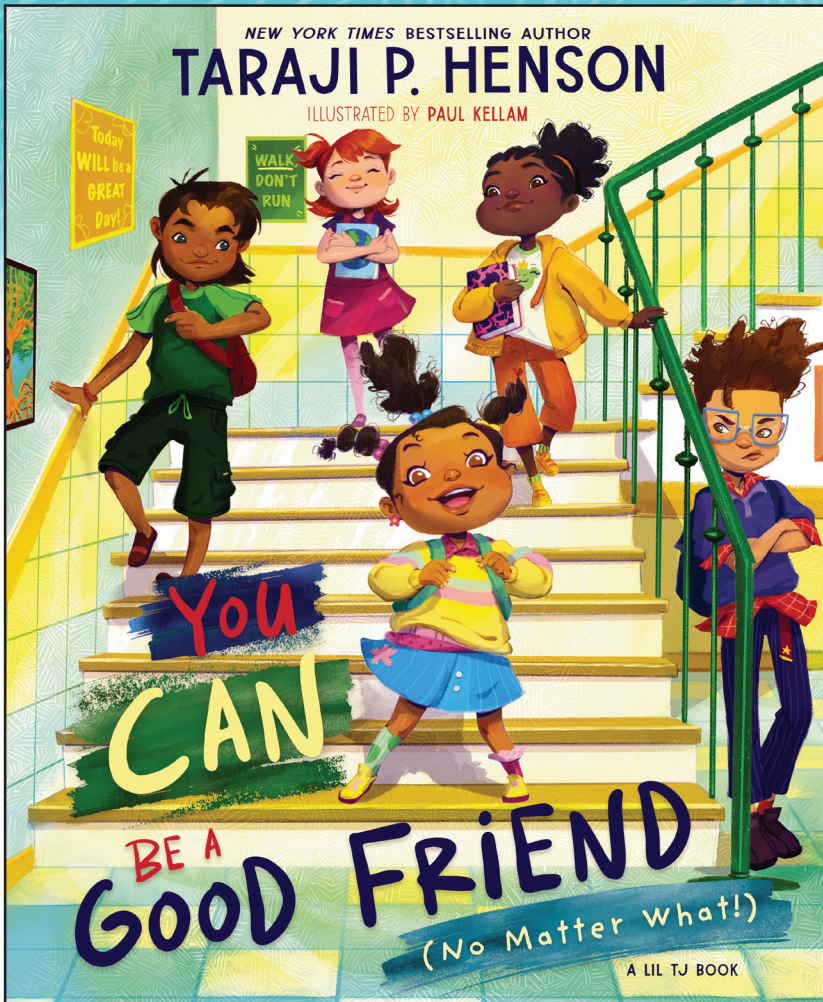


CURRICULUM GUIDE

9780310160595



YOU CAN BE A GOOD FRIEND

(No Matter What!)

A Lil TJ Book



BY

TARAJI P. HENSON

New York Times Bestselling Author

ILLUSTRATED BY

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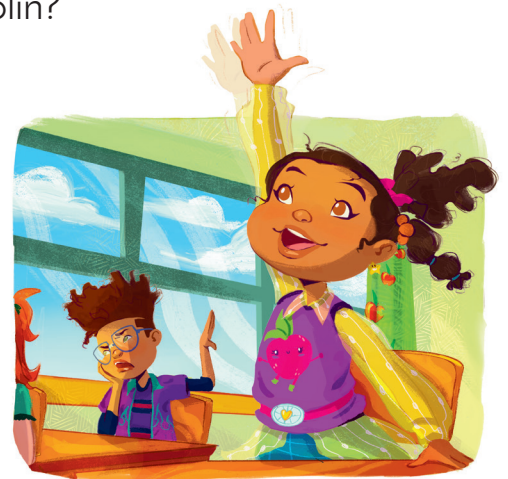
IN HER DEBUT PICTURE BOOK, award-winning actress and mental-health advocate Taraji P. Henson shows students that great things can happen when we approach others and ourselves with empathy, patience, and love.

Lil TJ is one cool kid. But when she arrives for her first day of school, she finds she's a little different from everyone else. Soon, a classmate starts picking on her and Lil TJ feels anxious and filled with doubt. Wise words from her beloved grandma help her see beyond the bully's behavior and make new friends.

You Can Be a Good Friend (No Matter What!) helps students embrace the importance of standing in their own uniqueness and promotes mental wellness and socialization skills by emphasizing friendship over bullying.

