

Lesson 8: Friendship

PURPOSE

To motivate students to pursue friendship of excellence in their daily lives.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

1. Understand and explain the difference between excellent and non-excellent friendships.
2. Recognize how true friends behave in situations.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- Aesop’s fable *The Bear and the Two Travelers*
- [Video clip](#) from Lord of the Rings – “I Can’t Carry It for You... But I Can Carry You”
- 7 Signs of a Good Friend Worksheet
- What Would an Excellent Friend Do? Worksheet + Answer Key

VOCABULARY

- Friendship of excellence: friendship based on pursuing excellence for oneself and others

PROCEDURE

Step 1: Review the previous lesson. Recall the definition of creativity. Reflect together on the experience of making and then sharing their drawings or poems with others. Remind students that they can use the power of creativity to find creative solutions to problems and to understand or express themselves.

Step 2: Introduce the topic of friendship by reading Aesop’s fable *The Bear and the Two Travelers*:

Two friends were traveling together, when a bear suddenly met them on their path. The one friend quickly climbed atop a tree and concealed himself in the branches. The other, fearing that he was about to be attacked, fell flat on the ground. The bear came up and touched him with his nose, smelling him all over. The man on the ground held his breath and feigned his death as well as he could, staying very still. The bear soon left him, since it is said that bears do not touch dead bodies. When the bear left, the other man descended from the tree, and jokingly asked his friend what the bear had whispered in his ear. “He gave me this advice,” said the man, “never travel with a friend who deserts you at the approach of danger.”

A fable is a story that imparts a lesson about how we should behave or treat others. Aesop’s Fables are a collection of stories, primarily featuring animals, that are credited to a Greek storyteller Aesop and have been passed down through generations.

After reading the short story, engage the class by asking the following prompts:

- » What do you think is the moral of the story?
- » Does the friend who jumps into a tree act in an excellent or non-excellent way? How so?
- » What can this story tell us about friendship? How should we treat our friends?

In the story of the bear and the two travelers, the takeaway is not that a true friend puts themselves or others in danger or harm’s way. The bear in the story is an illustration of our own fears or worries: if I stand up for someone will I also get made fun of or will my reputation be attacked? There is an old saying by the writer Euripides that goes, “good friends show their love in times of trouble, not just in times of happiness.” This quote captures the point of the fable; to be an excellent friend to someone means that we are willing to stand by them, even when it’s inconvenient or unpopular.

Step 3: Ask the students to think about what makes someone a good friend. Introduce them to the friendship of Sam and Frodo from J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*. Explain that *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.

Show the [video](#) in which Sam carries Frodo up Mount Doom.

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 fighting monsters, climbing mountains, and walking hundreds of miles through dangerous woods. Sam continued to support Frodo, even when it was hard, and when it would have been easier to leave him. Sam's actions throughout the story exemplify true friendship, and his actions show his deep love for his friend.

Give students a few minutes to reflect and write down seven characteristics they consider most important in a friend. These characteristics can include loyalty, support in difficult times, having fun together, or anything else students consider important. Hand out the [7 Signs of a Good Friend](#) list for students to fill in.

Ask students to volunteer to share what they wrote and explain why they chose these characteristics. Write the responses of students on the board so that everyone in the classroom can see them.

Step 4: Highlight that among the many characteristics of a good friend, there are some characteristics that make for a friendship of excellence.

1. A friendship of excellence is when friends treat each other as subjects and never merely as objects.

In a friendship of excellence, we respect the other person. We ask them for their opinion. We tell them the truth. We help them if they need help and when they are sad or not feeling well, we keep them company. We want what's best for them.

A friendship of use can include using a friend to get a good grade, lying or not telling them the whole truth in order to get something from them, asking them for favors and not being ready to return the favors, not considering how they would feel, etc.

2. Friends pursue excellence for themselves and others.

While friendship definitely involves having a good time together, making jokes and doing fun activities, a true friend should want the other person to become the best version of themselves. Sometimes this may mean not participating in an activity or action if it harms others. For instance, refusing to take part in a prank that could hurt a friend or discouraging a friend from skipping class. Since we want what's best for them, we encourage them to think about their actions.

