



SPROUT STREET NEIGHBORS

Five Stories

Curriculum Guide & Friendship Building Activities

Sprout Street Neighbors: Five Stories

By Anna Alter

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Chapter book for Ages 4-8



About the Book

Henry, Violet, Emma, Wilbur, and Fernando are neighbors in the same apartment building and they are also friends—though they have very different personalities. Henry prefers peace and quiet, and poetry. Violet spends hours knitting and practicing her flute. Emma is always ready for a party. Wilbur would be happy to work in his garden all day. And Fernando is just a little bit shy, but has a secret talent for the stage.

Sharing walls with neighbors can sometimes bring the unexpected, but these five work together to overcome their differences. *Sprout Street Neighbors* is a joyous celebration of friendship and individuality that is perfect for young readers ready for a chapter book.

Booklist calls it “reminiscent of *Winnie the Pooh’s* misadventures in the *Hundred Acre Woods*.”

About the Author/Illustrator:



Anna has lived in many apartment buildings and come across a variety of interesting characters along the way. She is a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design and the author and illustrator of many treasured books, including *A Photo for Greta*, *Disappearing Desmond*, and *Abigail Spells*. Her books have been a CCBC Choice best book of the year, Bank Street College best book of the year, Junior Library Guild selections, and Texas 2x2 Recommended Reading. Anna lives in Western Massachusetts, but travels around the country to visit schools and talk about her work.

Visit Anna at www.annaalter.com!

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The Sprout Street books bring up a variety of social and emotional issues that explore friendship, community, and kindness. Here are some tips for guiding the conversation.

BEFORE READING: Talk about what it means to be a good friend and neighbor.

Ask children: What can you do to show your friends you care about them?
If a friend is having a problem, what can you do to help?
What do your friends do that make you feel that they care about you?
Do you know your neighbors?
If you don't know your neighbors, how might you introduce yourself?
What does it mean to be a good neighbor?

AFTER READING - DISCUSSION STARTERS AND ACTIVITIES:

In chapter one, Henry is afraid to tell Emma how much noise she is making. Henry and Violet get creative to solve Henry's problem.

Ask children: Why do you think Henry feels nervous about telling Emma the truth?
What is he afraid might happen?
What can you do when telling the truth might hurt someone's feelings?
Can you think of a situation where a friend did something you didn't like?
Could you brainstorm a creative way to tell them how you feel?

Activity: Gather a basket of clothing or household items (cups, mittens, spatulas, socks, utensils, etc), then hand one out to each child. Their job is to invent a new use for the item, that would help someone else, as Violet does in *Sprout Street Neighbors*. Have children draw a picture of the item in it's new use and write or tell about how it works.

In chapter two, Emma's party doesn't turn out the way she expected. Her friends show her that having fun together is more important than how things look.

Ask children: How do you feel when things don't turn out the way you expect?
If a friend is feeling disappointed, what could you do to help cheer them up?
What does it mean to impress your friends? Have you ever felt that you needed to do that?

Activity: Have children pair up with a classmate and draw their portrait. Then ask them to fill in the following sentences about the other person. Display the finished artwork and interviews in the classroom.

My name is _____. My favorite thing to do with a friend is _____.
My friends cheer me up when they _____. I like to cheer my friends up by _____.

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In chapter three, Fernando is afraid to try something new, even though he wants to. He learns that if something is important, it's worth giving it a try.

Ask children: What does it feel like to you to try something new?
When have you done that and how did you feel afterwards?
Is there a way to help a friend gain the courage to try something, even if they are feeling afraid?

Activity: Have children start a discovery journal. On the first page, ask them to draw a picture of something new they'd like to try. Below the picture, help them write or tell about how to take the first step and who could help them. Encourage them to take that step. Continue adding to the journal. Over time, kids will be able to look back and see how many new things they tried and learned about.

In chapter four, Violet is embarrassed to ask for help when she needs it. She discovers that everyone needs help sometimes.

Ask children: Have you ever been afraid to ask for help?
What happened when you did?
How could you tell if a friend was feeling that way? What could you do to help them?

Activity: Help children make a booklet of "helper coupons" to give to friends, neighbors, or family members. Coupons might entitle the receiver to help planting flowers in their yard, carrying the groceries, or with their homework. These could be given for a holiday or an every day gift.

In chapter five, Wilbur is upset and doesn't know how to tell his friends how he feels or to solve the problem of his disappearing garden. He learns to share his feelings and accept help from his friends.

Ask children: How does Fernando notice that Wilbur is upset?
What does Fernando do to help him feel comfortable about sharing what is wrong?
What kinds of things can you do for a friend who is upset?

Activity: Make a kindness wheel. Trace a circle on a large piece of poster board, and divide it equally in to 10-12 wedges. Have children brainstorm kind things they can do for each other or their teachers at school. In each wedge, write one task. Pin an arrow in the middle, then take turns spinning it and doing a task. Return to the wheel as often as you like!