Peter's Chair
by Ezra Jack Keats (Harper)
Themes: Families/Sibling Rivalry
Grade Level: PreK-3
Running Time: 6 minutes, iconicgraphic

Summary

Peter's Chair is the story of a boy named Peter whose parents have just had a new baby. Peter walks around the house and notices that his parents are fussing with the new baby and painting his baby furniture pink! Peter's jealousy caused him to make a serious decision. He packs some things, including his little chair which he is determined his parents will not paint pink, and decides to run away.

Peter sits in his chair just outside the house to think a bit. Just then Peter's mother calls to him and invites him back in for a special lunch. Peter suddenly realizes that he is too big for the chair, anyway. He goes inside and tells his father that he'd like to paint the chair pink for his new baby sister.

The story ends with Peter and his father painting the chair, with a warm feeling of giving and understanding surrounding Peter and his family.

Objectives

• Children will explore their feelings regarding siblings
• Children will investigate family relationships
• Children will learn about the importance of sharing and giving

Before Viewing Activities

Share the book Peter's Chair with children. Then ask:

How do you think Peter felt in the beginning of the story?
How would you feel about having a new baby in the house?
Which of your things would you enjoy sharing with a new baby?
Which of your things would be hard to share?
Why do you think Peter decided to share his chair with the new baby?
How do you think Peter felt at the end of the story?

Talk with children about their siblings. Ask: How many siblings do you have? What is the most fun about having brothers/sisters? What do you and your brothers/sisters enjoy doing together? What is the hardest part about having brothers/sisters? How do you solve your problems with your brothers/sisters?

After Viewing Activities

Talk with children about the gift Peter and his father were making ready at the end of the story for Peter's sister. Then have children think about special things they might want to do for one of their siblings or family members. Stress to children that this "special something" might be a note letting the family member know how special he/she is, a special favor they might do for this family member, or a simple verbal message to let the family member know how much he/she is appreciated. If children choose to write notes, help them to do this in class. Later, have children talk about how giving this "special something" to a family member made them feel.

Have children draw pictures of their families and label each family member. Then have children describe their families as they share drawings. Later, allow children to create a story about an adventure they would like to have with their family members. (Print younger children's stories as they dictate them.) Display the stories, along with the family portraits, on a classroom wall or bulletin board.

Help children dramatize a situation involving a family that has just welcomed a new baby. Remind children of the way Peter felt about his new baby sister. Encourage children to include feelings of jealousy on the part of the older children for the new sibling in their dramatization. As children perform, encourage them to think of ways to work through the jealous feelings the older siblings have for the new arrival.

Other book based films and videos about sibling rivalry are available from Weston Woods. These include:

JOHN BROWN, ROSE, AND THE MIDNIGHT CAT written by Jenny Wagner and illustrated by Ron Brooks
MAX'S CHOCOLATE CHICKEN by Rosemary Wells
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