



PURPOSE

To highlight how friendships can aid our quest for human excellence

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson students will be able to:

1. Understand friendships as relationships based in mutual affection and centered around the pursuit of excellence
2. Recognize the role of effort, and respect for human dignity in forming and sustaining friendships

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- white printer paper
- drawing tools (i.e., colored pencils, markers)

VOCABULARY

- **friendship**: a bond of mutual affection between two people who pursue excellence together
- **effort**: the determined act of trying to achieve or complete something

PROCEDURE

Step 1: Review the previous lesson, with the following questions:

- Given that human beings are social, how does our pursuit of excellence relate to our social life?
- What are some ways we can act excellently towards others? What are some ways we can fall short of doing so?
- How can we help others to make excellent choices? How do we at times do the opposite?

Step 2: Introduce friendship with a class discussion and story.

Ask the following question, and write student answers on the board:

- What makes someone a true friend?

Based on the answers, work with the class to come up with a classroom definition of friendship, and prompt classroom discussion to tend toward the definition offered here. Finally, write the definition on the board, and ask students to copy it into their notes:

- **friendship**: a bond of mutual affection between two people who pursue excellence together

Read the summary of Sam and Frodo's friendship.

J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* series tells the adventures of Frodo the hobbit, who undergoes a long journey and many trials as part of an important quest. Frodo was willing to embark on his quest alone, but his best and most loyal friend, Sam, would not let him go by himself. Sam chose to accompany Frodo, and remained by his side, despite many dangers and risks, including monsters to fight, mountains to climb, and miles and miles to walk. Sam continued to support Frodo, even when it was hard and when it would have been easier and safer to leave him. Sam's actions throughout the story exemplify self-sacrifice and self-gift, and his actions show his deep love for his friend.

You can supplement this summary by using or referencing additional materials from the novels or the film, such as the scene in which Sam carries Frodo up Mount Doom.

Activity: Ask students to think of an occurrence in their own life similar to the message of this story above. The idea is for them to remember a time when a friend helped them to accomplish some good task or some excellent action. Distribute blank sheets of paper and colored pencils or crayons for the students to draw with. Then have the students draw this scene of a friend being a gift to them. The students can, among other things, use speech bubbles and quote the story.

Step 3: Help students understand what it means to be a good friend.

Ask students how to be a good friend in the following situations:

- Your friend asks you to play games even though they have a big test the next day
- Your friend is struggling to walk after he/she sprained their ankle
- A friend feels guilty about how they stole candy and asks you for advice
- Your friend forgot to brush their teeth and their breath smells unpleasant when they talk.
- It's your friend's birthday next week
- A friend is really sad and is crying by themselves at recess

Friendships are not meant to stay the same—they are meant to be an adventure, and to support us in our mission of respecting our own and others' dignity, and to grow in becoming excellent as human persons. As friends try to help each other to become excellent, their friendships will deepen and grow.

Ask students if they have been in situations with friends like the ones above. How did they act? Are there ways in which they acted excellently? Are there ways they could have acted better?

Explain: It is important that we choose to be a good and excellent friend every opportunity we get. However, it is also important to choose friends who will treat us well when they get the opportunity to do so. Friends should be concerned with the other person and help us to make good choices. This is a crucial part of what makes a friendship good in the first place.

However, wanting excellence for the other is not the only ingredient for a good friendship. Friendship also requires that we exert the effort to follow through on our choices. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the task of carrying the ring, which is an object of evil, is a heavy burden for Frodo and it drains much of his energy. He needs Sam alongside him to help get the task of destroying the ring done.

Write on the board:

- **effort**: the determined act of trying to achieve or complete something

We can desire to move the box from one side of the room to the other, but unless we put in the effort to move it nothing will happen. Similarly, we can want to pass our upcoming test, but unless we study, we won't. And we can desire to be friends with someone, but unless we actually put in the effort for a good friendship, it won't just happen.

Example: Taking the case above of the sad student at recess. It is good to want them to feel better, but unless we are putting in the effort by going to talk with them, we are not being a very good friend.

Step 4: Help students to understand that friendship typically begins with a common project.

Explain: While friendship is all about desiring the good for the other person, that bond typically forms through working towards a common task or project. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo and Sam develop and deepen their friendship through their common task of destroying the ring. Through working towards this excellent task together, Frodo and Sam come to a deeper friendship, valuing and appreciating the good of each other.

Activity: Divide the class into pairs of two. Have the students brainstorm together an excellent task the two of them can do in their school. Some examples could include helping the cafeteria staff in cooking or cleaning meals, helping the janitorial staff with keeping the school clean, helping the teacher to organize their classroom, etc. Students could also choose to be accountable to each other in improving study habits, or quitting a bad habit (such as staying up late, or distracting other students) from their habits form. The students should write down a plan for their project, including details on who, what, when, where, why, and how. Teachers can provide guidance about what is both appropriate and feasible. For homework, they should do their cooperative excellent task sometime in the next week, and report back to the class about their projects or provide a written report, following completion.

Step 5: Summarize: Today we have spent some time thinking about the way that living excellent lives is inseparable from helping other people to be excellent. If we want to live in an excellent way, we need to make excellent choices, and we can make excellent choices more easily if we have friends willing to work with us toward being heroes. The truest friendships are those marked by a mutual desire to grow in excellence!

FOLLOW-UP & HOMEWORK

Do your excellent school project within the next week and make a written or oral report summary as instructed by the teacher.

SUPPLEMENTS

None