

A Friend for Henry

 by Jenn Bailey, illustrated by Mika Song

Identities & Themes

- Feelings
- Friendship
- Kindness
- Identity safety
- School success
- East/Southeast Asian American
- Bi/Multiracial identity or Relationships
- Ability/Neurodiversity
- School success

Teacher Reflection Questions

More and more classrooms have students on the autism spectrum.

1. What has been your experience in building relationships with students on the autism spectrum?
2. What can you do to help your students show empathy and respect to and be inclusive of students on the autism spectrum?

Background Information for Teacher

Not all people experience or express emotions in the same way, nor do they behave in predictable, consistent ways. Children with autism spectrum disorders may feel excluded or may self-exclude. We know that feeling a sense of belonging is key to a student's ability to learn. However, it can be difficult to create belonging when children don't understand why people act or do things differently. They must be given the opportunity to ask questions and learn about people with disabilities or learning differences. Simple explanations and open dialogue nurture empathy and respect across differences. This story asks readers to think about life from the perspective of a child with autism. Many children will be able to identify with Henry's challenges with emotional regulation, making friends, and adjusting to different people and ways of doing things.

Language hint:

Many children have a friend, relative, or classmate on the autism spectrum. Helping children understand people with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) is important because they can't always tell if someone is on the autism spectrum by looking at them. Children don't need a long medical lecture. Give a brief explanation about why their friend might behave differently than they do and a chance to ask questions. You could say:

"Our brains all work a little differently from everyone else's. All of us are good at some things and not so good at others. Autism is one way people's brains work differently. You can't always tell someone is on the autism spectrum by looking at them. Our friends on the autism spectrum might be really smart about some things. They might also have a harder time with loud noises, bright lights, or strong-tasting foods than other people do. And they might need a little extra help from friends to get to know other people or to know what to do about how people around them are feeling."

See also the **Ability and Neurodiversity Primer** in this guide.

Anti-Bias Education Tenets

- Empathy & Understanding
- Healthy Complex Identities
- Respect Across Differences
- Notice, Name, & Reject Bias
- Responsiveness & Action

Social-Emotional Learning

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Social Awareness
- Responsible Decision Making
- Relationship Skills

Read this to the students before reading the book:

This book has a character named Henry who is starting school and is looking for a friend. Henry has very specific likes and dislikes, which sometimes makes it hard for him to make friends. Let's read to find out if Henry finds a friend in his new class.

Discussion Questions (essential questions bolded)

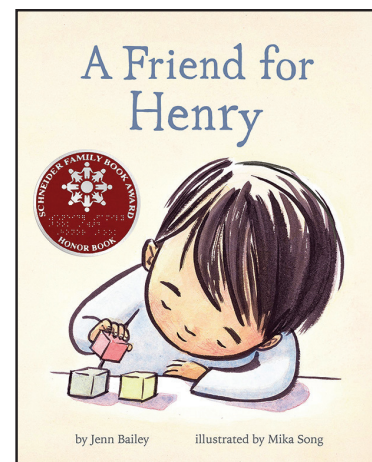
1. How does Henry feel when Vivianne gets upset that he painted her shoes?
2. **Can you tell about a time when you have said or done something that upset someone else, even though you were trying to be nice or helpful?**
3. **Why does Henry get mad when Samuel takes the green carpet square?**
4. **Can you tell about a time when you've gotten upset when someone did something differently than what you expected or wanted?**
5. What were some other things that upset Henry during the day and made it hard for him to make friends?
6. What does your face look like when you are upset?
7. Who did Henry become friends with at the end of the book?
8. **What did Henry and Katie have in common?**
9. **What was different about them?**
10. **How can you be friends with someone who is different from you?**

Journal Prompts & Extension Activities

Freeze: Ask the children to sit in a line or a circle. Call two to five children up and ask them to act out scenarios about getting along with friends. Remind them to use their bodies and their faces to show you how they would feel if what you describe really happened. After a moment of acting, say, "Freeze." Then take a picture, either a real picture or an imaginary one. You may want to assign specific roles to specific children to speed up the action.

- "There are three of you playing together and only two bikes. You have to figure out how to share...freeze."
- "Two of you are playing, and another child comes to play. That child figures out how to make the play even more fun...freeze."
- "Two children are playing, and one of them takes a toy from the other child...freeze."
- "Four of you are at the park, and a new child comes along. They really want to play, but seem quite shy...freeze."
- "Two children are having an argument. Another child comes along and helps them solve their problem...freeze."
- "Three children are playing, but one of them gets left out...freeze."
- "Three children are playing blocks. One of them takes all the blocks and won't share...freeze."
- "Three children are playing, and another child wants to join. The child who wants to join watches carefully for a minute to see what is going on so they can easily join the play...freeze."

Make sure every child gets a turn to act out something positive and something negative. If you take real pictures, you can display them and call the children's attention to them when they are trying to work out problems.



Literacy Connections

- Realistic fiction
- Identify details in the text
- Compare and contrast characters
- Identify theme or main message
- Describe characters/
Character development
- Character point of view
- Use illustrations/pictures/
photos to gain information
- Make inferences
- Make text connections (to
self, text, the world)
- Describe major plot events
- Sequence events