

**TOGETHER. APART. REGRET. NEW START?**  
***A lesson in three movements to accompany***  
***SOMETIMES A WALL...***

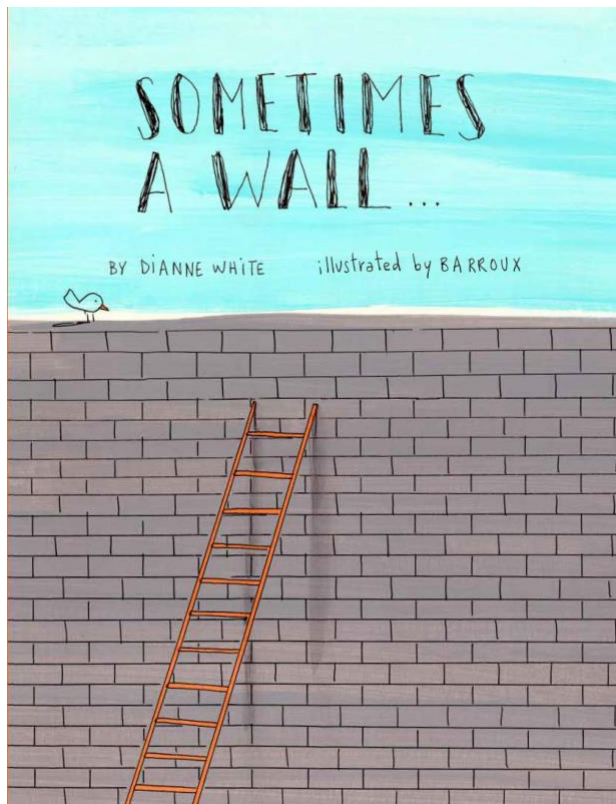
*There are many different kinds of walls.*

Some are fun! A chalk wall. A rock wall. The wall kids build when playing with blocks. The walls that rise when making a fort with pillows and blankets.

Other times, the fort-building that started out as a fun activity turns a corner, and someone gets excluded.

Leaving someone “out” and others “in” can look a million different ways. It doesn’t matter how young or old you are, we each have examples from our lives. Figuring out how to make amends when things go wrong is part of growing up and learning how to get along.

How will kids respond to the walls – both physical and metaphorical – they experience and the “different sides and points of view” they will encounter at school, home, and the world beyond? It’s my hope that *SOMETIMES A WALL...* and the lessons that follow might support this journey of discovery.



*by Dianne White, illustrated by Barroux.*

**An Overview:**

*One mini-unit. Three picture books. Three lessons inviting students into conversations about empathy, friendship, and the path from conflict to resolution.*

- **1st Movement:** *Together* (**I WALK WITH VANESSA** by Kerascoët)
- **2nd Movement:** *Apart* (**DRAW THE LINE** by Kathryn Otoshi)
- **3rd Movement:** *Regret. New start?* (**SOMETIMES A WALL..** by Dianne White, illustrated by Barroux)

## What's different about reading wordless (or nearly wordless) picture books?

Unlike typical picture book read-alouds, including wordless or nearly wordless books in storytimes depends heavily on the ability to read and interpret illustrations. There's a give and take that happens. With few or no words for guidance, students must create meaning through careful observation, collaborative conversation, and thoughtful questioning.

In her book, [READING PICTURE BOOKS WITH CHILDREN](#), Megan Dowd Lambert suggests reading *with*, rather than *to* children. Her Whole Book Approach, inspired by [Visual Thinking Strategies](#) (VTS) employs a kind of “co-constructive storytime,” in which the adult reader guides a back-and-forth conversation with kids using the following open-ended questions as a starting point:

1. What's going on in this picture?
2. What do you see that makes you say that?
3. What more can we find?

The lessons that follow aren't meant to be an *exact* implementation of Visual Thinking Strategies or the Whole Book Approach, but a starting place. (You can learn more about the Whole Book Approach [HERE](#).)



## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

(<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/>)

### SPEAKING AND LISTENING

#### Comprehension and Collaboration

- Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about *grade level topics and texts* with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
- Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, gaining the floor in respectful ways, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
- Build on others' talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others.
- Ask questions to clear up any confusion about the topics and texts under discussion.
- Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

#### Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas:

- Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.
- Create audio recordings of stories or poems; add drawings or other visual displays to stories or recounts of experiences when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

#### Craft and Structure:

- Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.
- Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.

### READING

#### Literature

- Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.
- Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

#### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

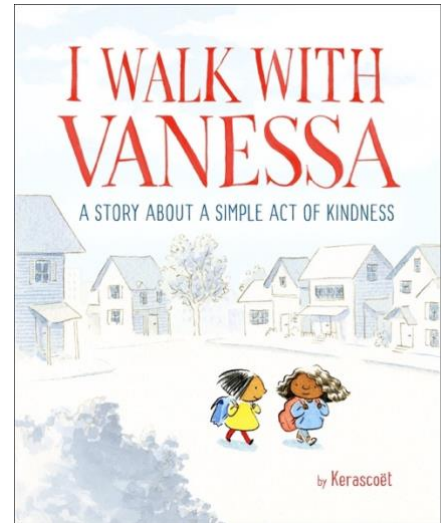
- Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

## 1st MOVEMENT: *Together*

**I WALK WITH VANESSA** by Kerascoët

Schwartz & Wade (2018) | ISBN: 978-1524769567

Inspired by real events, *I Walk with Vanessa* explores the feelings of helplessness and anger that arise in the wake of seeing a classmate treated badly and shows how a single act of kindness can lead to an entire community joining in to help.



