



by Karen Stephens

Friendship Skills: Children's Books for Preschool to Age 8

I've never met a parent who didn't hope their child would gather a comforting circle of friends to rely upon and enjoy. Friendship skills come naturally to some children; but for others, it takes a bit more practice. One very effective way of helping children grasp the dynamics of friendship is to read stories together. So below I list children's books that deal with friendship. The children's books can also remind you, as an adult, how children think about friendship. Understanding their perspective can help you guide children more sensitively and wisely.

The books can be obtained in a variety of ways, including from booksellers, public libraries, or your child care center's lending library. Some of the classics and more recent releases may be included in your child's classroom book club offerings (such as Scholastic, Trumpet, or Troll). Consider sharing this list with family members who want good book ideas for children's holiday gifts; they'll appreciate the help.

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Once you land your hands on some of these gems, read the books as often as your child wishes. New reflections — and questions — will arise with each reading. Examining a story character's behavior can be a safe, objective way for children to consider and analyze how friendships are formed and maintained. After ending a story, ask your child why the characters were friends. How did they become friends? How did they settle arguments? Your child might even want to be creative with the story line. Ask your child how the story ending might change, for better or worse, if characters behaved or talked differently. Responses will give you an amazing view of your child's perspective, maturation, and growth.

At the end of this list of children's books, I also cite books written for parents and teachers. Each examines the influence friendship has on development and can give you tips on nurturing children's friendship potential. Enjoy the discovery.

Children's Books for Preschoolers to Age 8

- *A Book of Friends* by David Ross (Scranton, PA: HarperCollins Children's Books 1999).
- *A Rainbow of Friends* by P. K. Hallinan (Nashville, TN: Ideals Publications, 2001).
- *Alexander and the Wind Up Mouse* by Leo Lionni (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers, 1974).
- *Being Friends* by Karen Beaumont (New York: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers, 2002).
- *Best Friends* by Marcia Leonard (Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press, 1999).
- *Best Friends* by Steven Kellog (New York: Penguin Putnam, 1986).
- *Best Friends for Frances* by Russell Hoban (New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1969).
- *Best Friends Sleep Over* by Jacqueline Rogers (New York: Scholastic, 1993).
- *Chester's Way* by Kevin Henkes (New York: Greenwillow, 1991).
- *Chicken Chickens* by Valeri Gorbachev (New York: North-South Books, 2001).
- *Clifford Makes a Friend* by Norman Bridwell (New York: Scholastic, 1998).
- *Do You Want to Be My Friend* by Eric Carle (New York: Putnam Publishing Group, 1988).

- *Duck on a Bike* by David Shannon (New York: Scholastic, 2002).
- *Elmer's Friends* by David McKee (New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1994).
- *Flip & Flop* by Dawn Apperley (New York: Scholastic, 2001).
- *Friends* by Helme Heine (New York: Simon & Schuster Children's, 1982).
- *Fox Tale Soup* by Tony Bonning (New York: Simon & Schuster Children's, 2001).
- *Friends* by Rob Lewis (New York: Holt, Henry Books for Young Readers, 2001).
- *Friends!* by Elaine Scott (New York: Simon & Schuster Children's, 2000).
- *Friendship: From Your Old Friends to Your New Friends* by Nuria Bosch Roca (Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series, 2001).
- *Fritz and the Beautiful Horses* by Jan Brett (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987).
- *Frog and Toad are Friends* by Arnold Lobel (New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1979).
- *George and Martha: The Complete Stories of Two Best Friends* by James Marshall (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997).
- *How to Be a Friend: A Guide to Making Friends and Keeping Them* by Laurene Krasny Brown (New York: Little Brown Children's Books, 2001).
- *How to Lose All Your Friends* by Nancy Carlson (New York: Viking Children's Books, 1994).
- *Hungry Hen* by Richard Waring (New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2001).
- *I'll Always Be Your Friend* by Sam McBratney (New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2001).
- *Just My Friend and Me* by Mercer Mayer (Racine, WI: Golden Books, 1988).
- *Let's Be Enemies* by Janice May Udry (New York: Scholastic, 1961).
- *Let's Be Friends Again!* by Hans Wilhelm (New York: Scholastic, 1986).
- *Make New Friends* by Rosemary Wells (New York: Hyperion, 2002).
- *Making Friends* by Fred Rogers (New York: Putnam Publishing Group, 1996).
- *May I Bring a Friend* by Beatrice Schenk De Regniers (New York: Simon & Schuster Children's, 1974).
- *Moonbear's Friend* by Frank Asch (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993).
- *My Best Friend* by Pat Hutchins (New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1993).
- *My Best Friend Moved Away* by Nancy L. Carlson (New York: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers, 2001).
- *My Friend Bear* by Jez Alborough (Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2001).
- *My Friend John* by Charlotte Zolotow (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers, 2002).
- *Now One Foot, Now the Other* by Tomie de Paola (New York: Putnam Publishing Group, 1981).
- *Penguin Pete's New Friends* by Marcus Pfister (New York: North-South Books, 1995).
- *Poppy and Ella: 3 Stories about 2 Best Friends* by Jeff Kaminsky (New York: Disney Press, 2000).
- *Rainbow Fish, The* by Marcus Pfister. (New York, NY: North-South Books, 2000.)
- *Snowman* by Raymond Briggs (New York: Random House, 1986).
- *Stevie* by John Steptoe (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).
- *Swimmy* by Leo Lionni (New York: Ifred Knopf, 1973).
- *The Best of Friends* by Pirkko Vainio (New York: North-South Books, 2000).
- *The Little Red Hen* by Paul Galdone (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991).
- *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson (New York: Penguin USA, 2001).
- *The Relatives Came* by Cynthia Rylant (New York: Bradbury Press, 1985).
- *The Very Best of Friends* by Margaret Wild (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990).
- *Thy Friend, Obadiah* by Brinton Turkle (New York: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers, 1969).
- *We are Best Friends* by Alike (New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1982).
- *Wemberly Worried* by Kevin Henkes (New York: Greenwillow Books, 2000).
- *What Will I Do Without You?* by Sally Grindley (New York: Scholastic, 1999).
- *Where is My Friend?* by Marcus Pfister (New York: North-South Books, 2001).
- *Whistle for Willie* by Ezra Jack Keats (New York: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers, 1976).
- *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge* by Mem Fox (Brooklyn, NY: Kane Miller Book Publishers, 1985).
- *Will I have a Friend?* by Miriam Cohen (New York: Simon & Schuster Children's, 1971).
- *Will You Be My Friend?* by Nancy Tafuri (New York: Scholastic, 2000).
- *Will You Forgive Me?* by Sally Grindley (New York: Kingfisher, 2001).
- *Witzy's Best Friends* by Suzy Spafford (New York: Scholastic, 2002).

