



You've Got a Friend

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eBook ISBN 978-1-78849-075-7**Judi Curtin**

Teaching Guide

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RATIONALE & THEMES

Molly's dad, Eddie, has returned from Africa to live in Ireland, however her initial delight at having him back in her life is tempered by the pall of unhappiness that seems to surround him.

His departure to Africa had prompted the breakup of her family and her mum is now in a new relationship with Jim, who is Molly's best friend's dad.

Worried about her dad's unhappiness and his inability to reconnect with any of his old friends, particularly his brother Stephen, Molly and Beth decide to help.

Determined to discover the cause of the distance between her dad and his brother, the girls use Rico's time portal to revisit the past and discover why the two men's relationship is damaged.

The themes explored are:

- Friendship
- Family disputes
- Bullying and its effects
- Memories
- Gender roles and equality
- Resentments
- Parenting styles
- Time travel
- Forgiveness
- Misunderstandings
- Feelings

SUMMARY

When her dad returns from Africa to live permanently in Ireland, Molly's initial delight is tempered by the realization that things can never be as they were, as Molly's mum is now in a new relationship with her best friend Beth's dad.

Eddie's attempts at social integration seem awkward. His relationship with his only brother, Stephen, which was always strained, hasn't been improved by his absence.

When her best efforts to help her dad prove unsuccessful, Molly and Beth decide to use their own personal time portal at the back of Rico's quaint shop to visit the past and investigate Eddie's childhood in an attempt to identify the reason for his sadness. There they discover a trail of misunderstandings that help to explain the distance between Eddie and Stephen and point to the source of his sadness.

Using information they gathered from their sortie into the past and an artifact that they manage to retrieve and transport back through time, they are able to restore the brothers' relationship and re-establish an ambition that they had held together as children.

APPROACH

This is a gentle tale of a relationship damaged by misunderstanding and bullying. It recounts how Molly and Beth move across time as they try to help Molly's father and his brother re-establish their friendship.

The themes sit firmly within the remit of the SPHE and PDMU guidelines. Development can be more effectively facilitated with small group discussion.

The guide has been divided into 3 sections to reflect the development of the story.

Section 1 The Dad Child Pages 5 - 89

SUMMARY

Molly and Beth are best friends and their relationship has strengthened since Beth and her father, Jim, moved in with Molly and her mother to live as a family.

When an invitation to attend a party at Jim's work excludes Molly, she finds herself left behind at home to entertain herself.

Feeling abandoned, Molly answers the phone to her father and is shocked to discover that he is standing on her doorstep.

Her amazement turns to delight when he explains that he has decided to return to Ireland permanently.

Molly is a bit worried about her mum's reaction to the sudden reappearance of her father, but he reassures her that it was arranged as a surprise and when the others return from the party, the greetings are cordial, much to Molly's relief.

Molly soon discovers the disadvantage of having her father back, when he decides to have opinions about her social life and blocks an invitation to a party that she and Beth were hoping to attend.

Molly and Beth decide that having a kitten might cheer her dad up and ask Beth's uncle Graham if he would donate one from a litter he is trying to find homes for.

When Graham cautions them to check with Eddie first, they are surprised that his refusal is emphatic. He reveals that once he had a cat called Pablo and hints at a painful memory that he is reluctant to revisit.

A conversation with her mother casts no light for Molly on either Pablo or a reason for the distance between her father and his brother Stephen. She agrees that resolving the issue causing the distance is the key to her dad finding contentment.

Molly and Beth then decide to use Rico's time portal to return to 1975, to her dad's childhood, to identify (and if possible, repair) what has caused the alienation from his brother.

Their first encounter is with Billy, an obnoxious bully, who seems to be causing problems for young Eddie. The girls are forced to resort to electronic deception to persuade him to give them directions to her dad's house.

Meeting Eddie, the 7-year-old version of her father, confirms his bond with Pablo, a 3-legged tabby. They learn that Stephen has been ill in hospital for a long time and Eddie is feeling lonely and crushed by Billy's bullying, however there is nothing to indicate why the adult versions of the brothers are so distant and the girls must investigate further.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- (Read pp 24 & 28-31): Molly's dad had left to live in Africa and her parents had separated causing a lot of anger and unhappiness. Now he has returned and Molly has given him a warm yet cautious welcome. What level of contribution should he expect to have now towards decisions about Molly. Should he have interfered with their party invitations?
- (Read pp31): Molly's mum has made it clear that Molly's contribution to the discussion has ended. The decision on whether she will be allowed to attend the party will be taken by the adults. How much weight should Molly's opinion have been given? Are adults always better at making difficult decisions? Which decisions should children be allowed to make independently?
- (Read pp61-65): Molly and Beth use a bizarre time portal to travel into the past. The thought of time travel is compelling and exciting. Why does the notion of time travel appeal to us?
- (Read pp70-71): Billy is an unpleasant bully and he has targeted Eddie and Stephen because they are different; they prefer writing to whatever entertains Billy. Why do some people have difficulty accepting differences in others? Why is difference seen as a threat? Which differences cause the most hostile and unfriendly reactions?