### BEFORE

Before leading students in a modified **PICTURE WALK**, use a post-it note or something similar to conceal the title on both the cover and title page, leaving the illustration visible.

**Ask:** What's going on in the picture? What will this story be about? What do you see that makes you say that?

Continue the picture walk to the title page, and the double-page spread that follows. Allow time for students to study the illustrations but ask them to keep their predictions to themselves for the moment.

Now, flip back to the cover and remove the post-it notes. Read the title and subtitle. Does knowing the title change their predictions?

### DURING

Guided by the open-ended questions (What's going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that? What more can we find?) continue to encourage

students to “read” the story by sharing their interpretations and thoughts about the developing art and narrative.

As Megan Dowd Lambert suggests in her book, “use these questions to help children dig deeper into insights that surprise or intrigue. The idea is to engage the group in ways that guide, as opposed to direct, the group’s reading.”

## **AFTER**

Share this brief quote from the backmatter with students:

*“Kindness multiplies. One small act of kindness can inspire more kind acts.”*

### **Questions to consider ...**

- What do think the quote means? Do you believe it’s true? Can kindness multiply? In what ways? Can you share examples?
- Have you ever experienced a small act of kindness? How did it make you feel? Did it inspire you to “pass it on?”
- What act of kindness might you try today?

## **EXTENSIONS**

- Make a *Kindness Poster* for your home or classroom. (pg. 6); paint rocks with positive messages to leave around the school or neighborhood; decorate the playground with kindness-themed chalk art.
- Have the students do a group retelling of the story. As one child shows the pictures, another student recounts what’s happening. The teacher can act as scribe or consider recording a video or audio of the retelling.

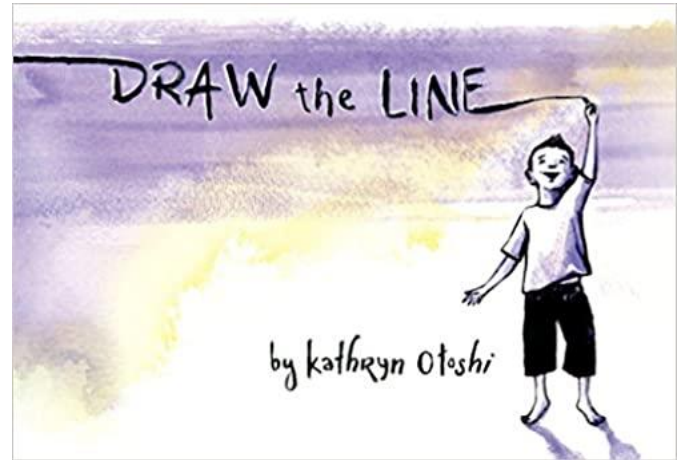
# KINDNESS COUNTS

## 2<sup>nd</sup> MOVEMENT: *Apart*

**DRAW THE LINE** by Kathryn Otoshi

Roaring Brook Press (2017) | ISBN: 978-1626725638

When two boys draw their own lines and realize they can connect them together—*magic happens!* But a misstep causes their lines to get crossed. *Push! Pull! Tug! Yank!* Soon their line unravels into an angry tug-of-war. With a growing rift between them, will the boys ever find a way to come together again?



### BEFORE

Open up the book so students can see both the front and back cover. **Ask:** What's going on in the picture? What will this story be about? What do you see that makes you say that?

### DURING

Guided by the open-ended questions above, continue to encourage students to “read” the story by sharing their interpretations and thoughts about the developing art and narrative.

Additional things to consider when reading: use of color and white space and use of the gutter – the inside margin at the center of a book.

