



Efraim Measures Up

Ages 6-9
A story and 9 activities



Efraim Measures Up

Every year, on the first day of school, Morah Pessy measures the height of every child in the class with a tall paper chart on the wall.

Efraim stands against the wall. He holds his breath and tries to stretch as tall as he can.

"Forty-eight inches," says Morah Pessy, writing it down.

"Is that good?" asks Efraim.

"It's just right for you."

But when he looks at the chart, he sees that everyone else in the class is taller. Yossi is fifty-two inches. Menachem is fifty-three. Even Shuey, who is in the same grade but a month younger, is fifty-one.

Efraim looks at his own mark. It is the lowest one on the whole wall.

At recess, the boys line up for a basketball game. "I'll be captain," says Yossi. "You, you, you," he says, pointing. "And you."

He doesn't point at Efraim.

Efraim waits. Nobody picks him. When the teams are set, one boy says, "Efraim can be on our team, I guess."

"Okay," says Efraim, in a small voice.

The game begins. The ball flies back and forth over his head. Whenever he reaches for it, a taller boy grabs it first. He feels like a mouse in a crowd of giraffes.

By the end, he hasn't scored a single point. He sits on the bench and rubs his eyes.

His friend Mendel sits beside him. "You okay?"

"I'm too small," says Efraim. "Everyone's bigger. I can't do anything."

"That's not true," says Mendel. "Remember the maze at the fair? You solved it in half the time. Because you could fit through the little spaces."

"That was one time."

"And at the sukkah, who crawled under the table to get the dropped spoon?"

Efraim blinks. "I did."

"And who got the ball when it rolled under the bench last week?"

"Me," says Efraim.

"Being small is good for a lot of things," says Mendel.

Efraim thinks about it. It is true. He can squeeze into tight spots. He can hide in the best places during hide and seek. He can run fast and zigzag between people.

"What about basketball?" he asks.

"Maybe you could play a different position," says Mendel. "Like the one who steals the ball from low down."

The next recess, Efraim tries something new. When the other boys dribble, he stays close to the ground and darts in from the side. He taps the ball away and passes it to a teammate.

"Whoa!" says Yossi. "That was fast!"

Efraim grins. He does it again. By the end of the game, he's stolen the ball four times.

"You're like a ninja," says one boy.

"A small ninja," says Efraim.

"A really good one," says Yossi. "You're on my team next time."

That afternoon, Morah Pessy comes by the chart on the wall. "You know," she says, "I measured last year, too. And do you remember what you were?"

"Forty-five."

"And now?"

"Forty-eight."

"That's three inches. You're growing all the time."

Efraim looks at the paper chart again. His line is the lowest. But for the first time, it doesn't bother him. It is his own line, with his own story.

He takes a marker and writes next to it: Fast.



Activity 1 of 9

Remember the story

1. How tall is Efraim?

2. What does Mendel remind Efraim he can do?

3. How does Efraim play basketball differently?

4. What does Efraim write next to his mark?



Activity 2 of 9

Fact or guess? (circle one)

1. Efraim grows three inches in a year. Fact / Guess
2. Nobody wants Efraim on a team forever. Fact / Guess
3. Efraim steals the ball four times. Fact / Guess
4. Yossi is the tallest boy at fifty-three inches. Fact / Guess



Activity 3 of 9

Think and write

1. What is something you are good at because of how you are?

2. Why does Efraim feel better after talking to Mendel?

3. What is a strength a friend has?

Activity 4 of 9

Word search (find all 6)

Words: SMALL, TALL, BASKET, NINJA, CHART, FAST

S	E	E	M	R	W	R	Y	F	I	C
K	F	Y	N	T	T	W	Y	N	U	A
G	A	S	G	V	E	R	P	O	E	T
F	D	M	F	C	K	E	V	U	G	S
J	G	A	S	T	S	N	C	S	F	A
Y	G	L	E	R	A	H	T	O	U	F
E	L	L	T	H	B	R	W	N	W	M
R	L	W	R	G	C	W	W	I	E	B
U	A	A	A	L	I	C	M	N	B	E
R	T	E	H	D	U	M	R	J	W	A
E	J	O	C	B	F	S	E	A	E	E



Activity 5 of 9

Scrambled words (from the story)

1. RAHTC = _____

2. SEFAFRGI = _____

3. LTSLBEABKA = _____

4. AINJN = _____

5. ONOSP = _____



Activity 6 of 9

Say it out loud

Practice each line in a calm, steady voice:

"I'm small, and I'm fast."

"Can I try a different position?"

"What is your best thing?"



Activity 7 of 9

My chart

My Strengths Chart

#	My strength	How it helps	Who sees it
Strength 1			
Strength 2			
Strength 3			



Activity 8 of 9

Draw it

Draw Efraim next to the paper height chart with the word Fast beside his line.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing. It occupies the central portion of the page below the instructions.



Activity 9 of 9

Answers

Remember the story:

1. Forty-eight inches
2. Squeeze into small spaces and solve the maze quickly
3. He stays low and steals the ball
4. Fast

Fact or guess: 1 Fact; 2 Guess; 3 Fact; 4 Guess

Scrambled words: CHART, GIRAFFES, BASKETBALL, NINJA, SPOON

Think and write: answers will vary; talk them over together.