



## **Educator's Book List**

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

### A note about this resource

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

Most 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 [CommunityEngagement@theseed.ca](mailto:CommunityEngagement@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                             |

Books Listed by Minimum Recommended Grade Level  
(click on a section or book title you're interested in)

## Pre K & K+

A Chair for my Mother  
Counting on Community  
I Can Hear The Sun  
The Cardboard Shack Beneath the Bridge  
Enemy Pie  
Have You Filled A Bucket Today?  
Hug Machine  
In My Heart  
Last Stop on Market Street  
On Our Street: Our First Talk About Poverty  
Say Hello  
Something Beautiful  
Still a Family  
Stone Soup  
Strictly No Elephants  
Thankful  
The Most Magnificent Thing  
The Quiltmaker's Gift  
The Rabbit Listened  
The Three Questions  
Tight Times  
What's My Superpower?  
Visiting Feelings

## Grade 1+

A Shelter in Our Car  
Fly Away Home  
If You Find a Rock  
Love Is All Around Calgary  
Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed  
Shi-shi-etko  
Shoebox Sam  
The Can Man  
The Family Under The Bridge  
The Invisible Boy

The Lunch Thief  
Those Shoes  
What Do You Do With a Chance?  
What Do You Do With an Idea?  
What Do You Do With a Problem?  
Whoever You Are

## Grade 3+

I Am Not a Number  
IF  
Mwâkwa Talks to the Loon  
The Hundred Dresses  
The Table Where Rich People Sit  
Wishtree  
Wonder

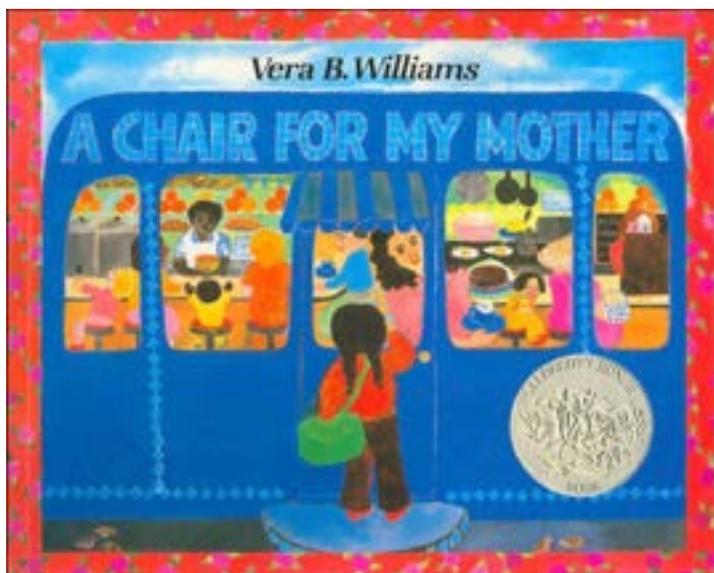
## Grade 6+

Also Known as Harper

## Grade 9+

Almost Home  
Tell Them Who I Am

Minimum  
Grade Level:  
Pre K & K +



Grade Level

Pre K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

M

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Read aloud K - grade 2

Independent reading grade 2.5 +

# 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.

## Significant Themes

**Poverty and Loss** *"There was a big fire in our other house. All our chairs burned. So did our sofa and so did everything else."*

**Community** *"The first day we moved in, the neighbours brought pizza, cake, and ice cream.... The very old man next door gave us a bed from when his children were little"*

**Saving Money** *"Every time, I put half of my money into the jar."*

Additional themes: Family, perseverance, joy, gratitude.

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

### Grade 1 connections

**Social:** My world [my home/my community]

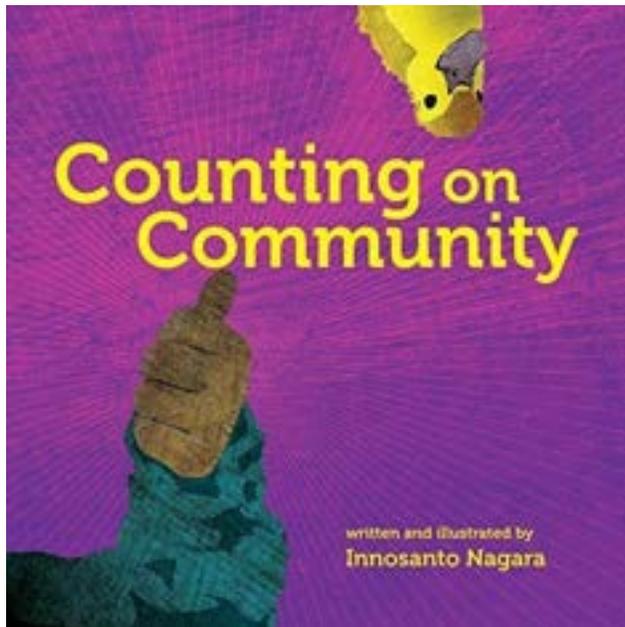
**Health:** Helping others/ volunteering

### Suggested activity:

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 2 connections

Express ideas and develop understanding, contribute relevant ideas



Grade Level

Pre K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

M

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Read aloud K - grade 2

Independent reading grade 2.5 +

## Counting on Community

*Innosanto Nagara*

### About

Counts from 1 – 10 the good things about a community

### Significant Themes

Community, citizenship and identity. Identifying the good within a community

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

### Pre K & K

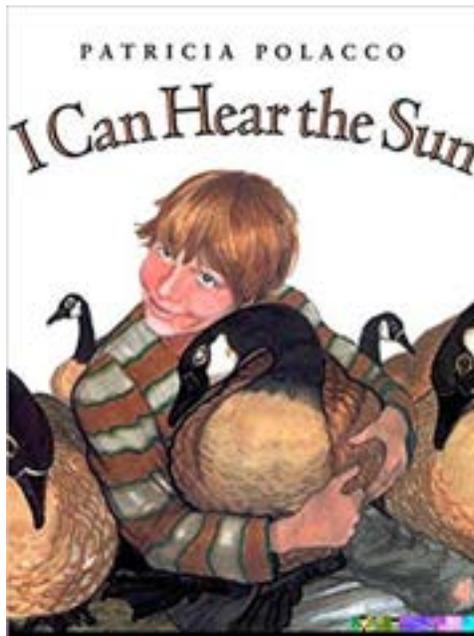
Focus on identity: Who am I? Where do I belong in my community?

### Grade 1 social

What makes a community? How do I fit in? Students will work to understand the benefits and responsibilities of living in a community, while appreciating the differences in others. They'll also explore the history of your family and community. They'll consider their own growth and how they are affected by community members. Develop age-appropriate behaviour for social involvement as responsible citizens contributing to their community.

### Suggested activity:

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



Grade Level

Pre K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

P

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Excellent for rich discussion content

Read aloud pre K—grade 3

Independent reading grade 4+

# 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.

## Significant Themes

**Loneliness** *“He didn’t smile or talk or play. He just sat for hours alone, and watched the geese.”*

**Friendship** *“Both of them sat for a while and watched the geese together... they walked together, ate together, and dreamed together”*

**Homelessness, animals, caring for others**

**Faith, hope** *“All you gotta do is believe!”*

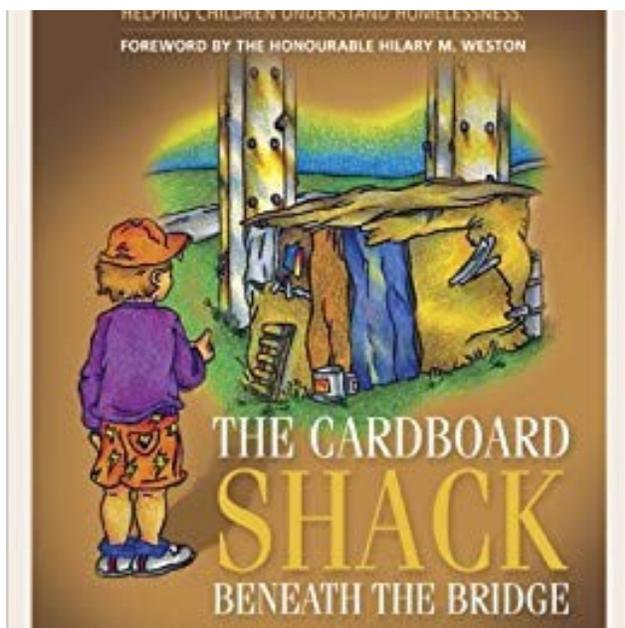
## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

**Language Arts:** Fairy Tales/Folklore/Modern Myth

Students use their language skills to describe things in greater detail – rich vocabulary development and lots of new words

**Suggested activity:**

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



Grade Level

Pre K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

L

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Read aloud K–grade 3

Independent reading grade 4+

## 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.

### Significant Themes

**Shelter:** *"It may look dark and very small, unlike the home you know, but made for shade and feeling safe, it blocks the rain and snow"*

**Compassion:** *"No matter what you see or hear, one thing is always true: each one without a house and home was once a child like you"*

**Action:** *"While some need shelter, food or clothes, some simply want a smile. And if you're with a grown-up, you may just talk a while"*

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

### Global Citizenship

Students discuss how their actions might affect people elsewhere in the world and how the actions of others might affect them. Consider the needs and points of view of others. Work and play in harmony with others to create a safe and caring environment.

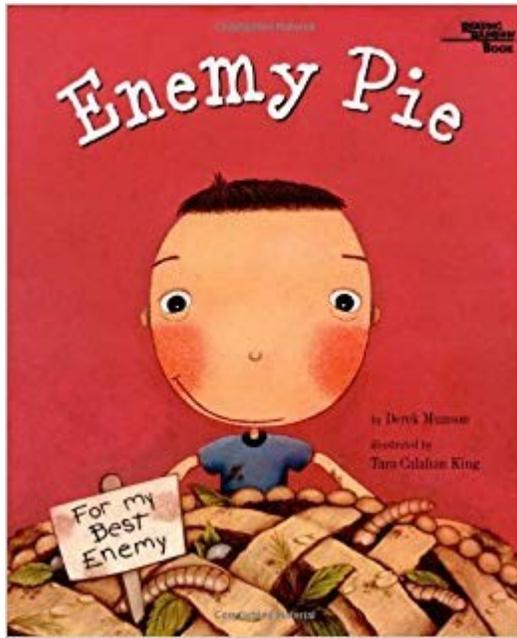
### Faith-Based Connections

Beatitudes review - "Blessed are the poor"

Discussion guide at the end of the book could help group discussion sessions

### 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  
Pre K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
L/M

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud K–grade 2  
Independent reading grade 2.5 +

## Enemy Pie

*Derek Munson*

### 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.

### Significant Themes

Facing challenges, friendship, community, making judgments, perspective:

*“In order for it to work, you need to spend a day with your enemy.*

*Even worse, you have to be nice to him. It’s not easy.”*

*“It was strange, but I was kind of having fun with my enemy.”*

*“Maybe Jeremy Ross wasn’t so bad after all”*

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

Grade 5 Science: Chemistry (baking/recipes)

