

Inclusivity Matters: A Representative Literacy Curriculum

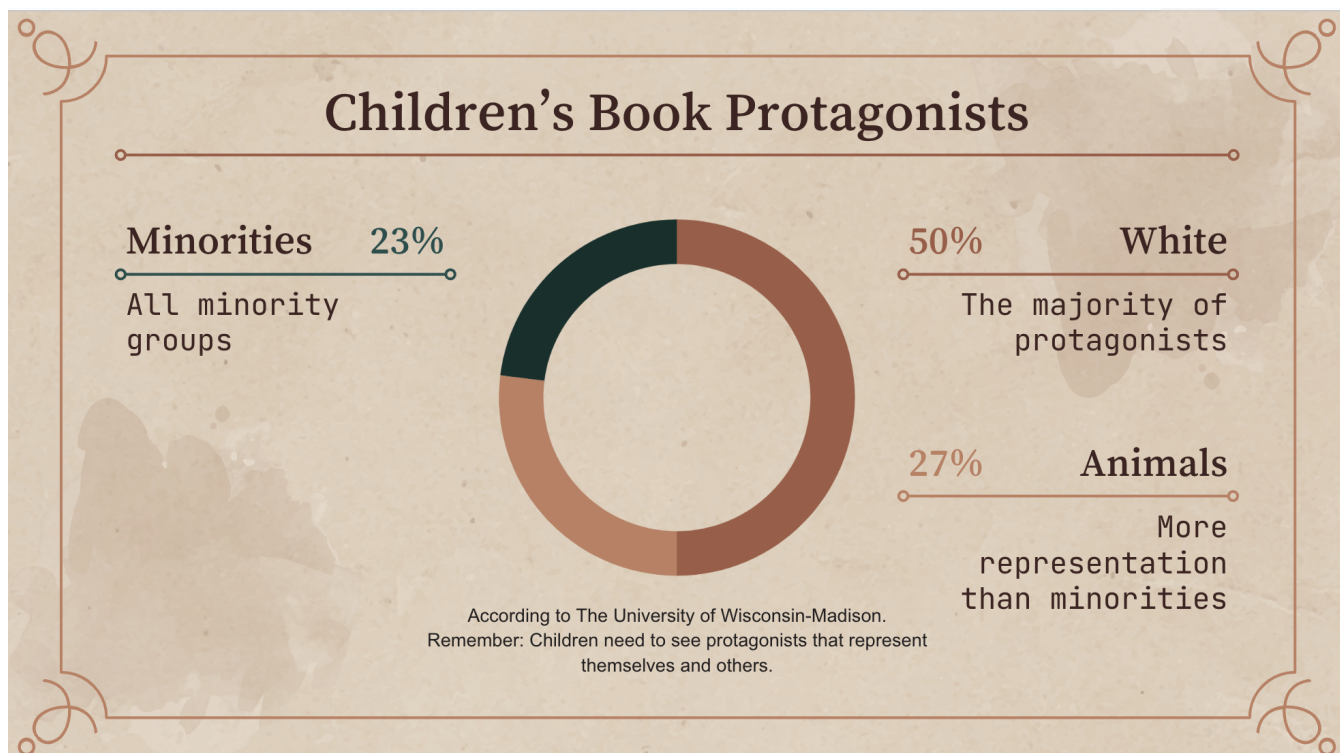
For ages 4-8

Created by Jaya Cox

A thoughtful, thought-provoking list of representative book choices for preschoolers and elementary school students to diversify their reading and spread awareness of different cultures.

As efforts to ban books and impact educational curriculum around the country become more pervasive, it is critical that children see themselves represented in the media and literature. Currently in children's literature, 50% of protagonists are white, 27% of protagonists are animals, and 23% of protagonists are minorities. There are more animal protagonists than minorities (University of Wisconsin-Madison). Presenting an accurate depiction of the world through books broadens children's horizons and shows them an array of races, ethnicities, cultures and backgrounds.

Lack of representation in books can be traced back to the publishing industry. According to the New York Times, 89% of a sample of 7,000 books published in 2018 were written by white authors. It's not necessarily that there aren't authors of different races who want to be published, but that the publishing industry skews in favor of white authors. The New York Times bestseller list also depicts a lack of diversity in the industry. The article "Just How White Is the Book Industry," states that of the 220 New York Times Best Sellers in 2020, only 22 were written by people of color. Even looking at the list now, in 2023, almost all of the books are written by white authors.



This curriculum was developed to encourage educators and young students to read books with more diversity by providing recommended books for these students, discussion questions, and activities that support a closer look at unique identity to expose students to differing perspectives and backgrounds. This curriculum also identifies further resources for educators to use in the future.

There is an included Goodreads list of all the books mentioned here, as well as other book recommendations added by other people for further exploration of representative books. This list is collaborative, and adding books is encouraged.

