



Friends
and



You Meet Your Friend

Poem by Kassia

**You meet your friend,
your face
Brightens—you have struck
gold.**





BEFORE READING

Before you read "Best Friends," look at the title and the subheadings. Who are the two best friends in the article? Find the part where Brian talks about his friend, and then the part where Osman talks about his friend.

ARTICLE BY
*Arlene
Erlbach*

PICTURES BY
*Kevin
Ghiglione*

Best Friends

You laugh with your best friend. You cry with your best friend. You share secrets you'd never tell anyone else. Your best friend is sometimes closer to you than any of your family members. A best friend can be a second self.

Yet sometimes your best friend makes you mad. Then you swear you'll never speak again – no matter what! You usually make up. Some people even remain best friends when they grow up.



Brian and Osman talk about being best friends

Brian “People sometimes think I’m older than Osman because I’m so much bigger than he is.

We’re the same age, but I’m big for my age and Osman is small. My mom says we look like Mutt and Jeff—two old-fashioned comic strip characters.

“I liked Osman right from the minute I met him. I found out that he’s into football, basketball, and collecting comic books—the things I like best. We’re both wild about comic books. We both have stacks of them. Someday our comics will be worth lots of money, and Osman and I will both be rich.

“I go over to Osman’s house more than

he comes to mine. His older married sister lives with them. She has a baby, and Osman has to watch the baby for her when she works. I don’t mind. We still have fun together. Even when Osman doesn’t have to watch the baby, I still like going to his house. He has a basketball hoop on his garage, and I love playing basketball. We can play basketball for hours and talk, and it feels like we’ve only been playing a few minutes.



Osman (left)
and Brian (right)

“Osman’s parents speak Spanish, not English, so I can’t understand them. They’re probably not talking about anything I’d be interested in anyhow. And maybe Osman can teach me Spanish. That way we’ll have a language that’s secret from certain people.

“Sometimes people wonder how it feels to be so much bigger than your best friend. It doesn’t matter to me at all. What matters is what kind of person somebody is. Size doesn’t count.”

Osman “I like Brian because he tells good jokes, he collects comic books, and he likes basketball. Also, he’s a lot nicer than most other kids I know. When we’re playing basketball, he doesn’t hog the ball or make sure he gets it first. Sometimes kids do that to me because I’m small.

“When Brian and I play basketball, we like to make believe that we’re big stars, like Michael Jordan or Larry Bird. I don’t do that with other guys—maybe they’d think it was dumb. Or maybe other guys pretend that they’re basketball stars, too, when they’re playing and don’t admit it to anyone. They’d think that other guys would think that was dorky. Still, I won’t tell any other guys that we do that.

A best friend is someone who will laugh at your jokes.

Laura Hickey, age 9



Brian (left) and Osman (right)

TIP: Best friendships are special.

**My best friend is cool
because he stands up
for me and helps me out.**

Al Mandani, age 10



"Brian and I like video games. He has Nintendo and I have Sega. I read all the game magazines, so I know lots of strategies not many other kids know. I've even learned some strategies myself because I play a lot. Brian is the only person I discuss new game strategies with. I don't want everyone to know about them. That way, they can get to higher levels sooner than we do, and I want us to be the first ones to reach them.

"One thing I wish is that I could go to Brian's house more, but I can't. I need to baby-sit for my nephew. It doesn't matter that much. A best friend is a best friend, no matter where you see him." ◆

**I like my best friend
because I can tell her my
secrets.**

Melissa Abate, age 9

They take time.

RESPONDING

to BEST FRIENDS

FOLLOW UP

Brian and Osman told you a lot about each other in the article. Would you like to be friends with Osman, with Brian, or with both of them? Why?

Interview Some Best Friends

You can find out more about best friends by interviewing them. That's what author Arlene Erlbach did: she talked to Brian about Osman, and to Osman about Brian, and wrote down what they told her. Choose a pair of friends your age or older and ask them a few questions like these:

Understanding the Article

- One reason Brian and Osman are friends is that they like doing the same things. They have a lot in common. Make a list of four things they like to do together.
- Osman has to baby-sit a lot. How do Brian and Osman make sure this doesn't cause problems in their friendship?
- What do you think is the best thing about having a friend?

How did you meet each other?

What things do you like to do together?

Do you ever have fights?

How do you make up?

Think of two more questions you might want to ask.

Take notes of the answers the pair of friends tell you.

If you like, you could write an article just like *Best Friends*.

TIP > If your school has a web site, create a page that asks friendship questions.

**High Score
for Good
Reading!**



Make a Good Friends Scrapbook

Wouldn't you like to look through a book of memories? Think of a friend you have, or one you would like to have. You can fill a scrapbook with things that remind you of good times you've had together. First make a list of some things to save in your Good Friends Scrapbook.

Imagine how you'll feel when you're an adult and you open a scrapbook from the age you are now!



Suggestions for your scrapbook:

- ticket stubs from a movie you saw together
- pictures of sports stars or singers you both like
- letters, postcards, and e-mail messages you sent each other

Friendship Collage

Read the quotes on pages 4 and 5 from students your age. Do you agree with their ideas about what makes a best friend?

Get together with a small group or the whole class and add your ideas about friends.

Turn your ideas into a big Friendship Collage. Find pictures in magazines. You could add photographs and drawings of yourself and your friends.

A Good Friend...

*always
understands me*

*makes me
laugh*

*knows when I'm
just kidding*



BEFORE READING

This is a true story.
It happened when
the author was
about your age. As
you read it, think
about the “old days
on the Prairies.”

- What things were
the same as now?
- What things were
different?

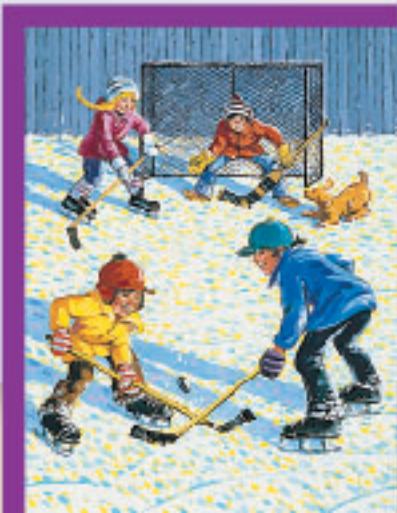
THE Moccasin Goalie

STORY AND PICTURES BY

William Roy
Brownridge

A LONG TIME AGO when I was a boy, my family lived
on the Prairies in a small town called Willow. The

winters there were very cold, with
the wind blowing the deep snow
into huge drifts. My friends and I
didn't mind. This was our favourite
time of year. Cold temperatures
meant ice, and ice meant hockey!





I had four best friends. We lived for hockey.

Anita had long braids that flew out behind her when she skated. Marcel was big and quiet and good at sports. Then there was the tough little guy we nicknamed “Petou.” And finally there was my dog Bingo, who always tried to steal the puck.

I was the goalie. I had a twisted leg and foot, so I couldn’t wear skates. But my leather moccasins were just fine. I was quick and could slide across the goalmouth

really fast. They called me “Moccasin Danny.”

Before the really cold weather brought ice to our rink, we played road hockey right on Main Street in front of the Red & White store. Pieces of firewood or old overshoes marked our goals. We didn’t have streetlights, and sometimes after dark we’d play by the light spilling from the store windows.

Often, on stormy days, Mom let us play inside with a soft ball of sponge rubber.