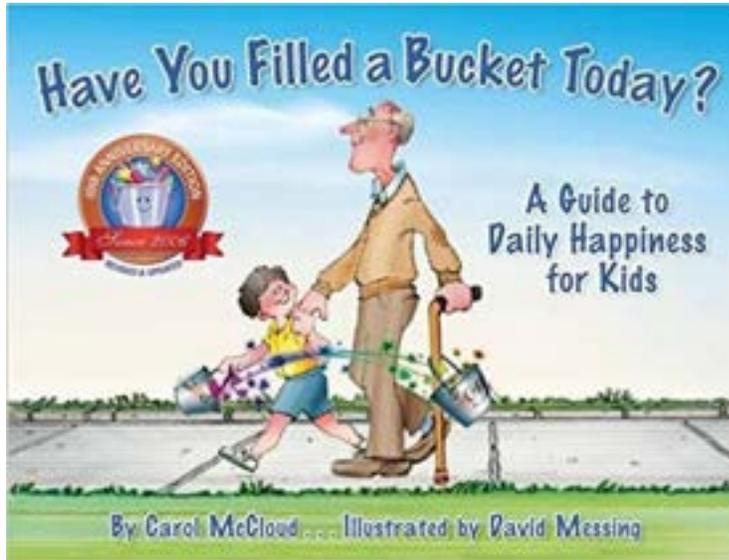
### Suggested activities:

Discuss how sharing our food with others creates community and makes others feel loved and welcome

Brainstorm how students could work together to bake at home (or school) and share their treats with some body in the school or neighbourhood who needs to be shown kindness or appreciation

Collect food donations for the food bank

Make sandwiches as a class to donate to a local homeless shelter



Grade Level

K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

I – P

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Read aloud

# Have You Filled A Bucket Today? A Guide To Daily Happiness For Kids

*Carol McCloud*

## 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."

## Significant Themes

**Positive actions, kindness, appreciation, love** *"You fill a bucket when you show love to someone, when you say or do something kind, or even when you give someone a smile"*

**Bullying** *"You dip into a bucket when you make fun of someone, when you say or do mean things, or even when you ignore someone."*

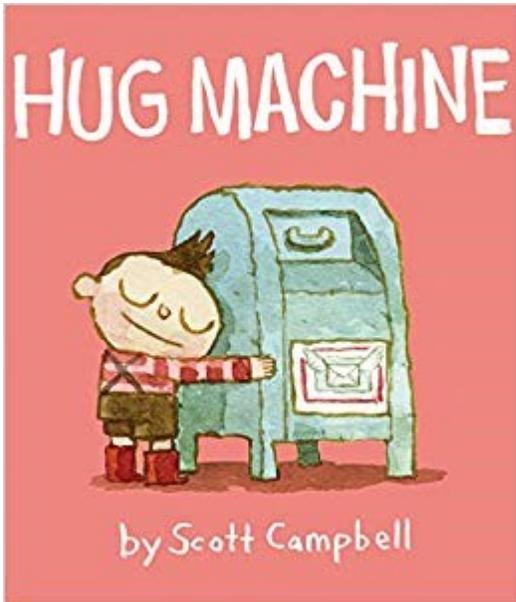
**Altruism** *"When you fill someone's bucket, you fill your own bucket, too!"*

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

Suggested activities:

Bucket Filling Projects - <http://bucketfillers101.com/>

Extension Lesson - [http://www.librarysparks.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/lsp\\_cha\\_bucket\\_nov14.pdf](http://www.librarysparks.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/lsp_cha_bucket_nov14.pdf)



Grade Level

K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

J

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Not Recommended for ELL

## 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!

### Significant Themes

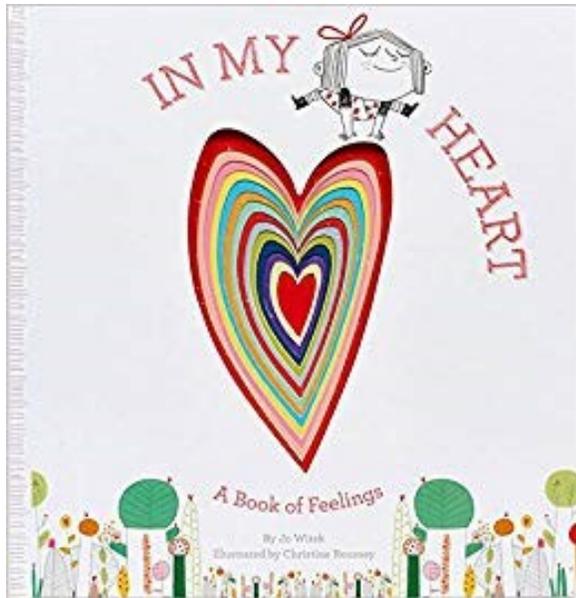
**Showing kindness**

*"My hugs calm people down. They cheer them up"*

**Love, empathy, belonging, positive message of acceptance and welcome**

### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

Free resource: [https://d28hgpri8am2if.cloudfront.net/tagged\\_assets/15265/hugmachineactivities.pdf](https://d28hgpri8am2if.cloudfront.net/tagged_assets/15265/hugmachineactivities.pdf)



Grade Level  
K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
J

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud

## In My Heart

Jo Witek

### 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.

### Significant Themes

Feelings, mindfulness, emotional awareness

*“This is when my heart is brave”*

*“When I get really angry my heart feels as if it will explode”*

*“My heart feels lazy and slow, as quiet as a snowfall”*

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

Grade 2 and 3 Health: Personal safety and wellness choices.

**Relationship choices:** People make choices as to how to express themselves. Safe expression of feelings is healthy. Identify physiological and psychological responses. Develop communication strategies to express needs and seek support. Express ideas and develop understanding, contribute relevant ideas and information from personal experiences to group language activities.

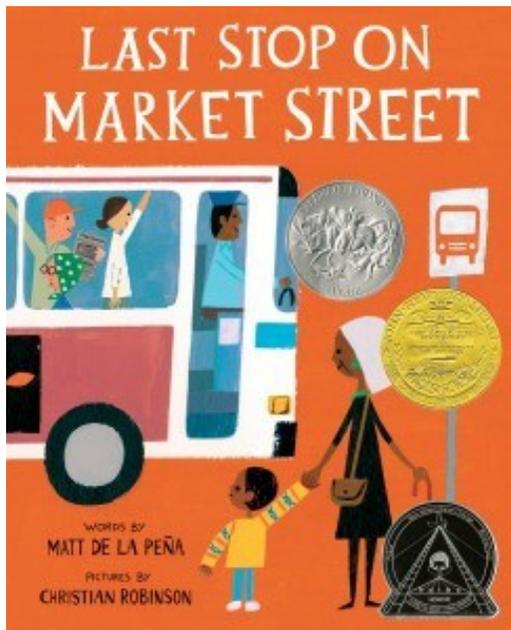
**Suggested activities:**

**Keep a journal**

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

K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

M

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Read aloud K–grade 1

Independent reading grade 2+

## Last Stop On Market Street

*Matt De La Pena*

### 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.

### Significant Themes

**Kindness, perspective, generosity, empathy:**

*“Nana gave everyone a great big smile and a ‘good afternoon.’”*

*“A man climbed aboard with a spotted dog. CJ gave up his seat”*

**Finding beauty around us:**

*“He wondered how his nana always found beautiful where he never even thought to look”*

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

### Social Studies

1.1 Community

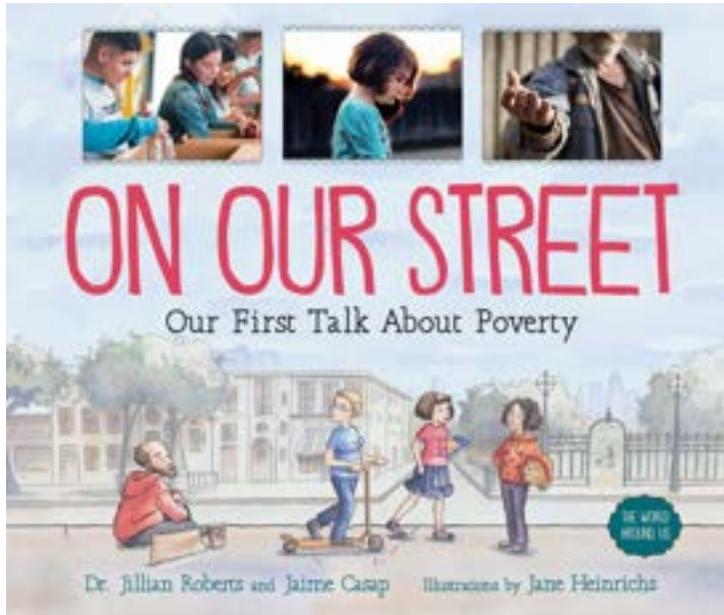
3.1 Connecting communities, 3.2 Global Citizens

**Science:** Observation skills - modelled by the grandmother on the bus

**Art:** Imitate the illustration style of the book

### Suggested activity:

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



Grade Level  
K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
K

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud grade 1–3  
Independent reading grade 4+

# On Our Street: Our First Talk About Poverty

*Dr. Jillian Roberts & Jamie Casap*

**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

**Significant Themes**

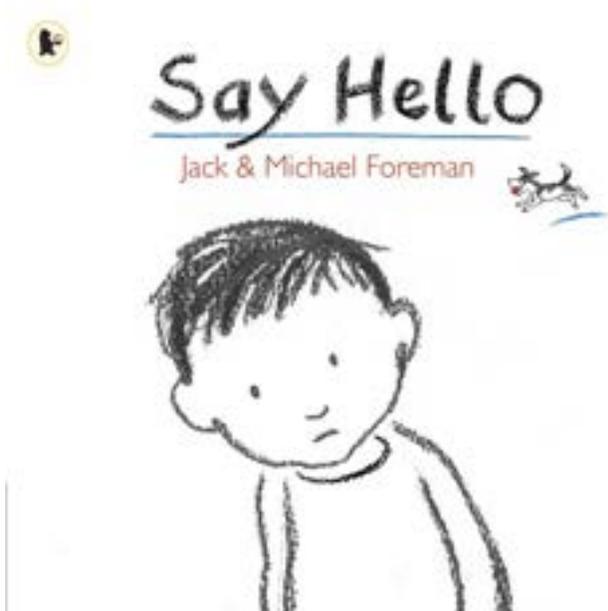
- The world around us
- Homelessness & Poverty
- Mental Illness
- Human rights & Essential services
- Refugee status
- Hope

**Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities**

**Health**  
Grades 1–6 - Awareness of the world around us

**Social Studies**  
**Gr. 1-3 Communities**  
 Gr. 1: My community 1.1, 1.2  
 Gr. 2: Canada’s Dynamic Communities 2.2  
 Gr. 3: 3.1 Communities in the World and 3.2 Global Citizenship

**Gr 9 Social: Canada: Opportunities and Challenges**  
 9.1 Issues for Canadians: Governance and Rights  
 9.2 Issues for Canadians: Economic Systems in Canada and the United States



Grade Level

K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

G

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Read aloud K–3

Independent reading grade 4+

## Say Hello

*Jack and 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.

