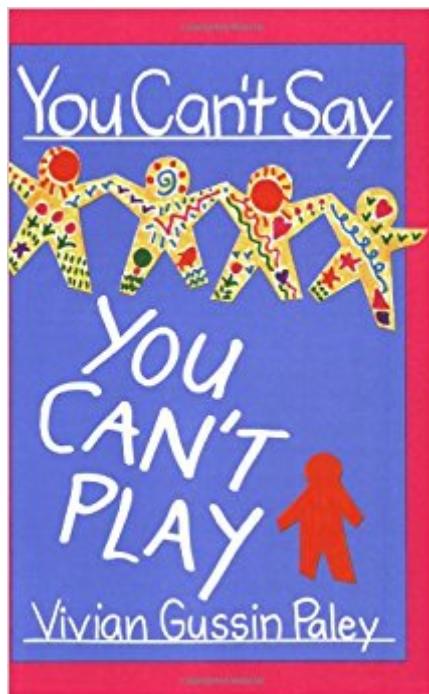


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# You Can't Say You Can't Play



## Synopsis

Who of us cannot remember the pain and humiliation of being rejected by our classmates? However thick-skinned or immune to such assaults we may become as adults, the memory of those early exclusions is as palpable to each of us today as it is common to human experience. We remember the uncertainty of separating from our home and entering school as strangers and, more than the relief of making friends, we recall the cruel moments of our own isolation as well as those children we knew were destined to remain strangers. In this book Vivian Paley employs a unique strategy to probe the moral dimensions of the classroom. She departs from her previous work by extending her analysis to children through the fifth grade, all the while weaving remarkable fairy tale into her narrative description. Paley introduces a new rule—“You can’t say you can’t play”—to her kindergarten classroom and solicits the opinions of older children regarding the fairness of such a rule. We hear from those who are rejected as well as those who do the rejecting. One child, objecting to the rule, says, “It will be fairer, but how are we going to have any fun?” Another child defends the principle of classroom bosses as a more benign way of excluding the unwanted. In a brilliant twist, Paley mixes fantasy and reality, and introduces a new voice into the debate: Magpie, a magical bird, who brings lonely people to a place where a full share of the sun is rightfully theirs. Myth and morality begin to proclaim the same message and the schoolhouse will be the crucible in which the new order is tried. A struggle ensues and even the Magpie stories cannot avoid the scrutiny of this merciless pack of social philosophers who will not be easily caught in a morality tale. *You Can’t Say You Can’t Play* speaks to some of our most deeply held beliefs. Is exclusivity part of human nature? Can we legislate fairness and still nurture creativity and individuality? Can children be freed from the habit of rejection? These are some of the questions. The answers are to be found in the words of Paley’s schoolchildren and in the wisdom of their teacher who respectfully listens to them.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this brief, ethereal and tender account of social relations among children, Paley--a kindergarten teacher at the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, a MacArthur grant recipient and the author of *The Boy Who Would Be a Helicopter* --explores how to keep students from being ignored by their classmates. She describes what happened when she asked students ranging from kindergarten to fifth grade to debate the proposition "You Can't Say You Can't Play." Woven throughout Paley's lessons is a parable about loneliness and rejection, which enables readers to share a child's view of the world. What the kids have to say is enchanting and surprisingly wise. For example, should a "boss" determine who plays with whom, or should there be an election? As a sagacious second-grader observes: "See, the bad thing about voting is, if you don't vote for that person she'll see all the people who don't like her. If it's a boss that's only one person doesn't like you so you don't feel so bad." Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book on early education describes an experiment Paley conducted in her kindergarten classroom. Unhappy with the fact that children too quickly learn to ostracize unwanted classmates, Paley decided to make some changes. She created a new social order by posting a sign saying, "You Can't Say, You Can't Play." She hoped to enforce the new order with the series of stories included in this book, which utilize a group of stock characters, principally Magpie. Paley creates an enticing series of children's stories, but her thesis is problematic. As a text for teachers concerned with the moral life of children, it is neither a substantial nor a substantiated offering, and other authors may offer more help.-Nancy E. Zuwiyya, Binghamton City Sch. District, N.Y. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I used this book decades ago to guide me in establishing a positive classroom climate for my young students. I bought it this time for my daughter who's a child and family counselor. She loves it and is also sharing it with her daughter's kindergarten teacher.

It was excellent and interesting book which I read it for one of teaching credential class and wrote

reflection of it.

Have not read the book, but purchased it based off recommendations from others. The book is a good tool for School teachers based off what I have learned about this author.

Whether you agree or disagree with the premise of this book, it is very thought provoking and will encourage critical thinking on the part of educators of young children.

Awesome book. I had to read it for a class, but I've read it 3 more times since then. I really recommend educators pick up this book and contemplate the educational philosophy of Vivian Paley.

I had to read this for a class in college. A very easy read with a great point of how we can change the world by starting as young as possible, teaching equality and getting along in a world filled with variety.

As early as preschool teachers begin to see that children's play can often lead to isolation and even teasing of their peers. This is an excellent book on how children think and how, as they enter elementary school, they often draw up rules and boundaries that exclude others.

I loved reading this book and helped me to gain a deeper understanding of why teaching kids to be respectful (and nice) to others at a very early age is so important.

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