Goodreads List:

Inclusivity Matters: Diverse Reading List

https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/190093.Inclusivity_Matters_Diverse_Reading_List

My Website:

<https://www.inclusivity-matters-a-representative-literacy-curriculum.com/>

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Breakdown of Books:

- Asian Representation
 - *Danbi Leads the School Parade*
 - *Eyes That Kiss In the Corners*
 - *Laxmi's Mooch*
- Black Representation
 - *Last Stop On Market Street*
 - *Soul Food Sunday*
 - *Sulwe*
- Body Positivity
 - *Bodies Are Cool*
- Disabled Representation
 - *When Charley Met Emma*
- Jewish Representation
 - *Mrs. Katz and Tush*
- Latin American Representation
 - *Dreamers*
 - *Where Are You From?*
- LGBTQ+ Representation
 - *Heather Has Two Mommies*
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- Muslim Representation
 - *Big Red Lollipop*
 - *Under My Hijab*
- Native Representation
 - *Fry Bread*
 - *We Are Water Protectors*

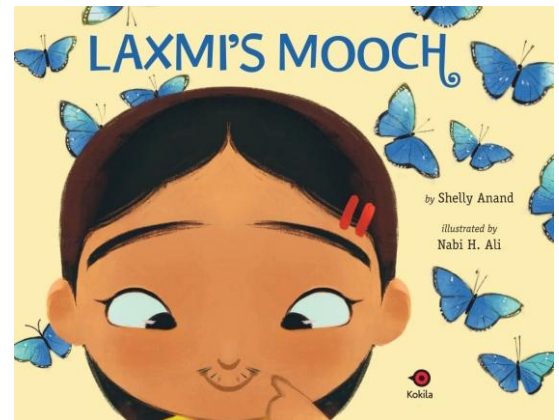
***Laxmi's Mooch* by Shelly Anand** **Illustrated by Nabi H. Ali**

Summary:

One day when Laxmi is playing on the playground at school, her friend points out the hairs above her lip. Laxmi is self-conscious at first, but her mother and father explain that it's normal. The next day at school, Laxmi makes all of her classmates love their "mooches."

Discussion Questions:

- What is a mooch?
- How did Laxmi feel when her friend pointed out her mooch? Why?
- Have you ever felt self-conscious about one of your features?
- What did Laxmi's parents say about her mooch?
- What is the history behind Laxmi's mooch?
- How is Laxmi's friend Zoe different from Laxmi? What animals do they choose to be toward the end of the book? Do you think the animals fit them?
- What happens at the end of the book?



Activities:

- Explore why people have body hair with your students. What is the purpose of eyelashes? Why is there hair in our ears? Why is there hair on our arms, legs, and even in our nose?
- Have your students draw their own mooches, either on themselves or on paper taped to their upper lip. Does their mooch remind them of anyone in their family?
- Look at the end pages of the book with your students and point out the Hindi words. Mooch means mustache in Hindi. Go through the book again and have them point out any Hindi words they see and identify the meaning. Ask about languages that are important to their families.

More Books Like This:

Beautifully Me by Nabela Noor

Watercress by Andrea Wang

Resources:

<https://theclassroombookshelf.com/2021/06/15/learning-about-and-loving-our-bodies-laxmis-mooch/>

<https://diversebooks.org/teaching-your-kids-body-positivity-learn-to-practice-it-yourself/>

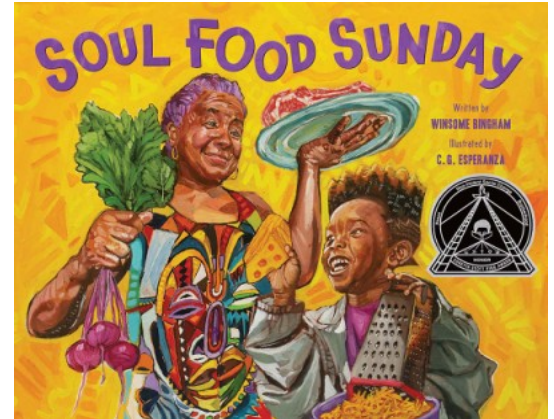
***Soul Food Sunday* by Winsome Bingham Illustrated by C. G. Esperanza**

Summary:

A little boy goes to his grandmother's house for "Soul Food Sunday," a day when his family spends time together and eats a big meal. The little boy is now old enough to help in the kitchen, so his grandmother shows him how to cook, step by step.

Discussion Questions:

- What do you notice about the illustrations in the book? Why are bright colors used?
- What foods does the boy learn to cook? Who teaches him?
- Are there special foods that your family enjoys?
- What is your favorite family tradition?
- Why did the boy want to cook instead of playing with his cousins?
- What did the boy do at the end of the story? How was his contribution special?
- If you were the author, how would you end the book?
- As you get older, why is it important to continue the traditions your family has now?



Activities:

- Have the students draw a table full of their own *Soul Food Sunday* foods.
- In the back of the book there is a recipe for Mac 'N' Cheese. Have students collect recipes from their family and have a recipe trading day.
 - Advanced activity: Ask students to bring in a food that is special to them. *Please check allergies before sharing food.
- Print out the word search below for your students which has the soul food mentioned in *Soul Food Sunday*, as well as other common soul food.

