

Be the Change: Inspiring Empathy in our Learners

One Book at a Time

Illinois Reading Conference



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Engaging Learners with Diverse Literature:

Woodson, J. (2018). *The day you begin*. (R. Lopez, Illus.). New York, NY: Nancy Paulsen Books.

When you walk into a room, you are different. There isn't anyone else like you. Sometimes that makes you feel special and sometimes that makes you feel uncomfortable. Everyone has felt both of those ways at one time or another. This book celebrates the day that you begin something and for those people who are different. It celebrates our differences and reminds us to accept each other for who we are, not matter what.

Herrera, J. (2018). *Imagine*. (L. Castillo, Illus.). Sommerville, MA: Candlewick Press.

A poem tells the story of Juan Herrera's journey from child to poet laureate. It celebrates the hopes and dreams of immigrants who find themselves in the books they read and the words that they write; in doing so, they find a way to make their dreams come true.

Britt, P. (2017). *Why am I me?* (S. Alko & S. Quall, Illus.). New York, NY: Scholastic.

A celebration of the diversity of humanity and the uniqueness of each of us by understanding that there is no "me," but a world where there is only a "we."

Getting to Know You, Me, and Every One:

Martinez-Neal, J. (2018). *Alma and how she got her name*. Sommerville, MA: Candlewick Press.

Alma Sofia Esperanza José Pura Candela thinks that she has way too many names: six! Alma asks her father where all of her names came from. As she hears the story of her name, Alma starts to think that her name might be right for her after all and realizes that she has a story to tell about how she got her name and it is a special one...just like her!

Choi, J. (2003). *The name jar*. New York, NY: Dragonfly Books.

Unhei is the new kid at school and she is worried that no one in her class will be able to pronounce her name, so she decides that she will let her classmates choose a new name for her. As she is thinking about what it will feel like to have a new name. One of her classmates learns her name at its meaning. On the day of her "name choosing," all are surprised at what Unhei learns about who she is and what her classmates think about her name!

Alexie, S. (2016). *Thunder Boy Jr.* (Y. Morales, Illus.). New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company Books for Young Readers.

Thunder Boy Jr. is named after his dad and although he loves his dad very much; he wishes he had a name that was all his own. He wants a name that "fits" him and celebrate what makes him unique. He has lots of great ideas too; if somebody will just listen...

Creating Communities Where All Are Celebrated and Included:

Bates, A. (2018). *The big umbrella*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

An umbrella waits by the front door until it begins to rain. Will it have room for everyone underneath it? The answer may surprise you as the reader sees more and more people gather underneath it. People of all shapes, sizes, and colors find shelter under the big umbrella; reminding us that there is always room for one more.

Newman, L. (2017). *Sparkle boy*. (M. Mola, Illus.). New York, NY: Lee and Low.

Casey loves to play with blocks, puzzles, and dump trucks, but he also loves to play with things that sparkle. His mother, father, and even grandmother think that is okay, but his sister Jessie isn't so sure. She is worried that his friends and other people will laugh at him. But when they find themselves at the library and some older boys decide to make fun of Casey because of his sparkle, what will Jessie do? Will she stand up for her brother and his unconventional choices or be ashamed of who he is?

Gino, A. (2018). *You don't know everything Jilly P!* New York, NY: Scholastic Press.

Jilly thinks that she understands everything about how life works, but then her little sister is born deaf and she realizes that things are going to change. She begins to think about how the world will treat her differently because Ella has is hearing impaired and she also knows that they are different than their African American cousins. Then she begins communicating with Derek online who she learns is African American and deaf. She hopes that he can help her, but as her relationship with him grows, she learns that the best way to learn about differences is to realizes that you don't know everything.

Arnold, E. (2018). *Bat and the waiting game*. (C. Santoso, Illus.). New York, NY: Walden Pond Press.

Bat's story continues, but one thing stays the same: change is difficult for him. Life has been good for him as he enjoys taking care of his new pet skunk, Thor. But, then life begins to change when his sister begins to spend more time with her friends and gets a part in her school play. When this happens, she can't take care of Bat after school and that means a big change for him. That change makes him very uncomfortable and he just wishes that life at home would go back to the way that it was before.

Arnold, E. (2017). *A boy called Bat*. (C. Santoso, Illus.). New York, NY: Walden Pond Press.

