

# Friendship

## Aspects of a good friendship

Friendships have existed since the start of time, from cavemen, around 2.5 million years ago, to Rachel, Monica and Phoebe in F.R.I.E.N.D.S. But why are friendships so important? Friendship is the key factor, impacting our psychological and physical wellbeing. Spending time with friends can release hormones called endorphins in the brain, which makes us happy. There are many different types of friendship, but they all share one thing in common: they have the ability to brighten up our lives. Friendship has also been key to breaking through racial and cultural barriers.

However, humans aren't the only species that form lifelong friendships – animals can too. Most animals have acquaintances, but only a few species are capable of true friendship. Dogs, for example, have the emotional capacity to form deep and enduring friendships. A study has shown that unrelated chimpanzees can develop strong bonds that last for years and research shows that durable friendships can be formed beyond the chimp species. Unlike human friendships, animal friendships do not rely on words and instead are defined by the experiences they go through and the sacrifices they make. As humans, we could also learn from these animals; friendships are not built on words but on actions.

So, what are the most important aspects of a good friendship? There should be respect, care, empathy and many other qualities we all hope to possess. It is essential that these feelings are reciprocated, otherwise this may be a sign that you are in a fake friendship. There are also many flip sides to friendship, such as bullying, antipathetic relationships and friends who do not side with you during challenging times. As Charlotte Brontë said, "Friends always forget those whom fortune forsakes." But why worry about bad friendships when you could just be a good friend?

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## Friendship in literature

Literature often idolise or romanticise various aspects of our lives, one aspect being friendship. As we read, we delve into the innermost feelings of a character towards their friends and unconsciously create a bias towards certain kinds of people or types of friendships. This can sometimes get in the way of perceiving friendship for what it is.

Charlotte Lucas and Elizabeth Bingley are two singletons at the start of the novel 'Pride and Prejudice', with contrasting personalities. Charlotte is the plain, intelligent one; Lizzie is the good-looking, sparky, lively one. They have opposing views on marriage; Charlotte values monetary gain over love, Elizabeth considers personal happiness more important. The marriage of Charlotte and Mr Collins marks a turning point in their formerly close friendship.

Even though Elizabeth grows as a person throughout the novel, she never learns to be a better and more forgiving friend to Charlotte, who made the best choice she could in her circumstances.

Harry, Ron and Hermione are probably one of the most famous friendships in recent literature. They are seen to be the golden trio. They balance each other out; in the first book, Ron's chess ability combined with Hermione's intelligence and Harry's bravery led to the reclamation of the stone. They always stand up for each other in times of need. However, there are little moments where their friendship is marred by jealousy, petty fights and distrust. When Harry's name gets drawn out from the Goblet of Fire, Ron becomes jealous of Harry. Ron refuses to believe Harry didn't put his name in the cup. They also have petty squabbles like when Ron thought his pet was eaten by Hermione's cat. In this friendship, while seemingly perfect, on the surface, they fall out at different points and exhibit unsupportive behaviour towards one another.

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson have one of the most iconic literary friendships. Arthur Conan Doyle shows how their relationship deepens as a result of their shared experiences and how a once distant pair, eventually consult each other about important life decisions. Their presence in each other's lives has helped them both evolve as professionals as well as humans. However, the seemingly perfect relationship is not all it seems. There is an imbalance in power between the two with Watson being subordinate to Holmes and being made to feel inferior on many occasions. The problem with such iconic friendships is that often, the healthier side of their relationship can become accepted as the norm.

We look up to these friendships depicted throughout literature and we learn so much from them. After all, literature gives us a perspective on life and teaches us how to approach different circumstances and relationships. Friendships are all different and they will always have flaws no matter what. There will never be a 'perfect friendship', however it is important to call out toxic behaviours. We should remember the words of a wise man. "A friend is one that knows you as you are, understands where you have been, accepts what you have become, and still, gently allows you to grow" – William Shakespeare.

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