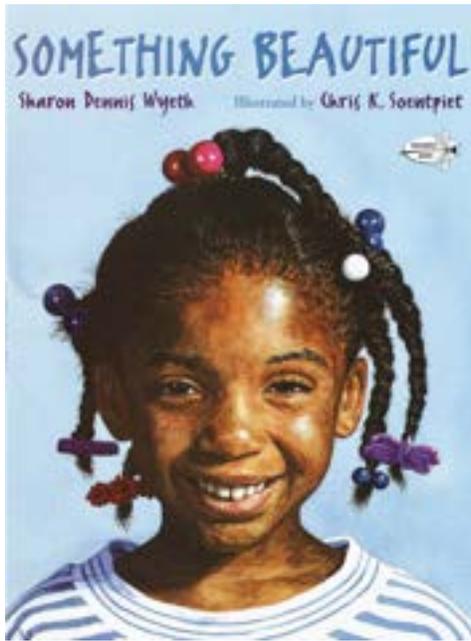
### Significant Themes

Kindness, friendship, inclusion

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

### 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 their observations about how people respond



Grade Level  
Pre K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
L

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud K–3  
Independent reading grade 4+

# Something Beautiful

Sharon Dennis Wyeth

**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!

**Significant Themes**

Homelessness & poverty  
Diversity & Inclusion  
*“Everyone should have something beautiful in their life”*

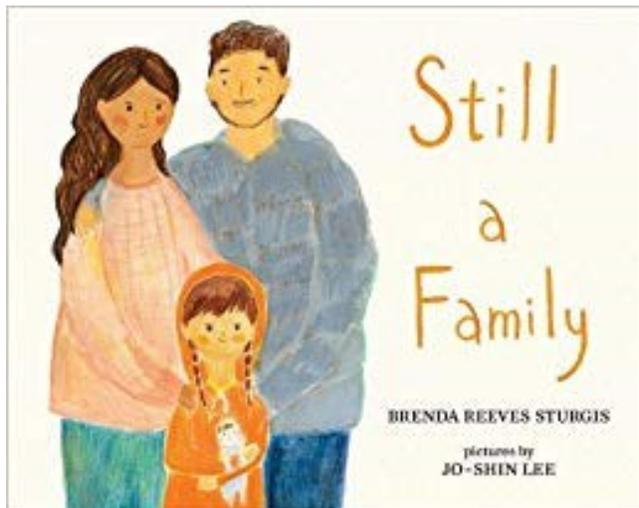
Taking control and action  
*“I scrub the door very hard and when DIE disappears I feel powerful.”*

Citizenship  
Finding the beauty in all parts of life and ourselves

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

**Social: Grade 2 2.S.5**  
Demonstrate skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and consensus building; demonstrate the ability to deal constructively with diversity and disagreement work and play in harmony with others to create a safe and caring environment consider the needs and ideas of others

**Suggested activity: Mind mapping**  
Study the quote “Beautiful – something, when you have it, your heart sings”  
As a class do a mind map or spider diagram and write down all the things that make your hearts sing  
Have students draw a picture, write a paragraph or poem focusing on the one thing that makes their heart sing most. What things can they do in their lives to take control, and be powerful, to be proactive?



Grade Level

K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

1

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Read aloud K–1

Independent reading grade 2+

## Still a Family

*Brenda Reeves Sturgis*

### 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.

### Significant Themes

**Family, community, homelessness, shelter life, reality for families on the streets:**

*“We are together, we are still a family”*

*“Even though Dad goes one way, and we go another, we are still a family”*

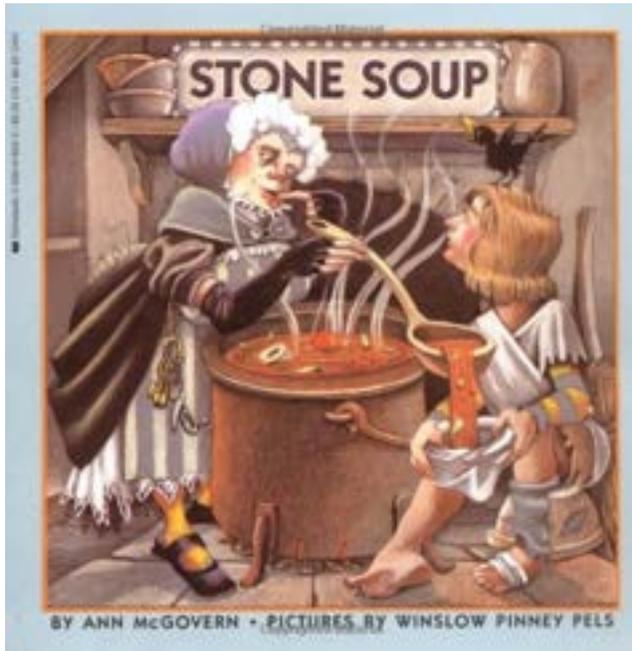
## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

Community awareness and Language Arts, Art and Citizenship outcomes covered.

### Suggested activities:

Tour or volunteer at Inn From The Cold. Many shelters exist in Calgary, but Inn From the Cold is the only family shelter in all of Alberta – this impacts family separation and makes an already hard situation even harder. Tour IFTC, have them come speak in your class, book a volunteering shift (ages 8+), or facilitate a fundraiser to support kids and families experiencing homelessness.

Book a Speaker from The Mustard Seed to share about our upcoming family housing build.



Grade Level  
K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
J

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud K–3  
Independent reading grade 4+

## Stone Soup

*Sharon Dennis Wyeth*

### 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".

### Significant Themes

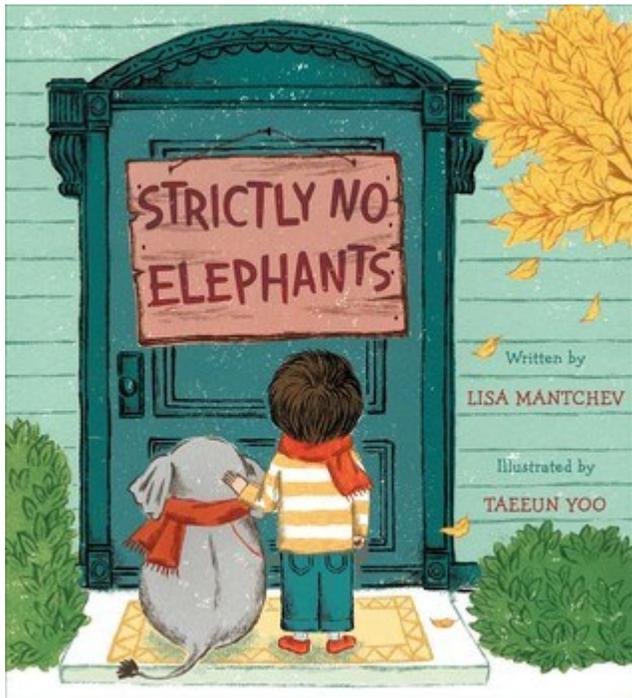
**Charity** – The old lady did not want to help until the clever young boy gets her to add many wholesome ingredients to his stone soup

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

**Grade 1 Health:** Personal safety and wellness choices.

### 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

Pre K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

J

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Read aloud K–3

Independent reading grade 3+

# Strictly No Elephants

*Lisa Mantchev*

## 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.

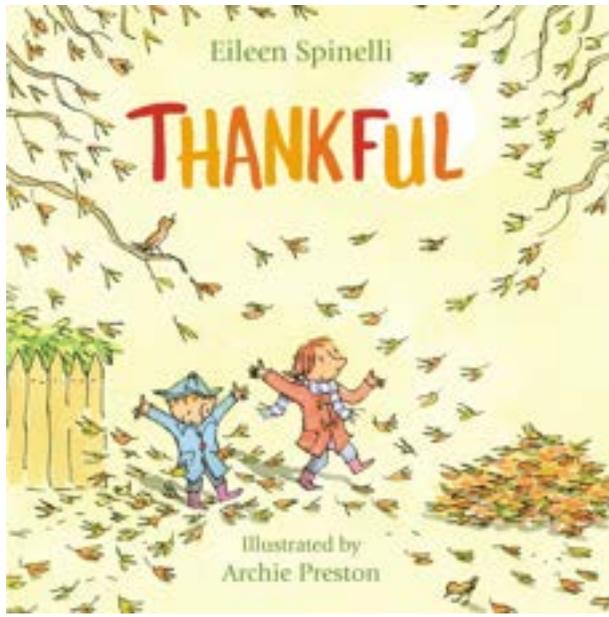
## Significant Themes

Friendship, caring for others, inclusion, acceptance, joy, being different:

*"That's what friends do: lift each other over the cracks... brave the scary things for you... never leave anyone behind."*

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

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



Grade Level  
Pre K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
K

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud K–3  
Independent reading grade 3+

# Thankful

*Eileen Spinelli*

## About

*Thankful*, written by beloved children’s author Eileen Spinelli and illustrated by Archie Preston, 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.

## Significant Themes

Gratitude, noticing small things, respect

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

### Grade 1-6 Health

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?

### LA: Mentor Text for poetry

This book is also available in animated videos on YouTube.



Grade Level

K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

L

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Read aloud K–2

Independent reading grade 3+

## The Most Magnificent Thing

Ashley Spires

### About

A clever, honest, and funny portrayal of an experience we can all relate to. Ashley Spires's latest tale will give kids (and their grown-ups) the most magnificent thing: perspective!

### Significant Themes

**Building things, inquiry learning, perseverance, perspective, and steadfastness:**

*The thing is still wrong. She decides to try again."*

**Understanding our feelings**

*"She gets MAD... Her hands feel too BIG to work, and her brain is too full of all the not-right things."*

*"...She EXPLODES! It is not her finest moment."*

### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

**Science**

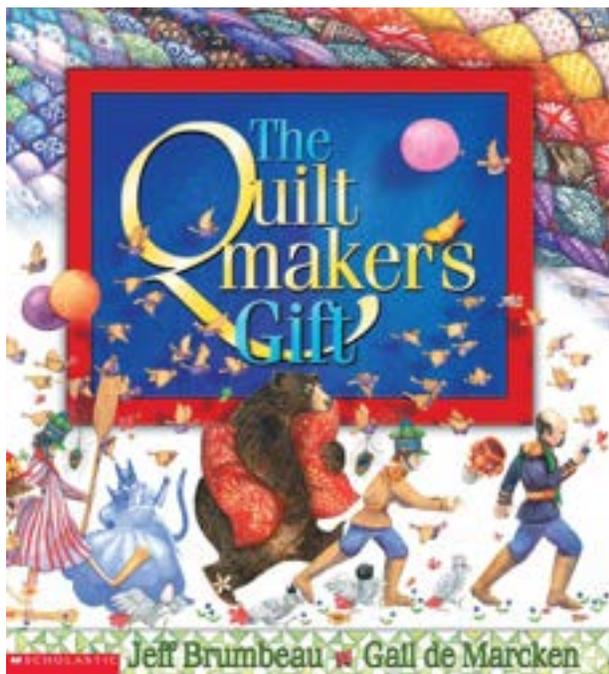
Gr 1 : Building Things

Gr. 3 : Building with a variety of materials and testing materials and designs

Gr 4 : Building devices and vehicles that move

**Health:** How to manage stress

**Suggested activity:** Have students work on a building project and utilize design-thinking and problem-solving to persevere through challenges



Grade Level

K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

P

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Read aloud all grades

## The Quiltmaker's Gift

*Gail de Marcken & Jeff Brumbeau*

### 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.

### Significant Themes

Generosity, material objects, definitions of "success" and "wealth", kindness, concern for others, empathy, giving back, altruism

### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

#### Suggested activities:

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

K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

P

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Read aloud all grades

Independent reading grade 1+

## 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.

### Significant Themes

**Grief, death, loss:**

*"Out of nowhere, things came crashing down"*

**Empathy, choices, decision-making, listening:**

*"Together they sat in silence until Taylor said, 'please stay with me.' ...The rabbit listened"*

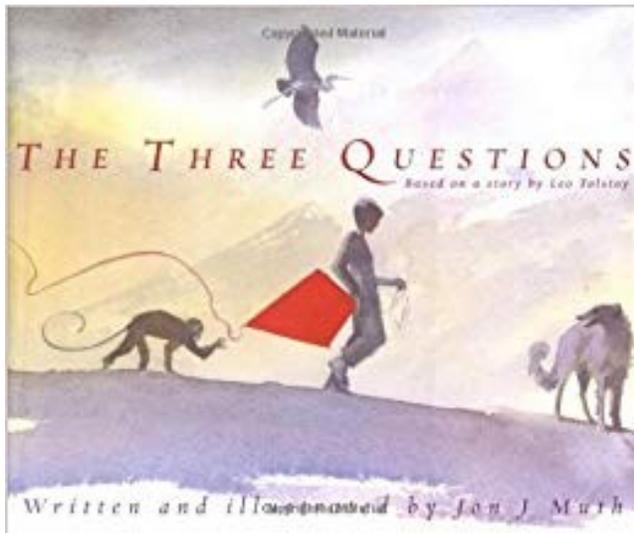
*"Through it all, the rabbit never left"*

**Resilience**

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

**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

K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

M

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Read aloud all grades

Independent reading grade 3+

## The Three Questions

*John 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!