Word Search

V S A F R I E D C H I C K E N
 Q E X X L F R E G Q U N M G G
 B A K E D B E A N S E D E R R
 F K C O P K K D A S N O F I E
 C F O K P X T V E K D A F T E
 Z C R R I I P O R K R I B S N
 L O N A C F E L E C V O H X S
 S R D E V B P K J E Y P M W N
 W N M A C N C H E E S E E Q G
 E B D S B Q W R L G X Q V O O
 E R P E A C H C O B B L E R P
 T E Q W M P Y M J I M K T X K
 T A R V W N G Y C P R I K R O
 E D S W E E T P O T A T O E S
 A S A U S A G E M H E N Z X I

Sweet Potatoes	Fried Chicken	Peach Cobbler	Pie
Mac 'N' Cheese	Baked Beans	Sausage	Grits
Pork Ribs	Cornbread	Sweet Tea	Okra
Greens	Corn		

More Books Like This:

May Your Life Be Deliciosa by Michael Genhart

Tomatoes For Neela by Padma Lakshmi

Resources:

<https://librarylessonswithbooks.com/soul-food-sunday-activity/>

<https://www.scribd.com/document/531947518/Soul-Food-Sunday-Activity-Sheets>

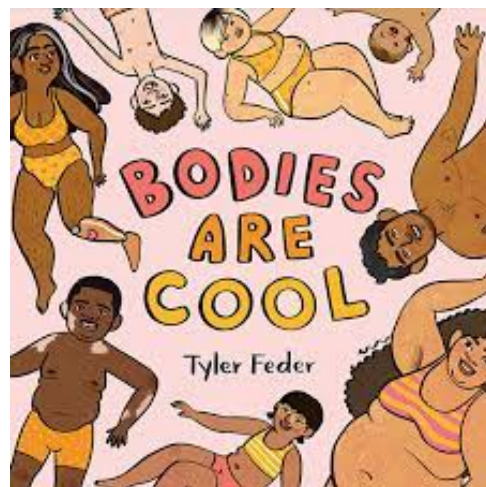
***Bodies Are Cool* by Tyler Feder**

Summary:

Bodies Are Cool explores all different kinds of body types, skin tones and hair types, while repeating the message that “bodies are cool.”

Discussion Questions:

- What bodies in this book look similar to your body?
Which bodies look similar to bodies of people you know?
- Why is it important to show so many different body types?
- Do you ever notice different body types? How can you learn more about different bodies?
- When do you feel best in your body? What do you do to feel this way? What are some things you can do in the future to feel good about yourself?
- What’s your favorite part of your body?
- What are some of the things your body does for you?



Activities:

- Watch the short film "[Hair Love](#)". How is this short film similar to *Bodies are Cool*? What does it teach you about your hair and your features?
- Have the students lie on lengths of paper to be traced. They can then decorate their tracing, add their own details such as hair and skin type, and label different body parts.
- Pick out some of the different bodies from the book and have the students recreate them with Playdough or by drawing them. Once they recreate the body, have them say what makes this particular body “cool.”

More Books Like This:

I Am Enough by Grace Byers

I Am Golden by Eva Chen

Resources:

<https://empoweredparents.co/body-parts-activities-for-preschoolers/>

<https://www.penguinclassroom.com/books/bodies-are-cool/>

***Eyes That Kiss in the Corners* by Joanna Ho Illustrated by Dung Ho**

Summary:

An Asian girl realizes that her eyes are different from all of her friends' eyes. Their eyes are large, with long lashes, while hers look like her mother's, grandmother's and sister's, and how they kiss in the corners.



Discussion Questions:

- How does the girl describe her eyes? How do the illustrations add to the way her eyes are described?
- How are the girl's friends' eyes different from hers? How does she describe their eyes?
- Whose eyes do the girl's eyes resemble? What does the girl call each of them? Why are they important?
- Have you ever compared yourself to how someone else looks? How does that make you feel?
- How does the girl feel at the beginning of the story compared to the end of the story? What makes her feel better about her eyes?
- How would you describe the girl's relationship to her family? What stories do her amah's eyes tell?
- How is her relationship with her sister Mei-Mei different from her mother and grandmother? How might she influence her sister in the future?
- What are some strengths that you are proud of like the girl in the story?

Activities:

- Have each student create an "All About Me Poster" filled with their favorite activities, hobbies, colors, foods, etc. to celebrate each student. Then, have a gallery walk with all of the posters.
- Celebrate each student's unique features by having them draw self-portraits and highlight their favorite feature.
- *Eyes that Kiss in the Corners* reads like a poem. Have each student write a poem about something they love about themselves.

