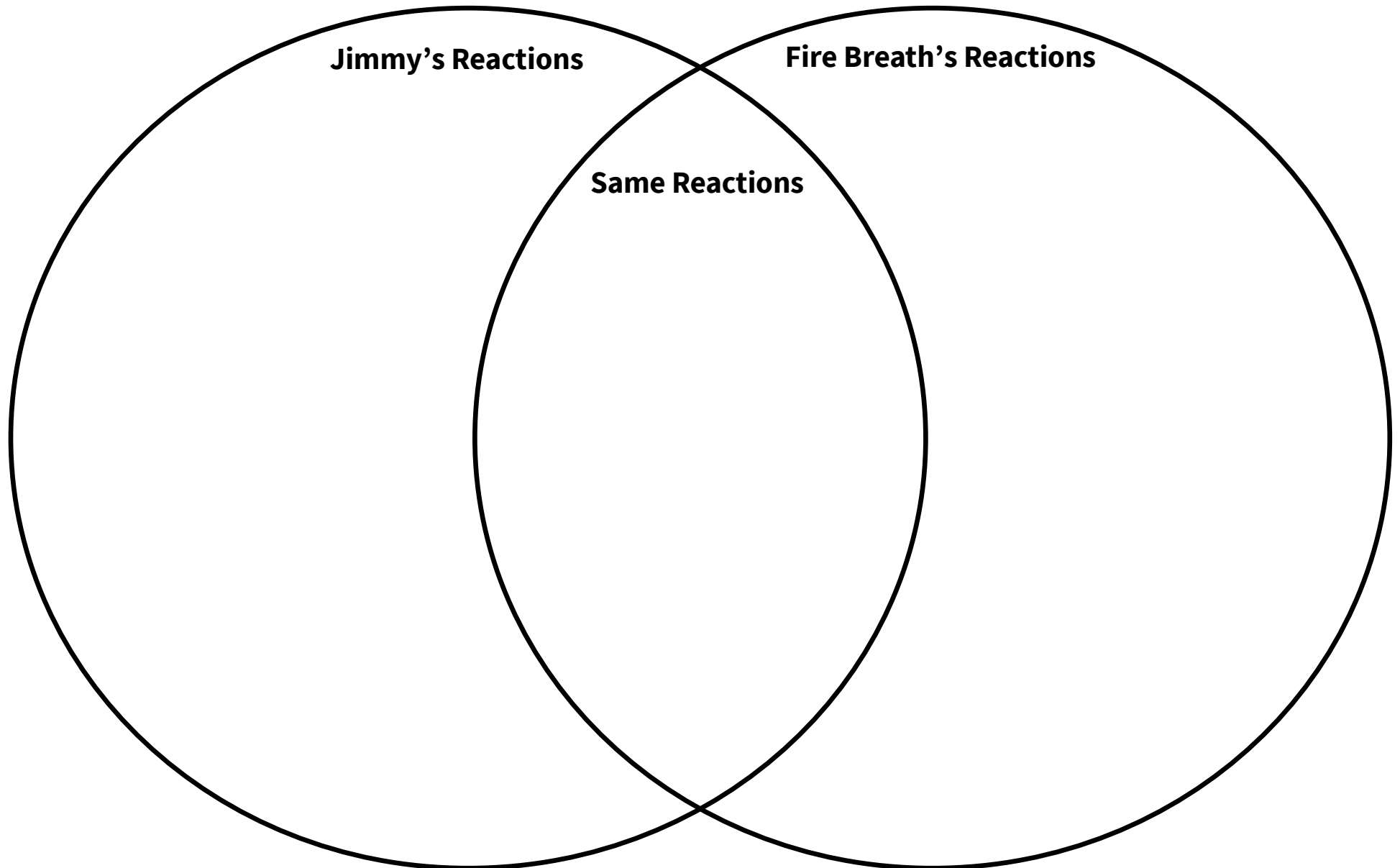
Choose 1-3 specific outcomes (from the outcome chart on the first page of this lesson) that you'd like to assess. Write the outcome number on the left-hand side and the student names in the diagonal boxes. Then, assess away!



Name:

Date:

## How do the Characters React to Anxious Feelings?



Name:

Date:

# Journal Entry

Write about a time you felt anxious or nervous. What happened and how did your body feel?

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Did you do anything to make yourself feel better?

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**Circle the strategy  
that made you feel best!**

Stretching

Dancing

Deep breathing

Thinking positive thoughts

Being kind to yourself

Talking to someone

Using your senses

Write 3 positive things about yourself!

1.

2.

3.