

Educator's Booklist



Books for teaching themes
related to homelessness,
poverty, empathy, caring,
and curiosity

A note about this resource

This book list includes books we have used in our SEEDschool classroom, books that have been recommended to us by other educators, and books we have found as we have searched for books related to homelessness, poverty, empathy, caring and other social issues.

Many of the books were reviewed and graded by Alberta Education K–12 teachers that graciously volunteered their time to The Mustard Seed.

This is an evolving resource. Do you have additional comments, classroom links, or books we should include on this? Send us a note at Engage@theseed.ca

Grade Level & Guided Reading Levels

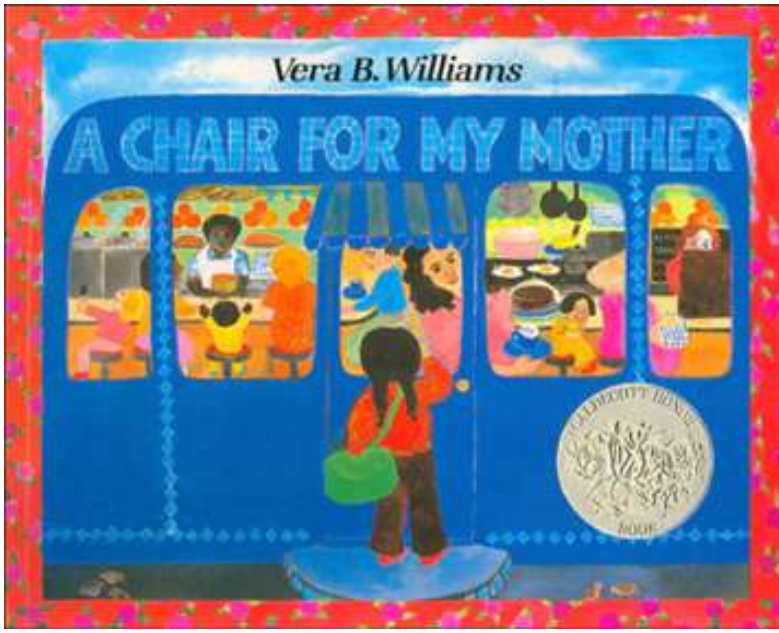
*chart adapted from Scholastic

Grade	Scholastic Guided Reading Level
Kindergarten	A B C D
1	A B C D E F G H I
2	E F G H I J K L M N
3	J K L M N O P Q
4	M N O P Q R S T
5	Q R S T U V W
6	T U V W X Y Z
7-12	N/A

Book Titles

Listed by Alphabet

A Chair for My Mother
A Duet For Home
A Home That Means the World
A Place to Stay: A Shelter Story
A Shelter in Our Car
Adoette
Be Kind
Because Amelia Smiled
Because of Mr. Terupt
Bibi
Chocolate Milk, Por Favor!
Celebrating Diversity with Empathy
Counting on Community
Crenshaw
David Jumps In
Each Kindness
Enemy Pie
Fly Away Home
Have You Filled a Bucket Today?: A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids
Hey, Wall: The Story of Art and Community
Home
Home
Hug Machine
I Am Every Good Thing
I Am Love: A Book of Compassion
I Am Not a Number
I Am One: A Book of Action
I Am We: A Book of Community
I Can Hear the Sun
I Know How to Draw an Owl
I Promise
I'll Walk With You
If You Find a Rock
If: A Mind-Bending New Way of Looking at Big Ideas and Numbers
In My Heart: A Book of Feelings
Kamala and Maya's Big Idea
Kishka for Koppel
Last Stop on Market Street
Let's Make a Change: The United Nations' 17 Goals for a Better World
Lovely
Maddi's Fridge
Malala's Magic Pencil
Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighbourhood
More Than Enough
Most People: (are Good People)
Mwâkwa Talks to the Loon: A Cree Story for Children
My Name is Not Refugee
New Kid
No Fixed Address
Old Blue is My Home
On Our Street: Our First Talk About Poverty
Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed
Our Class is a Family
Pies From Nowhere
Roll With It
Round Trip
Same, Same, but Different
Saturday at the Food Pantry
Say Hello
Say Something
Shelter
Shelter: Homelessness in our Community
Shi-Shi-Etko
Shoebox Sam
Something Beautiful
Stay
Still a Family
Stone Soup
Strictly No Elephants
Thank you, Omu!
Thankful
The Can Man
The Cardboard Shack Beneath the Bridge
The Circles All Around Us
The Gift Inside the Box
The Hundred Dresses
The Invisible Boy
The Lunch Thief: A Story of Hunger, Homelessness and Friendship
The Man with the Violin
The Most Magnificent Thing
The Name Jar
The One Day House
The One with the Scraggly Beard
The Quiltmaker's Gift
The Rabbit Listened
The Right Place
The Table Where Rich People Sit
The Three Questions
Those Shoes
Tight Times
Usha and the Stolen Sun
Visiting Feelings
We Are the Builders!
What Do You Do with a Chance?
What Do You Do with an Idea?
What Do You Do with a Problem?
What's My Superpower?
When We Are Kind
When We Were Alone
When You Find a Hope
Whoever You Are
Windows
Wishtree
Wonder
You Matter
Your Name Is a Song



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
M

A Chair for my Mother

Vera B. Williams

About

After their home is destroyed by a fire, Rosa, her mother and grandmother save their coins to buy a really comfortable chair for all to enjoy.

Themes

Family, Saving & Investment,
Places in the Community

Suggested Activity:

As a class discuss and find ways to give back to the community, like harvesting the garden for a senior's center, collecting donations, baking snacks for our neighbours, etc.



Grade Level
3-7

Guided Reading Level

A Duet for Home

Katrina Yan Glaser

About

A triumphant tale of friendship, healing, and the power of believing in ourselves told from the perspective of biracial sixth-graders June and Tyrell, two children living in a homeless shelter. As their friendship grows over a shared love of classical music, June and Tyrell confront a new housing policy that puts homeless families in danger.

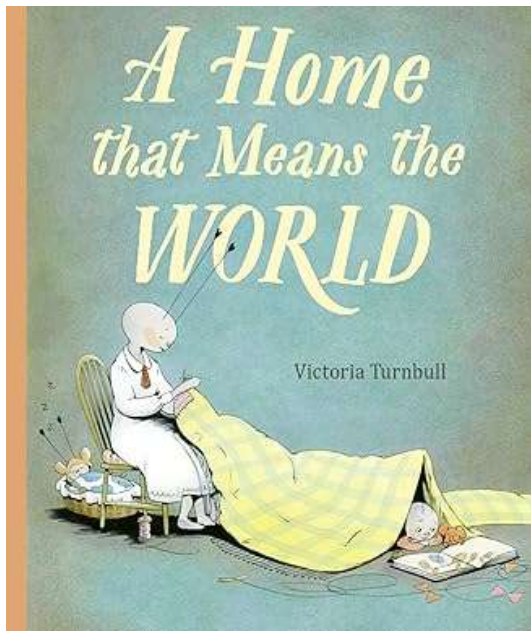
Themes

Homelessness, Friendship,
Activism

Suggested Activity:

Discussion:

- Why do you think the author chose to tell the story through both June's and Tyrell's eyes? How do their feelings about Huey House differ at the start of the book?
- Why is June so fiercely protective of her viola? Beyond just being a musical instrument, what does it represent about her life before the shelter and her connection to her father?
- How does the definition of home change for June from the beginning of the book to the end?
- When a new policy threatens the residents, the children decide to take action. What gives them the courage to speak up to adults in power? Have you ever seen something you felt was unfair and wanted to change?
- June's mother is struggling with deep depression. How does this affect June's responsibilities? How do the other residents and staff (like Ms. G) step in to form a "chosen family"?



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level

A Home That Means the World

Victoria Turnbull

About

Learn the importance of home and welcoming new people into communities with this beautifully illustrated picture book.

This heartwarming read teaches values of inclusivity and community, putting the concepts of displacement and asylum into terms that young children can easily understand. A book that encourages kids to be welcoming and considerate, empowering them to be kind to all.

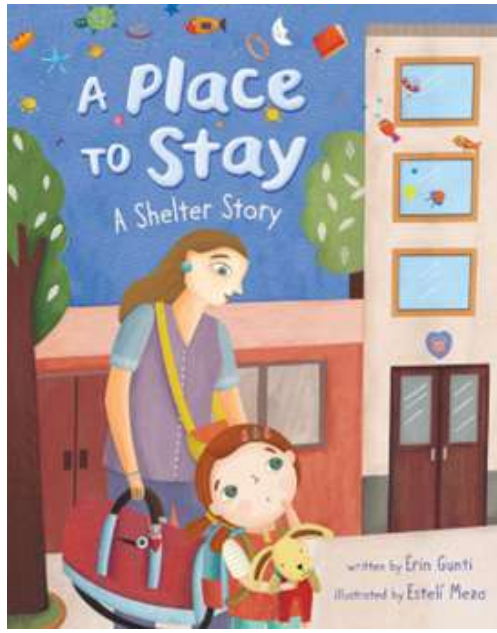
Themes

Acceptance, Inclusivity,
Community

Suggested Activity:

Book a Speaker: The Mustard Seed offers presentations focusing on understanding why homelessness and poverty are challenges in our city today and encouraging students to find ways to engage with their community.

Book a Workshop: The Mustard Seed offers half day workshops at no cost for grades 1-12 that help students identify basic needs and the challenges many people face when trying to meet their basic needs.



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level

A Place to Stay: A Shelter Story

Erin Gunti, Illustrated by Estelí Meza

About

This simple, touching picture book shows readers a women's shelter through the eyes of a young girl, who, with her mother's help, uses her imagination to overcome her anxiety and adjust. Includes factual endnotes detailing various reasons people experience homelessness and the resources available to help.

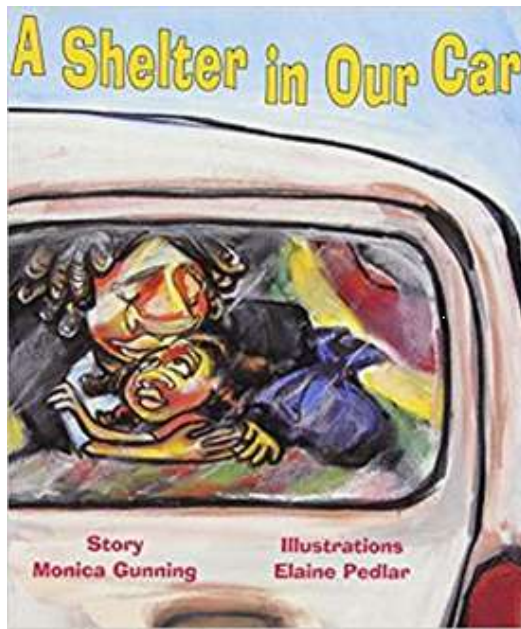
Themes

Homelessness, Imagination

Suggested Activity:

Journal: Imagine your classroom as a different space. Is it a spaceship? A banquet hall? A castle? A zoo? Write in your journal in strong, descriptive language about what your classroom really looks like in your imagination.

Research: Spend some time learning about family shelters in Canada and compare them to the book



Grade Level
1-3

Guided Reading Level
Q

A Shelter in Our Car

Monica Gunning, Illustrated by Elaine Pedlar

About

Tells the Story of Zettie whose mom has moved to America with her after her dad Dies. Life as an immigrant is difficult and ideas such as loss, identity, community, bullying, and empathy can all be explored as well.

Themes

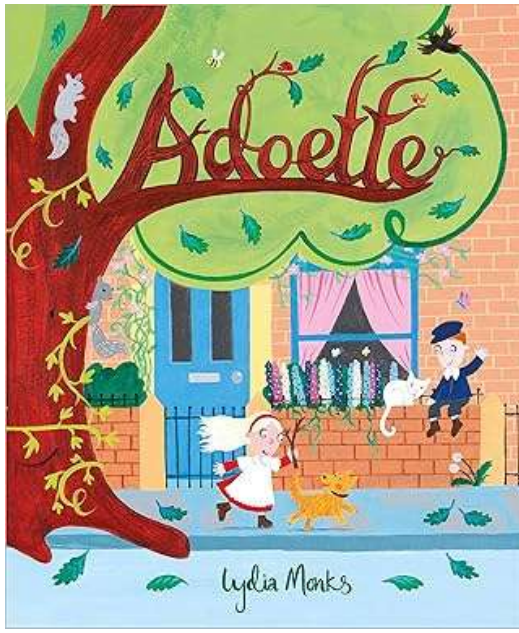
Poverty, Homelessness

Suggested Activity:

Make a Venn Diagram: Contrast and compare as a whole group the differences and similarities between a city in Jamaica and Calgary. Use a template Venn Diagram for students to chart their ideas and those of others during the sharing phase.

Brainstorming Together: How can we as a community make newcomers or immigrants feel welcome?

Expert interview: Book a presentation from an expert at a local organization that helps immigrants (Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, the Centre for Newcomers, etc.) to learn more about resources for new Canadians.



Grade Level
PreS-1

Guided Reading Level

Adoette

Lydia Monks

About

Adoette lived to be 100 years old. Just imagine all the things she saw! She lived on the same street all her life, but one day, people decided it would be best if she would go...

Award-winning author-illustrator Lydia Monks, illustrator of *What the Ladybird Heard*, beautifully tells the tale of the life of one tree, from a young sapling to a mighty oak, becoming the beating heart of the community she lived in, right up until the day they cut her down.

But there's hope, when one little girl takes one of her acorns to plant in the community garden.

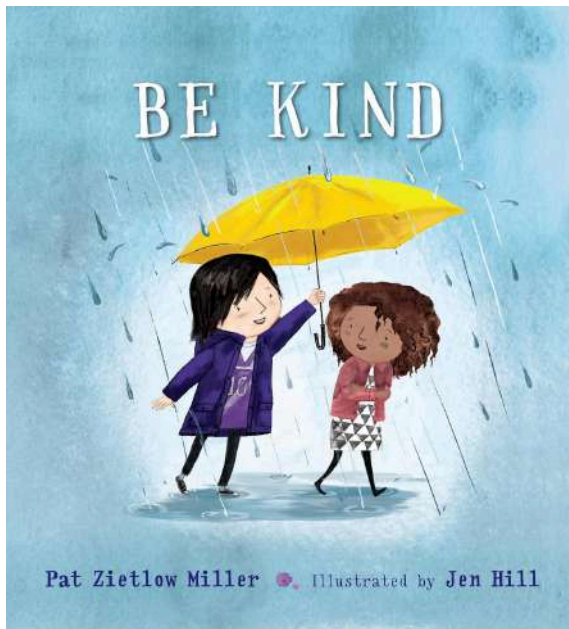
Themes

Community

Suggested Activity:

Discussion:

- Adoette lived for 100 years. What are some things the tree saw at the beginning of the book that we don't see on our streets today? (horses, carts, lack of electricity)
- Some people wanted Adoette gone because they thought she was "in the way" or "messy". Why do you think some people prioritize things like smooth pavements over a living tree?
- The characters in the book held up signs to save Adoette. If you were there, what would your sign say? Why is it important for a community to speak up when they think something is wrong?



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level

Be Kind

Pat Zietlow Miller, Illustrated by Jen Hill

About

What does it mean to be kind? When Tanisha spills grape juice all over her new dress, her classmate contemplates how to make her feel better and what it means to be kind. From asking the new girl to play to standing up for someone being bullied, this moving and thoughtful story explores what a child can do to be kind.

Themes

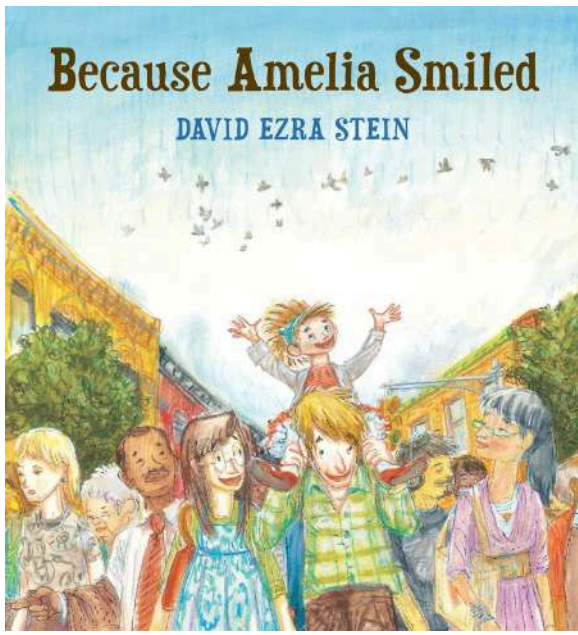
Friendship, Emotions, Kindness

Suggested Activity:

Journal: Create a list of ways you can show kindness to those around you.

Discussion:

- What stands out to you from this story?
- What are some of the ways you have shown kindness?
- What are some ways someone else has shown kindness to you?



Grade Level

1-3

Guided Reading Level

Because Amelia Smiled

David Ezra Stein

About

Because Amelia smiles as she skips down the street, her neighbor Mrs. Higgins smiles too, and decides to send a care package of cookies to her grandson Lionel in Mexico. The cookies give Lionel an idea, and his idea inspires a student, who in turn inspires a ballet troupe in England! And so the good feelings that started with Amelia's smile make their way around the world, from a goodwill recital in Israel, to an impromptu rumba concert in Paris, to a long-awaited marriage proposal in Italy, to a knitted scarf for a beloved niece back in New York.

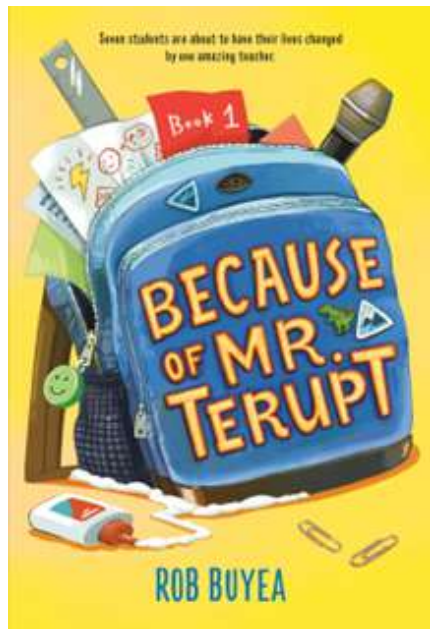
Putting a unique spin on "what goes around comes around," David Ezra Stein's charmingly illustrated story reminds us that adding even a small dose of kindness into the world is sure to spur more and more kindness, which could eventually make its way back to you!

Themes

Friendship, Kindness

Suggested Activity:

Brainstorm together how your class can start a positive ripple effect within your school or community.



Grade Level
4-7

Guided Reading Level
Y

Because of Mr. Terupt

Rob Buyea

About

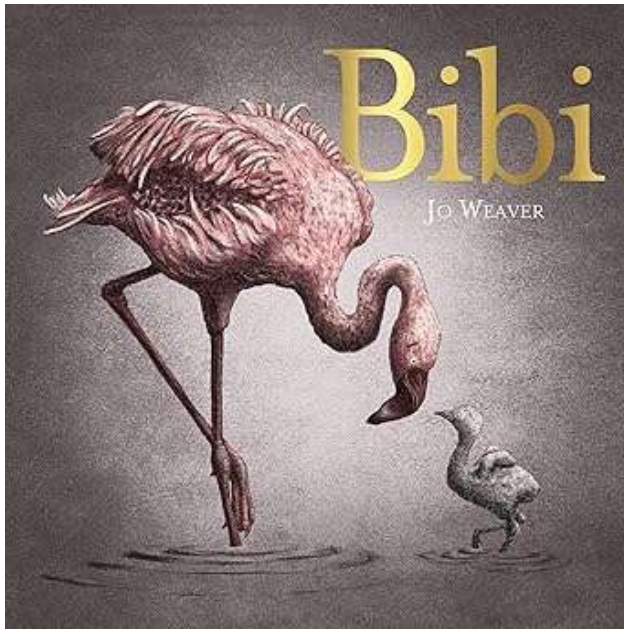
It's the start of fifth grade for seven kids at Snow Hill School. There's Jessica, the new girl, smart and perceptive, who's having a hard time fitting in; Alexia, a bully, your friend one second, your enemy the next; Peter, class prankster and troublemaker; Luke, the brain; Danielle, who never stands up for herself; shy Anna, whose home situation makes her an outcast; and Jeffrey, who hates school. Only Mr. Terupt, their new and energetic teacher, seems to know how to deal with them all. He makes the classroom a fun place, even if he doesn't let them get away with much until the snowy winter day when an accident changes everything-and everyone.

Themes

Kindness, Empathy, Forgiveness,
Hope

Suggested Activity:

A wonderful year-long book study for "Because of Mr. Terupt" has been created by a teacher and can be accessed here: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/8igr1p36064u2yx/Because-of-Mr.-Terupt-Guide-Updated-10.18.pdf?rlkey=97rurdjngzxexmed907t1ziiw&e=1&dl=0>



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level

Bibi

Jo Weaver

About

Bibi the flamingo has been with her flock for longer than anyone can remember. When the lake dries up, the flamingos are forced to leave their babies behind and fly away to find water. Bibi bravely volunteers to guide the baby flamingos on foot across the barren salt flats to reunite them with their parents.

But when one little flamingo starts to fall behind, Bibi teaches everyone a valuable lesson about community and the importance of helping one another in times of need.

Themes

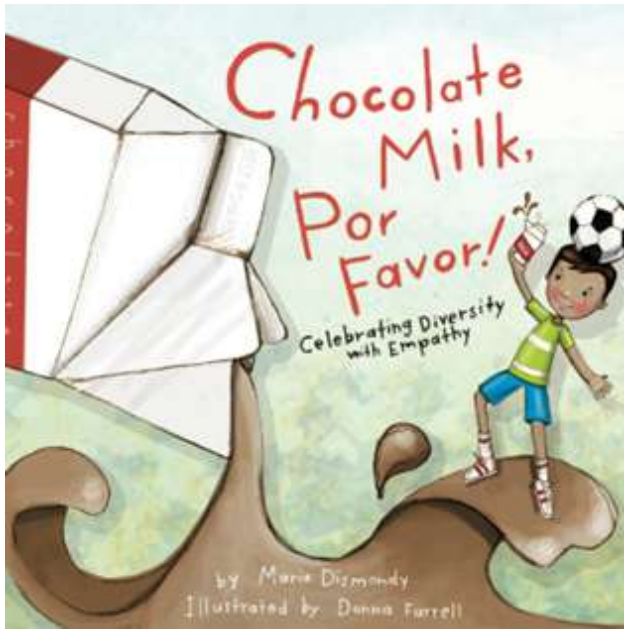
Community, Kindness

Suggested Activity:

Journal: The name *Bibi* is Swahili for “grandmother”. The story focuses on how the young and old care for each other. In your journal, have students draw a picture of an elder in their life (a grandparent, neighbour, mentor, or teacher). Underneath, ask students to finish the following writing prompt: Like Bibi, [Name] taught me how to...

Discussion:

- What makes Bibi a good leader? Is it because she is the strongest, or because she is the wisest?
- When Toto was struggling in the heat, why didn't Bibi just keep going with the others?
- At the end of the book, the flock waits for Bibi when she is tired. Why was it important for them to return the favour?



Grade Level
K-5

Guided Reading Level
K

Chocolate Milk, Por Favor!: Celebrating Diversity with Empathy

Maria Dismondy, Illustrated by Donna Farrell

About

It's Gabe's first day of school in America, and he doesn't speak English. This story shows how a simple act of kindness is worth more than a thousand words.

Kindness really is a universal language.

*Disclaimer: The illustrations imply Gabe is Brazilian while the text has him speaking Spanish instead of Portuguese.