More Books Like This:

Hair Love by Matthew A. Cherry

Eyes That Speak to the Stars by Joanna Ho

Resources:

<https://b0f646cfbd7462424f7a-f9758a43fb7c33cc8adda0fd36101899.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/teaching-guides/TG-9780062915627.pdf>

<https://dhjhxawhe8q4.cloudfront.net/harpercollinscomau-wp/harpercollinscomau-wp/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/04131710/Eyes-That-Kiss-in-the-Corners-Teaching-Guide.pdf>

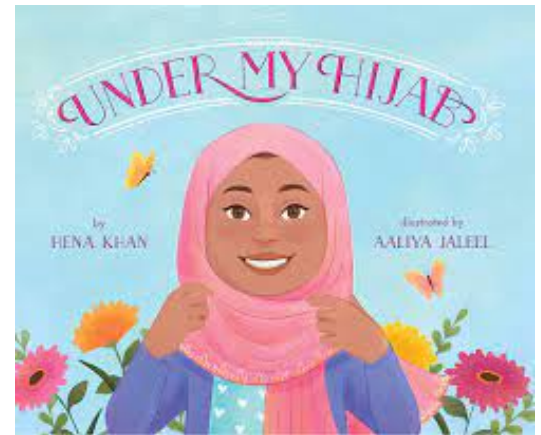
***Under My Hijab* by Hena Khan** **Illustrated by Aaliya Jaleel**

Summary:

A girl sees the ways the women in her life wear their hijabs at work and how they let their hair out at home, and dreams about when she'll one day express her personality through her own hijab.

Discussion Questions:

- What is a hijab? Do you know anyone that wears a hijab?
- When do the characters in the book wear their hijab? When do they take their hijabs off?
- How do the women in the book wear their hijabs differently? How does the girl's mom wear her hijab compared to her sister, for example?
- What does the little girl think about hijabs?
- What happens at the end of the book? How does that reflect what the girl has learned from all of the hijab-wearing women in her life?
- What is the significance of the title *Under My Hijab*?



Activities:

- There is at least one butterfly on each spread of the book. Ask students to find all of the butterflies. What do butterflies mean to the book?
- Have the students create an illustration of their favorite piece of clothing, and have them wear that piece of clothing to class the next day. Discuss what their clothing means to them and why hijabs are so important to the Muslim community.
- Have the students describe when they have to wear special clothing to certain events. What events require fancier outfits? What events require casual clothes? Create scenarios for the students and ask what clothing is appropriate to wear to each.

More Books Like This:

Alma and How She Got Her Name by Juana Martinez-Neal

The Proudest Blue by Ibtihaj Muhammad

Resources:

https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded_document/720/UnderMyHijab_TeachersGuide.pdf

<https://www.lookingglassbooks.org/curriculum-under-my-hijab>

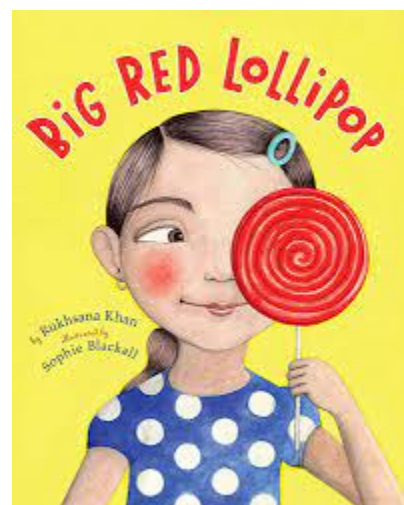
***Big Red Lollipop* by Rukhsana Khan Illustrated by Sophie Blackall**

Summary:

Rubina wants to go to a friend's birthday party, but her mother makes her bring her little sister along. Rubina is upset because the customs in her mother's home country are different from the customs here, so her mother doesn't understand Western birthday traditions.

Discussion Questions:

- Why did Rubina's mom make Rubina take her little sister to the party?
- What clothes does Ami wear? Why do Rubina and her sisters not wear Pakistani clothes?
- Why did Rubina tell her mom to let Sana go to the party without Maryam?
- What traditions does your family have that are different from your friends' traditions?
- What are your favorite things to do with your brothers and sisters?
- What can you do to make sure everyone in your family is heard?



Activities:

- Watch Rukhsana Khan's storytelling performance of the book. Ask the students to compare the book to the video. Is Sana's side of the story more clear? What would you do if you were in Rubina or Sana's position?
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8UQWdhhy8s>
- Research birthday celebrations around the world with your students. Compare the cultural differences and similarities.
- Discuss what each student's best birthday celebration was. What made that birthday special?

More Books Like This:

Lailah's Lunchbox: A Ramadan Story by Reem Faruqi

I'm New Here by Anne Sibley O'Brien

Resources:

<https://bartlettschools.edliotest.com/Big%20Red%20Lollipop%20LP.pdf>

<https://ketabak.org/sites/default/files/TeacherguideforBigRedLollipop.pdf>

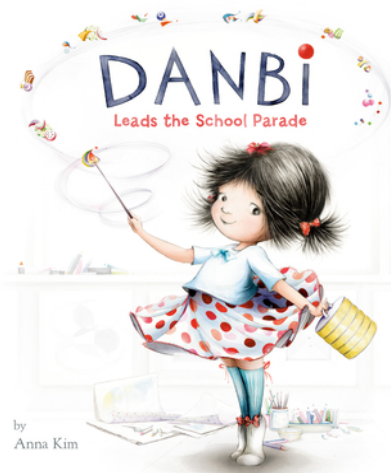
***Danbi Leads the School Parade* by Anna Kim**

Summary:

It's Danbi's first day of school in America after moving here from South Korea. Danbi has trouble getting to know the other students because of the language barrier and cultural differences. Danbi tried hard to fit in. Finally Danbi is able to connect with the other students at lunch over their interest in the food she brought to school and she leads the students in a parade.