As time went by, we became more and more impatient for the day when we could play real hockey.



When winter finally arrived, the rink was the centre of attention. The men and big boys began the flooding. We watched as the ice became thick and smooth. Later, our job would be to keep it clear of snow. We spent hours scraping and sweeping so we could drop the puck on beautiful gleaming ice.

Dad said we had hockey on the brain. Mom said she heard me talking about hockey in my sleep.



One morning there was a surprise at the rink. Mr. Matteau gathered us together.

"We're going to have a hockey team. It'll be called the Wolves," he said. "I'll be your coach, and today I choose the team. What do you say, boys?"

We shouted and screamed with glee. This was going to be hockey heaven.



Everyone was silent as Mr. Matteau began reading out the names for the new team. Marcel was first to be called. The rest of us anxiously held our breath as other names were added. Finally Mr. Matteau put down his clipboard. Anita, Petou, and I couldn't believe it. We were not on the team.



Marcel pointed to us and said, "They're good players."

Mr. Matteau shook his head. "Girls don't play hockey, Petou is too small, and Danny can't skate."

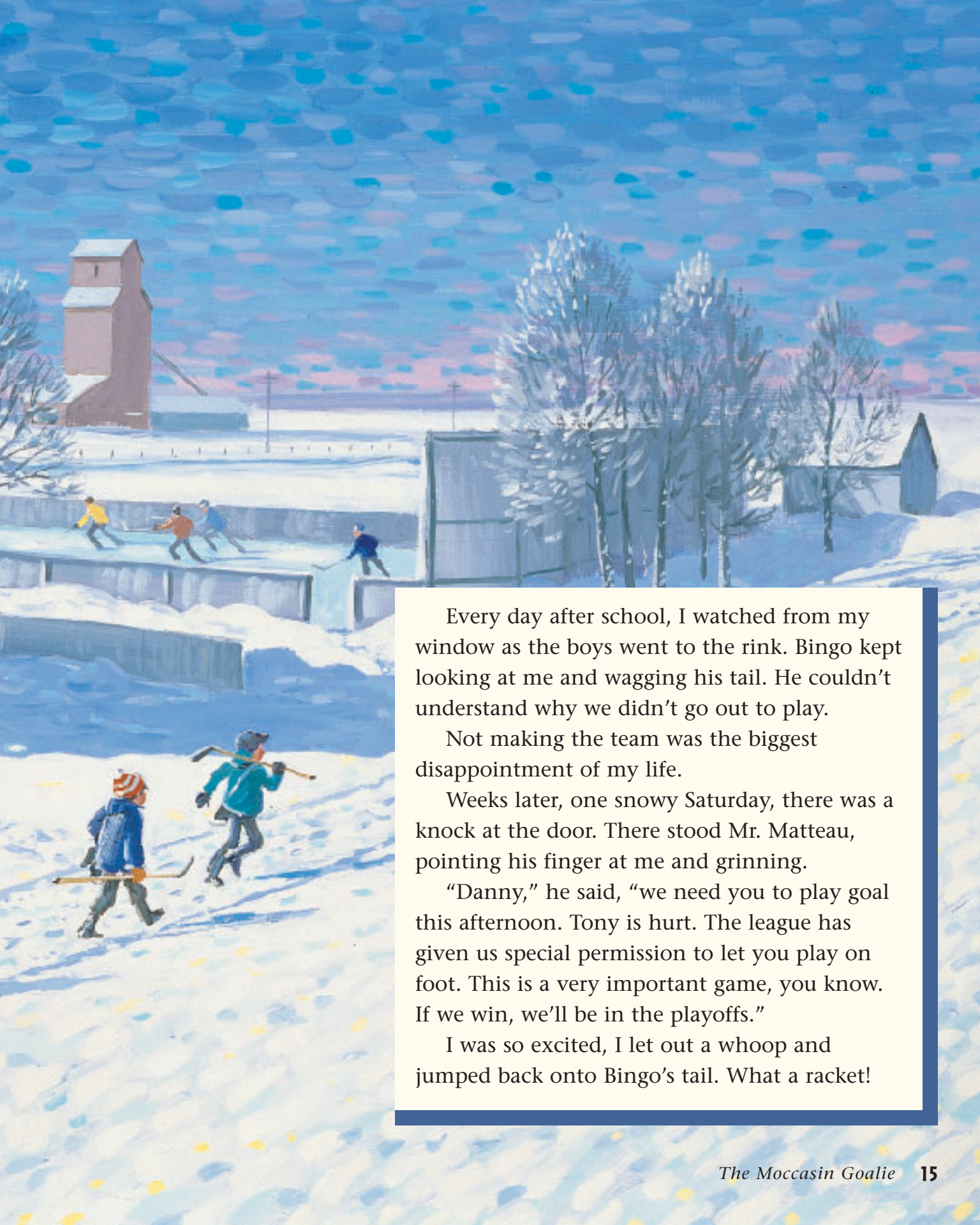
When I got home, I told Mom what had happened.

"You and Petou and Anita can still have fun playing together," she said. "There will always be games of shinny at the rink."

This didn't make me feel any better. "It's not fair," I said. "We're just as good as the rest!"

Every night was the same. I lay awake staring at the ceiling and talking to myself. "My first chance to wear a uniform and play real hockey, and now it's gone."





Every day after school, I watched from my window as the boys went to the rink. Bingo kept looking at me and wagging his tail. He couldn't understand why we didn't go out to play.

Not making the team was the biggest disappointment of my life.

Weeks later, one snowy Saturday, there was a knock at the door. There stood Mr. Matteau, pointing his finger at me and grinning.

"Danny," he said, "we need you to play goal this afternoon. Tony is hurt. The league has given us special permission to let you play on foot. This is a very important game, you know. If we win, we'll be in the playoffs."

I was so excited, I let out a whoop and jumped back onto Bingo's tail. What a racket!



But even though I was happy, deep down I was afraid. What if I let the team down?

When I got to the rink, all the guys patted me on the back and helped me into Tony's sweater. I was proud, but my heart was pounding.

Marcel whispered, "Don't worry. Just play your game and we'll win."

As I took my position in goal, I saw Anita, Petou, and Bingo watching along the boards. "You can do it, Danny!" they called.

The first period was really rough, with end-to-end action. They scored on me and my spirits dropped, but then we scored twice. The period ended at two to one for the Wolves. I had stopped ten shots out of eleven. I could hardly breathe.

Then, in the second period, they attacked us with all their strength. I stopped twelve shots. But finally a shot went in over my pads. I felt sick. We were tied at two all. I'd let the team down.

The third period was like a bad dream. The shots came at me from all sides. I stopped them with every part of my body. It seemed impossible that we could win.

With only two minutes to go, Marcel rushed up the ice, stick handled through their defence and slipped the puck under their goalie. At the final whistle, we piled on top of each other in a great heap. We had won the game three to two!

Mr. Matteau came onto the ice and put his arms around Marcel and me. "You two saved the game for us," he said. "Danny, I want you to stay on the team. What do you say?"



I spotted Anita and Petou waving in the crowd. Suddenly I knew what I wanted most of all. I looked at Marcel and he nodded. I pointed to my friends and said, “They play the rest of the year with the Wolves, too.”

Mr. Matteau laughed, but he promised. Then he took us all to Chong’s Café for treats.