Themes

Diversity, Empathy

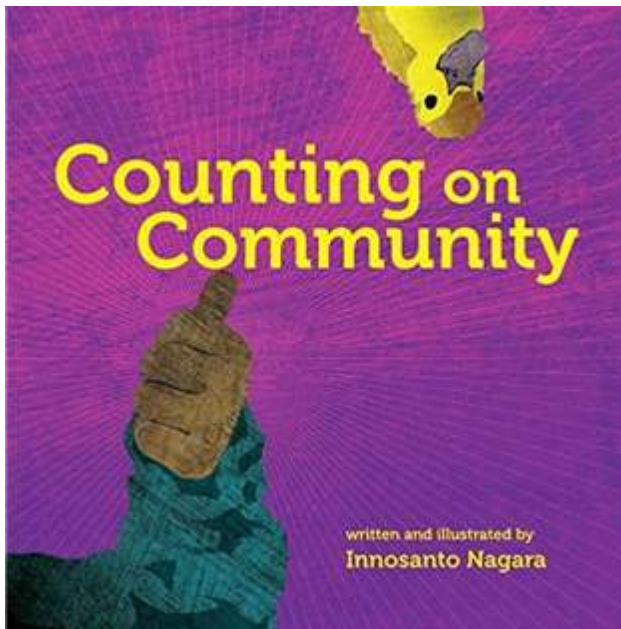
Suggested Activity:

Classroom Discussion: Focus on friendship: How to be a good friend? How would you make Gabe feel welcome if he came to our class? Focus on the beauty of difference: Celebrating you! What makes you different? Share with the class.

Journal or Draw: Take a minute to imagine that you were Gabe and Johnny. How would you feel? Why? Express yourself in your journal either with words or a drawing.

Classroom Welcome Guide: As a class write down some rules/steps that can be done to make new students feel welcomed to your class.

Additional Resources: <https://mariadismody.com/wp-content/uploads/readers-guide-chocolate-milk-small.pdf>



Grade Level
PreS

Guided Reading Level
M

Counting on Community

Innosanto Nagara

About

Counts from 1 – 10 the good things about a community. Children are encouraged to recognize the value of their community, the joys inherent in healthy eco-friendly activities, and the agency they possess to make change.

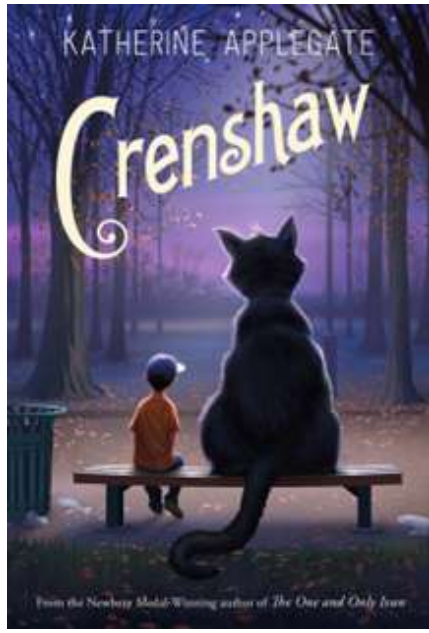
*There is a duck to find on every page!

Themes

Community

Suggested Activity:

Have students create their own list or picture/poster depicting the good things in their own communities (school, church, neighbourhood)



Grade Level
5-7

Guided Reading Level
S

Crenshaw

Katherine Applegate

About

Jackson and his family have fallen on hard times. There's no more money for rent. And not much for food, either. His parents, his little sister, and their dog may have to live in their minivan. Again. Crenshaw is a cat. He's large, he's outspoken, and he's imaginary. He has come back into Jackson's life to help him. But is an imaginary friend enough to save this family from losing everything? Beloved author Katherine Applegate proves in unexpected ways that friends matter, whether real or imaginary.

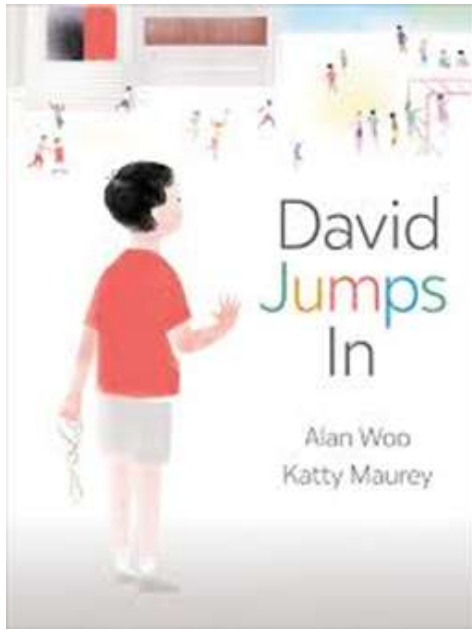
Themes

Homelessness, Poverty,
Friendship, Resilience

Suggested Activity:

Teacher's guide: <https://images.macmillan.com/folio-assets/teachers-guides/9781250043238TG.pdf>

Photo essay project on child/youth hunger:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1D4Ohm4hZZFFXolle57HC5nI9G-N_YpUcY5d9gGsJutU/edit?tab=t.0



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level

David Jumps In

Alan Woo, Illustrated by Katy Maurey

About

This lyrical tale, written in simple free verse, tells how a game with roots in ancient China – called elastic skip in this story – helps a boy find his footing on his first day at a new school. It is David's first day at his brand-new school. He doesn't know anyone. At recess, he stands alone and watches the other children enjoying their activities on the playground, from practicing soccer moves and climbing monkey bars to playing hopscotch and daydreaming in the grass.

Bundled deep inside David's pocket is a string of rubber bands, knotted and ready for a game of elastic skip. But will anyone want to try that game? he wonders. Will anyone want to play with him?

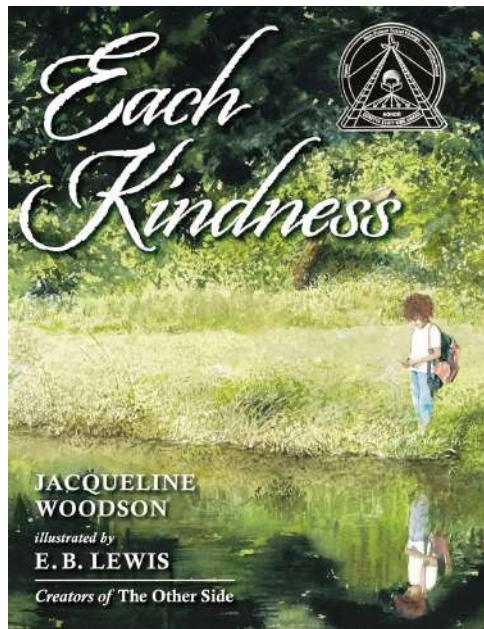
Themes

Friendship

Suggested Activity:

Presentations: Have each student make a presentation about something from their culture or family that they would like to share with the class. It could be a food, a game, a tradition, or something else!

Classroom Discussion: How can learn from one another? How does sharing create friendship?



Grade Level
K-3

Guided Reading Level

Each Kindness

Jacqueline Woodson, Illustrated by E. B. Lewis

About

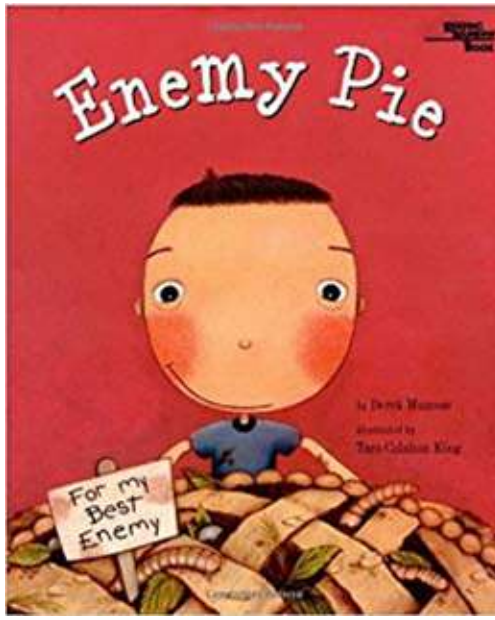
Chloe and her friends won't play with the new girl, Maya. Every time Maya tries to join Chloe and her friends, they reject her. Eventually Maya stops coming to school. When Chloe's teacher gives a lesson about how even small acts of kindness can change the world, Chloe is stung by the lost opportunity for friendship, and thinks about how much better it could have been if she'd shown a little kindness toward Maya.

Themes

Kindness, Friendship, Bullying

Suggested Activity:

Book a Workshop: The Mustard Seed offers half day workshops at no cost that focuses on stereotypes & de-stigmatization for grades 4-12. Students will be introduced to the concept of stigma and stereotypes and how these misconceptions can impact individuals experiencing poverty and homelessness.



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
N

Enemy Pie

Derek Munson, Illustrated by Tara Calahan King

About

Hoping that the enemy pie which his father makes will help him get rid of his enemy, a little boy finds that instead it helps make a new friend.

Themes

Friendship, Judgment, Bullying

Suggested Activity:

Classroom Discussion: How does sharing our food with others creates community and makes others feel loved and welcomed?

Brainstorm: As a class have students brainstorm different deserts they could bake at home (or school) and discuss how and where they could share their treats with somebody in the school or neighbourhood who needs to be shown kindness or appreciation

Acts of Kindness: Bring some of your classroom brainstorm ideas to life, whether that be collecting food do nations for the food bank or making sandwiches as a class to donate to a local homeless shelter.



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
M

Fly Away Home

Eve Bunting, Illustrated by Ronald Himler

About

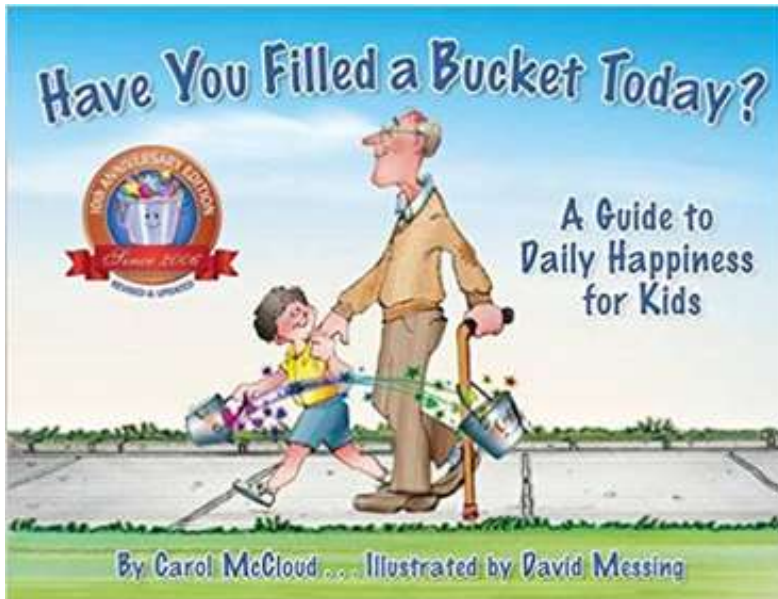
A homeless boy who lives in an airport with his father, moving from terminal to terminal trying not to be noticed, is given hope when a trapped bird finally finds its freedom.

Themes

Homelessness

Suggested Activity:

Symbols: What is a symbol? Learn about symbols of Hope (e.g. the bird) Can you create a symbol of hope, or a symbol to represent something else? What does it mean/represent? What is its purpose? Can this be a symbol for only one community only, or can many people from different backgrounds recognize it? Present as a poster/PowerPoint



Grade Level
K-4

Guided Reading Level
I-P

Have You Filled a Bucket Today?: A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids

Carol McCloud, Illustrated by David Messing

About

This heartwarming book encourages positive behavior by using the concept of an invisible bucket to show children how easy and rewarding it is to express kindness, appreciation and love by "filling buckets."

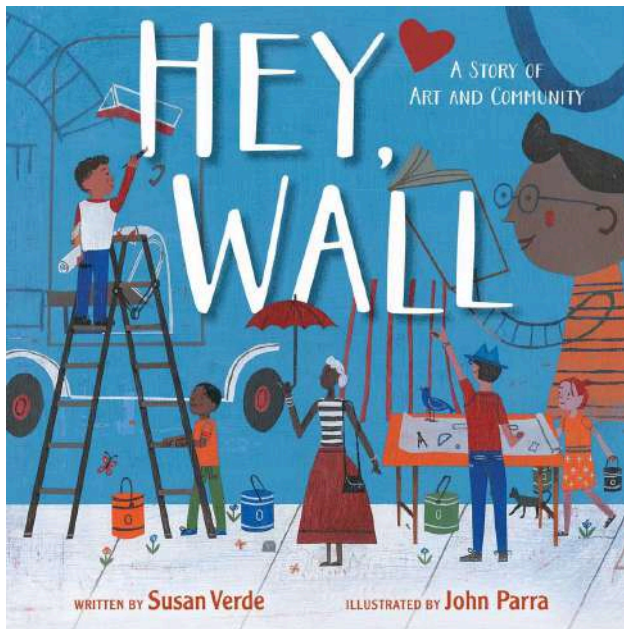
Themes

Kindness, Happiness,
Interpersonal Relations

Suggested Activity:

Reproduce the Great Job sheets (www.bucketfillers101.com/pdfs/GreatJobCards.pdf). Cut the sheets into quarters. Place in a colorful bucket in a central location. Instruct students that each time they act as a bucket filler at school, at home, in their neighborhood, or in the community, they can write about what they did or said on a Great Job slip and place it in their bucket. Periodically gather students and empty their bucket contents in a pile. Read select Great Job slips and celebrate bucket-filling behavior.

Additional Resources: <http://bucketfillers101.com/>



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level

Hey, Wall: The Story of Art and Community

Susan Verde, Illustrated by John Parra

About

There is a wall in Ángel's neighborhood. Around it, the community bustles with life: music, dancing, laughing. Not the wall. It is bleak. One boy decides to change that. But he can't do it alone.

Themes

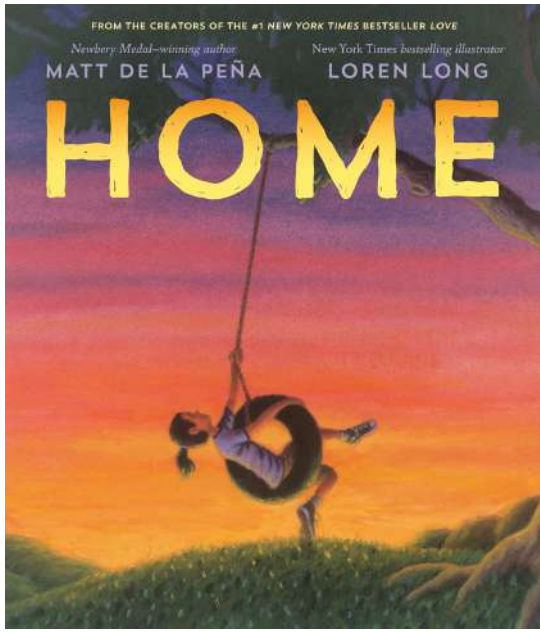
Community

Suggested Activity:

Educator Guide with discussion questions and activities can be found here:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/585a7978be659475691d30d0/t/5bca676ae79c709d36928e17/1539991404748/HEY%2C+WALL+Educator+Guide.pdf>

Art project: Have each student draw a picture that represents their community. Students can design something individually, then all the images can be pieced together to create a collaborative, mosaic art installment.



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level

Home

Matt De La Peña, Illustrated by Loren Long

About

So begins this stirring celebration of home in its many forms. For home is an idea more profound than the walls we build up around ourselves. It's the family that shows its love through small gestures every day. It's the community that sees one another through hard times. And it's the wonder of the natural world, a refuge we share with every living thing on Earth.

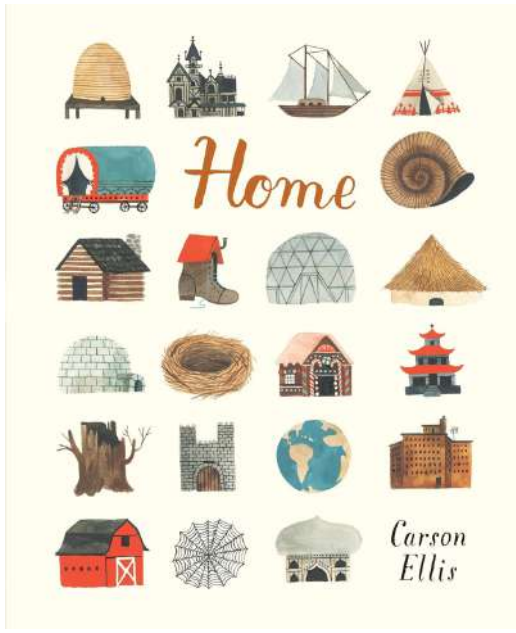
Themes

Home, Community

Suggested Activity:

Create a poem: The book uses sensory language to define home. Have students create their own "sensory poem" using this template:

- Home sounds like...
- Home smells like...
- Home tastes like...
- Home feels like...



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level

Home

Carson Ellis

About

Home might be a house in the country, an apartment in the city, or even a shoe. Home may be on the road or the sea, in the realm of myth, or in the artist's own studio. A meditation on the concept of home and a visual treat that invites many return visits, this loving look at the places where people live marks the picture-book debut of Carson Ellis, acclaimed illustrator of the Wildwood series and artist for the indie band the Decemberists.

Themes

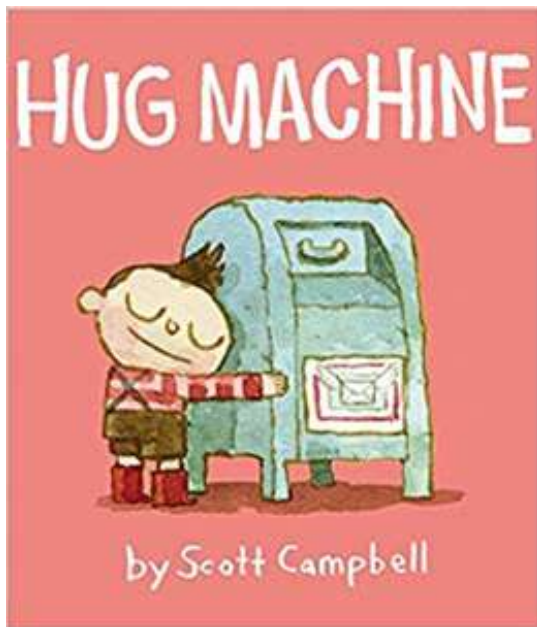
Houses, Cultural Diversity

Suggested Activity:

Journal: Pick one of the mystery homes in the book (like the one on the cliff or the one under the mushroom). Draw a picture of the person or creature you think lives there and list three things they keep inside their house.

Discussion:

- The book starts with physical buildings (country house, city apartment) and moves to wild and imaginary places. Is a home always a building? What makes a place feel like a "home" instead of just a "house"?
- Look at the different homes for people, animals, and mythical beings. What do they all have in common?
- There is a pigeon on almost every page. What do you think the pigeon is looking for? How does the pigeon connect all these different worlds?



Grade Level
PreS

Guided Reading Level
J

Hug Machine

Scott Campbell

About

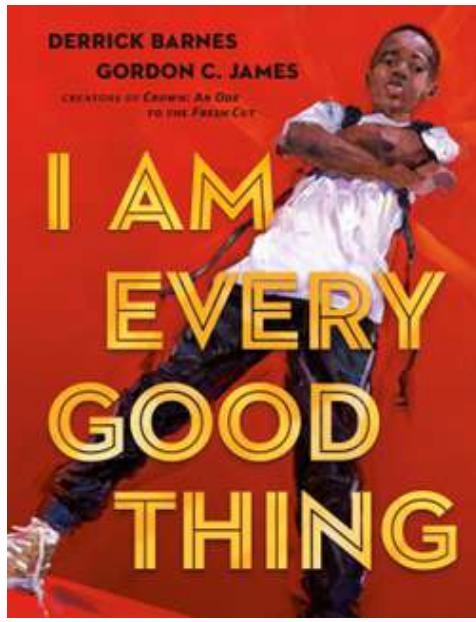
Who have YOU hugged today? Open your arms to this delightfully tender, goofy, and sweet board book from Scott Campbell. Watch out world, here he comes! The Hug Machine! Whether you are big, or small, or square, or long, or spiky, or soft, no one can resist his unbelievable hugs!
HUG ACCOMPLISHED!

Themes

Emotions, Feelings, Social Situations

Suggested Activity:

As a class have students brainstorm different ways they can be a hug machine through different acts of kindness and welcome! Have each student pick from the brainstormed list an act of kindness they wish to perform in the classroom, at home or in the community. Follow up by having students journal about their time as a machine of kindness.



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level

I Am Every Good Thing

Derrick Barnes, Illustrated by Gordon C. James

About

The confident Black narrator of this book is proud of everything that makes him who he is. He's got big plans, and no doubt he'll see them through—as he's creative, adventurous, smart, funny, and a good friend. Sometimes he falls, but he always gets back up. And other times he's afraid, because he's so often misunderstood and called what he is not. So slow down and really look and listen, when somebody tells you—and shows you—who they are. There are superheroes in our midst!

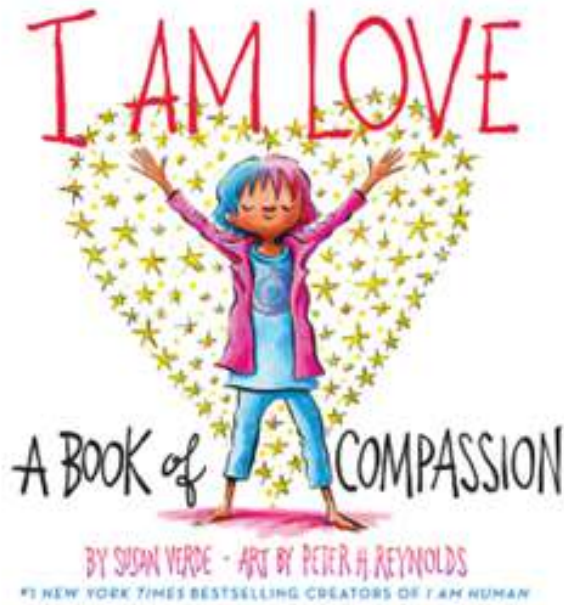
Themes

Self Esteem, BIPOC

Suggested Activity:

Drawing time: Have each student draw a self-portrait in a specific style (including art objectives) and decorate them with words to describe themselves.

Classroom Discussion: How do we know our value? Whose voices matter in our lives? How does confidence empower us to help others? How can we see others as every good thing?



Grade Level

PreS-2

Guided Reading Level

M

I Am Love: A Book of Compassion

Susan Verde, Illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds

About

Celebrate kindness, compassion, self-care, and love in all its forms! Love means showing kindness, living with gratitude, and taking care of our minds and bodies.

Letting our hearts lead the way can help move us closer to a better world.

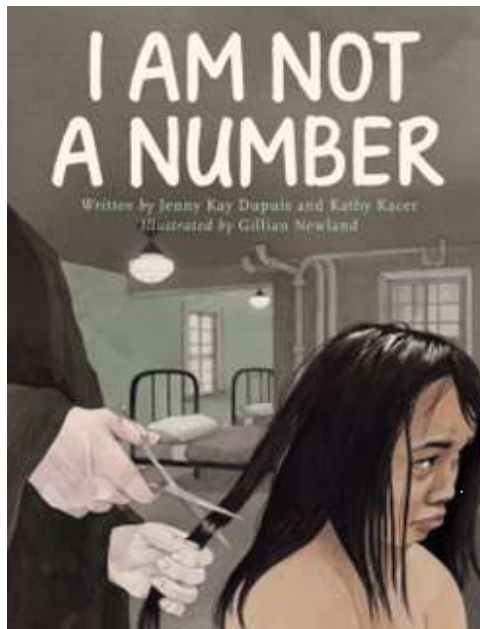
Themes

Love, Conduct of life,
Compassion

Suggested Activity:

Discussion: List good and bad emotions. Which good emotions can help the bad emotions?