Discussion Questions:

- Why was it hard for Danbi to make friends at first?
- What did Danbi do to try to fit in?
- How did she make friends at last?
- How would you feel if you were a new student like Danbi? How would you react to a new student coming to your school?
- What could the other kids have done to make Danbi feel more welcome?
- Do the students in the classroom in the book look like the students in our classroom?



Activities:

- Have the students bring their favorite lunch item to school and share with other students. Discuss why this item is important to them. *Check allergies.
- Show your students images of Korean food dishes. Visit an ethnic grocery store and select different foods from around the world for students to try. World Market, for example, has a variety of different foods.
- Use the emotion chart below to discuss the different emotions Danbi has throughout the book and why. How did Danbi feel at the beginning of the book compared to the end?
 - <https://storage.googleapis.com/classroom-portal-production/uploads/2020/03/41f49738-danbi-character-traits-chart.png>

More Books Like This:

- *Drawn Together* by Minh Lê
- *Amy Wu and the Perfect Bao* by Kat Zhang

Resources:

<https://www.danbiandfriends.com/>

<https://www.penguinclassroom.com/books/danbi-leads-the-school-parade/>

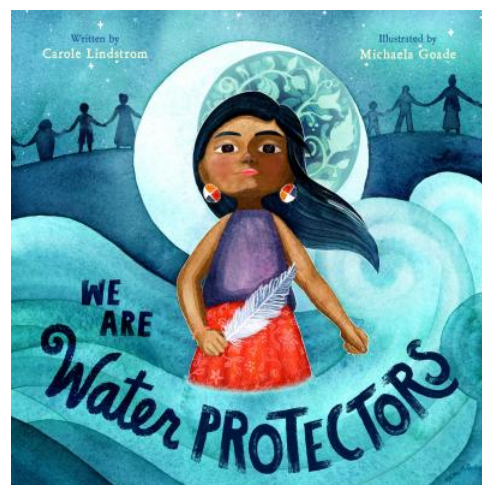
***We Are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom Illustrated by Michaela Goade**

Summary:

A girl's grandmother teaches her about the importance of water for the Earth and to their Native tribe. There is a black snake that wants to destroy the Earth, but from the lessons her grandmother taught her, the little girl knows that she must stand strong with her people.

Discussion Questions:

- What resource is important to the girl in the book? Why?
- What do you use water for? What would happen if our water was polluted?
- When the black snake comes, what does the girl do?
- What does the black snake represent?
- In the book the girl says "We fight for those who cannot fight for themselves." What does this mean?
- The book says that "We are all related." How is everything on Earth related to each other?
- Why is it important to protect the Earth?



Activities:

- Look at the glossary in the back of the book and review it with your students. Explain the author's backstory as part of the Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe and what these words mean to her.
- On the final page of the book there is an Earth Steward and Water Protector Pledge. Make copies of the pledge for each student to sign and date to help them understand the importance of caring for the Earth.
- Point out the illustration style of the book. Have each student make a watercolor poster of a part of the Earth that they are passionate about and have them present their posters.

More Books Like This:

We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga by Traci Sorell

The Undeclared by Kwame Alexander

Resources:

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/read-across-america/find-your-book/we-are-water>

<https://www.learningtogive.org/resources/we-are-water-protectors-literature-guide>

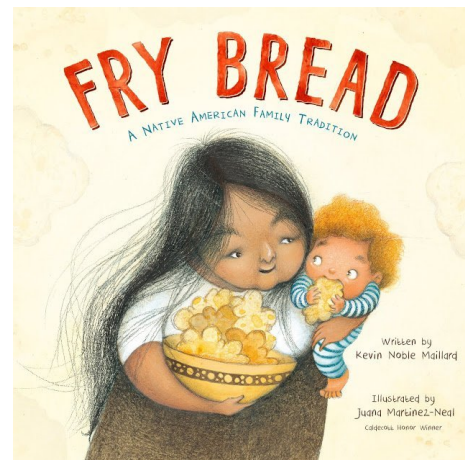
***Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story* by Kevin Noble Maillard Illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal**

Summary:

This book describes what the food fry bread means to Native culture and thoroughly explains the significance and tradition of this food, from sound and color to place and nation.

Discussion Questions:

- What is fry bread?
- What are the origins of fry bread?
- How is fry bread part of everyday life and special occasions in the book?
- Do you have a favorite food that is like fry bread? What/who makes this food special?
- Not everyone in the book looks the same. Why is this important to note?
- What are the words on the endpapers of the book? What do they mean?



