

Zara's Robot Friend

Parent & Teacher Reading Guide

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1 Welcome

Use this guide with **Zara's Robot Friend: A Story about Coding and Friendship** to explore creativity, caring problem solving, and the patience to try again. Zara's invention begins with a wish to help someone who feels lonely and becomes a story about connection.

1.1 Story at a glance

Zara loves to code, make programs and games, and build something helpful. She designs Project Buddy, a robot friend. When Buddy does not work at first, Zara checks her code and wires, breaks the problem into small steps, discovers a dead battery, and tries again. Later, Zara invites Maya to learn with her, and the two begin coding together.

1.2 Themes to notice

- Creativity can begin with a wish to help.
- Big problems can be explored one small step at a time.
- A setback can lead to another try.
- Sharing a skill can help people connect.

2 Before reading

Ask children what they would build if they wanted to help a person, animal, or place. Invite them to name one job their invention could do. Explain that Zara has an idea for a robot, but she will need patience when her first try does not work.

- What makes a good friend?
- What could a helpful robot do?
- What can you do when something does not work the first time?

3 During reading

Invite children to spot the steps Zara takes: she imagines, plans, codes, builds, tests, checks, and tries again. Pause briefly to let children explain what they see happening.

3.1 Words to notice

- **Code:** instructions that tell a computer or machine what to do.
- **Program:** a set of instructions made with code.
- **Sensor:** a part that notices something, such as light or movement.
- **Battery:** a power source for many devices.
- **Test:** to try something and see what happens.

3.2 Read-aloud pauses

When Zara writes "IF sad THEN hug" and "IF happy THEN dance," ask: "What is Buddy being told to do?" When the power button does not work, ask: "What could Zara check first?" When Zara tells Maya, "You can! I'll teach you," ask: "How does sharing a skill change the story?"

4 After reading

- Why did Zara want to build Buddy?
- What did Zara do when Buddy did not turn on?
- How did breaking the problem into small steps help Zara?
- What was the result of Zara taking Buddy to school?
- What is one skill you could share with a friend?

5 Try-it activity: Human-Robot Instructions

Choose one child or adult to be the “robot.” Another person gives simple, safe instructions to complete a task, such as taking three steps, picking up a book, or touching a chair. If the robot does something unexpected, pause and improve the instructions together. Connect this to Zara checking her code and testing one part at a time.

6 Classroom extension

Offer paper, pencils, and simple craft materials. Invite children to draw a helpful robot and label what it could do. Ask them to write or dictate one “IF ... THEN ...” instruction for the robot. Display the inventions with a sentence about whom each robot would help.

7 Family note

When a child is frustrated with a project, try Zara’s small-step question: “What is one part we can check next?” The goal is not to solve the problem immediately. It is to notice, test, and try again together.

This guide is a companion resource for the published book. Let Zara’s combination of imagination and kindness invite a conversation about the ways inventions can bring people together.

8 Printable Activity Sheet: Zara's Project Buddy Lab

Name: _____

Date: _____

Zara builds a robot friend because she wants to help. Decide who your robot would help and what it could do.

My robot helps: _____

Its helpful job is: _____

IF someone feels sad, THEN my robot will: _____

IF someone feels happy, THEN my robot will: _____

Draw your Project Buddy. Label one helpful part, such as a sensor, power button, or friendly greeting.

If my first idea does not work, one small step I can check next is: