

Unit of Study on Friendship



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Why a unit on friendship?

During my classroom observations and just walking on campus, I notice students are constantly looking down at their electronic devices or have iPods in their ears, avoiding contact with people. Facebook, Instagram, cell phones, and the constant need for stimulation are threatening real life interactions and the importance of having face-to-face friendships. Novels about friendship can help show the importance of leaving the electronic devices at home and maintaining eye contact as well as having physical contact with others.

Launching the Unit on Friendship

You've Got a Friend

By James Taylor



Caleb Christopher and Hailey Brynn

When you're down and troubled and you need some loving care
and nothing, whoa, nothing is going right.
Close your eyes and think of me and soon I will be there.
To brighten, yeah, even your darkest nights.

You just call out my name, and you know where ever I am.
I'll come running to see you again.
Winter, spring, summer, or fall, all you have to do is call and I'll be there.
Yeah, yes, I'll be there, you've got a friend.

If the sky above you should grow dark and full of clouds
and that old north wind should begin to blow.
Just keep your head together and call my name out loud.
Soon I will be knocking upon your door.
You just call out my name, and you know where ever I am
I'll come running to see you again.
Winter, spring, summer, or fall, all you have to do is call and I'll be there.

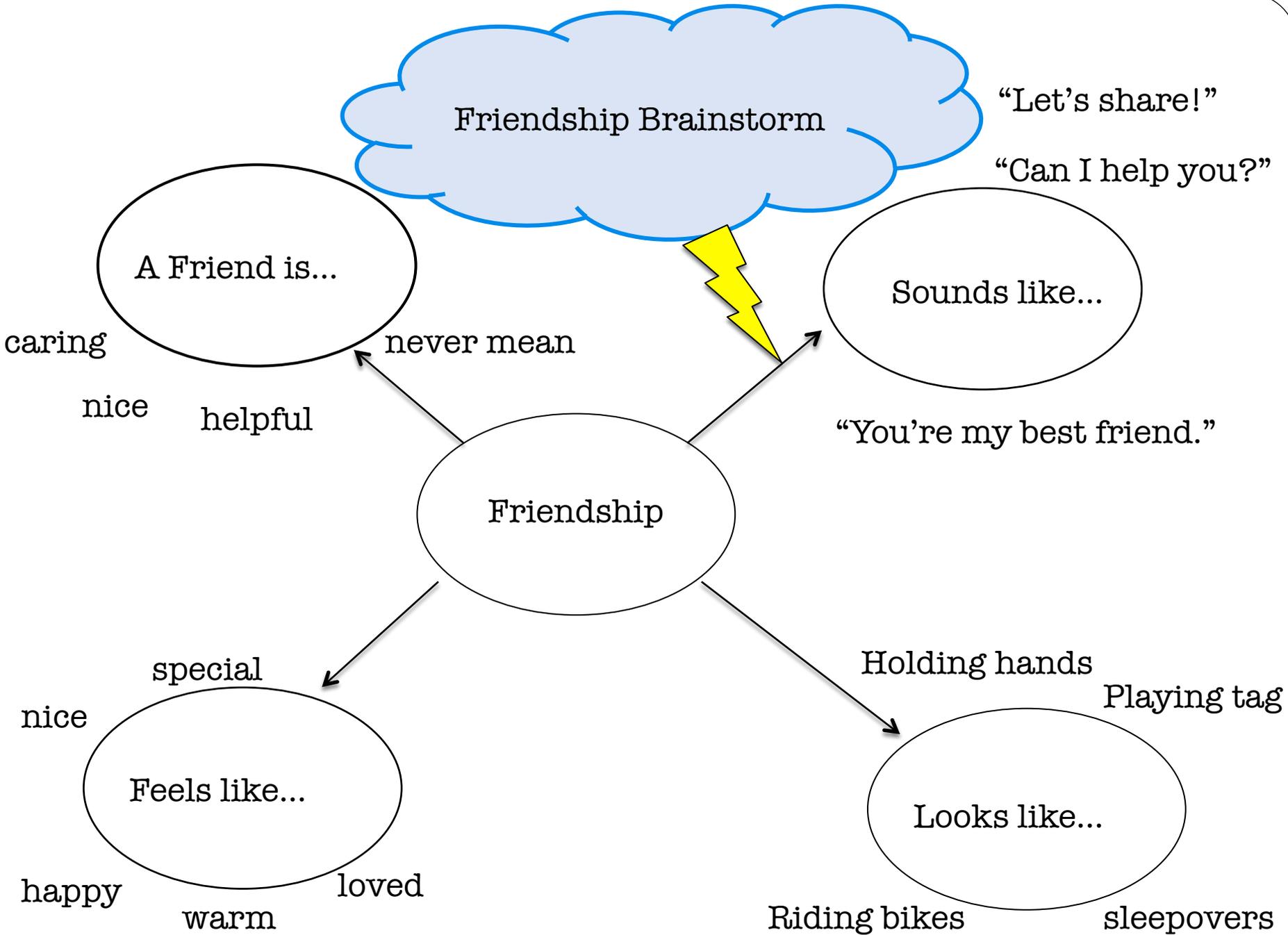
Hey, ain't it good to know that you've got a friend? People can be so cold.
They'll hurt you and desert you. Well, they'll take your soul if you let
them,
oh yeah, but don't you let them.

