

*Title: Reflective Practice On Teacher Trust And SES Variables,  
Inspired by A Tree Grows In Brooklyn, by Betty Smith  
Zachary Rodecap*

**Target Group:**

Elementary educators, primary years

**Learning goals expressed as questions:**

- In regards to students with strong work-avoidance habits, have I built a positive protocol and classroom culture that responds to this tendency without recourse to low-trust cues?
- How can I contextualize low-trust cues within broader SES discourse of class, race, and privilege?
- How can I help students identify, understand, and correct work-avoidance strategies?

**Objectives:**

Formally reflect upon unspoken, subtextually trust cues in our practice and protocols, especially in regards to students with strong work-avoidance habits. Check for SES bias and realign cues and protocols to better reflect best practices.

**Materials:**

Photocopies of Chapter 19, from *A Tree Grows In Brooklyn*  
Personal Notebook  
Reflection Tool

**Activities:**

- Warm up:

Ask educators to imagine getting into a time machine and going back in time to visit an urban school 100 years ago. What issues might educators have faced then that are the same today? What issues might be different? What protocols do you think were used in the past vs. today? Have we seen positive evolution? What are some universal student behaviors?

Give educators 5 minutes of private think time/then share out in a group.

- Connection:

“We’re going to read a text about an urban school from 100 years ago, and one of the issues that students and teachers faced then. You’ll be surprised to find out that it is an issue that you probably deal with every day.”

Give students 15 minutes to read. After they’ve finished, draw special attention to the section that starts with “[t]he problem of what was delicately called ‘leaving the room’ was a grim one...” (pp. 153).

Use the following section to lever a convesation about SES and trust in the classroom:

*Of course, Francie noted, the favored children, the clean, the dainty, the cared-for in the front seats, were allowed to leave at any time. But that was different somehow.*

*As for the rest of the children, half of them learned to adjust their functions to their teachers’ ideas of such things and the other half become chronic pants-wetters (pp. 155).*

Use the reflection tool to get teachers to begin processing their experiences. They should have 20 minutes to write and reflect.

Save the remaining 15 minutes for shared conversation about anything the book and/or activity raised.

**Closing:**

Teachers will identify one practice they want to change in order to bring their classroom protocols into alignment with best practices that communicate high-trust.

# Reflection Tool

Look over the following questions and make notes on and/or answer any that you connect with:

1. What are your observations on the connection between SES and work avoidance and engagement?
2. What are some frustrations, recurrent themes, or challenges that you experience as an educator in terms of ensuring a positive work culture when a percentage of students do display chronic work-avoidance habits?
3. When your protocols aren't working, do you sometimes resort to low-trust cues (as in frustrated sighs, eye rolling, or other dismissive body language)?
4. Have you actively taught your students about common work-avoidance strategies and has this helped them in any way?
5. What are your current classroom protocols, especially in regards to leaving the classroom? Are they supporting positive work in the class? What can you do to update those protocols to ensure that low-trust cueing is minimized while objective protocols are maintained?