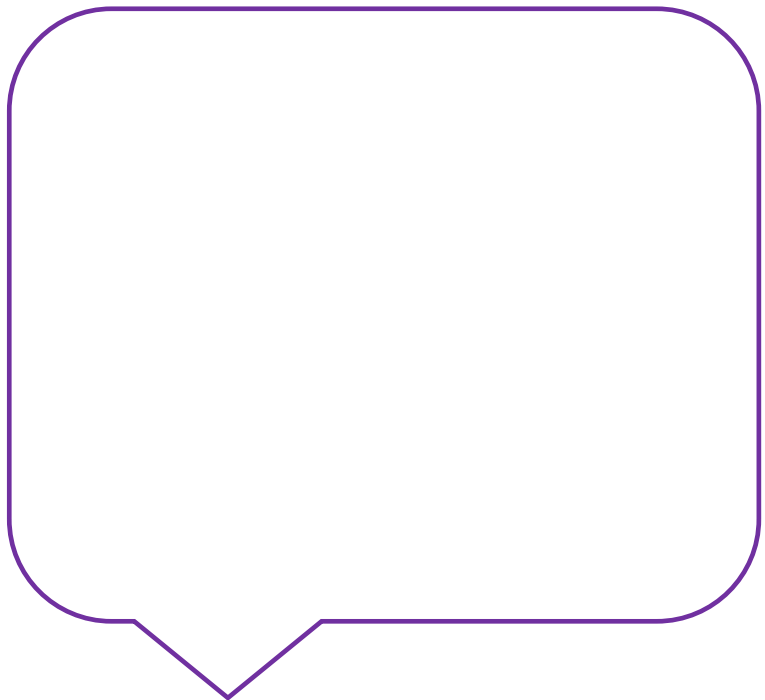
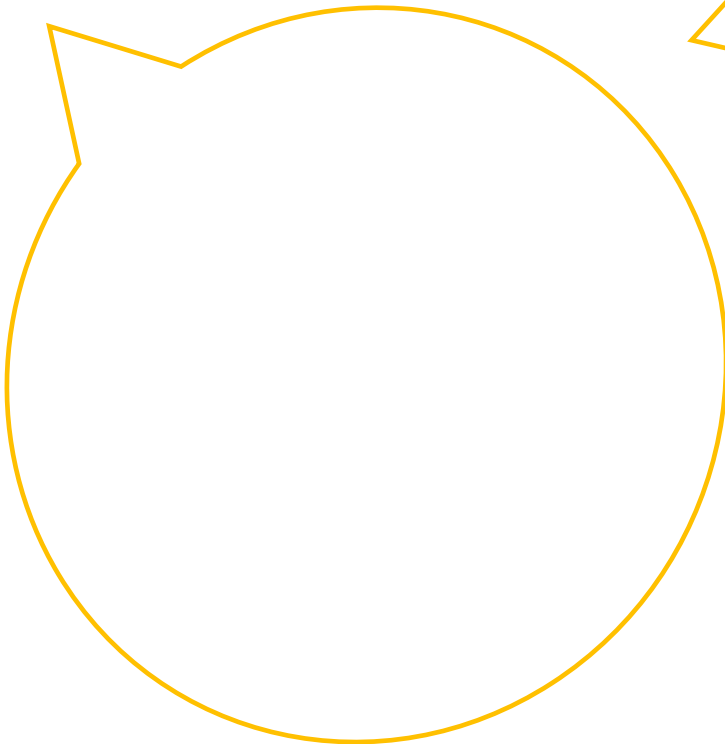
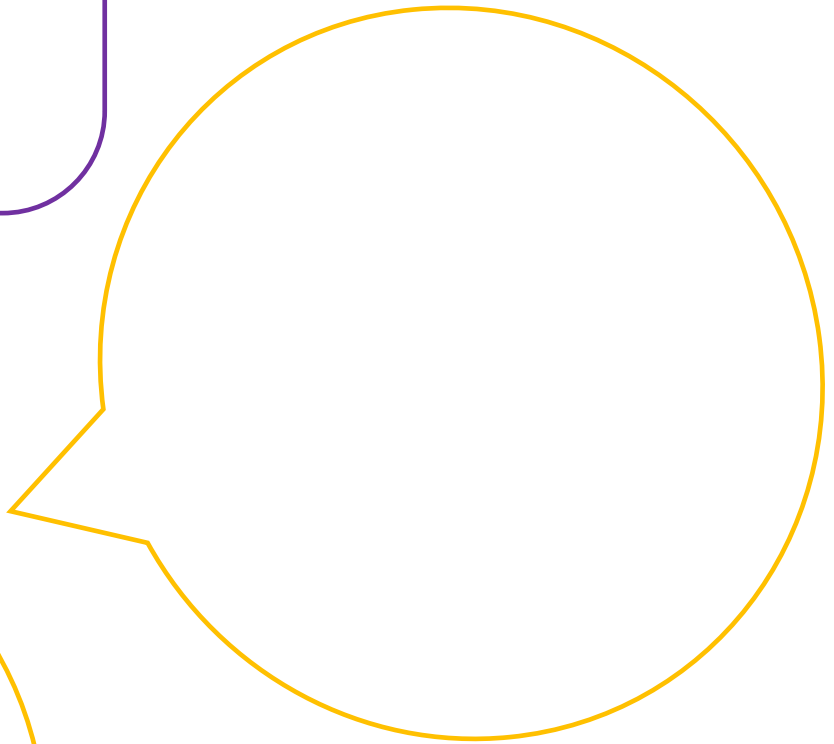
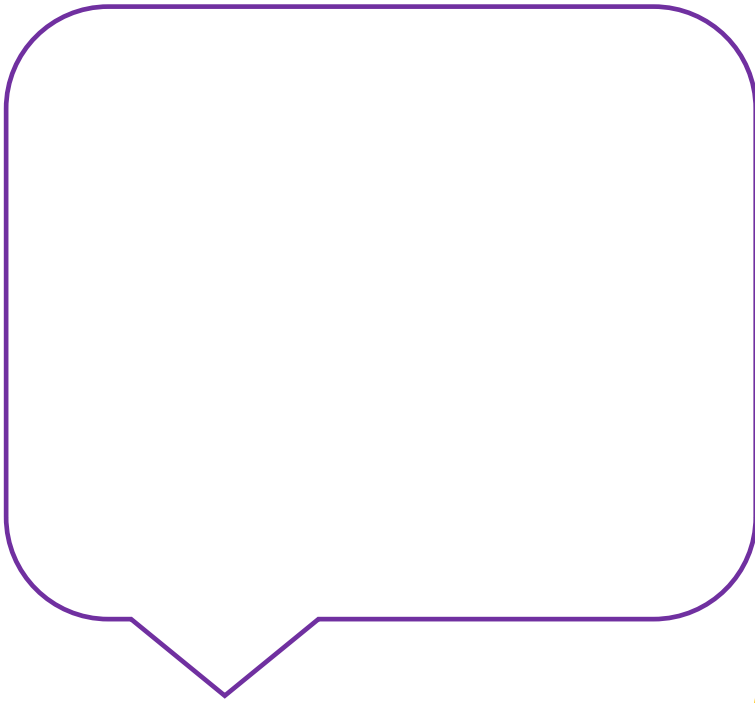
## AFTER