You just call out my name, and you know where ever I am
I'll come running to see you again.
Winter, spring, summer, or fall, all you have to do is call, Lord, I'll be
there, yeah, yeah,
you've got a friend. You've got a friend.
Ain't it good to know you've got a friend. Ain't it good to know you've got
a friend.
Oh, yeah, yeah, you've got a friend.

Sustained Silent Writing #1

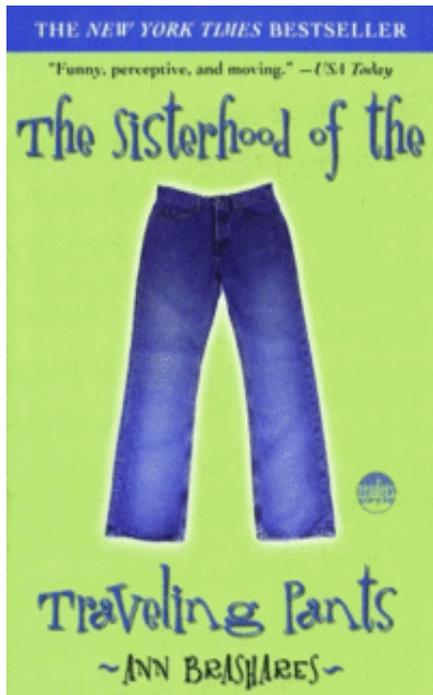
Here are a few things to think about when writing:

- What do you think are the qualities of a good friend?
- What about a bad friend?
- Do you consider yourself a good friend? Why or why not?
- Is there anyone in your life you would do anything for?



Centerpiece Work

The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants



After a lot of debate, this novel seemed to best fit my idea of how important friendship is. At first, I felt that boys would have a hard time relating to this novel. After much thought, I realized that I've read novels with boys on adventures like *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Lord of the Flies*, and *Of Mice and Men*, so why shouldn't boys read novels about girls? *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* might have four main characters who are girls but the problems they deal with can happen to both girls and boys. Lena has to deal with her first love, Carmen struggles with her parents divorce, Bridget has to take control over her budding sexuality, and Tibby makes a new friend who has cancer.

While this book brings up bigger issues, the friendships they have and maintain throughout the course of the book is what enables them to tackle these issues.

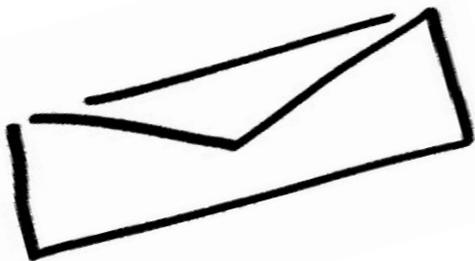
During the Unit

Encourage students to share stories about friendship or anything the characters in *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* might be experiencing.

If students are shy or do not wish to share, try a journal session or a pair share with someone they are familiar with.

Perhaps share your own stories for encouragement.

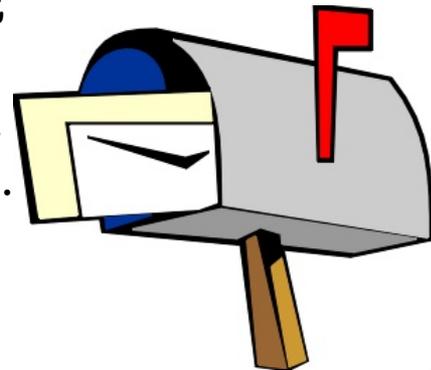
Students will write in a daily journal about how they feel about the novel. They will have certain topics to write about for each journal and turn it in at the end of every class.



Secret Pen Pals!

Assign each student a secret friend. The secret friends are only allowed to correspond with one another in writing by 'mailing' letters for delivery to the personal mailboxes. Each student makes a mail box and a mail drop for the anonymous notes. Each day, students are allowed to write a note for ten minutes to their special friends and get to read their letters from their pals. Topics for the letters can be assigned and graded accordingly. If a student is sick, the teacher will anonymously write a note so that a student does not learn who his or her secret pal is. Teachers can also use the mailboxes to correspond with individual students.

