

# MY FRIEND MEG

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## Summary

Jessie is so jealous of Megan, the new girl, she wishes Megan's pretty sneakers would stick to the road. Then, Megan is knocked down by a car, and ends up in a coma. As Jessie visits the hospital every day, her guilt gives way to a new understanding of what friendship and getting to know someone really means.

RL	GRL	DRA
5	U	50

RL = Reading Level by Grade  
GRL = Guided Reading Level  
DRA = Developmental Reading Assessment Level

### Themes

Hospitalization, jealousy

### Genre & Format

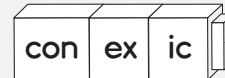
Realism—recount, chapter book

### Comprehension Strategies

Critique  
Gather  
Infer

### Word Analysis

Prefix *con-*  
Prefix *ex-*  
Suffix *-ic*



### Comprehension Skills

Character traits and emotions  
Main idea  
Story problem/story resolution

### Vocabulary

Categories: hospital words

### Writing

Recount from a different point of view

## BEFORE READING

### Build Background Knowledge

Read the blurb on the back cover aloud. Explain the word *accident* and point out that much of this story takes place at a hospital. Have students share what they know about hospitals. *Have you ever been to a hospital? What did you see and hear?* Use students' responses to compile a list of hospital-related words and phrases, such as *doctor, nurse, visitor, patient, x-ray, cast, and stitches*. Save the list to use during the reading.

Display the following sentence starters. Ask students to select one of the sentence starters and write about the topic for three to five minutes.

When I think of hospitals, I

\_\_\_\_\_.

I wonder if hospitals

\_\_\_\_\_.

## Introduce the Book

Ask students to look at the details in the illustration on the front cover. Point out that good readers use what they know to make inferences, or figure out more, about a story. Encourage students to make inferences about the two main characters by studying the characters' expressions. *Which character must be Megan Millhouse, the girl who is so popular? How can you tell?* Have students identify Jessie. Ask students how the details show how Jessie feels about Megan's popularity.

Work with students to identify the problem.

[Jessie is jealous of Megan.] Tell students that good readers think about how characters might try to solve a problem. *Why do you think the story is called My Friend Meg? Do you think that Jessie is just being sarcastic, saying the opposite of what she feels? Why or why not?*

## English Language Learners

Invite students to write text for selected illustrations in the story, such as pages 15, 21, 28, 44, 56 or 64. If time allows, mask the text and then make oversized copies of the illustration. Have students use the copies to create labels, speech balloons, dialogue, or a brief summary for the illustration. Ask questions to help students brainstorm ideas. *Who do you see in this picture? Where are they? What are they talking about? How does it make Jessie feel? What other details do you see in the picture?*

Remind students that in realistic novels, what seems like big problem can change suddenly as more important events happen. *Imagine that your best friend is late and you are going to miss a movie you really want to see. How would you feel? What if you found out that your best friend had become seriously ill? How would that change everything?*

Tell students that in realistic novels, characters solve their problems in realistic ways. Point out that realistic characters have emotions and traits that remind readers of people from real life.

## PAGES 4–13: Guide the Reading

Have students locate the Table of Contents and flip through the pages to locate the start and end of Chapter 1. Tell students to read pages 4–13 to meet Jessie and Megan. After students read, discuss with them the main idea in this part of the story. Explain that the main idea can be stated in a sentence. Read each of the following sentences and ask why it is or is not a good main idea sentence.

1. A new girl came to school.
2. Jessie wished she were as popular as Megan.
3. Jessie was upset by Megan’s popularity, but she felt guilty when Megan was knocked down by a car.
4. Jessie felt bad about Megan’s accident.

Have students discuss Jessie’s comment that everything changed when Megan Millhouse started going to her school. Observe that strategic readers can use character traits and emotions to take a closer look at what characters say and do and how they feel. Explain that understanding the characters better will give readers a clearer idea of the story problem and how it might be solved. *What does Megan do that bothers Jessie?* Have students decide if it was really Megan’s fault that Jessie felt so left out.

Have students reread pages 4–18 and note words that tell about Jessie’s feelings and attitudes: *sarcastic, in a huff* (page 4); *I wasn’t jealous, I was lonely* (page 6); *fist-pounding, tear-your-hair-out, stomp-and-scream jealous; I hated her; bad attitude* (page 8). Point out that sometimes the reader has to make inferences from the details to figure out what Jessie’s feelings were. Have students infer Jessie’s emotions on pages 9–12.