- **Questions for discussion:**
  - At what point did things go wrong? Do you think the boys got into a fight on purpose? Why or why not?
  - What *\*could\** the kids have done at the moment when the problem began? For example, when the boy on the right laughed, what might he have done instead? What do you think would have happened if he noticed that his friend was angry? What might have happened if they'd paused before reacting?
  - Is one child in the wrong and the other child in the right? Or is it just “one of those things?” Is it up to one child to step up and apologize?
- Have students work in small groups or pairs to create the dialogue (perhaps using speech bubbles on pg. 9) of each of the two characters for one or more double page spreads.

## EXTENSIONS and Resources

- [Draw the Line Activity Guide](#) (from Roaring Brook Press/MacMillan) – *includes numerous activities for younger learners.*
- [BookPage Interview](#) with author/illustrator Kathryn Otoshi
- Paired Drawing Activity (pgs. 10/11)

## Speech Bubbles



### **Paired Drawing/Communication Activity**

Communicating well is a learned activity that involves a variety of skills including listening, speaking, monitoring understanding, and clarifying meaning.

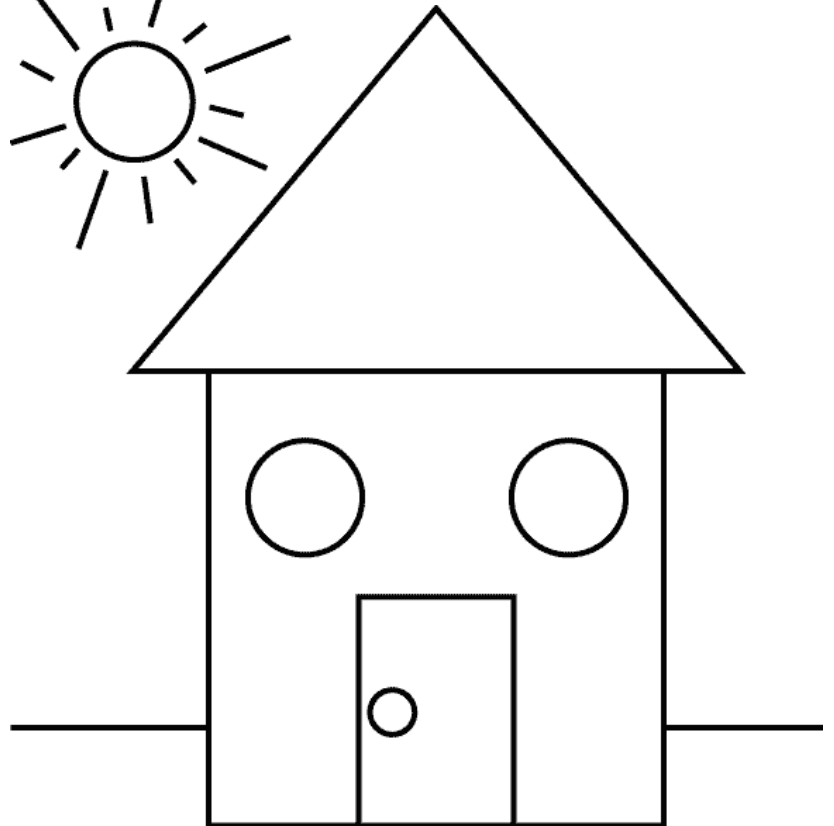
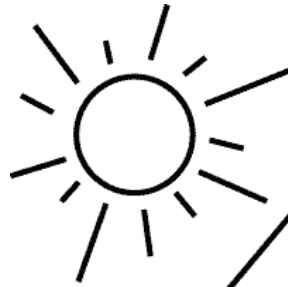
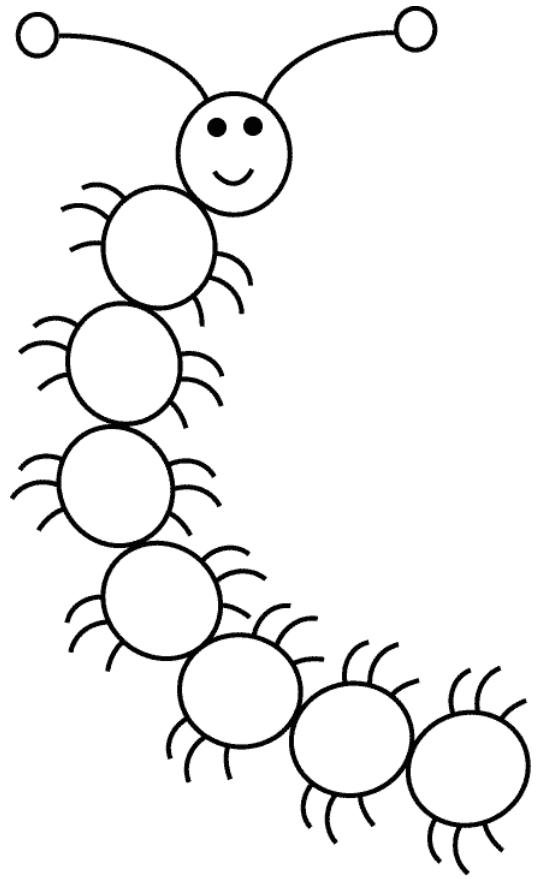
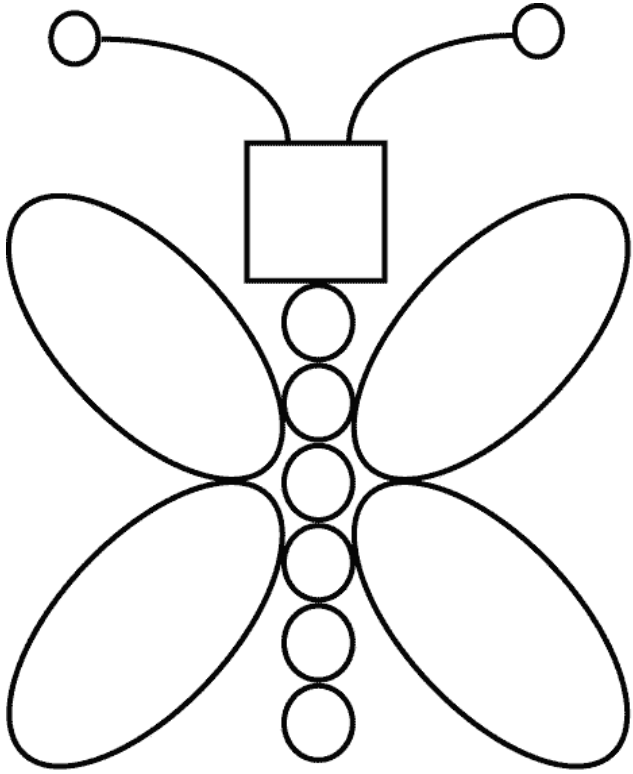
**Objective:** This activity practices listening and speaking skills and demonstrates how easily misunderstandings and misinterpretations can happen.