### Significant Themes

**Inquiry:** how to ask good questions/what makes a good question

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

**Science:** Inquiry/asking questions

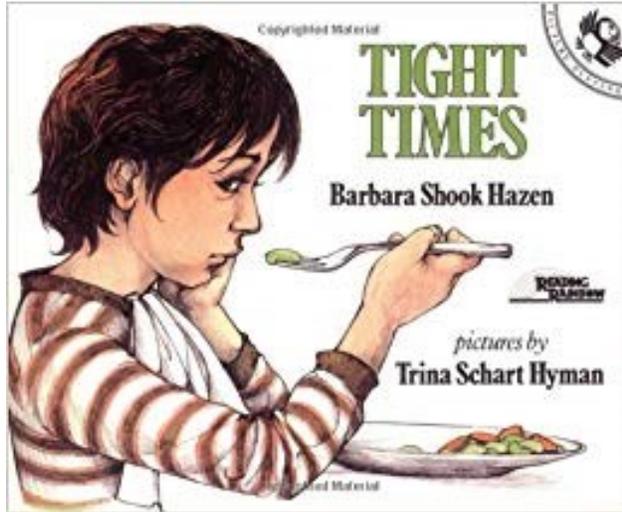
**Health:** Attitudes determine what kinds of questions we are willing to ask

**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.

Practice writing and asking good questions



Grade Level

K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

K

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Read aloud K–grade 3

Independent reading grade 4+

## Tight Times

Barbra Shook

### About

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

### Significant Themes

**Economic awareness and socio-economic impacts:** “*Tight times are when we all eat Mr. Bulk and not cereals in little boxes*” and “*Why we went to the sprinkler last summer instead of the lake.*”

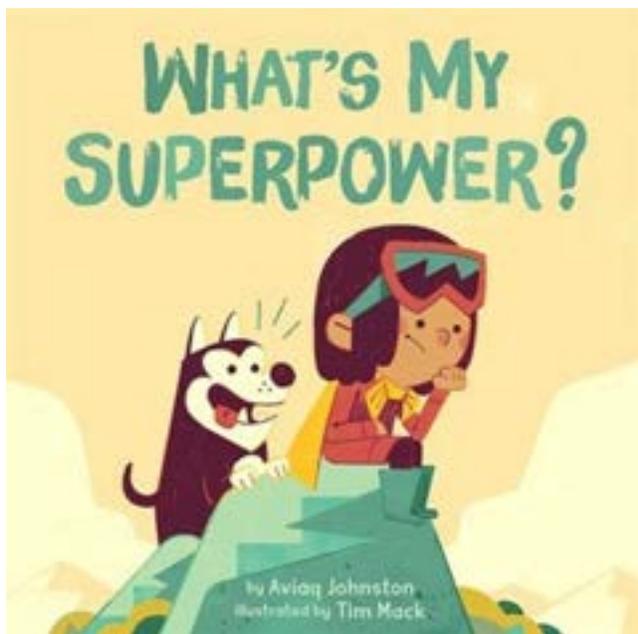
## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

Suggested activities:

**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.) 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

Pre K - K

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

L

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Read aloud Pre K—grade 3

Independent reading grade 3+

## What's My Superpower?

*Aviaq Johnston*

### 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.

### Significant Themes

**Uniqueness, individuality, encouragement, determination, inclusivity:** *“Can’t you see?... Your superpower is making people feel good about themselves.”*

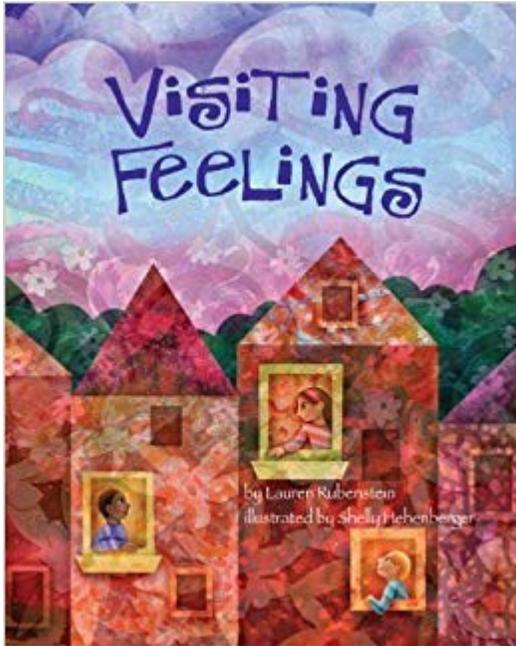
**FNMI perspectives;** book written by an Inuk author and has cultural references and traditional names

**Respect**

### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

**Suggested activity:**

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



Grade Level

K+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

L

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Read aloud K–grade 3

Independent reading grade 4+

## Visiting Feelings

Lauren Rubenstein

### About

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

### Significant Themes

**Emotional intelligence & mindfulness:**

*“Do you have a feeling that’s visiting today? Can you open the door and invite it to play?”*

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

**Grade 1 Health: Personal safety and wellness choices**

**Relationship choices:**

R1.1 Different ways to express yourself R1.2 Identify different physiological responses to emotions

R1.3 Identify positive & negative feelings R1.4 Compare/contrast positive/negative non-verbal communication

**Suggested activities:**

**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

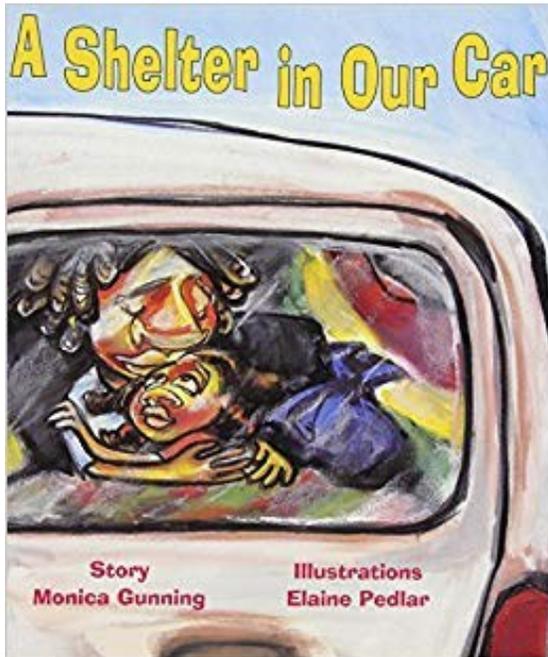
**Practice Poetry:** This is a great poetry mentor text for older students (grade 4-5)

**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 to represent each emotion (for example, blue could represent sadness but could also represent calm or peace.)

**Minimum  
Grade Level:  
Grade 1+**



Grade Level  
Grade 1

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
Q

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
High Interest for ELL | Rich Discussion content  
Great for low vocab

# A Shelter in our Car

*Monica Gunning*

**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.

**Significant Themes**

Immigration, Ideas of Loss [death, home, identity]: *“in the street lights their colors as bright as the flowers in the yard we left behind”*

Empathy

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

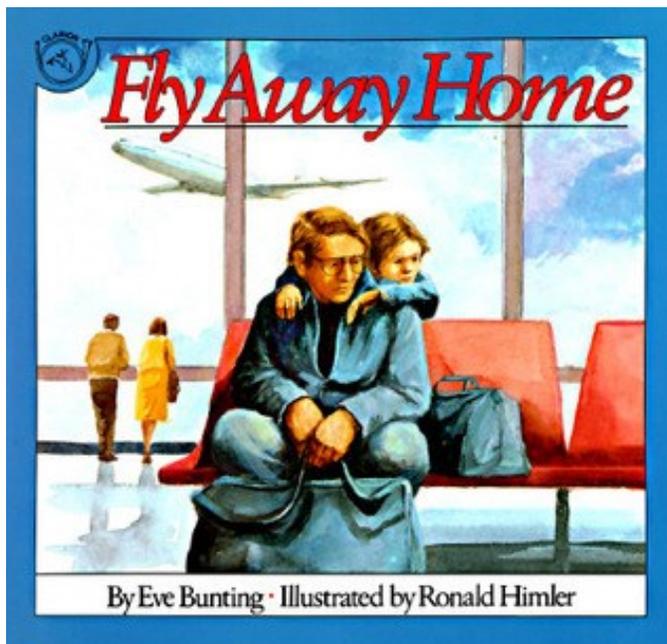
**Social Studies:**

Apply their understanding of community to this story - appreciate how communities are shared by a variety of factors, such as the past, where they are located, the groups to which they belong and the exchange of goods and services

**Suggested activities:**

**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 your community can make newcomers or immigrants feel welcome?



Grade Level

Grade 1+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

M

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Read aloud grade 1–2

Independent reading grade 3+

## Fly Away Home

*Eve Bunting*

### 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.

### Significant Themes

Homelessness, identity, and significance: *“Not to be noticed is to look like nobody at all”*

Community can be anywhere, e.g. with other people experiencing homelessness

Hope — image of the free bird: *“I know it was singing”* versus the feeling of hopelessness: *“Sometimes I get mad...Why do you have homes? What makes you so special?”*

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

### Social Studies:

Values and Attitudes. Global citizenship

Explore how people live in different communities, gaining an understanding of the global community and Canada’s role within it.

### Suggested activity:

Learn about symbols of Hope (e.g. the bird)

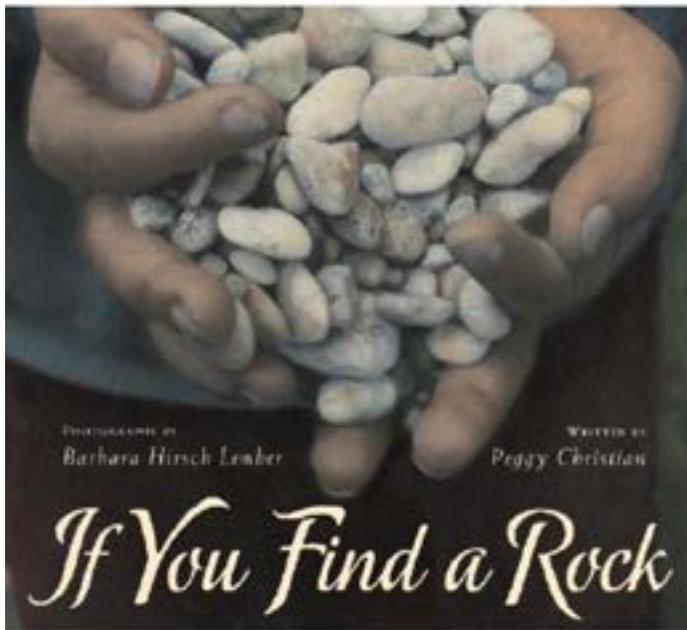
Can you create a symbol of hope?

What does it mean/represent?

What is its purpose?

Can this be a symbol for only one community only, or can many people who are different recognize it?

