

KEEP THE STORY GOING

THE RED BALLOON

The Red Balloon Project

What will you choose to hold?

A reader challenge for curious middle-schoolers

Your Mission

A friendship can begin with something very small: noticing someone, asking a question, sending a note, making room. This project turns the red balloon into a way to think about friendship, belonging, and the people who help us feel seen.

The Line That Holds

Write the names of three people who make you feel seen, welcome, or understood.

1. A Note Across the Line

Imagine you could send one short note to someone who might need it today. It does not need to fix anything. It only needs to say: I noticed you.

My note

Optional real-world challenge

Give the note to someone, leave it somewhere kind, or keep it private if that feels better.

2. Two People, Two Stories

Friends do not have to match. Draw or describe yourself and a friend as two completely different characters. Include what each person likes, notices, fears, or does well.

ME	SOMEONE I CARE ABOUT

What makes the friendship work even though you are different?

3. Notice the Edge

Sometimes a person is not alone because they want to be. They may be new, shy, worried, different from the group, or simply unsure how to join.

Someone I could make room for

Do not write a name if you want to keep this private. Describe one small action you could take.

4. It Doesn't Need to Be Pretty to Hold

Connections are not valuable because they look perfect. Think about a friendship, family relationship, team, class, or group that has survived an awkward or difficult moment.

What held?

What kept the connection from breaking?

What did you learn?

5. The Seven-Day Red Balloon Challenge

DAY 1 - NOTICE

- Say hello to someone you usually pass without speaking.

DAY 2 - ASK

- Ask someone a real question and listen to the answer.

DAY 3 - INCLUDE

- Make room for someone at a table, game, group, or conversation.

DAY 4 - SEND

- Write one encouraging note.

DAY 5 - DEFEND

- Do not laugh along when someone is being embarrassed or excluded.

DAY 6 - REMEMBER

- Tell someone one specific thing you appreciate about them.

DAY 7 - HOLD THE LINE

- Show up for someone in one small, reliable way.

Keep the Story Going

Finish this sentence:

I can help someone feel seen by...

A friendship does not have to be perfect to hold.