

CULTURAL TRADITIONS



SEL Reading & Discussion

Grades: K-2

Background: The Cultural Traditions live virtual field trip with Ohio History Connection focuses on celebrations that reflect our cultural diversity. This activity will give them an opportunity to explore the diverse identities of others and themselves.

Objectives: Students will discuss a read-aloud book and engage in a guided discussion that helps them build SEL skills related to diversity.

What's Inside?

- Discussion guide
- Book list

Sources: Reedsy/Discovery (book list) & Learning for Justice (discussion guide)

Developing Language to Talk About Texts

Exploring Texts Through Read Alouds | Grade Level K-2

What?

This strategy gives students tools to use when exploring, thinking about and discussing read-aloud texts.

When?

Before reading

Why?

Most children need explicit language instruction to discuss difficult or sensitive issues. This strategy introduces a framework to help students process and verbalize their thoughts about troubling subject matter. It also provides an opportunity for you to model and scaffold language instruction as students become proficient at reading, processing and responding to critical social issues.

How?

1. Introduce relevant words and phrases, such as *culture*, *stereotype* and *appreciation of lifestyles different from our own*. Ask children to listen for words that make them uncomfortable during the read aloud. Older students can follow along in this activity, using the Stereotype Chart.
2. Read aloud a central text about a lifestyle dramatically different from that of your students (e.g., a description of daily life for a child in another part of the world). The central text can be:
 - a. One of the recommended books on the list
 - b. One of the texts here: <https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/texts>
3. Discuss the characters, setting and events depicted in the text.
4. Listen to student comments and note words used by students that may be judgmental or insensitive.
5. Ask children for ideas about how to discuss difficult issues related to diversity.

6. Using your students' responses, construct a list of guidelines for these conversations. Consider making an anchor chart to display in your classroom.
7. Revisit with students the list of possibly insensitive words or stereotypes heard in the class discussion about the read aloud text.
8. Have students evaluate the words and reflect on how the words might make someone feel.
9. Discuss why these words and stereotypes are harmful.
10. Develop a list of alternative words to use in place of the hurtful language found in the central text.
11. Listen to students as they identify stereotypes or offensive illustrations and storylines during read alouds.
12. Continually offer positive alternative language for students to use during difficult conversations.

English language learners

Hearing accurately used language provides necessary modeling and reinforcement for English language learners. However, learning to follow group conversations can be a challenge. Establish participation guidelines and limit the number of people speaking at one time. Display the final list of guidelines in a visible location to help students convert new information into manageable chunks.

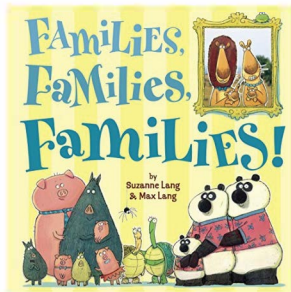
Connection to anti-bias education

Discussing critical social issues with children is crucial, especially when we consider that we are preparing them for democratic participation. Discussing these issues opens a space for children to “respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding and connection” (Anti-bias Standard 9). The strategy gives children the opportunity to understand the difference between intent and impact through examining word choice in classroom discussions that are open, safe and collaborative. Students can practice voicing their opinions about language that is and is not uncomfortable for them to hear. They will be aware of to why certain words are inappropriate or hurtful. Practice modeling positive listening skills to demonstrate and confirm that all members of the classroom have a voice that is respected and heard. These initial conversations about the impact of words will encourage children to examine texts, and the world, throughout their lives.

Recommended Books & Readings

Our world is not a simple place to live in. It is wide and full of color; its inhabitants enjoy a multitude of experiences and struggle with a variety of obstacles. Learning about these differences and appreciating them takes a whole lifetime, so what better way to prepare the generation of the future by reading children's books about diversity with them?

We've put together here a list of books to introduce to young minds a range of subjects: from cultural differences to gender fluidity, from social expectations to identity construction. Created by a diverse cast of writers and artists, these stories offer different lenses through which children can see the world.



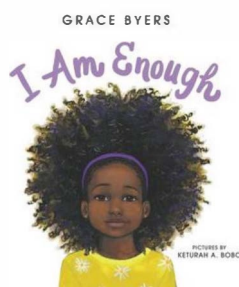
***Families, Families, Families!* by Suzanne Lang & Max Lang**

All types of families are valid, which is the message that this inspiring, joyous book imparts to children of all ages. Gentle rhymes accompany cleverly framed portraits of traditional and non-traditional families in these bright pages. All they want to tell you is this: whether you're living with two dads, two moms, a mom and dad, your grandparents, a stepmom, or a stepdad, you're in exactly the right place — you're with your family.