Activity: Create a dramatic scene for being a good listener, comforting someone, taking care of me and others, being thankful, being creative, and making mistakes.



Grade Level
2-5

Guided Reading Level
V

I Am Not a Number

Jenny Kay Dupuis & Kathy Kacer, Illustrated by Gillian Newland

About

When eight-year-old Irene is removed from her First Nations family to live in a residential school she is confused, frightened, and terribly homesick. She tries to remember who she is and where she came from, despite the efforts of the nuns who are in charge at the school and who tell her that she is not to use her own name but instead use the number they have assigned to her. When she goes home for summer holidays, Irene's parents decide never to send her and her brothers away again. But where will they hide? And what will happen when her parents disobey the law?

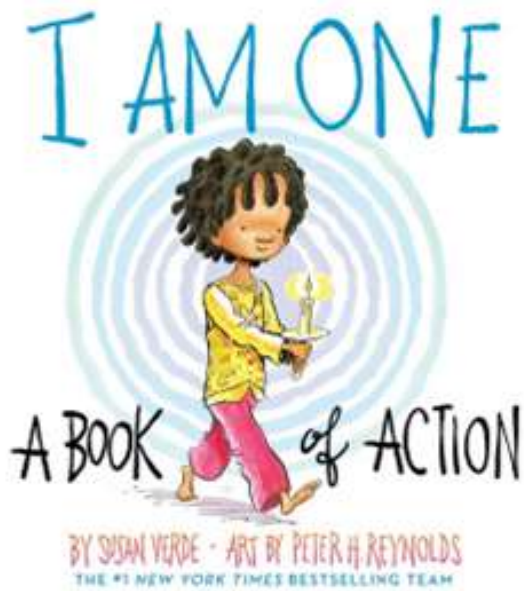
Themes

Indigenous, Residential Schools

Suggested Activity:

Before Reading: Please note that this book describes children being hurt by adults both physically and emotionally, and may not be appropriate for younger or more sensitive students. An understanding of residential schools is important for students to learn prior to this lesson. For further information, access the Indian Residential Schools and Reconciliation Teacher Resource Guide: <https://www.fnesc.ca/>.

Classroom Discussion: What kind of school is Irene going to? What do we know about Irene's school from the story? Why is Irene being sent there? What is the purpose of this school?
Journaling: Prompt students to reflect on what they see in their world and the experiences they notice in the story. Power, privilege, and bias are among the themes that are examined.



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level
M

I Am One: A Book of Action

Susan Verde, Illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds

About

Discover the power of activism!

One seed to start a garden, one note to start a melody, one brick to start breaking down walls: Every movement and moment of change starts with purpose, with intention, with one. With me. With you.

I Am One is a powerful call to action, encouraging each reader to raise their voice, extend a hand, and take that one first step to start something beautiful and move toward a better world.

Themes

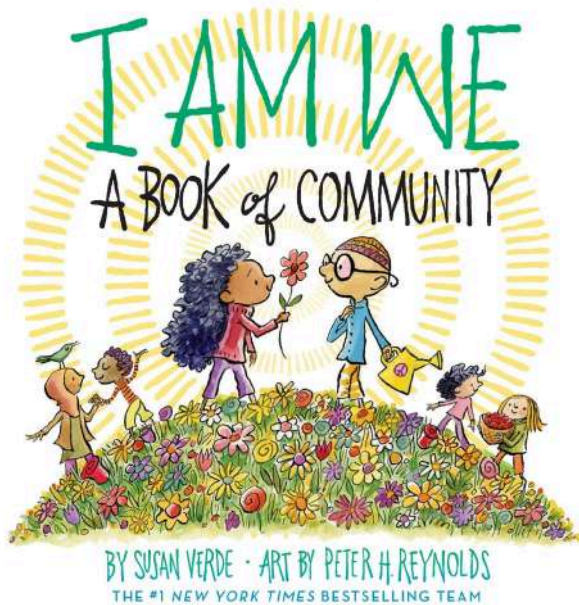
Emotions, Values, Action

Suggested Activity:

Before Reading: Discuss the Dalai Lama's in the Author's notes. Who is the Dalai Lama? What does he do for the world?

Discussion: Create a list of ones. Who in you life needs a one? Pick one and illustrate it happening.

Activity: Have a "One" day. Create a list to show the ones the class has done.



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
M

I Am We: A Book of Community

Susan Verde, Illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds

About

We are part of something bigger than ourselves, and when we each turn our goodness and compassion outward, we can create, learn, and love.

Sometimes we may wonder, *how does caring for ourselves help anyone else?* But then we realize that the better we feel inside, the more we can be there for others—our friends, families, and communities.

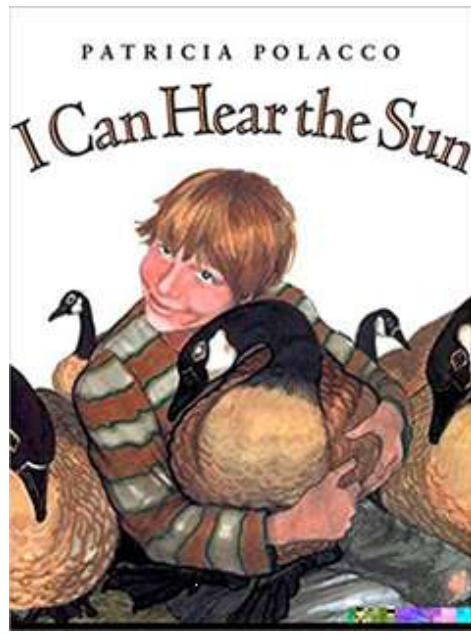
Themes

Community

Suggested Activity:

Discussion:

- What does community mean to you?
- What does community feel like in your heart?
- What does community look like in your classroom, family, neighbourhood, or even on a global scale?
- What communities are you a part of? A creative community? A scientific community? What role do you play?



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
P

I Can Hear the Sun

Patricia Polacco

About

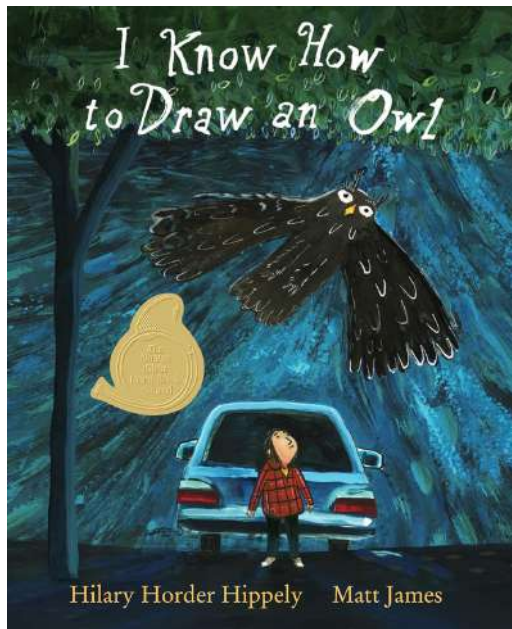
A boy experiencing homelessness finds a family at a bird sanctuary with the birds and the caretakers. The boy and a blind goose become best friends and are inseparable. When it comes time for the boy to leave the city he's in, he runs away and flies away with the geese instead. This is a heartwarming and inspirational story that shows family can be more than your relatives.

Themes

Friendship, Homelessness

Suggested Activity:

Have students write their own fairytale or modern myth exploring ideas of identity, hope, and friendship



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level

I Know How to Draw an Owl

Hilary Horder Hippely, Illustrated by Matt James

About

Belle and her mother used to have a house, a table, and chairs, a home like any of Belle's classmates'. But things changed. Now, they curl up each night in a blanket nest in their old blue car, with their things packed in around them.

The first night was hard, but they've never been alone: their friend the owl has always been nearby, hooting in its tree, looking out for them. Belle longs to catch sight of it, and one night, she finally does. That's how she learned to draw an owl.

No one knows that story. But when a new boy comes to school, a boy whose car looks like Belle's, a boy who looks lost and scared, it's Belle's turn to watch over someone.

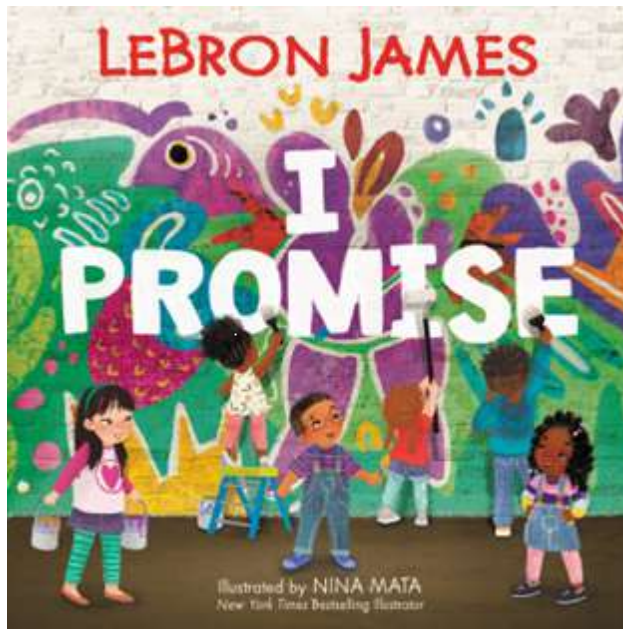
Themes

Homelessness, Empathy

Suggested Activity:

Book a Speaker: The Mustard Seed offers presentations focusing on understanding why homelessness and poverty are challenges in our city today and encouraging students to find ways to engage with their community.

Book a Workshop: The Mustard Seed offers half day workshops at no cost for grades 1-12 that help students identify basic needs and the challenges many people face when trying to meet their basic needs.



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level

I Promise

LeBron James, Illustrated by Nina Mata

About

I Promise is a lively and inspiring picture book that reminds us that tomorrow's success starts with the promises we make to ourselves and our community today. This book has the power to inspire all children and families to be their best.

Themes

Self-esteem, Values

Suggested Activity:

Class Pledge or Mantra: Discuss who you are as a class and write a class pledge or mantra. This is an opportunity for the class to define their beliefs and who they will become as students.

- What do we stand for? What kind of class do we want to become? What kind of feeling do we want to have in our class? What principles do we want to follow?
- Identify the class core values like acceptance, charitableness, compassion, generosity, gratitude, helpfulness, etc.

Create a mantra or motto that includes these things:

- "We are kind even when nobody is looking" "We put others first every time" "Our goal is to help and to care" "We show empathy and walk in somebody else's shoes"

Begin to use this mantra in your every day interactions with students to help them internalize it.



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level

I'll Walk With You

Carol Lynn Pearson, Illustrated by Jane Sanders

About

Beloved author of *The Lesson* and *Will You Still Be My Daughter?* Carol Lynn Pearson is known for her heartfelt, sometimes tear-jerking poetry and stories. Her newest title will enchant children with a sweet, tender poem about loving and accepting others, no matter what they look like, where they come from, or what their age and abilities are.

Themes

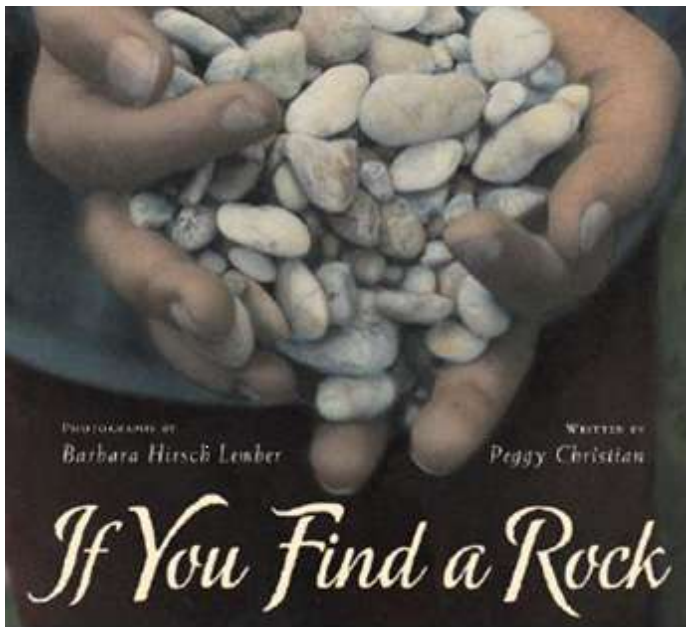
People with Disabilities

Suggested Activity:

Write a class pledge or promise. This is an opportunity for the class to recognize the needs of others and share in a promise to walk alongside those that are often excluded or alone in their walk.

- Who do we walk with? What kind of class do we want to become? Who can we help by walking alongside?
- Identify the class core values like acceptance, charitableness, compassion, generosity, gratitude, helpfulness, etc.
- "We will walk alongside _____ even when nobody is looking" "We will walk with others every time" "Our goal is to help and to care"

Begin to use this mantra in your every day interactions with students to help them internalize it.



Grade Level

1-4

Guided Reading Level

○

If You Find a Rock

Peggy Christian, Illustrated by Barbara Hirsch Lember

About

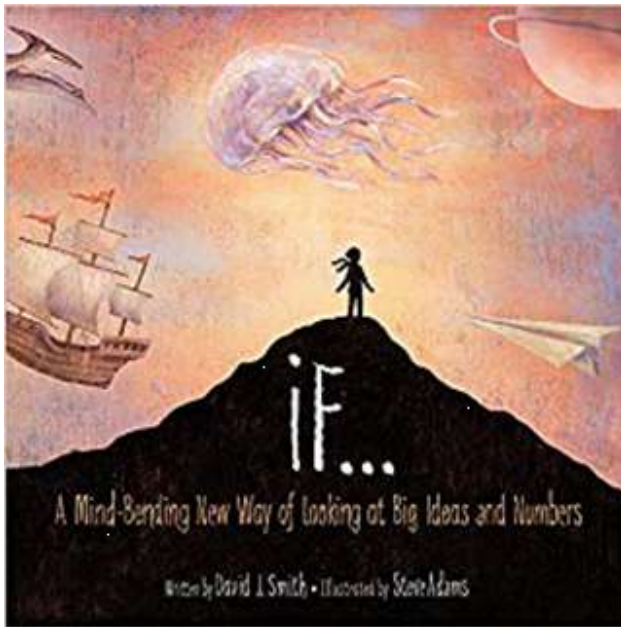
Think of all the rocks there are: the skipping rocks, the splashing rocks, and the chalk rocks. Whether the found treasures are climbing rocks or wishing rocks, children can't help collecting them. With joyful text and luminous photographs, *If You Find a Rock* celebrates rocks everywhere—as well as the mysterious and wonderful places they are found.

Themes

Impact, Mindfulness

Suggested Activity:

Writing & developing observation skills: Practice journaling and observing by prompting students to think about an object's physical features, how it was made, its design, and its value.



Grade Level
3-6

Guided Reading Level
V

If: A Mind-Bending New Way of Looking at Big Ideas and Numbers

David J. Smith, Illustrated by Steve Adams

About

If the Solar System's planets were shrunk down to the size of sports balls, and Earth were the size of a baseball, what size would the other planets be? If your lifespan was represented by a pizza divided into twelve slices, how many slices would represent your time spent in school? These questions and more are explored in this innovative and visually appealing book about very big concepts made accessible when scaled down to kid-friendly size.

Themes

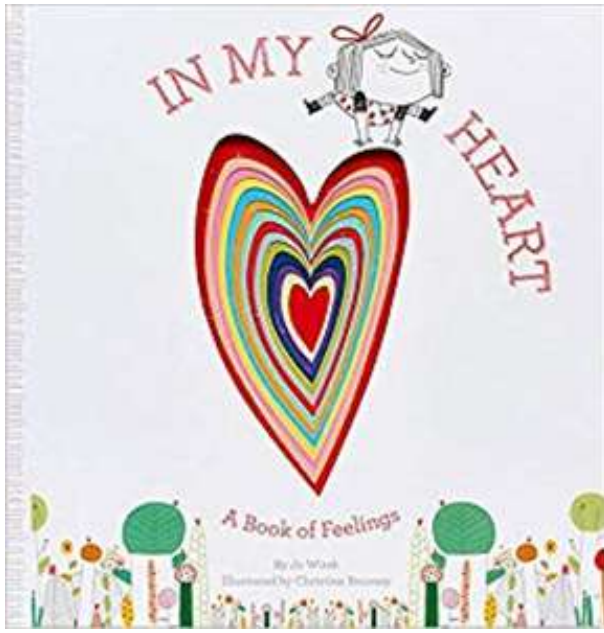
Natural Resources

Suggested Activity:

Make a Big Idea Small: Have students poll one another or several other classes about demographics; ask about gender, age, background, family structure, etc. Have students map out these demographics on charts; what percent of our class was born in Canada? How many students are female?

Work with the class to reduce information to a smaller number, e.g. "If all the grade 6 students at our school were represented by 10 people..."

Use this concept to create infographics about global poverty, homelessness in Canada, food insecurity, or other social issues.



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level
J

In My Heart: A Book of Feelings

Jo Witek, Illustrated by Christine Roussey

About

An exploration of feelings – big and small. A lovely book to explore emotional intelligence and emotional literacy with younger children. Lots of sensory imagery help to explain how feelings can look, feel, or be described.

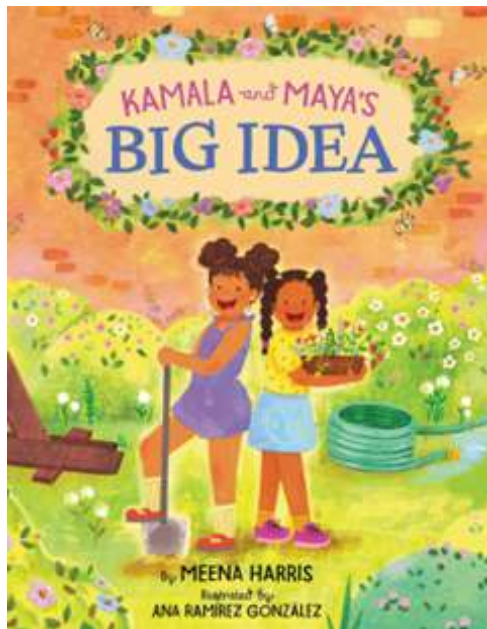
Themes

Emotions, Feelings

Suggested Activity:

Journaling: Focus on feelings and their triggers. Use an ABC chart for those with known SEBD concerns

Art project: Buy small jewelry boxes from the dollar store. Have students decorate the outside to represent how they think people see them, and have them paint the inside with colours that represent their feelings and emotions that people might not usually see. Remind students that they can use whatever colours they like to represent each emotion (for example, blue could represent sadness but could also represent calm or peace.)



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level

Kamala and Maya's Big Idea

Meena Harris, Illustrated by Ana Ramírez González

About

This is the uplifting tale of how the author's aunt and mother first learned to persevere in the face of disappointment and turned a dream into reality. This is a story of children's ability to make a difference and of a community coming together to transform their neighborhood.

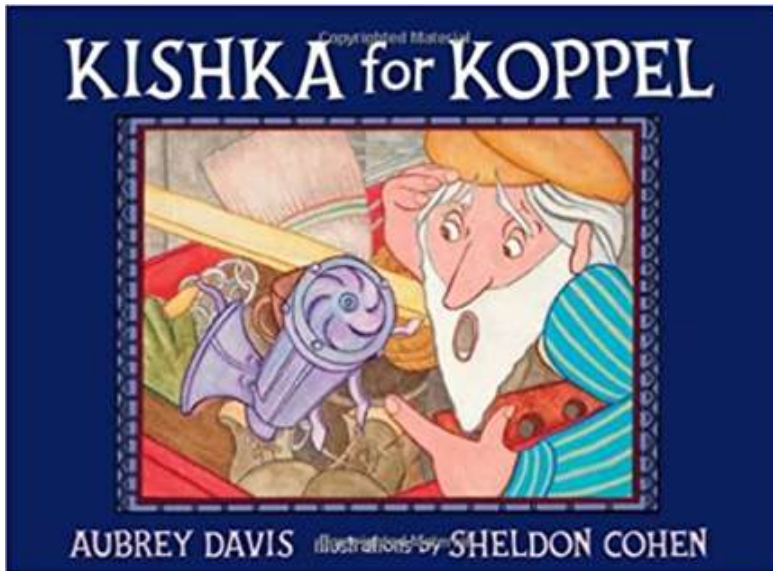
Themes

Community

Suggested Activity:

A great template for brainstorming, problem-solving, and writing letters based around a big idea can be found here:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e214c815399c14b031c5df1/t/5ed58afbb08f1e6f6f41761f/1591053064638/phenomenalgirl-activity-pages.pdf>



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level

Kishka for Koppel

Aubrey Davis, Illustrated by Sheldon Cohen

About

In this retelling of a Jewish tale, a magic meat grinder helps a poor Jewish couple recognize their blessings after the three wishes it grants them don't bring the happiness they expect.

Themes

Gratitude, Wants, Needs

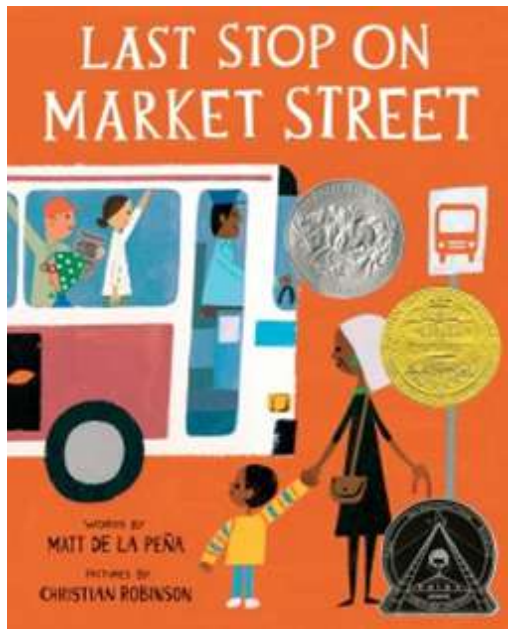
Suggested Activity:

Look up other "3 wish" stories and practice writing your own.

What might your character wish for that wouldn't turn out the way they'd hope?

How do we tell apart wants from needs?

What can we be thankful for, even if we don't have all our "wants"?



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
N

Last Stop on Market Street

Matt De La Peña, Illustrated by Christian Robinson

About

Every Sunday after church, CJ and his grandma ride the bus across town. But today, CJ wonders why they don't have the same things as others on the bus. Each question is met with an encouraging answer from grandma, who helps him see the beauty—and fun—in their routine and the world around them.

Themes

Wants, Needs, BIPOC,
Kindness, Empathy, Gratitude

Suggested Activity:

Head out into your school or neighbourhood and have students journal on 5 beautiful things they've never noticed before

Practice observation skills in journaling by encouraging students to write a journal entry in their classroom or outside as if they are news reporters. What is happening? Where? To whom? How? Why?



Grade Level
K-4

Guided Reading Level

Let's Make a Change: The United Nations' 17 Goals for a Better World

Judith Drews

About

Empowering and hopeful, this vividly illustrated guide to the United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals shows young readers how they can participate in making the world a better place—for themselves and for others.

Themes

Poverty, Sustainable Development Goals

Suggested Activity:

Donation drive: Help meet the practical, every day needs of clients at The Mustard Seed by hosting a donation drive with basic need items! This can include clothes, travel size hygiene items, new socks and underwear, or packaged snacks! Email engage@theseed.ca to learn more.