**Supplies:** pencil, paper, simple line drawings

#### **Procedure:**

- Divide students into pairs.
- Student #1 is given a copy of one of the drawings. Do not show the drawing to Student #2!
- Student #1 gives instructions to his/her partner without naming the object being drawn. (For example, if describing the butterfly picture, the student can't name what he's describing, but can say something like: "Draw 6 small circles in the middle of the page, one on top of the other... etc.) Student #2 may not ask questions.
- When the time is up, have students compare the drawing with the original and talk about the experience.
- Pass a second picture to Student #2 and have students swap roles. Student #2 will give the directions, but this time can answer yes/no questions and watch what Student #1 is drawing.
- What worked? What didn't? Was one role easier than the other? Did it help the partner to be able to ask questions? Did it help the leader to give better directions when s/he was able to watch what the partner was drawing?

TOGETHER. APART. REGRET. NEW START?  
*A lesson to accompany SOMETIMES A WALL...*



### 3<sup>rd</sup> MOVEMENT: *Regret. New Start?*

#### SOMETIMES A WALL...

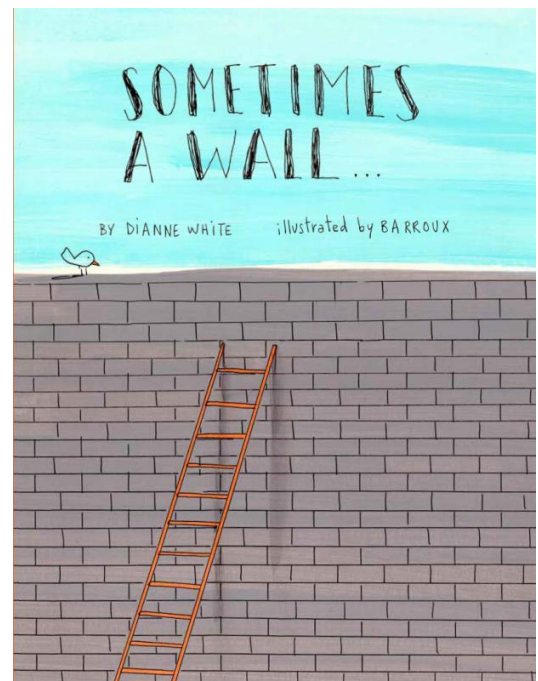
by Dianne White, illustrated by Barroux

Owlkids Books (2020) | ISBN 9781771473736

A day in the neighborhood begins with a chalk wall to draw on, a water wall to splash in, a climbing wall to clamber up, and a great wall of kids playing together.

But it isn't long before a wall comes between them, and one child is left out. After all the name-calling and hurt feelings, reflection and regret, is there a way these ex-friends can make amends?

Simple rhyming text is layered with playful illustrations to explore the many forms that walls can take – as well as the myriad feelings that accompany them. *Sometimes a Wall...* will inspire readers to scale walls of their own, with imagination and empathy.



#### **BEFORE**

Before leading students in a modified **PICTURE WALK**, use a post-it note or something similar to conceal the phrase (“A valuable lesson in friendship, one wall at a time”) on the back cover, leaving the illustration visible.

Begin with the front cover. **Ask:** What’s going on in the picture? What will this story be about? Who will be the characters in this story? What do you see that makes you say that?

What might the title, SOMETIMES A WALL... mean? Notice it includes an ellipsis (three dots) to indicate a pause or omission. It's meant to get the reader thinking: "Sometimes a wall... what?" How would you finish the sentence?