ACTIVITIES

1. Annoying (Read pp9-10)

Generally, our parents love us dearly and try their best to make decisions that are in our best interests. However, there is no doubt that at times they can seem very annoying.

Write a humorous cinquain poem to describe how annoying a parent can be at times.

You can present it as a card to your mum/dad afterwards to make them smile or maybe think.

writeshop.com/writing-a-cinquain-poem/

2. Dad & Mum (Read pp20-25)

Molly is delighted to see her dad, but then

she remembers her mum's reaction when they separated.

She loves both parents, but her mum has been there and looked after her and Molly doesn't want to hurt her.

Molly and Beth decide to create an advice leaflet that they intend to give to all three parents with suggestions on how they can live without disagreement.

Can you help them to create the leaflet?

nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/separation-divorce-and-contact/

3. Reconsider Please (Read pp28-32)

Annoyed that permission to go to the party has been withdrawn, Molly and Beth decide to write a letter of complaint to their parents objecting to their decision and asking them to change their minds.

What type of letter should it be? Will a long moaning, angry letter be effective? Can you help them to write the letter?

4. Pablo (Read pp49-52)

Molly's father tells her something of the story of Pablo, but a lot of the information is incomplete.

Use your imagination to create the story of Pablo and how he arrived in the children's life, explain what happened to his leg and why he was so attached to Molly's dad.

5. It's Different (Read p55)

Molly and Beth are amazed and entertained by the changes they see when they travel into the past. However, changes are happening every day that are only noticeable after a few years have passed.

Working in small groups, try to identify 5 interesting changes that you have noticed in your lifetime. The changes can be in any area e.g. fashion, music, your environment etc.

6. Beating the Bully (Read p86)

Eddie is unhappy because of Billy's cruel bullying and the advice from his parents on how to deal with it doesn't seem to be very effective.

Molly and Beth decide to teach him a rap that he can say to himself that contains useful advice on how to deal with Billy.

Can you help them to compose the rap?

wikihow.com/Write-Lyrics-to-a-Rap-or-Hip-Hop-Song

7. Girls' or Boys' Jobs (Read pp88-89)

Molly and Beth are shocked to hear Eddie talking about jobs for boys and jobs for girls, however when your parents were children these ideas were acceptable.

Interview your parents / grandparents and ask how jobs were gender assigned and compare this with the position today.

Use two Venn diagrams, one for the past and one for today to show your results.

The diagrams will have two interlocking sets for boys and girls with the interlocking area for jobs that both genders can do.

Section 2 A Narrow Escape Pages 90-163

SUMMARY

When Eddie is called indoors by his mum, Molly and Beth still have no idea what has caused the problem between the brothers and decide to investigate a little further.

When they meet two girls wheeling a strange-looking bike, Molly can only stare as the girls introduce themselves as Donna and Pam and explain the bike is called a 'chopper'.

Invited to join them, they return to Donna's house to a whirlwind introduction to teenage life, music tastes, dress codes and social conventions from the 1970s.

Before they leave, they learn that Stephen, who has been in hospital for months, is to return today and that Pablo is to be removed permanently to an animal shelter to avoid infection.

Realizing the effect that the separation will have on Eddie, Molly and Beth are determined to intervene and arrive outside Eddie's house in time to witness Stephen's return from hospital and the casual snub Eddie experiences as Stephen and all his toys are swept past him into the house.

Shortly afterwards they witness the heartbreaking scene as Eddie watches his dad take Pablo to the animal shelter and is cautioned never to reveal the reason for the cat's departure to his brother.

Finding him later in his tree house, they try in vain to comfort him, realizing now that the blame Eddie holds against Stephen has coloured their friendship ever since.

When Eddie is summoned by his mum for his meal, the girls leave the tree house, frustrated at being ineffective and Beth

distractedly steps into the road in the path of an oncoming car and is knocked down, requiring admission to hospital.