Journal: Draw pictures or write down your ideas and inventions for a better world



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
K

Lovely

Jess Hong

About

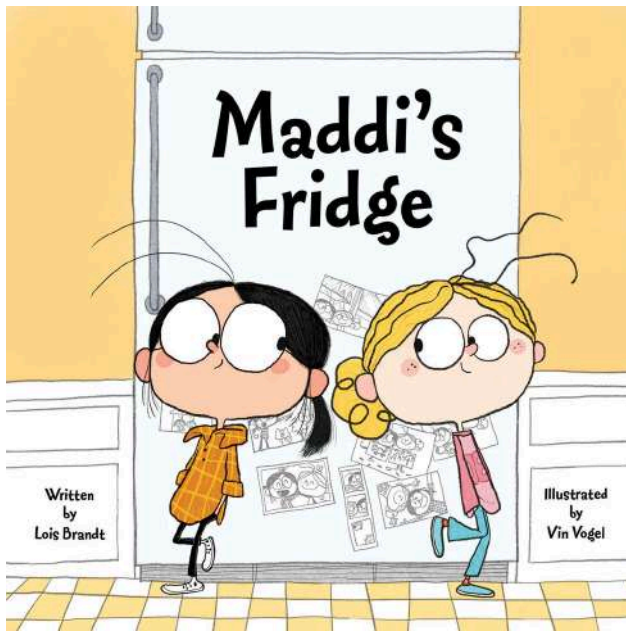
Big, small, curly, straight, loud, quiet, smooth, wrinkly. Lovely explores a world of differences that all add up to the same thing: we are all lovely!

Themes

Self-Esteem, Self-Acceptance,
Diversity

Suggested Activity:

Draw a self portrait and write down some things that are lovely about yourself. Now draw a picture of a friend and write some things that are lovely about them!



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level

Maddi's Fridge

Lois Brandt, Illustrated by Vin Voight

About

Best friends Sofia and Maddi live in the same neighborhood, go to the same school, and play in the same park, but while Sofia's fridge at home is full of nutritious food, the fridge at Maddi's house is empty. Sofia learns that Maddi's family doesn't have enough money to fill their fridge and promises Maddi she'll keep this discovery a secret. But because Sofia wants to help her friend, she's faced with a difficult decision: to keep her promise or tell her parents about Maddi's empty fridge.

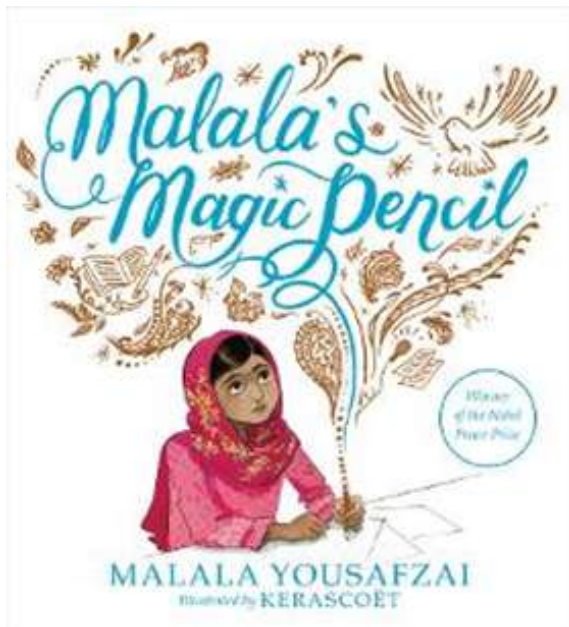
Themes

Poverty, Friendship, Food Security

Suggested Activity:

Book a Workshop: The Mustard Seed offers half day workshops at no cost that focuses on food security for grades 1-12. In this workshop, students will be introduced to the concept of food security and develop an understanding of the 5 A's of food security.

Snack Packs: Organize a food drive for packaged snacks and put together snack packs to give to people who need it! This could be people in your community, or people experiencing homeless at The Mustard Seed.



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
P

Malala's Magic Pencil

Malala Yousafzai, Illustrated by Kerascoët

About

Nobel Peace Prize winner and New York Times bestselling author Malala Yousafzai's first picture book, inspired by her own childhood.

As a child in Pakistan, Malala made a wish for a magic pencil. She would use it to make everyone happy, to erase the smell of garbage from her city, to sleep an extra hour in the morning. But as she grew older, Malala saw that there were more important things to wish for. She saw a world that needed fixing. And even if she never found a magic pencil, Malala realized that she could still work hard every day to make her wishes come true.

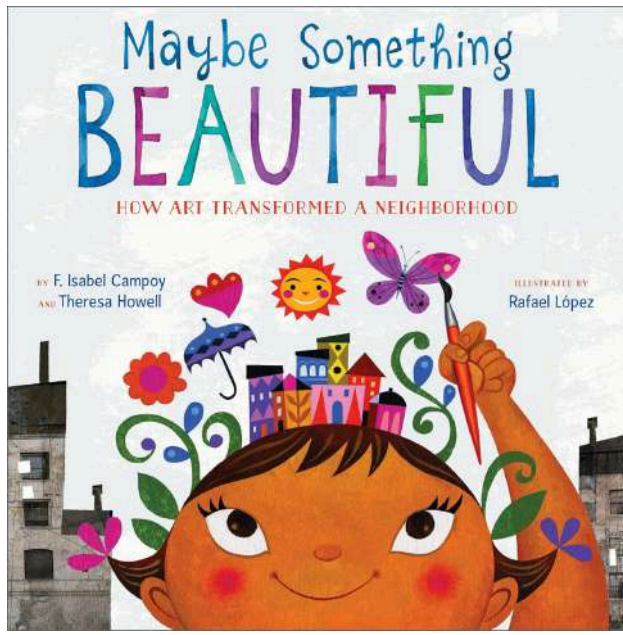
Themes

Advocacy, Equality, Resilience

Suggested Activity:

A resource pack can be found here:

<https://cdn2.penguin.com.au/content/resources/MMP%20Teachers%20Notes.pdf>



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level

Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighbourhood

F. Isabel Campoy & Theresa Howell, Illustrated by Rafael López

About

In this exuberant picture book about transformation through art, Mira lives in a gray urban community until a muralist arrives and, along with his paints and brushes, brings color, joy, and hope to the neighborhood.

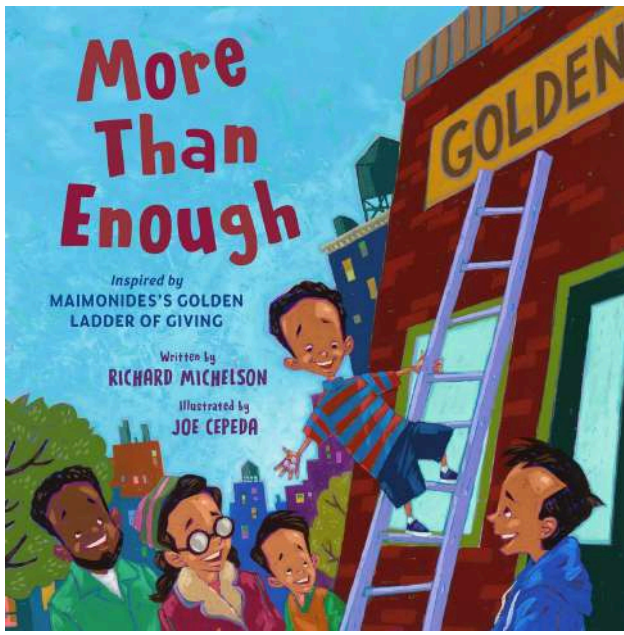
Themes

Community

Suggested Activity:

Teacher's guide can be found here:

<https://www.maybesomethingbeautiful.com/teachersguide/>



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level

More Than Enough

Richard Michelson, Illustrated by Joe Cepeda

About

A community grows as neighbor helps neighbor in this heartwarming story inspired by the Golden Ladder, a Jewish approach to charity intended to create a fair society.

Inspired by the twelfth-century Jewish scholar Maimonides's concept of the Golden Ladder, this picture book models different stages of giving and provides ample opportunity for thoughtful discussions about charity, generosity, and economics while telling an appealing, accessible story.

Themes

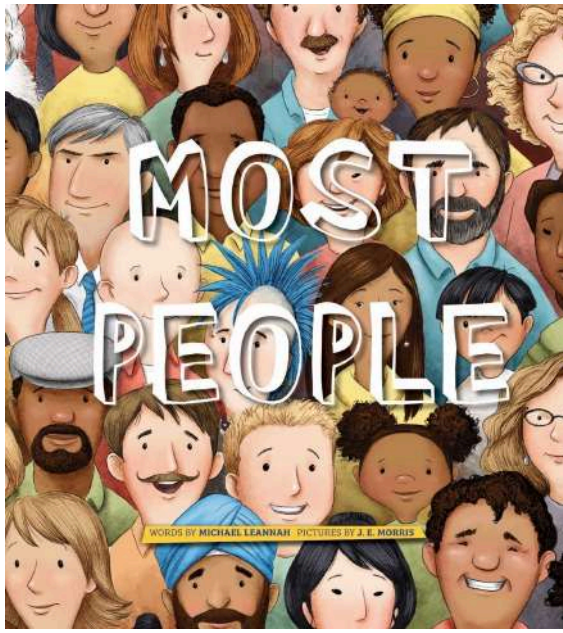
Poverty, Homelessness, Social Themes, Values & Virtues

Suggested Activity:

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think Moses wanted to keep his money to himself?
- What are some of the ways people were helped? Did all the actions involve spending money? Does it matter how old someone is?

Book a Workshop: The Mustard Seed offers half day workshops at no cost for grades 1-12 that help students identify basic needs and the challenges many people face when trying to meet their basic needs.



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level

Most People: (are Good People)

Michael Leannah, Illustrated by J. E. Morris

About

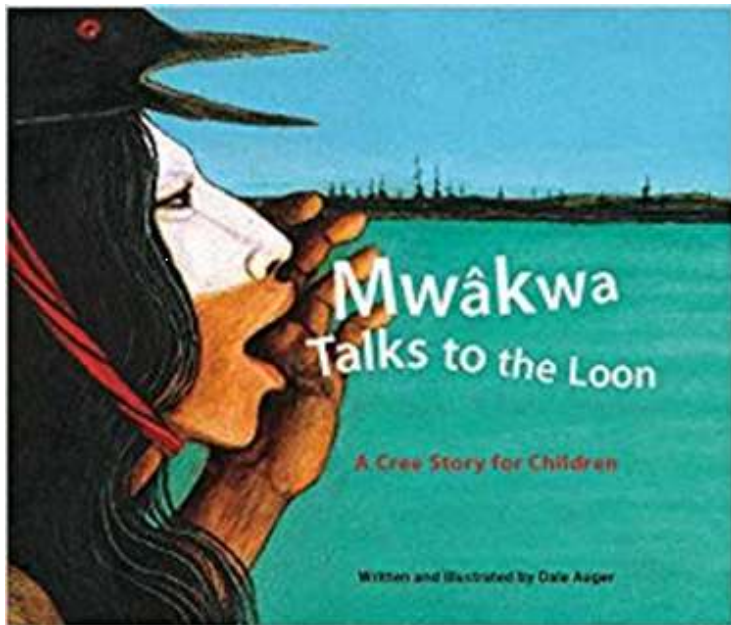
Michael Leannah wrote *Most People* as an antidote to the scary words and images kids hear and see every day. Jennifer Morris's emotive, diverting characters provide the perfect complement to Leannah's words, leading us through the crowded streets of an urban day in the company of two pairs of siblings (one of color). We see what they see: the hulking dude with tattoos and chains assisting an elderly lady onto the bus; the Goth teenager with piercings and purple Mohawk returning a lost wallet to its owner; and the myriad interactions of daily existence, most of them well intended. *Most People* is a courageous, constructive response to the dystopian world of the news media.

Themes

Diversity

Suggested Activity:

Book a Workshop: The Mustard Seed offers half day workshops at no cost that focuses on stereotypes & de-stigmatization for grades 4-12. Students will be introduced to the concept of stigma and stereotypes and how these misconceptions can impact individuals experiencing poverty and homelessness.



Grade Level
1-5

Guided Reading Level

Mwâkwa Talks to the Loon: A Cree Story for Children

Dale Auger

About

Kayâs is a young Cree man who is blessed with a gift that makes him a talented hunter. He knows the ways of the animals he hunts and can even talk with them in their own languages. But when he becomes proud and takes his abilities for granted, he loses his gift, and the people grow hungry.

With the help of the Elders, Kayâs learns that in order to live a life of fulfillment, he must learn to cherish and respect the talents he has been given. A glossary with a pronunciation guide to Cree words and phrases.

Themes

Indigenous

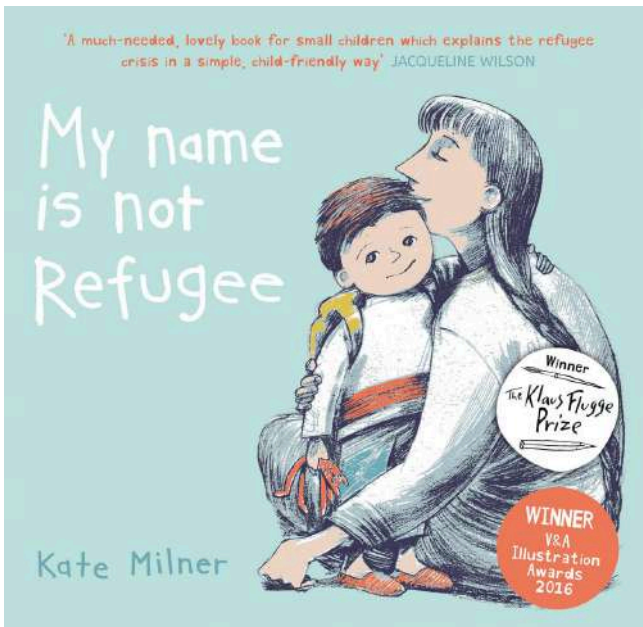
Suggested Activity:

Categorization: Use the story to stimulate a sorting activity of animals based on characteristics (two-legged, four-legged, winged, swimmers etc.). This can be done by cutting and gluing pictures from magazines.

Make a mural: that represents the village of Kayâs. Label all the characters of the story in the mural.

Discuss commonalities: between Kayâs (the hunter) and Mwâkwa (the loon). Although they are distinctly different in real life, they are "same-spirits" in the story.

Theatre time: Act out the story! The class can do it as puppetry or convert to Readers Theatre.



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level

My Name is Not Refugee

Kate Milner

About

A touching, timely and tender exploration of refuge and migration for the youngest readers, this picture book offers a moving insight into the real journeys being made by children today.

A young boy discusses the journey he is about to make with his mother. They will leave their town, she explains, and it will be sad but also a little bit exciting.

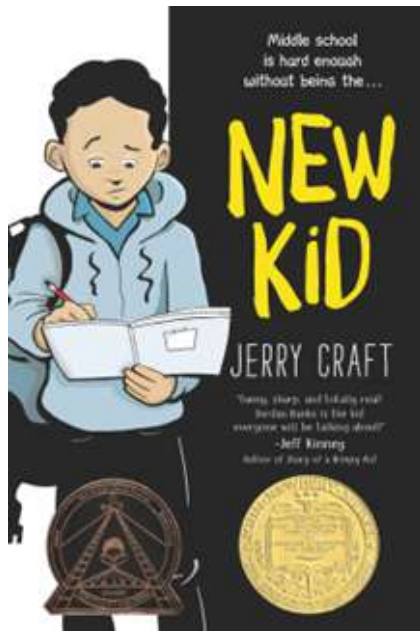
They will have to say goodbye to friends and loved ones, and that will be difficult. They will have to walk and walk and walk, and although they will see many new and interesting things, it will be difficult at times too. A powerful and moving exploration that draws the young reader into each stage of the journey, inviting the chance to imagine the decisions he or she would make.

Themes

Refugees

Suggested Activity:

Teacher toolkit can be found here: <https://wordunited.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/my-name-not-refugee-teacher-toolkit.pdf>



Grade Level

3-7

Guided Reading Level

S

New Kid

Jerry Craft

About

Seventh grader Jordan Banks loves nothing more than drawing cartoons about his life. But instead of sending him to the art school of his dreams, his parents enroll him in a prestigious private school known for its academics, where Jordan is one of the few kids of color in his entire grade.

As he makes the daily trip from his Washington Heights apartment to the upscale Riverdale Academy Day School, Jordan soon finds himself torn between two worlds—and not really fitting into either one. Can Jordan learn to navigate his new school culture while keeping his neighborhood friends and staying true to himself?

Themes

Race, Prejudice, BIPOC,
Inclusion, Bullying

Suggested Activity:

Comic time!: Work individually or in small groups to create comics about a time each student was a new kid somewhere. Imagine alternate storylines where someone had reached out or been mean. How can we make sure no new kid is ever left out?

Class committee: Create a class committee for welcoming new kids to the school

The Classroom Bookshelf activities: <https://theclassroombookshelf.com/2019/05/20/new-kid-by-jerry-craft-is-a-middle-school-must-read/>

Teaching guide from the author: <https://jerrycraft.com/wp-content/uploads/Updated-2020-New-Kid-Guide.pdf>



Grade Level

5-7

Guided Reading Level

No Fixed Address

Susin Nielsen

About

Felix Knuttson, twelve, is an endearing kid with an incredible brain for trivia. His mom Astrid is loving but unreliable; she can't hold onto a job, or a home. When they lose their apartment in Vancouver, they move into a camper van, just for August, till Astrid finds a job. September comes, they're still in the van; Felix must keep "home" a secret and give a fake address in order to enroll in school. Luckily, he finds true friends. As the weeks pass and life becomes grim, he struggles not to let anyone know how precarious his situation is. When he gets to compete on a national quiz show, Felix is determined to win – the cash prize will bring them a home. Their luck is about to change! But what happens is not at all what Felix expected.

Note: This novel contains mature themes and we recommend an adult reads first before deciding if it is appropriate for their class/child

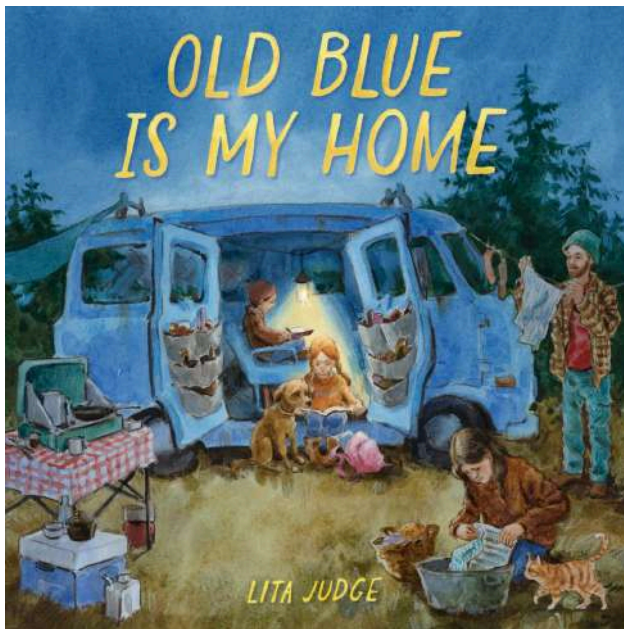
Themes

Homelessness, Family

Suggested Activity:

Classroom Discussion: Discuss the themes of shame and guilt in No Fixed Address. No Fixed Address takes a look at the lives of the 'hidden homeless' – the people who are without a permanent home and are just about finding alternatives to sleeping rough on the streets. What aspect of Felix's precarious existence would you find hardest to deal with?

Book a Speaker: At The Mustard Seed, we have engaging speakers that are happy to share with students about how The Mustard Seed helps those who are unhoused.



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level

Old Blue is My Home

Lita Judge

About

This poignant yet reassuring picture book follows a family and the van that provides them with safety, warmth, and togetherness amid economic and housing insecurity.

Themes

Poverty, Homelessness, Social Themes

Suggested Activity:

Book a Speaker: The Mustard Seed offers presentations focusing on understanding why homelessness and poverty are challenges in our city today and encouraging students to find ways to engage with their community.

Book a Workshop: The Mustard Seed offers half day workshops at no cost for grades 1-12 that help students identify basic needs and the challenges many people face when trying to meet their basic needs.



Grade Level

1-3

Guided Reading Level

P

On Our Street: Our First Talk About Poverty

Dr. Jillian Roberts & Jamie Casap, Illustrated by Jane Heinrichs

About

A gentle introduction to the issue of poverty, *On Our Street Explores* the realities of people living with inadequate resources. Using age-appropriate language, this book addresses mental illness, homelessness and refugee status as they are connected to this issue. Quotes from individuals and organizations such as UNICEF are included throughout to add further perspective on the issue.

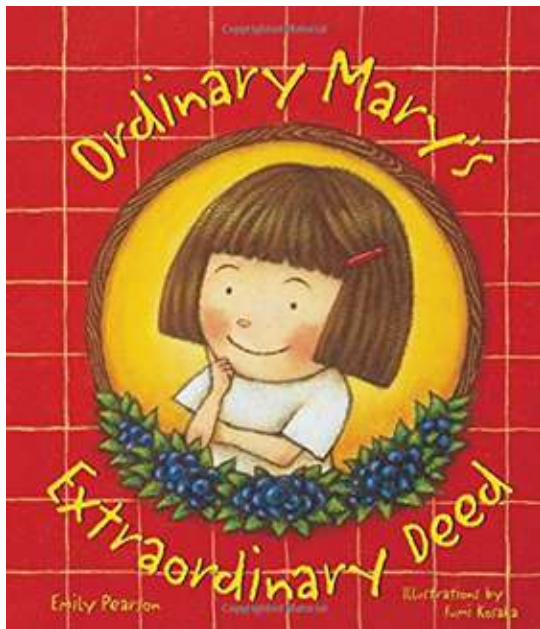
Themes

Poverty, Homelessness,
Community

Suggested Activity:

Book a Speaker: The Mustard Seed offers presentations focusing on understanding why homelessness and poverty are challenges in our city today and encouraging students to find ways to engage with their community.

Book a Workshop: The Mustard Seed offers half day workshops at no cost for grades 1-12 that help students identify basic needs and the challenges many people face when trying to meet their basic needs.



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
Q-R

Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed

Emily Pearson, Illustrated by Fumi Kosaka

About

A delightful tale of a young girl who does a good deed which travels and impacts the lives of everyone around her and in her community. Her deed goes full circle and teaches us about the good in "paying it forward."

Themes

Kindness, Values, Impact

Suggested Activity:

Brainstorm together how your class can start a positive ripple effect within your school or community.



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level

Our Class is a Family

Sandie Sonke

About

Teachers do so much more than just teach academics. They build a sense of community within their classrooms, creating a home away from home where they make their students feel safe, included, and loved. With its heartfelt message and colorfully whimsical illustrations, "Our Class is a Family" is a book that will help build and strengthen that class community. Kids learn that their classroom is a place where it's safe to be themselves, it's okay to make mistakes, and it's important to be a friend to others. When hearing this story being read aloud by their teacher, students are sure to feel like they are part of a special family.

