



**Special  
Olympics**  
Minnesota



Special Olympics  
**Unified Schools**

# Unified Young Readers Club

Archive of Books with Study Guides

## Introduction:

The **Unified Young Readers Club** books and study guides are another tool for teachers to use as they address such topics as inclusion, awareness, friendship, bullying, and acceptance to audiences of both students with and without Intellectual Disabilities. Each book has a theme that relates to multiple state academic standards, and aligns with the precepts of positive school climate initiatives like PBIS and Minnesota's Commitment to Equity. Educators can use these resources to help them as students work on ways to make and keep friends and identify feelings. Whether the books are used with self-contained classes or with inclusive groups, the resulting "Ah Ha!" moments will be just as satisfying.



*A few examples of the many MN State Academic standards addressed:*

### **ELA: Literary Text**

#### **K-2**

- 2.1.1.1 Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
- 2.1.3.3 Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.
- 2.1.7.7 Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

#### **3-5**

- 3.1.1.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
- 4.1.3.3 Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).
- 4.1.2.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

*(Continued)*

## **Health Standards –** (Based on National standards with MN specific benchmarks)

Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

### **MN Benchmarks:**

- Discuss how you are a special person.
- Identify comfortable and uncomfortable feelings.
- Discuss typical conflicts at this grade level and how to express your wants and needs in a healthy way.
- Discuss situations when and how to help a friend.
- Explain healthy ways to express emotions.
- Explore how families are alike and different.

## **Minnesota Commitments to Equity**

Creating equitable opportunities is dependent upon having inclusive policies and practices that represent all students, and providing each student increased access to and creating meaningful participation in high-quality learning experiences where each student realizes positive outcomes.

- Start from within: Focus on leadership, diversity and inclusiveness.
- Give students options: Empower students with high-quality options to support every learner's success.
- Improve conditions for learning: Focus on school culture, climate and social-emotional development. Connect teaching to the experiences, assets and needs of students.
- Monitor equitable implementation of standards: Improve the quality of curriculum and instruction for all students.
- Start early: Invest in families and learners early on.

## **Positive School Climate initiatives:**

The Unified Champion School program promotes social inclusion and positive school climate through whole school engagement activities, and integrates personal and interpersonal leadership development into existing programs, such as PBIS and Leader in Me. The discussion questions and activities in the Young Readers Club provide safe, structured ways students can explore differences and similarities and work to become more understanding, inclusive, and caring friends.

## ***I Don't Want To Be A Frog,***

by Dev Petty

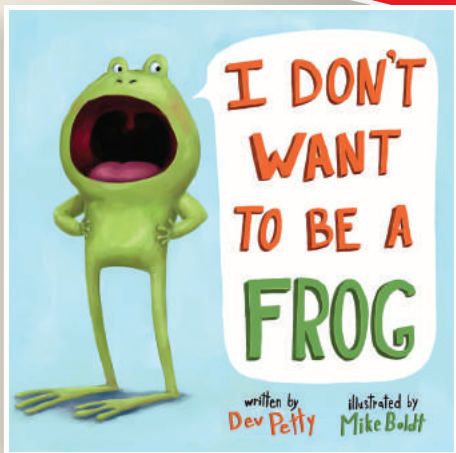
This is the story of a young frog with an identity crisis – he wants to be anything but a frog! It takes a meeting with a hungry wolf for the frog to decide that being himself isn't such a bad thing after all.

### **Discussion questions:**

1. Why didn't Frog want to be a frog?
2. What did Frog want to be? Why?
3. Why did Frog change his mind about being a frog?
4. How did Frog feel about himself at the end of the book?

### **Activities:**

1. Show the book trailer by going to Youtube and entering "I Don't Want to be a Frog book trailer".
2. Sing "The Little Green Frog" song – again on Youtube.
3. Pair children to draw pictures of each other. Write things you like about each other or about yourselves on your picture.
4. Make paper plate frog puppets. You can paint white paper plates, or make it simple by buying green ones. Fold the paper plate, add googly eyes and a red tongue, etc. Google directions for many versions of this idea.



## ***Since We're Friends,*** by Celeste Shally

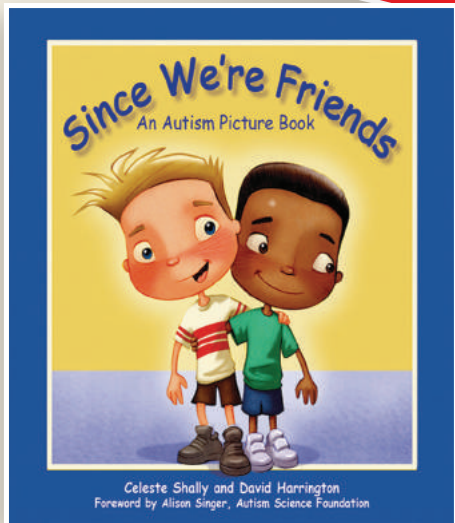
Since We're Friends is the story of two boys – one of whom is a student with autism. Their relationship and the authentic ways they make their friendship work will help children better understand differences in the way we react to situations.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What are some things the boys do to have fun together? Are those things you like to do?
2. How does Matt's friend help him when he gets upset?
3. How could you help a classmate who becomes upset about something at school?

### **Activity:**

1. Draw a picture of one way you could help Matt that is not mentioned in the book.
2. Make a list of other things you could do at recess.



## ***All My Stripes,*** by Shaina Rudolph and Danielle Royer

In *All My Stripes*, Zane worries that his “autistic stripe” is all that anyone sees. His mother points out that he is much more than that in a way that young children will understand.

### **Discussion Questions:**

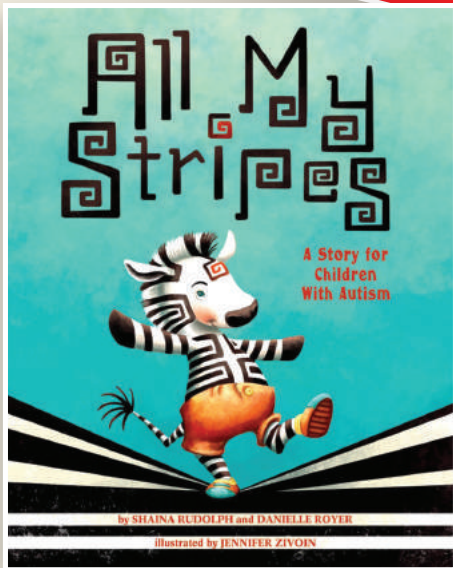
1. What are some of Zane’s struggles in school?
2. What did Zane’s mother mean when she said “I see many different stripes”? What were some of Zane’s stripes?
3. What are some of your stripes? Do we all have the same stripes? Look at a friend and name one stripe they have.

### **Group Activity:**

Work in small groups to create a different, more positive school day for Zane.

### **Individual activity:**

Draw a picture of one of your stripes.



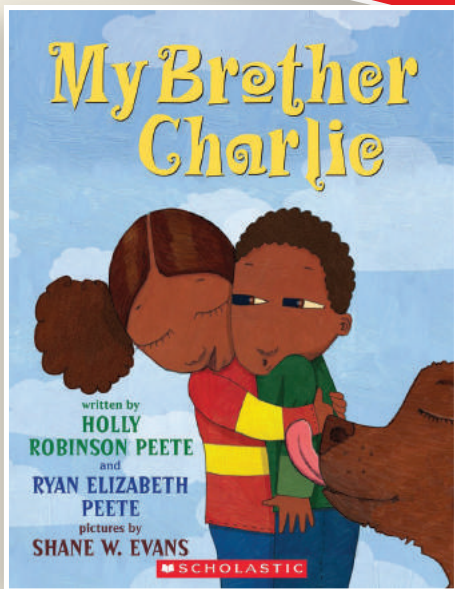
***My Brother Charlie,***  
by Holly Robinson  
Peete and Ryan  
Elizabeth Peete

My Brother Charlie is a book about a boy with autism, as told through the eyes of his twin sister. This book helps us recognize that we are all unique, with our own strengths and weaknesses.

1. In the story, how do you know that Charlie is different?
2. Can you name three things Charlie does well?
3. What does the author mean when she talks about "Charlie's Blessings"?
4. When the author says "Charlie has autism, but autism doesn't have Charlie", what does she mean?

**Activity:**

Draw a picture of a friend or family member and write or tell at least one "blessing" about that person.





