

Give to a Friend

 grades: 3-5

 30 minutes

“How many slams in an old screen door? Depends how loud you shut it. How many slices in a bread? Depends how thin you cut it. How much good inside a day? Depends how good you live ‘em. How much love inside a friend? Depends how much you give ‘em.”
– Shel Silverstein

Lesson Summary

Students explore the qualities of strong, meaningful friendships. During the discussion, spend time on the value of differences/diversity among friends in providing varying perspectives. Use the book *The Other Side* or *The Gift of Nothing* to explore the meaning of friendship and question whether it is more people or things that make us happy.

Students will Examine

- The qualities of meaningful friendships.
- How can differences between friends strengthen a friendship?
- What are the different ways of giving and receiving in friendship?

Pre-Activity Prep

- (Optional) Print *The Other Side* ([PDF version](#)) by Jaqueline Woodson (THINK.GIVE section).
- Hang 4-5 sheets of paper around the room, each with a Carousel on Friendship question or statement written on it (REFLECT section).
- (Optional) Print or digitally share an Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (1/student) (CONNECT + CLOSE section).

MATERIALS

ThinkGive Journals
Student Journal Guide ([PDF](#))
Chart paper (4-5 sheets)
Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))

MEDIA TO PREP

Slides: [Give to a Friend](#)
Read-aloud book: [The Other Side](#) (3:57)
Read-aloud book: [The Gift of Nothing](#) (2:27)

SHARE

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Option A

Encourage students to pair up with someone they haven't paired up with before. Each student shares their action. As time permits, have one or two students share what their partner shared with the whole group.

TEACHER TIP

If students feel dissatisfied with their actions or have yet to act, remind them that small, consistent actions help develop kindness muscles (ThinkGive Three), so keep trying!

Option B (longer activity)

Maître d'

Call out: Table for (numbers 2-5)

- Students gather in groups based on the number called out and share their actions.
- Call out another number. Students form new groups and share their actions. Continue rounds as time permits.

Discuss:

- Did you notice ways you take your family for granted?
- How was your action True (authentic)?
- In what ways did your action create a ripple? Remember, how taking this action made you feel is also a ripple.

THINK • GIVE

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Option A

Watch: [The Other Side](#) (3:57) ([PDF](#)) by Jacqueline Woodson. This story promotes tolerance, communication, friendship, and open-mindedness. Woodson addresses race relations with two young girls, one black and one white. A fence divides their homes, but they slowly get to know each other by sitting on this barrier.

Discuss:

- Why did the fence stretch through the town? What does the fence represent?
- Why wasn't Clover safe climbing over to the other side of the fence? Why was it safe for Annie to climb over to Clover's side of the fence?
- Why did Annie want to sit on the fence?
- Why didn't Sandra let Annie join the jump rope game but agreed to let Annie join them later that summer when she was with Clover?
- How would you describe the friendship between Clover and Annie?

DIGGING DEEPER

- What other "fences" might exist in friendships?
- How might friendships work through these fences?

Option B

Watch: [The Gift of Nothing](#) (2:27) by Patrick McDonnell (read-aloud book). Explores the importance of friendship, the meaning of gifts, and how people and relationships make us happy.

★ CONNECTION

Students write an acrostic poem about friendship and its meaning in their ThinkGive Journals.

Discuss:

- Was Mooch a good friend when he gave Earl nothing?
- Share when you received or gave the gift of nothing. What was it like?
- Might there be another gift that Mooch gave Earl? How do you know?
- Why are friends important?
- Do friends need to agree on everything, have similar interests, or act in similar ways?

DIGGING DEEPER

- How can a “gift of nothing” be preferred over a material gift?
- Is it OK to prefer a material gift over a “gift of nothing”? How so?

REFLECT

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Carousel on Friendship

Post 4–5 sheets of chart paper around the room. Write a different question or statement from the options below on each paper.

Question/statement options:

- Being a friend is easy. Why or why not?
- What kind of friend do you want to be?
- What makes someone a good friend?
- Why is it important to have friends with varied interests?
- What things can you learn from a friend with a different background than you?

Students form groups and spread out, each standing by a different chart paper. Give each group a different colored marker. Each group reflects on the question posed, writing their ideas on the chart paper.

After a minute or two, groups rotate. Students read through what the other group(s) wrote, agree with (checkmark), and/or add any additional responses.