Themes

Belonging, Community, Family, Friendship

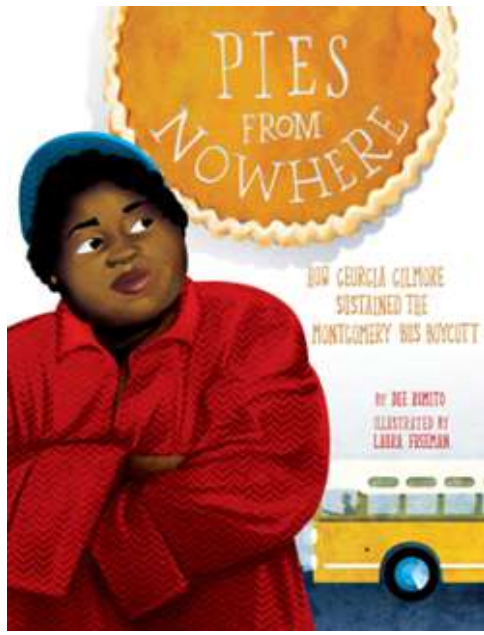
Suggested Activity:

Discussion: How is our class like a family?

Journal: Write or draw a favourite "Class family memory." Share with the class why this memory is special to you.

Class Family motto or mission statement: Determine together what are the class family values and what promises should be made as a class family.

An example can be found here: <https://lifebetweensummers.com/class-family-album-a-book-companion-for-our-class-is-a-family/>



Grade Level

Guided Reading Level

Pies From Nowhere

Dee Romito, Illustrated by Laura Freeman

About

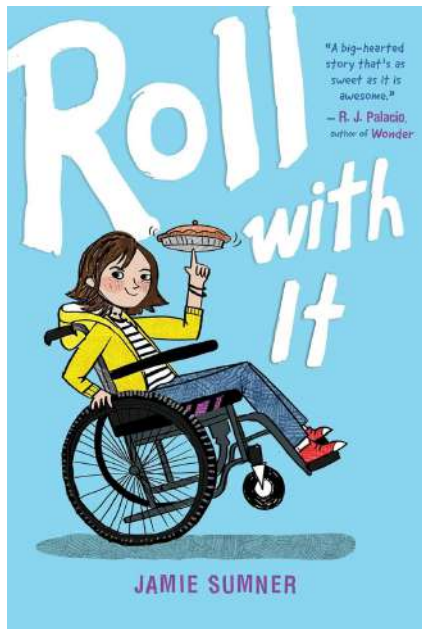
Georgia Gilmore was a cook at the National Lunch Company in Montgomery, Alabama. When the bus boycotts broke out in Montgomery after Rosa Parks was arrested, Georgia knew just what to do. She organized a group of women who cooked and baked to fund-raise for gas and cars to help sustain the boycott. Called the Club from Nowhere, Georgia was the only person who knew who baked and bought the food, and she said the money came from "nowhere" to anyone who asked. When Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested for his role in the boycott, Georgia testified on his behalf, and her home became a meeting place for civil rights leaders. This picture book highlights a hidden figure of the civil rights movement who fueled the bus boycotts and demonstrated that one person can make a real change in her community and beyond.

Themes

BIPOC, Fundraising, Activism, Community

Suggested Activity:

Hold a class bake sale to raise money for a cause that you decide on together. Why is it important to stand up for causes we believe in? Work with students to research causes, plan the event, advertise your bake sale, and then carry the project through to completion. Assign students to count the money and then give your donation to the organization you've chosen.



Grade Level
5-8

Guided Reading Level
W

Roll With It

Jamie Sumner

About

Ellie's a girl who tells it like it is. That surprises some people, who see a kid in a wheelchair and think she's going to be all sunshine and cuddles. The thing is, Ellie

has big dreams: She might be eating Stouffer's for dinner, but one day she's going to be a professional baker. If she's not writing fan letters to her favorite celebrity chefs, she's practicing recipes on her well-meaning, if overworked, mother.

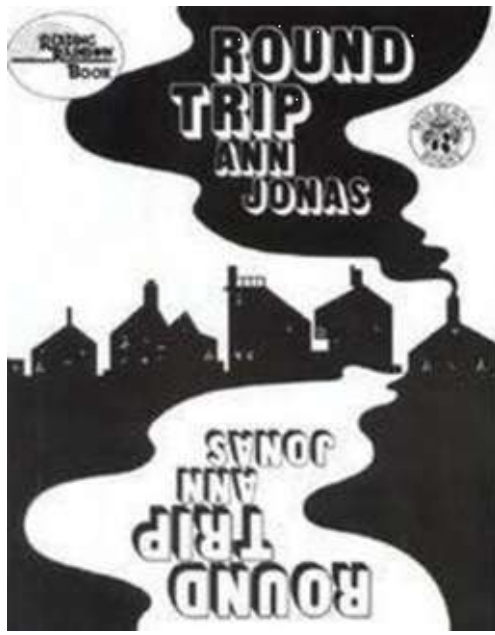
But when Ellie and her mom move so they can help take care of her ailing grandpa, Ellie has to start all over again in a new town at a new school. Except she's not just the new kid—she's the new kid in the wheelchair who lives in the trailer park on the wrong side of town. It all feels like one challenge too many, until Ellie starts to make her first-ever friends. Now she just has to convince her mom that this town might just be the best thing that ever happened to them!

Themes

Family Life, People with Disabilities

Suggested Activity:

Discussion Questions: are located at the back of the book



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
K

Round Trip

Ann Jonas

About

Black and white illustrations and text record the sights on a day trip to the city and back home again to the country. The trip to the city is read from front to back and the return trip, from back to front, upside down.

Themes

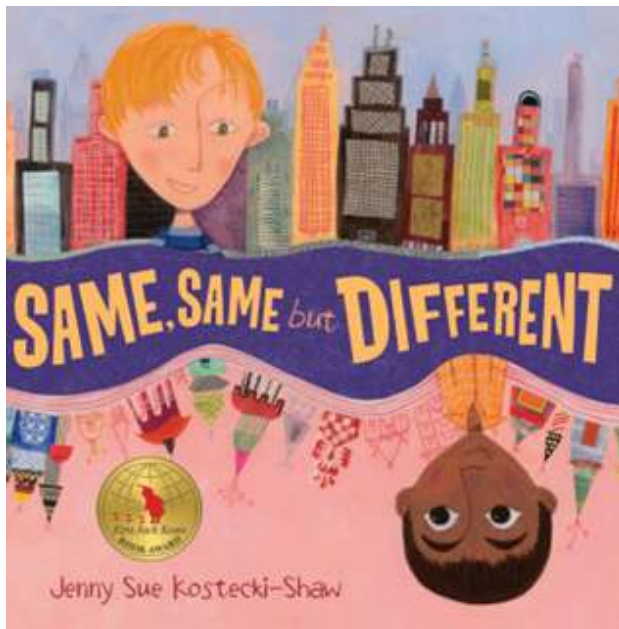
Perspective

Suggested Activity:

Discussion: What is perspective? How can I learn to see from another perspective? Why is it important to consider issues from multiple perspectives?

Journal: Practice the "Up, Down, All Around" journal prompt—split a page into six boxes and draw what you see in front, behind, on each side, above, and below you. Have journals trade journals with friends to see from another perspective.

Perspective: Try journaling for 30 seconds to a minute, writing down all you can see, hear, smell, and feel. Move to a new spot and repeat, paying attention to all the new things you notice from your new perspective.



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level

Same, Same, but Different

Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw

About

Elliot lives in America, and Kailash lives in India. They are pen pals. By exchanging letters and pictures, they learn that they both love to climb trees, have pets, and go to school. Their worlds might look different, but they are actually similar. Same, same. But different!

Through an inviting point-of-view and colorful, vivid illustrations, this story shows how two boys living oceans apart can be the best of friends.

Themes

Friendship, Diversity

Suggested Activity:

Pen-Pals: Create an opportunity for students to correspond with pen-pals from a different classroom, school, city, province or country. Invite them to brainstorm questions to ask their pen-pals, as well as information they might consider sharing about themselves.

Stamp That!: The end-pages of this book are covered with interesting stamps from India and America. Invite your students to design their own stamps. What do these stamps say about them and the world they live in?

Picture It: Elliot and Kailash use very little words to describe their worlds. Instead, they rely on communicating through pictures. Invite students to paint a detailed picture of their own worlds. Encourage them to include the features that make it special and unique. They may want to try using collage or other illustrating techniques demonstrated in the book.



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level

Saturday at the Food Pantry

Diane O'Neill, Illustrated by Brizida Magro

About

Molly and her mom don't always have enough food, so one Saturday they visit their local food pantry.

Molly's happy to get food to eat until she sees her classmate Caitlin, who's embarrassed to be at the food pantry. Can Molly help Caitlin realize that everyone needs help sometimes?

Themes

Poverty, Community, Food Insecurity

Suggested Activity:

Book a Workshop: The Mustard Seed offers half day workshops at no cost that focuses on food security for grades 1-12. In this workshop, students will be introduced to the concept of food security and develop an understanding of the 5 A's of food security.

Snack Packs: Organize a food drive for packaged snacks and put together snack packs to give to people who need it! This could be people in your community, or people experiencing homeless at The Mustard Seed.



Say Hello

Jack & Michael Foreman



Grade Level

PreS-3

Guided Reading Level

G

Say Hello

Jack Foreman, Illustrated by Michael Foreman

About

A lone dog comes upon a group of kids playing ball and with leaping ease, joins the game. They're all having so much fun, they don't see a sad little boy standing off by himself. Who will spy the boy and invite him to play? With arresting images by a master illustrator and a simple, touching text by his son, SAY HELLO evokes the joy and relief of finding a new friend just when it's needed the most.

Themes

Loneliness, Friendship

Suggested Activity:

Challenge students to say hello to five people they don't know in the hallway or on the playground throughout the day. Have students record/journal their observations about how people respond.



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
K

Say Something

Peter H. Reynolds

About

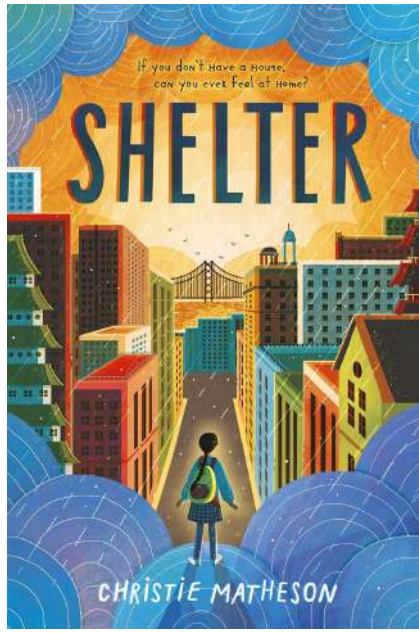
In this empowering new picture book, beloved author Peter H. Reynolds explores the many ways that a single voice can make a difference. Each of us, each and every day, have the chance to say something: with our actions, our words, and our voices. Perfect for kid activists everywhere, this timely story reminds readers of the undeniable importance and power of their voice. There are so many ways to tell the world who you are... what you are thinking... and what you believe. And how you'll make it better. The time is now: SAY SOMETHING!

Themes

Self-esteem, Values, Emotions,
Feelings

Suggested Activity:

Make signs: Invite students to create their own signs using a variety of materials. If students would benefit from a scaffold, revisit the beginning two-page spread with dozens of examples of powerful speech bubbles that students can use in their own signs, such as "follow your heart," "together is better," and "be brave." Have students hold up their signs and take photos for a display as a source of inspiration for others



Grade Level
3-7

Guided Reading Level

Shelter

Christie Matheson

About

A heart-wrenching middle grade debut that considers homelessness from one girl's perspective and explores deep truths about the resounding impact of empathy.

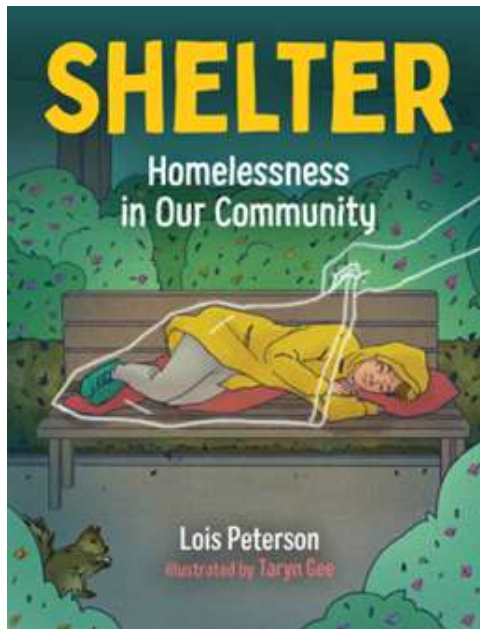
Themes

Homelessness, Empathy

Suggested Activity:

Book a Speaker: The Mustard Seed offers presentations focusing on understanding why homelessness and poverty are challenges in our city today and encouraging students to find ways to engage with their community.

Book a Workshop: The Mustard Seed offers half day workshops at no cost for grades 1-12 that help students identify basic needs and the challenges many people face when trying to meet their basic needs.



Grade Level
4-7

Guided Reading Level
Y

Shelter: Homelessness in our Community

Lois Peterson, Illustrated by Taryn Gee

About

Shelter answers the often difficult questions young people have about homelessness in a straightforward, compassionate and age-appropriate way.

The author brings personal stories from her experience working at a homeless shelter and introduces us to some of the people who live on the street.

The book challenges young readers to think about homelessness from a different perspective and gives them examples and practical ways they can take action and help in their own communities.

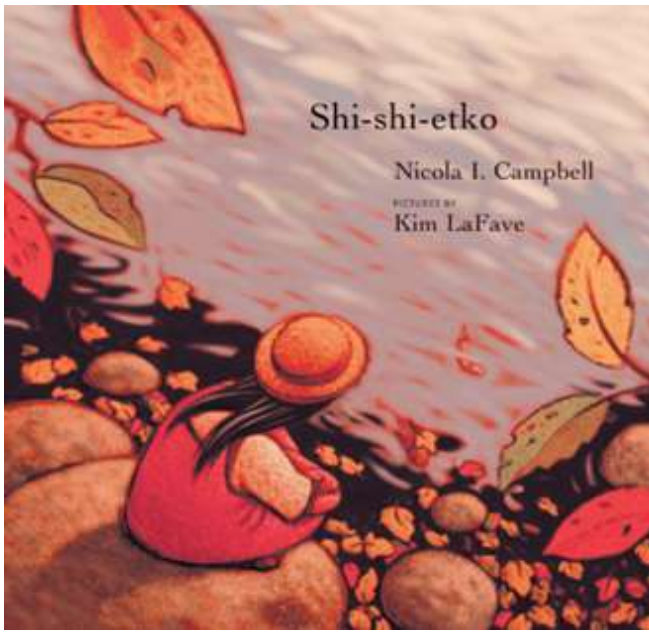
Themes

Homelessness

Suggested Activity:

Discussion: Put up Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. What do you notice? What do you wonder? Should the hierarchy exist?

Connections: UN Sustainable Development Goals, UN Rights of a Child, and UN Resolution on Homelessness.



Grade Level

K-4

Guided Reading Level

R

Shi-Shi-Etko

Nicola I. Campbell, Illustrated by Kim LaFave

About

This vibrantly illustrated story tells of the last few days of Shi-shi-etko's time with her family, before she is sent off to residential school. She takes time to appreciate the natural world around her and also take in valuable teachings from her family.

Themes

Indigenous, Residential Schools

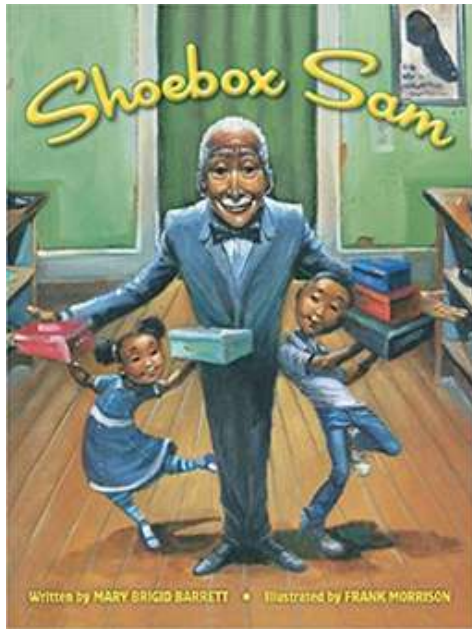
Suggested Activity:

Before Reading: An understanding of residential schools is important for students to learn prior to this lesson. Read the foreword written by the author at the beginning of the book. For further information, read the Indian Residential Schools and Reconciliation Teacher Resource Guide: <https://www.fnesc.ca/>

6-minute video: about the story of Shi-shi-etko <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKerhCGjSDE&t=16s>

Research: the various plants and animals mentioned in the story. What are you familiar with? What haven't you heard of before? Where do those plants grow? Are they native to Alberta?
Writing: Create a gratitude journal to keep your memories and a list of every day things you are thankful for

Classroom Discussion: What kind of school is Shi-shi-etko going to? What do we know about Shi-shi-etko's school from the story? Have students work in pairs or small groups to create questions about the school Shi-shi-etko is going to. Share the questions with the whole class and write them on a chart to post in the class.



Grade Level

Guided Reading Level

Q

Shoebox Sam

Mary Brigid Barrett, Illustrated by Frank Morrison

About

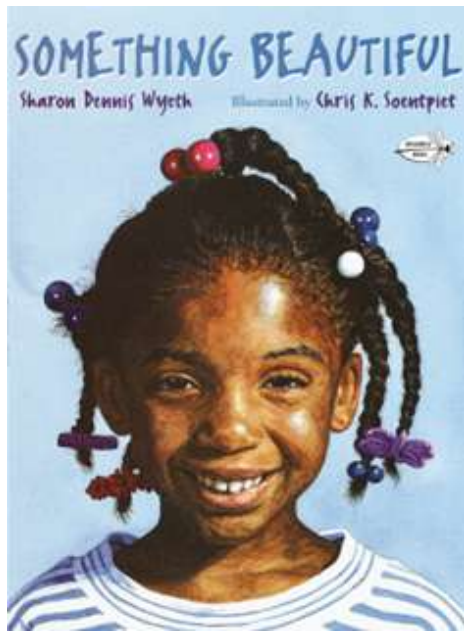
The story is about a shoe repair man named Sam that sells used shoes. In the process of helping community members with their shoes and other basic needs, Sam teaches children Delia and Sam about sharing and caring for others and the good feelings we feel when we practice altruism.

Themes

Kindness, sharing, service

Suggested Activity:

Classroom Discussion: What item of clothing is the most precious to you and why? It doesn't have to be new, just important to you. Would you give this away? Why or why not? Sam has created a community in his shoe store; he helps to feed and clothe people, makes them feel special and valued. *Can you think of anyone in your community who does that?*



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level
L

Something Beautiful

Sharon Dennis Wyeth, Illustrated by Sharon Dennis Wyeth & Chris Soentpiet

About

A young girl looks around her home and community and sees trash and broken things, she yearns for something beautiful to make her feel happy. In talking to those in her community she discovers that beauty is all around and mostly within us!

Themes

Diversity, Inclusion, Community, BIPOC, Homelessness

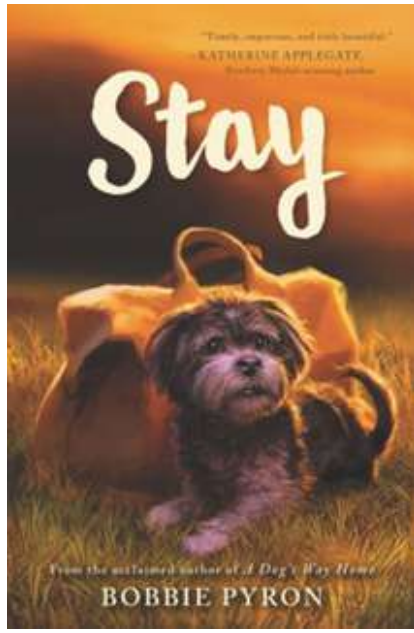
Suggested Activity:

Review: Study the quote "Beautiful – something, when you have it, your heart sings"

Mind map: As a class do a mind map or web and write down all the things that make your hearts sing

Creative corner: Have students draw a picture, write a paragraph or poem focusing on the one thing that makes their heart sing most.

Discussion: What things can students do in their lives to take control, and be powerful, to be proactive?



Grade Level
3-7

Guided Reading Level

Stay

Bobbie Pyron

About

Piper's life is turned upside down when her family moves into a shelter in a whole new city. She misses her house, her friends, and her privacy—and she *hates* being labeled the homeless girl at her new school.

But while Hope House offers her new challenges, it also brings new friendships, like the girls in Firefly Girls Troop 423 and a sweet street dog named Baby. So when Baby's person goes missing, Piper knows she has to help. But helping means finding the courage to trust herself and her new friends, no matter what anyone says about them—before Baby gets taken away for good.

Told in alternating perspectives, this classic and heartfelt animal tale proclaims the importance of hope, the power of story, and the true meaning of home.

Themes

Homelessness, Poverty

Suggested Activity:

Research local organizations like PALS or Parachutes for Pets to learn more about what they do and how they help people in need. Invite a guest speaker to share with your class about their work.

Class discussion: What would you do if you had to choose between keeping a pet outside with you, or giving up your pet so you can stay warm inside? What would be some challenges in making a shelter for pets and humans together? What can we do to help people experiencing homelessness who have pets?



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
1

Still a Family

Brenda Reeves Sturgis, Illustrated by Jo-Shin Lee

About

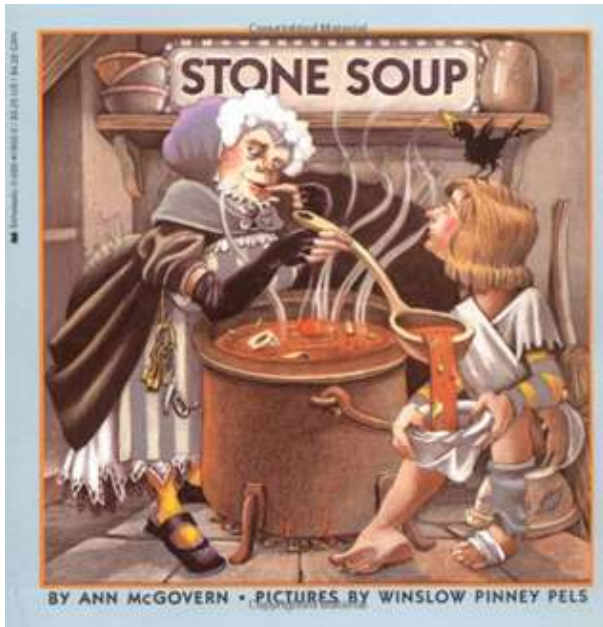
A family are split and live in 2 separate shelters (women and children, and one for men) and the little girl shares how even though they may be apart, they are still a family. The family begins the story living in separate shelters, and finishes the story still living in shelters. So many stories want to have “happy endings”, to “fix” things for their characters, but for most families struggling with poverty there are so easy fixes, and things don’t change overnight. By not changing the family’s situation, *Still a Family* reinforces the message that living in a shelter is nothing to be ashamed of, and that life carries on, no matter where you live.

Themes

Homelessness, Family

Suggested Activity:

Book a Speaker: At The Mustard Seed, we have engaging speakers that are happy to share with students about our upcoming family housing build. Email engage@theseed.ca



Grade Level
1-3

Guided Reading Level
J

Stone Soup

Ann McGovern

About

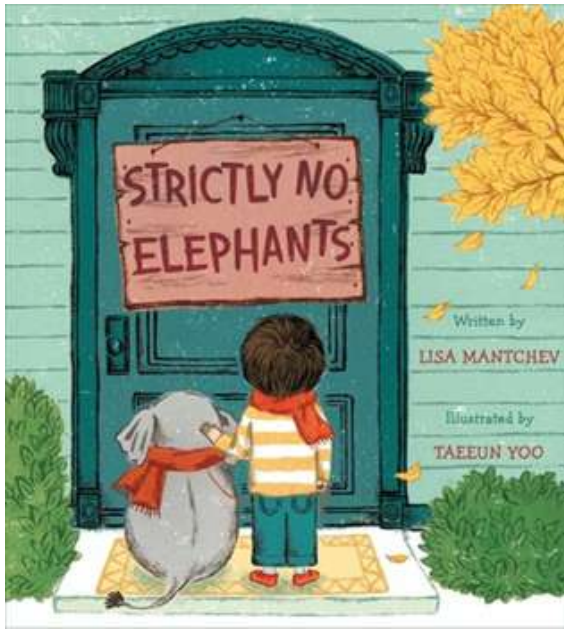
A clever young man tricks an old woman into believing that soup can be made from a stone. As the pot of water boils with the stone in it, he urges her to add more and more ingredients until the soup is a feast "fit for a king".

