

## Cover Up Teaching Activity (Honesty)

### Overview of the Activity

This interactive lesson (adapted from an idea in Activities That Teach by Tom Jackson) about honesty will visually show students the ripple effect that a lie can have. It requires a bucket or bowl of water, a quarter, and a roll of pennies. Let students gather around your bucket of water. Tell the students that the quarter represents a LIE and give an example of a lie that students their age might tell OR share a personal story interlaced with one dishonest fact that "draws in" the audience reaching the affective domain.

Drop the quarter into the water and ask students to make observations about what happened: it sank, it's heavy, it splashed me, it made ripples, it might rust down there. Compare what they saw happen to the quarter with what happens when someone lies. Discuss how sometimes people try to cover up their lies. Make a T chart with the advantages and disadvantages of telling a lie to cover up another lie. Discuss the lists before the second part of your lesson.

Tell students that the pennies represent lies that people tell to try to cover up their original lie. From above the bucket, without touching the water, students can take turns dropping the "cover-up lies" into the water to try to cover the quarter. Stress how difficult it is to completely cover up that lie. Ask for a prediction about how many more lies it might require just to cover up the first lie. If a penny partially covers the quarter, say, "but you can still see the lie." Once every student has had a turn and you can still see the lie, ask students if it's even possible to completely cover up a lie. This will also be a great science lesson on water displacement while it generates some interesting dialogue about honesty. If you want your students to take home something tangible to remember the lesson by, why not give them each a penny, which features the profile of Honest Abe himself!

To enrich the lesson, challenge students to write a paragraph comparing honesty and trustworthiness. Can you have one without the other? How many times does a person have to lie before you consider them a liar? If someone has lied to you, how might he or she earn your trust back?

### Tom Jackson's Book Excerpt

#### **Topic Area:** Honesty

**Concept:** Telling a lie seems simple enough to do. We lie to keep us from getting in trouble, to exaggerate something we did to make ourselves look better, to get others in trouble, to get out of certain situations, etc. However, one of the problems with telling a lie is remembering what we have said. The truth is easy to remember because it really happened. If we make up a lie to meet our needs in a certain situation, then we have to remember what we said later on if someone asks us about it. As we try to cover up our first lie we end up telling more lies. Now our story becomes even more complicated and we have to keep more lies straight. We have to remember what we said to whom and think about who might compare stories with each other. If we don't keep everything straight, someone will catch us in our lie and expose the truth. Rather than spend a lot of time and energy trying to cover up our first lie with other lies, wouldn't it be easier to just tell the truth? Once you have a reputation as a liar it is hard to get people to trust you. Trust is hard to get back once you have lost it.

**Method:** Classroom Activity

**Time Estimate:** 15 minutes plus discussion time

**Materials Needed:**

- A container (such as a cooking pot or a bucket) that you can put six to eight inches of water in.
- It should be at least eight inches across
- A quarter
- 10 pennies

**Activity:** Fill a container with six to eight inches of water. Begin the activity by placing a quarter on the bottom of the container right in the middle. Give the first person ten pennies. Explain that their challenge is to cover up the quarter with the pennies. The pennies must be dropped one at a time from a height of two inches above the water. After they have dropped all ten pennies, count how many pennies landed and stayed on the quarter. Estimate what percentage of the quarter they covered. Retrieve the pennies and let the next person have their turn. When everyone has taken a turn, repeat the process again to see if they can improve.

**Discussion Ideas:**

**"What" Questions**

How well did you do covering the quarter?  
How many pennies did you get to land on the quarter?  
How easy was it to get the pennies to land on the quarter?  
What techniques did you use?  
How successful were these techniques?

**"So What" Questions**

How can we compare this activity to trying to cover up a lie that we told?  
Do you sometimes have to tell more than one lie to cover up the first lie? Why or why not?  
How hard is it to remember which lies you told to which person? Explain.  
How can we keep from having to tell more lies to cover up the first one?  
How much control do we have over others passing on our lies?  
Describe a situation where someone may have to tell more lies after they told the first lie.  
What happens when someone catches you in a lie?  
How easy is it to convince someone you are telling the truth after they have caught you lying?  
How can you get that person to trust you again?

**"Now What" Questions**

Why is telling the truth easier than lying even if the truth may get us in trouble?  
How does being honest help people trust us?

**Reference:**

Jackson, T. (1998). Activities that Teach Family Values. Red Rock Publishing.  
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