

“It’s in the Bag!: A Tale of Friendship”

For all cycles

Paris, October 17 1987: 100 000 persons, rich and poor, from around the world, gather to proclaim that extreme poverty can be defeated, and that those who live in poverty are the first to react against it. At the invitation of Joseph Wresinski, himself from a poor family and founder of ATD Fourth World, they inaugurate a plaque in honour of the victims of extreme poverty. So begins the World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty, recognized by the United Nations in 1992 as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Since then, this day has been marked in more than 50 countries. People from all walks of life gather with those excluded, to celebrate their courage and recognize the equal dignity of all people.

DESCRIPTION

The story encourages children to think about how to interact with and respect people, in order to build friendships.

PURPOSE

Help youngsters realize that prejudices about poor people prevent them from opening up to them, considering them as people just like anyone else and including them in their projects.

ACTIVITY BREAKDOWN

* Read “It’s in the Bag! A Tale of Friendship” out loud. While you are telling the story, take the various items mentioned in the tale out of the shopping bags. Use the questions in italics as a framework for dialogue with the children. Show the children the illustrations while you are reading the story.

OR

* Read “It’s in the Bag! A Tale of Friendship” up to the asterisks. Then ask the children to finish the story using the “theatre-forum” technique (see last page), in order to explore other situations and imagine different endings. *Do these variations help people get along better together?* Then read the end of the story.

IDEAS

PREPARATION

Read carefully the story *It’s in the Bag! : a Tale of Friendship* and the following questions.

MATERIAL

Two shopping bags containing a picture of a chameleon, a copy of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a braided bracelet, a \$2 coin, paper bags for the children, Hampate Ba’s chameleon story and a sticker with the October 17 logo.

Appendix
“It’s in the Bag!: A Tale of Friendship”

Bibliographie

1. Hampaté Bâ, Amadou, *Sur les traces d’Amkoullel l’enfant peul*, Arles: Actes Sud, 1998.

BOAL, Augusto, *The theatre of the Oppressed*. New York: Urizen Books, 1979. Republished by Routledge Press in New York/London in 1982.

Tranversal skills

Intellectual skills

Exercise critical thought

...Personal and social skills

Develop one's personal identity.
Foster harmonious interpersonal relations.

Sectors

Socio-relational development

More

ATD Quart Monde also offers an activity kit designed to encourage awareness, thought, and action aimed at making sure all individuals receive due respect.

Important note

The October 17 Committee is organizing various events to mark the *World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty*. If you would like to take part or obtain additional material, please contact the committee at the following number :

(514) 279-0468

Tell us about your personal experience. We want to hear about children's real-life situations and what youngsters choose to do to make sure that none of their classmates are excluded, as well as how adults show their commitment.

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* Have the whole class prepare a "friendship" bag. The bag could be hung somewhere in the room and each child could add his or her own contribution. The October 17 logo and the slogan "Children want a better world for everybody. Join with them to overcome extreme poverty" could be shown on the bag. The bag could be filled once a month with new objects that in some way encourage people to combat exclusion and promote friendship.

* Encourage the children to create individual friendship bags that they can take home and fill with tokens of friendship.

* Use sheets of paper instead of bags. Stick the October 17 logo on the front. On the back, write "I've put the following items in my friendship bag..."

* Create a comic-strip version of the story or ask the children to create a new story based on the illustrations.

Food for thoughts (for teachers)

« There's nothing worse than someone who wants to do good instead of helping you do things yourself. » Yvette

What sort of attitude do we have toward the poorest members of our society? What do we know about their real-life situations and aspirations? Do we have a tendency to "buy" their silence with our charity?

Father Joseph Wresinski had the following words to say about people living in a shantytown: "What they need isn't particularly food and clothing. What all these people need is dignity, to no longer have to depend on other people's goodwill."

Do we have the courage to stand up and say that we want a society where everyone has a place, where people respect each other's equal dignity, and where everyone has the same rights? How do we reinforce school children who dare to say No to injustice and refuse to exclude classmates, in order to encourage other youngsters to follow their lead and offer their friendship to children of other skin colours, to children who are shorter or taller, badly dressed or find school more of a challenge? How can we help youngsters get to know each other, to understand, respect and help one another?

October 17 is an opportunity for underprivileged people to bear witness:

« It's a special tribute for us, for poor people. It makes us aware that we're part of society. It's a chance to dare to say things in a more special way. People want to hear what we have to say, to show their solidarity in their own way, to show that they feel concerned.» Yvette

« If people get into the spirit of October 17, they'll give us a hand, not take our place, because that would make us feel as if we weren't capable.. » Madeleine

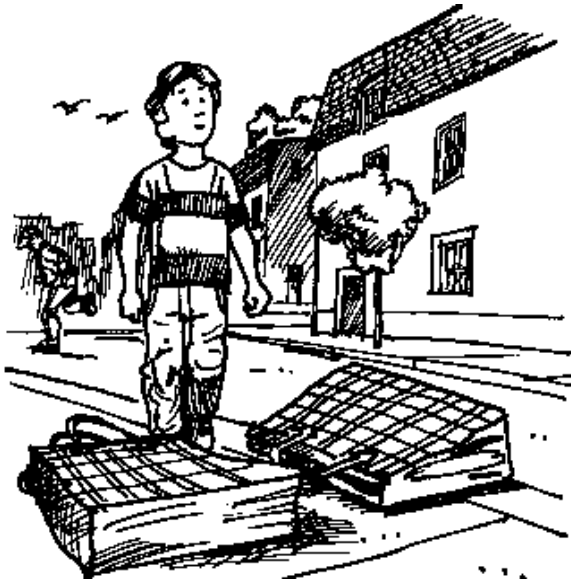


It's in the bag!