Themes

Charity

Suggested Activity:

Write recipes for a "classroom soup". What kind of "ingredients" are important to our class? Kindness, humility, compassion, humour, etc. How much of each? Which is the most important to our class? Work in small groups or as a class to decide on what ingredients best represent your students and values.



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
J

Strictly No Elephants

Lisa Mantchev, Illustrated by Tae-eun Yoo

About

When the local Pet Club won't admit a boy's tiny pet elephant, he finds a solution—one that involves all kinds of unusual animals in this sweet and adorable picture book.

Today is Pet Club day. There will be cats and dogs and fish, but strictly no elephants are allowed. The Pet Club doesn't understand that pets come in all shapes and sizes, just like friends. Now it is time for a boy and his tiny pet elephant to show them what it means to be a true friend.

Imaginative and lyrical, this sweet story captures the magic of friendship and the joy of having a pet.

Themes

Inclusion, Friendship

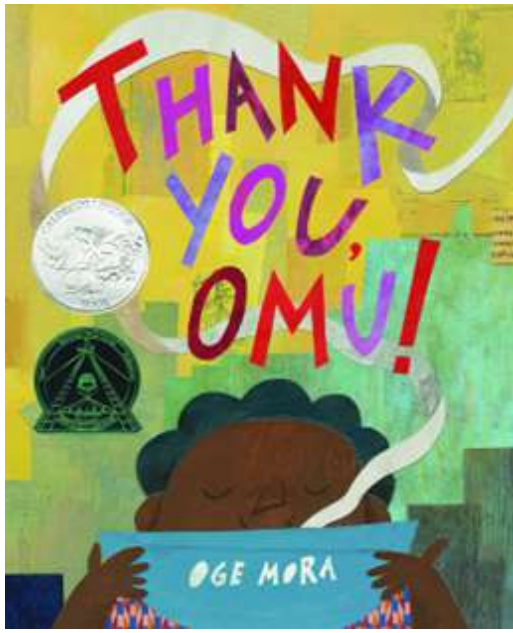
Suggested Activity:

Classroom Discussion: What do you think happens next, after the end of this story? Why would they let the boy and his elephant into the pet club? Without words, show me why you think the pet club didn't want a skunk. Show me, by the look on your face, how the boy and his elephant feel.

Cooperative Learning: Think of a pet you would like. Give your partner three clues (what color it is, where it lives, what it eats, it has a short tail, big ears, etc.) and see if they can guess your pet.

Additional Resource here:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56663dee841abafca76d6f46/t/5a73b0a4085229967126d754/1517531301674/Strictly+No+Elephants+-+formatted.pdf>



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
L

Thank you, Omu!

Oge Mora

About

Everyone in the neighborhood dreams of a taste of Omu's delicious stew! One by one, they follow their noses toward the scrumptious scent. And one by one, Omu offers a portion of her meal. Soon the pot is empty. Has she been so generous that she has nothing left for herself?

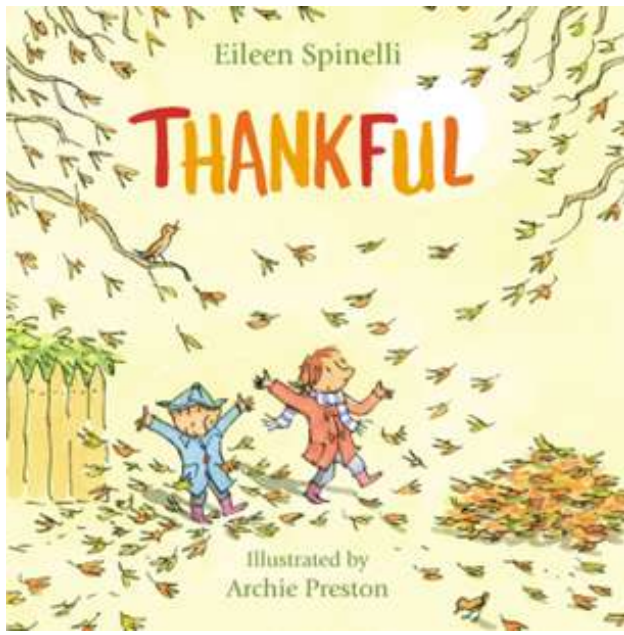
Themes

Community, Gratitude

Suggested Activity:

Writing: At the end of the story, the little boy shows his gratitude to Omu by writing a thank-you note. Talk to students about who they are thankful for and why. Then let students write a thank-you note and decorate a note to someone—a family member, a community member, or a friend. Help students distribute the cards.

Gratitude Jar: In the story, the neighbors come back to Omu's apartment to show their gratitude, or to say thank you. As a class create a gratitude jar. Then, using small slips of paper, have your students write the name of something or someone they are grateful for. Keep the jar available for your students to add to over time. When the jar is full, reread some of the notes and find a way to celebrate all of the special students in your class.



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level
K

Thankful

Eileen Spinelli, Illustrated by Archie Preston

About

Thankful, combines charming rhymes and whimsical illustrations to convey the importance of being thankful for everyday blessings. Like the gardener thankful for every green sprout, and the firefighter, for putting the fire out, children are encouraged to be thankful for the many blessings they find in their lives. Spinelli exhibits her endearing gift for storytelling with this engaging poem, reminding children how blessed and special they are. Meant to be read aloud, this heartwarming board book will be a treasured keepsake for parents and children alike.

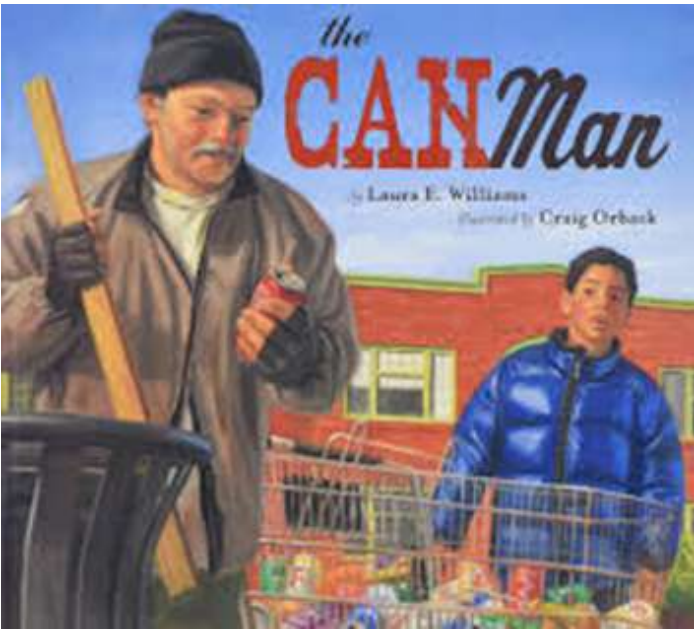
Themes

Gratitude

Suggested Activity:

Brainstorm: What things do you have to be thankful for every day? How does appreciating these things make a difference in how you see the world?

Thankful tree: Go on a walk around the school observing what we are thankful for in our school community. Have students collect small branches that have enough “arms” on it to hang thankful leaves. Place the branches in a jar in a prominent place in the classroom. You can print off copies of leaves or have students make their own leaf shapes. Punch a hole in the end of each leaf to add a loop of string or yarn for hanging. Kids can write their moments of gratitude on them. This is a fun way for students to see how many things we are all thankful for and appreciate them.



Grade Level

K-4

Guided Reading Level

P

The Can Man

Laura E. Williams, Illustrated by Craig Orback

About

Tim decides to collect cans, like the Can Man, to make money for a new skateboard. He's almost at his goal when he learns a valuable lesson that changes him.

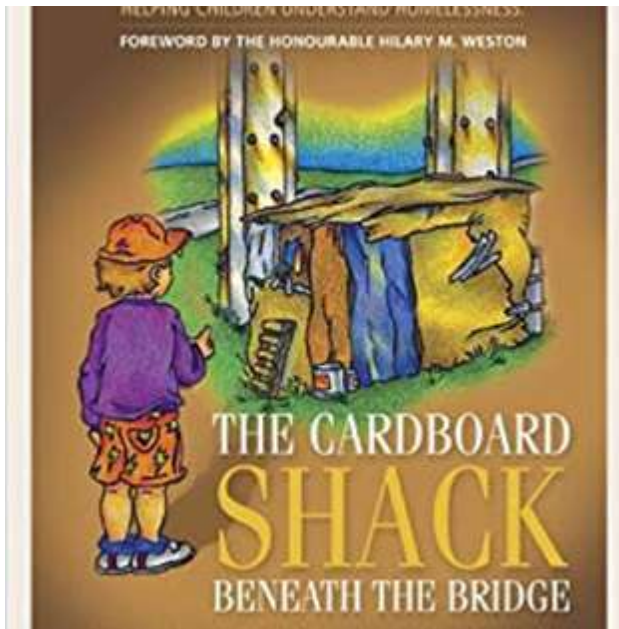
Themes

Homelessness, Poverty

Suggested Activity:

Although this is a children's fiction book, the ideas are higher level and can be used with older students to facilitate discussion, practice writing, and encourage citizenship through community projects and volunteerism.

Classroom Recycling Project: Lead the class in collecting cans and then use the money for a donation to a local helping agency. What are some things you can recycle aside from bottles? Can you collect gently used coats for the winter? What about gently used or new shoes and boots, hats, and scarves? Plan and organize a supply drive to donate to an organization. Discuss how your contribution will help others. Design fliers to advertise your project at school and in the neighbourhood and write letters to local businesses inviting them to help.



Grade Level
1-6

Guided Reading Level
L

The Cardboard Shack Beneath the Bridge

Tim Huff

About

A picture book that lays the groundwork for adults to enter in to conversations about homelessness, it's causes, and how students can help. Written in 16 stanzas, each accompanied by a colourful drawing, it gently raises questions in language a preschooler can understand and leaves it to the adult to decide where to take the discussion.

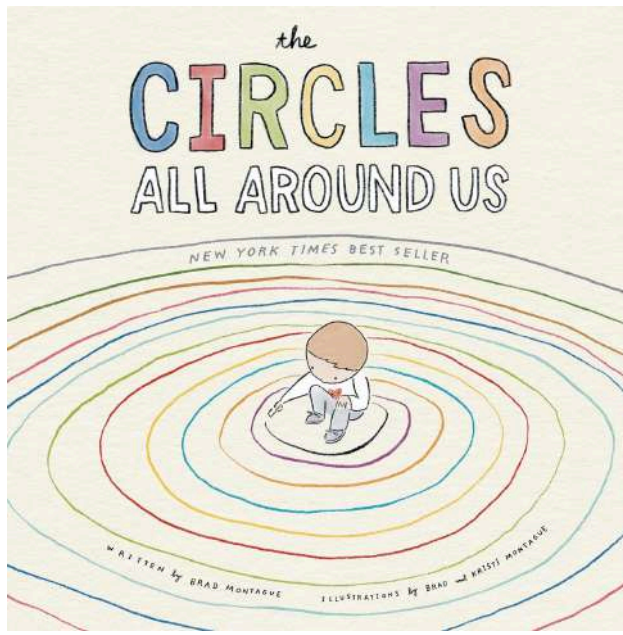
* Note—contains mention of prayer/faith

Themes

Homelessness

Suggested Activity:

Have students draw a picture or write about what kind of person might be homeless. What do they look like, think about, spend their time doing? What do they enjoy or dislike? After reading this story, have students edit or add to their original work



Grade Level
PreS-1

Guided Reading Level

The Circles All Around Us

Brad Montague, Illustrated by Brad & Kristi Montague

About

In the circles all around us, everywhere that we all go, there's a difference we can make and a love we can all show.

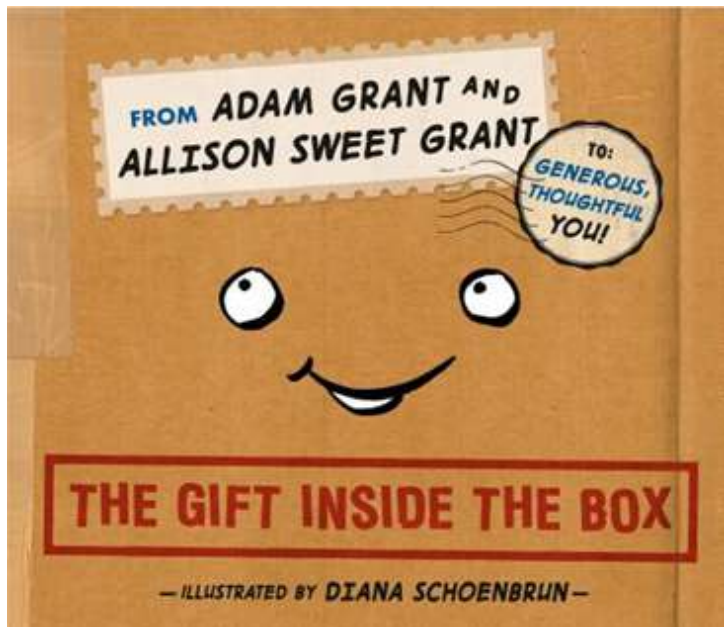
This is the story of a circle. When we're first born, our circle is very small, but as we grow and build relationships, our circle keeps getting bigger and bigger to include family, friends, neighbors, community, and beyond. Brad Montague originally created *Circles* as an Instagram video adorably narrated by his kids, and now this picture book adaptation is the perfect way to start a conversation about how to expand our worlds with kindness and inclusivity—even if it seems scary or uncomfortable.

Themes

Community, Kindness, Inclusivity

Suggested Activity:

Discussion guides and activities from the author can be found here:
<https://montagueworkshop.com/circlesguide>



Grade Level
K-3

Guided Reading Level

The Gift Inside the Box

Adam Grant & Allison Sweet Grant, Illustrated by Diana Schoenbrun

About

A mysterious gift box finds himself in search of someone to open him, but nobody seems to be the right one. After disheartening interactions with grabby kids, selfish siblings, and other single-minded would-be recipients, the box wonders if he'll ever find someone deserving of him. Could that someone be the very person who's reading the book itself?

Themes

Generosity

Suggested Activity:

Discuss: Who would you give the box to? Why? What do you think is inside?

Journal: Draw a picture of what you think is inside the box.



Grade Level

1-5

Guided Reading Level

○

The Hundred Dresses

Eleanor Estes, Illustrated by Louis Slobodkin

About

Wanda Petronski wore the same faded-blue dress to school every day. It was always clean, but it looked as though it had never been ironed properly. One day when a classmate showed up wearing a bright new dress that was much admired, Wanda said suddenly, "I have a hundred dresses at home." That had started the teasing game of dresses, which Peggy and Maddie played with Wanda. It was fun to stop Wanda on the way to school and ask, "How many dresses did you say you had?" Wanda did have the hundred dresses, and this is the story of how Peggy and Maddie came to understand about them and what the game meant to Wanda.

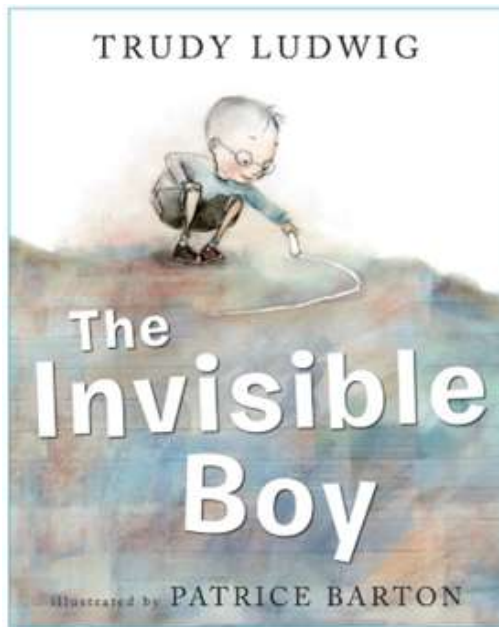
Themes

Friendship, Bullying

Suggested Activity:

Writing: Have students write a sequel to *The Hundred Dresses*. They can think about Wanda's life in the new city. Is it different from living in Boggin Heights? Do the children tease her there? Does Wanda want to return to her old home and be friends with Maddie and Peggy?

Theatre time!: Reader's Theater is a great way for students to practice reading fluently. Break the class into small groups of 3–5 children. Give each group an important scene or event from the story to create into a Readers Theater script. Students can then perform their scripts for students in the school or other grade level classes.



Grade Level
1-4

Guided Reading Level
L-M

The Invisible Boy

Trudy Ludwig, Illustrated by Patrice Barton

About

Meet Brian, the invisible boy. Nobody ever seems to notice him or think to include him in their group, game, or birthday party . . . until, that is, a new kid comes to class.

When Justin, the new boy, arrives, Brian is the first to make him feel welcome. And when Brian and Justin team up to work on a class project together, Brian finds a way to shine.

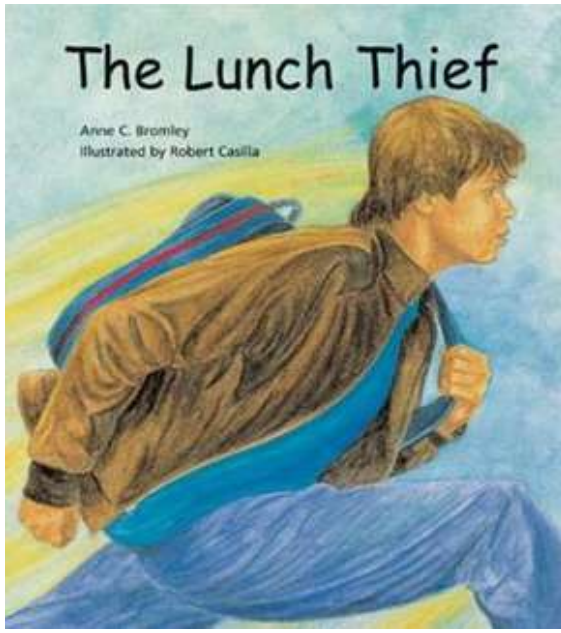
Themes

Emotions, Feelings, Self-Esteem,
Self-Reliance

Suggested Activity:

Discussion:

- How many examples in this story can you find that show Brian's invisibility?
- Which do you think is worse- being laughed at or feeling invisible? Explain.
- How many kids did it take in this story to help Brian begin to feel less invisible?
- What specifically did Justin do to make Brian feel less invisible?
- Are there any kids in your class, grade, or school who you see being treated as if they are invisible? If yes, what could you do to make them feel more valued, appreciated, or included?



Grade Level

Guided Reading Level



The Lunch Thief: A Story of Hunger, Homelessness and Friendship

Anne C Bromley, Illustrated by Robert Casilla

About

Rafael Munoz is frustrated because his and his classmates' lunches keep getting stolen by Kevin Kopeck, the new kid. But, his mama told him, "Use your mouth before your fists." So, instead of getting angry, Rafael talks to Kevin and learns that he lost everything in the wildfires. Rafael shares his lunch with Kevin and gains a new friend.

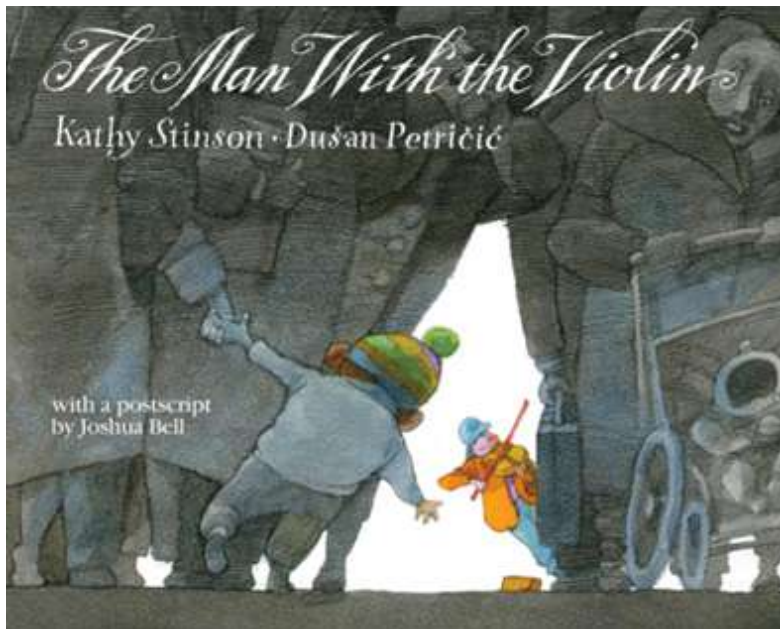
Themes

Hunger, Homelessness,
Friendship

Suggested Activity:

Classroom fundraiser: As a class raise money and buy supplies to make lunches for an organization that helps people experiencing food insecurity in your city.

Start a school food/supply pantry for students and their families who might not have enough. Collect dry/canned goods and hygiene supplies to stock the area and let your school know that the supplies are accessible to anyone who needs them.



Grade Level
K-3

Guided Reading Level

The Man with the Violin

Kathy Stinson, Illustrated by Dušan Petričić

About

When Dylan hears someone playing their violin in the subway he wants to stop and listen, but his mother and other commuters ignore the violinist completely. Based on the true story of Joshua Bell, the renowned American violinist who famously took his instrument down into the Washington, D.C. metro for a free concert

Themes

Noticing

Suggested Activity:

Kathy Stinson, the author, has some activity suggestions here:

<https://kathystinson.com/books/picture-books/the-man-with-the-violin/>



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level
L

The Most Magnificent Thing

Ashley Spires

About

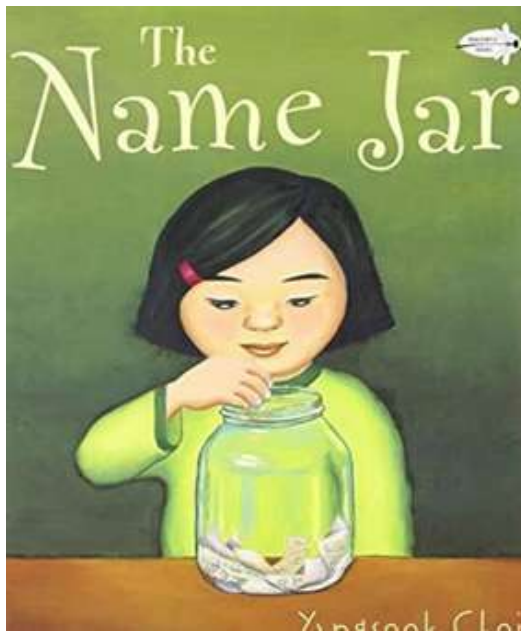
A little girl and her canine assistant set out to make The Most Magnificent Thing. But after much hard work, the end result is not what the girl had in mind. Frustrated, she quits. Her assistant suggests a long walk, and as they walk, it slowly becomes clear what the girl needs to do to succeed. A charming story that will give kids The Most Magnificent Thing: perspective!

Themes

Determination, Creativity,
Feelings

Suggested Activity:

Ask students "If you could make a magnificent thing for yourself that is not a toy, something that could help you fix your problems, what would it be?" Invite students to journal what magnificent thing they would make for themselves, why they would make it and then draw a picture of what it would look like.