Bixby Alexander Tam (whose nickname is Bat) has many surprises and unknowns in his life. Some of them he likes and some he doesn't. He lives with his mom and visits his dad. He has a difficult time making friends, but he loves animals. One day, his mother brings home a baby skunk and he decides that that is one surprise that he wants to keep, but it is going to take some convincing and work if he wants to make that happen.

Sharing Stories That Help Create Windows, Mirrors, and Sliding Glass Doors:

McGhee, H. (2017). *Come with me*. (P. Lemaitre, Illus.). New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons' Books for Young Readers.

The story of a young girl who is overcome with the fear in the world who goes to her father and asks what she can do. He takes her hand and takes her to do an act of kindness. The next day, her mother does the same thing. With each adult who says, "Come with me" - she is filled with hope for a better tomorrow.

Woodson, J. (2018). *Harbor me*. New York, NY: Nancy Paulsen Books. (release date August 28)

Our stories help to define us and they help to bring us together. It all starts when six kids have to meet for a weekly chat--by themselves, with no adults to listen in. There, in the room they soon dub the ARTT Room (short for "A Room to Talk"), they discover it's safe to talk about what's bothering them--everything from Esteban's father's deportation and Haley's father's incarceration to Amari's fears of racial profiling and Ashton's adjustment to his changing family fortunes.

Tonatiuh, D. (2018). *Undocumented: A worker's fight*. New York, NY: Abrams.

The story of Juan who is an undocumented worker who comes to America from Mexico to support his family. He works hard every day to make money to support them. He makes half of what his co-workers make because he doesn't have his papers. He lives in fear of his boss reporting him and getting arrested. As he deals with the frustration of being treated unfairly, he decides to stand up for his rights and join other workers to protest for equal pay.

Morales, Y. (2018). *Dreamers*. New York, NY: Neal Porter Books.

Dreamers is a celebration of what migrants bring with them when they leave their homes. It's a story about family and it's a story to remind us that we are all dreamers, bringing our own gifts from wherever we come from and wherever we go.

Yang, K. (2018). *Front desk*. New York, NY: Arthur Levine Books.

Mia's family lives in a motel. They are immigrants, but they have a secret; they hide other immigrants. If Mr. Yao, the hotel owner, finds out, they will be in serious trouble. Mia manages the front desk of the hotel and helps to take care of the guests. She also wants to be a writer, even though her mother wants her to concentrate on math because she doesn't know English very well. How will Mia's year end up? It will take all of her strength, confidence, and kindness to make her dreams and the dreams of those around her come true!

Rhodes, J. P. (2018). *Ghost Boys*. New York, NY: Little Brown Books for Young Readers.

Jerome is shot and killed by a white police officer. He then sees the devastation that rips apart the community on both sides of the issue. When he meets another victim of racial violence, he understands his place in history and realizes that he wants to try to begin the healing process within the world that he lived in.

Cellano, M. (2018). *Something happened in our town: A child's story about racial injustice*. (J. Ziofion, Illus.). New York, NY: Magination Press.

Two children - one white and one black - deal with the shooting of an African American teenager by a white police officer in their community. As they discuss the issue with their families, they try to understand the complicated issues behind race relations and the injustice that is related to it. After the conversations, they try to understand what they can do in response to it in their daily lives at school with their classmates.

Gratz, A. (2017). *Refugee*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

The stories of three young people from three different times and places who are all trying to overcome obstacles to find safety as refugees. From the terrors of Nazi Germany to war-torn Syria, we better understand what motivates those who flee their homes to come to countries in the hopes of finding new homes where they can find freedom.

Hiranandani, V. (2018). *The night diary*. New York, NY: Dial Books.

In 1947 India has been separated into two very separate nations - Pakistan and India. The divide has caused great dissension between the Hindus and the Muslims. Nisha and her family are refugees fleeing Pakistan because they are half-Hindu and half-Muslim. As they travel a long and difficult journey, she learns about family, country, but most of all herself.

Saeed, A. (2018). *Amal unbound*. New York, NY: Nancy Paulsen Books.

Amal lives a quiet life in her Pakistani village caring for her siblings and going to school until one day she disrespects the son of the village's landlord. As a consequence, for her actions, she is sent to live with his family to pay off her family's debt. As she works as a servant at the Khan

estate, she struggles to maintain her hope of ever getting her freedom. When she realizes that if she works with those around her that she may be able to not only regain her freedom, but also reveal secrets that have been hidden at the estate for many years.

