

Lesson 29: Being Friends

“And in the sweetness of friendship let there be laughter.” —Kahlil Gibran

Social Justice Standards: Diversity 6, 9

Summary

Books featuring diverse characters are a small slice of the children’s book market. Books featuring friends from different racial groups are an even smaller slice. But these books are really special and important in helping shape our children’s perceptions of friendship. An important research study demonstrated that as few as six books that depicted cross-race friendship encourage interaction and building friendship with those different than oneself. This lesson provides opportunities for you and your child or students to explore the importance of being friends.

Booklist

- *More-igami* by Dori Kleber, illustrated by G. Brian Karas
- *Jamaica and Brianna* by Juanita Havill, illustrated by Anne Sibley O’Brien
- *My Friend, Jamal* by Anna McQuinn and Ben Frey
- *My Two Blankets* by Irena Kobald, illustrated by Freya Blackwood
- *Yo! Yes?* by Chris Raschka
- *A Friend for Henry* by Jenn Bailey, illustrated by Mika Song
- *My Two Border Towns* by David Bowles, illustrated by Erika Meza
- *Sam & Eva* by Debbie Ridpath Ohi
- *I’m New Here* by Anne Sibley O’Brien

Consider This

- What is the longest friendship you have? What has kept the friendship going over the years?
- Do you have cross-race friendships? What circumstances have influenced the diversity of your friendship circle?
- What is the characteristic that is most common among your friends? Are there any character traits that are essential in maintaining friendships?
- Do you have friends that you can grow with in your anti-racist work? Who do you lean on to process and delve into this work?

Talk Together

- Ask your child or students to think about what it means to be a good friend. What do they look for in a friend? Is it always the same thing? Or do different friends have different strengths?
- What is similar in some of these stories of friendship? What is different?

Engage

- Plan a playdate with one (or more) of your friends!
- Go to a library or park that you do not usually visit to play and interact with new friends and experiences.

Explore More

- Embrace Race's "Encouraging Cross-Racial Friendships among Children"
- PBS Kids' Life Little Lessons: Friendship