## ***The Paper Bag Princess*** by Robert Munsch

The Paper Bag Princess is a book about an unusual princess named Elizabeth who is supposed to marry the prince, but first has to save him from a dragon.

### **Discussion Questions:**

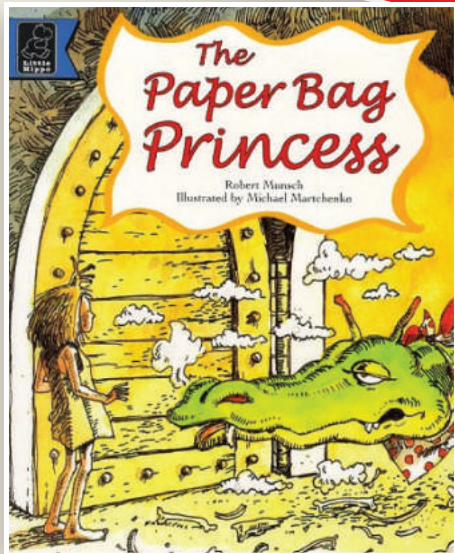
1. What are some other stories about princes and princesses? How do we expect them to look? How do you expect them to act?
2. How does Elizabeth look and act differently from other princesses? Why is this unusual?
3. How did she defeat the dragon? Was she still a princess when she was outsmarting him?
4. Elizabeth was a good friend to Prince Ronald. What makes a good friend?

### **Activity:**

Bragging contest. The dragon in the story bragged about his fiery breath and how fast he could fly. Have the class work in pairs to complete any of the following phrases:

- I'm so strong, I could...
- I'm so tall, I...
- I'm so fast, I ...
- I'm so smart, I...

If students finish quickly, they could draw a picture illustrating their bragging sentence.





## ***The Most Magnificent Thing***, by Ashley Spires

The book *The Most Magnificent Thing* is a story about a little girl who demonstrates perseverance and imagination as she tries over and over to make something magnificent.

### **Discussion Questions:**

Key vocabulary:

perseverance, imagination

1. The girl in the story knew just what she wanted to make and knew just how it would look. What happened when the thing didn't turn out the way she imagined it would? What did she do?
2. Have you ever made something and had it turn out all wrong? What did you do?

### **Activity** (two days)

Day 1: If you could make a magnificent thing for yourself that is not a toy, but could help you in some way, what would it be? After a brief discussion, let students pair up and draw/write about their ideas. Get the group back together to share "magnificent" concepts with the class. Brainstorm what types of materials you may need to construct your thing. Encourage students to bring some of the materials listed from home to use the next day.

Day 2: Look at the materials gathered and let groups begin to make their "magnificent thing", using their drawings/writing from the first day as a guide. Allow time to share/present the objects to the class.



## ***Going Places,*** by Peter and Paul Reynolds

A go-cart contest inspires imagination, team-work and thinking outside the box.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How did Rafael know how to build his go-cart? How did he feel about it when it was done?
2. Did Maya follow the directions? What did she build?
3. It was OK for Maya to make something different. Can you think of a time when you used your imagination and created something different from everyone else?

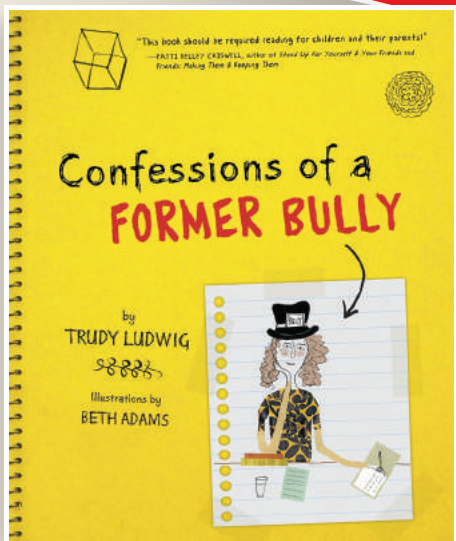
### **Activity:**

1. If you got a Going Places kit, what would you build? Draw your invention and share it with the class.



## ***Confessions of a Former Bully,*** by Trudy Ludwig

Confessions of a Former Bully is a book that may work best with upper elementary and middle school students. The book is written from the perspective of an 11 year old girl, as a consequence for her acts of bullying. Throughout the book, actual research on bullying is referenced, and cited at the back of the book.



Prior to reading the book aloud, have a discussion with your students about bullying, and brainstorm a list of what they see or have experienced as bullying behavior. This can be used later to compare and contrast with Katie's list.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Have you ever been bullied? Have you ever been the bully?
2. What does Katie mean when she talks about "bystanders"?
3. Explain the difference between tattling and reporting.

### **Activity:**

In small groups or pairs, pick one of the "Think about it" quotes from the book that is meaningful to you. Talk about your reactions to this quote, and what you think it means. Write the quote onto card stock, and illustrate it. Share your quote, your reactions and your illustration with the group.

## ***Sky Color,*** by Peter H. Reynolds

Sky Color is a book about looking at things from a different point of view. After observing the world carefully, Marisol is inspired to expand her thinking about the color of the sky.

Prior to reading the book, give the class a quick-write assignment – draw and color an apple. Sign the pictures and collect them for later. Now, read the book.



### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What part of the mural did Marisol decide to paint? What color was she looking for?
2. Marisol watched the sky at different times of the day. How did her observations change the way she thought about the color of the sky?

### **Activity:**

Ask the class to think about what color apples are. Pass several different types of apples around the class, asking children to look carefully at each one. Ask again – what color is an apple? This time wait quietly for more expansive responses. Pass out the first set of apple drawings, and ask the class to turn the paper over and draw another apple, using the real apples for inspiration.

## **Oliver**

by Birgitta Sif

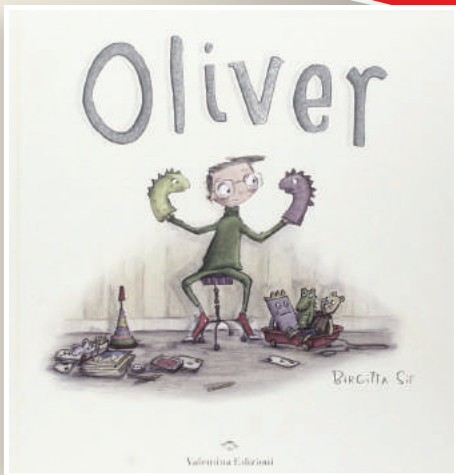
Oliver is a story about a little boy who is different. He uses his imagination for companionship, with his toys as his companions, until one day he meets a new friend.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Have you ever felt different? How does that make you feel? How did Oliver feel about being different?
2. What made Oliver decide he may have to change, to become different than how he has been? How did that make him feel?

### **Activity:**

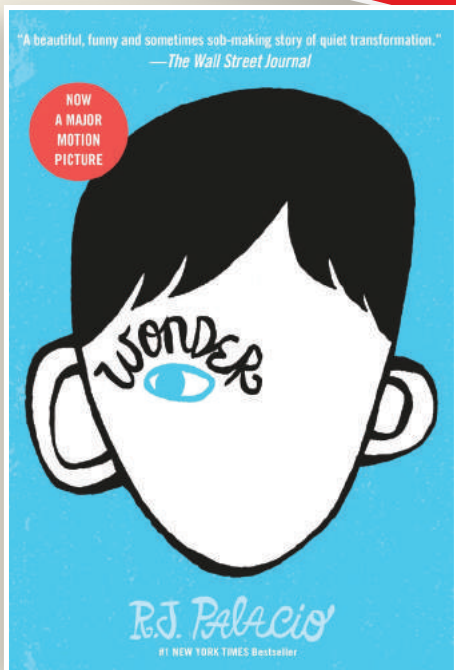
Think about ways you are different. Write or draw things that make you different and special. Compile into a class Being Different book.



## **Wonder,** by RJ Palacio

Wonder is a book about a boy born with a facial difference that has kept him from attending public school. He is about to enter 5th grade after years of homeschooling. The thing is that Auggie is an ordinary kid, with an extraordinary face. His challenge is convincing his new classmates that he is just like them, despite appearances.

Note: Wonder is now a movie! The questions and activities could be used after either reading the book or seeing the movie.