Our hearts glowed with the joy of victory. It was a night we would remember all our lives. ◆



RESPONDING

to THE MOCCASIN GOALIE

FOLLOW UP



Find out more about the old days. Ask grown-ups to tell you stories about playing games with their friends when they were young.

Something to Think About

Here are Mr. Matteau's reasons for not choosing Danny and his friends for the team:

- "Girls don't play hockey." (Anita)
- "Petou is too small."
- "Danny can't skate."

Think about each of these reasons. Are they fair or not fair? Pair up with a partner and share your ideas. What other solutions could Mr. Matteau have come up with?

Congratulations!
You've completed
the story!

Understanding the Story

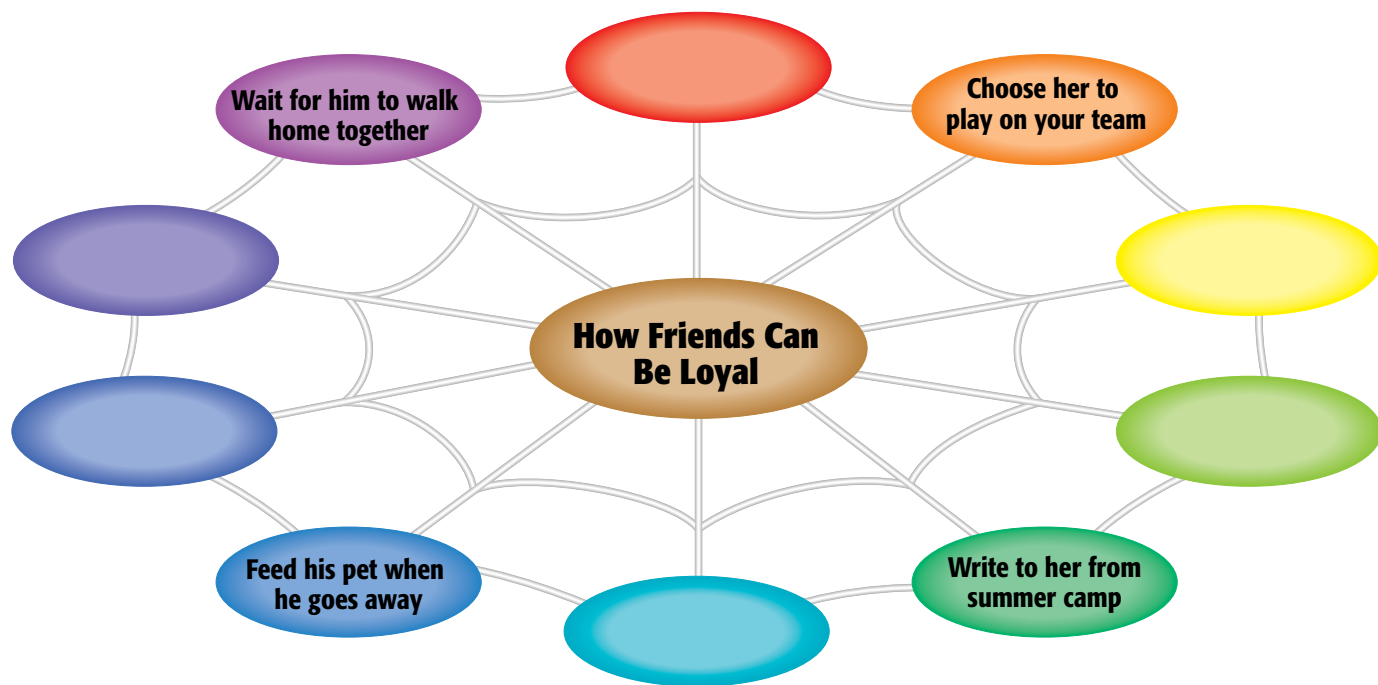
Instant Replay

- Why did Danny and his friends like winter?
- How did Danny get his nickname? Do you think the name suited him?
- Why were Danny, Anita, and Petou not chosen for the hockey team? How do you think they felt?
- How did Danny get his chance to play, after all?
- Danny had three "best" friends. Is it possible to have more than one best friend? Explain your answer.
- What do you predict will happen to Danny and his friends next hockey season?

Loyalty Web

CLASS DISCUSSION

How did Danny show his loyalty to his friends? Talk about a time when you were loyal to a friend, or a friend was loyal to you. Perhaps you picked her for the baseball team. Perhaps he invited you to a special party. Make a big web in your notebooks or on the chalkboard showing ways of being loyal to a friend.



Viewing the Illustrations

William Brownridge painted his own pictures to illustrate his story. Look at them again to find

- kids in action
- details about the “old days” on the Prairies
- how the artist contrasts night and day
- the way you can almost “see” the cold

Read more about William Brownridge on page 20.

William Roy Brownridge

by Catherine Rondina

It was a great day when the local hockey team made it to the finals, and the coach asked young William Brownridge to play goal in a playoff game. William was thrilled! The league gave special permission to allow him to play in his moccasins. To top it off, the team, the Vawn Cougars, won the championship.

This is the true story that became the picture book, *The Moccasin Goalie*.

William Brownridge wrote the story and painted the pictures that illustrate it.

"I carried the story around in my head for years," William says. "*The Moccasin Goalie* is about me and my friends, but it's also about being different. The story shows that being different doesn't mean you can't succeed."

Boyhood on the Prairies

William Brownridge was born in Rosetown, Saskatchewan, the youngest of five children. The doctor noticed right away that there was something wrong with his legs. Both feet were misshapen, so the doctor put casts on them. William

also had
spina bifida,
a serious
disorder of
the spine. When he was one year old, he
became very sick from the casts and
almost died.

Because of William's problems, his family had to travel often to the big city—Winnipeg, Manitoba—for medical help.

"It was the Depression and people were very poor," William remembers. "But my father was a station agent for the Canadian National Railway, so we were lucky. We could get free train passes to go back and forth to the hospital."

William had happy times, too. He spent many hours at the train station in Vawn, Saskatchewan, where his father worked. He loved watching the trains and the passengers coming and going. To pass the time, he began drawing pictures of what he saw.

William's illness kept him away from school a lot. But when he could he played with his friends in the



neighbourhood. He wore leather moccasins, the only shoes that fit his feet. He even wore them when he played hockey.

“I loved hockey,” William says. “I would play in the cold for hours. But because I didn’t have any feeling in my legs, they often got frostbitten. My dad finally got a loud whistle to call me off the ice when he figured I’d had enough.”

Artist and Writer

When William was sixteen, doctors decided to remove one of his legs. He would have to use crutches for the rest of his life. But William didn’t let this keep him from his dream—to become an artist. After studying graphic arts, he became a designer in Calgary, Alberta.

Today William has retired from his job, but he has plenty to do. “I keep very busy as an artist and a writer,” William explains. “I also

visit schools all over Western Canada and talk with the students.”

