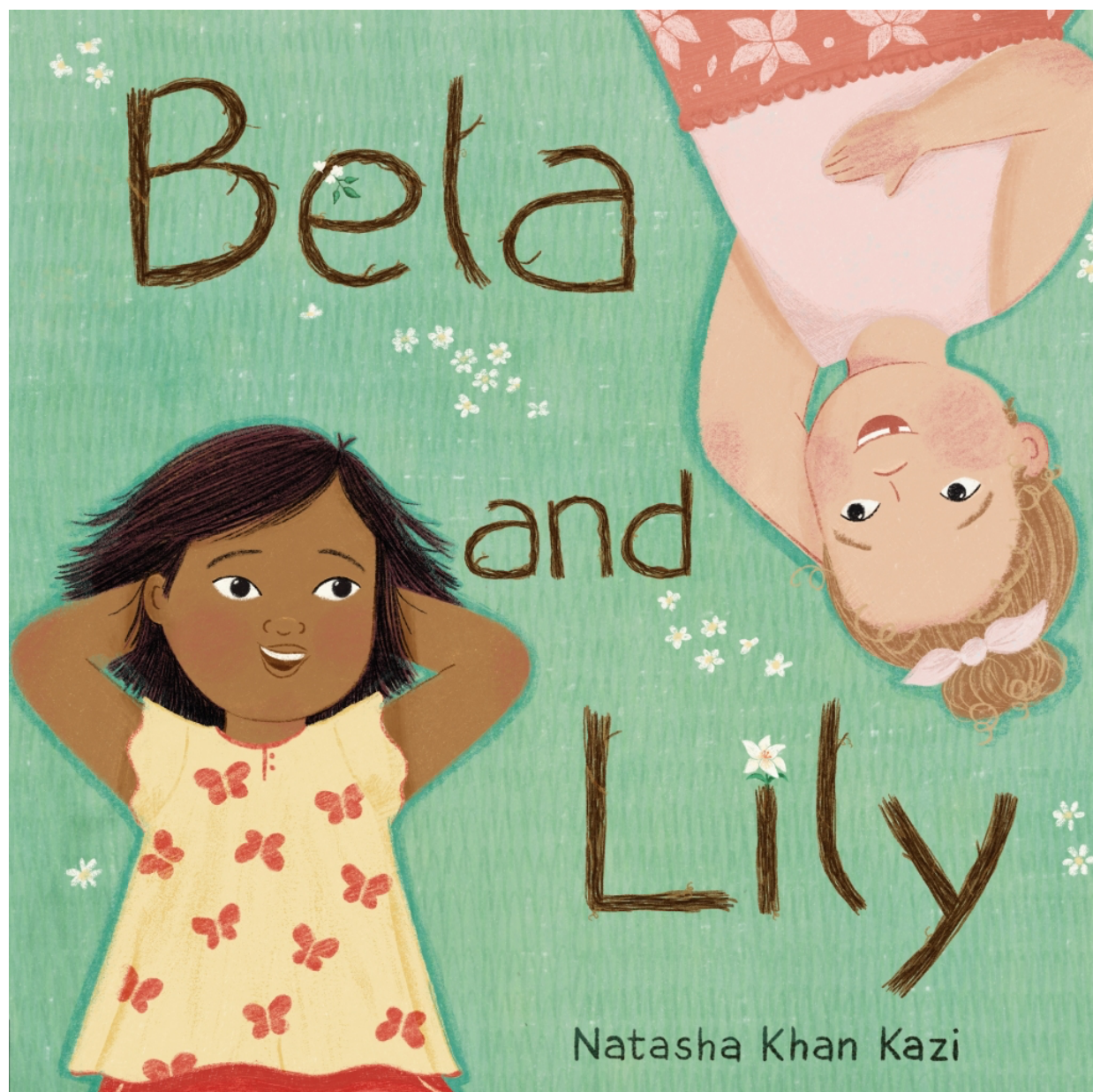


Bela and Lily

A teacher's guide created by Marcie Colleen
based upon the picture book
written and illustrated by Natasha Khan Kazi



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Natasha Khan Kazi, Author-Illustrator

Natasha Khan Kazi was born in Bangladesh, raised in Texas, Virginia, and Pennsylvania, and now lives in Southern California, where she writes and illustrates books for young readers, including her debut picture book, *Moon's Ramadan* (a 2023 JLG Gold Standard Selection, SLJ Best Picture Book, Chicago Public Library Best Picture Book, and Bank Street Education Best Picture Book.) Her creative work is rooted in empathy, diversity, and childhood joy. Natasha is the blogger behind [IslamiMommy](#) and a 2023 Highlights Foundation Muslim Storyteller Fellow. Her recent works include *Lulu In the Spotlight* (Versify/HarperCollins) and *Bela And Lily* (Kokila/Penguin). Learn more about Natasha and her books at www.natashakhankazi.com and follow her adventures on Facebook, Instagram, BlueSky, and TikTok [@natashakhankazi](#).



Marcie Colleen Curriculum Writer

This guide was created by Marcie Colleen, a former teacher with a Bachelor's in English Education from Oswego State and a Master's in Educational Theater from New York University. In addition to creating curriculum guides for children's books, Marcie can often be found writing books of her own at home in San Diego, California. Visit her at www.thisismarciecolleen.com.

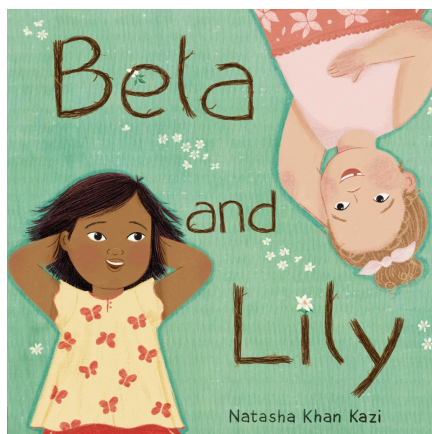
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How to Use This Guide

This classroom guide for *Bela and Lily* is designed for students in kindergarten through third grade. It is assumed that teachers will adapt each activity to fit the needs and abilities of their own students.