### **Discussion questions:**

1. Throughout the book, Auggie describes ways in which others react to seeing him for the first time: by looking away, moving away, looking down, etc. Have you ever been in a situation where you responded like this to seeing someone different? Has reading Wonder changed how you feel about your reaction?
2. How did Auggie change from the beginning of the book to the end? What experiences do you think affected him the most?
3. Star Wars is one of Auggie's passions. Why do you think this is? Do you see any reasons for Auggie to identify with these characters or want to be like them?
4. What was the most important thing you learned from reading this book?
5. This book was written from different points of view. Which did you enjoy the most? Which character did you relate to the most?

## ***Wonder,***

by RJ Palacio (Continued)

### **Activities:**

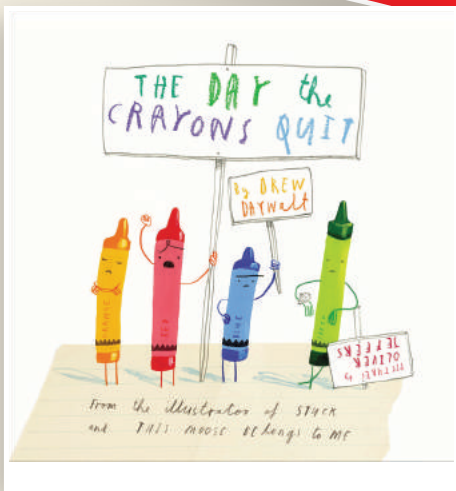
1. Readers Theatre. Use the script from the following link and present a Reader's Theatre to other groups. Link: [texasbluebonnetaward2014.wordpress.com](http://texasbluebonnetaward2014.wordpress.com)
2. Kindness journal. Ask students to record acts of kindness they performed or observed for a period of 10 days. At the end of the time, ask students to share how acting kindly toward others impacts each of us.
3. Prepare cards with the words " \_\_\_\_\_ (name) is a Wonder because \_\_\_\_\_". Each student puts their name on the card and others move around the room to add ways in which each student is special. Students can talk about how they feel reading what others think of them, and how it felt to thoughtfully think of something wonderful about each other.
4. Precepts were an important part of this book. Write precepts on cards and scatter them around the room. Students move around the room to find the precept that speaks to them and form a quick discussion group.
5. Brainstorm a class list of precepts – from the book or other precepts important to the students. From the list, let each choose a precept to write on cardstock in a decorative banner. Other materials can be used to decorate card – glitter, buttons, ribbon, etc. Students could take these home or place around the room for future reference.



# The Day the Crayons Quit

by Drew Daywalt

The Day the Crayons Quit is about poor Duncan, who just wants to color. But when he opens his box of crayons, he finds only letters, all saying the same thing: His crayons have had enough! They quit! Beige Crayon is tired of playing second fiddle to Brown Crayon. Black wants to be used for more than just outlining. Blue needs a break from coloring all those bodies of water. And Orange and Yellow are no longer speaking—each believes he is the true color of the sun. What can Duncan possibly do to appease all of the crayons and get them back to doing what they do best?



## Discussion Questions:

1. Out of all the crayons, which one gave the best reason for quitting and why?
2. What is so special about the picture at the end of the book? Did Duncan listen to each and every crayon's point of view? Did he take all their points into consideration?

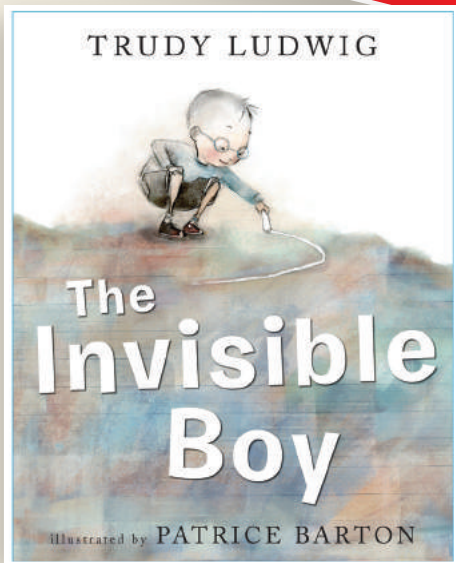
## Activity:

A letter is a great way to share your opinion. Think of something important that is happening at your school, in your class/club or think of something you would like to see change. Think about how you feel about that thing. Write a short letter like the ones in the book. State the issue, give your opinion and explain (give reasons and examples) why you're right. Deliver them to your Principal.

## ***The Invisible Boy***

by Trudy Ludwig

The Invisible Boy is about a boy named Brian. Nobody ever seemed 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.



### **Discussion Questions:**

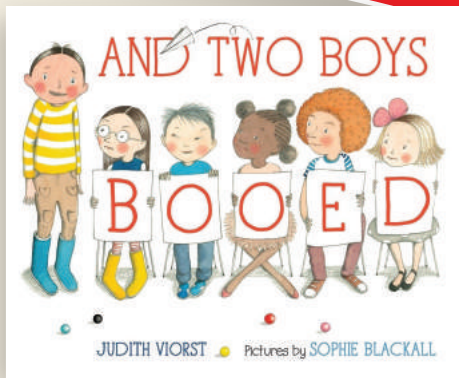
1. Have you ever tried to join a group, game or activity and the other kids wouldn't let you? If yes, how did that make you feel?
2. At lunchtime, all the kids were talking about the party that Brian wasn't invited to. Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation as Brian, with kids talking about the fun things they've done with each other in front of you and you weren't included or invited? If yes, how did that make you feel?
3. What do you think is worse, being laughed at or feeling invisible? Why?

### **Activity:**

On chart paper, brainstorm things you can do to make others feel valued and appreciated. Keep the chart visible, so you can refer to it as needed.

## ***And Two Boys Booed*** by Judith Viorst

In *And Two Boys Booed*, a boy is ready to sing his song in the school talent show. He isn't one bit scared because he had practiced a billion times, plus he was wearing his lucky blue boots and his pants with all ten pockets. But as all of the other kids performed before him, he got more and more nervous. See what happens as he overcomes his fear.



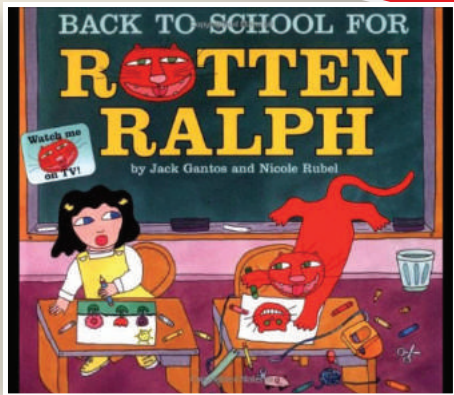
### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Do you ever get nervous about anything? If yes, what do you get nervous about?
2. Have you ever thought that you were really ready to do something and then realized you weren't?
3. What do you think about those two boys that booed? Was that nice? What should they have done differently?
4. The rest of the class cheered when the boy finished. How do you think that boy felt, even with the two mean boys?
5. What is something you can do when someone seems nervous? How can you help them out and help them to succeed?

## ***Back to School for Rotten Ralph,***

by Jack Gantos and Nicole Rubel

Summer is over, and Sarah is excited for school to start so that she can make new friends. However, her cat, Rotten Ralph, wants to be her only friend. He disguises himself and gets on the school bus to follow her to class. Although Ralph plans to sabotage Sarah's attempts to make friends, it all backfires when his identity is revealed and everyone wants to be friends with him and Sarah.



### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Why do you think Rotten Ralph didn't want Sarah to make new friends?
2. Rather than pulling all of the mischievous pranks and tricks, what should Ralph have done?
3. Have you ever had a friend that you wanted all to yourself? What did you do? How did you feel?

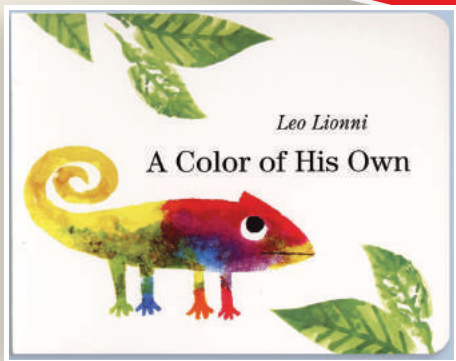
### **Activities:**

1. With a partner, talk about Ralph's disguise. Together, draw a picture of how you think Ralph looked when he got on the bus. Share the picture with your class.
2. Whole group activity: Imagine you are Rotten Ralph. Brainstorm things you could do while waiting for Sarah to return from school.