Grade Level

K-3

Guided Reading Level

J-K

The Name Jar

Yangsook Choi

About

The new kid in school needs a new name! Or does she?

Being the new kid in school is hard enough, but what about when nobody can pronounce your name? Having just moved from Korea, Unhei is anxious that American kids will like her. So instead of introducing herself on the first day of school, she tells the class that she will choose a name by the following week. Her new classmates are fascinated by this no-name girl and decide to help out by filling a glass jar with names for her to pick from. But while Unhei practices being a Suzy, Laura, or Amanda, one of her classmates comes to her neighborhood and discovers her real name and its special meaning. On the day of her name choosing, the name jar has mysteriously disappeared.

Themes

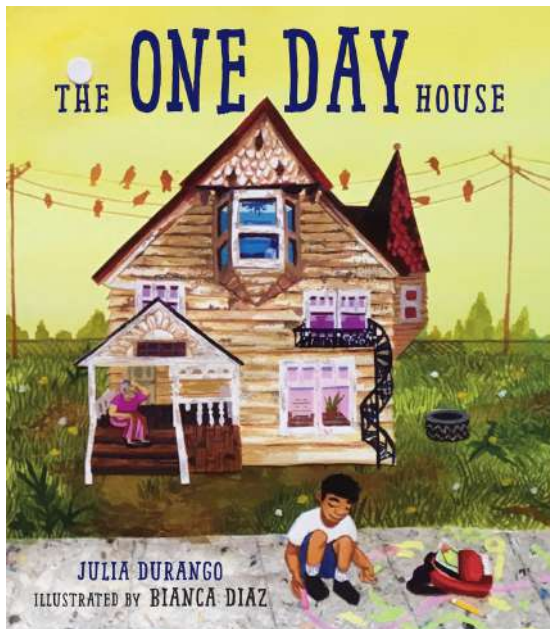
Friendship, Community, Identity

Suggested Activity:

Classroom Discussion: What did Unhei's grandmother give her before the family left Korea? Why was it important to both the grandmother and Unhei?

Unhei was teased on the bus to school. Why do you think this happened? Is there more than one reason? How can you tell by the drawing that Unhei is feeling uncomfortable on the bus? If you noticed this in real life, what would you do?

Has anyone ever had trouble pronouncing your name? Have you ever had trouble pronouncing someone else's name? What should we do when this happens? Unhei's mother says that being different is a good thing. Do you agree? Why or why not?



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level

The One Day House

Julia Durango, Illustrated by Bianca Diaz

About

Wilson dreams of all the ways he can help improve his friend Gigi's house so that she'll be warm, comfortable, and happy.

One day, friends and neighbors from all over come to help make Wilson's plans come true. Everyone volunteers to pitch in to make Gigi's house safe, clean, and pretty.

Themes

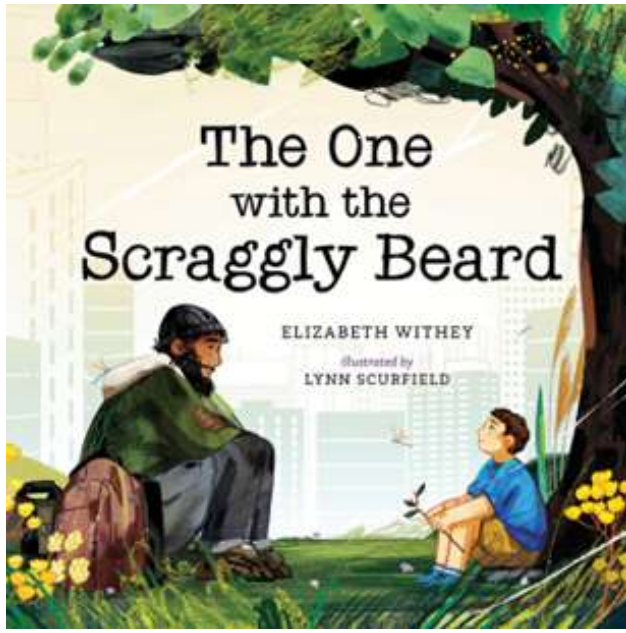
Community, Volunteering

Suggested Activity:

Discussion:

- Why do you think Wilson wanted to fix Gigi's house?
- How do you think Wilson would feel if "one day" never came and he wasn't able to fix Gigi's house? How do you think Gigi would feel?
- What do you want to do "one day" to help someone, like Wilson and the other community members help Gigi?
- What can you do to help "one day" arrive more quickly?

Journal: If you could design and build a house for a person in need that you know, what are some things you would like that person to have? Draw pictures of the house and the decorations you would put in it, and then label these things.



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level
M

The One with the Scraggly Beard

Elizabeth Withey, Illustrated by Lynn Scurfield

About

A child tries to understand the life of a man he has seen sleeping under a bridge. The boy's mother patiently answers his questions and explains how people's life paths can be so different. The child observes the things he has in common with the man and wonders where his own path will lead.

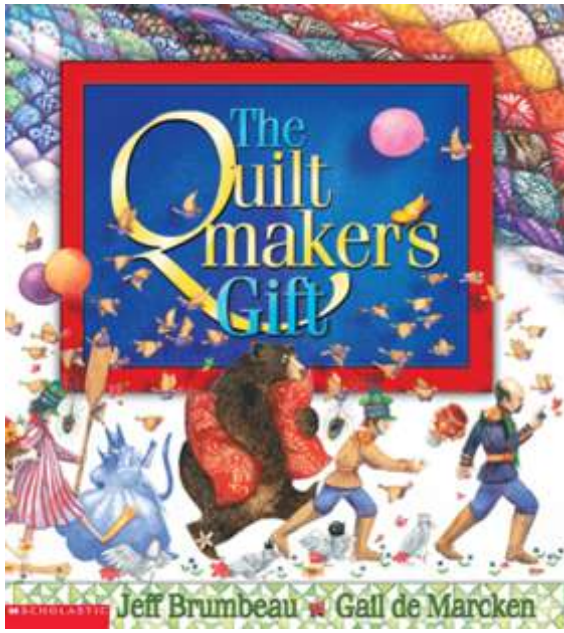
The One With the Scraggly Beard is defined by a simple narrative in which a child's curiosity and perceptiveness act as catalysts for understanding fear, suffering and resilience while exploring themes of homelessness, belonging and compassion. This unique book will speak to children and adults alike. A note from the author explains how the origin of this story is rooted in her own life.

Themes

Homelessness, Empathy

Suggested Activity:

Imagine the man under the bridge as a child and journal about his life. What do you think his favourite toy was? Who did he play with? What was his time at school like? How do you think he became homeless?



Grade Level
K-6

Guided Reading Level
P

The Quiltmaker's Gift

Jeff Brumbeau, Illustrated by Gail De Marcken

About

When a generous quiltmaker finally agrees to make a quilt for a greedy king, but only under certain conditions, she causes him to undergo a change of heart. Each page highlights a different quilt block pattern whose name relates to the unfolding story.

Themes

Generosity, Kindness

Suggested Activity:

Quilt time: Work together as a class to design and assemble a quilt to donate to a shelter. Students can design their own square with fabric sharpies, and parent volunteers can help with the assembly.

Brainstorm: with students about one thing that they own that they could give to somebody who needs it more. It could be a toy, a book, a clothing item, or a small amount of money.

THE RABBIT LISTENED



CORI DOERRFELD

Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level
P

The Rabbit Listened

Cori Doerrfeld

About

The Rabbit Listened is a tender meditation on loss. When something terrible happens, Taylor doesn't know where to turn. All the animals are sure they have the answer. The chicken wants to talk it out, but Taylor doesn't feel like chatting. The bear thinks Taylor should get angry, but that's not quite right either. One by one, the animals try to tell Taylor how to process this loss, and one by one they fail. Then the rabbit arrives. All the rabbit does is listen, which is just what Taylor needs. Whether read in the wake of tragedy or as a primer for comforting others, this is a deeply moving and unforgettable story sure to soothe heartache of all sizes.

Themes

Empathy, Emotions

Suggested Activity:

Type up the text of the book into a script. Split students into small groups and have them act out the story using their best dramatic expression. Discuss how we all need somebody to listen to us and how sometimes just being a good listener can be the best help to somebody else.



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level

The Right Place

Beatrice Masini, Illustrated by Simona Mulazzani

About

A lonely squirrel goes searching for a new home, only to discover that the best place is one where the whole community can live together. Joining Barefoot's acclaimed collection of social-emotional titles, this tale offers the perfect opportunity to start conversations about coping with loneliness, the importance of community, and what makes a place feel like home.

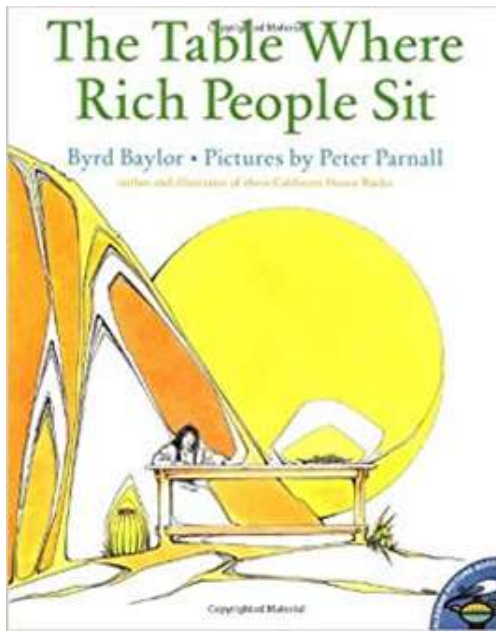
Themes

Community, Belonging,
Friendship, Loneliness

Suggested Activity:

Discussion:

- Why did Squirrel feel like his old home wasn't "the right place" anymore?
- At the end of the story, Squirrel builds a home that has a little bit of everything. What made this new place feel like the "right" one?
- Is "home" a building, or is it something else? Squirrel eventually realizes that the right place is where his friends are. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- What makes a place feel safe and happy?
- If you were going to help Squirrel build the "right place", what is one thing you would add to make it feel special?



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
T

The Table Where Rich People Sit

Byrd Baylor, Illustrated by Peter Parnall

About

A young girl debates the argument of what makes you rich – money or the things around us like family, freedom, the nature that we see in our communities, friendship, etc.

They embark on a budgeting exercise to see just how rich they really are.....and the results are quite surprising!

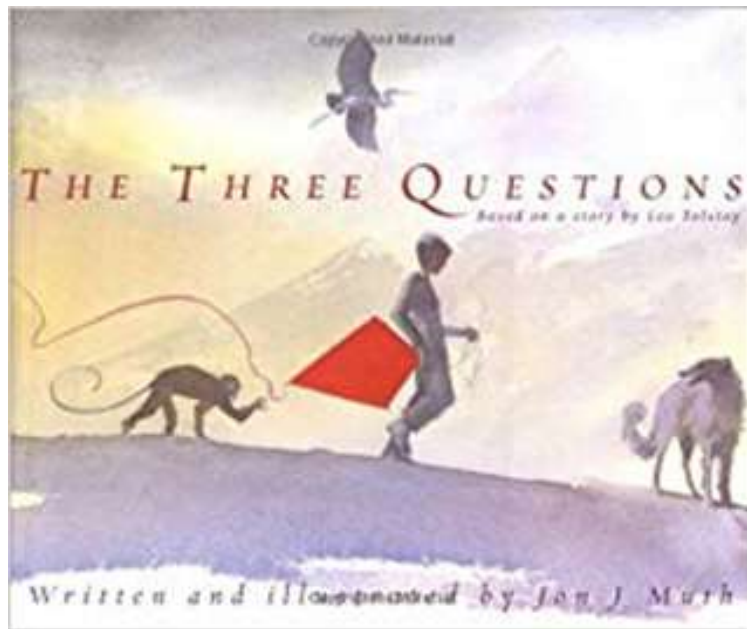
Themes

Poverty, Perspective, Gratitude

Suggested Activity:

Keep a journal: List all the things that money cannot buy, e.g. fresh air, sunrises, friendship, and discuss all the ways that we are rich.

Find Out How Rich You Are: In their journals, have students list all the things that money cannot buy (e.g. fresh air, sunrises, friendship,..) and discuss all the ways that we are rich. What amount of money do you think those things worth? Add up suggestions from your class and see how rich you are.



Grade Level

1-3

Guided Reading Level

M

The Three Questions

Jon J. Muth

About

Based on a story by Leo Tolstoy. A young boy asks: When is the best time to do things? Who is the most important one? What is the right thing to do? Find out what he learns in this charming, lyrically told story!

Themes

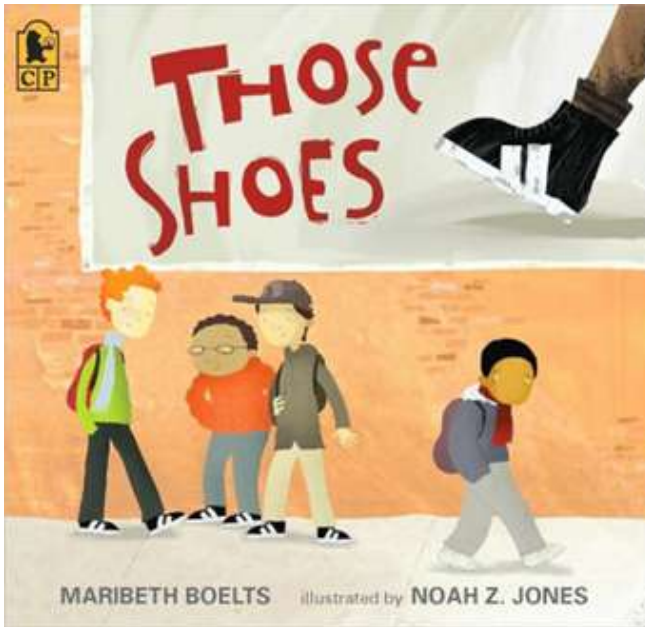
Conduct of life, Inquiry

Suggested Activity:

Learn about questions: In his article, "*What is a Good Guiding Question?*" Rob Traver states that good questions:

1. Are open ended, yet focused on a specific topic
2. Are non-judgmental, not value laden, and encourage the learner to think and ask other questions
3. Contain an emotive force or an intellectual bite such as, "When are laws fair?"
4. Are succinct, containing only a handful of words, yet demand a lot.

As a class, practice writing and asking good questions



Grade Level

1-3

Guided Reading Level

L

Those Shoes

Maribeth Boelts, Illustrated by Noah Z. Jones

About

Jeremy wants a pair of shoes to fit in with current fashion. Grandma says they don't have room for "want," just "need." Jeremy is determined, but he soon sees that the things he has — warm boots, a loving grandma, and the chance to help a friend — are worth more than the things he wants.

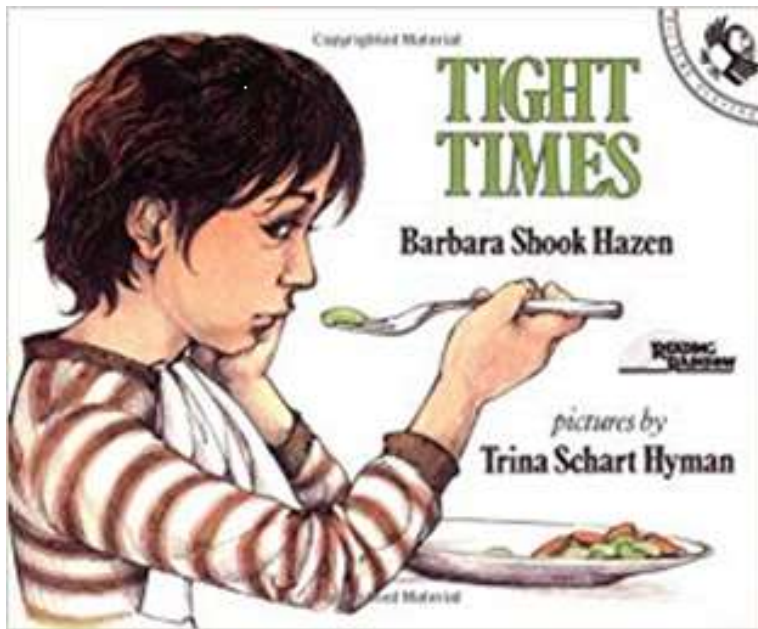
Themes

Poverty, Friendship, Wants, Needs

Suggested Activity:

Book a Speaker: The Mustard Seed offers presentations focusing on understanding why homelessness and poverty are challenges in our city today and encouraging students to find ways to engage with their community.

Book a Workshop: The Mustard Seed offers half day workshops at no cost for grades 1-12 that help students identify basic needs and the challenges many people face when trying to meet their basic needs.



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
K

Tight Times

Barbara Shook Hazen, Illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman

About

A young boy desperately wishes for a dog, however his father has lost his job and they are experiencing "tight times".

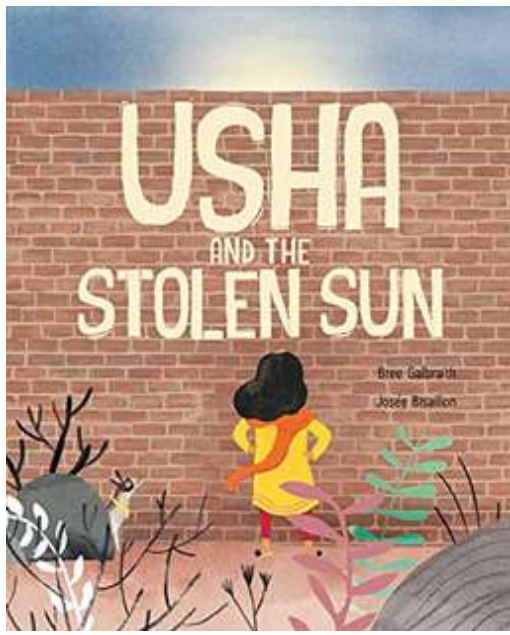
Themes

Poverty, Family

Suggested Activity:

Practice Spending: Play a token game where students must shop for a list of supplies. Provide limited tokens and then allow the class to shop and see what they buy, how much they can afford, etc. to understand "tight times." As a direct example from the book, use cereal in bulk/no name brand vs the fancier cereals in little boxes.

Create a Budget: Assign student groups of 2-4 a limited amount of money and provide them with a list of things to purchase (rent, new clothes, groceries, a gift for a friend, new video game, etc.) and how much each item costs. As students make difficult choices about their priorities, discuss how somebody could get help paying for rent or if they could access the food bank. Ask students why they made the decisions they did, and discuss the different choices made by different groups



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
K

Usha and the Stolen Sun

Bree Gailbraith, Illustrated by Josée Bisailon

About

Usha lives in a town where the sun hasn't shone for as long as anyone can remember. Only her grandfather remembers its brilliance and tells Usha stories about the time before other people took the sun away, building a wall to keep it all to themselves. So Usha decides to do something and sets off in search of the sun.

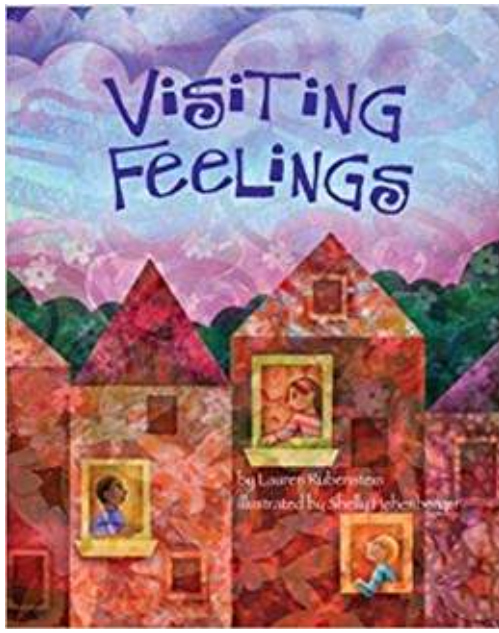
Themes

Compassion, Perseverance

Suggested Activity:

Classroom Discussion:

- When Grandfather was little, a wall was built to block the sun from his town. How do you think life would be different if you didn't have access to direct sunlight? What about access to clean air? Or fresh water?
- Usha has never seen the sun. How does she know she deserves it? Do we have basic rights as human beings? Should all human beings share the same rights? If so, can you think of any examples?
- When a system of fairness doesn't work for everyone, is it possible to change it? Have you heard of ways in your family, community, or country that people have changed what is considered fair or unfair? Have you experienced, heard, or seen unfair situations in your life?



Grade Level
K-3

Guided Reading Level
L

Visiting Feelings

Lauren Rubenstein, Illustrated by Shelly Hehenberger

About

An open book which invites children to explore their feelings with intentionality and mindfulness. It's an invitation to accept feelings and explore their in a sensory manner – how they look, smell, feel to the touch, sound, etc.

Themes

Emotions, Feelings

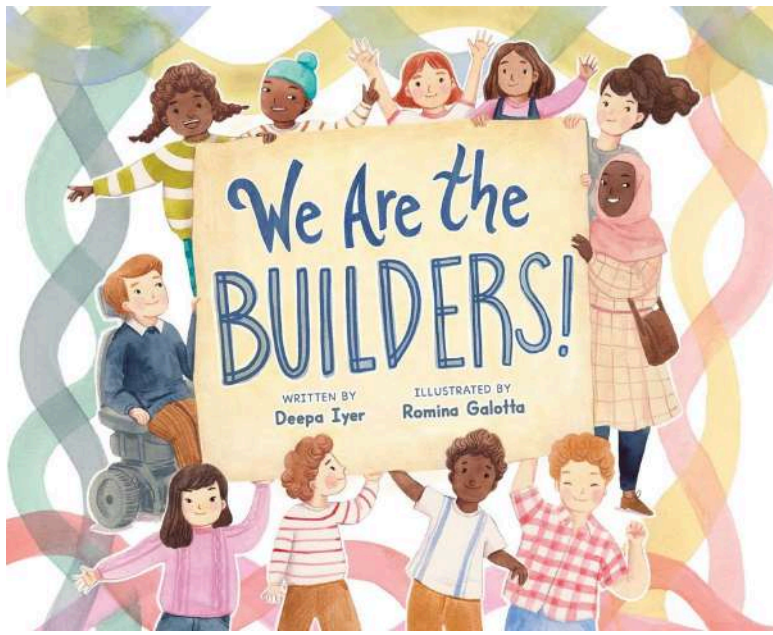
Suggested Activity:

Start a healthy relationships or friendship group: Explore feelings, how they come into the day, how we experience them, what reactions we have, and how to manage them

Practice Poetry: This is a great poetry mentor text for older students (grade 4-5)

Practice Yoga: Standing poses: Star (proud); Mountain (strong); Tree (steady and focused)

Art project: Buy small jewelry boxes from the dollar store. Have students decorate the outside to represent how they think people see them, and have them paint the inside with colours that represent their feelings and emotions that people might not usually see. Remind students that they can use whatever colours they like represent each emotion (for example, blue could represent sadness but could also represent calm or peace.)



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level

We Are the Builders!

Deepa Iyer, Illustrated by Romina Galotta

About

It's Community Day in a close-knit, diverse neighborhood, and everybody is pitching in to help one another. All the kids want to know where they fit in. Could they be builders, restoring old furniture for new neighbors? Caregivers, nurturing friends who are sad or lonely? Frontline responders, preparing for emergencies?

What they discover is that there's a place for every person, no matter their skills or interests—and that collaboration is what makes their community strong.