## Word Analysis

Ask students to find the word *except* on page 6. Explain that the prefix **ex-** means “out.” *Read the sentence containing except and use context clues to define the word. How does the prefix ex- affect its meaning?* Repeat the process with another example. Have students locate and copy the word *exactly* on the same page. After they have identified the prefix **ex-**, ask them to use context clues to create a definition for *exactly*. Invite students to share and compare their definitions. See Extend the Experience 1.

## PAGES 14–32: Guide the Reading

Review pages 4–13. Invite volunteers to recall what has happened so far. *Why was Jessie so upset when Emma said “my friend Megan”?* *How did Emma feel when Megan came to class?* [She wasn’t as friendly with Jessie; she copied Megan’s way of tossing her hair and said she was getting the same sneakers as Megan; she laughed at Jessie.] Tell students that in this part of the story, everything has changed and become much more serious. Observe that the way characters act when there is a problem can tell the reader a lot about them. Remind students how Emma and Jessie each felt about Megan at the beginning of the story. Ask students to notice if they still feel and act the same way in this part of the story. Tell students to read Chapter 2 and to use the illustrations and details in the text to gather information about Jessie’s emotions and character traits and about how she begins to change.

**Page 16:** *What was Jessie’s terrible secret?* [She had wished for Megan’s sneakers to get stuck to the road, and they had.] *On page 27, what did Jessie start to realize about her wish?* [Her silly thoughts hadn’t caused the accident.]

Have students discuss Jessie’s comment on page 27: *I think I changed from being little to big as I went through the door of Megan’s room. What are some things Jessie did that showed she was starting to change?*

Invite students to compare Jessie’s emotions and attitude at the hospital with those of Emma. Guide students to recognize that Emma is uncomfortable and afraid. Point out that Emma notices how different Megan looks, but Jessie thinks about how Megan must *feel*. Have students discuss the scene on page 30 when the nurse calls Jessie Megan’s friend.

## Word Analysis

Ask students to locate and copy the word *connected* on page 22. Ask them to circle the prefix **con-** at the beginning of the word, explaining that this prefix can mean “together” or “with.” Read aloud the surrounding sentences. Use context clues and the meaning of the prefix to help students define *connected*. *How does con- influence the meaning of connected?* Repeat the process with two more examples: *contribute* and *conversation* on page 23. Encourage students to watch for more **con-** words as they continue reading the story. See Extend the Experience 2.

## PAGES 33–49: Guide the Reading

Invite volunteers to recall how Jessie started to change after Megan was injured. Tell students that in Chapter 3, Jessie gets more involved with helping Megan. Have students use the Table of Contents to locate the start of Chapter 3. Instruct students to read pages 33–49 and then list words and phrases that describe what Jessie is like now and how she feels about Megan.

## Extend the Experience



### Reading Rods Prefixes, Suffixes, and Root Words Kit

Explore the color-coding in this kit with students. Point out that prefixes are on yellow rods, root words are on light green rods, and suffixes are on orange rods.

Demonstrate how to connect a yellow rod to the beginning of a light green rod to make a new word.

Have students find these word parts on their Reading Rods: **ex-** (yellow rod); **act, cit, cede, pend, press, tract** (light green rods); **e** (red rod). Challenge them to build six Reading Rods words beginning with the prefix **ex-**. Encourage them to say their words aloud to see if the words are real. Have them record their words. [*exact, excite, exceed, expend, express, extract*] Discuss the meaning of any unfamiliar words. *Can you add suffixes to any of these words? Use your orange Reading Rods to find out. Consult a dictionary when you need to. Record your results.* [Sample answers: *exactly, excitement, expressly, expression, extraction*] When students are done, have them think of ways to sort the words. [Sample answers: *expressly, expression (press words); exactly, expressly (-ly words)*]

## Extend the Experience



### Reading Rods Prefixes, Suffixes, and Root Words Kit

Have students find these word parts on their Reading Rods: **con-** (yellow rods); **test, cede, fus, struct, tract, form** (light green rods); **e** (red rod). Challenge them to build six Reading Rods words beginning with the prefix **con-**. Encourage them to say their words aloud to see if the words are real. Have them record their words. [*contest, concede, confuse, construct, contract, conform*] Discuss the meaning of any unfamiliar words. *Can you add suffixes to any of these words? Use your orange Reading Rods to find out. Consult a dictionary when you need to. Record your results.* [Sample answers: *contestant, confusion, contraction, construction, confusing*] When students are done, have them think of ways to sort the words. [Sample answers: *confusion, confusing (fus words); confusion, construction, contraction (-ion words)*]

Point out that good readers can learn more about characters by comparing them to other characters. Remind students that Jessie said, *A whole new pattern for my days began*. Have students compare Jessie's way of helping Megan to the other students' ways of helping. [Jessie went to the hospital almost every day; she got the class to make cards for Megan's room; she read to Megan every afternoon; she told Megan what happened at school.]