Now, open the book to reveal both the front and back covers. (NOTE: *the phrase "A valuable lesson in friendship, one wall at a time" should still be concealed.*)

**Ask:** What's going on in the picture? Does seeing both front and back covers change your predictions about what the story will be about? What do you see that makes you say that?

Uncover and share the phrase on the back. What might "A valuable lesson in friendship, one wall at a time" mean? Make a prediction about what will happen inside the pages of the book between the image on the front and the image on the back cover.

## DURING

Guided by the open-ended questions – What's going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that? What more can we find? – continue to encourage students to "read" the story by sharing their interpretations and thoughts about the developing art and narrative.

Additional things to consider when reading: use of color and white space and use of the gutter – the inside margin at the center of a book.

## AFTER

- **DISCUSSION GUIDE** (pgs. 15/16)
- Have each child draw an act of kindness on their own 6x6 paper square. Piece the squares together to create a classroom Friendship Quilt.

- Make a Double Bubble Map comparing and contrasting SOMETIMES A WALL with I WALK WITH VANESSA or DRAW THE LINE. (pg. 17)
- Work with the students to create a “path to peace” poster. What steps did the two characters take to resolve their differences? (see resources below for more about the Peace Path)
- Write a short unrhymed poem of apology in the style of William Carlos Williams, [“This is Just to Say.”](#)

### **EXTENSIONS and RESOURCES:**

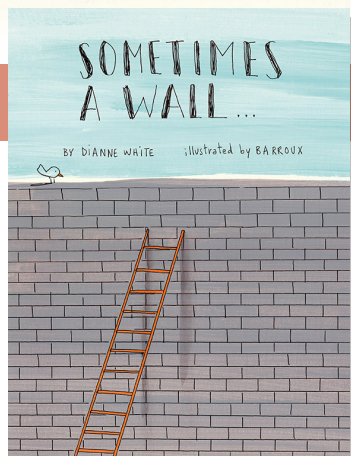
- [Peace Path](#) from recesslab.org
- Free downloadable [“Character/Emotions Chart”](#) from The Reading Roundup (Teachers Pay Teachers).
- Journal: Can you think of a time you experienced a similar type of disagreement with a friend? How did you feel? Were you able to work things out?
- **Be Kind** coloring page (pgs. 18/19)

### **OTHER BOOKS TO EXPLORE:**

- THE WALL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE BOOK by Jon Agee
- every little letter by Deborah Underwood, illustrated by Joy Hwang Ruiz
- BE KIND by Pat Zietlow Miller, illustrated by Jen Hill
- I AM HUMAN: A Book of Empathy by Susan Verde, illustrated Peter H. Reynolds
- LET’S BE ENEMIES by Janice May Udry, illustrated by Maurice Sendak
- ENEMY PIE Derek Munson, illustrated by Tara King
- STRICTLY NO ELEPHANTS by Lisa Mantchev, illustrated by Tae-eun Yoo



# SOMETIMES A WALL . . .



Book written by Dianne White  
and illustrated by Barroux

## Discussion Guide by Dianne White

### ABOUT THE BOOK

An afternoon in the playground introduces different kinds of walls: a brick wall to draw on with chalk, a water wall, and a climbing wall. What follows is a playful yet profound exploration of the many ways walls can divide us or bring us together. When one child is excluded from a game, another builds a castle to leave him out. When the builder declares the castle MINE, other kids feel alienated—but the builder becomes lonely, too, when the others have fun without him. The book ends with the optimism of a new start: friendship, forgiveness, and imagination give the wall new meaning. Told with short, simple lines of playful, rhyming text and loose line illustrations, this book sparks questions with empathy, insight, and charm. It's a timely tool for inquiry-based and social-emotional learning, sharing the important message that walls can unite or divide, depending on the choices we make.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. A wall can be many things. It can keep things in or out. It can protect or isolate. What are examples of different kinds of walls you've seen or experienced? What are the different ways a wall can be? In what ways does a wall divide?
2. What do you think were the different sides and points of view in the book?
3. Why do you think the children started acting unkindly toward the boy?
4. Why do you think the boy with the yellow hat wanted the boy in the striped shirt to go away?
5. Why was the boy in the (vertical) striped shirt staring?
6. Was the boy in the yellow hat being unfair? Why or why not?
7. What do you think the boy was thinking when he threw down the yellow hat and put on a crown?
8. Have you ever been like the child wearing the crown? Wanting to be "the king" of the castle? What were you thinking? How did you feel?
9. Have you ever felt left out, like the other child? What were you thinking? How did you feel? (Cont'd on next page)

ISBN: 978-1-77147-373-6

#### CURRICULUM LINKS:

**Language Arts:** Reading Comprehension; Visual Literacy  
**Visual Arts:** Illustration Techniques; Color  
**Character Development:** Empathy; Kindness; Caring; Respect; Bullying; Exclusion; Consequences; Problem Solving; Cooperation; Teamwork; Making and Keeping Friends; Creative Play; Imagination

