

# ***Understanding Assumptions and Communication Using the S.T.A.R. Strategy***

Lesson Objective:

Students will explore how assumptions based on body language and tone can lead to misunderstandings. They will use the S.T.A.R. strategy (Stop, Think, Act, Reflect) to communicate effectively and check assumptions.



Materials Needed:

- Copy of Chapter 13 from \*Ollie's Superpower Squad: Fourth Grade Challenges\*
- Whiteboard and markers
- S.T.A.R. Strategy Poster
- S.T.A.R. Strategy Reflection Worksheets (one per student)
- Emotion Cards for activity
- Pencils and markers, and crayons
- Home Connection Letter

Introduction to the Topic (10 minutes)

Greeting Outline:

- Welcome the children and have them sit in a circle (if applicable)
- Begin with a brief discussion (topic of lesson).

## **Greeting and Circle Time Teacher Script**

### **1. Warm Welcome and Opening Discussion:**

- “Good morning, everyone! Today, we’re going to talk about how we sometimes think we can ‘read’ people’s emotions just by their body language or tone of voice. Have you ever thought someone was upset or mad just by the way they looked or sounded? How did that feel?”

(Allow a few students to share their thoughts.)

## 2. Discussion Starter

- “Sometimes, we jump to conclusions, thinking we know what someone is feeling when we don’t have the full story. Today, we’ll be reading a chapter from \*Ollie’s Superpower Squad\* where the friends face this exact problem. We’ll use the S.T.A.R. strategy to see how we can make sure we understand people better by asking instead of assuming.”



Read the Chapter (15 minutes)

Story Time Outline:



- Read Chapter 13 aloud. Pause at key moments to engage students and ensure they are following the story.
- Ask questions during key parts of the story.

### Story Time Teacher Script:

#### 1. Prepare the Students for the Story:

"Now, let's read Chapter 13: \*Reading the Signs—But Are We Right?\* In this chapter, the friends have a misunderstanding because they assume they know what Sammy is feeling based on his body language. Let's find out what happens."

- (Read the chapter aloud, pausing at key moments to ask questions and engage the children.)

**1. Read the Chapter with Emphasis on Key Moments:**

- **While reading**, pause during key moments.
- **Ask Questions:**
- Why do you think Sammy was quiet at lunch?
- How did Harriet react when Sammy didn't respond to her?
- Why do you think Buzz thought Sammy might be upset about the snowball fight?
- What assumption did Harriet make about Sammy's feelings?
- How did Ollie notice that something might be wrong?
- What did Bennie say to check on Sammy?
- Why did Ollie suggest they might be jumping to conclusions?
- How did Sammy feel when the group assumed things about him?
- What did Betty say about solving problems by asking and listening?
- How did the friends use the S.T.A.R. strategy to help them understand Sammy better?

### Chapter 13: “Reading the Signs - But Are We Right?”

The air outside was cold and crisp, and the holiday spirit had fully settled in. With winter vacation just a few days away, Ollie, Harriet, Bennie, Sammy, Buzz, and Betty were excited about the break from school. The halls were decked out with snowflakes, and the class had been abuzz with chatter about winter plans. But despite all the festive excitement, a new challenge was waiting for them.

It all started during lunch one day when the friends gathered at their usual table. Harriet, always quick with her energy, was busy talking about the snowball fight she wanted to organize for the weekend.

“Sammy, you’ve got to be on my team! We’ll totally win,” Harriet said with a grin, throwing an imaginary snowball into the air.

But Sammy didn’t smile back. He was unusually quiet, staring down at his lunch tray. Ollie noticed first, his sharp mind picking up on Sammy’s body language.

“Sammy, are you okay?” Ollie asked, his voice full of concern.

Sammy hesitated before answering, his shoulders hunched. “Yeah, I’m fine,” he said softly, not meeting anyone’s eyes.

Bennie, always the steady one, frowned. “You don’t look fine, Sammy. Did something happen?”

Buzz, who was often full of excitement, leaned in, his eyes wide. “Are you upset because of the snowball fight? You can be on my team if you want.”

