

*Question – Referencing the book, describe and comment on the relationship between the two characters you have selected in your chosen text.*

In Louis Sachar's *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom*, there is an extraordinary partnership rarely seen in other publications. It is common to see writers feature relationships between two human beings in their stories. However, Sachar creatively thinks out of the box and creates a special attachment between a boy called Bradley and a toy named Ronnie. Surprisingly, this is one of the closest connections throughout the book.

Bradley Chalkers, the oldest and fiercest student in his class, is a mean, unforgiving bully. He flashes hostile looks to anyone he sees. When a new kid tries to be friends with him, he replies threateningly, "Give me a dollar or I'll spit on you." However, deep inside Bradley, he has a lonely heart longing for an ever-lasting friendship.

Ronnie is a tiny, stuffed, red rabbit with only one ear. Sachar repeatedly hints that Ronnie is Bradley's most cherished stuffed toy among his collection. Bradley never grows tired of Ronnie; he often makes imaginary conversations with her. At the end of Chapter 3, when Bradley had a dispute with his family members, Ronnie was the first to step out and assure Bradley that everything would be all right.

Ronnie is Bradley's most dependable pal. Apart from Ronnie, Bradley hardly tells anyone his secrets, not even to his family or teachers. For example, on p.109, Bradley whispered to Ronnie about falling in love with Carla, the school social worker. Bradley heaved out heavy sighs and even pleaded the stuffed animal not to tell anyone, from which we can see that his love for Carla is meant to be a closely guarded secret and is only revealed to Ronnie.

Ronnie is also a perfect example of Bradley's ideal companion, a reflection of what a

genuine buddy would be like to him. His dialogues with Ronnie are all created by Bradley himself. On p.123, Sachar writes that only Ronnie 'knew and understood' why Bradley suddenly started concentrating on his book report while the other stuffed animals, who did not understand that Bradley was doing his homework for Carla, groaned and complained about being left out. Ronnie encouraged Bradley to read on in spite of the distractions made by the other stuffed animals. Not only does Ronnie understand Bradley's sorrows and burden, but she also gives him the courage and strength to revive from his dispirited self. When Bradley was sent to his room by his parents on p.17, Ronnie was the first to comfort a depressed, crying Bradley. Also, on p.109, Ronnie stopped Bartholomew, the toy bear from distracting Bradley whilst he was doing his arithmetic homework by saying, "Leave him alone. He's trying to do his homework. He can't concentrate when you're talking to him."

Towards the end of the book, Ronnie acts as a resemblance of the social worker whom Bradley looks upon. Like Carla, Ronnie supports and agrees with Bradley in every way. She does not laugh or tease him when she knows Bradley is 'in love', and understands when Bradley is too busy to talk. It may seem insignificant when Bradley gives Ronnie to Carla as a farewell gift. Nevertheless, the symbolic meaning of his act is to present his rabbit pal who knows most about the kind, friendly social worker to Carla herself

After all Ronnie has done, Bradley decides to believe in himself and accept the fact that he needs to change in order to turn over a new leaf. If Ronnie had not appeared in this story, Bradley would not have made eight friends or got invited to a girl's birthday party.

Some may comment that this 'child and toy' relationship is childish and too old for a fifth grader, but I believe that if Ronnie had not established a close connection with Bradley, Bradley would not have accepted the realities of life and tried to transform himself. There is a saying that goes: "A friend is someone who understands your past,

believes in your future, and accepts you the way you are today.” Despite the fact that Ronnie is not human, she is still qualified as Bradley’s one and only trusted friend, for she is Bradley's most memorable childhood partner and his source of affirmation. Had Ronnie been excluded from the story, Bradley would not have undergone an amazing metamorphosis from a mean, grumpy bully to a popular, friendly fifth grader.