Books of Interest to Parents and Teachers

- *Children's Friendships* by Zick Rubin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).
- *Cliques: 8 Steps to Help Your Child Survive the Social Jungle* by Charlene Giannetti and Margaret Sagarese (New York: Broadway Books, 2001).
- *Building Healthy Friendships: Teaching Friendship Skills to Young People* by Terry Beck (Saratoga, CA: R & E Publishers, 1994).
- *The Friendship Factor* by Kenneth Rubin (New York: Skylight Press, 2002).
- *Best Friends, Worst Enemies: Understanding the Social Lives of Children* by Michael Thompson and Catherine O'Neill Grace (New York: Ballantine Books, 2001).
- *Connecting: Friendship in the Lives of Young Children and Their Teachers* edited by Dennie Palmer Wolf (Redmond, WA: Exchange Press, 1986). Currently being revised, expanded, and updated.
- *Good Friends are Hard to Find: Help Your Child Find, Make and Keep Friends* by Fred Frankel (Pasadena, CA: Perspective Publishing, 1996).

Books Written Specifically for Early Childhood Teachers

- *Building Social Competence in Children: A Practical Handbook for Counselors, Psychologists and Teachers* by Lilian Katz, Diane McClellan, James Fuller, and Garry Walz (Greensboro, NC: ERIC Counseling and Student Services Publications, 1995).
- *Connecting: Friendship in the Lives of Young Children and Their Teachers* edited by Dennie Palmer Wolf (Redmond, WA: Exchange Press, 1986). Currently being revised, expanded, and updated.
- *Fostering Children's Social Competence: The Teacher's Role* by Lilian G. Katz and Diane E. McClellan (Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1997).
- *Guiding Children's Social Development* by Marjorie Kostelnik, et.al. (Albany, NY: Delmar Press, 1993).
- *Kids Can Cooperate: A practical guide to teaching problem solving* by Elizabeth Crary (Seattle, WA: Parenting Press, 1984).
- *Promoting Social and Moral Development in Young Children* by Carolyn Pope Edwards (New York: Teachers College Press, 1986).
- *Promoting the Social Development of Young Children* by Charles Smith (Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield Publishing, 1982).
- *Roots of Caring, Sharing, and Helping: The Development of Prosocial Behavior in Children* by Paul Mussen and Nancy Eisenberg-Berg (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Co., 1977).
- *Together We're Better: Establishing a Coactive Learning Environment* by Bev Bos (Roseville, CA: Turn the Page Press, 1990).

About the Author — Karen Stephens is director of Illinois State University Child Care Center and instructor in child development for the ISU Family and Consumer Sciences Department. For nine years she wrote a weekly parenting column in her local newspaper. Karen has authored early care and education books and is a frequent contributor to *Exchange*.

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