
MRS. KATZ AND TUSH

Author: Patricia Polacco

Publisher: Bantam Doubleday

THEME:

Friendship can bridge differences in age and culture.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

A long-lasting friendship develops between Larnel, a young African-American boy, and Mrs. Katz, a lonely Jewish widow, when Larnel presents Mrs. Katz with a scrawny kitten without a tail.

The book supports the theme that friendship can bridge differences in age and culture, and LeVar celebrates the beauty and value of cross-cultural relationships as he visits his very own “bubee” and learns to make some traditional Jewish foods.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Discuss the concept of “friendship” with students. What is needed in a relationship for friendship to occur? What kinds of friends do we have (e.g., school friends, neighborhood friends, family friends, animal friends, book friends, etc.)?

Discuss with students how friendships with older people are different from friendships with people their own age.

Invite students to share stories about older friends. Who are they? How did they become friends? What do they enjoy doing together?

In the story, Larnel learns about the cultural traditions of Jewish people. Communities are often made up of people from different cultural heritages. Discuss events that celebrate different cultures and take place in the students’ own community. In which activities do their families participate? Do their families celebrate their own cultural traditions?

CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Obtain a copy of the book to read to the class. Put the events of Mrs. Katz’s life on a timeline. In order to make the timeline complete, students may wish to estimate the time in years back to the past when Mrs. Katz met her husband and into the future when Larnel is grown with children of his own.

Invite some experts on cats into the classroom as resource persons. Someone who shows or raises cats could talk about cats’ unique characteristics and special needs. A veterinarian could talk about ways to keep a cat healthy and how to be a responsible pet owner.

Adopt a local nursing home or retirement home and arrange periodic visits for the students. Before each visit, brainstorm activities they can do with/for their new friends. (Clear the activities with the administrator of the facility well in advance of the visits so alternatives may be planned if needed.) Allow some time after the visits for students to share what they are doing and learning with their new friends.

Extend invitations to elderly family members or friends of class members to visit the classroom. Find out any special talents and interests these people might have that they would be willing to share with the students. For example, a visiting friend might: teach a craft, share a hobby or collection, play a musical instrument, tell about her/his job, cook with the students, tell stories, read to students, and many other activities.

Brainstorm a list of different types of neighborhoods, e.g., small town, rural area, large urban, suburban, etc. Discuss what makes up a neighborhood in general and identify specific features of the neighborhoods they listed. Have students compare and contrast their neighborhood with that of LeVar’s “bubee,” Shari.

In the program, LeVar mentions many qualities about an urban neighborhood that he really likes. Ask students to think of an attribute of their immediate neighborhood that makes it special. Have each student draw a picture of this special quality and complete the sentence frame, “_____ makes my neighborhood special.” Bind the pages into a book.

Make a cat bulletin board. Have students search magazines and newspapers for pictures, cartoons, and articles about cats. Invite students to bring in pictures of their own cats. Include wild cats as well as pet cats. Have students make labels or captions for all the items on the board. They might wish to research various types of wild cats or breeds of domestic cats—have them add information they find to the bulletin board as well.

Have students make “Lost Cat” posters. Before they begin, discuss the types of items they would expect to see on such a poster.

RELATED THEMES:

pets
cooking
ethnic traditions

RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:

Program #52 — Duncan And Dolores
Program #72 — The Adventures Of Taxi Dog
Program #122 — Bread Is For Eating

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Patricia Polacco describes herself as coming from a storytelling family. These family stories have inspired the writing of many of her books. She is the author/illustrator of two other **Reading Rainbow** feature books, *Rechenka's Eggs* and *Appelmando's Dreams*. She is the mother of two grown children.

BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:**ABUELA**

by Arthur Dorros, illus. by Elisa Kleven (Dial)

WILFRID GORDON MCDONALD PARTRIDGE

by Mem Fox, illus. by Julie Vivas (Kane/Miller)

KWANZAA

by Deborah Newton Chocolate, illus. by Melodye Rosales (Children's Press)

SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:**AT TAYLOR'S PLACE**

by Sharon Phillips Denslow, illus. by Nancy Carpenter (Bradbury)

LOOP THE LOOP

by Barbara Dugan, illus. by James Stevenson (Greenwillow)

MISS TIZZY

by Libba Moore Gray, illus. by Jada Rowland (Simon & Schuster)

BETTER WITH TWO

by Barbara M. Joosse, illus. by Catherine Stock (HarperCollins)

GOOD MORNING, RIVER!

by Lisa Westberg Peters, illus. by Deborah Kogan Ray (Arcade/Little, Brown)

TIKVAH MEANS HOPE

by Patricia Polacco (Doubleday)

SALLY ARNOLD

by Cheryl Ryan, illus. by Bill Farnsworth (Cobblehill)

HENRY AND MUDGE AND THE HAPPY CAT

by Cynthia Rylant, illus. by Suçie Stevenson (Bradbury)

DOWN HOME AT MISS DESSA'S

by Bettye Stroud, illus. by Felicia Marshall (Lee & Low)

THE VERY BEST OF FRIENDS

by Margaret Wild, illus. by Julie Vivas (Gulliver/Harcourt Brace)

MIZ BERLIN WALKS

by Jane Yolen, illus. by Floyd Cooper (Philomel)

I KNOW A LADY

by Charlotte Zolotow, illus. by James Stevenson (Greenwillow)

Notes