



SHIP OF FRIENDS

The aim of this lesson is for the children to practise their thinking using the topic of friendship. Perhaps most importantly, friendship is an important concept for all young people. They think a lot about who their friends really are and what being a friend means. So this poem works well to get a discussion going that includes everyone, regardless of academic and verbal ability. They can also discover how the same word can mean different things to different people, and that by defining what we mean we can often share our ideas more effectively.

“

Is it the first one I ever made?
Or the one who, when I owed money, paid?
Perhaps the one who never lied?
Or the one who always took my side?
Which of them above the rest
Is the biggest one of all, the best?

Is it who I call or text the most?
Or is it the very generous host?
The one who's rich and gives me half ?
The one who always makes me laugh?
Maybe someone dead and gone?
Unless ... can I have more than one?

”

Plan

1. Read the poem to the class.
2. Give them some silent thinking-time to take it in.
3. Read it again but this time ask them if there are any words or phrases that they don't understand.
4. When you finish the second reading project the poem on the board for the children to examine. (With the poem on the board, the children can come up and point to the lines or words they are talking about). Ask them to think of questions about the poem, and talk about it in pairs. After a few minutes collect and list the questions. Ask if anyone can think of possible answers to any of the questions.
5. As the answers to the questions come, listen until they finish, then prompt children to link their ideas to other people's by saying 'Who else said something like that?', 'Is there anyone you agree/disagree with?'. If they do this themselves, praise it, and say that it is one of the skills you are looking for.
6. In order to understand the poem children need to see that each line is another way of describing or defining a 'best friend' – a way of choosing from amongst our friends. This should come out of the discussion, though it is possible you might sometimes have to steer them into thinking about it (eg 'Does 'it' mean the same thing in each sentence?' 'What does it mean/refer to?'. When a child does say it explicitly, then highlight this to the whole class. Make sure everyone gets to this level of understanding before the tasks below.

Task 1:

Ask the children to say which of these ideas is the best one (i.e. which one do they think is really a best friend?). This will probably come up anyway in the initial discussion.

Task 2:

The last line asks if you can have 'more than one'. What does it mean? (Can you have two best friends? Could you have two best friends who weren't friends with each other?)

Task 3:

Ask why the poem is called the Ship of Friends. Someone will see that it comes from the word 'friendship'. The author heard the word and thought of a ship. Why did the author like the idea of a ship of friends?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Write a story called 'The Ship of Friends'. Why were the people friends? Why were they in the ship? Where were they going? Did they all get on well? What happened when they got there?