

# My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother

Patricia Polacco  
1994  
New York, NY: Simon & Schuster

**LOYALTY**  
USA  
Realistic Fiction  
Reading Time: 10 minutes

## CONCEPTS

Loyalty  
Love  
Family

## SUMMARY

**"It was at that exact moment that our relationship changed somehow." So writes Patricia Polacco, when she recognizes the loyalty and love that exists between herself and her older brother, in this autobiographical story of sibling rivalry. Facial expressions in the author's detailed drawings greatly enhance the text.**

## OBJECTIVE

The student will be able to identify, define, and discuss loyalty, love, and family as they apply to the story. The student will understand these attributes as strong bonds that co-exist with sibling rivalry as a natural part of family life.

Note: Before reading the story, explain the word, "sibling" and talk about sibling rivalry as a natural part of family life.

## Interdisciplinary Ideas

### LANGUAGE ARTS

1. Make a mini-book titled, "A Brother is Someone Who...", "A Sister is Someone Who...", or "A Friend is Someone who..." Fold a few sheets of paper together, staple the folds to make a booklet, complete the title sentence on each page, illustrate, and share in small groups. Make sure to include examples that depict love and loyalty.
2. Reread the pages where Richie brags about being the fastest, the loudest, and so on. Together, brainstorm for three minutes words ending in the suffix, "est", and write on the board.
3. With a partner, choose one part of the story to role play. Choose parts, practice the scene, and act out for the class.

### SOCIAL STUDIES

1. In pairs, research the author. (keyword: Patricia Polacco) Report your findings to the class.
2. Record on a chart your feelings about living on a farm. Look at the illustrations in the story and list details of farm life, such as growing your own vegetables or sleeping outdoors. Make copies of the list, place a check plus beside the details you would like, a check minus beside those you wouldn't like, and a star beside those activities that would be good for the environment. In pairs, compare your preferences.

### ART

Revisit the story to look closely at facial expressions drawn by the artist. With a partner, practice drawing facial expressions. Take turns making faces that show feelings such as anger, surprise, or joy, draw them, and label the emotion.

### MUSIC

Listen to a CD of Marlo Thomas singing "Brothers and Sisters, Sisters and Brothers" from the album Free to Be You and Me.

# After the Story

## My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother

### DISCUSSION

1. What does Richie do that makes Patricia furious? What does Patricia do that makes her brother keep teasing her? Look at the author's family photos and read the dedication she writes at the beginning of the book. How do you think she feels about her brother now?
2. When Patricia Polacco was growing up, children teased each other about having red hair and about wearing glasses. Children today don't usually tease about these things. Why is it mean to tease people about their appearance? What can you do if someone teases your sibling or your friend? How can your actions show loyalty?
3. How does Richie show loyalty to Patricia? How is loyalty related to love and family in the story? Think about her Bubbie and discuss other examples of love in the story.
4. Do you think Patricia loves her brother even when she doesn't like him at times? What does she learn about loyalty after her accident? Tell about times you stood up for a brother, sister, or a friend.

### ACTIVITIES

1. Locate Michigan on a map of the United States and find lakes and state(s) that make up its borders.
2. Create a classroom "Loyalty, Love and Family" photo album. Bring to class photos of yourself with a sibling or special friend. Paste or glue photos in the album, write names of the people and the date the photo was taken, share the album in small groups by telling how you showed love or loyalty to each other.

### HOME CONNECTION

1. Complete Home Connection pages and take home to share with families.
2. Together, discuss sibling or friend rivalry. Ask family members to tell about times they showed loyalty to a sibling or special friend. With permission, share with the class.

### WRAP-UP

1. In *My Heartwood Journal*, draw pictures or write a list of five or more things you like about a sister, brother, or friend.
2. Write a thank you note to a friend or family member who has been loyal to you. Include a drawing and at least one sentence, and mail or give the note to your special person.

### VOCABULARY

**hiss**  
**sneer**  
**smug**  
**rhubarb**

**pucker**  
**inspire**  
**homeland**  
**babushka**

**stalk**  
**incredible**