## ***Color of His Own,*** by Leo Lionni

Every animal had its own color – except chameleon. Pigs were pink, elephants were gray, but chameleons change their color based on their surroundings.

This was very confusing, so Chameleon decided to spend his entire life in the same spot – on a green leaf. However, when fall came the leaf changed colors and so did the chameleon. Once spring came, he was able to meet another chameleon who taught him that having a friend makes it easier to accept yourself for who you are.

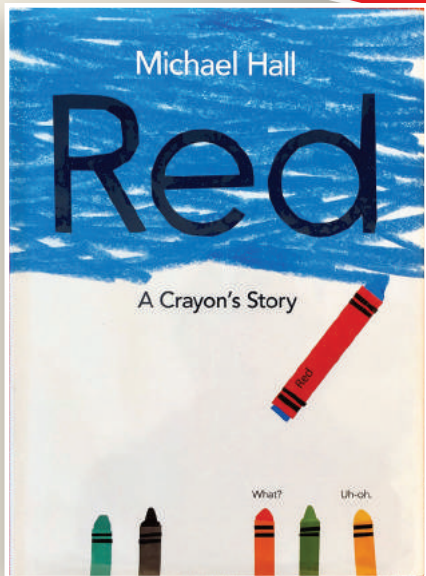


### **Discussion Questions and Activities:**

1. Work with a partner and find something that you have in common with each other.
2. Now, work with your partner or group to find something that makes each of you special and unique. Using the board or chart paper, make a class list of things that make us similar and things that make us unique.
3. After reading the book, ask children to draw a self-portrait to emphasize what makes him/her unique. Allow time for all to share with the group.
4. Given a choice of different colored chameleons, have each student pick one and complete the following sentence about their choice: I would be a \_\_\_\_\_ (ex: green chameleon) sitting on a \_\_\_\_\_ (ex: leaf).

## ***Red, A Crayon's Story,*** by Michael Hall

Red is really a blue crayon covered with red paper. Because of his red paper, everyone assumes he is red, and they expect red things from him. Red fails over, and over again trying to be what he is not, and all the other crayons give their opinion of why Red just can't seem to be red. Then one day he is asked to try drawing something unexpected, and Red finally realizes that he isn't red, he is Blue!



### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Have you ever tried to do something or to be a certain way and were unsuccessful? Why did you try? How did it make you feel?
2. Why do you think Berry asked him to make a blue ocean? What could Berry see that none of the other crayons and art supplies see?
3. What challenges do you think some children with special needs (and their families) may face simply because the children may act, learn or look a little different?

### **Activities:**

1. Make cards with sayings such as "Be Yourself, everyone else is already taken", "If you think someone could use a friend, Be one!", and "Friends are relatives you make for yourself". Place the cards around the room and let students go to the card that speaks to them to form a small group. Ask each group to talk about how their quote relates to the book, and then decide how best to illustrate their saying. When finished, allow each group to present their saying to the entire class.
2. All the crayons are asked to draw self-portraits. Ask students to draw their own self-portraits using ONLY the one color that best represents them. Allow time for each to share and explain their color choice for the self-portrait.

## ***Gaston,*** by Kelly DiPucchio

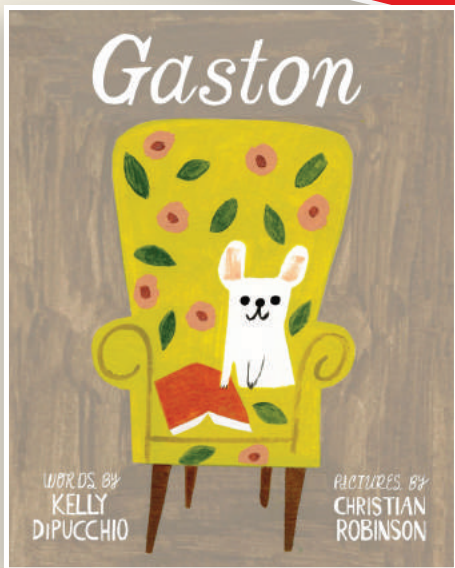
Have you ever felt like you didn't belong, or like you had to try harder at things that other people find easy? Gaston feels that way until one day he discovers that maybe he really DOES belong in another family. Will he finally feel at home with his new family, or is he one of the perfect poodles at heart?

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What made Gaston different, or unique in his family? If you were Gaston, would you switch families or stay with Mrs. Poodle?
2. What did they realize when they went home with the wrong family? Wasn't looking the same enough?
3. When they got back with their original families, how did Gaston and Antoinette bring the two families together? What are some things they did?
4. Have you ever tried to change who you are to fit into another group of friends? Did it make you happy?

### **Activities:**

1. Role playing: Pretend you are a member of Mrs. Poodles family. How would you walk? How would you talk? What does it mean to be dignified and proper? Now – pretend you are a member of Mrs. Bulldog's family. How would you sound? How would you move? How would you play? What does it mean to be brutish and brawny?
2. View the Youtube video Gaston by Kelly DiPucchio, the Susan Cook version.



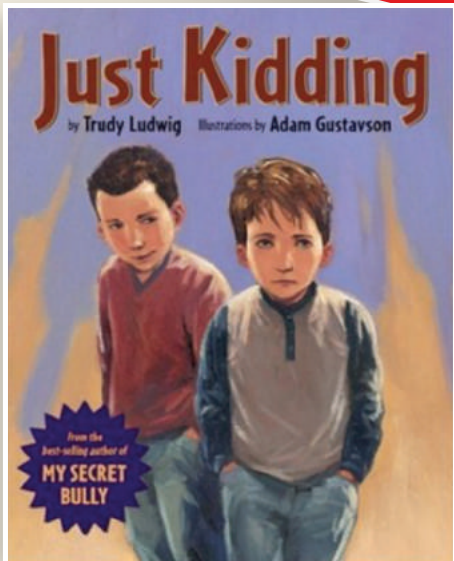


## ***Just Kidding,*** by Trudy Ludwig

DJ's friend, Vince, has a habit of teasing people and then saying, "Just kidding!" as if that makes everything okay. DJ feels that Vince's jokes aren't funny and have a sharp edge that can "cut you to pieces". With the help of his father, brother and his teacher, DJ learns to take positive action in response to the harmful teasing.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How could you tell that DJ was bothered by Vince's teasing?
2. When Vince said he was "just kidding", did you believe him? Why or why not?
3. Do you and your friends tease each other? How can you tell if your friends like it when you tease them? How do you let your friends know when their teasing hurts you?
4. When do you think teasing is okay and when is it not?
5. Who can you go to if you have a problem with teasing?
6. What would you do if you saw other kids teasing your friend in an unkind way?



## ***Just Kidding,***

by Trudy Ludwig (Continued)

### **Activities:**

1. Using the board or chart paper, ask the class to call out words or phrases that stood out to them – just kidding, tattling, etc. As a word or phrase is added to the list, ask the class to define it. You can use this as an anchor chart for additional discussions about teasing and bullying.
2. Put a T chart on the board, with Kidding, and Harmful Teasing as labels. Present various scenarios to the group, asking them to decide which column each would go into. The scenarios may be printed onto smaller cards so that they can physically be placed into the columns or you can use happy face/sad face sticky notes to indicate where each belongs.

Examples of possible scenarios:

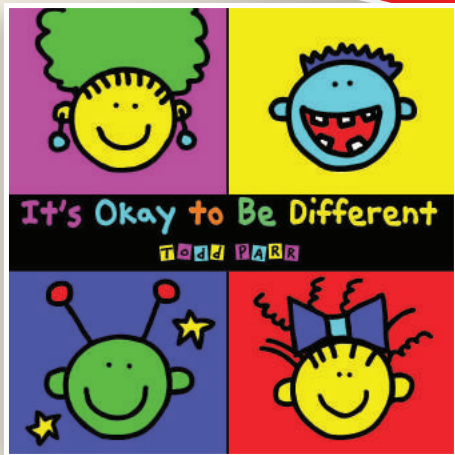
- \*The person being teased and the person teasing both laugh and swap roles happily.
- \*Joking continues even when one person becomes upset or says, "Stop!"
- \*The joking is meant to get everyone to laugh.
- \*The joke is "one-sided" – only one side or one person finds it funny.
- \*The joke is meant to laugh at the person.
- \*The joke is meant to laugh with the person.
- \*The joking stops if a person becomes upset or says, "Stop!"
- \*The joking makes the person look uncomfortable.