Write the definition of friendship of excellence on the board:

Friendship of excellence: friendship based on pursuing excellence for oneself and others

Elaborate on the definition of friendship of excellence by highlighting the following:

- » It is hard to achieve, only people who strive to be excellent can practice it.
- » It brings a much deeper fulfillment than a non-excellent friendship.
- » It helps lead to a happy and fulfilled life.
- » Those who possess it become better people through it.
- » It helps people achieve great things together.

Ask the students if they have personally experienced excellent friendships or if they can identify good friendships from cultural references or stories they have heard (it could be books, movies, etc.).

Step 5: Divide the students into groups and ask them to work on the: [What Would an Excellent Friend Do? Worksheet](#). The groups should analyze the different situations mentioned and suggest what a good friend would do in each situation.

After the groups finish working, ask them to share their conclusions with the rest of the class. Then, lead the class discussion based on the [Answer Key](#) provided with the activity.

Finally, have students look over their list of the seven signs of a good friend and add or remove any characteristics, after the class discussions about friendship of excellence. Then, on another scrap piece of paper, have students write down the name of a person in the classroom who they think best exemplifies the seven characteristics they wrote down. Place a bowl or hat at the front of the room and have students anonymously cast their vote. Draw from the hat but say each of the names of the students in the class aloud, **so that every student is named** as having the characteristics necessary to be an excellent friend.

Step 6: Summarize. Recall the characteristics of a good friend and the two essential elements of every true friendship. Recall also how a good friend would act in different difficult situations. Finish by emphasizing the importance of developing friendships of excellence in our daily lives.

7 SIGNS OF A GOOD FRIEND

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3. _____
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5. _____
6. _____
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WHAT WOULD AN EXCELLENT FRIEND DO?

Discuss the scenario and suggest what a good friend would do in response.

Scenario	What would an excellent friend do?
A friend invites you to skip class and play games on your phones. What do you say?	
Your friend wants to dye her hair red and asks if you think it would look good. You think it would look terrible on her. How do you respond?	
Your friend has some problems at home and would like to talk to you about it, but you would prefer to do something fun. What do you do?	
Your friend starts teasing another student who has problems studying and expects you to join in teasing. What do you do?	
You want to keep on texting your friend, but he tells you he really needs to study for tomorrow's exam. What do you do?	
A friend starts gossiping about another friend in front of you, expecting that you will join her. What do you do?	
An older student is picking on your friend during the break between classes. You do not feel comfortable standing up to an older student, but you also don't want him to pick on your friend. What do you do?	

What Would an Excellent Friend Do? – Answer Key

Scenario	What would an excellent friend do?
A friend invites you to skip class and play games on your phones. What do you say?	You tell them that this is not a good idea, since it will lead to problems at school. It would also make your parents upset if they found out. You suggest that you and your friend go to class and play video games after school.
Your friend wants to dye her hair red and asks if you think it would look good. You think it would look terrible on her. How do you respond?	You try suggesting to her in a polite way that some other type of hair style would probably look better on her.
Your friend has some problems at home and would like to talk to you about it, but you would prefer to do something fun. What do you do?	You listen to your friend first and try to help them with their problem. After they've talked about what's upsetting them, you propose doing something fun together since this will make them feel better.
Your friend starts teasing another student who has problems studying and expects you to join in teasing. What do you do?	You do not join in teasing the other student but instead make a joke which will not hurt anyone. You also make an affirming comment about the student being teased, to help them feel accepted.
You want to keep on texting your friend, but he tells you he really needs to study for tomorrow's exam. What do you do?	You tell a friend that he should study first and that you can text each other the next day, after the exam.
A friend starts gossiping about another friend in front of you, expecting that you will join her. What do you do?	You try to change the conversation. If that doesn't work, mention to your friend privately that you don't want to talk about this other person since you wouldn't want someone talking about you in this way, behind your back.
An older student is picking on your friend during the break between classes. You do not feel comfortable standing up to an older student, but you also don't want him to pick on your friend. What do you do?	You try to overcome your discomfort and tell the older student to stop picking on your friend. Or, you walk away with your friend and tell a teacher so that they can monitor the situation for the future.