It offers activities to help teachers integrate *Bela and Lily* into their curricula.

All activities were created in conjunction with relevant content standards in English Language Arts.



Title: Bela and Lily

Author: Natasha Khan Kazi

Illustrator: Natasha Khan Kazi

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A heartwarming picture book about two young girls who don't speak the same language and still become fast friends, by Bangladeshi American writer and artist, Natasha Khan Kazi.

*Lily looks at my eyes, lips, and shoulders
as if they are pieces of a puzzle.*

Bela, who has recently arrived in the United States from Bangladesh, meets Lily on the swings. But how do you make a friend when you don't speak the same language? Based on Natasha's own experience as a five-year-old immigrant making her first friend, *Bela and Lily* is about how two kindred spirits forge a bond through smiles, giggles, and a shared love of adventure, while also learning each other's words.

Praise for *Bela and Lily* by Natasha Khan Kazi:

"Inspired by her own experiences as an immigrant, Khan Kazi captures the frustration of language barriers, as well as the joys of transcending them." –*Kirkus Reviews*

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English Language Arts

Reading Comprehension

Before diving into the story of *Bela and Lily*, help students identify the basic parts of a picture book: the front cover, back cover, spine, title page, and endpapers. This activity encourages close looking, prediction, and engagement before reading.

Look at the front cover illustration.

- What do you see?
- Describe the colors, background, and setting.
- How many characters are shown? What are they doing?
- Who do you think these characters are?
- Describe the character on the left. Describe the character on the right.
- Based on their facial expressions and body language, how do you think they feel?
- Can you mimic the poses of Bela and Lily? How does your body feel when you move this way?
- What might these poses tell us about how the characters are feeling?

Take a close look at the back cover of the book.

- What do you see?
- Do you see any familiar objects, symbols, or natural elements?
- The cover includes a quote: "*How do you make a friend when you don't speak their language?*" How would you answer this question?

Open to the title page.

- What do you see in this illustration?
- Look closely at the setting. What might this place be?
- Describe the two girls shown. What are they doing?
- Choose three words to describe Bela. Then choose three words to describe Lily.

Look at the front endpapers.

- What do you see in these pictures? Can you name or describe some of the objects shown?
- What might these items tell you about the person (or people) who collected them?
- What kind of things do *you* like to collect?

Remove the jacket (or peek underneath) to see a hidden case cover illustration.

- What do you think the two girls are doing? How can you tell? What does their body language say?
- Why do you think the bee is included in the scene? Do you think it will be important to the story?
- What kind of place does this look like? Would you want to explore? Why or why not?

Based on everything you've seen so far—cover, hidden case cover, endpapers, title page, and images:

- What do you think this story might be about?
- What challenges do you think Bela and Lily might face?
- What feelings do you think this story will explore?

Now read or listen to the book.

- Why do you think Bela doesn't speak much at first when she arrives at the park?
- How do Bela and Lily try to connect even though they don't speak the same language?
- What are some nonverbal ways they communicate and show they want to be friends?
 - Think about gestures, facial expressions, and play.
- Bela says, "*Where I am from, words are different.*" What do you think this means?
 - Have you ever heard someone speak a language that was new to you?
 - Do you or someone you know speak a second language at home?
 - Do you or anyone you know have family members that speak a second language?
- What does Bela say when she sees the bee? What does Lily say?
 - How do they begin to share their words with one another?
- What causes a problem between Bela and Lily?
- How does each of them react during the disagreement?
 - How does that moment make you feel?
- Bela doesn't tell Amma what happened at the park. Why do you think she keeps it to herself?
- What helps repair the friendship between Bela and Lily?
 - What do they each bring to one another the next day?
 - How do they show they're ready to be friends again?
- What do you think Bela learns about friendship by the end of the book? What do you think Lily learns?
- Why might it be important to listen with your heart, not just your ears?
- Have you ever had to make a friend without using many words? What helped you connect?

Help students summarize in their own words what the book was about using the chart below.

Beginning	Middle	End
<p><i>"Where I am from, words are different."</i></p> <p>Introduce Bela and Lily:</p> <p>Who is Bela? Where is she from? How does she meet Lily?</p> <p>Enter the conflict:</p> <p><i>"So I say it's my rock with my hands and my feet. But Lily pulls the other way."</i></p> <p>What happens that causes Bela and Lily to get upset?</p>	<p>Working to solve the conflict.</p> <p><i>"Maybe broken bits can be something new."</i></p> <p>How does Bela feel after the argument? What helps her think about how to fix things?</p> <p>The Climax: What happens when Bela sees Lily again? What does Lily do? What does Bela do?</p> <p><i>"She says words I know: 'For you.'"</i></p>	<p>Resolution. How are things solved?</p> <p>How do Bela and Lily make up? What do they give each other?</p> <p>The ending: How things have changed?</p> <p>What is different at the end of the story compared to the beginning? How have Bela and Lily grown as friends?</p> <p><i>"Because we are friends."</i></p>

- BONUS: Using the basic plot structure above, students can create an original story about new friendship that doesn't require words. Students can work individually or as a class. Use both *Bela and Lily* for inspiration or draw from their own experiences.
- Art center ~ Provide a variety of art materials including crayons, pencils, markers, paint, scissors, colored paper, old magazines, and glue so students can illustrate their new friendship stories. Encourage them to include facial expressions, body language, and nature elements just like in *Bela and Lily*.
- Drama center ~ Set up a space with puppets, costumes, and props so students can act out *Bela and Lily* or their own stories about friendship. They can even create scenes that explore how friends make up after misunderstandings.

