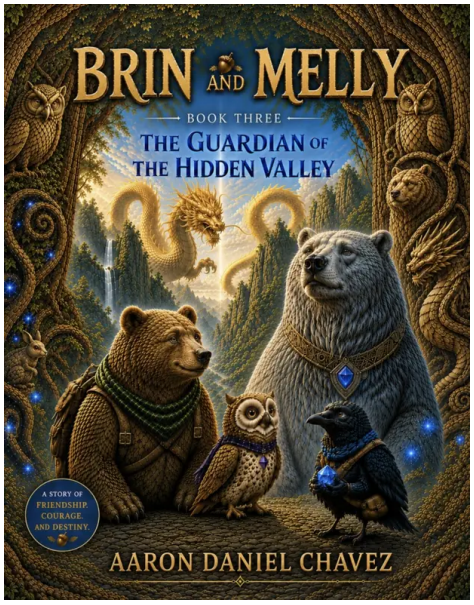
BOOK THREE

THE GUARDIAN OF THE HIDDEN VALLEY

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING GUIDE



Curiosity, honest growth, courage, belonging, and shared purpose

GRADES K TO 3 • CLASSROOMS • COUNSELING GROUPS • FAMILIES

Created for teachers, counselors, librarians, caregivers, and families
Story by Aaron Daniel Chavez

About the Story

Brin and Melly, Book Three, The Guardian of the Hidden Valley

A hidden valley and a legendary guardian

Brin, Melly, and Ari step through an ancient wooden door and meet Guardian Bear, a calm and wise silver bear. He welcomes them into a hidden valley of sparkling streams, glowing flowers, and stories carved into the bark of a great tree.

Ari discovers that his grandmother was one of the valley's greatest storytellers. Brin begins to recognize his own sharp senses and growing courage. Melly's curiosity leads her to touch a glowing crystal inside a hidden archway, and she honestly faces the consequences when the valley changes.

Beneath the Great Tree, the friends discover a carving of the First Guardian, the Dragon. Its awakening points them toward Dragon Mountain and a shared purpose larger than any of them expected.

SEL Learning Goals

- Describe how curiosity can be a gift when it is paired with thoughtful, responsible choices.
- Identify individual strengths and explain how self belief can grow through encouragement and practice.
- Explain how mentors, elders, and preserved stories can guide a community.
- Practice responding to a mistake with honesty, reflection, and a constructive next step.
- Recognize how friendship, courage, belonging, and shared purpose help a group move forward together.

Use the prompts that fit your students, community, and reading setting. Invite more than one interpretation and let children use details from the story to support their thinking.

Before and During Reading

Before Reading

- What makes curiosity helpful? When might curiosity need a pause?
- What can a story teach people many years after it was first told?
- What makes someone a trusted guide or mentor?
- How can friends help after someone makes a mistake?
- What is one strength you bring to a group?

During Reading, Stop and Talk

- Meeting Guardian Bear: What makes him seem calm, wise, and trustworthy?
- At the Great Tree: What does Ari learn about his grandmother and the value of preserved stories?
- At the hidden archway: What choice does Melly make? What changes after she touches the crystal?
- After the mistake: How do Melly and Guardian Bear respond with honesty, care, and growth?
- Brin’s discovery: What strength does Guardian Bear notice in Brin? How might that change Brin’s belief in himself?
- The First Guardian: What shared purpose begins when the dragon carving awakens?

After Reading Discussion

Curiosity and Responsible Choices

- Why does Guardian Bear call curiosity a gift?
- What could Melly have done before touching the crystal?
- How can curiosity help us learn while still protecting people, places, and important objects?

Honesty, Growth, and Self Belief

- How does Melly show honesty after the valley trembles?
- Why does Guardian Bear respond gently while still teaching an important lesson?
- What does Brin notice that others do not? How does Guardian Bear help him see this strength?

