

## Interdisciplinary Ideas

### LANGUAGE ARTS

1. Write a poem patterned after "Like Blue." Replace Blue in the title with the name of an older person you would like to emulate when you grow up. Begin by borrowing a line from the poem, "One day I'll be like\_\_\_\_." Write a few "Not" lines describing the person's physical appearance. Then write some lines about how the person is on the inside.
2. Write an essay titled, "My Best Older Friend." Describe the person, including physical and character traits. Tell what you do together, how you help each other, a special time, and what the person has taught you. Be sure to include Heartwood attributes.

### ART

1. Draw a picture of yourself with a close older friend. Make a class bulletin board matching these drawings with your poetry or "Best Older Friend" essay.
2. In this story Blue's "hands are strong stories." Cut out pictures of hands from magazines. Make up captions or short descriptions of "stories" you see in these hands. Post on a bulletin board. Look for pictures of hands on the attributes pages of [www.heartwoodethics.org](http://www.heartwoodethics.org).
3. Research African American artist Romare Bearden (Keyword: Romare Bearden). Look at his collage *The Block*, a tribute to Harlem, then draw buildings and cut out magazine pictures to create a class collage of a city neighborhood.

### SOCIAL STUDIES

Research the history of Harlem in New York City.\* Find out about other neighborhoods in New York City and how they began.

\* Visit [www.heartwoodethics.org](http://www.heartwoodethics.org) and choose Teaching Heartwood, Culture Keys, for more on the history, culture, and geography of this book.

## My Man Blue

Nikki Grimes  
1999  
New York: Dial Books

### LOYALTY

USA  
Narrative Poetry  
Reading Time: 6 minutes

### CONCEPTS

Loyalty  
Love

### SUMMARY

Set in the streets of Harlem, Nikki Grimes' series of realistic poems creates a story of bonding between a boy and a man. Damon needs a father and Blue has lost a son. Blue becomes a surrogate father to Damon, teaching and encouraging this "Second Son." Their relationship grows as Damon begins to trust and eventually emulate his new friend. Jerome Lagarrigue's bold expressive brush strokes capture both the strength and tenderness of this story.

### OBJECTIVES

The student will be able to define and discuss loyalty and love as they apply to this story. The student will be encouraged to look past outward appearances in accepting and building relationships with others.

# After the Story

## My Man Blue

### DISCUSSION

1. Who is telling this story? Does Damon trust Blue at first? Why or why not? Why does Damon change his opinion of Blue?
2. How does the saying "appearances can be deceiving" apply to this story?
3. Which of Blue's actions demonstrate loyalty toward Damon? Which actions show love?
4. What does Blue do to encourage Damon? Who encourages you?
5. How does Blue help Damon deal with his fear and anger related to teasing? What does Blue teach Damon that will help him as he grows up? How is this kind of teaching related to love?
6. Do you think their friendship will continue? Why or why not?
7. How do you think Damon feels about Blue at the end of the story? How does Damon feel about himself? Explain.
8. Think of someone who has influenced you. What have you shared? What has this person taught you? How have you helped each other? How are you loyal?

### ACTIVITIES

1. Find New York City on the world map.
2. Choose one of the following lines and discuss with a partner. What does it mean to you? Which Heartwood attribute connects most closely with this line? "Blue urges me to loop my fear like twine around a branch and use the rope to climb." "It's guys who don't hit girls who're strong." "His hands are strong stories." "He's just trying to keep me fit for this world."
3. Draw a Venn diagram. Compare and contrast Damon and Blue in terms of character traits, attributes, and interests.

### JOURNAL

1. Choose one or two of the lines listed in Activity #2 and respond in writing.
2. Write about how love is related to loyalty in this story.

### HOME CONNECTION

Tell people at home the story of Damon and Blue. Ask if they had an older friend who helped them when they were growing up. Ask for permission to share their stories with your class.

### VOCABULARY

**indigo**  
**stance**  
**fume**

**trespass**  
**spar**  
**rig**