***Lovely* by Jess Hong**

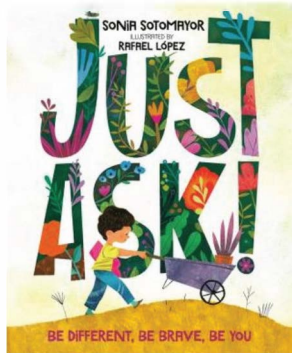
You won't find any preaching about the importance of differences here! Instead, Jess Hong's *Lovely* straight-up offers a delightful look at every kind of person under the sun. Her portraits of people cover the gamut of race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender expression, body shape — all of which ask the question, "What is lovely?" And it all culminates in one simple, powerful message: there is beauty in everyone, and we are all lovely.



***I Am Enough* by Grace Byers & Keturah A. Bobo**

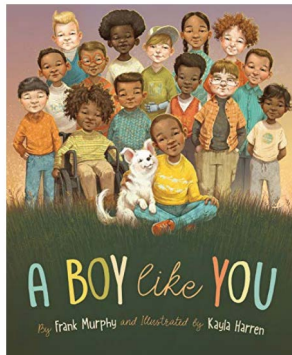
From Empire actor and activist Grace Byers comes a wonderful and empowering collection of positive affirmations for your child to read and cherish. Put simply, this is a celebration of you. In unassuming but freeing terms, Byers will show you the merits of a positive sense of self while teaching you how to appreciate and embrace differences.

Source retrieved and adapted on Aug. 8, 2022 from website.
(<https://reedsy.com/discovery/blog/childrens-books-about-diversity>)



***Just Ask!* by Sonia Sotomayor & Rafael López**

If your child is looking for a role model, you can't do better than Sonia Sotomayor — the first Hispanic and Latina justice to sit on the Supreme Court, bestselling author, and all around great human being. And while the briefs that she writes for the Supreme Court might be a little too hard for kids to understand, *Just Ask!* might just be perfect for them. In this hopeful, affirmative picture book, kids of all sorts of backgrounds and personalities work together to build a community garden. In encouraging children to ask others about their varying experiences, Sotomayor's wisdom and kindness shines through on the page.



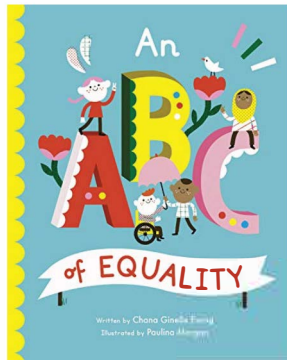
***A Boy Like You* by Frank Murphy & Kayla Harren**

Brute strength. Unfeelingness. Misogyny. Those are the norms that underpin toxic masculinity in today's culture — and *A Boy Like You* is the joyous, gentle book that's here to teach boys everywhere that that's actually not what you need to have in order to be a boy. Instead, Murphy and Harren (quite literally) paint a picture of positive masculinity that bucks stereotypical gender norms, providing a much-needed reminder that character, vulnerability, kindness, and sportsmanship are much more important than physical strength and privilege.



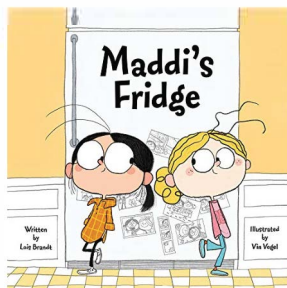
***All Are Welcome* by Alexandra Penfold & Suzanne Kaufman**

A book that belongs in every classroom and library, *All Are Welcome* invites children to step into a school where everyone is received with open arms. Even though it's the nerve-wracking first day of school — and even though everyone is different, from the kid in the wheelchair to the kid with the hijab — all come together to learn from and laugh with each other. Accompanied by bright, accessible illustrations, this is a picture book that children will cherish throughout the school semester.