Fans of *The Moccasin Goalie* have something new to cheer about. William has published a second book about the same gang of kids. It’s called *The Final Game*. ♦

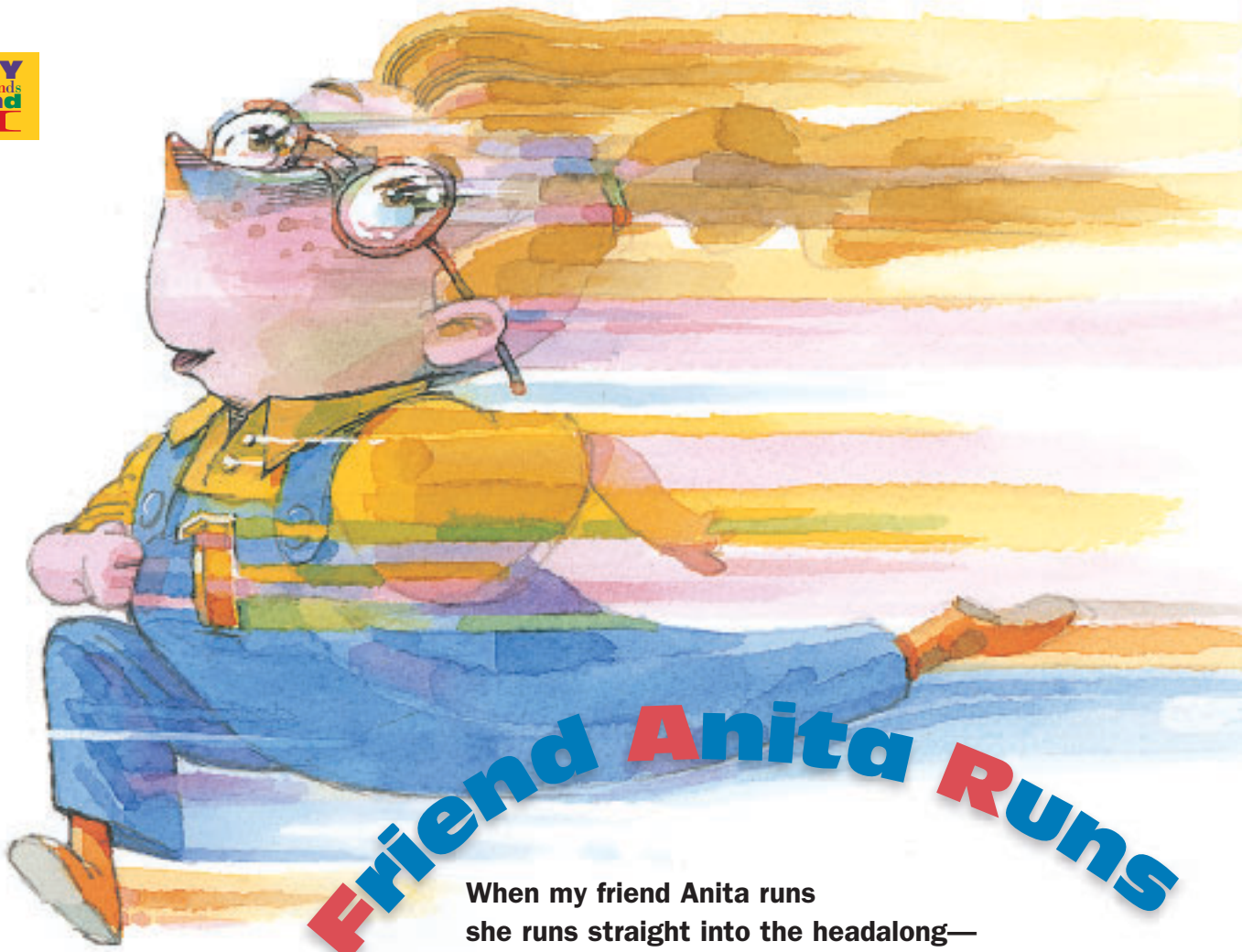
William Brownridge designed these uniforms for the NHL’s Calgary Flames.

FLAMES HOME UNIFORM



FLAMES AWAY UNIFORM





When My Friend Anita Runs

Poem by
Grace Nichols

Picture by
Dušan Petričić

When my friend Anita runs
she runs straight into the headalong—
legs flashing over the grass, daisies, mounds.

When my friend Anita runs
she sticks out her chest like an Olympic
champion—face all serious concentration.

And you'll never catch her looking around,
until she flies into the invisible tape
that says, she's won.

Then she turns to give me
this big grin and hug.

O to be able to run like Anita,
run like Anita,
Who runs like a cheetah.
If only, just for once, I could beat her.

RESPONDING

to WHEN MY FRIEND ANITA RUNS

Personal Response

- Would you like to have Anita as a friend? Why, or why not?
- What lines in the poem did you like best? Why?

Understanding the Poem

Race to the Finish Line



On your mark *verses one to three:*

The poet paints a picture of Anita racing over the fields and flying into the “invisible tape”—can you see it?

- Do you think Anita’s friend admires her? Why?



Get set *verse four:*

Anita turns and hugs her friend.

- How does Anita feel about winning the race? How do you know?



GO! *verse five:*

You reach the real finish line—the last line of the poem.

- What do you discover about the friend’s true feelings? Have you ever had a similar feeling? Tell about it.

Read Like a Writer

Similes

Grace Nichols writes that Anita “runs like a cheetah.” What does she mean? Here are some more animal comparisons, or similes. With a partner, talk about what each means.

- Radica runs like a deer.
- Amral eats like a horse.
- Andrew is as clumsy as a bull in a china shop.

Think of other animal similes to share with the class. Then plan to use a simile next time you write a poem or a story.

Story by
Judith Viorst

Pictures by
Ron Tanaka

The Southpaw

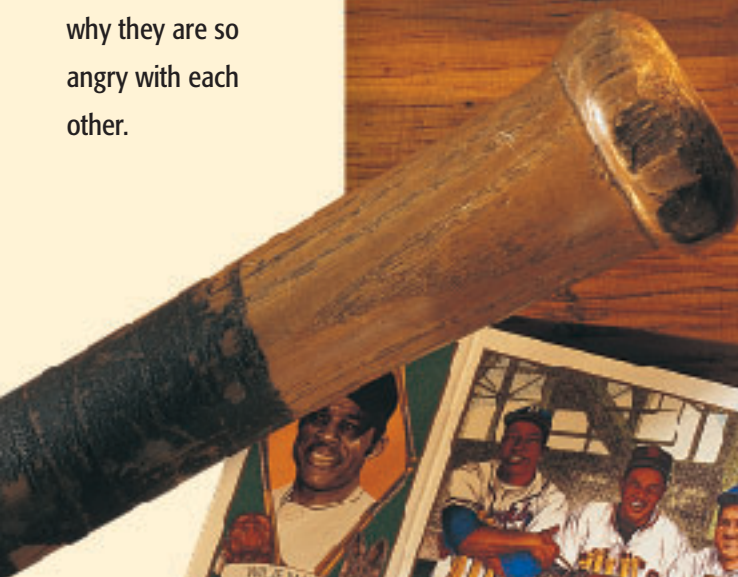
BEFORE READING



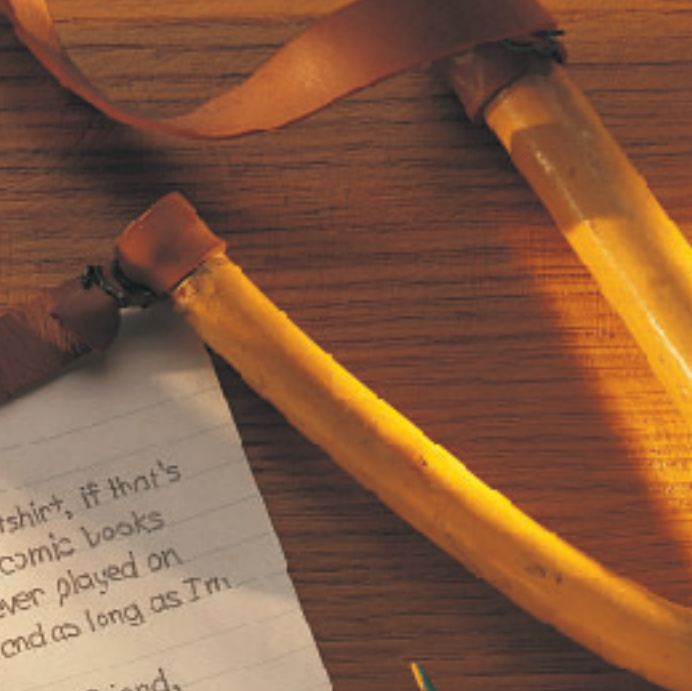



Here's a different kind of story—a letter story. Richard and Janet write notes and letters to each other. Read the story to find out why they are so angry with each other.

