

Understanding How Context Shapes Emotions

Lesson Objective:

Students will learn how context influences emotions and how to use the S.T.A.R. strategy to reflect and respond thoughtfully in various situations.

Materials Needed:



- Copy of Chapter 16: How Context Shapes Emotions
- Paper and pencils
- S.T.A.R. Strategy Poster
- Scenario cards
- Home Connection Letter

Introduction to the Topic (10 minutes)

Greeting Outline:

- Welcome the children and have them sit in a circle (if applicable)
- Briefly discuss the concept of context and its impact on emotions

Greeting and Circle Time Teacher Script

Warm Welcome and Opening Discussion:

- “Today, we are going to explore how the situations we are in, also known as context, shape the way we feel. Have you ever noticed that you feel different emotions depending on where you are or who you are with? For example, you might feel excited at a friend’s party but nervous before a test, even though you’re the same person. Our goal is to understand how these contexts shape our emotions and learn how we can respond thoughtfully using the S.T.A.R. strategy.”

Discussion Starter

- “Can you think of a time when you felt one way in one situation but very different in another, even though it involved the same people or activity?”

Read the Chapter (15 minutes)

Story Time Outline:



- Read Chapter 15 aloud.
- Ask questions during key parts of the story.

Story Time Teacher Script:

Prepare the Children for the Story:

- “Now let’s read a chapter from *The Star Squad: Navigating Fifth Grade Adventures* where the squad learns how context, like where you are and what is happening, can affect how you feel about a situation.”

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

Read the Chapter with Emphasis on Key Moments.

While reading, pause during key moments.

Ask Questions:

- Why does Betty hesitate to watch the action movie at night?
- How does Buzz’s confidence change depending on whether he plays sports with friends or in a competition?
- Why does Harriet feel more comfortable sharing ideas at home than at school?
- What did Ollie notice about how their emotions changed throughout the night?
- How do Maya’s feelings about public speaking change based on who she is talking to?
- How does Bennie feel in different family gathering situations?
- Why does Sammy feel restless after playing video games late at night?
- What does Ollie mean when he says, “Emotions don’t just happen, they are constructed”?
- How do the friends use the S.T.A.R. strategy during the conversation?
- What lesson do the friends learn about emotions and context by the end of the chapter?

Chapter 15: How Context Shapes Emotions

It was mid-February, and the friends had gathered at Ollie's house for a movie night. The plan was to watch a film, enjoy some snacks, and take a break from the busy school year. But as the evening unfolded, Ollie began to notice something interesting: the way they felt about things seemed to change depending on where they were and what was happening.

As the group chatted about the movie options, Sammy suggested a new action film. "It's supposed to be really exciting!" he said, but Betty looked hesitant.

"I'm not sure," Betty said. "I like action movies, but they make me feel jumpy if I watch them right before bed."

Harriet agreed. "Yeah, I feel the same way. I'd rather watch something funny tonight."

The friends began to realize that their feelings about the movie were different depending on the context. It wasn't just about whether the movie itself was good; it was also about what time of day it was, who they were with, and how they wanted to feel afterward.

Reflecting on Context and Emotions

Ollie paused the conversation to bring up what he'd noticed. "Isn't it interesting how what we feel can change depending on where we are or what we're doing? I've been thinking about what Mr. Jenkins said in class about how emotions don't just happen, they're constructed based on what our brains expect."

Maya nodded thoughtfully. "Yeah, like how I get nervous speaking in front of the class, but if I'm just talking to you all, I feel fine. It's the same person, me, but different places and situations make me feel different."

Buzz added, "And when I play sports, I feel confident if I'm with friends, but if I'm playing in a big competition, I get more nervous. It's not just about playing the game; it's about everything around it."

Exploring Different Contexts

The group decided to spend the rest of the evening talking about different situations that affected how they felt. They each shared examples of times when the context influenced their emotions.

Harriet: "When I'm at home, I feel more comfortable sharing my ideas. But at school, I sometimes hold back because I worry about saying the wrong thing."

Bennie: "I usually enjoy big family gatherings, but if there are too many people, it can feel overwhelming. I guess it depends on how many people are around and how loud it gets."

Sammy: “I love playing video games with friends, but if I play too late at night, it makes me feel restless. It’s like I can’t relax afterward.”