## ***It's Okay to be Different,***

by Todd Parr

This book delivers a feel good, positive message about acceptance and understanding. The brightly colored simple pictures and repetitive text work together to call attention to superficial differences and encourage readers to focus on acceptance and individuality. The child-friendly format features

Todd Parr's trademark bold, bright colors and silly illustrations. This book is a great way to start the conversation about diversity with young students.



### **Discussion questions**

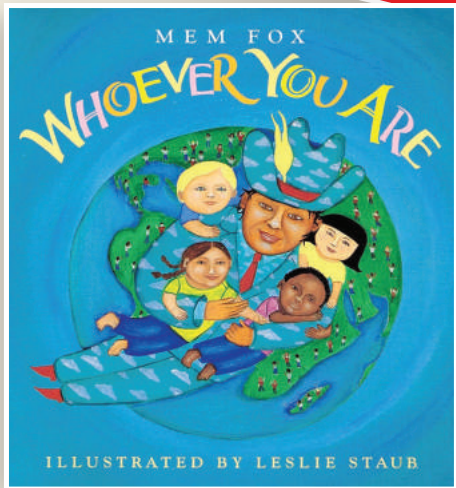
1. Before reading the book with the class, introduce the idea of differences/similarities by asking the group to respond to several of the following statements: Stand up if you have freckles/red hair/have lost a tooth/are wearing sneakers, etc. Then ask the children to think of other ways we are different from each other.
2. Read the book, stopping to ask if anyone knows someone who is like a given character. Which, if any, characters are like you?

### **Activity**

1. Make a T chart - What makes us Different/ What makes us the Same. Brainstorm until there are several examples on each side of the chart. Save this for the next activity.
2. Review the book and the chart. Write the sentence model "It's okay to \_\_\_\_" on the board. Tell the class that each student will use that model to create at least 1 page of a class It's Okay book. Encourage students to illustrate their pages, using the bright, bold colors of the book. Allow all to share their work, then compile the pages into a class book.

## ***Whoever You Are,*** by Mem Fox

This story celebrates those qualities that make us different and the same. This is seen through the book's vivid illustrations of children all over the world who have different customs, languages, food, homes, and schools. It reaffirms the idea that even though we may appear different we share a common bond of joy and pain.



Do a picture walk through the book prior to reading it. Ask students to concentrate on the pictures, describing those things they see that are familiar or different, writing them on a T chart Same/Different.?

### **Discussion questions**

1. What words does the author keep repeating? Why do you think she repeats those words?
2. What are things that make you special and different?
3. How do our differences make us happy? How do our differences make us sad?

## ***Whoever You Are,***

by Mem Fox (Continued)

### **Activities:**

#### **1. Interviews**

Come up with a list of questions students would like to ask each other.

Allow the group to divide into pairs of students, each interviewing the other, using questions developed by the class. Depending on ability, students could record their answers on paper, to be shared with the group. This would be a good way to introduce Unified pairs and a great get-to-know-you activity early in the year.

Examples of questions may be:

What games do you like to play?

Do you have brothers/sisters?

What food do you like to eat?

What is your favorite animal?

What music do you like to listen to?

What places do you like to visit?

#### **2. Stretch a Sketch**

Pass out paper, asking students to draw and color what they think is the most important message in the book. Allow each student to share their drawing.

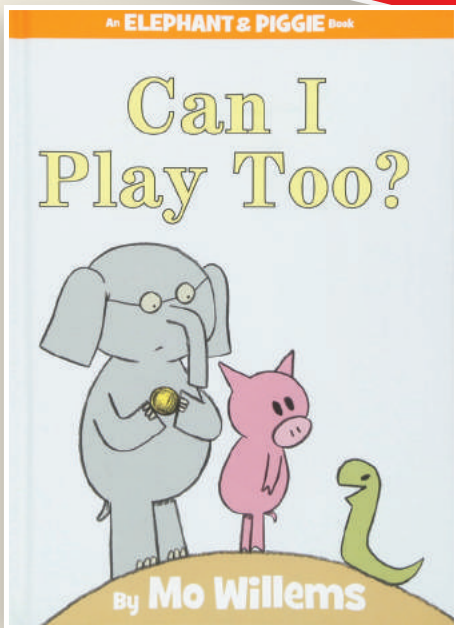
#### **3. Class Venn Diagram collage**

Pass out magazines, scissors, crayons/markers. Ask students to locate and cut out pictures that illustrate differences and similarities people may have. On a long piece of bulletin board paper with a Venn diagram drawn on it, have students put things that show differences in the center and images that show differences on the outside.

## ***Can I Play, Too?***

By Mo Willems

Piggy and Elephant are about to start a game of catch, when their friend Snake asks “Can I play, too?” Both are puzzled by the request because Snake has no arms. But the three friends try hard to find a way to include everyone in the game. After trying different solutions, poor Snake is about to give up, saying “Well, I guess I can’t play after all”. This is a wonderful read-aloud book with very funny illustrations.



### **Discussion questions**

1. Why is Snake so sad?  
What do you think Elephant and Piggy can do? How can they solve the problem?
2. Have you ever had to think of a new way to do something so that a friend could play with you?

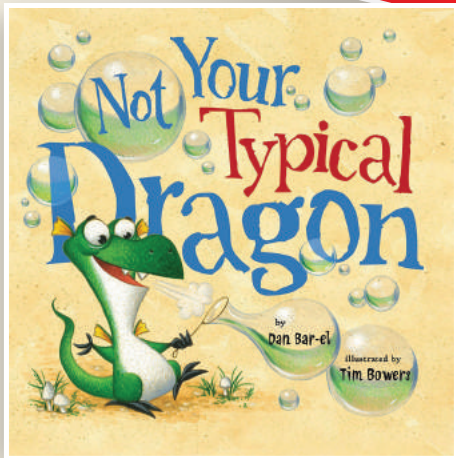
### **Activities**

1. Give each student a piece of paper folded into 4 squares. In each square, students write or draw: 1) something they observed in the book, 2) something they wondered about, 3) a sensory description – smell, touch, etc., and 4) how the story is like something they did or that happened to them. Allow time for all to share if they choose.
2. Let small groups of children act out parts of the book for the class.

## ***Not Your Typical Dragon,***

by Dan Bar-el

Crispin is a dragon who is about to turn 7 – the age that dragons start breathing fire. When his big day comes, Crispin just knows he will be the one to light the candles on his birthday cake. However, it's not fire that comes out, it's whipped cream! Crispin tries over and over to breath fire, but is disappointed each time (marshmallows! Really?) After wondering if he'll ever find his inner fire, a family emergency ends with Crispin using his not-typical abilities to save the day.



### **Discussion questions:**

1. What made Crispin different from the other dragons?
2. How did his family react? What else could they have done?
3. How do you think you should treat someone if they are different from you?

### **Activities:**

1. With a partner, talk about what makes you special. Allow time for pairs to share with the group what makes their partner stand out, like Crispin.
2. Given paper, allow students to write or draw their responses to "I'm not your typical dragon. When I open my mouth, \_\_\_\_\_".
3. Cooking activity – Fireless S'mores. Combine bite sized graham crackers, mini-marshmallows, mini-chocolate chips. Stir, then scoop into individual cups.



## ***Different Is Awesome,*** by Ryan Haack

A little boy brings his big brother, born with only 1 hand, for Show And Tell. The students ask him all sorts of questions about how he does things with only 1 hand. They quickly realize that he can do anything they can, only he does it differently. Along the way, the students see that we are all different in one way or another.



### **Discussion questions:**

1. What are some things Ryan did differently?
2. What would you have asked Ryan? How do you think he would have answered?
3. What makes you awesome? (record responses for later use.)

