

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Bluish

by

Virginia Hamilton

Book Information

Virginia Hamilton, Bluish
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Interest Level: MG

Three fifth-grade girls from different backgrounds confront such issues as illness, ethnicity, culture, need and hope, and become friends.

Topics: Community Life, Customs and Cultures; Community Life, Prejudice; Community Life, School; Disabilities, Physical; People, Friends; READNOW - Demco Media Turtleback Books, Demco Media - Read Now Grades 1-3; READNOW - Perma-Bound, Perma-Bound - Read Now Grades 4-6; READNOW - Renaissance Learning, RLI - Grades 4-6 (Theme: Friends and Family); Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 6-8

Main Characters

Anneva Brown (Mom) Dreenie's mother, who encourages Dreenie to understand others
Dreanne Brown (Dreenie) the kind-hearted, fifth-grade girl who befriends a classmate recovering from leukemia; she narrates sections of the story
Gerald Brown (Daddy) Dreenie's father, who buys her a dog
Max McKee the teacher's aide who chaperones Dreenie, Bluish and Tuli in the museum
Mrs. Rita Winburn Natalie's serious mother, who tries to protect her from others
Ms. Baker the fifth-grade teacher, who encourages her class to be considerate of Natalie's needs
Natalie Winburn (Bluish) a fifth-grade girl who is slowly recovering from leukemia; she becomes friends with Tuli
Paula a classmate who works on the school project with Dreenie, Bluish and Tuli

Tulithia (Tuli) the brash, goofy, fifth-grade girl who wants to be friends with everyone; she especially treasures her relationship with Dreenie
Willeva Brown (Willie) Dreenie's intelligent younger sister, who frequently demands that Dreenie take care of her

Vocabulary

brag to speak about oneself in an overly proud way
gorgeous extremely beautiful
halted stopped or ended
snickered laughed in a hidden or mean way

Synopsis

Dreenie is a fifth-grade girl who often feels burdened by her flamboyant friend Tuli and her brilliant younger sister, Willie. She is intrigued by Natalie, a seriously ill girl who has been dubbed "Bluish" by her classmates. When Bluish invites Dreenie to play with her, Dreenie shies away because she worries about contracting Bluish's illness.

As time passes, Dreenie and Tuli begin building a relationship with Bluish by helping her maneuver her wheelchair. When the three girls work on a school project together, their friendship blossoms. Bluish shows her appreciation of Dreenie and Tuli by giving them knitted caps so that they can look like her. When Bluish brings caps for the whole classroom, Dreenie arranges to have the class surprise her by putting the caps on during a school party.

One day Bluish is not in class and the teacher, Ms. Baker, recognizes that the class needs to be reassured about Bluish's health. She explains that Bluish has leukemia, but she is slowly recovering.

During the holiday vacation, Dreenie's family invites Tuli's and Bluish's families to celebrate Kwanzaa. When Willie asks Bluish if she is going to die, Tuli and Dreenie make a pact with Bluish to show their support for her. At the end of the book Dreenie announces her intention to give Bluish the journal she wrote about her.

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Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

What do Dreenie, Tuli, Willie and Bluish do after Willie asks Bluish if she is going to die?

They decide to make a pact to show that they will not let Bluish die. They hold hands, and Dreenie makes the statement, "Bluish is, because we are; we are, because Bluish -- is -- us!" Then Bluish shows them that her hair is growing back.

Literary Analysis

How does Dreenie's school honor the holidays?

Ms. Baker encourages the children to share their diverse traditions. A tree is displayed in the classroom, but the children are allowed to add to it. Natalie is allowed to teach the children a game associated with Hanukkah and the teacher's aide explains several holidays to the children.

Inferential Comprehension

Tuli often begs to go home with Dreenie. What reasons might Tuli have for preferring to be at Dreenie's home?

Tuli likes to be around people and receive attention from others. The only person at Granmom Gilla's house is Granmom Gilla, whereas Dreenie's house has several people to pay attention to Tuli. Also, Tuli thinks that Dreenie's apartment building is more comfortable than her own. Finally, Tuli has no responsibilities at Dreenie's home, but she is expected to help take care of Granmom Gilla at her own home.

Constructing Meaning

How can the reader tell that Tuli is becoming jealous of Bluish?

Tuli complains that Bluish and Dreenie do not like her Christmas presents as much as they like each other's presents. She also whines that Dreenie is always thinking of Bluish when Dreenie notes that Bluish may be able to walk by summertime.

Teachable Skills

Differentiating Fact and Opinion Dreenie expresses many opinions about others. Have the students make a list of things Dreenie says about Bluish, Willie, and Tuli. Ask students to determine which statements are facts and which are Dreenie's opinions. Students could display their conclusions on a chart.

Recognizing Feelings Dreenie tries to understand how Bluish is feeling, but Bluish rarely speaks about what she actually feels. Have the students write an essay describing Bluish's feelings in one or more of the chapters in this book. Help students focus on how the feelings are made clear to the reader.

Recognizing Details Ms. Baker mentions that Bluish must take chemotherapy to cure her illness. Have the students read about the side effects of chemotherapy and then make a poster that shows the side effects Bluish experiences.

Recognizing Plot The climax of the story is usually when the central problem is resolved or the conflict is ended. Have groups of students consider what they believe to be the climax of this story. Allow each group to act out its choice and defend the choice by explaining how the event addresses the conflict in this story.