Present as a poster/PowerPoint



Grade Level  
Grade 1+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
0

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud grade 1–2  
Independent reading grade 3+

## If You Find a Rock

*Peggy Christian*

### 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.

### Significant Themes

Appreciation of the world around us

### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

**Art:** Photography, use of rocks in nature art

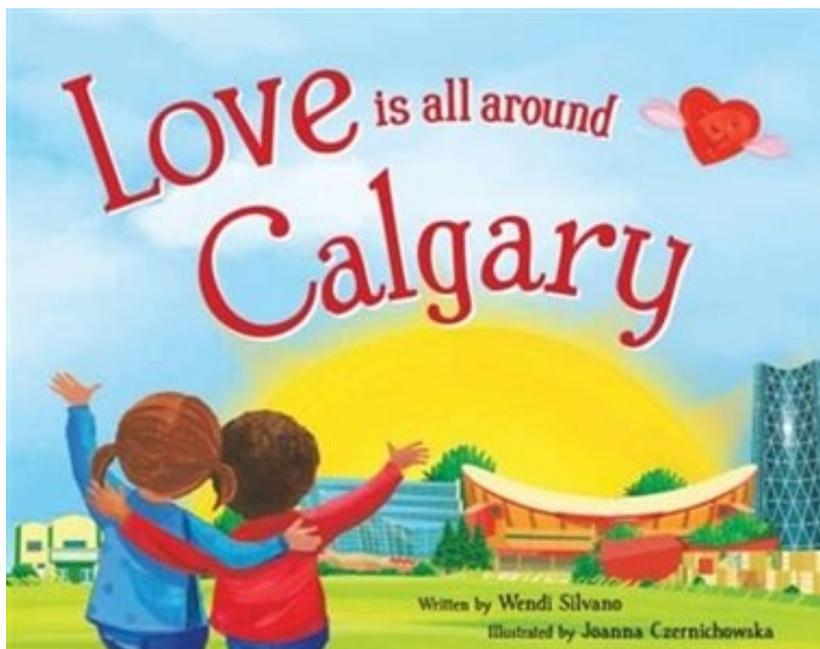
**Science:** Nature walk, rock observation walk, grade 3 rocks and minerals

**Language Arts:**

1.1, 2.1 , 3.1, 4.1 Students use their language skills to describe things in greater detail – rich vocabulary development and lots of new words

**Suggested activity:**

Writing & developing observation skills: Practice journaling and observing using the “looking at objects” journaling prompt



Grade Level  
Grade 1+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
J

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud grade 1–3  
Independent reading grade 4+

## Love Is All Around Calgary

Laura E. Williams

### About

A book based on Calgary communities and noticing love in all the areas of our city.

### Significant Themes

#### Community awareness:

*“You can see how love travels when shared with a friend”  
“Love grows from the ground.”*

*Gentleness, kindness and selflessness; small acts of kindness can be a seed for growing charity and community!*

### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

Community awareness and LA, Art and Citizenship outcomes covered.

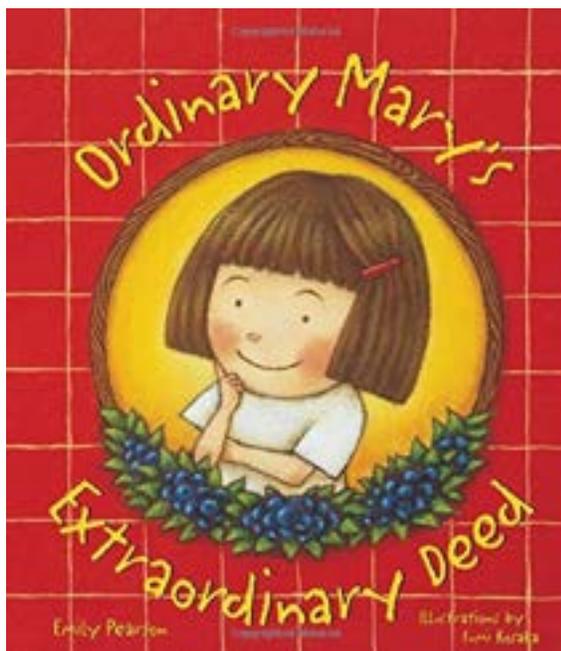
Grade 1-6 Health: Awareness of the world around us

#### Grade 1-3 Social Studies:

- My community
- Canada’s Dynamic Communities
- Communities in the World and Global Citizenship

#### Suggested activity:

**Brainstorm:** Think of all the communities mentioned in the book. Is one yours? Maybe not, but how do you know love is in your community? Small acts of kindness can go a long way – how can we be more kind and caring?



Grade Level  
Grade 1+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
Q - R | Lexile coded for adult-directed reading

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud K–grade 3  
Independent reading grade 4+

## Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed

Emily Pearson

### 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.”

### Significant Themes

Citizenship and community

Kindness and good deeds have a ripple effect: *“Love was sent to every person everywhere”*

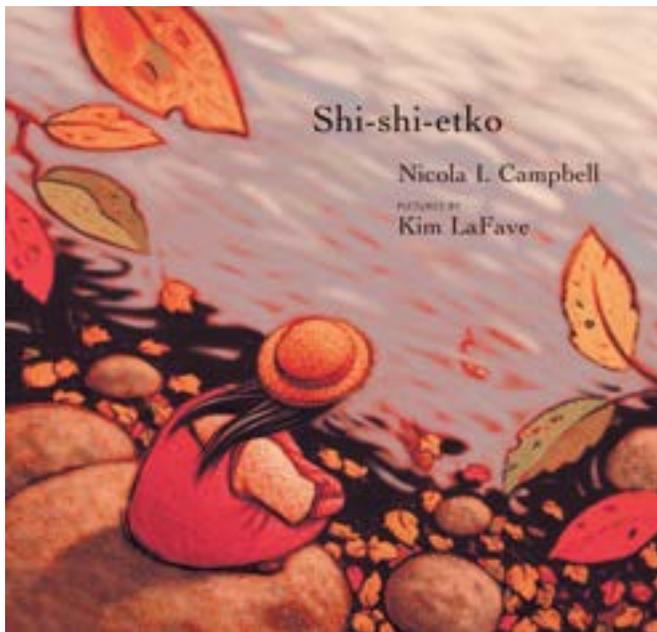
### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

#### Citizenship

**Math:** Work as a group to calculate the reach of Mary's deed by multiplying  $5 \times 5$ ,  $5 \times 5$ ,  $25 \times 5$ , etc. as far as students are able

**Suggested activity:**

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



Grade Level  
Grade 1+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
R | Lexile coded for adult-directed reading

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud grade 1-6  
Independent reading grade 5+

## Shi-shi-etko

*Nicola I. Campbell and 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.

### Significant Themes

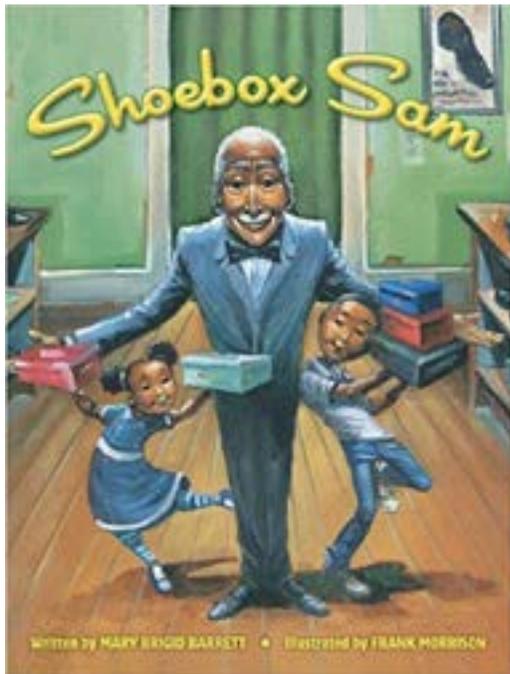
Gratitude, appreciation, noticing the little things, loss, residential school

### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

**Science:** 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?

**Health:** Create a gratitude journal to keep your memories and a list of every day things you are thankful for

**Social:** Research residential schools and the effects they had on the communities around them



Grade Level  
Grade 1+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
Q

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud K–grade 3  
Independent reading grade 4+

## Shoebox Sam

Mary Brigid Barrett

### 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.

### Significant Themes

**Hope, compassion, kindness, sharing:**

*“That man has eaten near a dozen doughnuts...” “When you’re hungry you eat.”*

**Service/Faith in action (CCSD):** *“Sam gently pulls off the man’s ragged socks and puts on a new pair”*

*Refer to the story of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet.*

### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

**Suggested activities:**

**Samaritans Purse shoebox drive**

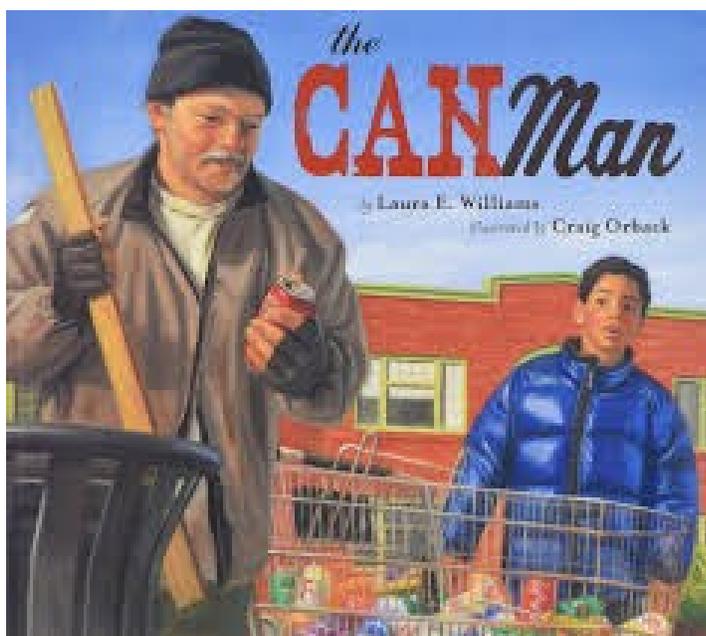
Discuss what items go into the box: why and how could they be chosen?

Pack shoeboxes as a class

**Discuss:**

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  
Grade 1+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
P

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Rich discussion content  
Great for independent reading

## The Can Man

Laura E. Williams

### 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.

### Significant Themes

**Identity:** "Almost everyone called him the Can Man, but not Tim's parents."

**Homelessness and people's stories:** "My mom and Dad remember you from when you lived in your building"

Empathy, perspective, needs/wants

### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

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.

#### Suggested activity:

##### Recycle Project

Can your class collect cans and then use money for a donation?

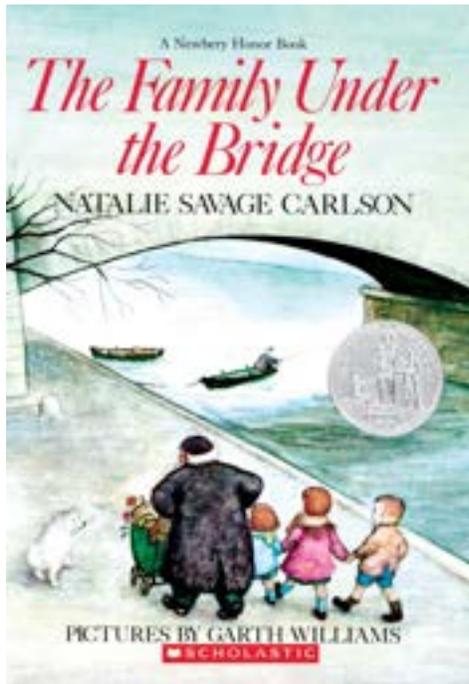
What are some things you can recycle aside from bottles?

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

Write a letter to local businesses to ask for help (Grade 3 and Jr. High letter-writing curriculum)



Grade Level  
Grade 2+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
R–S

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud grade 2–4  
Independent reading grade 4+

## The Family Under The Bridge

*Natalie Savage Carlson*

### About

This is the delightfully warm and enjoyable story of an old Parisian named Armand, who relished his solitary life. Children, he said, were like starlings, and one was better off without them.

