

TEACHER PREPARATION

KEY CONCEPTS

1. Some girls offer sex to get love; some boys promise love to get sex.
2. Physical intimacy before marriage damages people.
3. Everyone experiences infatuation. There's nothing wrong with being infatuated. The problem comes when we let the powerful (and wonderful) feelings of infatuation lure us into dream breakers (drugs, alcohol, and particularly premarital sex).
4. Infatuation is mostly about another person making me feel good.
5. Mature love is being committed to what's best for another without demanding anything in return.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. Distinguish between the characteristics of infatuation and mature love.
2. Distinguish between the causes and effects of damage brought about by intimacy before commitment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Note: At the end of the last lesson, your students wrote letters to a friend who is thinking about taking drugs. Seeking the permission of one of your students and keeping that person's letter anonymous, read one of the most convincing letters to the class today.

Note: Next lesson, if you have decided to have an interview with an athlete or performer, you may want to prepare your students that they will meet a special guest during the next lesson.

Warning: The Grandmothers' Letter in this lesson is long, emotionally powerful, and potentially painful. You may want to practice reading it aloud to make sure you will be able to control your emotional reaction. Some of your students might be in tears when you finish the story.

MATERIALS / PREPARATION

In the Box: Grandmothers' Letter.

LESSON

BEGINNING THE LESSON



INTRODUCTION

5 MINUTES

Read the selected letter.

Introduce the story.

To make clear what you want the students to write in their notebooks, write the names on the board with space under each name while you explain it to the students. You will use these names in the next activity.

Vlad Olga

Sergei Olga

Vlad Woman

In this series of lessons, we are looking at some crucial life skills you will need if you are going to fulfill your dreams. Last time, we explored the skill of resisting pressure from other people. I'd like to read one of the letters you wrote.

[Read the letter you have selected.]

Today, we are going to consider another important life skill.

We'll begin in a minute by reading another section of our story that includes a Grandmothers' Letter. But this time, as you listen to the letter, I want you to take some notes in your notebook. In the letter, you'll hear about three relationships.

The first one is between one of the grandmothers, Olga, when she was a young woman and a young man named Vlad. So please write in your notebooks "Vlad" and "Olga", and leave some space under each of their names. As you listen to the story, I want you to write down various character qualities you hear described in either Olga or Vlad. (For example, if Olga does something kind, you would write the word "kind" under Olga's name.)

Another relationship you will hear about is Olga and a boy named Sergei. Because Olga may show different characteristics with Sergei, I want you to write the name "Sergei", and alongside, "Olga", and leave some space under each of their names.

Finally, you will hear briefly about a third relationship. This one is between Vlad and another woman. (We don't ever hear her name.) So again, please write "Vlad" and "Woman", with space under each to write several character traits.

As usual, the story begins with Natasha, Dima, and Sasha.



STORY

10 MINUTES

[Read the following story:]

"Education is just one long vocabulary lesson." A sheet of paper with those words printed on it waited on their teacher's desk when the three friends arrived. She was nowhere to be seen.

"Do you think it's true?" asked Natasha.

"Sounds like one of those statements that is supposed to get you to think about something in a different way," said Dima.

“You mean like my dad’s observation that a chicken is just an egg’s way of reproducing itself?” said Sasha.

Dima laughed and then nodded his head. “Yeah, I guess so.”

“So you’re saying everything we do in school could be viewed as a lesson in vocabulary. Whether it is math or science or history, all subjects have a vocabulary to them, and the mastery of that vocabulary is at the core of what we mean by an educated person,” said Natasha.

Sasha picked up the piece of paper and noticed that there was something written on the other side. “Infatuation and Love – Romance 101.”

Tatyana Alexandrovna walked in just as the three students discovered the writing on the back of the piece of paper. “Interesting approach to education, isn’t it? I must admit I’d never thought about it in that way before. This week’s letter is from your grandmother, Dima, and it’s about the hard lesson of learning the difference between love and infatuation. It was one of the costliest lessons any of them ever learned.”

Dear Ones,

Few letters are harder to write than the one that follows. Oh, how I wished I’d chosen another way to learn this lesson! Perhaps my story will spare you the pain and regret this particular “vocabulary lesson” cost me and those I care about.