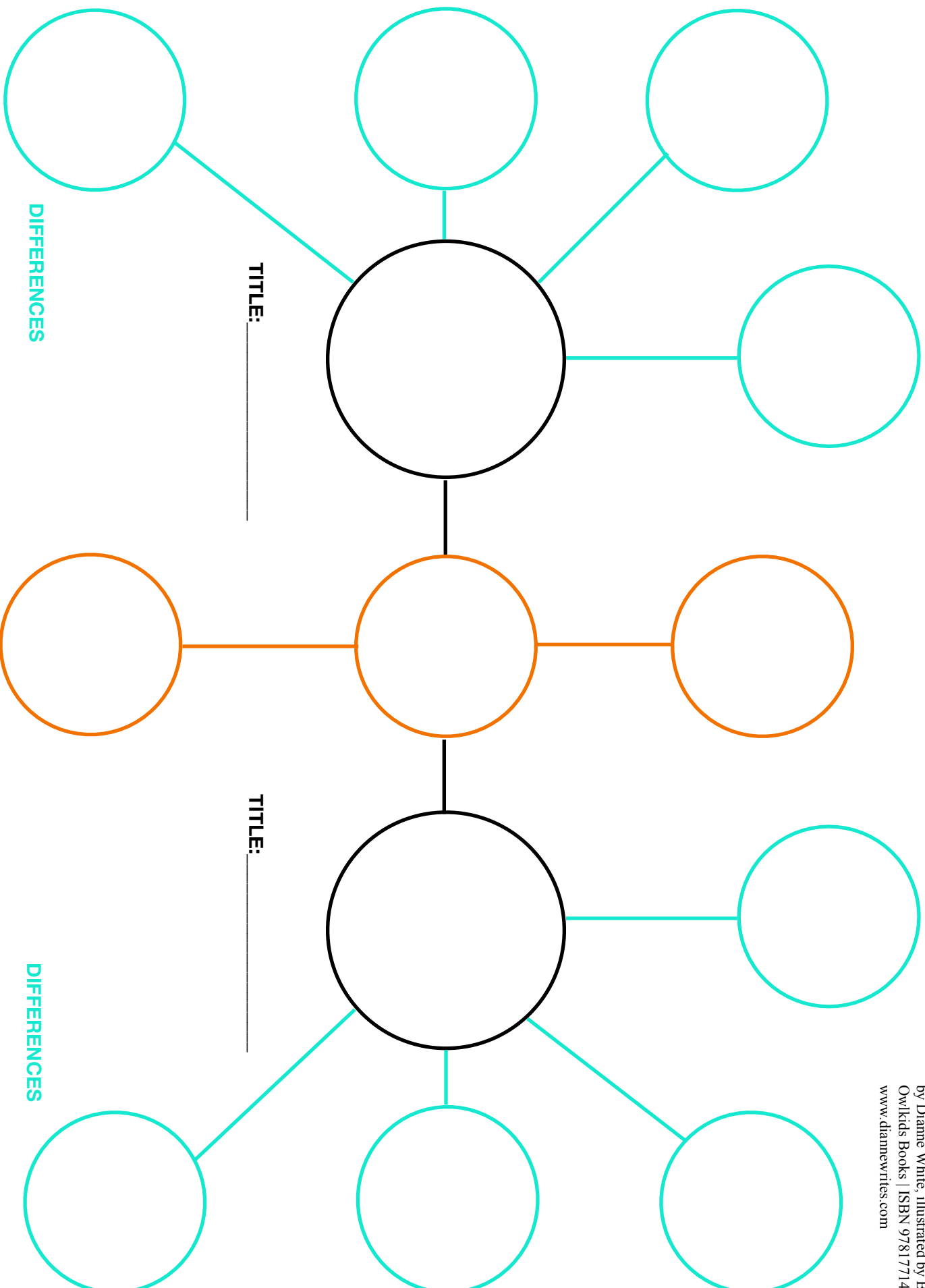
#### READING LEVELS:

