



**Darius Goes West “Know About It”
LESSON PLAN
Subject: SOCIAL STUDIES
Age range: 6th - 12th grade
Created by: David Martin, M.Ed.**

Have Wheelchair, Will Travel

OVERVIEW

The goal of this lesson plan is to introduce students to what it takes for Darius to travel, what obstacles exist in every day life that prevent him from being able to access attractions and facilities, and what laws are in place to protect Darius from discrimination on the basis of disability. The best use of this lesson plan incorporates individual and group interaction with personal experience and a structured learning environment. This is a learning plan for attitude.

Teaching for Attitude – Most people will never know what it’s like to spend the majority of a day in a wheelchair, but as the old saying goes, *“In order to understand me you have to walk a mile in my shoes”*. Most schools are required to have an available wheelchair in the event that there is an emergency. If possible, borrow this chair for the day. You can also try asking a local wheelchair company to loan you a chair. At the beginning of the day, ask for one or two students to volunteer to sit in the wheelchair and to act as if they were dependent on the chair. Direct your other students to go about their day normally and not to pay any special attention to the student(s) in the wheelchair. All activities on this day need to be done without special accommodation, only going by what the school would normally provide for that day. Ask students who are chosen to participate in this experiential training to keep track of their feelings throughout the day as they encounter barriers and obstacles. Later, have them share what they encountered/learned.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- 1) Outline what it takes for Darius to get ready for his day and all the planning elements he must consider.
- 2) Identify the barriers to travel Darius encounters and what his options are in accessing services and facilities.
- 3) List the types of travel that would be accessible for Darius and what he has to do in order to prepare for a trip.
- 4) Identify the Regulations that protect the rights of people with disabilities and suggest ways they (the students) can help make their living space more accessible for people with disabilities.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION

For this lesson plan, you will need:

- * A DVD of *Darius Goes West: The Roll of His Life*
- * A manual wheelchair (optional)
- * Large Post-it Notes pads,
- * Pre-Test and Pre-Test Answer Sheets. (See “Appendix”)
- * Paper Copies of the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (See “Appendix”)

- * Questions and Answer Sheets for Discussion on the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (See “Appendix”)

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Before showing the movie to your students, you may want to give them a Pre-Test (see “Appendix”). This will help you get a feel for the sensitivity level of your class and their understanding of what people with disabilities experience.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Outline what it takes for Darius to get ready for his day and all the planning elements he must consider. You can do this by:

Brainstorming with your students (15 minutes)

Darius has to think things through. He can't just get up in the morning, jump into the shower, throw on some clothes and head for the door. Darius is just like thousands of people with mobility impairments who have to plan ahead in order to get him out to his destination on time. Start by having your students list five things that they take for granted when they get up in the morning. *Student answers might include: Getting out of bed, walking into the kitchen, feeding themselves, opening and closing doors, climbing stairs, and using the bathroom.*

NOTE: If you can, create a large “To Do” list with Post-it-Notes and display these answers around the classroom. Next, ask, “What can we conclude from this exercise?” The answers should reflect the fact that much of what people without disabilities experience is taken for granted and is *instinctive behavior*. (Definitions for underlined and italicized words used in this lesson plan are listed in the “Resources” section, under “Glossary.”). Most of what people with disabilities do is considered *deliberate behavior*. Use a flip chart or large Post-it-Notes to list instinctive and deliberate behaviors. Conclude the brainstorming session with this statement: *People without disabilities don't understand people with disabilities if they don't slow down to think about what a person with a disability experiences on a daily basis. It's our responsibility to make every environment we live in accessible for every person regardless of their disability.*

2. Identify the barriers to travel Darius encounters and what his options are in accessing services and facilities. You can do this by:

Class Discussion (5 minutes)

The first and most glaring example of a violation of ADA regulations Darius and the Crew encountered was at the gas station. Darius couldn't get into the bathroom because there were not curb cuts. What does the ADA regulation say the gas station was supposed to provide for a person in a wheelchair? Look at the ADA Title III summary:

- Public accommodations must comply with basic nondiscrimination requirements that prohibit exclusion, segregation, and unequal treatment. They also must comply with specific requirements related to architectural standards for new and altered buildings; reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures; effective communication with people with hearing, vision, or speech disabilities; and other access requirements. Additionally, public accommodations must remove barriers in existing buildings where it is easy to do so without much difficulty or expense, given the public accommodation's resources.