Who is Bela? ~ Character Study

How a character acts and what a character says can tell readers a lot about who the character is.

Read *Bela and Lily* paying close attention to the character of Bela. Scene by scene, record your thoughts, in a chart like the one below. Be sure to notice facial expressions, body language, and small moments.

What she does	Why do you think she does what she does?	How would you describe her?	What might she say?
Example: Tries to say "Look, a frog," but trips over the words.	She wants to connect.	Hopeful, nervous, brave.	"That's not what I meant."
Joins Lily on the swings and stretches like a peacock.	She's finding a new way to connect—through play.	Curious, joyful, playful, imaginative.	"Want to be friends?"

After learning more about Bela's character, imagine how she might act in one of the situations below. What would she do? How might she feel? What could she say or think?

Choose one of the following prompts and write or draw a new scene:

- Lily unpacks a snack that Bela has never seen before.
- Bela finds some chalk and makes a sidewalk mural.
- Lily gives Bela a friendship bracelet.

Critical Thinking

In many stories, characters grow because of something they experience. Let's think about how that happens in *Bela and Lily*.

Do you think Bela changes in this story?

- How does she feel at the beginning?
- What does she learn by the end?
- How does her friendship with Lily help her grow?

Do you think Lily changes in the story?

- What is she like when she first meets Bela?
- How does she show she's learning something new?
- What does she do to show she cares?

What do you think is the message or theme of this story? Think about what the author wants us to learn or feel.

How does the story teach us about...

- Empathy
- Communication without words
- Kindness and friendship
- Patience and understanding
- Making mistakes and making up

Writing Activities

My New Friend

Write a short fictional story inspired by *Bela and Lily*, focusing on how friendships can begin with smiles, play, or small acts of kindness—even when words are hard to find.

Prompt: Imagine you meet someone new at the park or school. You don't speak the same language. How do you become friends? What do you do together? How do you show kindness without using words?

Make sure to include a beginning, middle, and end. These sentence starters might help younger writers:

- "At first, I felt..."
- "Then we..."
- "We didn't say anything, but..."
- "By the end, I knew we were friends because..."

Stories can be written individually or as a class.

Illustrating Feelings

In *Bela and Lily*, two girls meet at the park. At first, things feel uncertain—Bela speaks Bengali, and Lily doesn't understand her words. But as they play together, they begin to connect through feelings, actions, and shared experiences. This story reminds us that *feelings are powerful*, and we can express them in many ways—even without words.

This activity helps students explore how to recognize and express their emotions through color, storytelling, and art.

- List as many feelings as students can think of in the Feelings column (sad, mad, fear, nervous, happy, disappointed, excited, etc.).
- Have children choose a color for each feeling and explain why they are choosing each color for each feeling.
- Then, in the "When I Felt That Way" column, students should write about a time they felt that feeling.

FEELING	COLOR	WHEN I FELT THAT WAY

- Choose one of the situations in the "When I Felt That Way" column and illustrate it using the color included on the chart.

Speaking and Listening Activities

Picture books are written to be read aloud. Here are some other ways to bring *Bela and Lily* to life in your classroom and have fun with speaking and listening skills!

Feelings Without Words

This activity will help students explore nonverbal communication and build empathy, just like Bela and Lily do when they don't share the same spoken language.

Instructions:

1. Begin by discussing how people show feelings without using words—through faces, hands, posture, and movement.
2. Introduce several emotions (e.g., happy, sad, shy, excited, nervous, confused, frustrated).
3. Call out or show one emotion at a time and invite students to act it out silently using only body language and facial expressions.
4. For each one, ask the class:
 - What do you see in the face or posture?
 - When might someone feel this way?
 - How can we show we understand someone's feelings, even without words?

Extension:

- Create a class "Feelings Without Words" photo collage or drawing wall.
- Pair students up to mirror each other's expressions and guess what the other is feeling.

Talking About Feelings

In *Bela and Lily*, both girls experience a range of emotions as they meet for the first time at the park. At first, they feel unsure. Then curious. And eventually connected. Even though they speak different languages, their feelings help them understand one another.

Look through the book, page by page, and ask how each character might be feeling at each moment. Keep track on a list of each emotion named.

Once the list is finished, have children choose one and make a sentence about that feeling.

Just like Bela and Lily, we all feel various feelings at different times. It is ok to feel happy or sad or angry.

Ask children to share a time when they felt the same emotions as Bela and Lily.

"Today I feel happy because my friend and I are going to play together."

"Last week I felt lonely because I didn't know anyone at the park."

"Yesterday I felt left out when I didn't know how to play the game everyone was playing."

"I felt welcome when someone asked me to play."

Listen and Share

Sometimes understanding someone simply comes from listening to them and allowing them a chance to express themselves. Instead of trying to talk right away or interrupt the silence, Lily takes time to notice how Bela is feeling. Like in the quiet moments between them at the park, sometimes we just need to listen and give others space until they're ready to share.

With students sitting in a circle, hand one student a small plush doll. Explain that only the person who is holding the stuffed animal can talk. Everyone else's job is to listen. When the stuffed animal is put down again, the teacher/classmates respond to that student, then the stuffed animal moves to the next person to talk (a volunteer or the former talker can pull a name from a basket).

Use the Listen and Share method for sharing sentences or personal stories about feelings.