This is a great tool for students of all grade levels. Students will be able to get to know other students they might not normally associate with. Barriers can be broken and amazing friendships can be made. This is also a great way to introduce letter writing to students.



I Am Friendship

I am generous and forgiving.

I wonder if you are the same.

I hear your heart beat.

I see your love.

I want to hold your hand.

I am generous and forgiving.

I pretend we will always be together.

I feel safe with you.

I touch the hearts of others.

I worry we won't always be together.

I cry when I realize it has happened.

I am generous and forgiving.

I understand we will grow apart.

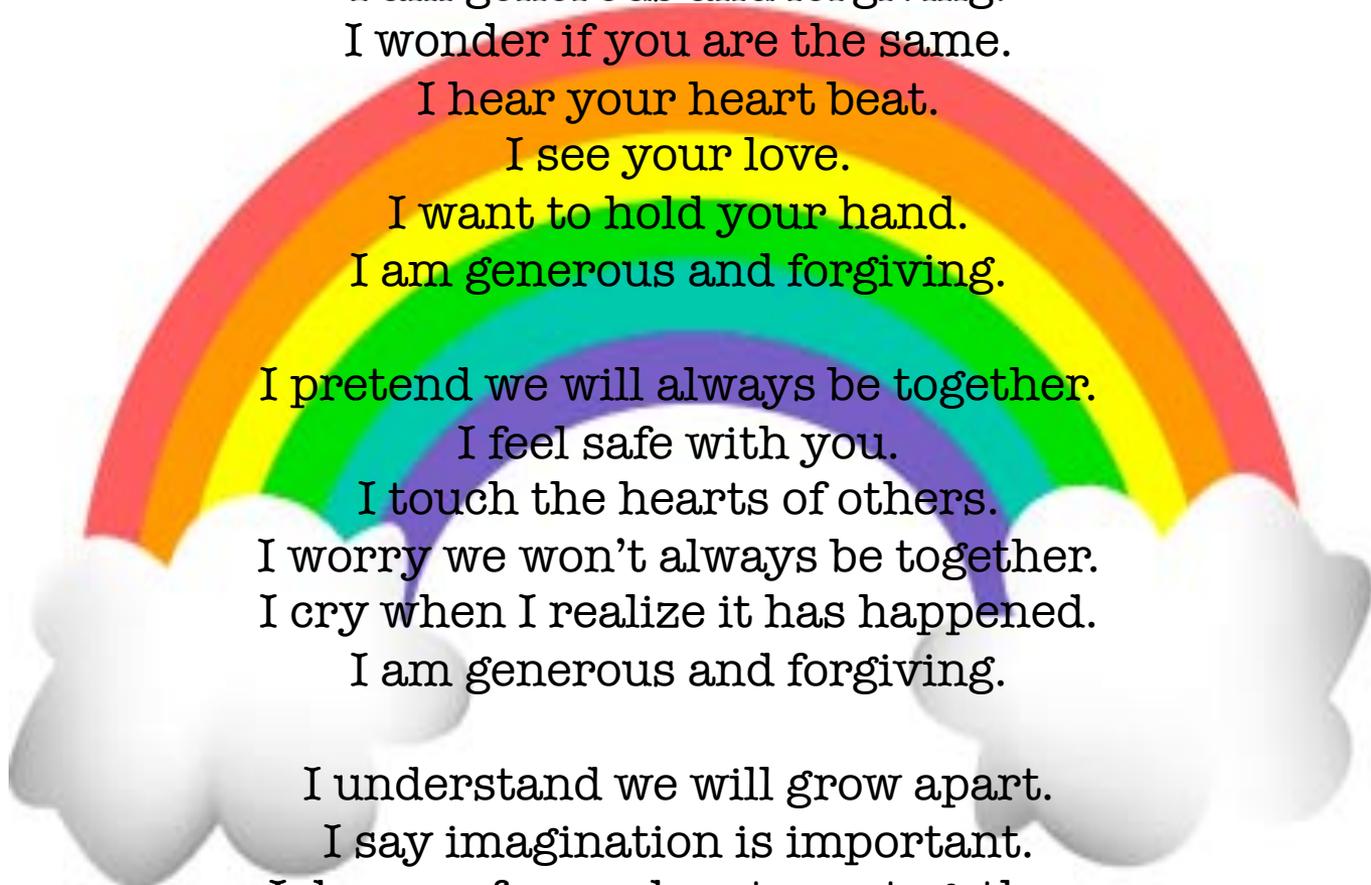
I say imagination is important.