Vlad was the handsomest boy in the school – and he was mine.

The snows came early that year, and I remember the sound of the geese as they flew south. If those geese were crying a warning, it was altogether lost on me.

When Vlad and I were together, my heart was as warm as summer. I had to be careful, though. My father would not approve of the closeness I was beginning to have with Vlad. My dad and mom liked Sergei, not Vlad. That, too, should have been a warning.

Sergei came over to my parents’ apartment twice every week to help me with mathematics. Sergei and I had been in school together since kindergarten. He was always patient with me, even when I became frustrated with math and took it out on him.

Vlad was more reckless. He was ready for anything – except waiting. He didn’t like waiting for me, either. As the fall went on, Vlad began to work hard to move me toward a sexual relationship.

“You love me, don’t you?” he asked.

“Of course, I do.”

“You must show your love.”

“But I’m just not ready.”

“When will you be ready?”

“I don’t know.”

Vlad sighed heavily and tapped his foot on the floor. “I can’t and won’t wait forever, you know.”

I knew that. One thing Vlad would not do was wait forever.

The more I resisted, the more impatient Vlad became, and I really worried that I might lose him. Whom could I talk to? There was no one I could ask about something as personal as this. I was alone.

Vlad pressed me again, and this time I made him a promise. During the fall break, I would be ready.

The time drew near, and I began to pack the days with adolescent dreams. Vlad would finally ask me to marry him, and my father would simply have to accept the inevitable.

By the time the night arrived, I was nervous, but resolved. All my dreams would come true through this doorway.

It was nothing like I expected. After our time together, I didn't feel any of the peace I thought I'd feel. I felt guilty, as if I had participated in a robbery of something precious to me, a robbery in which somehow I was also the victim.

Vlad seemed to change, too. As the week went on, he seemed to be avoiding me. Finally, I met him in the hallway.

"Oh, it's you," he said. It wasn't the greeting I expected, and he looked out over my shoulder, instead of staring steadily into my eyes as I had come to expect.

"I've missed you," I began.

"I've been really busy."

He just stood there. The moment grew more and more awkward. I tried to rescue it.

"Want to get some ice cream after school?"

"Uhhh," he said. "I really can't."

Silence, again. He didn't explain, and the time stretched out uncomfortably.

"I'll see you around," he said, and he walked off down the hall without a backward glance.

I stood in the hall for a long time. That night in my bed, I tried not to think about it. The next day, I resolved to talk to him again. I imagined him saying yesterday was all a big misunderstanding and we'd laugh about it later.

When I caught up with him, he got angry.

"What are you doing, following me around like this?"

"But Vlad . . ."

"But nothing. If I need to see you, I'll call you. Until then, I'm busy."

"Vlad . . .," I began again as he turned his back and walked off. A few paces away, he joined a couple of other boys and said something to them I couldn't hear, and they all laughed.

The next few weeks were ghastly. Somewhere deep inside I knew that I had already spent the only coin I ever had that could purchase his favor.

Winter settled in hard and cold. My grief had dulled to a monotonous depression. As if this were not enough, I seemed to have contracted some sort of stomach ailment, and I couldn't keep food down, particularly in the mornings. A horrible thought occurred to me. I tried to push the thought aside, but once in my head, it wouldn't leave me alone. The following day, I went to the clinic.

The physician's assistant brought back the results of my test. "You are pregnant. Would you like me to schedule a procedure for you?" Her words droned on, but I couldn't hear her. What was I going to do? What would my father do when he found out?

The next day, I found Vlad.

"What do you want?" he asked.

In a few brief sentences, I told him the news. There was a long pause. Then he spoke, his voice short and sharp.

"It isn't mine."

"What?"

"It isn't mine."

I was speechless. My throat grew tight, "What did you say?"

"You heard me."

"You . . . you can't do this to me."

"I can get five other guys to say it might be theirs."

I went home and simply sat – I had no idea how long – staring into the pattern of the ice on the window.

Sometime later, I heard a knock on the door. It was Sergei, coming to help me with math. I didn't want to see anyone, but I didn't know what to say, so I just let him in.

He opened the math book and then looked at me.

"What's wrong, Olga?"