Sammy didn’t respond, but his tone was a bit flat when he said, “I’m not upset about the snowball fight.”

Harriet, interpreting his quietness, sighed. “I guess you just don’t want to hang out with us, then.”

The group fell silent, sensing that something was off but not quite sure what it was. Ollie, always thinking deeply, realized that they were all making assumptions based on Sammy’s body language and tone, but they weren’t sure if their assumptions were correct.

“I think we might be jumping to conclusions,” Ollie said thoughtfully. “Sammy said he’s fine, but we’re all guessing what he might be feeling.”

Betty, ever the problem-solver, nodded. “And if we’re wrong about what’s bothering him, we could end up making things worse by assuming something that isn’t true.”

Sammy, who had been listening quietly, finally spoke up. “Actually... I wasn’t upset about the snowball fight. I was just thinking about how my family might not be able to go on our winter trip this year. I’ve been distracted, that’s all.”

The group looked at each other, realizing they had all misunderstood Sammy’s quiet behavior.

Buzz blinked in surprise. “Wow, I didn’t know. I thought you were mad at us or something.”

Harriet sighed with relief. “I’m glad you told us. I was thinking all kinds of things that weren’t true.”

Bennie, his steady presence always reassuring, smiled gently at Sammy. “Thanks for letting us know. I’m sorry we didn’t ask sooner.”

Grandma, who had been sitting nearby reading a book, looked up and smiled. “You’ve all learned something important today,” she said, walking over to join them. “It’s easy to assume

we know what someone else is feeling based on their body language or tone of voice. But as you just saw, those assumptions aren't always right."

Ollie, who had been thinking about Lisa Feldman Barrett's theory of constructed emotion, nodded. "Our brains try to predict what someone is feeling based on what we see and hear, but those predictions aren't always accurate."

Betty added, "That's why it's important to check in with people instead of assuming we know what's going on."

Grandma smiled. "Exactly. Body language and tone of voice are clues, but they don't tell the whole story. You can't 'read' someone like a book. It's always best to ask before jumping to conclusions."

Sammy, feeling more comfortable now, nodded in agreement. "I should've told you guys what was really bothering me sooner. I didn't mean to make you worry."

Harriet, full of energy as usual, grinned. "And we should've just asked you instead of assuming things. I guess we all learned something today."

Ollie, always the planner, suggested, "Maybe we can use our strengths to help us be better about this in the future. Harriet, your energy can help us be more direct—asking questions when we're not sure."

Buzz, who loved coming up with creative ideas, added, "And we can use our creativity to come up with ways to check in with each other. Like, instead of guessing how someone feels, we could make it fun to ask."

Betty, ever the problem-solver, nodded. "And we can remember that even if someone seems upset or quiet, it doesn't mean we know why. We can solve the problem by asking and really listening."

Bennie, with his calm and steady demeanor, smiled. "And we can support each other by not jumping to conclusions. It's okay if someone's having a tough day—we just need to be patient."

Sammy, feeling grateful for his friends, nodded. "Yeah, thanks, guys. I didn't mean to worry you. I guess I was just stuck in my own thoughts."

Grandma beamed with pride at the group. "You've all shown such maturity by recognizing that assumptions can be tricky. When you use your strengths to communicate openly and listen to each other, you'll always find the right path forward."

As the day continued, the friends felt closer and more aware of how important it was to be careful when interpreting body language and tone of voice. They had learned that while those cues could offer hints about how someone was feeling, they didn't always tell the full story. With the winter vacation just around the corner, the group made a promise to each other: they would ask questions, check in with one another, and never assume they could "read" someone's mind. They would use their personal strengths—Harriet's energy, Ollie's planning, Buzz's creativity, Betty's problem-solving, Sammy's empathy, and Bennie's steady support—to make sure they always understood each other better.

And as they headed off into the snowy December afternoon, they knew that this lesson would help them not only in school but also in life, because understanding others took more than just guessing. It took asking, listening, and caring.