Activities:

- Using the recipe in the book, make fry bread for the students. Have them record their observations.
- Ask the students to interview family members and find a food that is important to their family. Have them record how the foods became important to their family or community, and who is their “fry bread lady.”
- As students learn about Native American history, have them write down questions they have or things they never knew that they want to share with the class. Have a class discussion over these topics.

More Books Like This:

Thank You, Omu! by Oge Mora

At the Mountain's Base by Traci Sorell

Resources:

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/read-across-america/find-your-book/fry-bread-native>

<https://theclassroombookshelf.com/2020/02/03/fry-bread-a-native-american-family-story-a-love-letter-to-indigenous-nations-and-communities/>

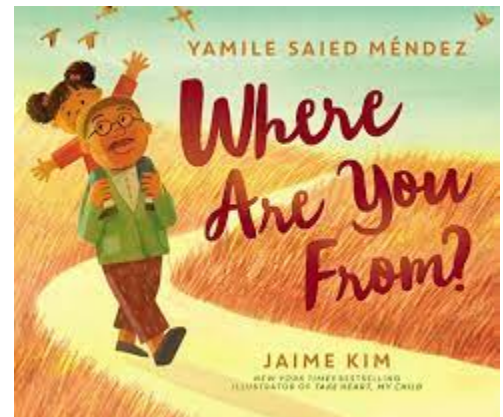
***Where Are You From* by Yamile Saied Méndez** **Illustrated by Jaime Kim**

Summary:

A girl is asked multiple times where she is from, but she doesn't know the answer. She asks her grandfather, who teaches her about her background.

Discussion Questions:

- How do you think the girl felt when people asked her where her family is from? Why do you think that might be hurtful?
- What do you know about where your family is from?
- Who does the girl turn to when she doesn't know how to answer the questions about where she is from? Why does she turn to her grandfather? Who would you turn to?
- How can you get to know someone without making them uncomfortable?
- Where are some of the places the girl's grandfather says she is from?
- What is your favorite part or illustration in the book?



Activities:

- Have the students write down five questions each to ask their family members about where they are from. Discuss what they discovered the next day.
- Print out a map and have each student color in the region their family is from.
- Pick a country from each continent to research and discuss with your students. Afterward, discuss which country they would like to travel to in the future.

More Books Like This:

Islandborn by Junot Díaz

All Are Welcome by Alexandra Penfold

Resources:

<https://www.richlandlibrary.com/blog/2021-09-04/dinner-table-talks-where-are-you>

<https://www.twolittlebirdsteaching.com/where-are-you-from-activities/>

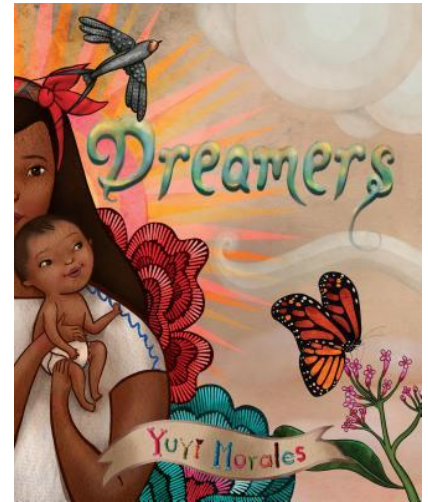
***Dreamers* by Yuyi Morales**

Summary:

A mother and her son immigrate to the United States and are unable to go back to their home country. They can't speak English. One day, they discover the library and it transforms them. They are dreamers.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think the woman and child left their home country?
- What problems did the woman and her child face in the new country?
- Why do you think the author included Spanish words in the book? How do you think it feels to speak a language that is different from everyone around you?
- Why was the library so important to the mother and her son? What do we learn from books? How have books helped you?
- The mother and son are dreamers. What does that mean?
- Where do you see examples of the woman's strength in the book? How would you describe the woman?
- What do you dream about or dream of doing in the future?



Activities:

- Go around in a circle and have each student say one thing they dream about. As you go, each person has to recite the dreams of the people that come before them to show the importance of being attentive to others' dreams. At the end, whoever went first has to recite all of the dreams. If there is a smaller group of kids, do multiple rounds.
- Have the students write down five things they would bring with them if they had to leave their home.
- Watch Yuyi Morales's explanation of her book and explain the immigrant experience to your students:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAiTFJaNiD8&t=33s>

More Books Like This:

Drum Dream Girl: How One Girl's Courage Changed Music by Margarita Engle
My Papi Has a Motorcycle by Isabel Quintero

Resources:

<https://childrenslibrarylady.com/dreamers-by-yuyi-morales/>
<https://inspiremeasap.com/2021/07/dreamers-by-yuyi-morales-activities.html>

***Heather Has Two Mommies* by Lesléa Newman Illustrated by Laura Cornell**

Summary:

Heather doesn't have a traditional family, instead she has two mommies. When Heather goes to school for the first time, she sees that everyone's family is different and that "the most important thing about a family is that all the people in it love each other."

