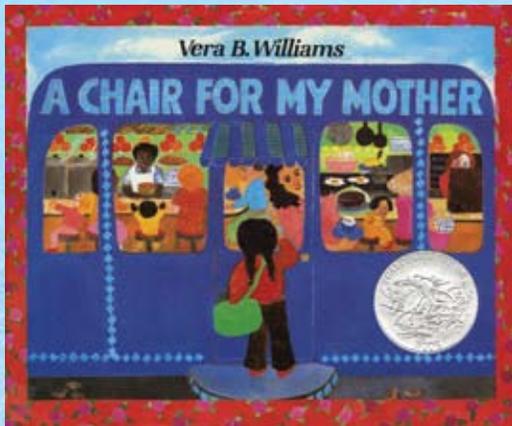


A Chair for My Mother & A Chair for Always

By Vera B. Williams

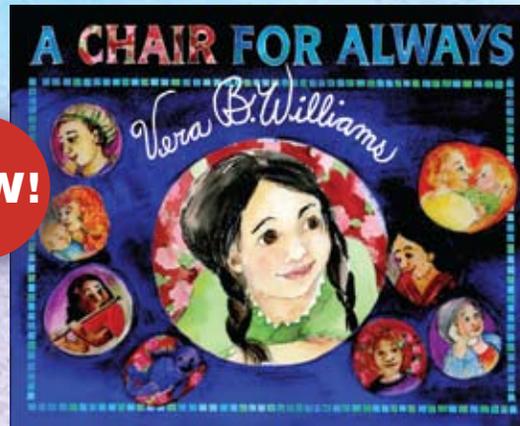
Classroom Guide



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Themes for Discussion

Family

Rosa's experiences demonstrate the importance of families pulling together in good times and bad. What is a family? Who is in Rosa's family? How is Rosa's family similar to and different from your family? How do Rosa's family members take care of each other? How do your family members take care of you, and how do you help take care of them?

Community

A Chair for My Mother and *A Chair for Always* exhibit two meanings of community: a group of people who live near each other, and a group of people who actively help each other. Which characters from the community appear in both books? How do these characters act as a community? Are communities important? Why or why not? Are you part of a community? Explain.

Change

Events in Rosa's life show that change can come from both tragedy and joy. What changes does Rosa experience in these two books? How does Rosa feel about change? Why do you think Rosa doesn't want a new chair in *A Chair for Always*? Can anything always stay the same? Explain. What changes have you experienced in your life? How did they make you feel?

Birth

A Chair for Always explores the significance of birth. Rosa says that all her family members—and even the furniture—look happy when Benji is born. Why do people think babies are special? Why is birth significant? What do you know about what happened when you were born? Why is Benji's birth exciting for Rosa? What is a midwife? What do you know about taking care of babies?



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Classroom Activities

Advice for Rosa

Facilitate a discussion about whether or not Rosa's family should keep their chair for always. After listening to various ideas, ask students to decide what they think Rosa's family should do. Review letter writing with your class, and then have students write to Rosa, either supporting her desire to keep the chair for always or persuading her to get a new chair. Students should include specific reasons for their position. Have partners read each others' letters and talk about how they think Rosa would react to them.

A New Chair

Ask students to pretend that Rosa decides to get a new chair. What do they think the new chair will look like? Prompt students to consider color, pattern, size, and style. Provide pieces of fabric, construction paper, markers, scissors, and glue for students to design a new chair for Rosa's family. What new memories might this chair hold for Rosa?

Something for Always

Ask students to think about something that is so special to them that they would like to keep it for always—something as important as Rosa's family's chair. Invite volunteers to share stories about their "for always" items. Then have students draw their special objects and write captions explaining their significance. Display the illustrations for everyone to see.

Community Action

Create a service learning experience for your students, taking inspiration from the support the community gives Rosa's family in *A Chair for My Mother*. Work with a hospital, shelter, or family service group to organize a baby clothing and supplies drive. Students should advertise the event, set up a collection area, help deliver the donated materials, and report on the results of the project. Engage students in discussing what they are doing, why, what questions they have, and how they feel about helping others.

Baby Music

Reread the part in *A Chair for Always* about Rosa's friends from the Oak Street Band visiting Benji. What lullabies do your students know? What kinds of words and sounds are appropriate for lullabies? Break the class into small groups to create lullabies for Benji, instructing students to write original lyrics to a familiar tune. If you have rhythmic instruments available, children could add these sounds to their lullabies. Have each group perform its lullaby for the class.

Change, Change, Change

A Chair for My Mother and *A Chair for Always* both develop the theme of change. Expand upon this theme by having students brainstorm about common changes that happen in people's lives. Ask them to write in their journals about a change that has happened to them. Students should reflect on the following questions in their responses: Why did the change happen? How did you react to it? How did you feel about the change when it was happening? How do you feel about it now?

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