

# Lesson from a Book: “Elizabeth Fry,” chapter five of *Good Friends*

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by Judith Baresel, illustrated by Ken Hutchinson, Quaker Books (Great Britain), 2002, pp. 63–76

*Synopsis of story: This story begins with Elizabeth Fry as a teenage member of her wealthy Quaker family. She meets several Quakers who impress her and convince her to be a plain Friend, and to do good works. Later in life, after marrying and raising many children, she pioneers work with women and their children in a deplorable prison system. She sets up a school for the children and the mothers, teaching them life skills.*

## **Lesson plan age level:**

Middle school (10–13 years old).

## **Lesson focus:**

Friends testimonies; the value of having mentors; determination and courage; defining a project and then finding and receiving help from others

## **SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN**

### *Opening:*

Start with introductions, if needed, and a “check-in.”

### *Quotation:*

Choose an appropriate quotation or query about equality from your yearly meeting Faith and Practice.

### *The story:*

Before reading the story, ask the participants to listen for what in Elizabeth’s story relates to their own experience. The class then reads the story.

### *Wonderings and discussion questions:*

1. How is Carrie like you, how is she different?
2. How is the teen-aged Elizabeth Fry like you, how is she different?
3. What about this story interests you most?
4. I wonder why this rich woman would care about poor people whose lives were so different from hers. Invite responses.
5. How does the work of Elizabeth Fry reflect our Friends testimonies?
6. Sometimes people on the margins or who are in great need are invisible to those who live very comfortably. I wonder who the people on the margins are in your communities. I wonder who the people in greatest need are where you live. Invite responses.

***Suggested activities:***

1. Ask Quakers who work in prisons, or who work with homeless people, to come and share their experiences with the class. (Suggest they read the Fry story first.)
2. Ask children to bring in articles or pictures relating to prisons or homelessness, or perhaps some other social condition the group lifts up.
3. Read a summary statement about the equality testimony from your yearly meeting book of faith and practice. Invite children to find connections between it and the story.

***Closing:***

Choose an appropriate closing activity and/or end with a period of worship.

***Suggested follow-up service projects:***

1. Support a homeless shelter through cooking, knitting/ sewing, or organizing a clothing drive.
2. Ask a support group for families of inmates to suggest service possibilities.

NOTE: The material in the above lesson plan could be used for several lessons. It could also fit into a unit on the peace, equality, simplicity or community testimony, or one on “letting our lives speak.”

Lesson plan by Suellen Lowry of Humboldt Meeting for the FGC Religious Education Committee.

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