



The Usual Suspects



Prep **10** minutes



Activity **1** hour



Grades **3-5**

OBJECTIVE:

To have students research and report on how to prevent becoming sick because of germs.

MATERIALS:

- *The Usual Suspects* Handout
- Poster board
- Drawing and art supplies
- Internet access for students or books on childhood infectious diseases

EDUCATION STANDARDS:

Health: 7.5.1 Identify responsible personal health behaviors.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Have students read *The Usual Suspects* handout.
2. Ask students to think about when they have been too sick to come to school. What illness did they have? Have students brainstorm illnesses that have kept them or their classmates home from school. Some common childhood illnesses caused by microbes include: cold, flu, whooping cough, strep throat, stomach ache or diarrhea, croup, impetigo, pink eye, ringworm, and chickenpox.
3. Assign each student or group of students an illness to research. Provide students with websites (if you have internet access) or with selected books covering common childhood illnesses, such as:
 - <http://kidshealth.org/kid/talk/qa/germs.html>
 - www.bam.gov/
 - *I Wish I Was Sick Too!* by F. Brandenburg
 - *Wash Your Hands!* by T. Ross
 - *Germs Make Me Sick!* by M. Berger
 - *Why I Sneeze, Shiver, Hiccup, & Yawn* by M. Berger
 - *Germs! Germs! Germs!* by B. Katz
 - *Those Mean Nasty Dirty Downright Disgusting But Invisible...Germs.* by J.A. RiceStudents can use the handout to take notes, as well as to plan their poster.
4. When students have completed their research, give them poster board and art supplies. Students may also want to print images from their research to include on their poster. Some suggestions include microscope images of the germ that causes the illness or photographs of physical symptoms, such as rashes.
5. Have students create a BOLO (**Be On the LookOut**) poster about the common symptoms of and ways to prevent their assigned illnesses.
6. Give each student or group of students time to present their poster to the class and answer any questions their classmates have. If possible, give students additional time to walk around the room and look at each other's posters.
7. Have students summarize what they have learned by filling out the *Case Report* on the handout.



Interactive Whiteboard Extension

1. Using a whiteboard, show this video about how the spread of germs can cause illnesses: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlDqcmYEV8&feature=channel>.
2. List common illnesses and ask students to use "Response Clickers" to share if they have or have not experienced these illnesses. (Option: Record students' responses by asking them to close their eyes and raise their hands.) Using the whiteboard, create a graph of student responses. In small groups, have students create other types of graphs sharing the results.



The Usual Suspects

Harry, Ella, and Johnny were sitting outside during recess. Suddenly Johnny sneezed into the inside of his elbow.

"Uh-oh," Ella said, "I hope you aren't getting the same illness Harry had last week."

"Not a chance," Harry assured them. "I had strep throat. That doesn't make you sneeze."

"I think I'm just sneezing because of allergies," Johnny said. "Those aren't contagious. You can't spread them to other people."

"That's good," Ella said. "But illnesses can be spread to others when you sneeze, so thank you for sneezing into your elbow so you wouldn't spread germs—just in case!"

"Yeah!" Harry smiled. "I don't want to get sick again. I had to miss my soccer game."

"No problem," said Johnny. "Thank you for staying home from school when you were sick so you wouldn't share your germs with the rest of us."

"You know," Ella said thoughtfully, "sometimes it's hard to tell when you are getting sick with something that could be contagious. It can be hard to know if you should stay home."

"Yeah," said Harry. "A sneeze may be suspicious, but how do you know if you are really sick or just inhaled some dust? I would hate to miss school just because I didn't do a good job cleaning my room."

Ella laughed. "You would probably never make it to school in that case! But seriously, I think a little investigation is in order here. Let's track down the usual suspects, the illnesses that often keep kids home from school, and figure out how to identify them."



Help Ella, Johnny, and Harry track down the usual suspects that can make kids sick. Research an illness and create a BOLO (Be On the LookOut) poster to help other kids identify it. Use the form below to plan your poster.

Be on the Lookout for _____

1. Describe the suspect (type of germ that causes it and its symptoms): _____

2. Describe what to do if you catch the suspect (treatment): _____

3. Describe how to prevent catching the suspect: _____

4. Describe what NOT to do if you think you have caught the suspect (how it spreads): _____

Other important information:

1. Describe some images you want to include on the poster: _____

Case Report: After you look at all the BOLO posters in your classroom, it is time to write your case report. Now that you have seen the symptoms for several common illnesses, what main symptoms would you tell others to watch out for? What advice would you give others to help keep them from spreading an illness?
