



Jessica's Box

By Peter Carnavas

Synopsis:

The whole family is excited about Jessica's first day at school and Jessica is especially looking forward to making some friends. Every day, she sets out with her cardboard box full of something to impress the other children, only to find that friendship can't be bought. Jessica finally discovers there is one special thing that somebody might be interested in – herself. Friendship and the value of being yourself are key themes in the book.

Author/Illustrator Style and Medium:

Peter has used watercolor and black pencil for the book illustrations. Color plays an important part in several pages, sometimes sepia or blue shades are used to convey sadness. The white space is also vital to the sense of emptiness and loneliness that Jessica sometimes experiences.

Author/Illustrator Motivation:

The idea for *Jessica's Box* came from a very short story Peter wrote for his wife. Several years later, he changed the character to a young girl and applied the theme of seeking friendship to the beginning of school. As a teacher, Peter has also observed the efforts children will make in order to gain friends, particularly through toys and other possessions, when all they really need to offer is themselves.

Before Reading the Book:

- Ask the children what makes somebody a friend, what sort of things do friends do? Who can be a friend?
- Why are friends important?
- If somebody didn't have any friends, how do you think they would feel?
- What are some things we can do to make friends?

After Reading the Book:

- What were some of the things Jessica brought in her box?
- Why do you think none of the other children wanted to be her friend after she brought all of those things?
- How did Jessica make a friend in the end? What was the special thing in her box?
- What would you have done if you were Jessica?
- Discuss the value of being yourself in order to make friends.



Activities

Friendship Chart

- Draw a picture of yourself in the middle of a page.
- Then draw pictures of the people who are important to you in circles around the outside.
- Write their names beneath the pictures and write the qualities that make them a good friend.

Friendship Boxes

- Collect cardboard boxes, enough for every child. Paint the outside of each box and leave to dry.
- Children take photos of the people important to them. Print them out and stick them to the sides of the box. Children can then put a picture of themselves inside the box. If photos are not practical, children can draw pictures of the people important to them.
- Brainstorm the qualities of a good friend (honesty, kindness, trustworthiness, etc.) and add some of these words to the outside of the boxes.

Friend Profile

- Have each child choose one friend to write a Friend Profile about. Ask them to find out what they like, what they are interested in, favorite food, sport, music, etc.
- Have the children present to the class, along with why they think their friend is a good friend.

Friendship Poster

- Have the children make friendship posters, with tips on how to be a good friend.

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