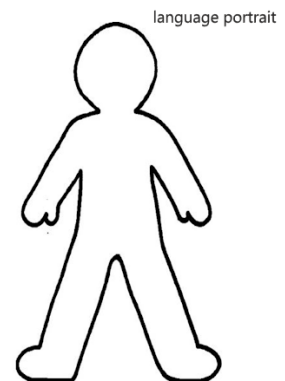
Language Activities

My Language Portrait

This activity shines a light on all the different languages that children speak and help them celebrate multilingualism as something that makes them unique and exceptional.

Create a human outline (see right) and have students choose a number of coloring pencils that equals the number of languages they speak. They are then free to decorate their human outline in any way they wish to symbolize the many languages they speak.

Finished Language Portraits can be displayed and shared with the class.



Word Exchange Match Game

In *Bela and Lily*, the girls begin to connect through play—even when they don’t speak the same language. As they spend time together, Lily starts to learn a few Bengali (Bangla) words, showing how language can be shared, discovered, and celebrated. In this activity, we’ll explore some of the English–Bengali word pairs from the story and have fun learning new words together through games and movement.

Materials Needed:

- Flashcards (each with a word in English or Bengali)
- Word pairs from the book (e.g., Bee – Moumachi, Flower – Phool, Rock – Pathor, Leaf – Pata, Cloud – Megh)

Instructions:

1. Create pairs of flashcards—one card for each English word, and one for its Bengali (Bangla) counterpart.
2. Mix them up and lay them face down or scatter them around the room.
3. Students take turns flipping over two cards, trying to match the English word with the correct Bengali word.
4. When a match is found, ask the student to say both words aloud and use one in a sentence or act it out.
5. Encourage the class to repeat the pronunciation together, emphasizing the joy of learning new languages.

Extension:

- Invite students to contribute simple words in any languages they speak at home, creating new matching pairs to expand the game.
- Add visuals or drawings to help with memory and understanding.

My Name Is...

Names are an important part of who we are. In *Bela and Lily*, Lily listens closely and tries to say “Beh-la” the way Bela says it. This small moment shows respect and care—and helps build their friendship. In this activity, we’ll explore the stories behind our own names and learn to honor each other’s identities, just like Lily does for Bela.

Materials Needed:

- Student journals or drawing paper
- A map or globe (optional)

Instructions:

1. Ask students:
 - What does your name mean (if you know)?
 - Who chose your name?
 - Is there a special story behind it?
2. Invite students to share how to pronounce their name correctly and practice saying each name slowly and respectfully, just like Lily does in the book.
3. Have students write and/or draw a page titled "My Name Is..." with any of the following:
 - The meaning or origin of their name
 - A drawing of how their name makes them feel
 - Something they love about their name
 - A list of nicknames or how they say their name in another language

Extension:

- Create a classroom name wall or "Name Garden" where each student's name blooms with meaning.
- Invite families to contribute stories or letters about how their child got their name.

Science

Five Senses Nature Mindfulness

Nature can be a peaceful place to slow down and connect—with ourselves and with others. In *Bela and Lily*, the park becomes more than just a playground; it's where two new friends begin to understand each other. Simple moments in nature—like noticing a leaf, building with sticks, or feeling the breeze—can help us feel calm, curious, and more at ease.

Brainstorm some other nature activities that can have a calming effect.

Then find a safe place outside to use your five sense to create a sense of mindfulness.

- Look: Try and find 5 different shades of the color green. Look around you and notice the different shades of colors that surround you. Maybe the light reflecting off wet grass or a shadow on the underside of a leaf. What about the different patterns on plants, such as veins?
- Listen: Listen for a few minutes and identify 4 different sounds. Notice any background sounds that you would normally filter out, such as birds singing, the wind rustling through the leaves, any water flowing nearby.

- Touch: Find three different textures that you can feel. Pick up an object such as a stone or a leaf, notice how it feels. Look for other items such as lichen and dead wood, or the bark on a tree. Do these things feel wet/dry, hot/cold, hard/soft, smooth/bumpy?
- Smell: Find two different smells. Move around and find something that might have a scent. Can you find flowers or grass to smell? Are there any trees around you? Can you smell them?
- Taste: Taste the air. Take a big breath in and notice the cold air passing over your tongue, down your throat, and into your lungs. Can you notice a taste in the air? Different environments have different tastes, especially if it has been raining heavily or the sun is out. Notice what the air tastes like where you are. As you exhale, notice how the air has been warmed up by your body as it passes out your nose and mouth.

How do you feel? Are you calmer? What else could you add to your nature mindfulness routine?

Create a poster about how to create calm in nature.

Social Studies

What Makes a Good Friend?

Discuss what makes a good friend. Draw upon examples from their own friendships and create a list describing what makes a good friend.

Example: Good friends...

- Are reliable.
- Do kind things for one another and use kind language.
- Help out when a friend is sad or has a problem.
- Like to spend time together.
- Have fun with one another.

Look closely at *Bela and Lily*. Which moments show Lily being a good friend to Bela? Which moments show Bela being a good friend to Lily?

As a class, create an action plan on how to be a good friend.

Finding Commonalities/Uniqueness

Bela and Lily come from different worlds—Bela speaks Bengali, and Lily speaks English. At first, they don't understand each other, but they discover they have many things in common. Even when we seem different, there are always ways to connect and be friends.

Finding what you have in common with other people is a good way to start a meaningful relationship. Here is a way to learn what you have in common with your classmates, while also celebrating what makes each of you unique.

Materials: A pen and two pieces of paper.

- This activity can be done as a whole class or in pairs.
- On one sheet of paper, you will have ten minutes to come up with a list of things in common. Completely obvious answers such as “we both have hair” or “we are both in _____ class” are not allowed!
- After ten minutes, switch to the other paper. You now have ten minutes to come up with a list of things that are unique to only one person.
- Share both lists with the class when finished.

