

# Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you, who you are

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## Part 1: Practical Guidance and Didactical Approach

### Background and keywords:

In his book providing key strategies for teaching boys, Biddulph (2003) stated that girls in today's Western world possess more self-confidence than boys. Self-confidence is frequently linked to the position a child occupies within the group, who supports him and his inner circle. Friends and groups/cliques are especially important to children during puberty years. It is common knowledge that at that age, children start gradually detaching themselves from their parents and home life, as they become more independent.

Often parents dictate to their children, which friends are desirable and which are not. As Helga Gürtler so eloquently puts it, parents want their children to have friends that greet in a friendly manner, wipe their feet before coming inside and know how to speak "in a civilized manner". Often parents are not very good judges of which children make good friends and which others are merely, only figuratively-speaking good at "buttering them up". Children themselves have completely different criteria, when it comes to meeting others and making new friends. It is very important that choice of friends is not merely based on physical appearance, rather than personal traits. Often children choose their friends on the basis of criteria such as modern clothes, beautiful possessions, a great deal of pocket money, or "simply being cool".

### Similar topics:

Friendship, group composition, culture, personal traits, discernment

### Materials:

The Estonian children's film (2005) Röövlirahnu Martin /Der magische Kater/ Mat The Cat!

Plot: After moving to the country, ten-year old Martin finds it difficult to get used to his new surroundings. His greatest rival at school is Kevin, a spoilt, rich boy, who manages to court Maria's favour with all his fantastic possessions. Martin, on the other hand, appears to be really disaster prone. His grades are not the best and this makes his single mother unhappy.

So Martin withdraw "into his own world", a wooden house on a huge cliff. He can hardly believe his eyes when a tomcat addresses him. The bizarre creature, which can actually speak and occasionally turns into a strong boy and does magic, becomes his friend. It is not long before the two are inseparable and together they succeed in winning Marta's heart and even solving Martin's school problems as well.

- Worksheets (photos)
- Bulletin board
- Pictures
- Colourful slips of paper

- Pens
- DVD (Film sequences 3.33 – 5.28)

**Duration:**

2 teaching units of 45 minutes each

**Number of participants:**

- 20 to 25 boys and girls in a class
- 4 to 5 children in small groups (for group work)

**Age:**

9 -12 year old boys (and girls)

**Aims:**

To become more skilled at:

- observing human behaviour;
- making decisions;
- justifying one's opinion;
- thinking through friendships.

**(Short) explanation:**

The teaching material includes film photos and film sequences. Pupils will work alone in order to best make their personal assessment of themselves and then in small groups. Before watching the movie, they are to decide, based on outward appearance, which of the two boys they would like to have as their friend. An experiment carried out at one school in Estonia with 10 to 11 year olds, showed that most of the pupils chose Kevin (one of the movie actors) as the character they wanted to be friends with. After watching the movie, their opinion changed. With the help of the worksheets and through the teacher's group moderation, the pupils should come to realize that often outward appearances are deceiving.

**Reflection:**

With the help of the teacher to moderate, a discussion will be held at the end of the lesson in order to draw conclusions.

- Do you know someone who is very popular, even though he is rude and rowdy, just because he has expensive belongings that attract other children?
- What do you think is the reason for that?
- What could be done about that?
- Can someone, from their own experience, report about how someone judged another person wrongly because of their outward appearance?

**Variations (Continuation):**

Rather than only watch film sequences, show the whole movie which lasts 75 minutes (then follow the other steps outlined).