

# The Rag Coat

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## LOVE

U.S.A./Appalachia  
Realistic Fiction  
Reading Time: 10 minutes

### CONCEPTS

Love  
Self-reliance  
Courage  
Hope  
Justice

### SUMMARY

**This is the story of a self-reliant mountain girl, Minna, who wants more than anything to go to school – but first Minna needs a coat. Displaying courage and self-reliance, she faces the hardships of her family’s life and the reactions of her classmates to a gift from “the quilting mothers.” The author’s soft pastel illustrations depict tender emotions, quiet strength, and love.**

### OBJECTIVES

The student will be able to identify, define, and discuss love, self-reliance, courage, hope, and justice as they apply to this story. The student will explore strategies to stop teasing.

## Interdisciplinary Ideas

### LANGUAGE ARTS

Create a “friendship coat.” Make a large outline of a coat and cover with fabric scraps that hold loving memories (if fabric scraps are unavailable, draw or paint different patches). For a bulletin board, write about scraps on index cards and place around the coat.

### MATH

Research Appalachian quilt patterns. (Keyword: Appalachian quilt samples)  
Copy patterns using paper triangles, rectangles, and squares.

\* Visit [www.heartwoodethics.org](http://www.heartwoodethics.org) and choose Teaching Heartwood, Activities, Primar, for comic strip paper and an outline map of the U.S.

### SOCIAL STUDIES

1. On a Venn diagram, compare and contrast your school with a one-room school. (Keyword: one-room schoolhouse)  
Discuss advantages and disadvantages of going to a one-room school.
2. In which states might Minna have lived? Color and label them on an outline map of the U.S.\* (Keyword: Appalachia region)

### SCIENCE

Heartwood uses color to show that love embraces all other attributes. Using a prism, demonstrate that white is made up of all colors. (Keyword: light prism activities primary grades)

### ART

1. Minna displayed self-reliance when she made a doll out of quilt scraps and stuffing. Collect fabric and wood scraps, cardboard rolls, and other materials for a scrap box. Use items in the box to make toys.
2. Investigate to find friendship quotes, such as “The only way to have a friend is to be a friend.” (Keyword: friendship quotes) In your best handwriting, copy your favorite friendship quote and make a paper frame for it. Give as a gift to a friend.

# After the Story

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### DISCUSSION

1. Minna's life is difficult. Why do you think she doesn't feel sorry for herself? Who loves Minna and makes her feel safe? Who helps you feel safe?
2. What are Minna's hopes? What are your hopes?
3. What does Minna realize when she runs away from the teasing? How does she show courage and self-reliance? If you were in Minna's class how would you help her? Have you ever seen someone teased because of something they wore or how they looked? How do you think they felt? How can you make people stop teasing?
4. Describe examples of fairness and justice in the story.
5. How do the "quilting mothers" show they care about Minna and her mother? Think of a time someone in your family was able to show love by helping others. Share your thoughts.

### ACTIVITIES

1. Locate Appalachia, U.S.A., on the world map.
2. In small groups, discuss how you might stop teasing in your school. Explore web sites on bullying for more strategies. Share ideas, list, and post in the classroom. Try out one of the ways when you see someone being teased.
3. With a partner, find examples of Heartwood attributes in the story. Share with the class and make Flap Books (see Story Elements in the Reproducibles section of the *Teacher's Guide*).
4. With a classroom volunteer, research places to donate clothing you have outgrown. If possible, bring clothing (in good condition) to class to donate to a group or organization. (Keyword: donate clothing *your city and state*)

### EXTENSION

1. Complete Home Connection pages and take home to share with families.
2. Retell the story at home. With your family talk about Papa's words to Minna, "People only need people, and nothing else." Ask your family what words they would like you to remember for a lifetime. With permission, share with the class.

### WRAP-UP

1. In *My Heartwood Journal* write and illustrate ways Minna showed two or more Heartwood attributes.
2. Partner read the illustrated story, "Jimmy and Rolf-Ola Uglyzit" (see *Teacher's Guide*). In pairs or small groups, create Courage Comics that use the dialogue, "Leave him alone. He's my friend." or "Leave her alone, she's my friend."\* Make copies of your stories, compile pages, make covers, and distribute to the class.

### VOCABULARY

**self-reliance**  
**fetched**  
**soot**

**burlap**  
**porcelain**