“Broken Bits” Mural

In *Bela and Lily*, the girls face moments of misunderstanding and difference, but from those moments, a new friendship begins to grow. Sometimes when things feel broken or don't fit quite right, that's when new connections and creativity can emerge. Just like torn pieces of paper can be rearranged into a beautiful mosaic, our mistakes and differences can come together to create something meaningful and whole.

Inspired by Bela and Lily's story and the idea that “Broken Bits into Something New”, your class can create a piece of community art with that same name. This artwork can brighten a spot in your school or neighborhood that feels like it needs a little more warmth and inspiration. The project can involve as many people as possible, using torn paper or recycled scraps to build a large mosaic that symbolizes how small, imperfect pieces come together to form something beautiful—just like friendships do.

Through this shared creation, students explore how misunderstandings and challenges are opportunities for growth, and how working together builds connection. The mosaic becomes a symbol of community, respect, and new beginnings—reminding everyone that sometimes the first step toward understanding starts with simply embracing differences and listening with an open heart.

New Vocabulary: Immigrant

Let's learn about the word immigrant and how it relates to *Bela and Lily*.

1. Define the word immigrant:
 - An immigrant is a person who moves to another country to live there permanently.
 - Bela is an immigrant. She moved from Bangladesh to the United States.
2. Discuss:
 - Do you know anyone who has immigrated to a new country?
 - Have you or someone in your family moved to a different country or state?
3. Explore the map:
 - Find where you live now.
 - Then find Bangladesh, where Bela is from.
 - How far would Bela have traveled to come to your town?

4. Think about your own family story:

Talk to someone at home and answer these questions:

- Has anyone in your family moved from another country to the United States?
- Why did they move? What was happening in the world or their home country at the time?
- What language(s) did they speak before learning English?
- Are there any family heirlooms, stories, or traditions passed down from their original country?
- How did they feel when they first arrived? Was it hard to make friends or communicate like it was for Bela?

5. Let's celebrate your story:

Create a poster that shares your family's journey, traditions, or culture. Ideas:

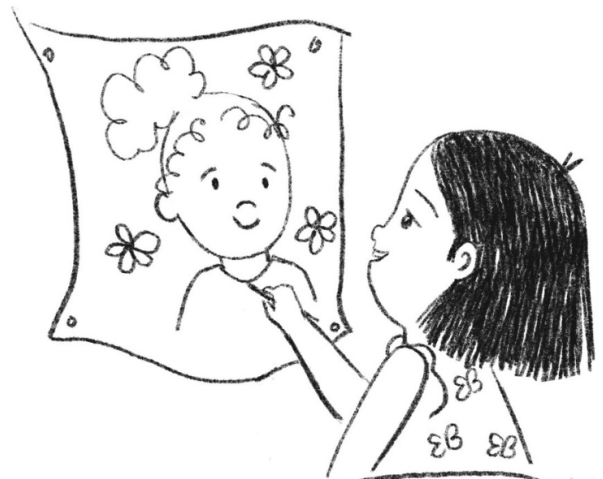
- A drawing or map of where they came from
- Any special foods, holidays, or words they brought with them
- A photo or drawing of someone from your family
- Words in another language (like Bela says "moumachi" for bee!)

6. Display your story:

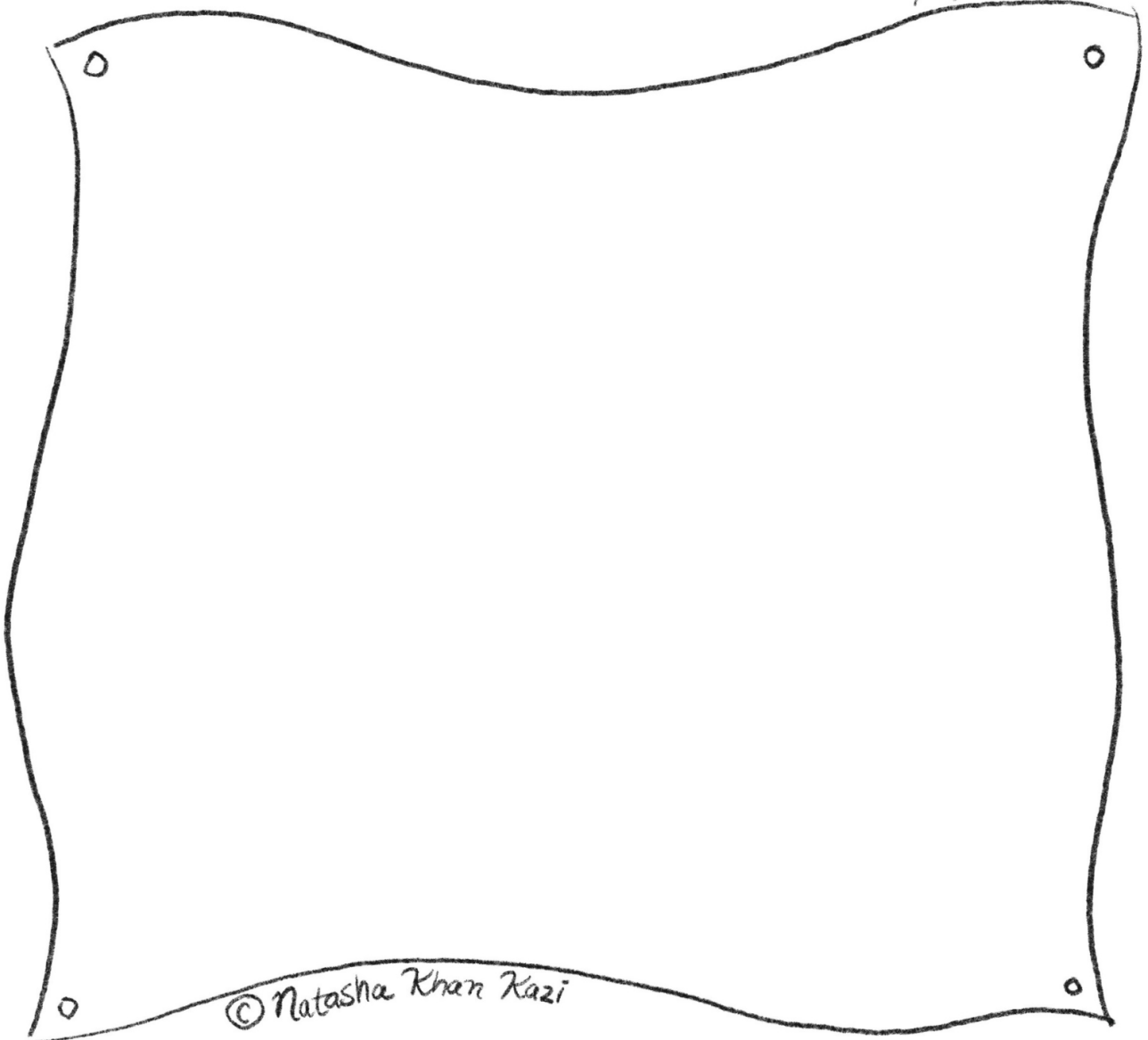
Hang your poster in the classroom or school hallway to help others learn about your family's journey—just like we learned about Bela's.