A Tale of friendship



It was early fall. Summer was over and the children had headed back to the classrooms. An elderly lady carrying two large and apparently heavy shopping bags was making her way slowly past the school. You could tell from her face that she was very tired. Suddenly, a buzzer sounded: it was 3:30, and school was out for the day! A crowd of happy youngsters rushed out into the street and began to make their way home. Suddenly, two particularly excited boys appeared out of nowhere at top speed. Perhaps they were having a race, or maybe they'd been quarrelling and one of them was trying to get his hands on the other one. In any case, it was too late to stop! They ran smack into the old lady and she dropped her bags.

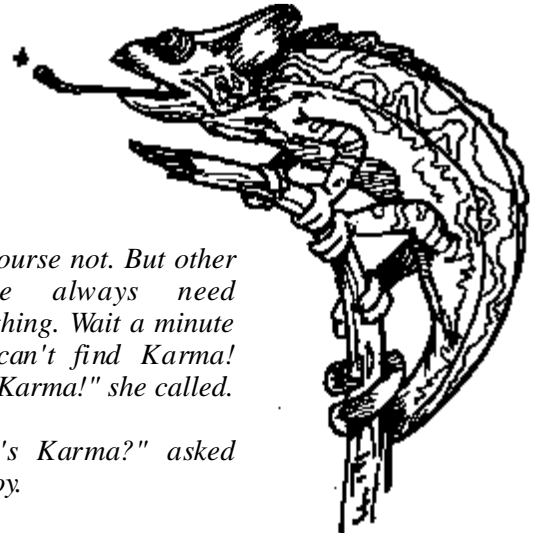


Vexed, she said, "Slow down and watch where you're going! The least you could do is help me pick up my bags." One of the boys kept running, but the other slowed down and stopped. He bent over and picked up one of the shopping bags.

"Gosh, it's heavy! What do you have in your bags?" he asked the lady.

"My treasure," she answered, smiling.

"You mean money and jewels?"



"Of course not. But other people always need something. Wait a minute? I can't find Karma! Here Karma!" she called.

"Who's Karma?" asked the boy.

"My chameleon. He was in one of my bags."

"A chameleon! What a strange pet! You must lose him a lot," laughed the boy. "He'll be hard to find. Chameleons are afraid of everything! They change colour at the drop of a hat to avoid quarrels."

"What does a boy your age know about chameleons? Ah, there he is!" said the woman, bending over and scooping up Karma.

"I know a lot about chameleons! They're cowardly!"

"There's an African poet called Hampate Ba who knows a great deal about chameleons," said the lady.

"He wrote that when a chameleon arrives somewhere, it takes on the colour of its

Have you ever behaved or seen someone else behave like a chameleon? In what sorts of situations?

surroundings. It has nothing to do with hypocrisy: it's a matter of tolerance and good manners. As the poet writes, rubbing other people the wrong way doesn't help anything. Nothing good has ever come out of a fight."

"So chameleons aren't really cowardly," mused the boy. "Maybe they've got the right idea."

The old lady rummaged in her shopping bag and found a piece of paper. Handing it to the boy, she said, "Here. You can reread what the poet wrote. I noted it down: it's part of my treasure. I knew somebody might need it. If I'm not mistaken, you and your friend weren't having a friendly race, were you?"

With a thoughtful expression, the child took the sheet and repeated to himself, "Nothing good has ever come out of a fight." Then, in a louder voice, he told the lady that he and his friend had been playing a game. But he wasn't very convincing. As he headed down the street, he looked back over his shoulder and called out, "I'll remember your story about the chameleon! I'll tell it to my family!" The old lady smiled, picked up her bags and went slowly along her way.

By this time most of the children had already hurried past. After just a few steps, however, the old lady stopped again. A noise had caught her attention. She looked around and saw a little girl about ten years old leaning against the schoolyard wall, crying. Moved, the lady went up to the girl.



"Hello sweetheart. What's wrong? Can I help?"

"My name isn't Sweetheart," answered the girl. "And I'm tired of being called names. Nobody even knows my real name."

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to insult you."

"It's okay. But I wish people would stop forgetting my name. It makes me feel like I'm no one."

"You're right to be annoyed that nobody calls you by your name."

The old lady started digging around in one of her bags. She pulled out a copy of a document marked "Convention on the Rights of the Child." Leafing through the document, she stopped on a page and said, "There it is! I knew it was written somewhere!"