### **Activities:**

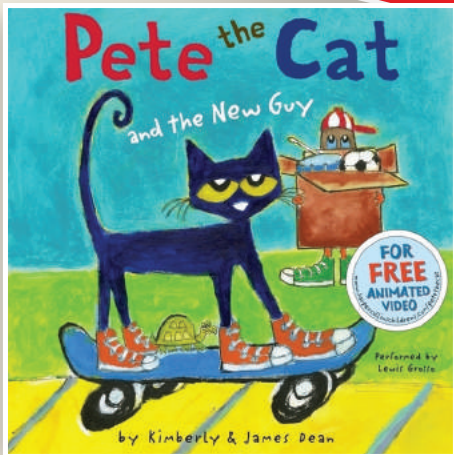
1. Try to do something one-handed, like tie your shoes, put on your socks, etc. Was that hard? Were you able to do it?
2. Pick something that makes you awesome. On a piece of paper, draw or write about what makes you awesome. Share with the class. (check the previous chart for ideas, if needed.)

## ***Pete the Cat and the New Guy,***

by Kimberly and James Dean

There's a new guy in town, and Pete the Cat can't wait to meet him. When they finally meet, Pete realizes that they are very different from each other. Pete tries to get Gus to do the same things he does – like climb trees, and jump – but Gus just can't – he's a platypus.

Gus is special in his own way, just like Pete, and has things he can do. Pete realizes that everyone has their own special things, and that being different is cool.



### **Discussion questions:**

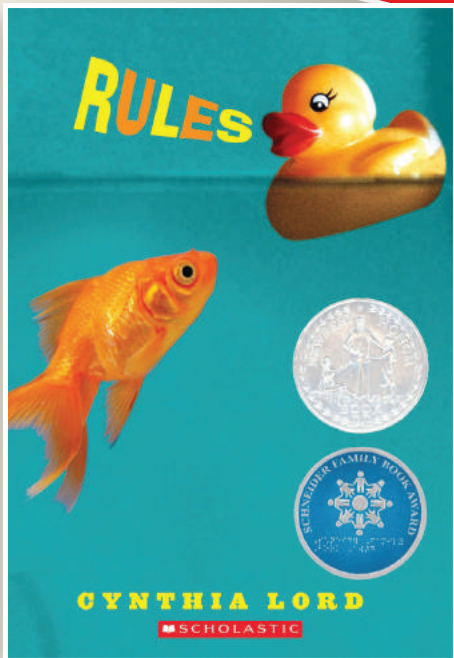
1. What were some things Pete tried to do with Gus? Why couldn't Gus do the same things Pete did?
2. How do you think Gus felt when he couldn't climb or jump like Pete? How do you think Pete felt?
3. How did Pete discover Gus' talent? Why did that make him happy?
4. When Pete says that there is something everyone can do, what does he mean?

### **Activities:**

1. Make a Being a Good Friend chart. Brainstorm things that good friends do. This can be used as an anchor chart to remind students how to be a good friend.
2. Complete the sentence. Set up a template for "My friend \_\_\_\_\_ is very good at \_\_\_\_\_". As ability allows, let children complete the sentence by writing or recording responses. Let children illustrate their sentences. Display on bulletin board.

## **Rules,** by Cynthia Lord

Catherine just wants a normal life – which is not possible when your brother has Autism. She has spent years trying to teach David the rules – from “no toys in the fish tank” to “keep your pants on in public”, in order to change behaviors that embarrass her. One summer she meets Jason, and Kristi, the neighbor for whom she has always wished. It is her own surprising behavior that changes everything and makes Catherine question what is normal?



### **Discussion questions:**

1. What are some of the rules Catherine thinks David should learn? How would they make her life easier?
2. How do you feel when you are with friends and encounter someone with a disability? What do you do? What would Catherine suggest you do?

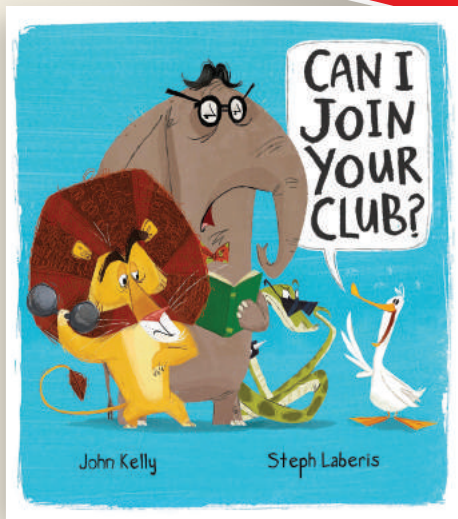
### **Activities:**

1. With a partner, think of additional rules David or Catherine should learn. Share your rules with the class or add them to a class list of Rules.
2. Whole group: Brainstorm the names of the characters in this book. Write them on chart paper, leaving room for the class to add character descriptions. Using the chart and the descriptions, allow students the time to choose a character to draw.

## ***Can I Join Your Club?***

By John Kelly

Duck really wants to join a club – any club. Even though he tries hard to fit in, it just doesn't work: he can't roar like Lion or trumpet like Elephant. So, Duck decides to start his own club, with his own rule – Everyone is Welcome! Lesson learned? When it comes to making friends, being yourself is what counts.



### **Discussion questions:**

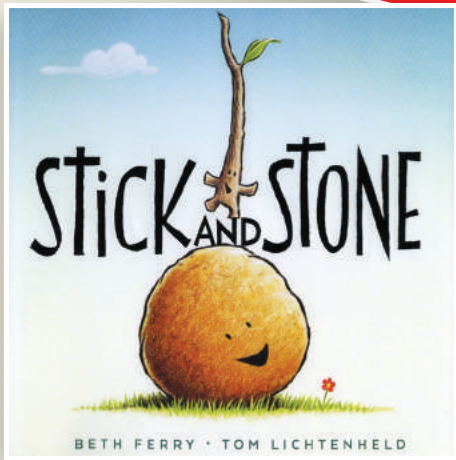
1. What types of clubs did Duck try to join? What were the rules each club had? Why was Duck's application denied?
2. Duck still wanted to join a club, so what did he decide to do? What was his rule for joining his club?
3. Which club do you think would be the most fun? Why?

### **Activities:**

1. Divide class into several small groups. Ask each group to come up with an idea for a club, and a rule that would allow everyone to join it. (Ex: Cooking Club – if you eat, you can join). Use paper to make a poster for your club. Share with the class.
2. Place the different club posters around the room. Set the timer and let the class wander around, signing up for the clubs of their choice. When the timer rings, all return to the carpet. Using the posters, ask different children to explain why they signed up for a given club.

## ***Stick and Stone,*** by Beth Ferry

This is a story about friendship. Stick and Stone become good friends, especially after Stick stands up for Stone when Pinecone bullies him. An unexpected twist comes in the form of a hurricane, which blows Stick away and leads Stone to search high and low for his buddy. The picture book lends itself to lessons on friendship and bullying. The illustrations are wonderful – simple and expressive.



### **Discussion questions:**

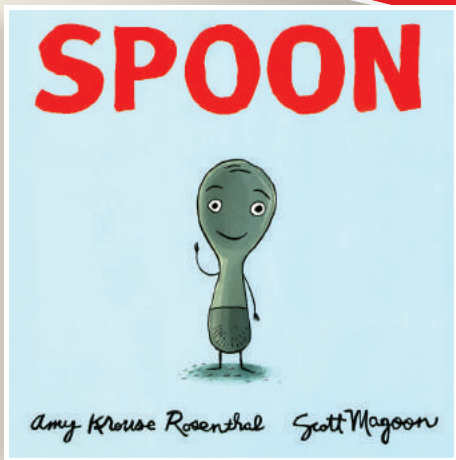
1. Who are the main characters in this story? What problem do both Stick and Stone have?
2. How did Stick stand up for Stone? How did Stone feel when he couldn't find his friend?
3. What is the moral/lesson of this story? (be a good friend, be kind to everyone)

### **Activities:**

1. Divide a piece of paper into three sections. Students are asked to think of three ways they can be a friend. Depending on ability, students may complete this on their own, with a buddy or can dictate their response and do their own illustrations. Allow time for students to share their ideas with the class.
2. Take class outside to look for their own Stick and Stone. Use markers to draw a simple face on a rock and a stick. Encourage pairs to act out parts of the story, using their Sticks/Stones.

***Spoon,***  
by Amy Krouse  
Rosenthal

Spoon thinks his friends have it so much better than he does. He doesn't get to cut and spread like Knife. He doesn't get to go practically everywhere like Fork, and he's not cool and exotic like Chopsticks. Then he finds out that his friends think Spoon is the lucky one. He gets to be silly and bang on a pot, unlike Knife who is always handled so seriously. Fork wishes he could measure things like Spoon. Lessons in this book include be happy with what you have, and accept your own unique gifts.