FRIENDLY FACE

Bela drew a picture of her best friend, Lily. Draw a face on the paper. You can draw a real friend, a storybook friend, or a silly face.



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QUALITIES OF A FRIEND

Crossword Puzzle

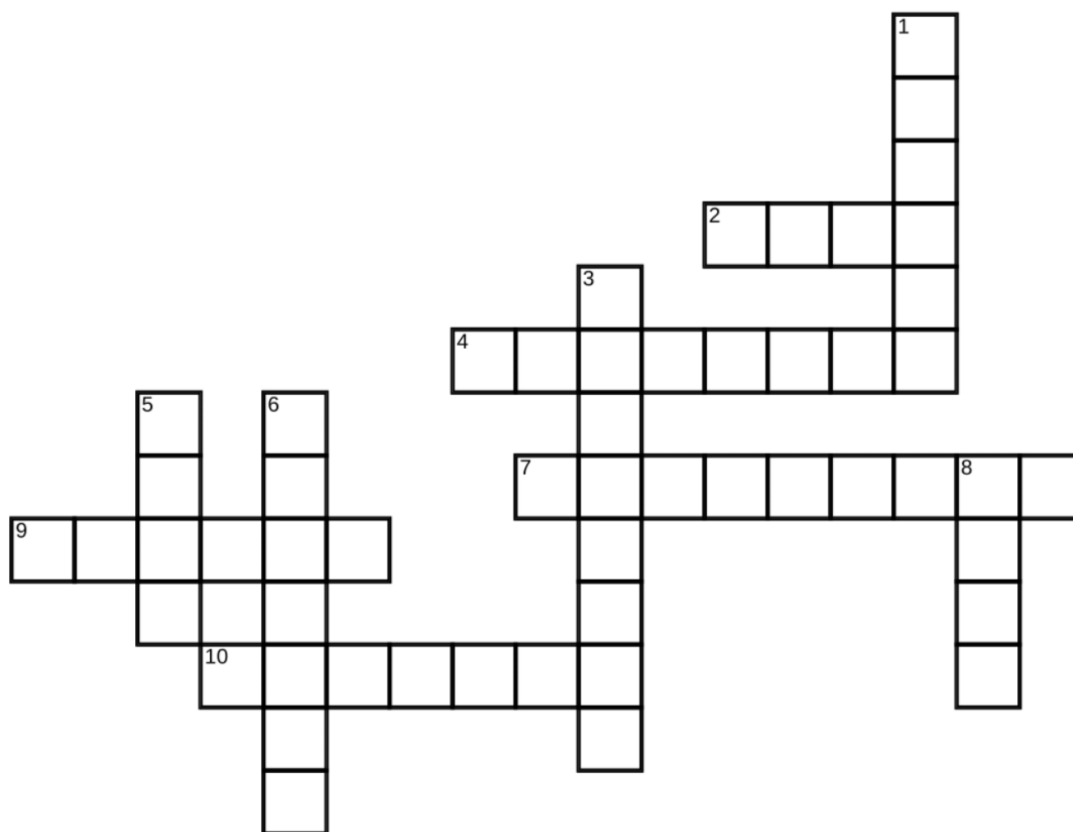


Down

1. Lets others use or play with their things
3. Smiles, says hello, and wants to make friends
5. Cares about how others feel
6. Pays attention when someone talks
8. Says kind words and does kind things

Across

2. Takes turns and follows the rules
4. Doesn't stay mad when someone says "sorry"
7. Makes others feel happy and not left out
9. Tells the truth
10. Likes to help others



Nice · Helpful · Shares · Listens · Kind · Fair · Honest
Friendly · Welcoming · Forgives