Discussion Questions

- ♥ Look carefully at the illustration on the first page of the story. What clues in the illustration show the reader information about the main character, Lil TJ?
- ♥ TJ talks often to her Grandma Patsy about her hopes, her dreams, and her adventures. Describe the kind of relationship that TJ and Grandma Patsy share.
- ♥ Describe TJ's mood as she gets ready for the first day of school. How does she picture the day when talking with her brother?
- ♥ What clue do we get that TJ might not be feeling so confident as she walks into school?
- ♥ What positive things happen to TJ on the first day of school? In contrast, what happens when she meets a boy named Beau?
- ♥ TJ had been excited and hopeful about her first day of school. Describe the effect Beau's words have on TJ.
- ♥ Where does TJ go when she is feeling low at recess and wants to be alone? Why do you think she chose this place to make herself feel better?
- ♥ How does TJ react to Beau's attempt to play the violin? What thoughts go through her head before she approaches Beau to speak to him?
- ♥ What does Beau finally admit to TJ? Does this change your opinion of Beau?
- ♥ What important lessons did both TJ and Beau learn about building friendships?



The discussion questions, activities, and worksheets in this guide were created by Leigh Courtney, Ph.D. She teaches in the Global Education program at a public elementary school in San Diego, California. She holds both master's and doctoral degrees in education, with an emphasis on curriculum and instruction.

Activities

GROWING A FRIENDSHIP

TJ's Grandma Patsy tells her, "Friendships take time, Baby Girl. You need to nurture them to help them grow." Think about a friend that you have made in your neighborhood, at recess, in your classroom, or at an after-school activity. On a piece of construction paper, draw a large flower with a stem and two leaves. In one leaf, put your name and in the other, add your friend's name. Along the stem, write about how you met your friend. In the flower petals, write about what you and your friend do together to help grow your friendship.

BE AN UPSTANDER

When Beau bumps into TJ in the hall at school, he tells her that she is so little he almost stepped on her. TJ looks around for support from other classmates, but no one says anything. When no one responds when they see an unkind act, they are being "bystanders." In contrast, "upstanders" try to help the person who is being bullied. As a class, brainstorm strategies upstanders could use to help a person who is being bullied (say stop, find an adult, listen to the person being bullied, use an "I" statement, etc.). Design a badge on a sticker label or cardstock to show you're an upstander. On your badge, write "I'm an upstander because . . ." and complete your statement with a strategy you could use to help others. Wear your badge to recess to show others that you stand against bullying.

KINDNESS MATTERS

When TJ talks to Grandma Patsy about how Beau's behavior makes her feel, Grandma Patsy gives her some advice: "You've heard me say 'You get more flies with honey,' haven't you? Now's the time! Be honey—show them your sweet self. You can be a good friend no matter what!" Think of ways that you can show kindness to others in your classroom, on the playground, and at home. Design a kindness poster that states a strategy for kindness and includes a colorful illustration of what the strategy would look like in action.

START WITH HELLO

Come together as a grade level or as an entire school and have a "start with hello" day. Make name tags for everyone to wear. Include the birth month of each person on their name tag. At lunch, have kids sit together who share the same birth month to help kids make connections and possibly new friendships!



Name: _____

What's the Difference Between a Buddy and a Bully?



Read through the sentences at the bottom of the page. Which sentences sound like something a bully would say? Which sound like words that a friend or buddy would say? Cut out each statement and paste it in the column where you believe it belongs.

A BUDDY

A BULLY

You're not my friend.

I'll help you with that.

Your clothes look weird.

Do you want to join me and play?

Do you want to sit together at lunch?

You're not allowed to play with us.

I'll save a place for you.

You talk too much.

Name: _____

Charting a Character's Emotions

TJ has many different feelings in this story. Look back through the book and identify words that describe her feelings. Use these words to fill in the three panels to show how TJ was feeling in the beginning, the middle, and at the end of the story. Include a picture of TJ in each section that shows why she was feeling this way.



BEGINNING

MIDDLE

END

Name: _____

Zooming in on the Central Message

Think carefully about the events in *You Can Be a Good Friend (No Matter What!)*. What message do you think the author is trying to share with readers? Describe what you believe to be the central message of this book and draw an illustration to go with it. Then think about how you could apply this message from the book to your own life. Write about this connection.



THE CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE BOOK

CONNECTING THE MESSAGE TO MY OWN LIFE
