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Teddy is no longer a doll-corner resident; he is now a guest or an intruder there. As a guest, he responds to invitations—usually to be the father. All the boys, even Andrew, will agree to a brief stint as father if they are alone when asked.

The girls understand what turns a guest into an intruder: The magic number is 3. If one boy is summoned into the doll corner, he is likely to cooperate; two, in certain combinations, might still be manageable; three, never. Three boys form a superhero clique and disrupt play. The doll corner is easy to understand, for there is but a single drama to enter, as either protagonist, antagonist, or supporting player.

By contrast, the many unconnected activities in the block area must share the same space and materials, each unit continually readjusting its boundary lines to accommodate the

others. A half hour of constructive play in the blocks requires one or more of three conditions: socially mature players, a plot strong enough to make role-playing more important than covetousness, or the presence of leaders with good building skills.

Believing that Franklin would do admirably well in all categories, I urge him to leave the art table and apply his talents to the block area. At both the art table and the wood-bench, he is the model of maturity and aplomb. He performs his self-appointed tasks with such meticulous care that others watch and copy him. His intense concentration on clearly defined goals entices more boys into "work" projects than all my curriculum ideas combined.

Much to our surprise—the children's and the teacher's—Franklin has the opposite effect in the blocks. There he is dictatorial and intolerant; his sense of perfection rules out any notion of group participation. Anything less than total control is an impossible compromise for him to make.

He has this control in art construction and, to some extent, in superhero play, where his detailed knowledge of movie and television scripts usually gives him the final word. In the block area, however, nothing matters so much as a democratic spirit, and Franklin does not yet have this. He ends every session in tears, and block play is in danger of being ruined.

I station myself outside the blocks to see if I can identify the point at which things go wrong. Ordinarily, by the time I arrive on the scene it is too late; everyone is angry and no one can explain what happened.

Jonathan is already building when Franklin runs in, asking, "Can I play?"

"Sure you can," Jonathan replies. "I'm building a house."

"Wait! Don't put it there!" Franklin grabs a block from Jonathan's hand and begins to rearrange the design of the building. "This is the way. Do it like this," he states firmly.

Jonathan tentatively lays a block on its side.

"No! Leave it alone! You're spoiling it!" Franklin yells again. "Just watch me, can't you?" He does not look at Jonathan as he speaks; he concentrates only on the blocks.

Teddy, who has been observing the scene, puts a large arc

at one corner of the building. He keeps his eyes on Franklin, testing to see what his friend will do.

"No, Teddy! That ain't the way it has to be!" Franklin removes the arc. "Lemme have that! Just put it away. We don't need it high over there! It don't look nice that way!"

I can no longer remain silent. "Franklin, you're very bossy. You won't let the boys do anything."

He looks surprised. "Yeah they can. I said they can."

"But you grab their blocks the minute they have an idea."

"I'm helping them. They want me to."

"Do you boys want him to?"

Jonathan and Teddy look at each other, but before they can speak, Franklin is crying and pulling Andrew's arm down: "Leave that be, Andrew! It's mine!"

Andrew looks as if he's going to hit Franklin with the block. With me there, all he can do is scream, "He wasn't even using it! He's a stupid pig!"

"I am so using that! It goes right here. I need all those. I was here first. You're spoiling my whole thing." Franklin tearfully runs back and forth to the block shelf, filling his arms with blocks as, one by one, the boys leave.

"Franklin, will you please look around," I say. "Everyone is gone."

"Why?"

"Why? Because you're being very selfish, that's why."

Franklin looks worried. "I ain't selfish. I ain't said they hasta go."

"You're just like the fox in 'The Blue Seed.' Remember that story? He wouldn't let anyone share his house, so the house blew up?"

Franklin nods, squinting to take the measure of his building. "Can I finish my house now?"

The moral of the fox story is of no concern to Franklin. The offending party never sees the connection to his own behavior in a morality tale.

"Franklin, wait. Let me tell you what I mean about the fox," I say, determined to press my point. "Remember when you were the fox? You had to yell at everyone, 'Get out! You can't

live in my house!' That's just what you're doing in the blocks now."

"I ain't doin' that! Soonest I'm done, everyone can come in. First I gotta get it just right."

"But they want to help."

"I said they can help. They wasn't listening."

My approach is useless. He can picture every detail of the ten-story house he plans to erect but nothing of the scene he just had with Jonathan and Teddy. Yet Franklin knows how to listen to dialog and stay in character. When he is the father in the doll corner, he does not act like Darth Vader. Nor does he make the little pig sound like the Big Bad Wolf. Artistic integrity is important to Franklin. What he needs is an objective view of the scene he just played. The analogy of the selfish fox is too abstract and direct criticism too personal. The story-plays come to mind: "Once there was a boy named Franklin. . . ."

The class is seated around the circle. I have asked Jonathan and Teddy to bring a pile of blocks into the center.

"This is a guessing game," I tell everyone. "I'm acting out a true story. You have to guess who I'm pretending to be. You two boys pretend you're building something, and I'm going to keep interrupting."

Self-consciously the boys begin to build a road. I rush over and grab several blocks. "No, not that way! Give it here! Do it this way!" I shout.

The boys are momentarily startled but continue to lay out blocks. I yell at them again: "Stop doing it that way! You're spoiling my road!"

By now everyone is looking at Franklin, who is pounding his thigh and laughing. "That's me! You're pretending you're me! Is that really me?"

"It really is you. I watched you in the blocks. That's the way you sounded. Remember?"

"I do remember! You did that part just right."

When I confronted Franklin earlier in the block area, he denied everything. The moment I make him the star in his own story, he is flattered and attentive. He is not offended and

therefore does not need to defend himself. My view of objectivity is the opposite of the children's. They can become objective only when events are seen as make-believe.

"Okay, Franklin, now you come into the circle. I pretended to be you. Now you pretend to be a boy named Franklin who lets people use their own ideas in the blocks. 'Once upon a time there was a boy named Franklin who knew how to play in the blocks.'"

Franklin saunters out, grinning broadly, and starts to build a tower. I motion to Jonathan and Teddy to help him.

"That's good, boys," he says, nodding agreeably. "You sure got good ideas. Go on, get some more good ideas."

Everyone claps. It is a grand performance, reminiscent of the finale to "The Blue Seed." The fox is gone; long live Virtue!

Lasting changes in behavior are not so easily achieved, of course. But, in kindergarten, appearances are important. Suddenly I recognize the difference between telling a child he must share and saying instead, "Pretend you are a boy who knows how to share." The first method announces that a child has done something wrong. "Pretend" disarms and enchants; it suggests heroic possibilities for making changes, just as in the fairy tales.]

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A role-playing incident may not alter a person's manners, but it provides a standard for easy reference. I can now speak about Franklin's behavior in a calm context, and he willingly sees himself in the picture. Cops and robbers could also benefit from an approach that omits dispiriting confrontations. My normal response, when robbers charge the doll corner, is to ignore the plot and remove the characters from the stage, thereby changing the subject from fantasy to recrimination.

"You boys cannot spoil the girls' play," I say. They reply, "We're robbers," but I dismiss the notion. "You can't be rob-