I looked at him and just started to cry. Sergei came over to where I was sitting and gently put his arm around my shoulders. It felt so good just to have someone hold me.

"Whatever it is, you can tell me."

Maybe I could tell him. He'd always understood everything, ever since elementary school.

Finally, I just blurted out that I had ruined my life! I was pregnant. At first, he was shocked, and his face betrayed some other emotion. It might have been disappointment or pain, but I was too focused on myself.

He didn't say anything for the longest time. Then, he nodded, as if he'd just finished some conversation with himself. He said, "Don't get rid of your baby; I'll marry you. I'll talk to your Dad. You'll see. It will be all right."

I was so relieved that there was someone else willing to take over the mess I'd made of my life that I just went along.

Sergei was not the man of my dreams, but he was willing to have me as I was. The years passed and I found myself hating Sergei – as if it were all his fault. Neither one of us got what we'd hoped for.

But that is not the end of my story. There's one more chapter. It happened many years later. I saw Vlad on the street. He didn't even recognize me. The years hadn't taken away his good looks, but it was the woman with him that I'll never forget. He treated her with contempt.

"Keep up, woman! Don't make me slow down for you again!" She never looked up but increased her pace. And he never looked back; you could just tell she'd endured this for years.

I watched as, once more, Vlad walked out of my life. My face was wet with very old tears. They were tears from a well that was decades old. The enormity of what I had narrowly escaped – Vlad's abuse – and what I had gained instead – Sergei's love – broke upon me, and I sobbed, standing right there on the sidewalk.

Then, Sergei was beside me. "What's wrong, Dear?"

His concern lifted an old burden, and I couldn't even speak.

It didn't seem to matter to Sergei. He took my arm the way he always did, and we walked side by side. I squeezed his hand, and he looked at me for a long moment. He hadn't said he loved me in so many words all those years ago. He'd just said the baby and my father would be okay, and told me he would marry me – that it would be all right.

"Thank you," I said. "You were right, you know."

"About what?" he asked.

"Oh, I was just remembering something you said to me a very long time ago. I just realized how right you were."

From one who learned this lesson the hard way,

Your Grandmother,

Olga



= 15 minutes

EXPLORING THE LESSON



VLAD-OLGA- SERGEI CONTRAST

ABOUT 10 MINUTES

Accept your students' suggestions and write them on the board under the correct name.

Two kinds of love

1. Infatuation

Now, let's see what sort of character traits you came up with for the pairs of characters in this story. Let's begin with Vlad and his relationship with Olga.

First, what traits did you see in Vlad?

[When the students have finished reading their suggestions, add the following traits, if the students have not already suggested them:]

Vlad (with Olga)

- Impatient
- Demanding
- Manipulative
- Insensitive
- Irresponsible
- Dishonest

Vlad (with woman)

- Contemptuous
- Cruel

Olga (with Vlad)

- Superficial (attracted primarily to physical)
- Rebellious and deceptive (toward parents)
- Fearful (of losing Vlad)
- Guilty

Olga (with Sergei)

- Compliant (went along with Sergei's offer)
- Blaming
- Ungrateful (toward Sergei, before she saw Vlad on street)
- Trusting
- Grateful (toward Sergei, after she saw Vlad)

Sergei (with Olga)

- Sensitive
- Responsible (took charge of solving Olga's problem)
- Patient
- Faithful
- Accepting
- Practical
- Trustworthy

What we've seen in these lists is really a description of two different kinds of love. There is immature love, which is sometimes called infatuation, and there is also mature love – or giving love.

1. **Infatuation** is primarily self-centered. When I am infatuated with someone, it makes me feel good to look at them, to be with them, to have other people see me with them, to have them like me, and to have them say nice things to me.

2. Mature love

2. **Mature** or real **love** is other-centered. Mature love's primary focus is the other person. When a man genuinely loves a woman, he cares how she feels and he will sacrifice to do what's best for her, even if it's difficult.

 = 25 minutes

Based on the story and any other ideas you might have, let's make a chart contrasting infatuation and mature love. For example under "Infatuation", we might put "impatient", and under "Love", we'd write "patient".

[Write on the board a chart similar to the one below. Put students' responses in the appropriate columns. Try to draw out the following contrasts or add them at the end of the chart. Also feel free to add contrasts that you think might be important for your students.]