Have students note the ways in which Jessie's feelings about Megan keep changing: she wanted to help her; she couldn't wait to see her again right away (page 33); the guilty feeling she'd carried around inside was gone at last; she hadn't known Megan before, and suddenly she was the most important thing in Jessie's life (page 35); she hoped Megan would wake up soon and that she would be there when she did (page 41); she was desperate to know the signs of recovery from a coma (page 42); she wished she could have a proper visit with Megan some day (page 49). Observe that in Chapter 1, Jessie thinks only about her own needs, and that now she is thinking of someone else's needs.

Have students gather details in the illustrations that help tell the story.

Remind students that since Megan is in a coma she cannot speak and that Jessie has to use inferences to figure out what Megan is like. For example, point out that when Mrs. Millhouse brings in Megan's cassette player, Jessie realizes that she and Megan like the same music (page 41). *What does Jessie learn about Megan when she stays in her room at home? How does she feel when she sees Megan's shoes?* Point out that earlier, Jessie had judged Megan without knowing anything about her. Encourage students to write a few words that describe the way Jessie is now, such as *wiser, more mature, caring, thoughtful, worried, helpful*.

## Vocabulary Development

Invite students to locate and copy words and phrases that have to do with the hospital: *head injuries, coma* (page 14); *accident* (page 16); *doctors, hospital* (page 17); *pain, operation* (page 18); *plastic tubes went into her windpipe ... and down into her lungs* (page 22); *nurse, gauges, bed* (page 23); *hospital rooms* (page 25); *a tray of cups and pills, beepers* (page 29); *white coats* (page 30); *pediatric, intensive care unit* (page 33); *get-well card* (page 35); *physical therapist* (page 41); *patient, infected* (page 42); *tracheotomy* (page 44); *scar, wheelchair, nurses' station, life support* (page 55). Work with students to interpret and categorize these words.

## PAGES 50–64: Guide the Reading

Invite students to recall how Jessie began to help Megan and learn more about comas. *How helpful was Jessie compared to Emma and the other kids? What did Jessie find out about Megan when she went to her house?* Remind students that, since the visit

to her house, Jessie has started calling Megan Meg, and that she now thinks of Megan as a good friend, not a rival.

Observe that sometimes people form judgments about others before they know anything about them. Tell students that strategic readers, like thoughtful people, gather important details about characters in order to understand them better. Point out that as Jessie gets to know the real Megan, her feelings of jealousy disappear and she begins to care about Megan and hope for her recovery.

Tell students that in the last chapter, Jessie makes several surprising discoveries. Allow time for them to read Chapter 4. Then, observe that just as the hospital made Jessie think about what Megan is going through, hearing what Mrs. Millhouse says lets Jessie see what school was like for Megan. *Why is Jessie surprised to hear that Megan was not good at reading?* [She's imagined that Meg had always been good at everything.] Have students revisit page 59. *What else did Jessie find out?* [Megan felt unhappy and said she didn't have any friends; she held her chin up and tossed her hair because she was nervous.] Have students discuss Mrs. Millhouse's comment: *A crowd is never the same as a friend.* Then, encourage students to discuss the painful lesson Jessie learned about friendship when she went to the movies and realized that she hadn't been invited to Emma's birthday party.

Encourage students to note details that tell about Jessie's feelings.

Ask students if they liked the ending of the story. *Did it seem realistic? Do you think Jessie and Megan will become close friends? What do you think the sneakers mean to Jessie now, compared to what they meant to her at first?*

Remind students that in the beginning of the story, Jessie's problem was that Megan was more popular than she was. Then, have students recall the much more serious problem that occurred. *What are some things that Jessie did to help solve the serious problem of Megan's accident? Revisit the title of the story. How does the end of the story resolve both problems?*

## Word Analysis

Have students locate and copy the word *Pediatric* on page 33. Ask them to underline the letters **-ic** at the end of the word, noting that this suffix means "relating to." Guide students to derive the meaning of *Pediatric* from two smaller word parts: **ped** meaning "child" and **-ic** meaning "relating to." ["health care for children"] Ask students to locate and copy the word *terrific* on page 50. Have them underline the suffix **-ic**. *What is one meaning of terrific?* ["great"] Explain that another meaning of *terrific* is "causing great fear," as in *It was a terrific storm.* *How does the suffix -ic contribute to this definition of the word?* Together brainstorm other words ending with **-ic**. [Sample answers: *comic, historic, poetic, public, sympathetic*] Discuss and analyze each word. See Extend the Experience 3.