Dear Richard,
Don't invite me to your birthday party because I'm
not coming. And give back the Disneyland sweatshirt I
said you could wear if I'm not good enough to be friends with
your team. I'm not good enough to be friends with.
P.S. I hope when you go to the dentist he finds 20 cavities.

Your former friend,
Janet





Dear Janet,
Here is your stupid Disneyland sweatshirt, if that's
how you're going to be. I want my comic books
now--finished or not. No girl has ever played on
the Mapes Street baseball team, and as long as I'm
captain, no girl ever will.

Your former friend,
Richard

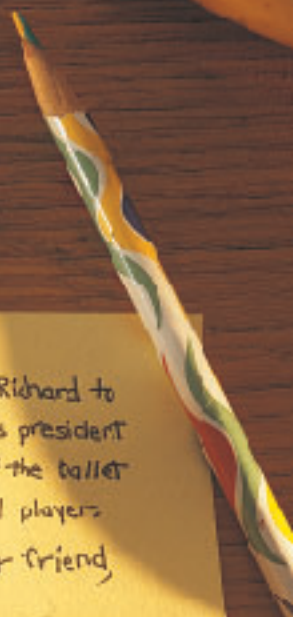


P.S. I hope when you go for a checkup
you need a tetanus shot.

Dear Richard,

I'm changing my goldfish's name from Richard to
Stanley. Don't count on my vote for class president
next year. Just because I'm a member of the ballet
club doesn't mean I'm not a terrific ball player.

Your former friend,
Janet

P.S. I see you lost your ~~first~~ first game 28-0.



Dear Janet,
I'm not saving any more seats for you on the bus.
For all I care you can stand the ~~the~~ whole way to
school. Why don't you just forget about baseball
and learn something nice like knitting?

Your former friend,
Richard

P.S. Wait until Wednesday

Dear Richard,
My father said I could call someone to go
with us for a ride and hot fudge sundaes.
In case you didn't notice, I didn't call you.

Your former friend,
Janet

P.S. I see you lost your second game 34-0.

Dear Janet,
Remember when I took the laces
out of my blue-and-white sneakers
and gave them to you?
I want them back.



Your former friend,

Richard

P.S. Wait until Friday.




Atlet



Dear Richard,
Congratulations on your unbroken record. Eight straight losses,
wow! I understand you're the laughing stock of New Jersey


Your former friend,
Janet

P.S. Why don't you and your team forget about baseball
and learn something nice like knitting maybe?





Dear Janet,
Here's the silver horseback riding
trophy that you gave me. I don't think
I want to keep it any more.

Your former friend,
Richard
P.S. I didn't think you'd be the kind
who'd kick a man when he's down.



Dear Richard,
I wasn't kicking exactly,
I was kicking back.
Your former friend,
Janet

P.S. In case you were wondering,
my batting average is .345.



Dear Janet,
Alfie is having his tonsils cut tomorrow.
We might be able to let you catch next week.
Richard

Dear Richard,
I pitch. Janet

Dear Janet,
Jael is moving to Kansas and Danny
sprained his wrist. How about a
permanent place in our field?
Richard

Dear Richard,
I pitch. Janet

Dear Janet,
Ronnie caught the chickenpox and Leo
broke his toe and Elwood has these
stupid violin lessons. I'll give you first
base, and that's my final offer.
Richard

Dear Richard,
Susan Reilly plays first base,
Marilyn Jackson catches, Ethel Kahn
plays centrefield, I pitch. It's a
package deal.
Janet

P.S. Sorry about your 12-game
losing streak.

RESPONDING

to THE SOUTHPAW

FOLLOW UP



Choose a partner and tell each other what happened in the story. You could begin this way:

The one thing Janet really wanted was to play on Richard's baseball team.

Prepare a Dramatic Reading

Congratulations!
You've made the
reading team!

Understanding the Story

Go for a Home Run

This is a story about two friends who are having a big fight. But instead of yelling at each other, they write letters.

FIRST BASE

What are Richard and Janet fighting about?

SECOND BASE

How do Janet and Richard try to resolve the conflict?

THIRD BASE

How would you try to resolve the conflict?

HOME RUN

Who wins in the end? How?

Remember to support your answers with details from the story.

You and a partner can have fun reading *The Southpaw* aloud. Who will play the role of Richard? Who will be Janet? First read the letters silently to be sure you understand them very well. Pay close attention to the punctuation marks, too. Then rehearse your oral reading.

If you like, perform *The Southpaw* for the class.



To make your reading dramatic, you could

- sit at separate desks or chairs, far apart
- pretend you're writing or typing while you speak
- wear a baseball cap or T-shirt

How ~~Not~~ to Resolve a Conflict

Here are some adjectives that describe Janet's and Richard's behaviour. Choose words from the box to fill the blanks in the following sentences.



Adjectives

angry

stubborn

bragging

insulting

immature

pleading

When Janet

...asked for her sweatshirt back, she was _____.

...told Richard her batting average was .345, she was _____.

...refused to play any position but pitcher, she was _____.

When Richard

...said no girl would ever play on his team, he was _____.

...told Janet to take up knitting, he was _____.

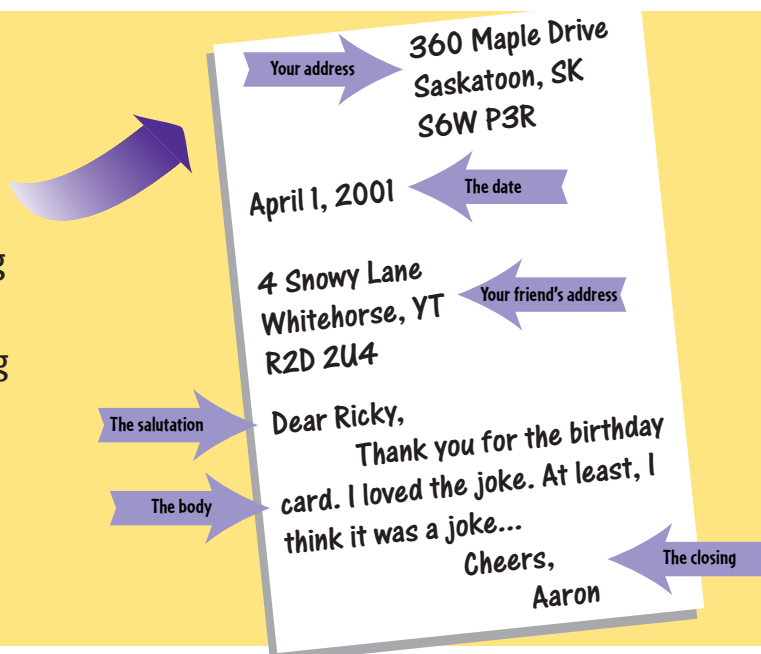
...begged Janet to rename her goldfish "Richard," he was _____.