Ask a student to look at the attachment, “Obstacles to Darius or Any Other Person with a Disability” (in “Appendix”) and indicate what the gas station could have done to make the bathroom accessible to Darius. *The gas station could have built a ramp that was at least 36 inches wide (Darius’ chair is 36” wide) and sloped to provide a one-inch rise every 20 inches).*

Group Discussion: (10 minutes)

How long do you think it takes to get Darius ready for a day at the beach? Let’s think like Darius. What are some of the things Darius has to do from the time he wakes until he gets to the beach. How much prep time would this take? What are the obstacles Darius faces to get from the RV to the beach? What method was used to get Darius into the ocean? How did the crew get him out of the ocean? What does this say about beaches across America? Break the class into three groups and give them five minutes to review one of the three articles on Beach Accessibility (see “Resources”). Have them report back to the question: “What is being done, and what can be done to make beaches more accessible for people with disabilities?”

Class Discussion (10 minutes) – What problems did Darius encounter when he was at the Gateway Arch in St. Louis? What were the accessibility issues? Check the “Accessibility outline for the Gateway Arch” (see “Resources”). What allows the Arch not to have to comply with the ADA?

Are there are places that Darius went that showed thoughtful design, making it possible to allow a person in a wheelchair to enjoy the same features as a person without a disability? Ask students to name those places. *Carlsbad Caverns, Dude Ranch, Las Vegas, Swamp Boat Ride, the hotels that Darius stayed in during the road trip.*

3. List the types of travel that would be accessible for Darius and what he has to do in order to prepare for a trip. You can do this by:

Class Discussion (10 minutes)

Have students list the ways in which Darius traveled in the movie (*Power/manual wheelchair, RV, swamp boat, hot air balloon, Jason’s Dodge Charger, Delta jets*). Next, discuss any other ways he might get to film festivals or fund raising events.

What has to be considered before Darius can decide whether a form of transportation , an entertainment venue or business is accessible?

- [Entry Ways](#)
- [Elevators](#)
- [Ramps](#)
- [Accessible Lavatories](#)
- [Lifts](#) – See the [Guidelines on Bus and Van Access by the US Access Board](#) in “Resources”
You may also want to check out the [Accessibility Stick II](#) that can be used to measure ramps, entry ways and accessibility features.

4. Identify the Regulations that protect the rights of people with disabilities and suggest ways they (the students) can help make their living space more accessible for people with disabilities. You can accomplish this by:

Class Discussion (10 minutes) – Does Darius have the Right to Travel? If so, what regulations protect him from discrimination in Air Travel, in ground transportation, in access to restaurants and public buildings and all other venues open to the public?

- a. Discussion of the Air Carrier Access Act (see question/answer sheet in “Appendix”)
- b. Discussion of the Americans with Disabilities Act (see question/answer sheet in “Appendix”)

REVIEW/CLOSURE

Summary: Use a flip chart or large Post-it-Note to draw conclusions for this lesson: “What have we learned today about travel for people with disabilities?”

Sharing the Day: Give the one or two students who spent the day in wheelchairs an opportunity to share what they experienced either in terms of discrimination (generalized answers – people specific) and if they felt different from the rest of the class when they were using the wheelchair. Did they do anything to engage other non-wheelchair users? What was the most important lesson they walked away with after spending a day in a wheelchair?

HOMEWORK

Ask your students to write a short essay on this topic: If you had unlimited resources, what would you do to make life more accessible for Darius or any other person you may know who has a disability?