Mentors, Stories, and Shared Purpose

- What makes Guardian Bear a helpful mentor?
- Why are Ari’s grandmother’s stories important to the valley?
- How do Brin, Melly, and Ari use different strengths as a team?
- What new purpose begins when the Dragon asks to be found?

Curiosity is a gift. But it must be used wisely.

Classroom Activities

01 **Curiosity With Care**
Present an interesting classroom object. Students name what they notice, what they wonder, and what permission or information they need before touching or changing it.

02 **The Story Tree**
Students draw a tree and add a leaf for a story, lesson, or tradition learned from a parent, grandparent, elder, teacher, or mentor.

03 **Strengths the Group Needs**
Small groups complete a cooperative challenge. Each student names a strength they can contribute, such as noticing, encouraging, building, recording, or explaining.

04 **Pause, Own It, Grow**
Practice a four step response to mistakes: pause, tell the truth, consider the effect, and choose a helpful next action.

05 **Our Shared Purpose**
Groups choose a classroom goal and make a simple plan showing how different strengths, support, and responsible choices can help everyone contribute.

SEL Standards Connections

These connections support instructional planning. They are not an official endorsement or curriculum certification by CASEL or Washington OSPI.

Framework	Connected competencies or standards	Story connection
CASEL 5	Self awareness Self management Social awareness Relationship skills Responsible decision making	Students recognize strengths, manage a response to a mistake, value mentors and stories, support friends, and consider responsible choices.
Washington Standards 1 and 2	Self Awareness and Self Management	Students recognize strengths and emotions, then practice an honest and constructive response after a mistake.
Washington Standard 3	Self Efficacy	Students identify personal strengths, accept guidance, and grow in belief that they can contribute to a shared goal.
Washington Standard 4	Social Awareness	Students value the perspectives of a mentor and the stories preserved by an elder.
Washington Standards 5 and 6	Social Management and Social Engagement	Students communicate, cooperate, contribute different strengths, and work toward shared purpose.

Framework references: casel.org/what-is-sel and ospi.k12.wa.us/student-success/resources-subject-area/social-emotional-learning-sel

Extend the Learning

School Counselor or Small Group

- What helps you pause before acting on curiosity?
- Who is a trusted guide you can ask for help?
- What can you do after a choice causes an unexpected problem?
- Which strength do you bring to a group journey?
- How can friends help someone learn and grow after a mistake?

Writing and Drawing Prompts

- Kindergarten and Grade 1: Draw one strength you would bring to the friends' journey. Finish the sentence, 'I can help by...'
- Grades 2 and 3: Write about a time you learned from a mistake or from the guidance of a teacher, family member, elder, or friend.
- Creative extension: Invent a new guardian for a special place. What does the guardian protect, teach, and value?

Family Connection

Ask a family member about a person who guided them through a difficult or unfamiliar experience. What did that mentor say or do that made a difference?

Teacher Reflection and Student Exit Ticket

Teacher Reflection

- What did students understand about respectful curiosity?
- How did students describe the role of a mentor or trusted guide?
- Who may benefit from more practice with uncertainty, perspective taking, or cooperative decision making?

Student Exit Ticket

- One strength I bring to a group is...
- One responsible choice I can make when I am curious is...
- A person I can ask for guidance is...
- After a mistake, I can be honest and...

Curiosity can open a door. Honesty, guidance, and friendship help us choose what comes next.

Continue the Journey

Use the Guides Together

Book One explores friendship, courage, kindness, and belonging. Book Two adds curiosity, teamwork, wisdom, and family stories. Book Three extends the learning through respectful curiosity, mentorship, self management, and decisions made together.

Invite students to compare how Brin, Melly, and Ari grow across the series. Keep drawings, reflections, and exit tickets in a Brin and Melly learning portfolio.

More Free Resources

Visit BrinandMelly.com for the Book One and Book Two SEL guides, classroom read aloud resources, printable coloring pages, virtual author visits, and additional activities for families and schools.

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