Molly's distress melts to relief when it is confirmed that Beth's injuries are superficial. However, the episode becomes awkward when the doctor announces that Beth will have to stay in hospital overnight for observation and the nurse asks for contact details so that her parents can be informed.

Managing to deflect initial enquiries, Molly is forced to return to the tree house to spend the night where she discovers a book of stories that the brothers had been writing together. On impulse, she decides to take it with her.

In the morning she plunders an assortment of clothes for Beth from a clothes line and manages to rescue her before the nurse involves the police, as they both scramble out of the hospital and through the return portal in Rico's shop back to their own time.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **(Read p96):** Donna made a copy of the song on her recorder rather than buy the record. Why does she not understand this as piracy? Why are some types of theft acceptable? When does taking something without paying stop being theft?
- **(Read pp99-100):** Pam's and Donna's opinions on gender roles and equality surprise Molly and Beth. Should any job be exclusively male or female? How should employment be structured reasonably so that it is available for everyone? How might society change if gender equality was universal?
- **(Read p106):** Molly and Beth are surprised at the craft skills that Pam and Donna have developed. Is Molly's mum correct, that social media usage has affected the development of other skills we might have? How can we protect ourselves from the negative effects of the overuse of social media?
- **(Read p109):** Pam explains that Eddie's dad will announce that Pablo must go, without any warning. How should unpleasant news be given to children? Why did Eddie's dad do it this way? Are there advantages in the 'quick break' approach?
- **(Read p144):** Molly struggles to understand why her grandparents did not notice that Eddie was lonely and is grateful that she is an only child. Is it possible for parents to treat each of their children equally? How does your place in the family determine whether you are treated more or less favourably than older

or younger siblings?

ACTIVITIES

1. The Room (Read p94)

Molly and Beth are appalled by the decoration in Donna's room.

Can you write a description including an illustration of the worst decoration you have ever seen in a bedroom?

2. Face Cream (Read pp103-105)

Molly and Beth dismiss the face cream advert as misleading and patronizing.

When Donna challenges them about what the advert should say, the girls decide to respond with a 'cool' modern ethical advert. Can you help them create the illustration and copy for their advert?

3. Billy (Read p110)

Molly dismisses Billy and his behaviour, though secretly she shudders to think of the adult he will grow to be.

Create a character profile for him as an adult? Who will he be? How will he behave? What job will he have? How will others feel about him or behave towards him?

4. Welcome Home (Read p112)

Even in his sadness, Eddie has missed his brother and looks forward to seeing him again.

To welcome him home, he and Pablo have made him a card containing a poem and a picture.

Create a copy of the card they made for him.

5. Comments (Read p118)

The comments his father make to Eddie seem very insensitive.

All parents should be careful about what they say to their children as the effects of their comments can last a long time.

Working in groups, make a list of the 5 things that parents should say to their children every day and a list of the 5 things that they should never, ever say to their children.

Include an explanation of the effects that these comments might have.

6. Problems (Read p137)

Molly and Beth scan the problem page in the magazine to amuse themselves.

After they have read all the problems, they decide to compose imaginary problems and answers themselves.

First Molly outlines a problem and Beth replies with an appropriate answer, then they swap roles.

They manage to invent three problems each before the nurse returns.

Recreate the problems and answers they imagined.

7. Dear Eddie (Read p150)

Overwhelmed by the story that Eddie has written, Molly decides to write a short sequel to it without revealing too much detail about what the future holds for him, so that he has something to look forward to.

Help her to compose what she should write.

8. Mysterious (Read p163)

When the police arrive at the hospital, Molly and Beth cannot be found.

Concerned at their disappearance, the policewoman takes a statement from the nurse and goes to Castle Street to investigate before making her report.

Make a copy of her report and conclusions on the strange disappearance of the girls who seemed to vanish without trace.

Section 3 Pablo comes Home Pages 164-238

SUMMARY

Exiting through Rico's time portal, Molly and Beth consider everything that they discovered, yet still have no clear insight into the cause of the distance between her father and his brother.

Arriving home, their mother's interest is aroused when she sees Beth still dressed in the clothes that Molly stole, wearing a hospital identity bracelet and is only diverted with a threadbare explanation and a clever distraction.

Returning from school next day the girls meet Stephen, Molly's uncle. During the conversation, they take the opportunity, armed with information from their visit to 1975, to probe his attitude to the distance between himself and his brother.

