

A Touch of Friendship

Tricia Martin

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Following a helpful octopus in a beautiful undersea setting, the picture book A Touch of Friendship provides ample guidance on social interactions.

Tricia Martin's picture book *A Touch of Friendship* imparts helpful life lessons against the busy backdrop of the ocean.

It's a glorious morning in the ocean bay that Ollie the octopus calls home. Countless creatures are busy going about their days, and a lot of them could use a hand—the perfect opportunity for an octopus who wants to be kind. From mollusks who would like to come out of their shells to a ray who needs to mind his manners, Ollie has plenty of friends to help—and morals to share along the way.

There's a new lesson for every creature that Ollie helps, and their situations are varied. The resultant advice is sometimes familiar (“don't be shy”; “remember to have fun”), but more advanced messages are also present. The book discourages exaggeration, for example, and it promotes values like humility, opening the door for a higher level of discussion on manners and morals. And the language is often similarly advanced, with complicated scientific terms like intertidal, cephalopod, and mollusk defined in the helpful appendix for curious minds.

Much like the real ocean, the art is brimming with energetic colors and details. The cheery expressions and human behaviors of Ollie and his friends are paired with lifelike backgrounds, blending to create eye-catching art. And a series of questions is appended to the book to help audiences apply what they've learned from Ollie and friends in plausible real-life scenarios.

Following a helpful octopus, the picture book *A Touch of Friendship* provides ample guidance on social interactions in a beautiful undersea setting.

IAN DAILEY (December 15, 2022)

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