

The Peddler and the President

By Ann D. Koffsky | Illustrated by Pedro Rodríguez

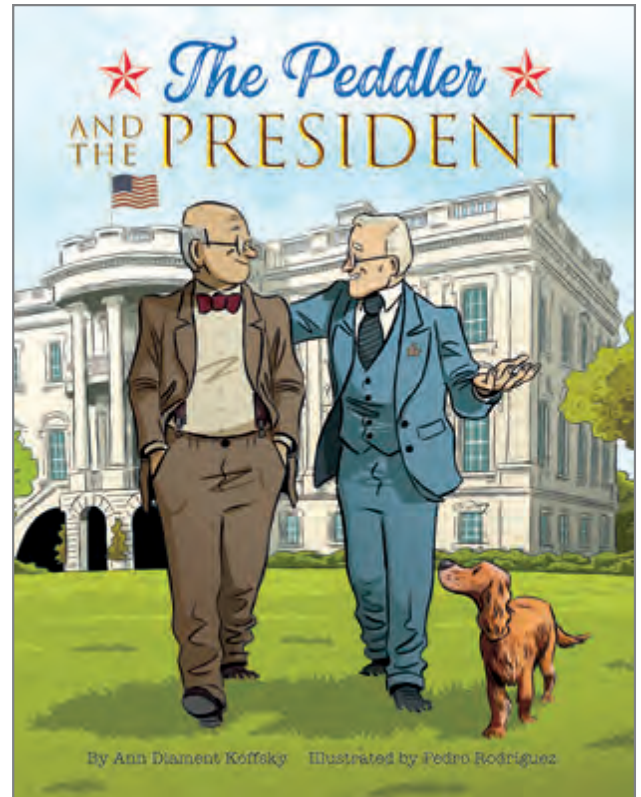
READING GUIDE

About the Book

Harry and Eddie were unlikely friends. Harry was 19. Eddie was 14. Harry lived on a farm with chickens, cows, and horses. Eddie never even had a pet! Harry was Christian. Eddie was Jewish. But they worked together very well. They operated an army shop in their hometown and later founded a hat shop together.

Even when they didn't work together, they remained friends. They wrote letters all the time. Harry went into politics, eventually becoming the President of the United States! Eddie was a salesman in Kansas City. Harry would shop in Eddie's store, and Eddie would visit the White House. Even though people like Harry's wife, Bess, didn't think Jewish people should interact with the upper classes, Harry never left his friend.

But after World War II, there was an international discussion about whether the Jewish people should establish a new country in their ancient homeland. A lot of people were asking Harry to support the idea. Harry's advisors in the White House wanted him to stay quiet. Eddie was conflicted. He was Harry's friend, and he was also Jewish. Eddie needed to have courage to speak about his beliefs, as well as trust in his friend to listen.



Ann D. Koffsky has written and/or illustrated more than thirty books for children, including the Kayla and Kugel series, *What's In Tuli's Box?* and *Under-the-Sea Seder*, published with Apples & Honey Press. She lives in West Hempstead, New York.

Pedro Rodríguez studied illustration at the Fine Arts School La Llotja in Barcelona, Spain. He now has more than forty published books, including his award-winning comic book *Omar el Navegante* and a series of Rudyard Kipling graphic novel retellings he illustrated for Stone Arch Books. Pedro lives next to the beach, close to Barcelona.

Key Themes:

Friendship in the Face of Difficulties, Antisemitism, 20th Century American History, Courage

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Ages 6–8 years

Use these questions to preface and conclude a reading of this book with children. Encourage them to share their observations as you read the book together, and take time to linger on pages or spreads that generate more discussion.

Before Reading

- Look at characters and the building on the cover of the book. Where do you think this story takes place, and when? What do you see on the cover that makes you think so?
- Read the title out loud. Do you know what a “peddler” is? Do you think peddlers and presidents are often friends? Why or why not?

While Reading

- As you read this book, you will notice that each chapter begins with a date. What is the earliest year listed? The latest? Think about what you know about how people lived in those years. In what ways do you think their lives were different than people’s lives today? In what ways do you think they were the same?

After Reading

- Harry and Eddie were friends since their teenage years until they were much older—almost their entire lives! Why do you think Eddie and Harry became such good friends? What do you think makes a friendship strong enough to last that long?
- On page 22, it says that Eddie never asked Harry for anything and that, “He didn’t want anything from Harry except his friendship.” Why do you think it was so important to him not to ask Harry for things? How do you think that choice affected their friendship?
- Throughout the book, there are illustrations of many different rooms, such as the inside of the bank, the army canteen, a family’s living room, and Harry’s office. Look carefully at each of these illustrations. What do you see in each one that helps you know that the story is taking place in the 1940s and not today?
- On page 16, it says that Eddie and his family, “wondered if Bess didn’t like Jews.” Why do you think they wondered that?
- On pages 24-26, the book describes how many Jewish people hoped to return to their ancient homeland and rebuild a modern Jewish country there. Why do you think so many Jewish people wanted to build a new, modern Jewish State? Why do you think that was so important to them?

Optional: Extension Activity

- Look at the timeline at the end of the book. You’ll see that it highlights important events in the lives of Harry and Eddie. Now, make your own timeline that focuses on YOU.
 - o Draw a long line across the width of your paper. Add six (or more) dots spaced along the line.
 - o Next to the first dot, write the date and year of your birth. Next to the last dot, write today’s date.
 - o Label the middle dots with important events that have happened in your life (your first day of school, the day you lost your first tooth—things like that.) If you’d like, you can also add illustrations next to each dot, too.