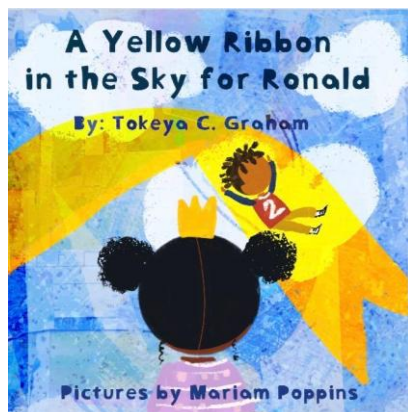


Reading Together: A Conversation Companion for *A Yellow Ribbon in the Sky for Ronald*



Age range: 6+ | Grade level: 1st grade and up

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OBJECTIVE

To support thoughtful, age-appropriate conversations about illness, friendship, grief, remembrance, hope, and caring for others while giving children space to name and process their own feelings.

THEMES

Friendship • Hope • Childhood Illness • Grief and Loss • Remembrance • Helping Others

SUMMARY

In *A Yellow Ribbon in the Sky for Ronald*, a young girl shares memories of her best friend, Ronald. Through an honest and heartfelt story, readers learn what hope looks like in the face of a very big diagnosis. Even in the midst of sorrow, we witness courage, joy, and the lasting power of friendship.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

***Content Note:** This story includes themes of serious illness, grief, death, and remembrance. Children may respond differently depending on their own experiences. Allow space for questions, feelings, silence, or the choice not to participate in a discussion.*

Before You Read

Children don't have to understand all the themes in the story before you begin. Keep the conversation open without trying to steer their feelings or the discussion. Here are some simple questions to ask before you start:

- What did you notice or wonder about the cover image?
- What did the title make you think of?
- What do you think this story might be about?
- Have you ever helped someone who wasn't feeling well?

While You Read

Pause while reading to ask some questions. Allow group interactions to guide the conversation as much as possible. However, for a specific lesson plan, feel free to select images to discuss.

- What did you notice or wonder about this image?
- What emotions do the characters seem to be experiencing in this scene?
- How do you feel when you look at the images?
- What does this scene make you feel?

After You Read

Allow students to sit for a moment with their feelings. It's okay if they need some quiet before talking.

- What was your favorite part of the story?
- What image was your favorite?
- How did the story make you feel?
- How does the girl in the story keep Ronald's memory with her?

For Educators, Librarians, Parents, and Caregivers

A Yellow Ribbon in the Sky for Ronald is a work of fiction based on a real experience. Fiction is an excellent learning tool because it allows readers to experience other people's lives while reflecting on their own. In this story, serious topics such as illness, grief, and loss are addressed. These topics may bring about big feelings for readers, young and old.

Children will bring their own experiences, feelings, and questions to a story. It is important to answer their questions honestly in age-appropriate ways. Remember that listening is often more important than having all the answers. Here are some ways to support children as you share this story:

- Sit with the silence. Sometimes it's better to sit with children and let them just be. Talking will come when it's time.
- Give children permission to pass. No one should be required to share a personal experience or feeling in a group setting.
- Ask, "What do you think?" or "Tell me more about that." Let their thoughts, feelings, and questions guide the conversation.
- If a child becomes overwhelmed, pause the conversation and offer a calm, trusted adult or other support as appropriate.

ACTIVITIES

- Do one act of kindness this week.
- Draw or write a thank-you note to someone who is a helper.
- Create a written or picture journal to capture feelings.
- Talk about a loved one who has passed. Look at pictures together and share memories.
- Create a yellow ribbon of hope or remembrance. Write or draw one thing you hope for, one person you remember, or one way you can care for someone else.

Ways to Use This Book

Read-alouds • Small-group conversations • Social-emotional learning • Grief and loss support • Friendship and kindness discussions • Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

Remember

There is no right way to respond to a story about illness or loss. Children may want to talk, draw, write, ask questions, sit quietly, or return to the conversation later. Follow their lead.