The friends realized that context didn’t just change their emotions, it also changed how they reacted to those emotions. Ollie remembered that Mr. Jenkins had explained how our brains predict how we should feel based on the situation we’re in.

Using the S.T.A.R. Strategy to Reflect on Context

To understand how context influenced their emotions, they decided to apply the S.T.A.R. strategy:

Stop: Whenever they felt a strong emotion, they would pause and notice the situation they were in.

Think: They would think about the context and consider why they were feeling that way. Was it because of where they were, who they were with, or something else about the situation?

Act: Based on what they noticed, they would decide how to respond. If the context was making them feel nervous or upset, they could try changing their environment or doing something different.

Reflect: Afterward, they would think about how the context had affected their emotions and whether their response helped.

Putting It Into Practice

The friends decided to try out the S.T.A.R. strategy over the next few days to see how context affected their emotions at school, at home, and during activities. They promised to share what they discovered.

A few days later, they gathered again to discuss what they had noticed.

Harriet: “When I was at school, I felt nervous before a math quiz. I realized it was because the classroom felt tense, like everyone was on edge. I took a few deep breaths and reminded myself that I had prepared. It helped me focus more on the quiz than on the nerves.”

Maya: “At my piano lesson, I felt more confident when my teacher encouraged me, even if I made mistakes. But when I practiced alone, I felt more critical of myself. I think it’s easier to stay positive when someone else is there to support you.”

Buzz: “I noticed that when I practiced soccer in my backyard, I felt relaxed, even if I missed a goal. But at practice with the team, if I missed a shot, I felt embarrassed. It wasn’t just the mistake, it was the feeling of being watched.”

The friends agreed that context played a big role in shaping their emotions. They learned that sometimes they could change the situation to help them feel better, and other times they just needed to be aware of how the environment was affecting them.

Learning to Navigate Emotions Across Contexts

As they talked, they began to understand that being self-aware meant not just knowing what they were feeling, but also recognizing what was happening around them that could influence those feelings.

Betty summed it up. “If we know how different places and situations affect us, we can be better at choosing how we react. We can take steps to calm down or boost our confidence depending on what’s happening.”

Ollie added, “And we can remind ourselves that just because we feel one way in one situation doesn’t mean we’ll always feel that way. The same thing can feel different in different contexts.” The friends left Ollie’s house that evening with a new goal: to pay attention not just to their emotions, but also to the situations that shaped those emotions. By becoming more aware of the contexts in which their feelings arose, they could learn to navigate their emotions more effectively and make choices that helped them feel and act in ways that aligned with who they wanted to be.

And as they continued through the school year, they carried this lesson with them, ready to face whatever contexts came their way with a little more self-awareness and a lot more understanding.

Post-Chapter Teacher Script

- **Teacher:** “This story shows us that we have to not only pay attention to how we feel, but also the situations in which those emotions arise. When we know what kinds of situations cause certain emotions, we can better predict how we navigate these situations.”

Post-Chapter Questions

These questions encourage children to think deeply about what they listen to and to understand that they can use the S.T.A.R. Strategy in many different situations.

- Have you ever felt nervous or excited based on who was around you?
- What are some contexts where you feel more relaxed or confident?
- How does the presence of other people affect how you feel or act?
- Why is it important to notice how your surroundings shape your emotions?
- Can changing the environment help change your emotions? How?
- How can the S.T.A.R. strategy help when you feel overwhelmed by your surroundings?
- What would you do if you felt nervous in one context but confident in another?

- How do emotions shift depending on the time of day (e.g., morning vs. night)?
- What are some ways to make yourself feel more comfortable in stressful situations?
- Why is it important to reflect on how the context affects your feelings after an experience?

Do an Activity (20 minutes)

- Students will practice recognizing how context influences emotions and use the S.T.A.R. strategy to respond thoughtfully.



