

Mrs. Katz And Tush

(GPN #93/PBS #908)

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Program Description:

A long-lasting friendship develops between Larnel, a young African-American, 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.



Social Studies Concepts:

- culture
- relationships



Classroom Activities:

Culture

In the story, Larnel learns about cultural traditions of Jewish people. Communities often include a variety of people from different cultural heritages. Discuss your community’s culturally-centered events.

Do any students and their families participate? How do they participate? Do their families celebrate their cultural traditions in other ways? Host a class Culture Fair where students share one tradition from their heritage. [See Do-At-Home-Activity.] Invite family members to help demonstrate traditions. Students may wish to set up a display, share some special food and/or music and wear native costumes. [Help students who do not have support from home by pairing them with volunteers who can assist them in researching their cultural traditions.]

Culture

In the program, LeVar mentions many qualities about an urban neighborhood that he likes. Have students think about their neighborhood and identify why it’s special – perhaps it’s the trees in the park, a special smell from a bakery, neighborhood friends, etc. Then ask students to express this in writing, by completing the sentence frame: _____ makes my neighborhood special. Have students illustrate their sentences, bind the pages into a book and put it in the class library so it’s available for students and visitor to read.



Relationships

Ask the school media specialist to find a variety of books featuring a young person enjoying a relationship with an older person. Read several of these with the class. Then have students form groups of three and invite them to share stories about an older friend, telling who they are, how they became friends, what they enjoy doing together, and what makes the person special. Have students write a friendly letter to their older friend expressing why they appreciate this special friendship.



Relationships

Watch the video again or read the book, *Mrs. Katz and Tush*, to the class. Have students put the events of Mrs. Katz's life on a timeline. In order to make the timeline complete, help students estimate back to the time when Mrs. Katz met her husband and into the future when Larnel is grown with children of his own. Have students illustrate the timeline with drawings of favorite scenes from the story.



Relationships

Invite a cat expert (e.g. veterinarian, animal shelter worker, experienced cat owner) to visit the class and share what they know about the unique characteristics and special needs of cats. They could talk about ways to keep a cat healthy, how to be a responsible pet owner, why animals can be very good companions for older people, etc. After the visit, have students write illustrated thank you notes to send to the guest.

Do-At-Home Activity:

Family Traditions

Encourage family members to become involved in the class Culture Fair by asking them to discuss with their child a family tradition related to their culture or heritage, to describe it on the "Family Traditions" activity page and to return the page to class. Students will be able to learn a great deal from their families about their own heritage as they plan what they will share with the class.



Suggested Reading:

Review Books:

Abuela by *Arthur Dorros*

Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge by *Mem Fox*

Kwanzaa by *Deborah Newton Chocolate*

Other Suggestions:

At Taylor's Place by *Sharon Phillips Denslow*

Loop The Loop by *Barbara Dugan*

Better With Two by *Barbara M. Joosse*

Tikvah Means Hope by *Patricia Polacco*

Henry And Mudge And The Happy Cat by *Cynthia Rylant*

The Very Best Of Friends by *Margaret Wild*

I Know A Lady by *Charlotte Zolotow*

Family Traditions

Dear Family,

We are learning about cultural heritage and are planning a classroom Culture Fair where students can share a family tradition and learn more about the variety of cultures that make up our community. Please take some time to discuss with your child a family tradition related to your culture or heritage, and then describe the tradition on this page before returning it to school.

Something special we do in our home is:


