



## BIG BAD GOES BACK TO SCHOOL

### – SEL THEMES & CONVERSATION STARTERS –

Listen to the episode: <https://jonincharacter.com/big-bad-goes-back-to-school/>

The summaries and questions on the next page are designed to encourage deep thinking, reflection and open-ended discussions about “Big Bad Goes Back to School” themes.

## Summary of Story Themes and Lessons:

1. It's normal to feel nervous about new beginnings – especially school!
2. Past experiences don't define your future – growth happens through reflection and trying again.
3. Mindfulness tools can help manage big emotions – like body scans and grounding exercises.
4. Support from friends makes a big difference – encouragement can ease worries.
5. Learning is a spiral, not a straight line – we revisit challenges with new skills each time.

## Summary of SEL Themes:

- Self-Awareness – Big Bad recognizes and names his feelings of anxiety, embarrassment, and self-doubt, helping kids understand their own emotions.
- Self-Management – The story models calming strategies like deep breathing, body scans, and mindfulness to manage strong emotions and stress.
- Social Awareness – Jonathan, Serena, and Redge demonstrate empathy by listening to Big Bad and validating his experience without judgment.
- Relationship Skills – The friends offer support, encouragement, and kind words, showing the importance of healthy communication and positive peer relationships.
- Responsible Decision-Making – Big Bad makes the brave choice to return to class, reflecting on past experiences and using new strategies to face his fears constructively.

## Download My Back to School Adventure Plan Worksheet:

<https://bit.ly/ep74worksheet>

## Facing Fears and Overcoming Nervousness:

- How did Big Bad feel about going back to school, and why?
- Can you think of a time when you felt nervous about trying something new? What did you do to feel better?
- What advice would you give to Big Bad to help him feel less scared about going back to school?

## Mindfulness and Coping Strategies:

- What mindfulness exercises did Serena teach the group?
- How do you think these exercises helped Big Bad?
- Have you ever tried any mindfulness exercises, like deep breathing or body scans? How did they make you feel?

## The Importance of Practice and Growth:

- Big Bad was worried about his new class because he didn't do well in his last class. Why is it important to keep trying even when we feel like we're not doing well?
- When Serena said that growth is a spiral, not a straight line, what do you think she meant by that?
- Can you give an example of something you have practiced and gotten better at over time?
- Why is it important to keep practicing and trying, even if something is difficult at first?

## Empathy and Compassion:

- How did Redge, Serena and Jonathan support Big Bad when he was feeling nervous?
- How can we show support and kindness to our friends who are going through tough times?
- Can you share a time when you helped a friend or family member who was feeling upset or nervous? How did it make you feel?
- Why is it important to be understanding and empathetic towards others who might be struggling?

## Embracing New Experiences:

- Big Bad decided to go to his class even though he was nervous. What are some new experiences you would like to try? What would make you feel more confident about trying them?
- How can trying new things, even if they seem scary at first, help us grow and learn more about ourselves?

## Starting a New School Year (Making Personal Connections):

- What are some things that make you excited or nervous about starting a new school year?
- If you're going to a new school, what do you think it will be like? What questions do you have about it?
- Big Bad was worried about meeting new classmates. What are some ways you can make new friends at school?
- What are some things you can do to feel more comfortable on your first day?
- Who are the people you can talk to if you're feeling nervous about school (like family, teachers, or friends)?
- Can you think of something you're looking forward to learning or doing this school year?
- If a classmate is new or seems nervous, what could you do to help them feel welcome?