Senzai, N.H. (2018). *Escape from Aleppo*. New York, NY: Paula Wiseman Books.

Nadia celebrates her twelfth birthday in her home in Aleppo, but life is changing in ways that are alarming her family. Civil war has begun in Syria and now one is safe anymore. Her family decides to flee to safety. This is a dangerous decision to make, but Nadia's parents feel that they have no choice. They gather a few belongings, leave the only home that they have known, and then hope that they can find a way to get to a safer place to live a life where they can be free.

Boelt, N. (2009). *Those shoes*. (N. Jones, Illus.). Sommerville, MA: Candlewick.

Jeremy wants a pair of shoes like everyone else has, but his grandma can't afford them. She says that he needs winter boots instead because they are more practical for the money. When they find the shoes that he wants at a thrift store, Jeremy thinks that his problem is solved, but the shoes are too small. Will he wear them and be miserable or is there someone who needs "those shoes" more than he does?

Brandt, L. (2014). *Maddi's fridge*. (V. Vogel, Illus.). New York, NY: Flashlight Press.

Sofia and Maddi are best friends who share everything. One day Sofia discovers that Maddi's family doesn't have anything in her fridge and Maddi shares with her that it is because they don't have the money to buy food, but makes Sophia promise not to tell anyone. Sophia is torn because she feels like it is a secret that she shouldn't keep, but what shouldn't do.

Braden, A. (2018). *The benefits of being an octopus*. New York, NY: Sky Pony Express.

Zoey has lots of responsibility for a seventh grader. She goes to school, but she also takes care of her younger siblings after school so that her mother can work at the local pizza parlor. Her teacher encourages her to join the debate club where she hopes that Zoey will find her voice and the confidence that she needs to help her family find its way out of a challenging situation. Life is hard for Zoey at home and at school, so she manages the stresses of her day to day life through the things that she has learned about the octopus.

Halligen, K. (2018). *Her Story*. (K. Walsh, Illus.). New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

The stories of 50 women who changed the world and a celebration of the things that girls have yet to do through the inspiration that is provided to them through these stories.

Farqui, S. (2018). *Meet Yasmin*. (H. Aly, Illus.). New York, NY: Picture Window Books.

Yasmin is a second grader who loves to solve problems in creative ways. Whenever she sees something that others see a challenge, she sees an adventure. Living in a big city provides many opportunities for her to practice all the skills that she has learned throughout her young life.

Kulpers, A. (2018). *Polly Diamond and the magic book*. (D. Toledano, Illus.). San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books.

Polly loves to write and she loves to look at the words that she has written. One day she discovers a book that will make that she writes in it come true! She is so excited that this will make all of her dreams come true, but she quickly learns that she creates may not be what she expected at all!

Beaty, A. (2016). *Ada Twist, scientist*. (D. Roberts, Illus.). New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams.

Much like other scientists who have come before her, Ada uses both her curiosity and questions to help her formulate experiments that lead her to scientific discovery. Unfortunately for Ada, her experiments have caused quite a stink ...literally. Now she must use perseverance to not give up until she finds the causes and maybe even the answers to the questions that she began her experiment exploring.

Derting, K. & Johannah, S. (2018). *Cece loves science*. (V. Harrison, Illus.). New York, NY: Greenwillow.

Cece loves science and she is always looking for an opportunity to take what her teacher is teaching her about the scientific method and apply in her daily life at home. Although her family isn't quite sure what to do with her experiments, they are always fascinated and encourage her to continue asking questions and finding answers to her inquiries.

Aronson, B. (2018). *Melia and Jo*. (J. Oxley, Illus.). New York, NY: HMH Books for Young Readers.

Melia is scientific and Jo is creative, but they are best friends who love to make things. When they put their minds together to make something, amazing things happen!

Professional Resources:

Ahmed, S. (2018). *Being the change: Lessons and strategies to teach social comprehension*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Biggs-Tucker, K., & Tucker, B. (2015). *Transforming Literacy Teaching in the Era of Higher Standards, 3-5*. Scholastic.

Walther, M. (In Press). *The Revved-Up Read Aloud: What to Say as You Turn the Page*. Corwin.

Walther, M. & Biggs-Tucker, K. (In Press). *Blurring the Lines: An Integrated Reading and Writing Workshop*. Stenhouse.