Discussion Questions:

- What is Heather's favorite number? Why? What's your favorite number?
- Do all families look the same? What does your family look like? Is it different from Heather's family?
- What is your favorite thing to do with your family?
- What are your two favorite things you would bring with you anywhere?
- What is the most important thing about a family?

Activities:

- Have your students draw their families like Heather's class does and show each other the pictures. Does everyone's family look the same?
- Pair up students and have them discuss what makes them different from each other. How are they similar? What are the advantages of having differences?
- Print out a family tree template from the link below and have each student fill one out with the help of their family members.
 - <https://freefamilytreetemplates.com/>



More Books Like This:

This Day in June by Gayle E. Pitman

In Our Mothers' House by Patricia Polacco

Resources:

<https://www.glsen.org/activity/heather-has-two-mommies-turns-25>

<https://www.thesocialcreatures.org/thecreaturetimes/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-lgbtq-pride>

***Sulwe* by Lupita Nyong'o**

Illustrated by Vashti Harrison

Summary:

Sulwe is a little girl with dark, beautiful skin, yet she doesn't feel beautiful because she looks different from everyone around her. They all have lighter skin than her, so Sulwe tries to change herself to be seen as more beautiful. Sulwe goes on a journey to learn to love her skin.

Discussion Questions:

- How does Sulwe feel about her skin color? Why does she feel this way?
- What does Sulwe do about it?
- Have you ever felt like Sulwe did about your appearance?
- Sulwe's mother tells her that beauty comes from the mind and heart. What does having beauty on the inside mean?
- What does Sulwe dream about? What does the dream teach her?
- How are Night and Day different? Do they help each other?
- How does Sulwe feel about herself at the end of the book?

Activities:

- Using aluminum foil, black paper, glue and white colored pencils, have students make self affirmation mirrors. They should glue a piece of aluminum foil to the center of the black paper, and write positive words around the border of the mirror. When they look in the mirrors, they should remind themselves of everything that makes them beautiful and why they are enough.
- Sulwe's name means star. Have students say what their name means, or have them come up with a word that represents them and their name.
- Have each student draw a classmate's name from a jar and say at least one thing that makes that classmate special.



More Books Like This:

We're Different, We're The Same by Bobbi Jane Kates

I Love My Hair by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley

Resources:

https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/book-of-the-month-sulwe-parent-guide_0.pdf

<https://seldallas.org/unit-9-skills-building-sulwe/>

***I Am Whole* by Shola Oz** **Illustrated by Shifa Annisa**

Summary:

I Am Whole describes a little girl who is multiracial. She comes from many different cultures and is made whole because of it.

Discussion Questions:

- What makes you whole?
- Where is your family from?
- Do you have any cultural traditions that your family does?
- Does your family eat foods from their culture?
- What languages does the girl know? Do you know any other languages?
- The girl says she can dress up to celebrate special days. Does your culture have special clothing? Why is this clothing important?



Activity:

- Have the kids draw a picture of themselves and their parents and describe what traits, physical or personality wise, come from each parent and how these traits blend to make them.
- Show the students pictures of people from different cultures and ethnicities. Using M&Ms, point out that each M&M is a different color. Ask the students if they think they will be the same or different on the inside. Cut one in half and discuss with your students how even though people may look different, they are all beautiful on the inside.
- Ask parents to write down three things that make their child special and have them send those into the class to be read out loud.

More Books Like This:

Same, Same But Different by Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw

The Day You Begin by Jacqueline Woodson

Resources:

<https://www.teachingexpertise.com/classroom-ideas/picture-books-celebrating-individuality/>

<https://mijabooks.com/i-am-whole-book-review/>

***Last Stop On Market Street* by Matt de la Peña Illustrated by Christian Robinson**

Summary:

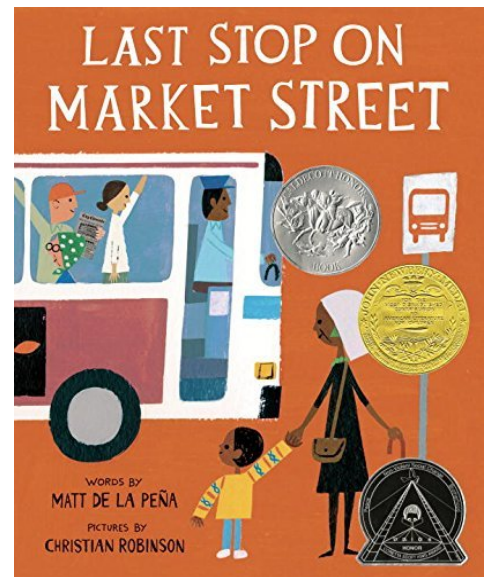
CJ and his grandmother ride the bus after church every Sunday to the soup kitchen where they volunteer. One day, CJ is not in a good mood and asks his grandmother why they don't have the nice things other people do. His grandmother replies positively and tells him to find the beauty in the things they have.