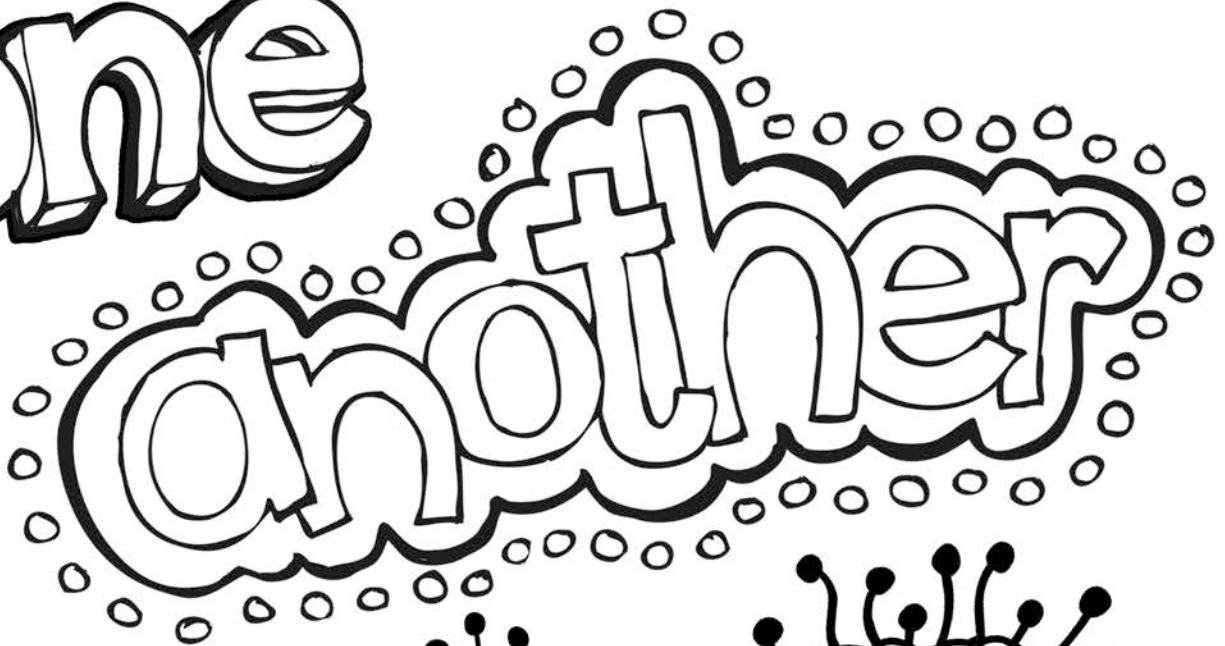
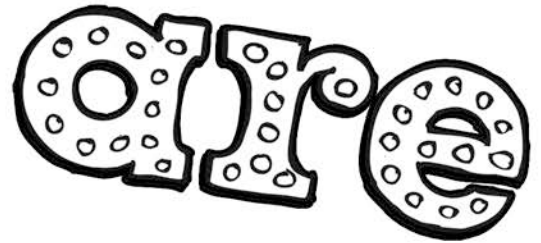
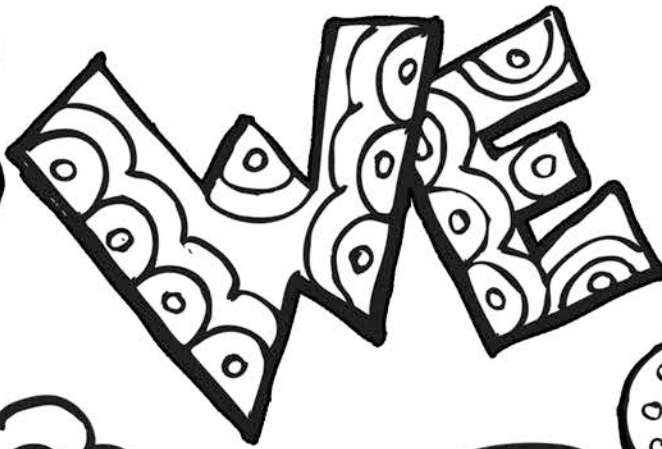
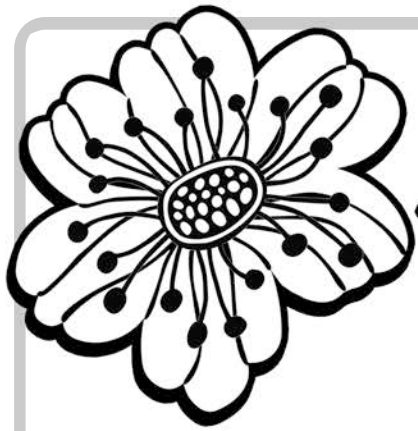
**Grade:** Pre-K–4  
**Fountas & Pinnell:** M  
**Reading Recovery:** 20  
**Lexile® Measure:** NP  
**Common Core:** L.2, RF.2, RL.2, SL.2, W.2

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONT'D)

10. What kinds of feelings do you think the boy with the crown was experiencing when he was alone?
11. What do you think made him decide to ask for a “new start?” Have you ever acted in a way that you later regretted? What did you do to fix the situation?
12. A wall can lead to anything. What did this wall lead to? How did the kids end up working things out?
13. Have you ever been in a situation in which you weren’t getting along with someone and there was a “wall” between you – a wall that made it hard to get along? Were you able to resolve your disagreement? How? If you weren’t able to resolve the disagreement, can you think of a way you might have handled things differently?
14. Did the problem resolve in a realistic way? What would have happened if the boy had stayed in the castle?
15. As humans, we have the ability to make choices. To be good or bad. Obey or disobey. To be kind or thoughtless. To speak up or be quiet. We make mistakes, but we can also learn and grow. Put yourself in the place of one of the characters. What do you think they are feeling and thinking? What might this character learn from the events of the story?
16. Think of a problem you’ve had with a friend. A “wall” that came between you. Was there only one, or more than one way to look at the problem? One or more than one way to solve it?





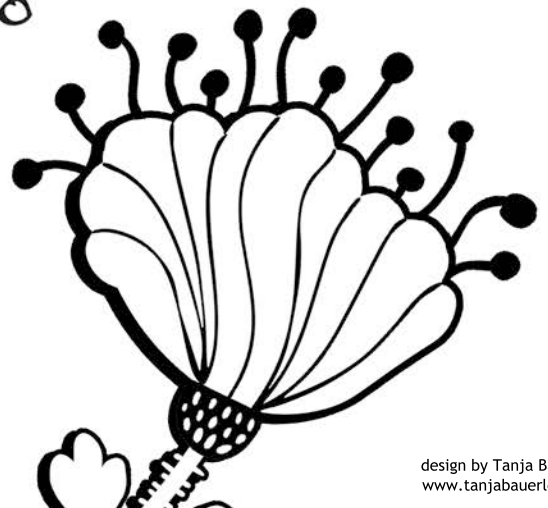


SOMETIMES A WALL...



by Dianne White  
illustrated by Barroux  
Owlkids Books  
ISBN 9781771473736

WWW.DIANNEWITES.COM



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# SOMETIMES A WALL