RESOURCES

The Air Carrier Access Act: <http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/rules/382short.pdf>

The Americans with Disabilities Act: <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/links/adasummary.htm>
(Focus on Title II and III): <http://www.access-board.gov/adaag/html/adaag.htm#4.1>

Disability Rights Laws: <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/cguide.htm>

“Your Words, Our Image” Poster:

Beach Accessibility:

http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub_newsroom/press_releases/press_releases.php?id=19911

<http://www.ncaonline.org/monographs/12pools.shtml>

http://www.csc.noaa.gov/magazine/back_issues/apr98/sec4b.html

Accessibility at the Gateway Arch, St. Louis MO

<http://www.nps.gov/jeff/planyourvisit/accessibility.htm>

<http://www.gatewayarch.com/Arch/info/accessibility.aspx>

Access to Buses - <http://www.access-board.gov/news/vehicle-draft1.htm>

ADA Accessibility Stick II - <http://www.adastick.com/>

GLOSSARY (Definitions of underlined, italicized words)

Accessibility - A general term used to describe the degree to which a system is usable by as many people as possible. In other words, it is the degree of ease with which it is possible to reach a certain location from other locations

Instinctive Behavior – What a person does without thinking. Instinctive behavior is a reaction to an event or behavior.

Deliberate Behavior – What a person does after taking into consideration the needs of others

ADA Regulation – The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), enacted in 1990, protects individuals with disabilities from discrimination in employment, public facilities housing and transportation (other than air travel).

Accessibility Stick II – A ruler-like tool used to measure the accessibility features of building, bathrooms, aircraft seats, the grade and slope of ramps and other features for compliance to ADA accessibility standards.

APPENDIX

Pre-Test (Questions)

True or False?

1. Since the US Government regulated public transportation in 1986* and 1990*, the number of complaints have reduced significantly over the years.
2. The number of people with disabilities who travel has increased dramatically since 9/11/2001.
3. No matter where you go, you will find ramps and curb-cuts that make buildings accessible for all people.
4. Transportation of customers personal wheelchairs is a real hassle, so many do not travel with their chairs.
5. People who use wheelchairs have the right to accessible transportation and services.
6. Failure to provide appropriate services for a person with a disability rarely results in much more than a warning.
7. Providing accessibility for all people is a civil rights issue.
8. Airlines charge extra for customers to use their wheelchairs
9. Hotels and resorts are required to provide a wheelchair accessible van to get customers to their property.
10. There is little I can do to make travel more accessible for people with disabilities.

Pre-Test (Answers)

1. **FALSE** – The Department of Transportation Enforcement Office has reported significant increases since it began keeping records.
2. **TRUE** – Unlike, the general population, the disability community has remained consistent in their decisions to access travel systems. In 2005, the Open Doors Organization in Chicago surveyed the disability community and found that over 20 million people with disabilities are traveling by air.
3. **FALSE** – Exemptions allow buildings and facilities that were put into service before certain dates to not have to comply until there is a need to refurbish a property or facility. What that means is there are plenty of places that are not accessible for people who use wheelchairs or have reduced mobility.
4. **FALSE** – Though there are many people who won't travel with their power chairs, the wheelchair is their only mode of independence. People with disabilities are not slowed down by barriers, they just have to be more creative about getting around them.
5. **TRUE** – The Air Carrier Access Act and the ADA Title III protect the rights of people with disabilities by requiring access to equipment and services.
6. **FALSE**– Though the DOT does not hand down a fine for every infraction, in 2002 most of the airlines were charged with significant monetary fines (some as high as \$1 million) and investigations that tied up resources and personnel for years. Currently violations of the Air Carrier Access Act are fined at \$25,000 per violation.
7. **TRUE** – When you take into consideration that civil rights are about protecting the rights of those who are at a significant disadvantage without our assistance, accessibility for people with disabilities is a civil rights issue.

