



Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

My Smiling Eyes

An activity of the Maria Hertogh series

When you read the stories about Maria Hertogh at <http://more.whatsup.sg>, you might feel sorry for Maria. She was unhappy in the Netherlands. She was a Dutch child, like the other children there. Yet, she felt she was different. And, she was made to feel different by others.

On the other hand, she spent seven happy years with her adoptive family in Malaya. Think about it. Maria could not fit in with the Dutch in the Netherlands although she looked like everyone else there. She felt she belonged in Aminah's Malay family although Maria looked different from them.

PART 1 - What made the difference?

What do you think might have made the difference between her experience of life in Malaya and in the Netherlands? We do not have enough facts to be certain — we can only speculate. Speculating means to guess in a logical way so that we can see more clearly what affected Maria's feelings.

1a) After noting the information in the stories, do some guesswork to answer this question. Try to list some factors that might have affected her feelings at each place.

Why was Maria happier with Aminah's Malay family in Malaya than with her own Dutch family in the Netherlands?

My guesses (in point form) about how these might have affected Maria's feelings:

Food: _____

Language: _____

Dressing: _____

Climate: _____

Family members: _____

Friends: _____

Maria herself: _____

Other factors: _____

We were not there to help Maria Hertogh in the Netherlands. But, we can reach out to kids who are like Maria at school by offering friendship.

Every year, there are kids like Maria who have to change school or even move from one country to another. (You may be one of them.) So much depends on what is called **friendship starter skills**.

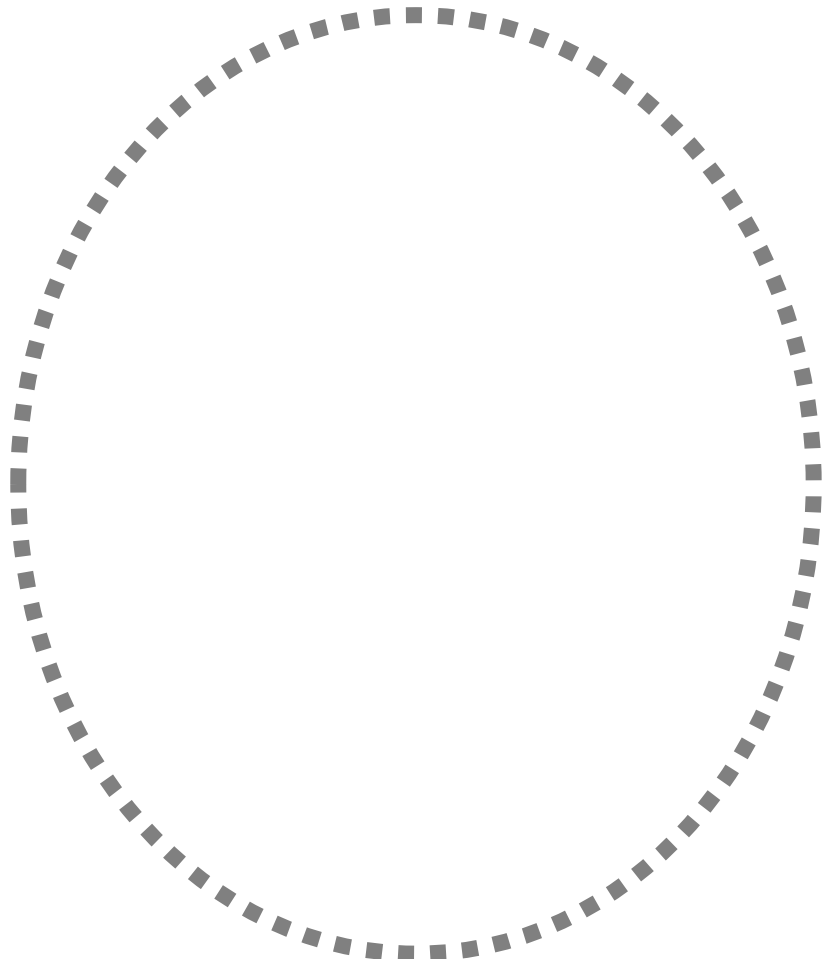
The three most basic friendship starter skills are **making eye contact, smiling, and saying hello**. You know this: just as it takes two hands to clap, it takes two to form relationships — with one reaching out, and the other responding. Try the following to investigate how this works by studying the effect of your friendship starter skills.

PART 2 - Do your eyes smile?

In ordinary times, we may not wonder whether our smiles reach our eyes. During the COVID-19 pandemic, wearing masks made all the difference. Why bother smiling when you are wearing a mask? The bigger question is how to make it clear that you are smiling when people can see only your eyes.

- 2a) Wear a mask. Face a mirror. Smile at yourself. Does your smile reach your eyes? That is, if strangers were looking only at your eyes, would they be able to tell whether you are smiling? Try different ways of smiling until you feel sure that your smile has reached your eyes. You will need to have smiling eyes for Part 3!
- 2b) Sketch a portrait of your face in a mask to remind yourself that it is possible to have smiling eyes. In fact, when we must wear masks, it is essential to be able to make your smile reach your eyes.

MY PORTRAIT →
*I'm wearing a mask
and my eyes are
smiling.*



PART 3 – Does the world smile back?

3a) Conduct a little experiment at a place where there are children you have never met. For instance, with your parent’s/guardian’s permission, you may choose to go to the children’s section of a public library or a playground near you. As you would be approaching 20 kids, you may have to go more than once to complete this activity.

In the table below are listed four strategies. Some of them use your **friendship starter skills** more than others.

Try each strategy with five kids who are strangers to you. You do not have to go in this order. Give each child a few seconds to respond. Later, in the appropriate cells, record your observations using an emoji (e.g. 😊 😐 😞) of each child’s response to you. You may also write a phrase under each emoticon.

Strangers’ responses to me						
A	I made eye contact, Smiled, & said hello.	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3	Child 4	Child 5
B	I made eye contact, smiled but didn’t say hello.	Child 6	Child 7	Child 8	Child 9	Child 10
C	I made eye contact, said hello but didn’t smile.	Child 11	Child 12	Child 13	Child 14	Child 15
D	I made eye contact but didn’t smile or say hello.	Child 16	Child 17	Child 18	Child 19	Child 20

3b) Reflect on your findings. What combination worked best for you? Were there any disappointments as you tried out your friendship skills? Was it thrilling in any way?

3c) Share with your class your main takeaways from each part of this activity.

When your eyes smile, the world smiles with you!