

Penny Perfect and Sally Sloppy

A Cosmos Grow Adventure



When is a task, “Good enough?”
When is a task, “Not done yet?”

The answers to these questions may be difficult,
but you must be able to make that decision.

If you don't, you may become a
Penny Perfect or a Sally Sloppy.

Penny Perfect and Sally Sloppy

Main Focus:

One of the more difficult things for all of us to decide is, "when is a task good enough or not done yet".

A. The Main Concepts:

This story illustrates the two ends of the spectrum of this concern. Some children make themselves terribly anxious about tasks and seem unable to decide when they have completed something or have studied enough. These children are seldom "problem students" in the classroom. These children will make good grades and the irrationality of their thinking may manifest itself in dysfunctional behaviors later in life. They are unable to recognize when they have "done my very best" and insist on being the best or "perfect" all of the time.

At the other extreme is the child who just wants to "get by". This is more typical of humans and more recognizable because they are frequently underachieving. But they also have problems with recognizing and striving for "doing my very best". It is an understanding of realistically evaluating your performance, recognizing your best effort and accepting the result of this "best effort" that is at the core of this story. We may be the only animal species that holds a grudge. We may be the only one that can justify present behavior on the actions of others in the distant past. We may be the only one that will engage in despicable behavior and be able to justify it on the flimsiest misinterpretation of the motives of others.

B. Teach the Defining Terms to The Students

C. Listen to the Flip Book Story

D. Sample Dialogue with Students after Listening to the Story

In the story Cosmos returns to his home tree and finds that some spiders have moved in. One morning Cosmos decided to listen in on their lessons. What are the spiders learning about that day? (They are learning about making webs)

Cosmos stated that he has never watched a spider make a web and that there was lots to learn. What are some things that the spiders have to learn about making webs? (How to make a web strong but not too strong, invisible but not too invisible and to know what a good location is for the web)

Cosmos went to watch one young spider by the name of Penny. What did he notice about Penny's web? (Cosmos noticed that Penny's web was done very nicely and that he thought she looked about finished.)

What did Cosmos say that Penny was doing and saying about her web? (Penny was pulling on one strand and another saying how it was not straight enough and was upset with the web)

When the teacher came to inspect Penny's web what did the teacher say? (The teacher also stated that the web was done well and that she looked to be done)

What was Penny's response to the teacher? (Oh no, there is still much that needs to be done. This strand needs to be straightened, this one is much too weak, and when the light hits it in just the right way, it is much too visible)

The teacher suggested that maybe one strand could be a little straighter. Do you think that the teacher was saying that the web was not good or that it needed to be fixed? (No, she was simply letting Penny know that sure it is not perfect, but it does not need to be perfect. That it was fine just as it was)

What did Penny do when the teacher stated that maybe one strand could be straighter? (She tore down the whole web and started all over again)

Was Penny happy with the next web she built? (No she kept building web after web and tearing them all down because they were not perfect enough to her)

If Penny never keeps a web up what is going to happen? (Without a web she will not be able to catch any bugs and will be hungry.)

Cosmos then went to visit Sally. What was Sally doing when he found her? (She was asleep in the tree)

What did Cosmos say about the web that Sally built? (He said that her web did not seem to be done well at all.)

What happened when the teacher came to see Sally's web? (The teacher told Sally that she would need to start her web over because it was too weak and had holes in it.)

Did Sally want to try again? What did she tell the teacher? (No, she told the teacher that the web was fine because she was going to catch the weak and the nearsighted bugs.)

Is there really any such thing as weak and nearsighted bugs? (No and that means that Sally will go without food)

The teacher explains that there are spiders like Penny and Sally in every class. That Penny's problem is that she wants to be perfect and that she wants to be the best. That although she does work hard, she will not be able to survive if she never completes a web. And that Sally's problem is that she just wants to hurry up and be finished. Even if it means doing a sloppy job that will not be successful.

In our world, can we sometimes have times that we act like Penny or like Sally?

Let's think about some Math Homework that we have to do sometimes. What if we are like Penny and we get home and want to do a perfect job on our math. That we spend all night making sure the numbers are written perfect and every time we mess up, we rip up the page and start over. We work all night but never actually complete the assignment. What is going to happen the next day?

Or what if we are like Sally and all we can think about is being finished with the homework so that we can go outside to play. So we take out the homework and scribble down answers without even looking at the problems. The next day we go to school and what is going to happen?

So you see in our world too being too perfect or too sloppy is not good. Trying to be perfect or the best causes problems and rushing through tasks causes problems. Our goal is to take our time and try our best, but we have to accept that trying our best is the best that we can do.