Who is the old lady? How do you imagine her?

"What?" asked the girl.

"This is a document that explains children's rights. It's called a convention. It's written here on this page, 'Everyone has the right to a real name and to be respected.'"

"A convention on children's rights? I didn't know that children have rights," said the girl.

"Of course they do. Here, you can keep this copy."

"It's incredible: you have just what I need! Are your bags magic?"

"It's true that they're a bit magical. I carry around a lot of odds and ends. I pick up things here and there that I think might be useful for building bonds of friendship."

How would you define "bonds of friendship"? Try to find an example.

"What are bonds of friendship?"

"It's like when you quarrel with a friend and then make up".

The girl nodded. "It's like at home. My little brother and I had a quarrel, and afterwards he came and gave me a bracelet to make up. We live in a tiny apartment, and there are four kids in the family. We all sleep in the same room. My little brother follows me everywhere, and sometimes I feel like I'm suffocating, like there isn't enough space to breathe."

"I see. But there must be times when it's fun to share a room with three other children."

The girl giggled. "We have pillow fights. And we tell each other secrets and scary stories before we go to sleep. It's true that we quarrel a lot, but we also know how to make up". The old lady and the little girl smiled at each other and then headed off in opposite directions.

When she got to the corner of the street, the old lady eased herself down on a bench near a playground. Accompanied by their parents, some children were playing on the swings. The lady sat quietly for a moment, watching the youngsters enjoy themselves. But she was ill at ease. She had the feeling that someone was watching her. All of a sudden, a little boy stepped in front of her and said, "Here, lady, this is for you." He handed her a coin.

The lady replied, "Thanks very much, but I don't want your money. Keep it for yourself." The boy

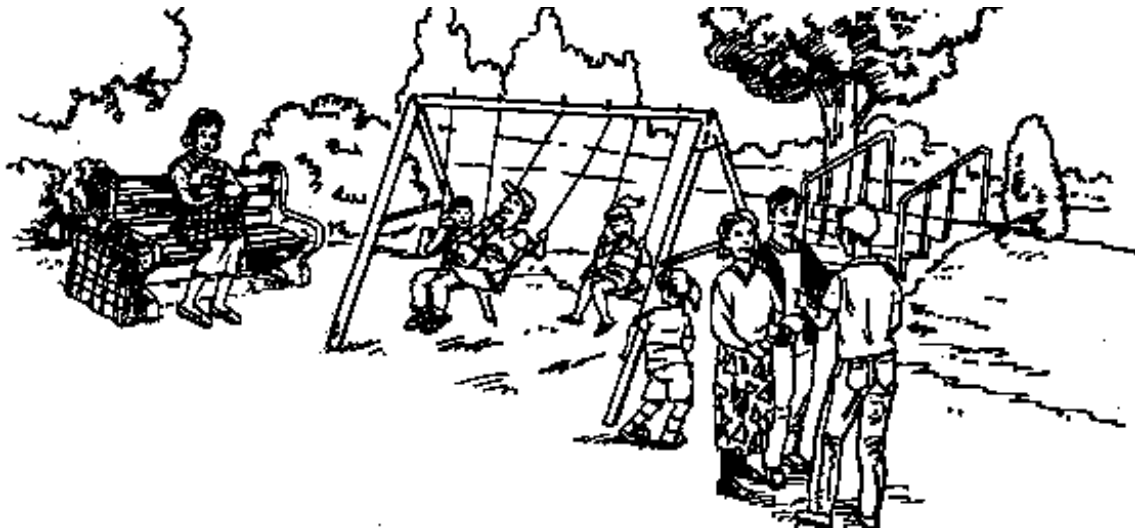
was clearly confused. He stood there staring at the lady and her bags. Observing the situation, the boy's mother stepped up.

The old lady tried to explain. "It's true, I'm poor. And it's true that I need help. But I didn't ask you for anything. Respect and dignity are terribly important for people like me. What I really need is for someone to talk to me about friendship, because that's a topic I know something about. I don't just want people to offer me food or money."

With these words, she pulled a paper bag out of her shopping bag and handed it to the boy. "Here, take this. You can use it to carry things to build friendships. There are too many wars and too much misery in the world. But the earth, sun and rain belong to everyone. We're all part of the same family."

What do you think? In your opinion, what does the elderly lady need most?

How would you finish her story?



Theatre-forum, also called "theatre of the oppressed," was created in Peru. The goal is to make the people in the audience actors in the play ? in other words, active participants who can have an impact on society. Theatre-forum depicts conflict situations commonly experienced by spectators. At any time during the play, a spectator can stop the action and replace one of the actors or add his or her own character to the play. People can interrupt the play by clapping their hands. At replacement) character is ready, he or she claps his or her hands a second time and the action starts up again. Theatre-forum helps people understand the underlying and encourages them to build a better future by mechanisms of injustice and exclusion coming up with solutions in a fictional setting. In short, it helps prepare people for real-life action. Based on Augusto Boal's The Theatre of the Oppressed (see bibliography).