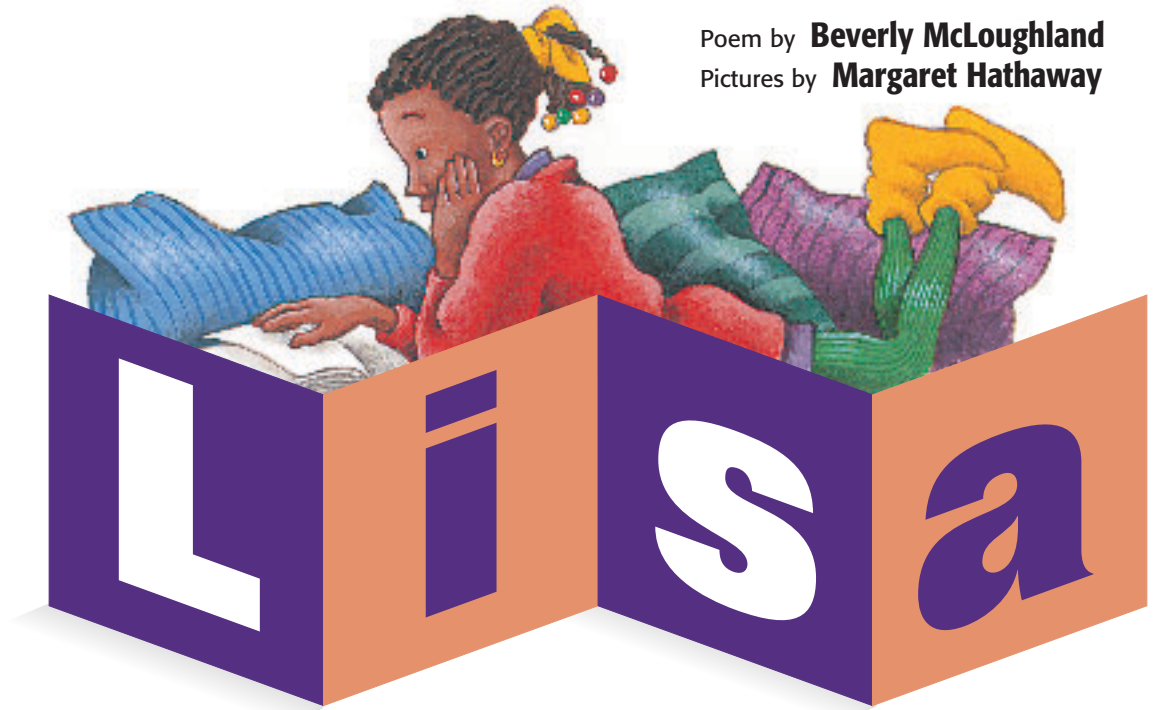


A Letter Story

Here are the elements of a friendly letter:

Think of a story you could tell by writing letters. Choose two characters (like Richard and Janet), and get them writing short letters to each other. If you have a key pal, ask her to help you write the letters. Have fun!





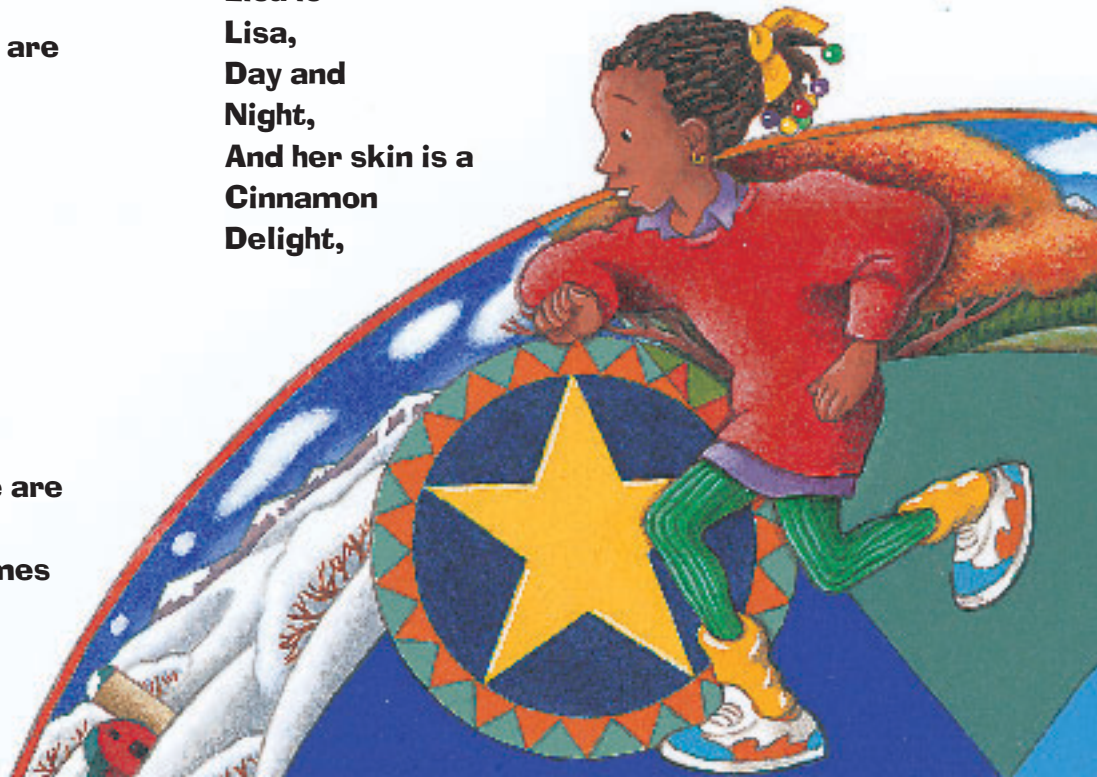
**Lisa's father is
Black
And her mother is
White,
And her skin is a
Cinnamon
Delight,
Her hair is
Dark
And her eyes are
Light,
And Lisa is
Lisa,
Day and
Night.**

**And Lisa is
Lisa,
Night and
Day,
Though there are
People
Who sometimes
Say —**

**Well, is Lisa
That,
Or is Lisa
This? —
Lisa is
Everything
She is.**

**Lisa is
Lisa,
Day and
Night,
And her skin is a
Cinnamon
Delight,**

**And Lisa is
Sun
And Lisa is
Star,
And Lisa is
All
The dreams that
Are.**



RESPONDING

to LISA

Personal Connection

Have you ever heard people say, “You look just like your mother”? Or, “She’s stubborn, just like her father”? In what ways are you similar to members in your family? How are you different?



TV Friends

What kinds of friends do you see on television? Complete the chart below using information from your favourite TV shows.

Kinds of Friends	Names of TV Friends	Name of TV Program
best friends		
neighbourhood friends		
family friends		
school friends		

In your opinion, are the friendships you see on television realistic or not? Why?