8. **FALSE** – 14 CFR 382.57 prohibits airlines from charging for services that are required under the Air Carrier Access Act. Wheelchairs are available in all US airports without charge to any person requiring one due to a disability.
9. **TRUE**– ADA regulations require that any service that is provided to a person without a disability must be provided in some way to a person with a disability. However, there are many hotels and resorts that do not currently have this service in place to accommodate individuals with disabilities.
10. **FALSE**– You may have to think in a different way, but you can:
 - Assist a person with a disability if they need a little help.
 - Draw attention to inaccessibility.
 - Present solutions that would make a facility more accessible for people with disabilities.
 - Support programs like Charley's Fund and Darius Goes West.

“Obstacles to Darius or Any Other Person with a Disability”

Darius could not use the bathroom at the first stop on his trip across America. The gas station was in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the following changes to its entry way would have made it very easy to make the bathroom accessible for Darius or any other person with a Disability. Below is the section of the ADA that should have been applied by the gas station:

4.7 CURB RAMPS

4.7.1 Location. Curb ramps complying with 4.7 shall be provided wherever an accessible route crosses a curb.

4.7.2 Slope. Slopes of curb ramps shall comply with [4.8.2](#). The slope shall be measured as shown in [Fig. 11](#). **Transitions from ramps to walks, gutters, or streets shall be flush and free of abrupt changes. Maximum slopes of adjoining gutters, road surface immediately adjacent to the curb ramp, or accessible route shall not exceed 1:20.**

4.7.3 Width. The **minimum width of a curb ramp shall be 36 in (915 mm),** exclusive of flared sides.

4.7.4 Surface. Surfaces of curb ramps shall comply with [4.5](#).

4.7.5 Sides of Curb Ramps. **If a curb ramp is located where pedestrians must walk across the ramp, or where it is not protected by handrails or guardrails, it shall have flared sides; the maximum slope of the flare shall be 1:10 (see [Fig. 12\(a\)](#)). Curb ramps with returned curbs may be used where pedestrians would not normally walk across the ramp (see [Fig. 12\(b\)](#)).**

4.7.6 Built-up Curb Ramps. Built-up curb ramps shall be located so that they do not project into vehicular traffic lanes (see [Fig. 13](#)).

4.7.7 Detectable Warnings. A curb ramp shall have a detectable warning complying with [4.29.2](#). The detectable warning shall extend the full width and depth of the curb ramp.

4.7.8 Obstructions. Curb ramps shall be located or protected to prevent their obstruction by parked vehicles.

4.7.9 Location at Marked Crossings. Curb ramps at marked crossings shall be wholly contained within the markings, excluding any flared sides (see [Fig. 15](#)).

4.7.10 Diagonal Curb Ramps. If diagonal (or corner type) curb ramps have returned curbs or other well-defined edges, such edges shall be parallel to the direction of pedestrian flow. The bottom of diagonal curb ramps shall have 48 in (1220 mm) minimum clear space as shown in [Fig. 15\(c\)](#) and [\(d\)](#). If diagonal curb ramps are provided at marked crossings, the 48 in (1220 mm) clear space shall be within the markings (see [Fig. 15\(c\)](#) and [\(d\)](#)). If diagonal curb ramps have flared sides, they shall also have at least a 24 in (610 mm) long segment of straight curb located on each side of the curb ramp and within the marked crossing (see [Fig. 15\(c\)](#)).

4.7.11 Islands. Any raised islands in crossings shall be cut through level with the street or have curb ramps at both sides and a level area at least 48 in (1220 mm) long between the curb ramps in the part of the island intersected by the crossings (see [Fig. 15\(a\)](#) and [\(b\)](#)).