But the children who lived under the bridge recognized a true friend when they met one, even if the friend seemed a trifle unwilling at the start. And it did not take Armand very long to realize that he had gotten himself ready-made family; one that he loved with all his heart, and one for whom he would have to find a better home than the bridge.

### Significant Themes

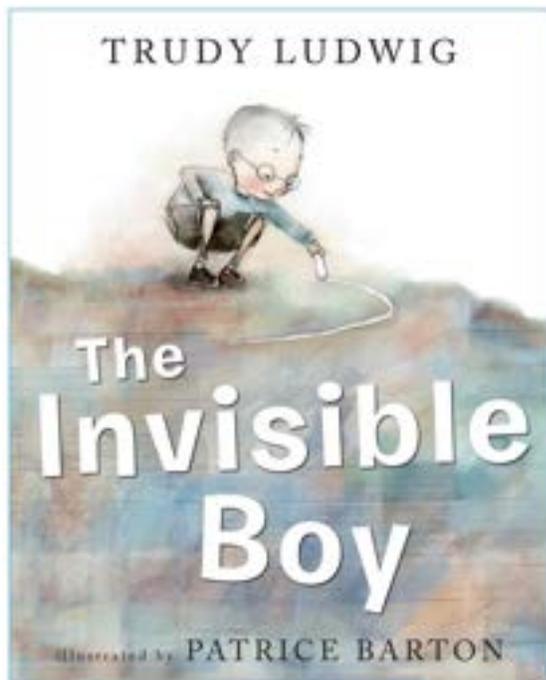
Empathy, responsibility, transitions, teamwork

### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

**Art:** Sketching/drawing scenes from the readings

**Social:** Connecting communities in the world (being from another culture). Global citizenship

**Health:** Kindness, helping others, responsibility, teamwork, working together



Grade Level  
Grade 1+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
L—M | Lexile coded for adult-directed reading

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud grade 1—3  
Independent reading grade 4+

## The Invisible Boy

*Trudy Ludwig*

### 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.

### Significant Themes

**Exclusion:** *“He sits there wondering which is worse—being laughed at or feeling invisible”*

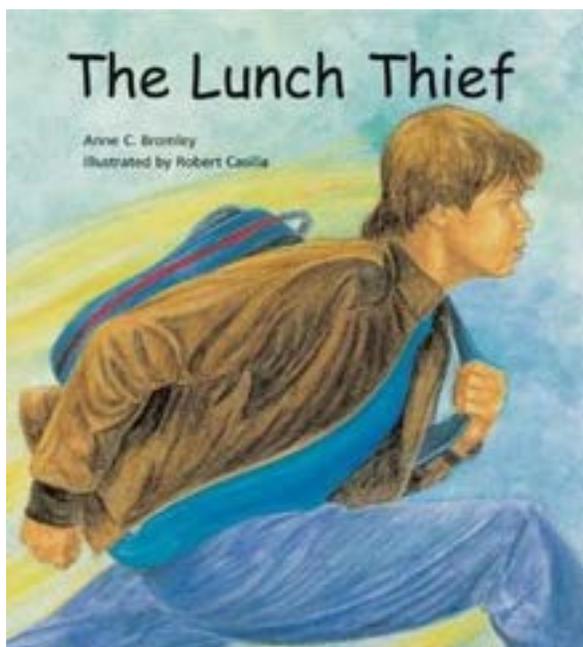
**vs. Inclusion:** *“Mrs. Carlotti said we can have up to three people in our group. We’re only two. C’mon, Emilio, let him work with us”*

**Empathy, belonging, welcome, and acceptance**

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

### Suggested activity:

Brainstorm as a class who in your community might sometimes feel invisible (school caretaker, elderly, those experiencing homelessness) and work together to create a gift or many cards to surprise these individuals and ensure they know that they are seen, appreciated, and loved.



Grade Level  
Grade 1+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
0

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud grade 1–3  
Independent reading grade 4+

## The Lunch Thief

Anne C. Bromley

### 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.

### Significant Themes

Hunger & poverty, loss, friendship, understanding, compassion, helping others, sharing, empathy

*Problem solving: "I should report him, but he'll figure out who did it and pick a fight after school. I may be big for my age, but I'm not a fighter."*

*Homelessness from a fire: "Half of Jacinto valley was burned down by wildfires that spread all over the country. Kevin doesn't want to talk about the fires"*

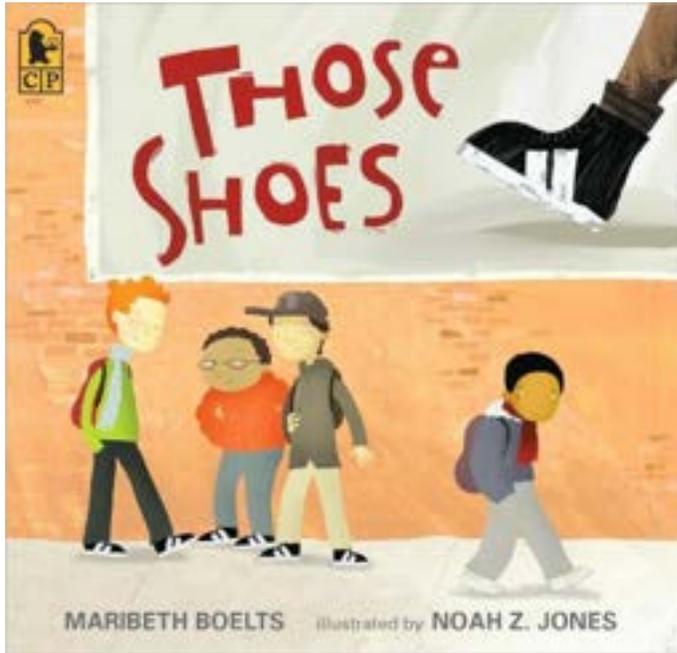
### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

Resource: <https://annebromley.com/lesson-plan-lunch-thief.pdf>

Suggested activities:

Service: Raise money and buy supplies to make lunches for an organization that helps people in need.

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  
Grade 1+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
L

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud grade 1–2  
Independent reading grade 3+

## Those Shoes

*Maribeth Boelts*

### 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.

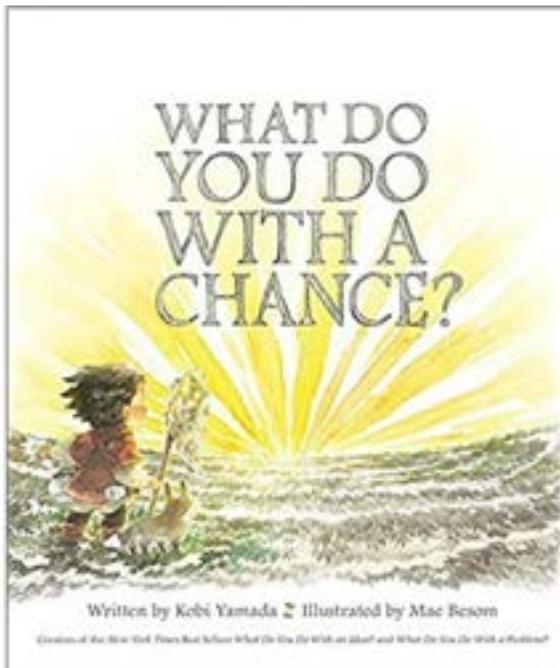
### Significant Themes

Wants vs. needs, contentment, thankfulness, values

### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

#### Suggested activity:

Help students make lists of wants vs. needs. What belongs in each category? How can we make sure that everyone in our community has everything in the needs column?



Grade Level  
Grade 1+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
K

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud K–grade 3  
Independent reading grade 3+

# What Do You Do With A Chance?

*Kobi Yamada*

**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.

**Significant Themes**

**Failure:** *"I went to reach for it, but I missed and fell. I was embarrassed."*

**Risk-taking, courage, letting go of fears:** *"When another chance came around, I wasn't so sure. But I decided to try" "I still wanted to take a chance, but I was afraid."*  
*"The second I let go of my fears, I was full of excitement"*

**Bravery:** *"Maybe I don't have to be brave all the time. Maybe I just need to be brave for a little while at the right time"*

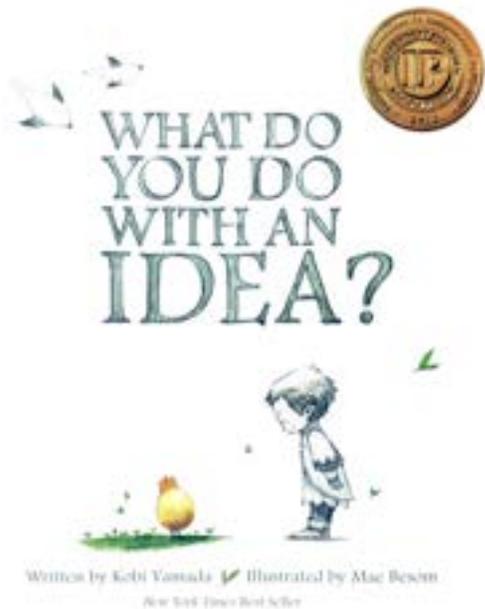
**Discovery, inspiration, motivation, growth**

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

Grade 1-6 Health: What does taking calculated, thoughtful risks look like?

**Suggested activity:**

Ask the questions:  
 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  
Grade 1+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
K

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud K–grade 3  
Independent reading grade 3+

# What Do You Do With An Idea?

*Kobi Yamada*

### 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.

### Significant Themes

**Innovations (ideas), thinking outside the box, inspiration**  
**Patience & persistence:** *“I decided to protect it, to care for it.”*

**Confidence:** *“This is MY idea, I thought. No one knows it like I do. And it’s okay if it’s different, and weird, and maybe a little crazy”*

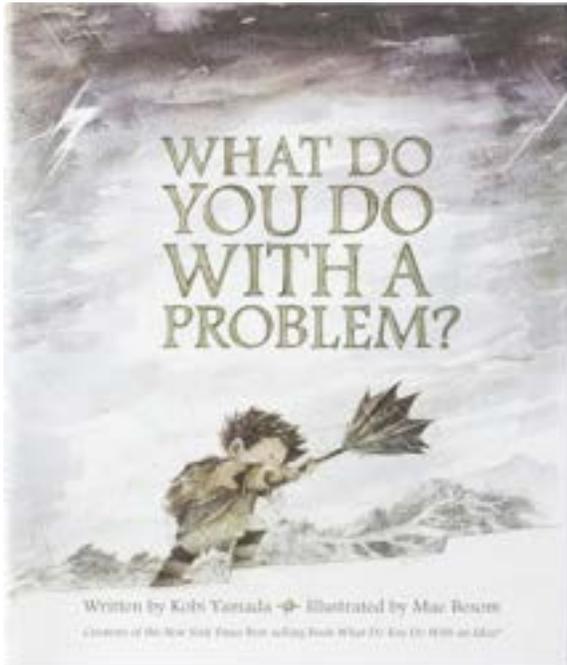
**Perspective:** *“It showed me how to walk on my hands... it is good to have the ability to see things differently”*

### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

**Art:** Sketching with black/white and some color, self-portrait  
 Idea Portrait Activity: [http://www.lincolncottage.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/idea-portrait\\_web.pdf](http://www.lincolncottage.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/idea-portrait_web.pdf)

**All subjects:** Seeing things from different perspectives & practicing open-mindedness

**Ask:** What are ideas? Why are ideas important? Where do ideas come from? Why do we have ideas? What do you do with an idea?  
 Focus on seeing things from different perspectives & practice open-mindedness



Grade Level  
Grade 1+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
K

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud K–grade 3  
Independent reading grade 3+