Aware that it exists, but with no clear understanding why, he is persuaded to accompany them to her dad's house where Molly hopes that they will be able to talk, identify and resolve the issue that separates them.

Initially the exchanges are stiff and formal until Beth utters the key word – 'Pablo' –

to provide the prompt for them to discuss honestly their feelings towards each other, while she and Molly retire to the garden to give them space to have the conversation that was long overdue.

When the evening chill finally drives them back indoors, the girls are delighted to see the reconciliation between the brothers. However, before they leave, Molly has another surprise and presents them with their book of 'Hector the Brave' adventure stories that she brought back from the tree house, suggesting that they should revive him together.

Molly books a place on a community writing course for her dad's birthday only to discover that he and Stephen have already signed up together.

Now at a loss for another present idea, Beth suggests they return to 1975 with an amazing plan in mind.

Meeting with Pam and Donna again, they are able to orientate their time line and realize that there is still time to visit the animal shelter where they are able to intercept Eddie's dad and secure possession of Pablo before he is dropped off, enabling them to bring him back with them through Rico's time portal.

Nervously, the girls offer the present to Molly's father, unsure of his reaction, however when Pablo taps his cheek with a paw, a trick that young Eddie taught him, he is overwhelmed and the girls make their exit, leaving Pablo and Eddie to renew their friendship.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **(Read p180):** Eddie and Stephen were shy boys and Billy was able to convince them that writing stories was silly. Why did they allow him to do that? How does peer pressure encourage you to behave in a way that you might not be comfortable with? Can you think of examples where peer pressure is positive?
- **(Read p223):** Eddie's father becomes irritated with Beth and Molly, annoyed that they are challenging his decision. His view is that adults make the decisions and that children should be seen but not heard. Is he being reasonable? Should children always have the opportunity to express their opinion? Are adults the only ones able to have sensible opinions?
- **(Read p229):** Rico allows Molly and Beth to bring Pablo back with them, explaining that animals interpret time differently. They simply live in the present moment. What does he mean by this? How would

life be different for us if we had no understanding of past or future? Could we live without memories or dreams? What type of life might it be?

- **(Read p237):** Eddie explains that although his parents were strict, they loved him and tried to do their best for him. How is it possible to love someone in spite of their faults and not because of their virtues? Why is it important to recognize faults as well as virtues in someone? Which do we tend to concentrate on when we think of someone?

ACTIVITIES

1. Time Travel **(Read pp161-167 & 228)**

As the girls pass through his shop, Rico reaches under his counter and smiling, hands them a small folder each.

Inside they find a leaflet explaining time travel and a list of rules for what they can do and what they mustn't do.

They also find instructions on how they can develop their time travel experience and survive in a different time zones as well as information on the Time Traveller Community and how they can join.

Finally, there is a special badge for them to wear so that they will be able to recognize other travellers.

Can you create the contents and design for the folder?

2. Animal Friends **(Read pp194-195)**

When he was lonely, Eddie was comforted by Pablo.

There are many examples of how pets and other animals can provide support to humans.

To highlight the benefits that pets and other animals can bring, the animal shelter has organized a poster competition to show how a pet / animal can be an asset to our lives.

Can you submit an entry?

3. Hector the Brave **(Read p199)**

Stephen recognizes the story of Hector and the crocodile that he and Eddie had written together when they were children.

Together they read it aloud, a paragraph each, while Molly and Beth listen amazed.

Can you make a copy of the story and read it as they might have read it?

4. A Day to Remember **(Read p208)**

On a previous visit to the past, Beth got to spend the day with her mum as a young girl.

It was special because Beth's mum died when she was a baby and she had no memory of her.

Now she remembers each detail of that day vividly.

Can you describe in detail a time that you spent with someone special who meant a lot to you?

5. Memento **(Read p235)**

Molly has returned to the past and brought Pablo back with her.

If you were able to go back to any time or place in the past, what memento would you return with and how would you use it?

You can add an illustration if you wish.

6. WOW **(Read pp213-214 & 228)**

Unknown to Molly and Beth, Donna and Pam decide to follow them and secretly find their way through Rico's time portal to spend a short period in 2018.

The author thought it might be interesting to include a short description of their experience.

Create the paragraph that she might have written.

7. Emoji **(Read p238)**

Emoji can be a fun way to communicate without using any words.

(The word comes from two Japanese words meaning Picture Words)

In small groups make a list of your 10 favourite emoji and explain what they mean.

With a friend, can you create a conversation using ONLY emoji?

The first two books about Molly and Beth's time-travelling adventures