Activity: Context and Emotion Role-play

Introduce Activity

○ “We’re going to practice recognizing how context influences emotions, and we’ll use the S.T.A.R. Strategy to help us. We’ll get into small groups, and each group will get 1 Scenario card. You will act out the scenario twice. The first time without using the S.T.A.R. Strategy, and then a second time with the S.T.A.R. Strategy to find a better way to respond. We’ll act out the scenarios in front of the class and discuss the differences between the two scenes. ”

Instructions

- Divide students into small groups.
- Provide each group with one scenario card (examples below).
- Students will act out the scenario twice, first without using the S.T.A.R. strategy, then using it to find a better way to respond.
- After each performance, discuss how the S.T.A.R. strategy changed the outcome.
 - How did the character’s feelings change depending on the situation, even though the activity was similar?**

(Example: Why did the student enjoy reading at home but feel nervous reading in class?)

- What did you notice about the character’s first reaction when they didn’t use the S.T.A.R. strategy? Was it helpful or not? Why?**

(Prompt students to reflect on impulsive or emotional reactions.)

- iii. **In the second version, how did using the S.T.A.R. strategy help the character better understand the situation or their emotions?**

(Help students identify how Stop, Think, Act, and Reflect led to a more thoughtful or positive response.)

- iv. **How did understanding the context help the character choose a better way to respond the second time?**

(Encourage analysis of how knowing the “why” behind feelings changes behavior.)

- v. **What can we learn about managing our emotions in different situations by comparing these two scenes?**

(Help students generalize the lesson to their own experiences.)

Example Scenarios:

- A student feels nervous giving a class presentation but comfortable talking with friends at lunch.
- A student feels frustrated playing a board game with family, but enjoys playing the same game at a friend's house.
- A student feels excited about soccer practice with friends, but is overwhelmed before a big game.
- A student enjoys reading at home on the couch but feels uncomfortable reading aloud in front of the class.
- A student feels excited when practicing piano at home, but nervous during a piano recital with an audience.
- A student feels confident asking questions during small group work but is hesitant to raise their hand in front of the whole class.
- A student enjoys working on art projects alone but feels frustrated when paired with a partner who has different ideas.
- A student feels excited to share a story with their best friend, but feels embarrassed sharing the same story with a larger group.

Closing Discussion (5 minutes):



Wrapping It Up

- “Great job, everyone! Today, we learned that context can shape the way we feel and respond. The same situation might feel different based on where we are, who we are with, and even what time of day it is. By using the S.T.A.R. strategy, we can pause, think about what’s happening around us, and choose how we want to respond.”

Wrap Up the Lesson (5 minutes)

Review and Reflection Overview:

- Have students reflect on their experiences and what they learned.

Review and Reflection Teacher Script

Gather in a Circle for Reflection:



- “Let’s all come back together in a circle.”
- “Who would like to share their reflections on what they learned in today’s activity? How will you carry this insight into your daily lives?”
- Allow students to share their insights.

Closing

- “Great work today, everyone. What we saw in each role play was how much our emotions can change depending on the context, even when the activity is the same. When we don’t stop to think, we can react in ways that don’t always help us or others. But when we use the S.T.A.R. strategy, **Stop, Think, Act, Reflect**, we take a moment to understand the situation, our feelings, and how to respond in a more thoughtful way. This helps us make better choices, especially in tricky or emotional moments. Remember, the goal isn’t to avoid emotions, it’s to understand them and use strategies like S.T.A.R. to handle them in a healthy way.”

Home Connection Letter

1. Sending Information Home:

- “Before you go, I have a letter for you to take home. It explains that we learned that our emotions can change depending on the situation. We learned that the S.T.A.R. Strategy is helpful to be able to understand the situation, our feelings, and how to respond in a more thoughtful way.”
- 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, we explored how context shapes emotions. Students discussed how emotions can change depending on the situation they are in, for example, feeling nervous in front of a large group but confident with close friends. We also practiced using the S.T.A.R. strategy: Stop, Think, Act, Reflect, to respond thoughtfully in different situations

Here are some ideas to continue the conversation at home:

- Ask your child about situations where they feel different emotions and why.
- Encourage them to use the S.T.A.R. strategy when they feel overwhelmed or uncertain.
- Talk about ways they can change their environment to support positive emotions.



We hope these activities help your child become more aware of how their surroundings influence their feelings and provide strategies for managing emotions effectively.

Thank you for your support in developing these essential life skills!

With Gratitude,

S.T.A.R. Strategy



Stop -Take some deep breaths.

Think -What solutions are there?

Act -Pick the best solution.

Reflect -How did it go?



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