

A Chair for My Mother

by Vera B. Williams

Identities & Themes

- Socioeconomic status
- Multigenerational relationships
- Family structure: Single parent
- Grief/Loss
- Community
- Kindness
- Identity affirmation

Teacher Reflection Questions

1. What experiences do you have with tragedies like fires or with community generosity like this book illustrates?
2. How can you lead conversations that help students understand that hard work does not always result in having enough and that not having enough is not because families don't work hard?
3. What opportunities can you create for generosity?

Background Information for Teacher

Not every family has the same opportunities or income. Hard work does not necessarily mean a family will have all that they need. Many families are amongst the working poor, with jobs that do not pay living wages. This book highlights the incredible generosity that is prevalent in most low income neighborhoods where people know what it is like to need. It also shows how circumstances can dramatically change in an instant and sheds light on the resiliency of a family.

See also the **Socioeconomic Status 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 Competencies

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

Read this to the students before reading the book:

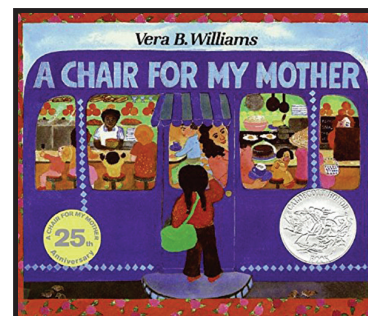
After a fire destroys their home and everything in it, Rosa, her mother, and grandmother move to an apartment furnished through the generosity of their neighbors, friends, and family. The three save and save until they can afford to buy one big, comfortable chair that all three of them can enjoy.

Discussion Questions (essential questions bolded)

1. In our world, not everyone has the same amount of money and/or number of opportunities. For some families, everything is hard to pay for. For some families, only some things are hard to pay for, and for other families, nothing is hard to pay for. How would you describe the family in this story?
2. Why does Rosa's mom want and need a new chair?
3. How does Rosa keep a positive outlook even after they lost everything in the fire?
4. How does Rosa respond to having to save up for the chair?
5. Each member of this family contributed to the money jar. How does Rosa help her mother save up for the chair?
 - How do you think it felt to put every extra penny into the jar for a common goal?
 - What kinds of things do you think each family member gave up in order to save for the chair? How do you think that felt?
 - When the family's home burned down, they were helped by many other people who also don't have a lot of money. Why do you think those families did this?
6. Tell about a time when you saw or experienced (as a giver or receiver) this kind of generosity.
7. How does the story end?
8. What challenges did the family in this story face? How did they show courage and generosity during these challenges?
 - Which of these challenges would you be most willing to face and which would require the most courage from you? Why?

Journal Prompts & Extension Activities

1. Knowing that there are many families like the ones in this story who work very hard but still have trouble making ends meet, what do you think could be changed in our country or community to make sure all families have what they need?
2. Tell about a time when you or your family had to save up for something? How did you feel while you were saving? How did you feel when you reached your goal?
3. **Family Diversity Chart:** Create a class chart of family differences such as number of children in the family, number of adults in the family, or whether or not there are babies in the family. Before creating the chart, take a moment to think about areas a particular child may be sensitive about or areas that may create a sense of isolation for one or more children. For example, if almost all of the children live in houses and only one child lives in an apartment, think carefully about whether you want to chart living spaces.



Literacy Connections

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