Continue rotating until all groups have responded to every question, then discuss the questions/statements as a class.

DIGGING DEEPER

Each group makes a “friend poster” with their definition and four examples.

★ CONNECTION

Read-aloud book: [Our Diversity Makes Us Stronger](#) (5:00) by Elizabeth Cole. This story celebrates our diversity and reminds us that it strengthens our friendships and communities. Discuss: What activities or interests do you have that differ from your friends? How does embracing our diversity strengthen our friendships?

CONNECT + CLOSE

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Take Action

Explain: Before our next ThinkGive session on [give date], look for opportunities to impact a friend positively. Keep your eyes open for small moments when you can take action and be a Daymaker for a friend. Give bravely and create wide ripples that spread through our community!

Brainstorm

- Can you appreciate a friend who has helped you?
- Can you recognize a new friend?
- Can you acknowledge a friend you've taken for granted?
- Can you notice how your friends are feeling and be there to help?

Things to Consider

- The ThinkGive Three focus is on giving a True gift. Be authentic!
- Consider what a friend might want, need, or enjoy.
- Create a ripple effect in your class, school, or community!

Closing Quote

Use this quote to close out the lesson. The reflective questions could serve as an Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)).

"How many slams in an old screen door? Depends how loud you shut it. How many slices in a bread? Depends how thin you cut it. How much good inside a day? Depends how good you live 'em. How much love inside a friend? Depends how much you give 'em." – Shel Silverstein

- What does this quote mean to you?
- Do you think that friendships are made stronger through kindness?

★ THINKGIVE THREE

1. True: be authentic
2. Small: small is all
3. Brave: step into your courage zone



VOCAB

Daymaker: noun; a person that takes time to do something kind for someone else, thus making their day better.



CONNECTION

Shel Silverstein (1930–1999) was an author, cartoonist, and musician, making him a very talented man! Silverstein is best known for children's literature and poems.

Sample Actions

- I apologized to a friend I disagreed with.
- I sat with a friend on the bus because they were all alone.
- I gave a thank you note to a friend who was there for me when I had a challenging situation with my family.

Student Journal Questions

- What's your greatest strength as a friend? What's something you could do to be a better friend?
- Describe a time when you found it hard to be a friend.
- Write about a time you made a new friend. How was this person different or similar to you?
- Describe a time when you took a friend for granted.

Extensions

DO

Potato Activity

Follow the procedure and facilitate the discussion in the Potato Activity ([PDF](#)) "to help youth eliminate stereotyping and recognize the uniqueness of each individual."

People with Disabilities Activity

Run the People With Disabilities activity ([PDF](#)) with your class to have your students "experience a condition similar to what some people with learning disabilities deal with regularly" and gain more understanding (empathy) for friends who may have a learning disability. Prepare for and complete Procedure 1 with accompanying discussion questions. Then, complete Procedure 2 with accompanying discussion questions.

WATCH

Video: [A Fox and a Mouse](#) (6:23). A lonesome fox hunts a mouse—and their relationship evolves as two owls begin to interfere with the hunt!

Discuss:

- What is the relationship between the fox and mouse at the beginning and end?
- What caused the relationship to change?
- What does this tell you about how friendships start?
- Share an example of a friendship that started as a different relationship.

Video: [Same, Same but Different](#) (3:13). These pen pals living in different parts of the world become best friends after realizing they have so much in common.

Discuss:

- What do you think "same, same but different" means?
- What examples of "same, same but different" can you think of among yourselves?
- How can "same, same but different" strengthen a friendship?

READ / LISTEN

Read-aloud book: [Four Feet Two Sandals](#) (8:20) ([PDF](#)) by Karen Lynn Williams and Khadra Mohammed. This book portrays the strength, courage, and hope of refugees worldwide, whose daily existence is marked by uncertainty and fear.

Discuss:

- What is friendship? How can you be a true friend?
- Sometimes, being a friend means giving up something important to you. How do Lina and Feroza show their friendship for each other?
- Lina and Feroza share their sandals. What else do they share?

Read-aloud book: [Be a Friend](#) (1:35) by Salina Yoon, a story about being different from the others around you and how that difference can make you special.

Discuss:

- What small gifts do Dennis and Joy give to each other?
- Do you think they always knew they were giving these gifts?