## What Do You Do With A Problem?

*Kobi Yamada*

### 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.

### Significant Themes

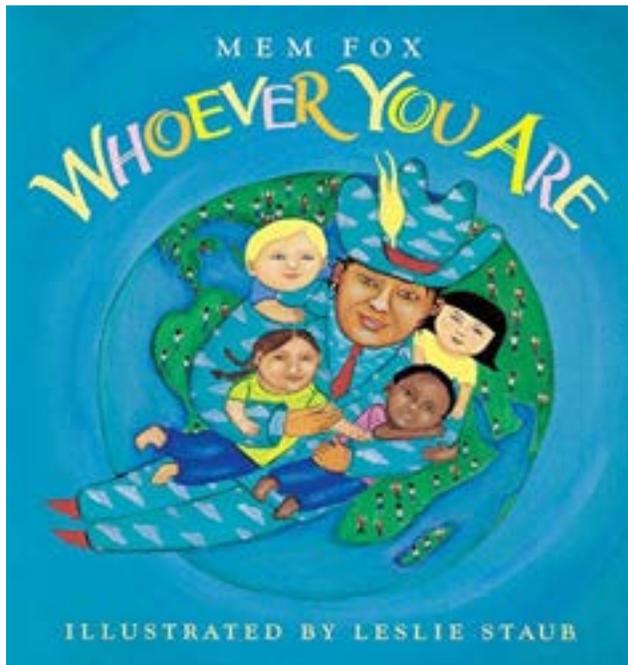
**Worry/anxiety:** *“The more I worried the bigger my problem became”*

**Courage:** *“I got ready and I tackled my problem”*  
*“I’m not afraid of them because I know their secret”*

**Resolution & resilience:** *“My problem held an opportunity... for me to learn and to grow”*

### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

Great book to use in a resource room to work with children suffering from excessive worry or anxiety challenges



Grade Level  
Grade 1+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
1

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Yes

## Whoever You Are

*Mem Fox*

### 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.

### Significant Themes

**Diversity (difference):** “Whoever they are and wherever they are” and similarity “but inside their hearts are just like yours.”

Appreciation for other cultures, languages, etc.

### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

**Grade 1 Social:** Students will work to understand the benefits and responsibilities of living in a community, while appreciating the differences in others  
Focus on seeing things from different perspectives & practice open-mindedness

**Suggested activity:**

**Make a Venn Diagram**

Make a class VENN diagram and identify the following;

Types of communities or groups students belong to and their similarities and differences

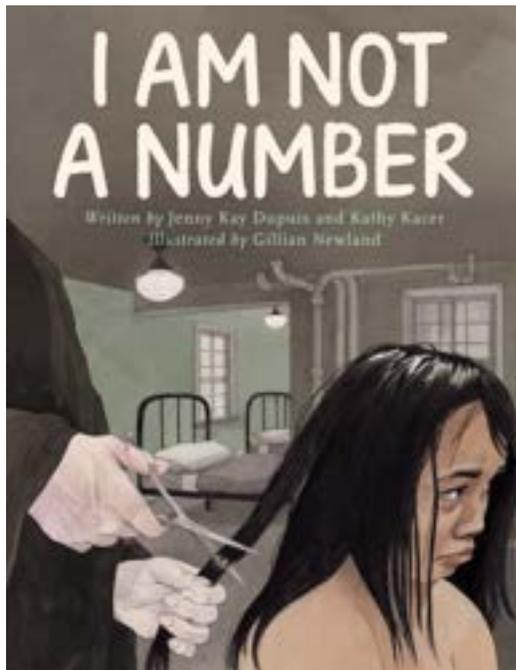
What helps us to recognize different groups or communities?

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?



**Minimum  
Grade Level:  
Grade 3+**



Grade Level  
Grade 3+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
V

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud grade 3  
Independent reading grade 4+

## I Am Not a Number

*Jenny Kay Dupuis and 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?

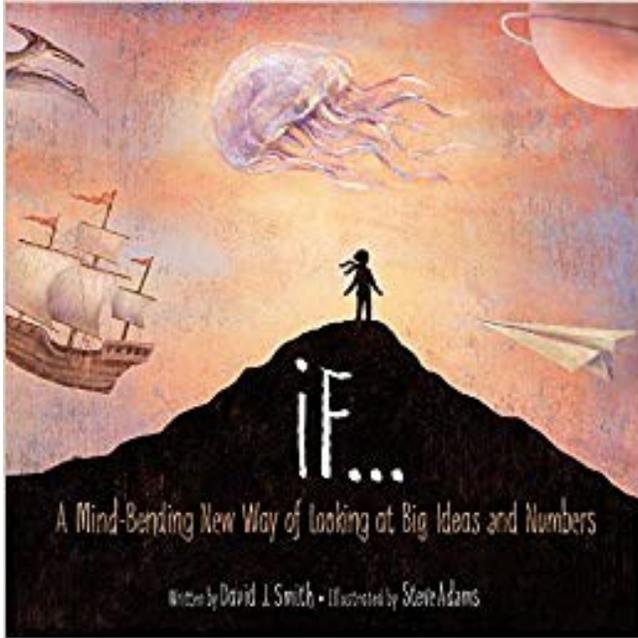
### Significant Themes

Empathy, prejudice, Canadian history, Indigenous history, loss, culture, government, diversity

### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

**Social studies:** This book is based on the true story of the author's grandmother's residential school experience. Use the information in the back to learn about the residential school system and its impacts.

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.



Grade Level  
Grade 3+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
N/A - High Interest | Good for reluctant readers

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud grade 1–6  
Independent reading grade 4+

# IF: A Mind Bending New Way of Looking at Big Ideas and Numbers

David Smith

## 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.

## Significant Themes

Globalization, global citizenship, solar systems, natural resources, socio-economic differences, space, symbols, time

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

Great book to use in a resource room to work with children suffering from excessive worry or anxiety challenges

**Science and Social:** Cross curricular topics on planets/earth/history/timelines

**Math/Social:** Understanding the concepts of scale and timelines

**Reading:** Good for extending comprehension

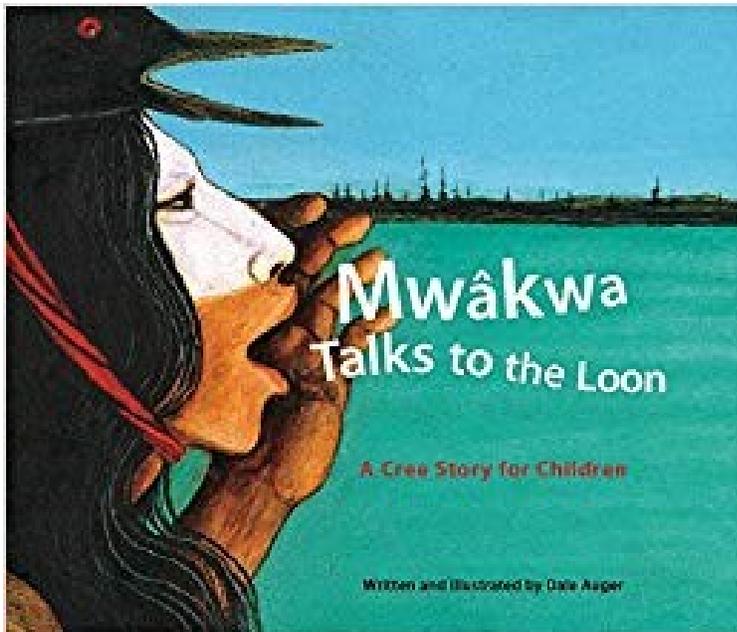
### Suggested activity:

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



Grade Level  
Grade 3+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

N/A

ELL / ESL Appropriate

No

## Mwâkwa Talks to the Loon

*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 is included.

### Significant Themes

Pride, listening, valuing our gifts and talents, Cree culture, animals, nature & land

### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

**Note:** This book has many Cree words with an index at the back with definitions and pronunciations. This may pose a challenge to younger students for independent reading, but can help build skills of inference and guessing based on context for more advanced readers.

**Suggested activities** (from <http://empoweringthespirit.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/mwakwa-talks-to-the-loon-1.pdf>):

**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 out dated magazines.

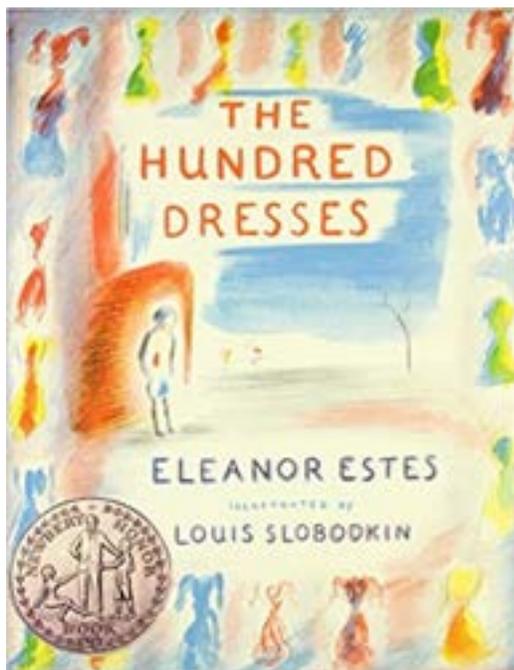
**Make a mural** that represents the village of Kayâs. Label all the characters of the story in the mural.

**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.

**Act the story**, do it as puppetry or convert to Readers Theatre. It would also be a good story to do as a shadow play.

**Research a Cree word**, pronounce it to the class, and provide its meaning.

**Write the story** from the point of view of one of Kayâs’ brothers or sisters.



Grade Level  
Grade 3+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
P

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud K–grade 3  
Independent reading grade 3+

## The Hundred Dresses

*Eleanor Estes*

### 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.

### Significant Themes

**Bullies & standing up for what is right, kindness, compassion, integrity:**

*"... But she had said nothing. She had stood by silently, and that was just as bad as what Peggy had done. Worse."*

*"After a long, long time she reached an important conclusion. She was never going to stand by and say nothing again."*

**Tolerance, acceptance, and empathy**

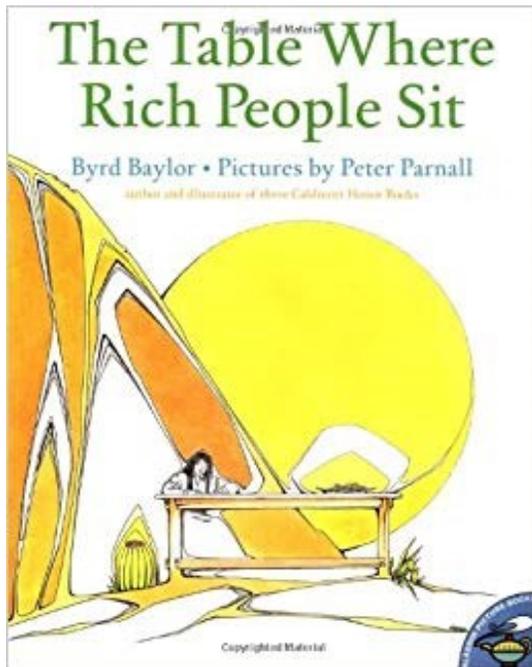
**Consequences of actions:** *"Maddy was beginning to wonder how she could bear the hard fact that... she might never be able to make amends"*

### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

**Art:** Sketching/drawing

**Gr. 3 Social:** Connecting communities in the world (being from another culture). Global citizenship

**Health:** Bullies, kindness, helping others, tolerance, acceptance, not following the crowd



Grade Level  
Grade 3+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
T

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud grade 3–4  
Independent reading grade 5+