**Discussion questions:**

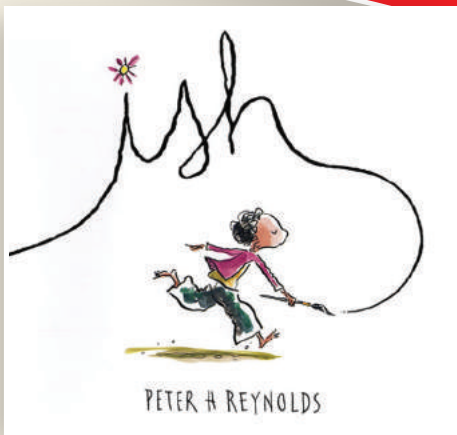
1. Why does Spoon think his friends have it so much better than him?
2. When Spoon couldn't see all the great things about his life, what did mom do to help him? Have you ever felt that way about yourself? What could you do the next time you feel that way?
3. Take a minute and think of at least 2 great things about yourself. Brainstorm a list of the special things you think of – work as pairs or as a class.

**Activities:**

1. Make a paper spoon for each child to help them remember great things about themselves. Make the spoon large enough that words can be written onto the spoon. Decorate them and hang them in the classroom.
2. Create a utensil family, using plastic spoons, forks and knives, along with craft times such as googly eyes, pipe cleaners.

## ***Ish,*** by Peter Reynolds

Ramon loves to draw – until his older brother makes fun of his drawings. Then one day, he finds someone who enjoys his work – his little sister. From her he learns that his drawing of a vase doesn't have to be perfect, it just has to look “vase-ish”.



### **Discussion questions:**

1. How many of you love to draw?
2. Why did Ramon have trouble drawing after his brother made fun of his picture? What could Ramon have said to his brother?
3. What does Marisol mean when she says that the picture is “vase-ISH?”
4. What are some new ideas Ramon finds for his art once he starts to see the world in the new, ISH way?
5. Could you draw a feeling, like Ramon did? What would happy-ish look like?

### **Activities:**

1. Ish-ful Portraits: create an ish-ful portrait. Label them ishfully “Peter-ish”, “Tyanna-ish”. Class can partner up and do ish-ful portraits of each other.
2. Math – estimation. Quickly show a group of items, not giving class time to count. Ask how many? 10-ish? 5-ish?
3. Fold a piece of drawing paper into quarters. Have class write the name of something Raymond drew in each quarter (ex: tree-ish, house-ish, fish-ish, boat-ish). Let the class have fun drawing their own versions of things Raymond drew.



## ***Exclamation Mark,*** by Amy Krouse Rosenthal

This is a creative story about an exclamation mark who feels out of place around all the periods. He wants desperately to fit in. He meets a question mark and soon discovers how exciting it can be to be different.



### **Discussion questions:**

1. How was Exclamation Mark different from all the periods? How did he try to fit in? What did he do when nothing he tried worked?
2. Have you ever felt different from your friends? What did you do?
3. What happened when he met Question Mark?

### **Activities:**

1. Brainstorm with the class ways in which having a positive attitude (making their mark) can affect their school year, friendships, classroom community, etc. Make a list on chart paper to use as a reference if needed for the next activity.
2. "Make Your Mark" Bulletin Board: Using black and white construction paper, let class make exaggerated exclamation marks (big, black shapes for the line, round white shapes for the dot). Make sure the white dot part is large enough to write words or draw small pictures to illustrate/label strengths each child wishes to show to the world. Typical answers may be along the lines of making new friends, getting better grades, being a good listener, being respectful of others, being a good sport, etc. These can be shared, then put on a bulletin board. Students could write their names with white crayon or chalk on the black part.

# **One,**

by Katherine Otoshi

This is a simple picture book about the power of being yourself and standing up to bullies. It shows children that one person can make a difference.



## **Discussion questions:**

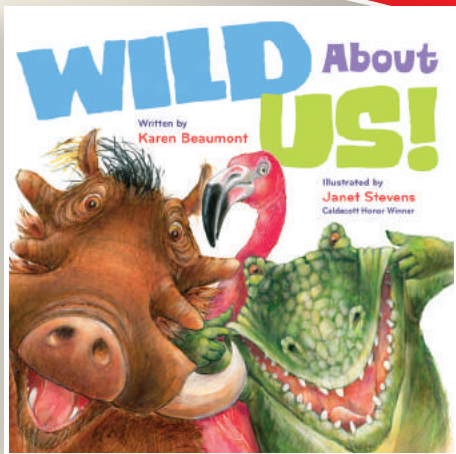
1. What does Blue think of himself? How does that change when he is around Red?
2. What happened to Red when no one asked him to stop being mean?
3. What happened when One stood up to Red?
4. What does it mean "to count" - to feel like you have value? When was Red asked to be part of the group that counts?

## **Activities:**

1. Using chart paper or the board, write "Every 1 counts!" The 1 can be very large and decorated with colors seen in the book. Underneath the 1, you can ask the class to come up with positive things to do when someone is being mean – "use kind words", "be a good friend", "ask a friend to play", etc. Students can then use paper and crayons to make their own "Every 1 Counts" posters, signing their names under the positive response.
2. Cut out red, blue, yellow, green, purple and orange circles and numbers from one to seven. Ask students to use the shapes and numbers to act out or retell the story of One. How did they feel acting out the different colors and numbers?

## ***Wild About Us!*** by Karen Beaumont

Wild About Us is a cleverly written and beautifully illustrated book about the celebration of differences. Warty Warthog takes you on a journey through the zoo, looking at ways his zoo friends embrace that which makes them unique, whether it is Elephant's long nose, or Kangaroo's huge feet. This book about acceptance, self-confidence and compassion will bring out the best in all of us.



### **Discussion questions:**

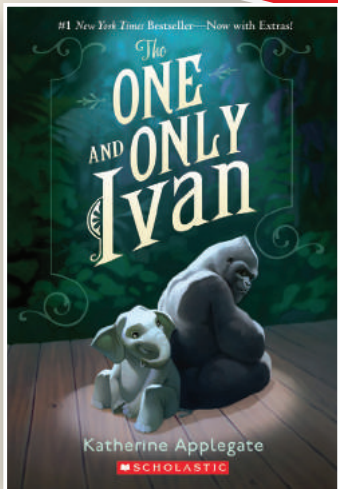
1. What are some of the words used in this book to describe the animals?
2. How did they seem to feel about the way they looked?
3. The animals in the book are "wild" about themselves. Why?
4. What connection can you make to these zoo animals?

### **Activities:**

1. Brainstorm different words used to describe the animals in Wild About Us! Add other descriptive words as appropriate to the list.
2. Describe why you are wild about yourself to a friend. Now, draw a self-portrait showing why you are wild about yourself. Share your picture with the group.
3. Using the list of descriptive words, draw a picture of an animal, focusing on the chosen word. Example: Drawing a zebra with lots of stripes or a crocodile with many sharp teeth.

## ***The One and Only Ivan,*** by Katherine Applegate

This Newberry Award winning chapter book is told through the eyes of Ivan, a silver back gorilla who has been living in captivity for 27 years. The book begins with Ivan living at the Exit 8 Big Top Mall and Video Arcade, along with Stella, an elephant and Bob, a stray dog. Ivan tells his story through flashbacks of where he has been, challenges he faces, and his hopes for the future. When the owner of the Mall brings in a baby elephant named Ruby, Ivan understands what captivity really means and begins to work to find a better way of life for himself and his friends.



### **Discussion questions:**

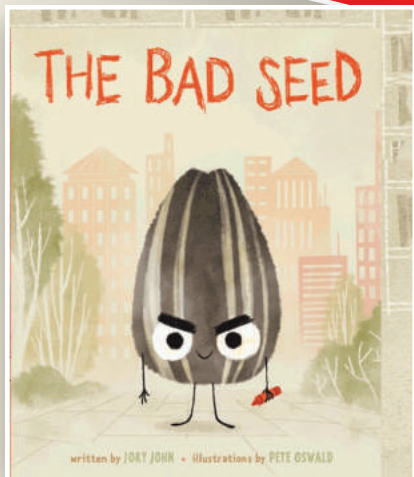
1. Who are the main animal characters in the story? Why are they important to Ivan?
2. How does Julia try to help Ivan?
3. How does Ivan learn about the outside world? What do you think is the most important thing for him to learn?
4. How does the arrival of Ruby change things for Ivan? What does he promise Stella?
5. The idea of belonging is important in this story. Discuss the idea of belonging from the view point of each character. Compare that to what belonging means to you.