QUALITIES OF A FRIEND

Crossword Puzzle



Across

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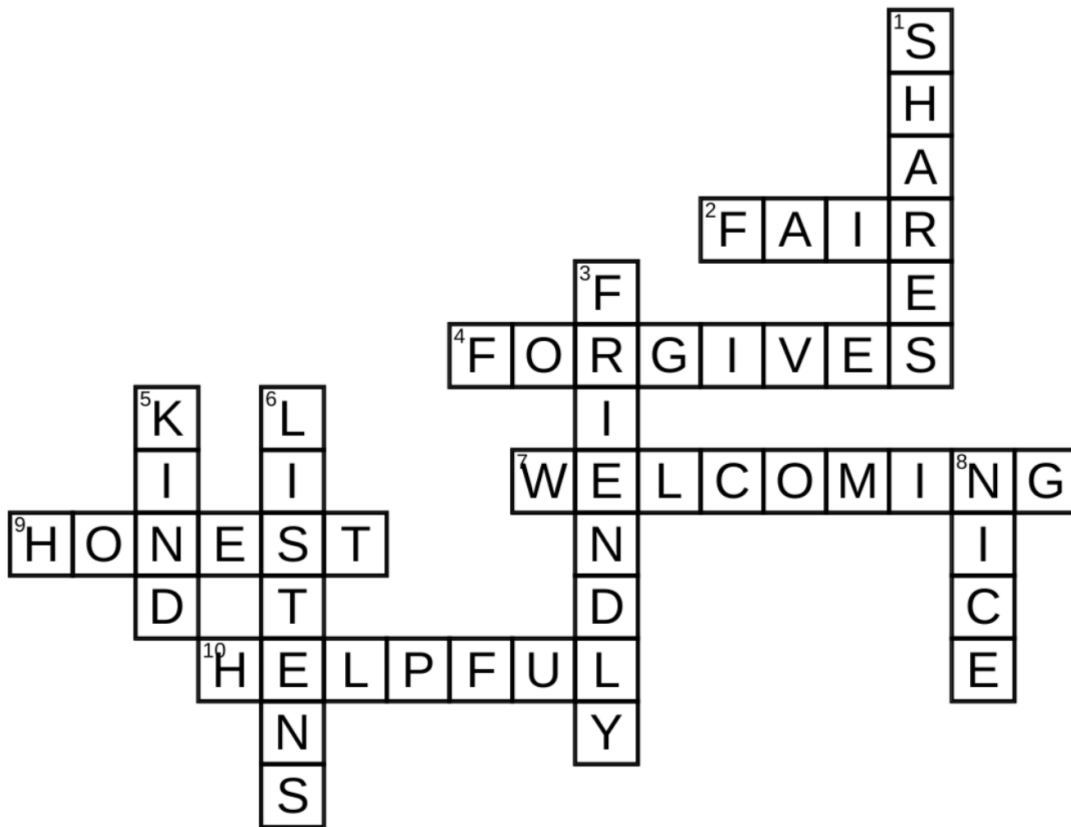
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Nice · Helpful · Shares · Listens · Kind · Fair · Honest
Friendly · Welcoming · Forgives

Qualities of a Friend



You feel safe around them.

They check on you when you're sad or hurt.

They tell the truth.

They clap for you when it's your turn to shine.

You like some of the same things!

They invite you to play or make sure you feel welcome.

Their jokes make both of you laugh.

They listen to your ideas.



They take turns and share.

They forgive and say sorry.

GOOD FRIENDS

Word Search



J H Q F R I E N D G
O G M A X L T N G L
I Y I E R P A N U O
N I V G V V K U P O
M C E L G Y S I G K
M S Q Z I L E C N H
H M G U S S E S K D
E I Q E B R T E C A
L L S H A R E E O W
P E H E L L O S N H



giggle

listen

friend

help

smile

share

laugh

hello

kind

join

look

see

I AM A GOOD FRIEND

There are many ways to show someone you are a good friend. How do you like to show friends that you care?

I am a good friend by

Draw a picture of yourself being a good friend.

By:



QUALITIES OF A FRIEND



Which qualities do you want in a friend?
Circle the most important to you.