Discussion Questions:

- How does CJ's mood change throughout the book?
- What are some of the things CJ *wants*? How is that different from what the people at the soup kitchen *need*?
- What did CJ learn from his nana?
- Nana shows CJ the beauty in his surroundings. What beauty do you see around you?
- Why does Nana volunteer at the soup kitchen?
- When was the last time you helped someone in need?

Activities:

- Have students write about or discuss an adult who is meaningful to them. Ask them to describe lessons this adult has taught them.
- Mimicking the illustration style, have students create a scene in their community that represents the beauty CJ's nana teaches him to see. Have them draw and cut out objects, then glue everything together to create the finished scene.
- Have the class brainstorm things they can do to help their community. Pick one for the class to do.



More Books Like This:

Those Shoes by Maribeth Boelts

Our Class is a Family by Shannon Olsen

Resources:

<https://childrenslibrarylady.com/last-stop-market-street/>

<https://www.fgcu.edu/cas/centers/rockcenter/files/sample-lesson-plans-pic-bks-persp-tkng-last-stop-market-st.pdf>

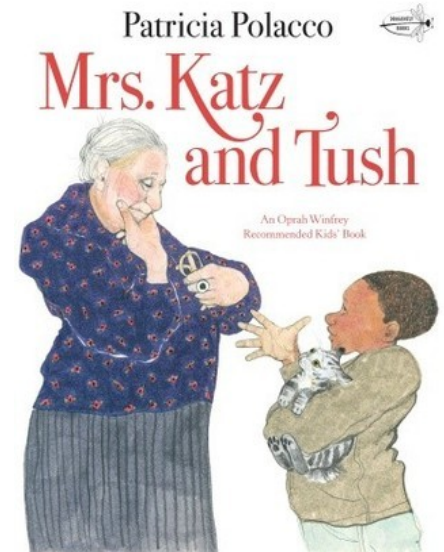
***Mrs. Katz and Tush* by Patricia Polacco**

Summary:

Larnel's mother introduces him to Mrs. Katz, their Jewish neighbor who is lonely because her husband died. Larnel and Mrs. Katz become good friends after Larnel brings her a pet cat. Slowly, as he starts spending more time with Mrs. Katz, he learns about Jewish heritage.

Discussion Questions:

- How are Mrs. Katz and Larnel similar? How are they different?
- How do Mrs. Katz and Larnel become friends?
- What do Mrs. Katz and Larnel learn from their friendship with one another? What does Mrs. Katz teach Larnel about Jewish culture?
- How is Larnel's family history similar to Mrs. Katz's family history? What is the connection between Jewish history and Black history?
- Do you have friendships with people from different backgrounds and cultures than you? Do you have friends that are different ages than you? Why is it important to form friendships with people different from ourselves?



Activities:

- Ask your students to talk to a family member or neighbor who is older than they are. What was life like when that person was growing up? How has the world changed since then?
- Research Hanukkah and Passover with your students. What do the holidays signify? What foods are important to the holidays?
- Have the students find the Yiddish words in the book. Ask them to infer what each word means before telling them the meaning.

More Books Like This:

Milo Imagines the World by Matt de la Peña

Big Dreams, Small Fish by Paula Cohen

Resources:

<https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Judaism/353327#:~:text=Like%20Christianity%20and%20Islam%2C%20Judaism.a%20special%20relationship%20with%20him.>

<https://www.chroniclesofmomia.com/mrs-katz-and-tush/>

***When Charley Met Emma* by Amy Webb** **Illustrated by Merrilee Liddiard**

Summary:

Charley is told by his mother that being different isn't a bad thing, but when he sees Emma, a little girl with limb differences, on the playground one day, he asks why she looks weird. Emma is upset, but slowly Charley learns more about her and they become friends, making Charley realize that everyone is different, but being different is okay.

Discussion Questions:

- What did Charley's mother teach Charley about being different?
- How does Charley react when he first sees Emma? Why does he react this way?
- What does Charley learn after talking to Emma?
- How are Charley and Emma different? How are they similar?
- What does Charley learn by the end of the book?

Activities:

- Explain different disabilities that people can have, such as deafness, limb differences, vision impairments, learning disabilities, and more. Learn some words in sign language.
- Hide an object and ask a student to find the object. Then blindfold the student and have them find a different object. Allow the other students to give directions. Discuss the differences between the first and second round.
- Give each student playdough or clay. Have them sculpt something, like a person or a dog. Once they have sculpted for a few minutes, ask them to only use one hand to sculpt. Discuss the challenges of only using one hand and explain that some people, like in the book, have limb differences that make their experiences different.

More Books Like This:

We're All Wonders by R.J. Palacio

Just Ask!: Be Different, Be Brave, Be You by Sonia Sotomayor

Resources:

<https://adayinourshoes.com/resources-to-teach-kids-about-disabilities-awareness-and-inclusion/>
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1022&context=diversefamilies-project>