I dream of our adventures together.

I try to be patient.

I hope our friendship will be empowering.

I am generous and forgiving.



Extending the Unit

I am the Traveling Pants



I am a magical friend.
I wonder why Bee is so sad.
I hear what Lena truly desires.
I want Carmen to love her life.
I am a magical friend.

I pretend to be a shoulder to cry on.
I feel like the fifth friend.
I touch their hearts.
I worry about Bee.
I cry for Tibby.
I am a magical friend.

I understand their struggles.
I say, "Don't be afraid", to Lena.
I dream to be washed someday!
I try to talk sense into Carmen.
I hope to be with them forever.
I am a magical friend.

Homework Extra Credit:

For one week, at every meal (even a snack) turn off all electronic devices.

- No cell phone.
- No television.
- No computer.

Maintain eye contact with whomever you are eating and enjoy the conversation

Write 1-2 pages on your experience.

Answer the following questions:

- Did you like this experience?
- Why or why not?
- Will you keep this tradition?
- Why or why not?
- Did anyone else use their phone during the meal?
- How did that make you feel?



Suggestions for further reading:

* All novel summaries are from Amazon.com

The Second Summer of the Sisterhood by Ann Brashares. With a bit of last summer's sand in the pockets, the Traveling Pants and the Sisterhood that wears them embark on their 16th summer.

Bridget: Impulsively sets off for Alabama, wanting to both confront her demons about her family and avoid them all at once.

Lena: Spends a blissful week with Kostos, making the unexplainable silence that follows his visit even more painful.

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck. They are an unlikely pair: George is "small and quick and dark of face"; Lennie, a man of tremendous size, has the mind of a young child. Yet they have formed a "family," clinging together in the face of loneliness and alienation. Laborers in California's dusty vegetable fields, they hustle work when they can, living a hand-to-mouth existence. For George and Lennie have a plan: to own an acre of land and a shack they can call their own.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain. Climb aboard the raft with Huck and Jim and drift away from the "sivilized" life and into a world of adventure, excitement, danger, and self-discovery. Huck's shrewd and humorous narrative is complemented by lyrical descriptions of the Mississippi valley and a sparkling cast of memorable characters.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain. "Tom Sawyer liked adventures, which means he was always getting in trouble." Searching for treasure, witnessing a murder, getting caught in a bat cave, tricking others into doing his work, running away with Huckleberry Finn--Tom Sawyer's antics and mischief-making are sheer, child-pleasing delight. Every boy and girl should experience the joy and fun of this classic tale.

Old Yeller by Fred Gipson. Young Travis Coates is left to take care of the family ranch with his mother and younger brother Arliss while his father goes off on a cattle drive in the 1860s. When a yellow mongrel comes for an uninvited stay with the family, Travis reluctantly adopts the dog. Though Travis initially loathes the "rascal" and at first tries to get rid of it, Old Yeller eventually proves his worth, saving the family on several occasions. Travis grows to love this dog named Old Yeller. And they become great friends.

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee. A gripping, heart-wrenching, and wholly remarkable tale of coming-of-age in a South poisoned by virulent prejudice, it views a world of great beauty and savage inequities through the eyes of a young girl, as her father -- a crusading local lawyer -- risks everything to defend a black man unjustly accused of a terrible crime.

The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins. It is written in the voice of 16-year-old Katniss Everdeen, who lives in the post-apocalyptic nation of Panem, where the countries of North America once existed. The Capitol, a highly advanced metropolis, exercises political control over the rest of the nation. The Hunger Games are an annual event in which one boy and one girl aged 12-18 from each of the twelve districts surrounding the Capitol are selected by lottery to compete in a televised battle to the death.

Concluding the Unit

Besides the basic understanding of the novel and its themes, students should be able to understand the importance of friendship.

Students will have the option to write a paper on an important friendship in their lives OR about a topic of the teacher's choice regarding the novel.

Consider these questions when writing your essay:

- Why or why not would you consider this friendship important?
- Are you still friends with this person? Why or why not?
- How has this person shaped your idea of a friend?
- Has your idea of friendship or a friend changed since the beginning of this unit?
- If you did the extra credit, has this shaped your idea on how to be a good friend?
- Will you continue to put your phone away when conversing with friends?

Students will briefly present their essays to class.

Works Cited

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Twin photo. Caleb and Hailey. Taken by Danessa Stull. 20 November 2012. Print.

All other pictures taken from Microsoft PowerPoint 2008. 20 November 2012.