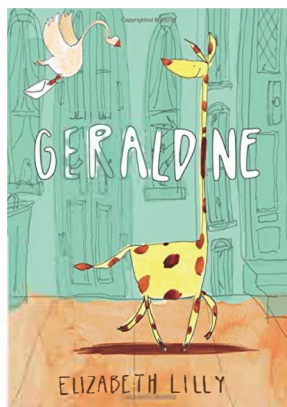
***An ABC of Equality* by Chana Ginelle Ewing & Paulina Morgan**

In *An ABC of Equality*, Chana Ginelle Ewing and Paulina Morgan re-imagine everyone's favorite ABCs in terms of diversity. Which means that A is for ability, B is for belief, C is for class, and P is for pick this one up if you'd like a cheerful, colorful book to help you explain social justice to your children. With its vibrant illustrations and simple explanations, this book is particularly great for younger children for whom it's never too early to start learning about equality.



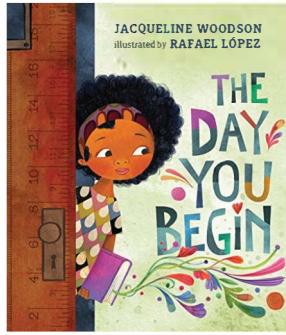
***Maddi's Fridge* by Lois Brandt & Vin Vogel**

Sofia and Maddi are the best of friends. Everything they do, they do together: they play together, go to school together, and enjoy life together. But then Sofia finds out one day that Maddi's fridge is almost completely bare... and that Maddi goes hungry more often than not. How can Sofia help Maddi — despite having promised her ashamed best friend that she'll keep this discovery a secret? Brandt handles hard topics like poverty, hunger, and diversity with a sensitive, empathetic touch, and the result is a compassionate picture book that instills a true lesson about friendship and trust.



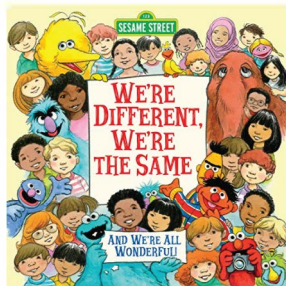
***Geraldine* by Elizabeth Lilly**

No, no, NO! Geraldine is NOT moving, especially NOT to a new place where she's always the odd one out. Not to mention that she's a giraffe with an incredibly dramatic neck, which complicates matters (and doorways)! But in this whimsical, heartwarming book about getting along with people different from you, with the help of another girl as unusual as her, Geraldine discovers just how to fit in without losing herself.



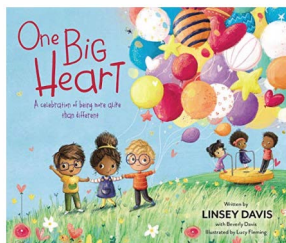
***The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson & Rafael López**

Award-winning Jacqueline Woodson is back with another awesome hit for children. For any child who's ever felt scared and different from others, this sweet book will help them find the courage to reach out and connect. Whether they're feeling excluded because of their race, hair style, family, or learning ability, *The Day You Begin*, with its gentle verse and gorgeous artwork, is here to give them the support and reassurance that there will always be someone out there who welcomes them.



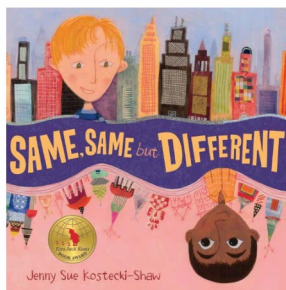
***We're Different, We're the Same* by Bobbi Kates & Joe Mathieu**

When there's a complex question, trust Elmo and the Sesame Street gang to figure out the answer! In *We're Different, We're the Same*, the beloved show is packed into a beloved book that teaches children and adults alike that it's what's on the inside that truly matters. Colorful and engagingly illustrated, it will let you in on a secret about what makes our world so wonderful. (Spoiler alert: it's us!)



***One Big Heart* by Linsey Davis & Lucy Fleming**

If you're looking for a book that approaches the topic of diversity from a Christian point of view, *One Big Heart* might be the one that you want to read out loud to your kids at night. In this multicultural picture book, similarities are celebrated as much as differences. From our laughter to our dreams, we're more alike than we are different, and there's always common ground to be found when you meet someone else.



***Same, Same But Different* by Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw**

8,000 miles might separate Elliot and Kailash, but that distance won't stop these pen pals from writing letters and exchanging pictures with one another! The more notes that they exchange, the more they realize exactly how different their cities, their lives, their families, and their backgrounds are. But they're also much more similar than they realize, which is where the true magic of friendship lies.

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