

Kids' Reading Guide

For The Gift of Gerbert's Feathers, by Meaghann Weaver and Lori Weiner

Siblings

If you have a brother or sister who has a serious illness and you have ever felt worried for or even jealous of your sibling, you are not alone! Your relationship to your ill sibling is special, and you play an incredibly important role in your family. Gerbert's siblings were very important to him. When he became sicker, it was hard for him to continue to play with them the way he once had. This made him feel sad. Has the time that you spend with your brother or sister changed? If so, what has this been like for you? You may have noticed that Gerbert's parents were changing, too. His dad was more protective of the family and his mom was giving Gerbert some special foods that he liked. Have your parents changed at all since your brother or sister became ill?

When Gerbert was getting weaker and he didn't have the strength to go on the Great Migration, he gave each of his four siblings one of his feathers and he whispered a word of power into each of the feathers. He whispered the words joy, growth, peace, and courage, for this is what he wanted for each of them to have as they grew up.

If your sibling was to whisper something that he or she wished for you, what do you think that would be? If you could wish something for them, what would it be? Gerbert's siblings and family also wanted their brother to have something from each of them, so they could feel connected forever. Is there anything of yours that you think your brother or sister would like to have?

"In sun and rain and ice and snow, feather by feather, we're always together" were words Gerbert and his family often said together. Are there words or prayers that your family says with each other? Perhaps you can write these words or draw something important to your family on one of the feather pages on the front and back pages inside the book or in this document. Remember, you are a very special part of your family and you will forever be a brother or sister. No circumstance or amount of time will ever change this fact.

Friends and Peers

Friends can help bring joy and fun to our days. Having a friend who is sick can be scary. You may wonder when your friend will get better or if your friend will get better. You may miss being able to do things the way you used to with your friend before they became ill. You may even find it upsetting to see the changes that are happening to your friend, such as changes in their weight and energy level. These are normal feelings.

Gerbert's body and ability to play changed over time with his illness. The other goslings his age were probably surprised by the way that he started to look and act different. When they were splashing or flapping together, they may have felt sad that Gerbert was less able to keep up in their games. They might have been thinking of the times that they had laughed and played with Gerbert in the past. They may even feel guilty for not visiting Gerbert very often.

Do you think Gerbert may have wanted to have special moments together with his friends even though his body was changing? Can you think of ways that Gerbert's friends could still include him or could still spend special time with him? Are there things that you would still like to do with your friend who has been sick?

When a classmate or friend becomes ill, sometimes friends are not sure what to say to them or how to behave around them. Have you ever felt this way? Maybe Gerbert's friends and classmates worried about whether they would get sick too if they played with Gerbert. Have you ever had similar worries? This is not an unusual thought, but almost all diseases are NOT contagious. Gerbert was just happy having his friends around. He wanted people to ask him how he was feeling. When someone is sick, they very much like to be treated like they were treated before. They often miss the life they had before they became ill. For example, if you used to play games with your friend, see if this is something that you can still do. If your friend is not up to playing that day, ask if you can come back and try again another day. If you used to tell jokes together, your friend might really appreciate being able to laugh with you again. Your visit can be a great distraction from thoughts about being ill, taking medicines, and visiting doctors! And if your friend who is ill has siblings, spend some time with them too! They probably feel a lot of the same things you do, so you might be able to help each other. Just spending time with someone and talking to them through health and sickness is being a true and wonderful friend.

Fun Facts About Canada Geese

- A baby goose is called a gosling. A fledgling is a young goose that left the nest and is growing adult feathers, but can't fly far distances yet.
- At least 11 subspecies of Canada Geese have been recognized.
- Canada Geese fly at an average speed of about 40 miles per hour when migrating, but may increase their speed to 70 miles per hour if they catch a strong tailwind.
- Migrations can be as long as 3,000 miles and the geese are capable of flying up to 1,500 miles in a single day if the weather is good.
- Many Canada Geese return to the same nesting ground year after year.
- Canada Geese parents stay paired partners for life. The father goose and mother goose both take turns guarding the nest.
- All Canada Geese lose and regrow some of their flight feathers in the warmest days of summer in preparation for the next season's flight.

Information adapted with permission from the All About Birds website, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.
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