**LOVE/
INFATUATION
CONTRAST
ACTIVITY**
ABOUT 10 MINUTES

INFATUATION

(immature, self-centered)

- Impatient
- Insensitive
- Irresponsible
- Dishonest
- Untrustworthy

LOVE

(mature, other-centered)

- Patient
- Sensitive
- Responsible
- Honest
- Trustworthy



**SUMMARY:
SHORT LECTURE**
ABOUT 5 MINUTES

Infatuation is mostly about another person making me feel good. It asks, "What do I need?" It is focused on taking care of my feelings.

Genuine love, on the other hand, is being committed to what's best for another person without demanding anything in return. It asks, "What does he or she need?" Mature love focuses on taking care of the other person.

The difference is very important. As we saw in today's story, infatuation uses others to get what it wants for itself. Those who are infatuated may not even realize they are trying to control the other person.

Most of us experience infatuation often – many times with different people. There's nothing wrong with being infatuated. It is a natural part of life. The problem comes when we let the powerful and exhilarating feelings of infatuation lure us into dream breakers like drugs, alcohol or, particularly, premarital sex.

 = 40 minutes

ENDING THE LESSON



PERSONAL JOURNAL ENTRIES

ABOUT 5 MINUTES

Students should put their answers to the question in their Personal Journal so they are available for future reflection.

Before dismissing your students, remember to dictate the Parent-Teacher questions to them.



= 45 minutes

Here is a final thought for you to consider. Please write your responses in your Personal Journal to this question:

“What things might need to change in my life for me to be ready for genuine, giving love?”

Today, we learned about the crucial differences between infatuation and mature love. Next time, we’ll explore another of our life skills: dealing with the lure of immediate gratification.

For the next lesson, please be sure to bring your Personal Journals.

RESOURCES

GOING DEEPER

Note to teacher: It is probably best not to read verse four which might give your students the confusing impression that God approved of Samson's behavior or his motive, or both. A likely interpretation of this passage is that God understood Samson's immaturity and providentially used it to bring about God's larger purpose.]

Last time, we heard the story of Joseph, a man who refused to compromise. Today, we are going to look at another biblical story about a man who possessed incredible physical strength. Although Samson was strong on the outside, he often demonstrated weak internal character.

A little background will help us better understand this story. In the time and place where Samson lived, marriage customs were quite different from what they are in our country today.

Two of those differences are important for us to understand.

1. Parents were expected to choose whom their children would marry, and young people were supposed to respect and honor their parents' wishes.
2. Young men were expected to marry someone from their own nation, preferably a distant family relative. (An added complication was that Samson's countrymen hated their enemies and were almost continually at war with them.)

[Read the story of Samson's choice from Judges 14:1–3.]

What are some of Samson's attitudes that you observed in this brief story?

[Accept all answers. If students do not suggest them, mention the following:]

1. Samson did not show respect for his parents' concerns.
2. Samson's reason for wanting to marry was superficial – she looked good to him!]

Mock TV INTERVIEW

[Lead your students in designing a mock television interview of the "World's Strongest Man". Have one of the boys play Samson and another student, perhaps a girl, play the interviewer. Have the other class members suggest questions for the interviewer and what kinds of answers Samson would likely give.]

You could also have an announcer promote the interview:

"After the break, our correspondent will interview the world's strongest man. He has also been one of the nation's most eligible bachelors. But, as we will see, that is about to change! Stay tuned."

Make sure the questions and answers bring out how self-centered and superficial Samson was and that his motivation to marry was infatuation, not genuine love.]

FOCUS POINT

Be sure to leave time for discussion at the end of the learning activity so your students can discuss the connection between the learning activity and the lesson. Listen to see whether they seemed to understand the key points listed. If you sense that one or more of these points may have been lost, be sure to guide the discussion to make sure they get these main ideas.

1. **Being physically strong or successful does not guarantee successful relationships or a successful marriage.**
2. **An infatuation based on looks is a poor reason to marry.**

PARENT-TEACHER CONNECTION

For Family Discussion:

1. Discuss with your adolescent what originally attracted you to your spouse.
2. Explain to your adolescent the differences you have observed between immature and mature love.

