The Technology Tail: A Digital Footprint Story

Story: Julia Cook
Illustration: Anita DuFalla
ISBN-13: 978-0993001208
Key ideas:
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1;
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1

WORD WALL: FOOTPRINTS

Evidence, footsteps, footprints, hints, path, remains, remnants, traces, trail.

SYNOPSIS

A young girl has a frank conversation with her computer, who reveals knowing in detail about all of her online activities. She finds out about having a 'Technology Tail' which gets prettier every time she does something uplifting or kind online and bruised each time she is unsafe or unkind. The book concludes with concrete five rules for safe online behavior.

DISCUSSION

Say: *Think about footprints in the sand. When the ocean waves cover the footprints, what happens to them?* **Allow** students to respond, and **affirm:** *They disappear. However, your online footprints stay there forever. Whenever you are online, remember that you need to protect your privacy and avoid places or interactions that are offensive or unsafe. It is easy to write something online you might later regret.* **Ask:** *What questions can you ask yourself before posting something online to determine whether or not its safe and kind? Why might some people feel like saying something mean online is different than saying something mean in person? Does that make it okay?*

GROUP ACTIVITY

Say: *In this activity, participants will wear Technology Tails and reflect on their use of email and social media.* **Distribute** yarn and **show** the students how to create a three-strand plait. **Ask** participants to wear the plaited belts. Then, **distribute** rectangular pieces of paper and **teach** participants how to attach it to their belts using masking tape. **Read aloud** the following questions, and **ask** participants to raise their hands and answer honestly. *1. Have you ever complimented someone online?* (**Hand out** stickers to put on the tails). *2. Have you ever offended someone online, even if you did not mean it?* (**Hand out** band-aids). *3. Have you ever shared personal information such as your password, address, or whereabouts?* (**Show** participants how to cut a small hole in the tail). **Ask** participants to take the tails home and continue to reflect on safe online behaviors.

AT-HOME ACTIVITY

Participants may take home a pair of non-latex, disposable gloves. With the class, **review** the five questions: (1) Is it true? (2) Is it helpful? (3) Is it Inspiring? (4) Is it necessary? (5) Is it kind? Ensure all participants understand what these questions ask and how to answer them. **Ask** participants to write the rules on the gloves and to wear them for a weak whenever they engage in an online activity that involves messaging, such as email, social media, or games on shared servers. **Conduct** a follow-up discussion about the experience of wearing the 'THINK Gloves'.

RESPONSIBILITY REQUIRES ACTION

Responsibility is the active side of morality: doing what I should do, doing what I said I would do, doing what is best for everybody; especially doing the one thing I should be doing right now.