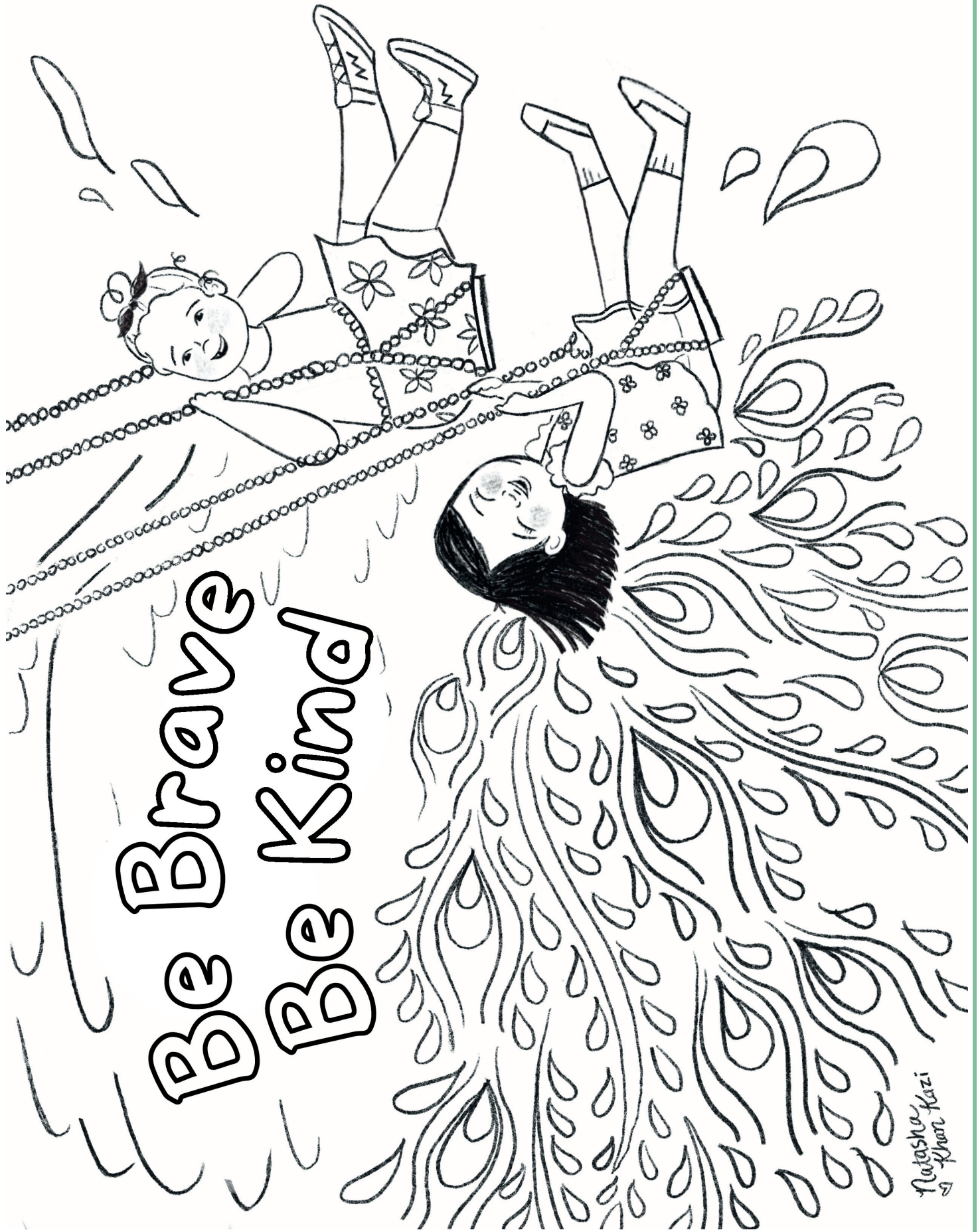


- | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|----------|
| Kind | Friendly | Reliable |
| Respectful | Forgiving | Helpful |
| Honest | Shares Interests | Listens |
| Includes Others | Encouraging | Loyal |



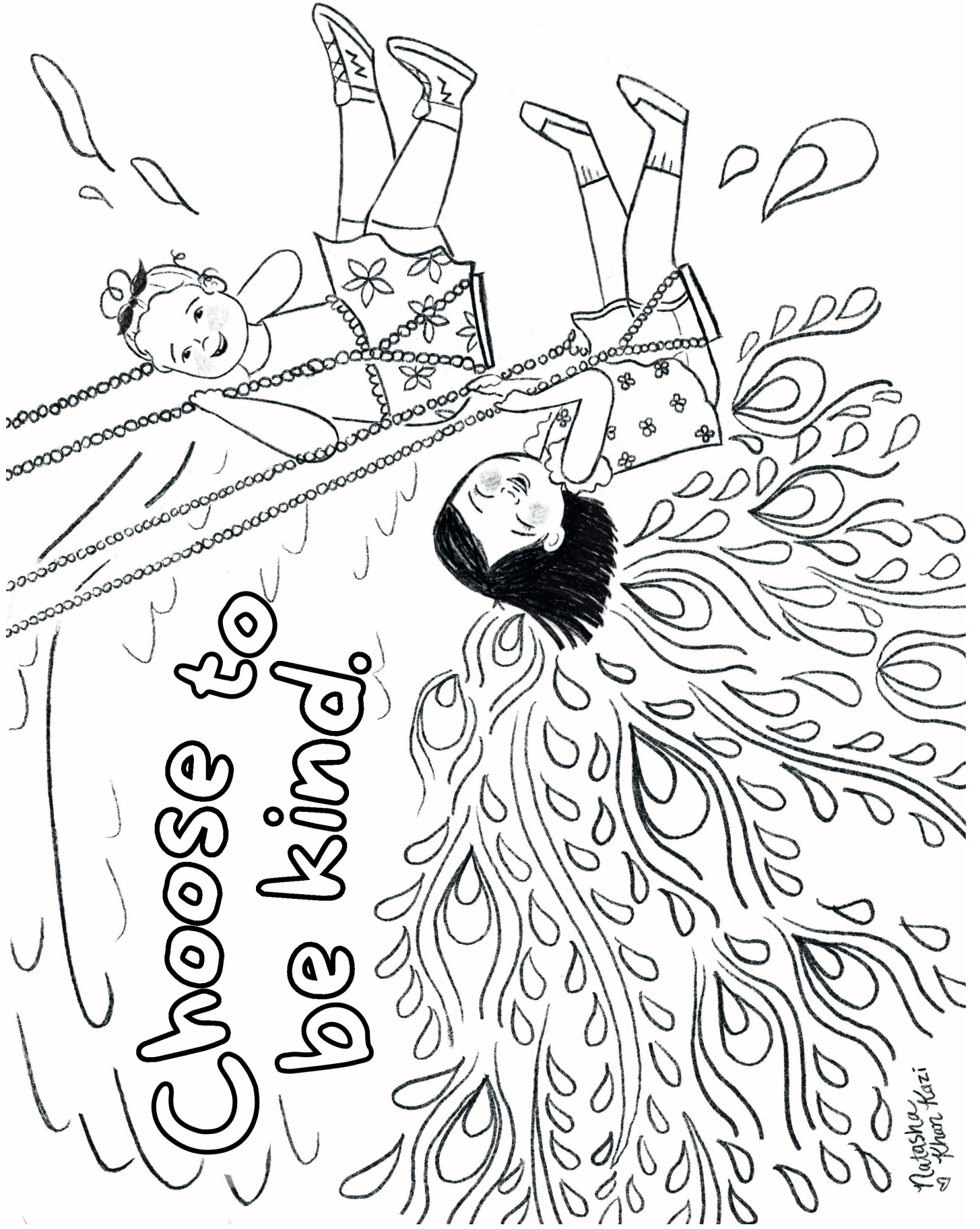
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Be Brave Be Kind



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Choose to
be kind.



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