Themes

Community, Citizenship, Social Action

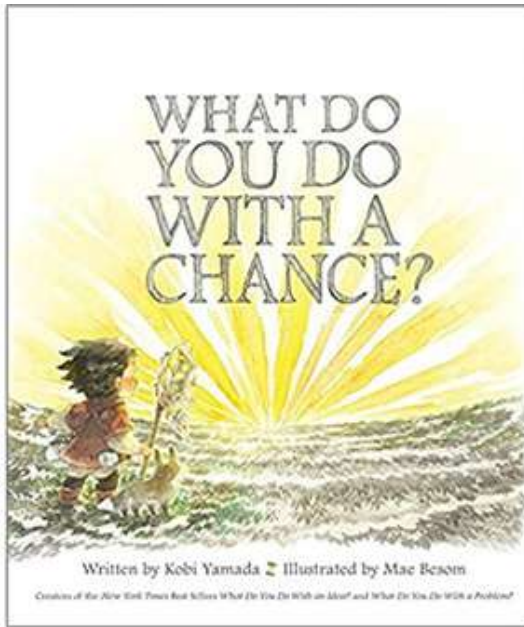
Suggested Activity:

Explore the Social Change Map here: <https://www.socialchangemap.com/>

Discussion:

- What happens when Ramla and the children play their various roles? How does their community change?
- What role is your favourite and why? When you play your favourite role, how do you feel? How do others feel?
- Do you know people in your family, school, neighbourhood, and community who play different roles?

Journal: All of us care about the world in some way and want to make it a better place. Draw a picture or write about how you'd like your community to change.



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
K

What Do You Do with a Chance?

Kobi Yamada, Illustrated by Mae Besom

About

A child is visited by his first chance and, unsure what to do with it, he lets it go. Later on, when a new chance arrives he reaches for it, but this time he misses and falls. Embarrassed and afraid, he begins ignoring each new chance that comes by, even though he still wants to take them. Then one day he realizes that he doesn't need to be brave all the time, just at the right time, to find out what amazing things can happen when he takes a chance.

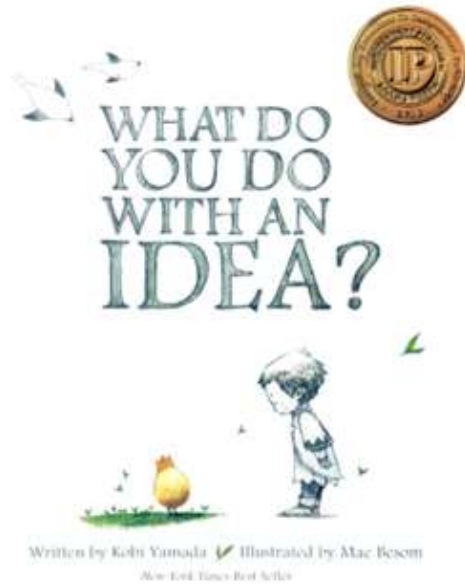
Themes

Self-Reliance, Self-Esteem

Suggested Activity:

Classroom Discussion:

What kind of things might be risks? What are risks we should take? What about risks we shouldn't take? Have you ever been too scared to take a chance? Has there been a time that you took a chance even though you were scared? What happened? How did you feel? What opportunity currently exists in our lives/community/school? How can we make the most of these opportunities? What advice would you give to others when presented with a specific opportunity?



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
K

What Do You Do with an Idea?

Kobi Yamada, Illustrated by Mae Besom

About

What do you do with an idea? Especially an idea that's different, or daring, or a little wild? This is the story of one brilliant idea and the child who helps to bring it into the world. It's a story for anyone, at any age, who's ever had an idea that seemed too big, too odd, too difficult. It's a story to inspire you to welcome that idea, to give it space to grow, and to see what happens next.

Themes

Creativity, Self-Actualization

Suggested Activity:

Art: Sketching with black/white and some color, self-portrait. Resources for Portrait Activity: http://www.lincolncottage.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/idea-portrait_web.pdf

Classroom Discussion: What are ideas? Why are ideas important? Where do ideas come from? Why do we have ideas? What do you do with an idea? How can we see things from different perspectives?



Grade Level
PreS-1

Guided Reading Level
K

What Do You Do with a Problem?

Kobi Yamada, Illustrated by Mae Besom

About

A unique perspective on identifying how a problem can seem so huge it threatens to swallow you up but when you tackle it, you may find a golden opportunity to learn and grow.

Themes

Problem Solving, Self-Actualization

Suggested Activity:

Classroom Discussion: As a class spend some time looking for opportunities that can be found in problems. Revisit the book and talk about how the boy discovered opportunity hidden behind his growing problem. Ask students to think of and share some examples of opportunities that might be hiding in every day problems. Share a couple of examples to get them started. For example, you might discuss:

- If I run out of a certain ingredient I need to make what I planned for dinner, the hidden opportunity would be that I'll create something new and exciting to cook.
- If I have the problem that my car has run out of gas, the hidden opportunity would be that I'll get some good exercise walking or biking to work.



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
L

What's My Superpower?

Aviaq Johnston, Illustrated by Tim Mack

About

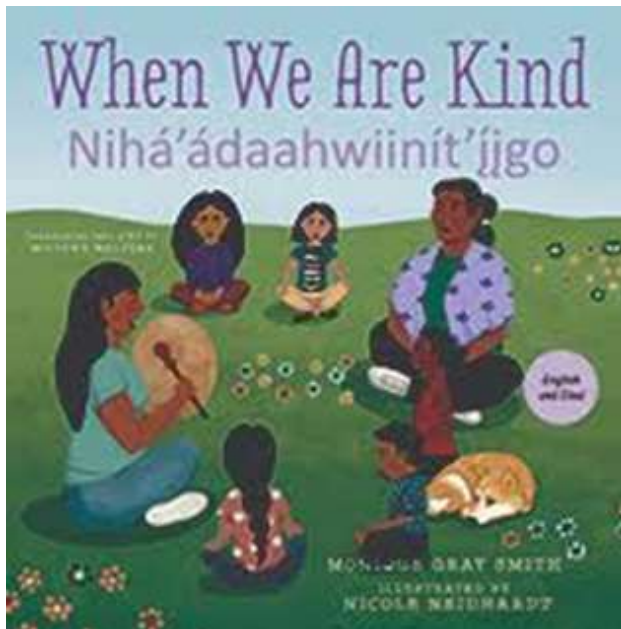
Nalvana feels like all of her friends have some type of superpower. She has friends with super speed (who always beat her in races), friends with super strength (who can dangle from the monkey bars for hours), and friends who are better than her at a million other things. Nalvana thinks she must be the only kid in town without a superpower. But then her mom shows Nalvana that she is unique and special, and that her superpower was right in front of her all along.

Themes

Self-Acceptance, BIPOC,
Inclusion

Suggested Activity:

Help students identify positive traits in themselves and one another (kind, big smile, funny, creative, resilience, respect, courage, empathy) and design a drawing or craft that depicts and explains their "superpower."



Grade Level
PreS-1

Guided Reading Level
G

When We Are Kind

Monique Gray Smith, Illustrated by Nicole Neidhardt

About

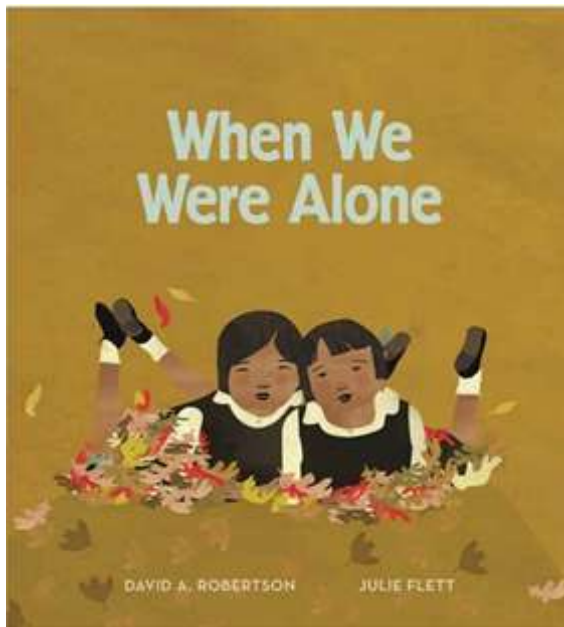
When We Are Kind celebrates simple acts of everyday kindness and encourages children to explore how they feel when they initiate and receive acts of kindness in their lives. Celebrated author Monique Gray Smith has written many books on the topics of resilience and reconciliation and communicates an important message through carefully chosen words for readers of all ages.

Themes

Kindness, Indigenous, Generosity, Responsibility

Suggested Activity:

Have students trace their hands in their journals. Brainstorm a list of kind things they can do at home, at school, in their communities, and to take care of themselves. Have students write one kind thing they can do in each finger & the thumb and decorate the page.



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level
○

When We Were Alone

David Robertson, Illustrated by Julie Flett

About

A young girl notices things about her grandmother that make her curious. Why does her grandmother have long, braided hair and beautifully coloured clothing? Why does she speak Cree and spend so much time with her family? As she asks questions, her grandmother shares her experiences in a residential school, when all of these things were taken away.

Themes

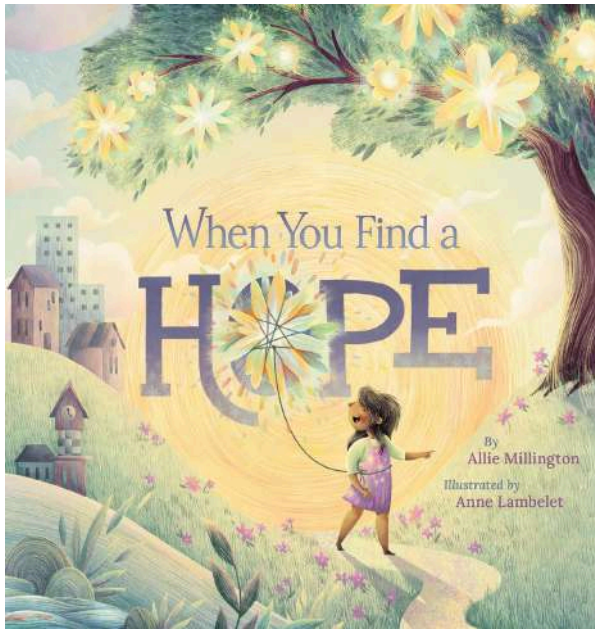
Indigenous, Residential Schools

Suggested Activity:

Discussion: Who is part of your family? What family traditions do you have? How do you connect with your culture?

Activity: List important things and then illustrate what would happen if they were taken away.

Create an art piece inspired by the book's art Julie Flett: <https://www.julieflett.com/>



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level

When You Find a Hope

Allie Millington, Illustrated by Anne Lambelet

About

Experience the improbable beauty of a shattered hope born anew in this magical tale about a young girl, a tree full of hopes, and the power of perseverance.

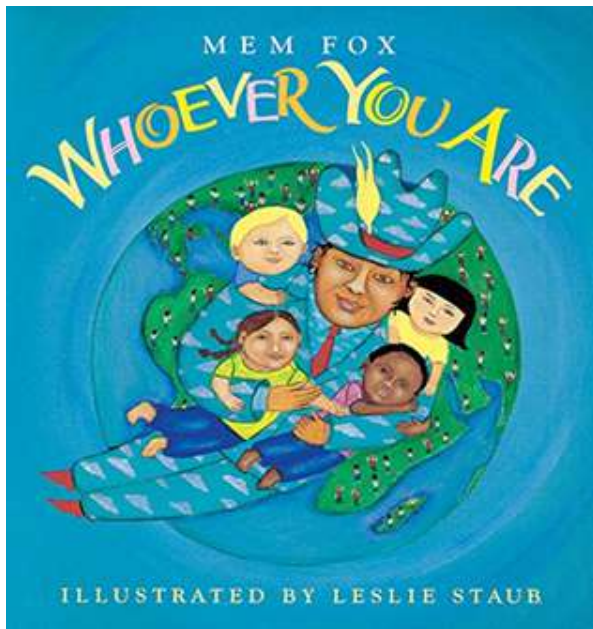
Themes

Emotions, Feelings, Social Themes

Suggested Activity:

Write a hope letter: Have students write a letter to their future self. You could tell your future self what you are feeling in this moment, and the hopes and dreams you have. Seal letters in an envelope, then give students their letter back after a period of time. This could be in a month, three months, or more!

Art project: Gather various images, magazines, stickers, etc. and instruct students to look for symbols of hope and create a collage!



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
1

Whoever You Are

Mem Fox, Illustrated by Leslie Staub

About

Every day all over the world, children are laughing and crying, playing and learning, eating and sleeping. They may not look the same. They may not speak the same language. Their lives may be quite different. But inside, they are all alike. Stirring words and bold paintings weave their way around our earth, across cultures and generations.

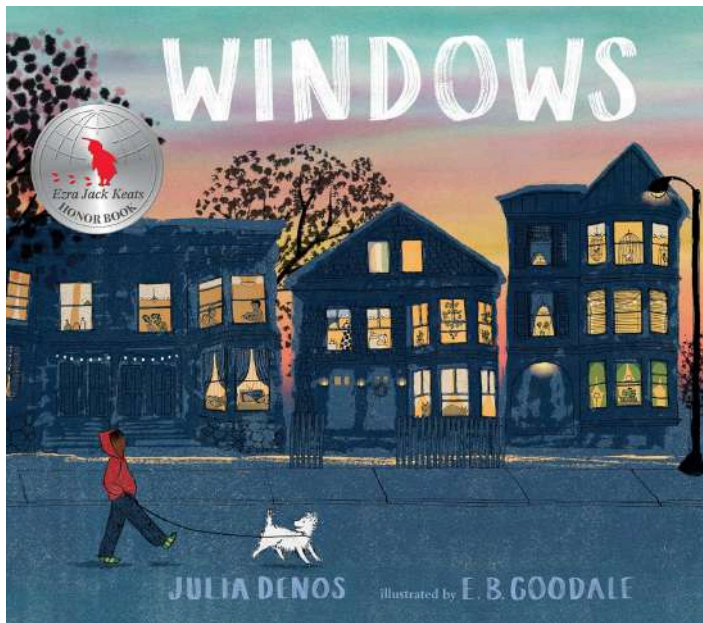
Themes

Diversity, Inclusion

Suggested Activity:

Venn Diagram: Make a class VENN diagram and identify the following types of communities or groups students belong to and their similarities and differences

- What helps us to recognize different groups or communities?
- In what ways do we belong to more than one group or community at the same time?
- In what ways do we benefit from belonging to groups and communities?



Grade Level
PreS-2

Guided Reading Level
L

Windows

Julia Denos, Illustrated by E. B. Goodale

About

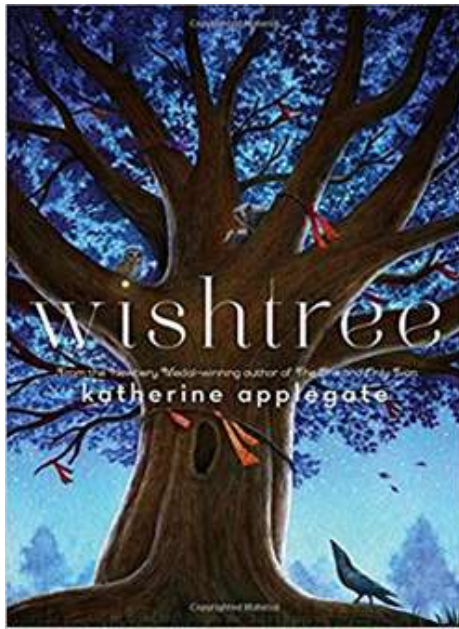
Walking his dog at dusk, one boy catches glimpses of the lives around him in this lovely ode to autumn evenings, exploring your neighborhood, and coming home.

Themes

Community, Safety, Belonging

Suggested Activity:

Journal: Have students draw a picture of one of the windows in the story and write a sentence about it. On another page, have students draw another window- one from their own home and write a sentence about what someone would see if they looked in their window. Share with another student and compare how the windows are similar and/or different.



Grade Level

3-7

Guided Reading Level

T

Wishtree

Katherine Applegate

About

Red is an oak tree who is many rings old. Red is the neighborhood "wishtree"—people write their wishes on pieces of cloth and tie them to Red's branches. Along with her crow friend Bongo and other animals who seek refuge in Red's hollows, this "wishtree" watches over the neighborhood. You might say Red has seen it all. Until a new family moves in. Not everyone is welcoming, and Red's experiences as a wishtree are more important than ever.

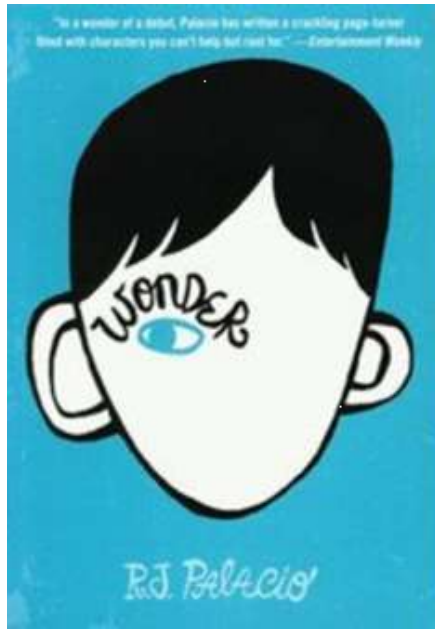
Themes

Community, Friendship,
Immigration, Empathy

Suggested Activity:

Imagine Your Tree's Story: Red shares an abundance of experience and knowledge in this volume. Pick a special tree near your home, your school, or within your community. What stories would it tell? Support your story with truths related to your family or community history.

Write a New Ending: In *Wishtree*, the community designates Red a Heritage Tree. What could have happened if Red was cut down? How would that have changed Samar and her family's relationship with their community? Imagine Red was cut down and was transformed into a large pavilion for a local park. Could Red still have brought the community peace in a new way? What other tree products bring people and communities together?



Grade Level
3-7

Guided Reading Level
V

Wonder

R.J. Palacio

About

August Pullman was born with a facial difference that, up until now, has prevented him from going to a mainstream school. Starting 5th grade at Beecher Prep, he wants nothing more than to be treated as an ordinary kid—but his new classmates can't get past Auggie's extraordinary face. *Wonder*, now a #1 New York Times bestseller and included on the Texas Bluebonnet Award master list, begins from Auggie's point of view, but soon switches to include his classmates, his sister, her boyfriend, and others. These perspectives converge in a portrait of one community's struggle with empathy, compassion, and acceptance.

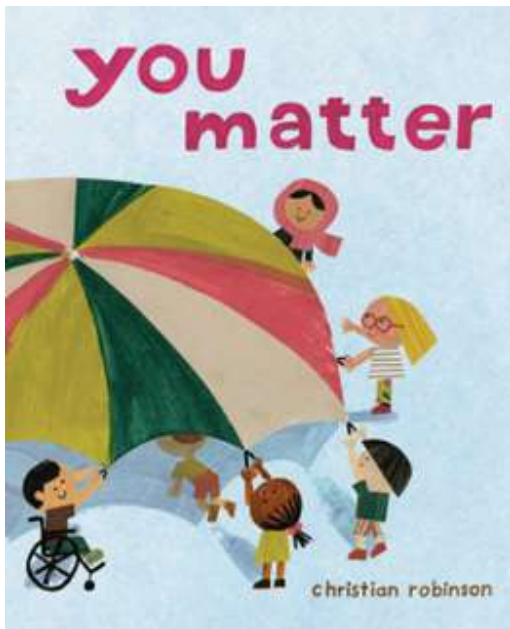
Themes

Self-Acceptance, Inclusion

Suggested Activity:

Classroom Discussion: Overcoming challenges—Auggie's attendance at Beecher Prep creates issues for students, parents, teachers, and the principal. What are some of the challenges that arise? How does each group of individuals overcome the challenges? What role does Auggie play in either helping or hurting the situation? What lessons are learned because of Auggie's attendance at the school?

Additional resources here: <https://sites.prh.com/wonder>



Grade Level
PreS-3

Guided Reading Level
J

You Matter

Christian Robinson

About

In this full, bright, and beautiful picture book, many different perspectives around the world are deftly and empathetically explored—from a pair of bird-watchers to the pigeons they're feeding. Young readers will be drawn into the luminous illustrations inviting them to engage with the world in a new way and see how everyone is connected, and that everyone matters.

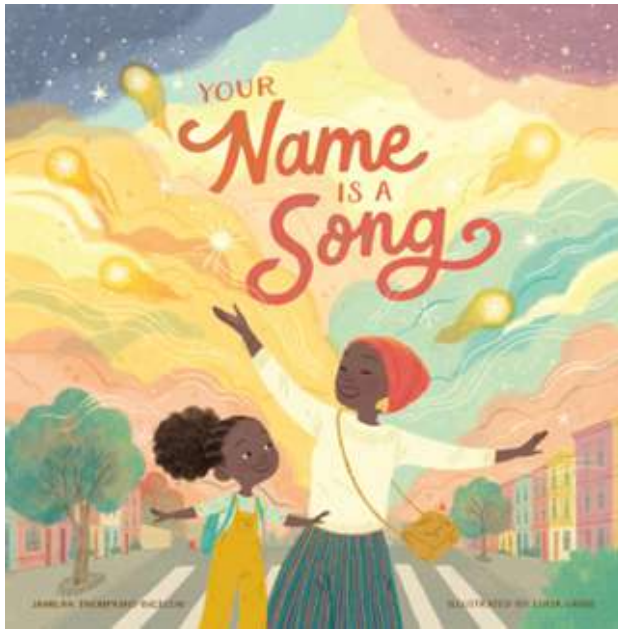
Themes

Self-Esteem, Self-Acceptance,
Diversity

Suggested Activity:

Class Discussion: Work together as a class to define the word "value". Discuss who and what has value. Who decides? Can different people value different things? Can value change?

Mind map: Create a web of all the things that matter to your class and then brainstorm how we care for and show what we value.



Grade Level
K-4

Guided Reading Level

Your Name Is a Song

Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow, Illustrated by Luisa Uribe

About

Frustrated by a day full of teachers and classmates mispronouncing her beautiful name, a little girl tells her mother she never wants to come back to school. In response, the girl's mother teaches her about the musicality of African, Asian, Black-American, Latinx, and Middle Eastern names on their lyrical walk home through the city. Empowered by this newfound understanding, the young girl is ready to return the next day to share her knowledge with her class. *Your Name is a Song* is a celebration to remind all of us about the beauty, history, and magic behind names.

Themes

BIPOC, Inclusion

Suggested Activity:

Classroom Discussion: Why is it important to know someone's name? What does your name mean? What are some ways we can make sure we know and use everyone's names properly?

Partner Sharing: Have students share with a partner or the class what their name means, if they were named after someone/something, if there is a cultural component to their name, and how to pronounce it properly.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING

GRADE SCHOOLS



PRESENTATIONS

Time: 20 minutes – 1 hour (age/grade dependent)

Audience: All ages

Details: Online or In-class Presentation | No cost

The Mustard Seed offers presentations focusing on understanding why homelessness and poverty are challenges in our city today and encouraging students to find ways to engage with their community. We present to individual classes as well as entire schools and can tailor a presentation to your classes' learning or specific topics if requested.

WORKSHOPS

Time: 2-3 hours

Audience: Grades 1-12

Details: In-class or Downtown | No cost, item donations appreciated | Bussing not included

The Mustard Seed offers half-day workshops that can be hosted at The Mustard Seed Downtown location or in your schools. These workshops allow an in-depth focus on topics related to poverty and homelessness such as affordable housing, basic needs, employment, food security, and stereotypes and destigmatization

SEEDschool

A program of The Mustard Seed in partnership with Campus Calgary/Open Minds, which provides Calgary teachers the opportunity to move their classes to The Mustard Seed for an entire week of curriculum-based experience, designed to meet the needs of each individual learner. Teachers design and implement a year-long interdisciplinary study that uses the week at the site as a catalyst for learning.

For more information and to book in with our team, please contact Engage@theseed.ca