The winter break would soon begin, but for now, the friends were content to enjoy the time they had together, knowing they had grown a little wiser—and a lot closer.

### 3. Post-Chapter Teacher Script

- **Teacher:** “Wow, Ollie and his friends sure learned that it’s really important to check in to see if their interpretation of body language and tone of voice is correct - otherwise, you can sure make some mistakes and it can cause problems.”

### 4. Post-Chapter Questions

Ask these questions to help students reflect on the chapter and connect it to their own experiences:

- How can body language sometimes mislead us?
- Why do you think it’s important to check in with people before assuming how they feel?
- How did the group’s assumptions make Sammy feel?
- What might have happened if they hadn’t used the S.T.A.R. strategy?
- How did stopping to think help the group understand Sammy better?
- What action did the friends take after realizing their mistake?
- How does using empathy, like Sammy’s strength, help when communicating with others?
- Why is it important to support each other when someone is feeling down?
- How can we use our personal strengths to help us communicate better?
- What can we learn from the group’s experience about handling tricky situations?

Do an Activity (20 minutes)

- Students will practice identifying emotions based on observations of body language and tone of voice, and then confirming their assumptions with clarifying questions.

### Activity: Emotion Matching and S.T.A.R. Reflection (20 minutes)

#### 1. Introduce Activity

“Alright, friends! Today, we’re going to play a fun game that helps us become emotion detectives! We’re going to practice noticing how someone *might* be feeling just by looking at their face, body language, or listening to their voice, without them ever saying the emotion out loud. Sounds fun, right?

First, I’m going to give each of you two things:

- An *Emotion Card* – this will have one emotion written on it.
- A *S.T.A.R. Strategy Reflection Worksheet* – we’ll use this a little later.

Here's how it works:

When it's your turn, you'll look at your emotion card and act it out—*without saying the word*. You can use your face, your body, and your tone of voice to show how someone might feel if they were having that emotion.

Everyone else, your job is to observe closely. But before you make a guess, I want you to ask a *clarifying question*—something that shows you're really thinking. For example, instead of just saying, 'You're mad!' you could ask, 'Are you feeling frustrated because something didn't go the way you wanted?' See how that helps us understand each other better?

After we've had a few turns, we'll use our S.T.A.R. worksheets to reflect. You'll think about a time when maybe you jumped to a conclusion about how someone felt—and how you might handle it differently next time using the S.T.A.R. strategy:

**Stop. Think. Act. Reflect.**

Let's get started! I can't wait to see your amazing acting skills and thoughtful questions!"

## 2. Activity Instructions

a. Hand out the \*Emotion Cards\* (write the following emotions on individual cards: happy, sad, angry, scared, excited, tired, surprised, shy, proud, nervous, bored, frustrated, confused, jealous, lonely, friendly, grateful, disappointed, embarrassed, hopeful, guilty, anxious, content, relieved, curious, envious, amused) and the \*S.T.A.R. Strategy Reflection Worksheet\* to each student.

b. Explain that students will take turns picking a card and acting out that emotion using body language or tone without saying the emotion word aloud.

c. Other students will try to guess the emotion, but before jumping to conclusions, they must ask a clarifying question like, "Are you feeling frustrated because something didn't go your way?"

d. After a few rounds, have students fill out the \*S.T.A.R. Reflection Worksheet\*, reflecting on a time when they made an assumption about someone's feelings and what they could do differently in the future.

"Wow—what an incredible job you all did showing emotions and asking thoughtful questions! You were really tuning in to each other and looking *beyond the surface* to understand what someone might be feeling. That's a powerful skill.

Now, let's slow things down and think about how this connects to real life. I'm going to walk you through the *S.T.A.R. Strategy Reflection Worksheet* step by step.



Let's start with the **S for Stop**.

Think about a time when you saw someone acting a certain way—maybe they were quiet, grumpy, or pulled away from the group. Before you knew how they were really feeling, did you make a quick assumption?

Now for the **T – Think**.