# The Table Where Rich People Sit

Byrd Taylor

**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!

**Significant Themes**

**Material goods vs the gifts all around us, the intangibles like freedom, family, nature etc.:** *“The subject is money; and I say we don’t have enough of it”*  
*“I tell my parents they should both get better jobs so we could buy a lot of nice new things.”*

**Appreciation for the gifts of nature and day-to-day blessings:** *“But Mountain Girl, I thought you knew how rich we are”*  
*“To tell you the truth, the cash part doesn’t seem to matter anymore.”*

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

**Reading:** Good for extending comprehension – vocab development is excellent

**Suggested activities:**

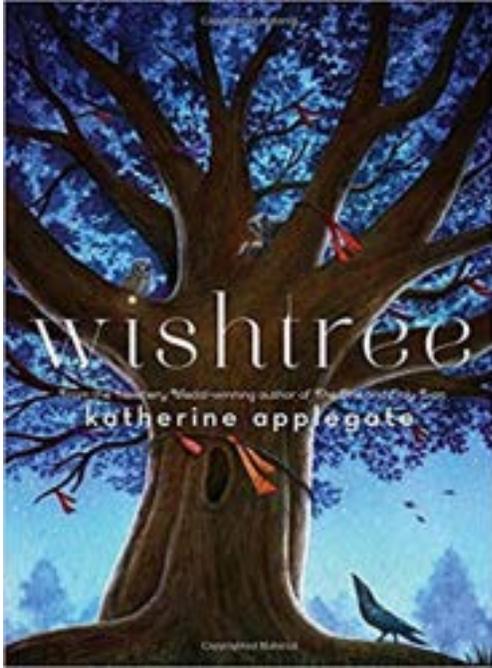
**Keep a journal**

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

**Make 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.) 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  
Grade 3+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
L–M

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
Read aloud grade 3  
Independent reading grade 3+

## 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.

### Significant Themes

**Immigrant families, multiculturalism:** *"Different languages, different food, different customs. That's our neighborhood: wild and tangled and colorful. Like the best kind of garden."*

**Friendship, kindness, loyalty, empathy:** *"Making others feel safe is a fine way to spend your days."*

**Animals, tolerance/acceptance**

**Confidence:** *"It is a great gift indeed to love who you are."*

**Resilience:** *"But sometimes things happen that aren't so good. When they occur, I've learned that there's not much you can do except stand tall and reach deep."*

### Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

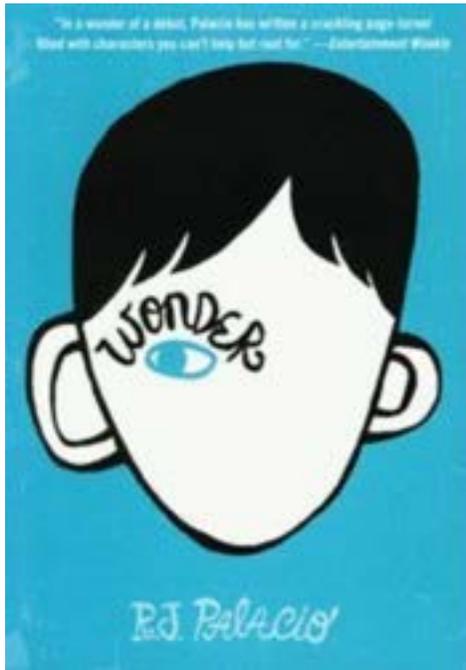
Great resources for extended learning:

<https://www.plt.org/recommended-reading/wishtree/>

<https://bookunitsteacher.com/wp/?p=5932>

<https://www.wishtreebook.com/resources>

<https://images.macmillan.com/folio-assets/teachers-guides/9781250043221TG.pdf>



Grade Level

Grade 3+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]

V

ELL / ESL Appropriate

Read aloud grade 3

Independent reading grade 4/5+

# 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,

## Significant Themes

### Kindness & acceptance

*"Kinder than is necessary. Because it's not enough to be kind. One should be kinder than needed."*

*"When given the choice between being right or being kind, choose kind"*

### Bullying & friendship

*"It's not enough to be friendly. You have to be a friend."*

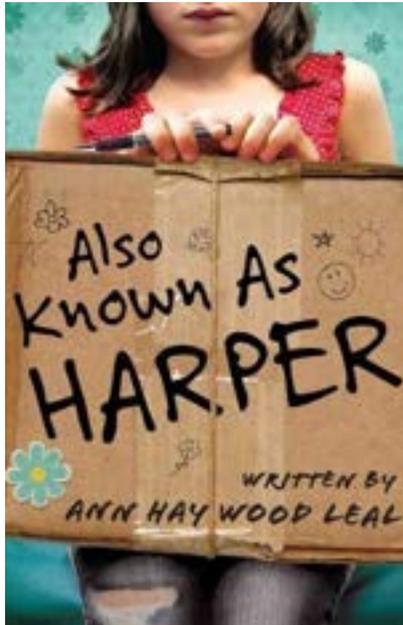
### Taking risks & facing fears

*"Now that I look back, I don't know why I was so stressed about it all this time. Funny how sometimes you worry a lot about something and it turns out to be nothing."*

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

Great teacher resources: <https://wonderthebook.com/for-teachers>

**Minimum  
Grade Level:  
Grade 6+**



Grade Level  
Grade 6+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
V | Suitable for Junior High

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
ELL / ESL benchmark 4 and above

## Also Known As Harper

*Ann Haywood Leal*

### About

Harper is an aspiring poet, and life is giving her a lot to write about just now. Daddy up and walked out, leaving them with too many bills, too little money, and an eviction notice. Now Mama is scrambling to make ends meet, leaving Harper to stay home and take care of her brother. Their whole world has been turned upside down.

### Significant Themes

**Self-confidence, courage, belonging, resilience, facing adversity, overcoming emotional and financial struggles.**

**Family Loss:** *"I know how badly he wanted daddy to come walking back up our front steps and i wanted that for him. But I wasn't so sure I wanted that for me."*

**Friendship/and judgment/ stereotypes:** *"You know we can just be school friends."*

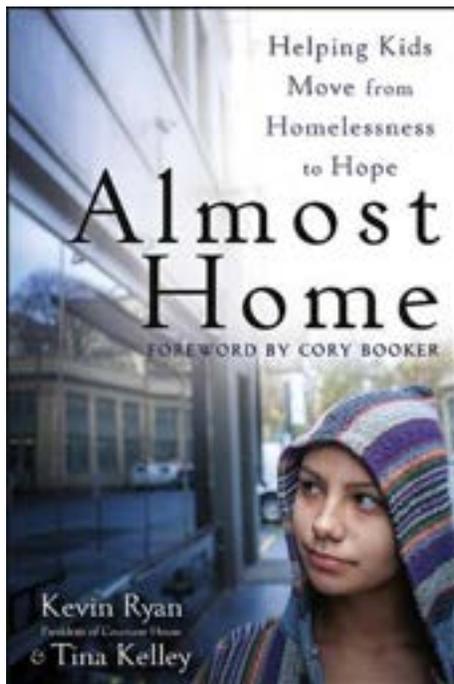
**Mature themes:** Abandonment, eviction, loss of home and family, not finishing school, friendship lost and found, alcoholism/drinking (references Daddy's whiskey and meanness), loss, shame, death, and humiliation

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

### Suggested activity:

**Poetry:** Harper is an avid poetry writer. Challenge your class to write a personal piece of poetry appropriate to grade expectations about an issue that they feel strongly about. Have an oral reading and those that want to share may do so. Make a class poetry book and bind all the works into a poetry anthology to share. Give a copy to each student to use as a resource and perhaps later in the year use these poems for review/comprehension/assessment pieces.

**Minimum  
Grade Level:  
Grade 9+**



Grade Level  
Grade 9+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
Grade 7+ [Contains mature content]

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
ELL / ESL Benchmark 4 and above

## Almost Home

Kevin Ryan and Tina Kelley

### About

This book shares the stories of six young people from across the United States and Canada as they deal with life alone on the streets. These 6 children find their way to Covenant House, the largest charity serving homeless and runaway youth in USA and Canada.

### Significant Themes

Hope, identity, and belonging. Resiliency, confronting loss and grief, pain and fear.

Empathy, judgment & stigma. This is a powerful book of hope and healing but also of great adversity.

*“Real heroes are the ones concerned with the least glamorous things”*

*“Homeless young people need to know that someone believes in them”*

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

Grade 10 - 12 — Essays, presentation, book reviews, do a prezzi, etc.

NOTE – Sensitive and adult themes and topics

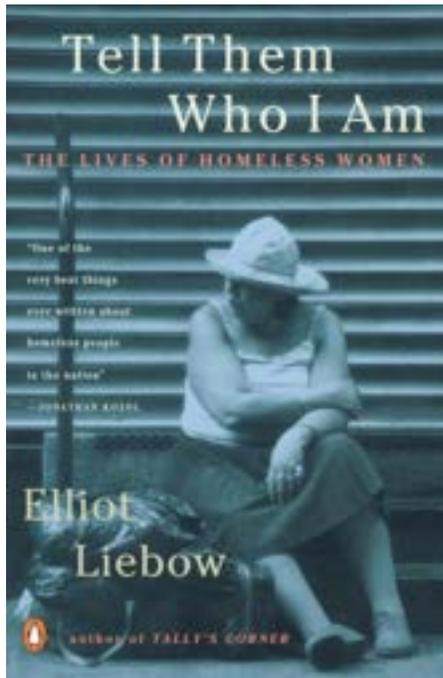
Paulie: Abusive parents

Muriel: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Benjamin: Abusive parents

Creonia: Pregnancy at age 16, Jim and Keith: Neither are homeless but help out at Covenant; it is a sad story as their parents were killed, leaving the sons alone

Meagan: Was kicked out of her home when she admitted she was gay



Grade Level  
Grade 9+

GRL [Guided Reading Level]  
Easy vocabulary, contains mature content

ELL / ESL Appropriate  
ELL / ESL benchmark 4 and above

# Tell Them Who I Am: The Lives of Homeless Women

Elliott Liebow

## About

Liebow (Talley's Corner) here succeeds in demolishing the anonymity of the homeless. Skillfully blending a social scientist's objectivity with humanitarian concern, he observes women who live in a variety of shelters near Washington, D.C.-- how they interact with one another, family and shelter staff; pass their days; and struggle to retain their dignity in the face of rejection by society. Liebow's probing and morally honest report reveals hard truths about the humanity and inhumanity of us all.

## Significant Themes

**Focuses on the dynamics of shelter life:**

*"The atmosphere of the shelter is at once relaxing and stifling – things are easy and relaxed but every exit or entry...is documented in the log book."*

*"...defined by where we sleep at night"*

*"...they wanted to be borrowers, not beggars"*

**Low income:** *"How will I ever get out of here if I can't save?"*

**Caste/class system which exists in shelters.**

**Family dynamics:** *"I felt like I was getting smothered and didn't have much chance to prove myself"*

## Curriculum Links & Classroom Activities

*There are some difficult and sensitive topics in here (teen pregnancy, abortion, rape, job loss, mental health, disability, abuse, alcoholism, drug addiction, etc.) so please be mindful of this as you share with students*

**Suggested activities:**

**Research**

*"The number of homeless persons is going up. And just as clearly, supportive public sentiment toward the homeless is going down."* Is this true in Calgary or Canada? Use this quote as a starting point for a research paper, PowerPoint presentation, or use it as a catalyst to begin a volunteer/education project

**Budgeting**

Some of the women received welfare and support cheques in the sum of \$600

Do a budgeting exercise with your group and see how they could afford to live on \$600 a month in Calgary. Think about rent, transportation, food, utilities, clothing, medication, etc.