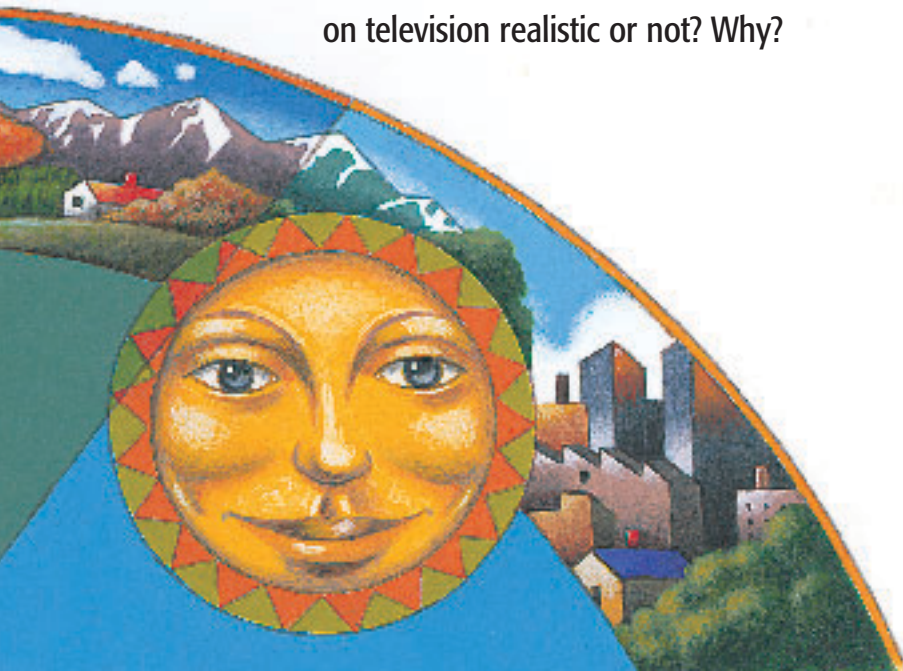
Something To Think About

There is a wise saying: *Don’t judge people by the colour of their skin.*

- What does the saying mean?
- Do you think the poet, Beverly McLoughland, would agree with this saying?

Understanding the Poem

- How is Lisa similar to her parents? How is she different?
- The poet writes, “Lisa is Lisa, Day and Night.” What do you think the poet means?
- What is the message of the poem?





BEFORE READING



In this story, Gita has left her friends and family in India to start a new life in Canada.

As you read the story, think about why Gita feels so unhappy at festival time (Divali).

Words from India

Hindu: (HIN doo)
a religion that began in India

Divali: (dee VAH lee)
Hindu festival of lights

New Delhi: (New DEL ee)
capital city of India

diya: (DEE ya) oil lamp in a small clay pot

perras and jallebies:
(PER ahs, jah LAY bees)
Indian sweets

Lights for Gita

Story by Rachna Gilmore

Pictures by Jackie Besteman



GITA PULLED HER HAT DOWN over her ears as she stepped off the school bus.

“Divali,” she whispered. “Today’s really and truly Divali.”

But nothing in the November gloom seemed like Divali.

Today, New Delhi would be glowing with celebration. All her aunts, uncles, and cousins would be together at her grandparents' house. They'd be laughing, talking, and exchanging sweets with friends and neighbours. In the evening they'd light diyas to honour the Goddess Lakshmi who brought prosperity and happiness. And then—fireworks. The whole city would be brilliant with fireworks.

Gita looked anxiously at the dark clouds.

"Please, please don't rain."

Papa had said, "I'll be home early—with fireworks for our first Divali in our new home."

It wouldn't be like Divali at her grandparents'. Still, Mummy had made their favourite sweets—golden perras, spiral jallebies—and she'd let Gita invite five school friends to help celebrate. Gita had wanted to invite her whole class, but you had to be quiet in an apartment.

Not outside, though. Fireworks, lots of them—that's what Divali was all about, the Festival of Lights.

Gita glared at the grey sky before racing up the creaky stairs to their apartment.

She flung her arms around her mother. Papa was home early, just as he'd promised.

"Did you get the fireworks, Papa?"

"Yes, I got them," he said slowly. "But Gita, Divali isn't just fireworks. There's ... "

"Show me, Papa, where are they?"



Gently, Papa turned Gita toward the window. A large drop splashed against the glass. Then another and another.

"It won't last long," said Gita, her voice wobbly.

"The forecast says freezing rain tonight," said Papa.

"Never mind. We'll have the fireworks tomorrow."

"But I promised my friends ... "

"We'll turn on all the lights," said Mummy. "And light the diyas. You and your friends will have a lovely party."

Gita blinked back her tears.

"Come," said her mother. "Change into your new dress. Then we'll light the diyas."





Gita and her mother set the little clay pots along the windowsills and around the room. Needles of ice stung the windows. Freezing rain on Divali! How could such a place ever be home?

Last year Divali had been warm and joyful. She and her cousins had startled everyone with noisy crackers called little rascals. They'd whispered in the prayer room as the incense smoke curled upward and the grown-ups chanted. Grandmother had told them stories of Prince Ram and his wife Sita and of their homecoming on Divali. And in the evening! Cones spouted fountains of fire, Catherine wheels whirled, and hissing rockets burst into dazzling showers of colour.



A sudden gust rattled the window. Gita stuck out her tongue. You can't get in! And you won't spoil my party! She gave a hard twist to the wisps of cotton wick.

Mummy, bangles tinkling, filled the diyas with mustard oil. As she finished, the phone rang.

Gita heard the murmur of her mother's voice, the click of the receiver, and then more ringing.

She shook the box of matches impatiently as her mother came back. "Can I light the first one?"

Mummy just smiled and smoothed Gita's hair.

"That was Jennie and Helga. It's too icy to drive, they can't come."

The phone rang again.

Gita ran to her room. She burrowed into bed, and jerked the covers over her head. "I hate this place," she sobbed.

Mummy lifted back the covers and gently hugged Gita.

"Amy hasn't called. And she does live nearby."

Gita pulled away and blew her nose.

"Gita," said Mummy softly. "Divali is really about filling the darkness with light. Fireworks can't do it for us. We must do it ourselves." Mummy's smile was bright, but also sad—like grandmother's smile when they'd said goodbye.

For a long moment Gita sat still. Then she managed a watery smile. "Let's light the diyas."

One by one, golden flames quivered and sprang to life.
The warm fragrance of mustard oil filled the room.

Just as Gita lit the last wick the electric lights flickered—
on, off, on again. Then all the lights—in the apartment, in
all the houses, even the street lamps—died.

Darkness on Divali! Gita's throat tightened.
Then she began to laugh.



In the sudden
rush of darkness
their diyas
glowed—bright,
brighter, brightest—
filling the living
room with light.

“We beat the
darkness, we beat the
darkness!” Gita
clapped her hands.

“Lakshmi will come
for sure. We’ll have
wonderful luck,” said
Mummy.