4.8 RAMPS

4.8.1* General. Any part of an accessible route with a slope greater than 1:20 shall be considered a ramp and shall comply with 4.8. [Appendix Note](#)

4.8.2* Slope and Rise. The least possible slope shall be used for any ramp. The maximum slope of a ramp in new construction shall be 1:12. The maximum rise for any run shall be 30 in (760 mm) (see [Fig. 16](#)). Curb ramps and ramps to be constructed on existing sites or in existing buildings or facilities may have slopes and rises as allowed in [4.1.6\(3\)\(a\)](#) if space limitations prohibit the use of a 1:12 slope or less. [Appendix Note](#)

4.8.3 Clear Width. The minimum clear width of a ramp shall be 36 in (915 mm).

4.8.4* Landings. Ramps shall have level landings at bottom and top of each ramp and each ramp run. Landings shall have the following features:

- (1) The landing shall be at least as wide as the ramp run leading to it.
- (2) The landing length shall be a minimum of 60 in (1525 mm) clear.
- (3) If ramps change direction at landings, the minimum landing size shall be 60 in by 60 in (1525 mm by 1525 mm).
- (4) If a doorway is located at a landing, then the area in front of the doorway shall comply with [4.13.6. Appendix Note](#)

4.8.5* Handrails. If a ramp run has a rise greater than 6 in (150 mm) or a horizontal projection greater than 72 in (1830 mm), then it shall have handrails on both sides. Handrails are not required on curb ramps or adjacent to seating in assembly areas. Handrails shall comply with [4.26](#) and shall have the following features:

- (1) Handrails shall be provided along both sides of ramp segments. The inside handrail on switchback or dogleg ramps shall always be continuous.
- (2) If handrails are not continuous, they shall extend at least 12 in (305 mm) beyond the top and bottom of the ramp segment and shall be parallel with the floor or ground surface (see [Fig. 17](#)).
- (3) The clear space between the handrail and the wall shall be 1 - 1/2 in (38 mm).
- (4) Gripping surfaces shall be continuous.
- (5) Top of handrail gripping surfaces shall be mounted between 34 in and 38 in (865 mm and 965 mm) above ramp surfaces.
- (6) Ends of handrails shall be either rounded or returned smoothly to floor, wall, or post.
- (7) Handrails shall not rotate within their fittings. [Appendix Note](#)

4.8.6 Cross Slope and Surfaces. The cross slope of ramp surfaces shall be no greater than 1:50. Ramp surfaces shall comply with [4.5](#).

4.8.7 Edge Protection. Ramps and landings with drop-offs shall have curbs, walls, railings, or projecting surfaces that prevent people from slipping off the ramp. Curbs shall be a minimum of 2 in (50 mm) high (see [Fig. 17](#)).

4.8.8 Outdoor Conditions. Outdoor ramps and their approaches shall be designed so that water will not accumulate on walking surfaces.

Q&A on the Air Carrier Access Act (ACCA)

- 1. According to the ACAA, what is the definition of a person with a disability?** A person with a disability is any individual, who has a physical or mental impairment, on a temporary or permanent basis, that limits one or more major life functions. The life functions include: taking care of oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working.
- 2. What is the purpose of the ACAA?** The purpose of the Air Carrier Access Act is to implement this act which is designed to prevent discrimination on the basis of disability in air travel.
- 3. Does Darius have to give an airline any advance notice of his intention to travel?** For some things like his power wheelchair, he has to give notice to the airline if he will be traveling on an aircraft with less than 70 seats. Since his wheelchair is powered by a battery he has to notify the airline 48 hours in advance so preparation can be made for his chair/battery.
- 4. When can an airline require a customer with a disability to travel with an attendant? Can Darius travel independently?** Darius has to be able to assist in his own evacuation of the aircraft in the event of

an emergency, has to understand safety instructions and communicate with the flight crew in some manner. Since Darius cannot assist in his own evacuation of the aircraft, he would need to travel with an attendant who would assist in getting Darius off the aircraft in the event of an emergency