What could have been going on for that person? Could they have been tired, nervous, or maybe something happened that you didn't see? Write or draw what thoughts ran through your mind at the time.

Next is **A – Act**.

Looking back, how did you respond? Did you ignore them? Did you ask them if they were okay? What did you do, and was it helpful?

And finally, **R – Reflect**.

Knowing what you know now—especially after today's activity—what could you do *differently* next time to be more understanding or supportive?

Take your time. You can write or draw your answers—whatever helps you express your thinking best. I'll be walking around if you want to talk through anything.

Remember: understanding emotions—ours and others'—helps us grow as kind, thoughtful people. Let's be the kind of friends who pause, think, and care."



## Wrapping it Up

Wrap Up the Lesson (5 minutes)

### 1. Review and Reflection Overview:

- After students complete their reflections, invite volunteers to share what they learned from their reflections.
- Encourage students to continue using the strategy in their daily lives

## Review and Reflection Teacher Script

### 1. Gather in a Circle for Reflection:

“Let’s all come back together in a circle.”

### 2. Closing

“Before we wrap up for today, let’s take a moment to think about everything we practiced and learned.

Today, we learned that **emotions aren’t always easy to see or understand**—and that’s okay. We practiced using our *eyes, ears, and hearts* to notice how someone might be feeling, and we remembered to ask kind, curious questions instead of jumping to conclusions.

We also used our **S.T.A.R. strategy**—Stop, Think, Act, Reflect—to help us slow down and respond in thoughtful ways when we’re unsure about someone’s emotions.

By taking the time to *notice, wonder, and reflect*, we become better friends, better classmates, and better problem-solvers.

You did an awesome job today, and I’m so proud of how respectful and thoughtful you all were. Keep using what you learned today in and out of the classroom!”

## Home Connection Letter

### 1. Sending Information Home:

- “Before you go, I have a letter for you to take home. What we learned today in class.”
- Hand out the letters as the children prepare to leave.

Parent Letter

Sending Information Home:

- Provide each child with a letter to take home to their parents explaining the lesson.

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Today in class, your child participated in a lesson about understanding emotions and assumptions. We discussed how it's easy to think we know what someone is feeling based on their body language or tone of voice, but sometimes our assumptions can be wrong.

We read a chapter from \*Ollie's Superpower Squad\* and used the S.T.A.R. strategy (Stop, Think, Act, Reflect) to practice how we can communicate better by asking questions and checking in with others instead of jumping to conclusions.



Encouraging your child to share their feelings and ask questions when they're unsure of others' emotions can help them continue to grow in their communication skills. You can reinforce today's lesson by discussing moments when assumptions were made and how asking can help clarify feelings.

Thank you for your support

With Gratitude,

## ***S.T.A.R. Strategy Reflection Worksheet***

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Think about the tough situation your group discussed or one you've experienced. Use the S.T.A.R. strategy to help guide your thinking and work through the situation. Fill out each section carefully.

S: Stop. What is the situation?

Describe what happened or what is happening. Why is it tough for you or someone else?

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How are you feeling? List the emotions you or others are feeling in this situation.

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T: Think. What do you need to think about before acting?

What are some options you can consider? What might happen if you react right away?

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What are others feeling or thinking? Put yourself in someone else's shoes. What emotions might they be experiencing?

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A: Act. What action can you take?

What can you do to help solve the problem or make the situation better? Be specific.

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How can you use your strengths to help? Think about your personal strengths (e.g., problem-solving, empathy, planning). How can they help you act in a positive way?

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R: Reflect. What happened after you acted?

Did your action help solve the problem? What did you learn from the experience?

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What will you do next time? If a similar situation happens again, how will you handle it based on what you've learned?

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Final Thoughts:

1. What is one thing you learned from using the S.T.A.R. strategy today?

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2. How can you use the S.T.A.R. strategy in other situations?

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Happy

Sad

Angry

Scared

Excited

Tired

Surprised

Shy

Proud

Nervous

Bored

Frustrated

Confused

Jealous

Lonely

Grateful

Hopeful

Curious