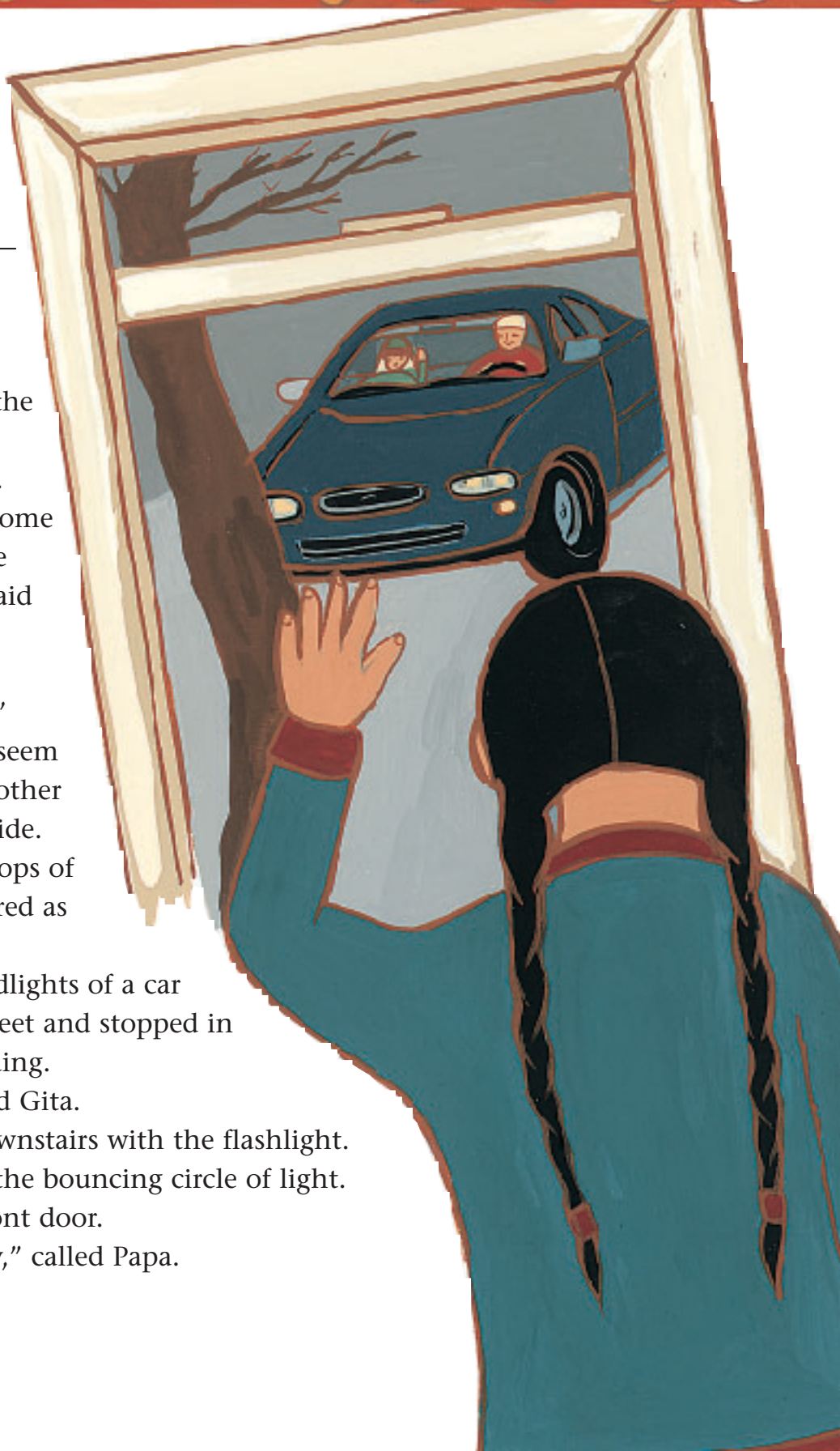
Gita ran to the
window. The diyas’
reflection made it seem
as if there were another
shining room outside.
She sang softly. Drops of
freezing rain glittered as
they flew past.

Slowly, the headlights of a car
came down the street and stopped in
front of their building.

“It’s Amy!” shouted Gita.

Papa started downstairs with the flashlight.
Gita ran ahead in the bouncing circle of light.
She opened the front door.

“Careful, it’s icy,” called Papa.





Gita took a few cautious steps. She stopped, eyes wide.

The whole world glistened! The sidewalks, every branch, every twig, the lamppost, even the blades of grass!

In the dark city, only their windows blazed with the steady glow of diyas. The ice, reflecting their light, sparkled and danced like fireworks.

Amy's voice brought her back. "Gita, tomorrow we can go sliding. It'll be like flying."

Gita's eyes shone. She'd have to write her grandparents about this Divali in her new home. "Hey, Amy, let's play hide and seek while the power's still out."

She took one last look at the light singing in the heart of the ice. "Come on," she shouted, "race you upstairs!" ◆



RESPONDING

to LIGHTS FOR GITA

FOLLOW UP

- Why was Gita unhappy at Divali time?
- How did Gita's parents try to make her feel better?

Making New Friends

It's not easy to make new friends when you move or go to a new school. In your group, talk about ways you could help a new student to meet people and feel more at home. Share your ideas with the class.

You're in the
"Good
Reading"
Spotlight

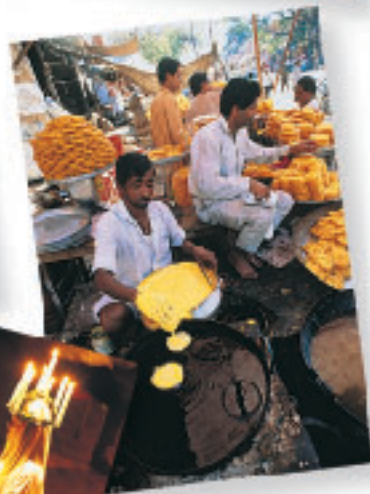
What Is Divali?

Divali, a Festival of Lights which falls in October or November, is observed by Hindus all over the world. It is a magical family time that honours Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth who brings good fortune and prosperity to all throughout the year. It also celebrates the homecoming of Prince Ram and his wife Sita, as told in the Hindu epic *Ramayana*. Lots of sweets, parties, storytelling, and fireworks make this a holiday particularly loved by children.

Understanding the Story

Lighting the Diyas

- How are Gita's party plans spoiled?
- What does Gita mean when she laughs and says, "We beat the darkness!"?
- When Gita rushes out to meet Amy, she sees that the city looks beautiful. Why?
- What if you had to move to a new country? What would you be the most excited about? What might you be worried about?



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT

A World of Festivals

Diwali takes place in October or November, so we call it a fall festival. People celebrate festivals all around the world.

To find out more about festivals, visit your school library or use the World Wide Web. Look under Festivals. Ask the librarian to help you find a few good books. Bring them to class and set up “A World of Festivals” display.

For extra fun, hold “A World of Festivals” party and serve festive food from various lands.



**MORE
GOOD
READING**

***The Gift* by Joseph Kertes**

Jacob was a Jewish boy from Hungary. More than anything, he longed to celebrate the holidays with his new Canadian friends. This funny-sad story tells what happened when he finally got his wish. (a short story book)

***A Friend Like Zilla* by Rachna Gilmore**

Zenobia’s vacation in Prince Edward Island is going well. She’s having tons of fun with Zilla, the girl from the next-door farm, feeding seagulls and such. But trouble arrives with Uncle Chad, who just can’t understand how Zilla can be 17 years old. (a chapter book)

***The Dragon’s Egg* by Alison Baird**

Ai Lien is lonely at her new school. What’s worse, the bully, Jake Bradley, won’t stop picking on her. What a surprise, then, when her best friend and protector hatches out of a dragon’s egg from China! (a chapter book)