5. **What seats on an aircraft can Darius sit in? Are there seats that Darius cannot sit in?** Darius is entitled to sit in any available seat he is qualified for. The only restriction for Darius would be the Exit Seats which require full dexterity in all four quadrants of your body. Darius wouldn't be denied on the basis of his disability, he would be restricted on the basis of his ability to perform the functions of a person sitting in an exit seat.
6. **When Darius travels, what is the airline required to provide?** The carriers are required to provide assistance enplaning, deplaning and making connections.
7. **Can Darius travel on smaller aircraft?** Darius would have a lot of trouble getting into a small aircraft but there are ways to get him on using a mechanical lift. However, Darius has a 35" wide wheelchair (biggest in the state of Georgia) which is larger than the cargo hold door. Airlines using these small aircraft would have to find a way to get Darius to his destination another way.
8. **What happens if an airline damages Darius' wheelchair?** Carriers are responsible to take care of customers personal wheelchairs and return them to the customer in the same condition as they were presented for travel. Carriers are responsible to repair damages and in the event a wheelchair is damaged beyond repair, they must replace it up to the original purchase price.
9. **Darius is provided wheelchair assistance to get from the ticket counter to the gate. Upon arrival at the gate, the agent asks Darius for \$20.00 as a tip. Is this a violation of the regulations?** Yes, the service Darius is requesting is called "Meet and Assist" which is required for any person with a disability and free of charge. Tip solicitation is a terminable offense as well as a violation of the ACAA.
10. **Who can Darius talk to if he believes his rights as a person with a disability have been violated?** A Complaint Resolution Official - (CRO)

Q&A on the Americans With Disabilities Act (ACT)

1. **What is the overall purpose of the ADA?** To provide the scope and technical requirements for accessibility to buildings and facilities by individuals with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.
2. **When you walk through a parking lot, how many parking spaces are allotted for people with Disabilities?** One space for every 25 parking spaces.
3. **If you are entering your school, what features are available to make it possible for a person in a wheelchair to have access to the building?** Every building must have an accessible route which allows a person with a disability to easily enter and exit the building. Buildings have to be connected by ramp systems. Some buildings are required to provide elevators. Doors have to be accessible by opening for a person with a disability.
4. **If you go to a restaurant or any other public facility, what do you notice in the bathrooms that are accessibility features for a person with a disability?** Stalls large enough for a wheelchair, sinks that are built to accommodate a wheelchair and adaptive toilets and drinking fountains.
5. **Do public payphones have to be accessible for people with disabilities?** Yes! Phones must be built at levels to accommodate a person in a wheelchair, accessible to people who are blind, deaf or hard of hearing.

6. **If you go to a bank and want to use the automated teller machine, are these machines ADA accessible?** Yes! Built at wheelchair height, they are also able to be used by people who can read Braille.
7. **You and your friends are going to a professional basketball game. You approach the information counter and want to purchase tickets. One of the people in your group is in a wheelchair. Do they have to comply with ADA regulations?** Yes, information and ticket counters have to have a portion of their counter that can be accessed by a person in a wheelchair. The facility must also have ramping systems to get the person in a wheelchair to the level where their ticket was purchased and a direct way in and out of the venue.
8. **Do libraries have to provide accessible service to people with disabilities?** Yes, just like any other public facility, Libraries must provide direct path entry and table tops that will allow a person in a wheelchair to be able to use the books and other services of the Library.
9. **You're going on a trip with Darius and the Crew! They are staying in a hotel. What services have to be available for a person in a wheelchair?** (For every 25 hotel rooms, a hotel must provide at least one accessible room which would have a bathroom where a person in a wheelchair can access the shower, sink and toilet. The faucets would have paddles instead of knobs and the bed would be lower to the floor.
10. **At one point Darius used a train to get from one point to another. Did the train have to be accessible?** ADA requires that train stations and trains be accessible. Kiosks and teller windows have to be accessible and the train must have a lift device to get Darius to the level entry of the train.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Delta is the official carrier of Darius Goes West. Since January of 2007, Delta has transported Darius and the Crew a distance equivalent from here to the moon!