



Literacy

A story about friendship

THE RED AND BLUE ROBE

As the Italian proverb says, "who finds a friend, finds a treasure", a friend is something precious, possibly for life. Though friendship must be cultivated: protected and nurtured. Around this topic you are asked to become first a philosopher and then a writer... Try it out!

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| Discipline area | Writing, Reading and Literature |
| Topic | Relationships |
| Estimated time | 2 h |
| Learning goals | <p>If you go through the whole unit, you will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop critical thinking and conflict solution skills • improve your ability to think logically and to formulate and communicate your thoughts • learn to listen to others before forming your own opinions |

Warm-up

What is most important in friendship?

Share your answers and discuss with your buddy the following questions:

1. **Why** do you consider this most important?
2. **What happens** if this element is missing?
3. **What feelings** are connected to it?

Learn

1

This is a **short story** from the Congo, relevant for any friendship around the world. Together with your buddy take turns reading out loud the story to each other, help each other in understanding the terms you might not know yet.

A story about friendship

The red and blue cloak – A story from the Congo



There were once two friends who had grown up together and promised each other **eternal friendship**.

When they grew up, they got married and they each built their own house right across from each other with only a small path separating them.

One day **a trickster came** to the village. He had heard about this unique friendship and decided to **put it to the test**.

The red and blue cloak – A story from the Congo



He dressed himself in an extraordinarily beautiful robe of two colors. The cloak was split down the middle: it was **red on the right side** and **blue on the left side**.

Dressed in this beautiful cloak, he walked through the narrow path between the two friends' houses. Both friends were out working in their respective small fields, directly opposite each other.

The **trickster whistled loudly** where he went, so that the two friends, at exactly the same time, had to look up from their work and watch him walking between their houses.



At the end of the day, when they finished their work, one friend said to the other, "Wasn't that a beautiful **red** cloak that man wore today?"
"No," answered his friend; "it was a beautiful **blue** cloak."
"I saw the man quite clearly as he walked between us," said the first.
"His cloak was **red**."
"You are mistaken," said the other; "I also saw it quite clearly. It was **blue!**"
"I know what I saw," insisted the first; "the cloak was **red!**"
"You know nothing," answered the other angrily; "it was **blue**."
"Sure," cried the first, "so **you think I'm stupid!** I know what I saw. It was red!"



They started **fighting**, kicking and punching each other, rolling around on the ground screaming.
In that moment, the trickster returned.
He stood directly in front of the two men who were punching and kicking each other, and who shouted: "**Our friendship is over.**"

The trickster walked straight towards them, showing off his beautiful cloak.
He laughed out loud at their silly argument.
The two friends saw his cloak. They saw how it was split down the middle with a red side and a blue side.



The two friends stopped fighting and **shouted at the man** with the cloak:

"We have lived as brothers, side by side all our lives. It is your fault that we started fighting and fighting each other. You started a war between us."

"Don't blame me," replied the trickster; "It wasn't me who made you quarrel.
You are both wrong and both right.
Yes, because you **both told the truth**. You argue and fight because you only saw my cloak **from one point of view.**"

2

Together with your buddy, find and write down answers to the following questions:

1. How long have the boys been **best friends**?
2. How and why did they start a **quarrel**?
3. What could have been done to **avoid this conflict**?