## Extend the Experience



### Reading Rods Prefixes, Suffixes, and Root Words Kit

Ask students to look at the suffixes on their orange Reading Rods and take out the **ic** rod. Have them listen for the sound of this suffix as you say *metric* slowly. Instruct them to build *metric* with Reading Rods. When they are done, verify the correct spelling. Tell students that another suffix can come after **-ic**. Have them listen for **-ic** as you say *vertical* slowly. Ask students to build the word with Reading Rods. Note that **-ic** is in the middle of *vertical*. Choose more words with **-ic** for students to build, such as *antibiotic, microscopic, photographic, political, and pediatric*. See if they can incorporate the meaning of the suffix, "relating to," in definitions.

# INFORMAL ASSESSMENT

Ask students to recall how Jessie felt about Megan in the beginning and how her feelings changed. *Why didn't Jessie like Megan at first? What happened after Jessie first went to the hospital to tell Megan she was sorry? What did Jessie find out about Megan that surprised her? How had Jessie changed by the end of the story?*

## REVISIT THE TEXT

### Story Problems and Story Resolution

Have students use a graphic organizer to write about the story problems. Distribute photocopies of Worksheet 1 to students. *What was Jessie's problem at the beginning of the story? What much more serious problem happened next? What did Jessie do to help Megan? How were both problems resolved by the end of the story?*

**BLM** Use Worksheet 1 to write about the story problems and story resolution.

### Character Traits and Emotions

Have students discuss how Jessie felt about Megan before and after the accident and what Jessie did to show her feelings. *How did Jessie feel at first? How did she change? What do you think she learned about friendship?*

**BLM** Use Worksheet 2 to write about character traits and emotions.

## AFTER READING

### Writing in the Genre

Have students review how Jessie and Megan became friends. Point out that it will take Megan a long time to feel better. Have students discuss how Megan's life will change. Remind students that there will be some problems to solve and some good things, too. For

example: *One of Megan's legs is injured, and she will have to wear special shoes. Do you think she will be able to walk right away? What about physical therapy? Do you think she will one day take ballet classes again?*

Remind students that Megan now has a friend and that she and Jessie have many interests in common. Point out that Megan also understood when Jessie was reading to her, even though she was unable to show it while she was in a coma. Explain that people in comas can sometimes hear and understand what people are saying around them.

Invite students to write another realistic chapter of the story or a diary entry, this time from Megan's point of view. *How does Megan feel about her problems? How does it help to have a friend? What kind of activities do Megan and Jessie enjoy together? What do they talk about?* Encourage students to read their chapters aloud.

## Independent Writing

Have students discuss some of the careers mentioned in the story, such as nurse, doctor, and physical therapist. Discuss with students how these and other occupations involve helping people. Invite students to find out more about an occupation they admire by using nonfiction books, career brochures, the Internet, and, if appropriate, interviewing someone in that occupation. Have students write a brief report telling how that occupation helps people and how people learn to do that occupation.

## Fluency

Select a memorable passage of the story, such as pages 50–64, with its dialogue, range of emotions, and surprising plot developments. Briefly discuss these elements with students. Explain how the way you read aloud can draw attention to or away from these story elements. To demonstrate, read aloud part of the passage word by word, using an uninflected voice and hesitating over some words.

Then read aloud the same passage fluently and with good expression to demonstrate the difference. Model other ways of adding interest to the reading, such as by changing your voice for the dialogue, by altering your pitch, volume, and tone of voice, and by adjusting your rate of speed.



# WORKSHEET 2: Character's Emotions

Write words that describe how Jessie felt about Megan at first and how she changed. List what Jessie said and did to show how she felt. Tell something Jessie learned about friendship.

## Character Chart: Jessie

At first, Jessie felt:

After the accident Jessie felt:

What she said:

What she said:

What she did:

What she did:

Something Jessie learned about friendship is \_\_\_\_\_

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