### **Activities:**

1. Make an anchor chart showing the 4 places Ivan has lived. Help class brainstorm details of Ivan's life in each place. When finished, use the anchor chart for additional activities. Students may write their responses on sticky notes to add to the chart.
2. Go online to learn about the real Ivan, who inspired this book, and find out how he adapted to life at Zoo Atlanta.
3. Allow students to research mountain gorillas, their natural habitat and what can be done to help them. Go to [www.gorillas.org](http://www.gorillas.org) to find out what is currently being done to protect these animals.

## ***The Bad Seed,*** by Jory John

This is a book about a seed – a bad seed. He has a bad temper, bad manners, and a bad attitude. He knows he’s bad. Everyone thinks he’s bad. So, he acts bad. But what would happen if he decides he wants to change and be happy? This book shows that positive change is possible for everyone – with some will power, acceptance and just plain being yourself.



### **Discussion questions:**

1. Why does the main character call himself a “bad seed”? What are some of the “bad” things the seed does?
2. Why do you think the bad seed decided he was ready to be happy? What are some of the things he does to try to be good?
3. Have you ever had days when you acted like the bad seed?

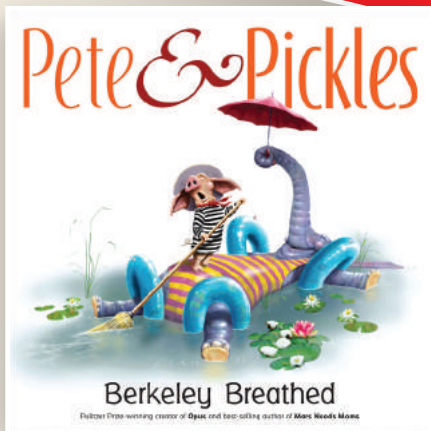
### **Activities:**

1. The bad seed says he wasn’t always a bad seed. How do you think he felt when he heard others call him a “bad seed”? How could others have helped him instead? Draw a picture of something you would have done to help the bad seed. Share your drawing with the class and explain your thinking.
2. Seed Sort: Give children a paper plate with different types of seeds. Have them sort the seeds into groups and explain why they sorted the seeds the way they did.
3. Sunflowers: Materials: paper, paint – brown, green and yellow, paint brushes and forks. Paint a small brown circle in the center of the paper. Use green paint to make a stem and a leaf or two. Dig the tines of the fork into the yellow paint, and starting from the brown circle, draw outward to make the petals.
4. This book would be a great addition to a plant unit. Visit this site for tons of seed activities for children: [fantasticfunandlearning.com](http://fantasticfunandlearning.com) and search for “35 Seed Activities for Young Kids”.

## ***Pete and Pickles,*** by Berkely Breathed

This is a sweet book about acceptance and unexpected friendship, and a pig who is lonely, but just doesn't know it. Pete is a perfectly predictable, practical, uncomplicated pig. At least, he was . . . before a runaway circus elephant named Pickles stampeded into his life, needing a friend. Pickles is larger than life and overflowing with imagination.

She takes Pete swan-diving off Niagara Falls. (Sort of.) And sledding down the Matterhorn. (Sort of.) Pete goes along for the wild ride and begins to enjoy himself, until Pickles goes too far and Pete tells her she must leave.



### **Discussion questions:**

1. Who do you think Paprika was?
2. Why do you think Pickles ran to Pete?
3. How did the pig save the elephants life?
4. Pickles dreams about going all over the world. What do you dream about?

### **Activities:**

1. Make a Valentines Day card for your best friend, your teacher, your mother or father.
2. Make a bouquet of 3 dimensional flowers. Cut out several circles of different sizes. Using one circle make 5 slits (pie slices) but do NOT cut into the middle. Leave room for the middle. Fold the slices up and glue a smaller different colored circle in the middle. For another type of flower, cut 15+ slits around the circle then do the same with another colored circle (the same size). Glue the cut circles together and fold up the skinny slits so you can see both colors. Glue the flowers to popsicle sticks, piper cleaners or thick strips of paper (you can make the strips by folding a piece of paper several times).
3. Plan a grand adventure (sort of) that you can do on the school playground.

## ***Leo the Late Bloomer,*** by Robert Krause

In *Leo the Late Bloomer*, Leo is behind his friends in reading, writing, drawing, eating neatly and speaking. When Leo's father becomes concerned, Leo's mother explains that Leo is simply a late bloomer. Later, in his own good time, Leo "blooms", pleasing his patient parents and, of course, himself. This is a good book to use to help children understand that everyone does things at their own pace, and that's alright.

### **Discussion questions:**

1. How do you think Leo felt about not being able to do the things his friends could do?
2. How do you think Leo's parents felt at the beginning of the story?
3. How did Leo learn to draw, write and speak?
4. How do you think Leo and his family felt at the end of the story?

### **Activities:**

1. Whole group: Ask the class to think of things that they were unable to do when little, but can do now – skipping, reading, writing, riding a bike, etc. Make a list of those skills they are most proud of. Have children draw pictures to illustrate the list. Display the list and illustrations in the classroom.
2. How would you like to celebrate when you learn a new skill?
3. How could you show someone – a friend, brother or sister – how proud you are of them?



## **Zero,**

by Kathryn Otoshi

Zero feels empty inside and has a hole right through the center. She feels left out because she wants to count like the other numbers but how can she when she is worth nothing? This book explores how to find value in yourself and others.



### **Discussion questions:**

1. What does it mean to have value?
2. Why did Zero only see an empty hole inside?
3. How did Seven help Zero find her value?
4. Have you ever felt like you didn't matter? What made you feel that way?
5. Think of a time when you felt valuable – to friends or to family. How did you feel then?

### **Activities:**

1. Whole group: Using chart paper or white board, brainstorm a list of words from the book that have more than one meaning (count, value, hole, stretch, open, soar).
2. Prepare paper with a large zero covering most of the page. Ask students to draw a picture of the time they felt really valuable, cut it out and glue it into the center to the zero. Share your picture and story with your classmates.
3. Prepare ahead of time: Cut out large "coins" from construction paper. Write something valuable about each person on their coin. Ex: kind, helpful, understanding, friendly, etc. Give each child their coin. Ask the class to discuss how it feels to know that someone values something about them.



***Stand Tall,  
Molly Lou Melon,***  
by Patty Lovell

We are all unique, and no one more so than Molly Lou Melon. She is short and clumsy, has a voice like a bullfrog and has buck teeth so big she can stack pennies on them. But she doesn't mind – her grandmother always told her to walk proud, smile big, and sing loud. Molly puts that advice into practice as she deals with a bully at her new school. David Catrow's illustrations are bright, colorful and funny.



**Discussion questions:**

1. How did Molly Lou's grandmother make her feel special?
2. What happened when Molly Lou moved to a new town?
3. How did Molly solve the problem?
4. How did Ronald Durkin change?
5. What does "standing tall" mean to you?

**Activities:**

1. Whole group: Print hard copies of the sayings Molly's grandmother told her. Ex: "Walk as proudly as you can and the world will look up to you". Display the sayings on the wall or board as you come to them in the story. These sayings can be used throughout the school year to remind students that they can stand tall, like Molly Lou Melon.
2. Take a digital photo of each student or ask them to draw self-portraits. Encourage everyone to think of at least one positive statement about themselves and write it on the drawing or the printed photo. Use these to make a bulletin board in the class.
3. Give each student the story starter "I stand tall by..." Allow time for students to share with the class ways in which they stand tall.

## ***Say Something,*** by Peter H. Reynolds

In this empowering new picture book, Peter H. Reynolds explores the many ways that a single voice can make a difference. Each of us, 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!



### **Discussion questions:**

1. Why is it important for all of us to say something?
2. In the book, what are some of the ways children found to say something?
3. What is your message for others? What would you like to change in your class, your school or in the world?

### **Activities:**

1. Whole group: Brainstorm things to say, using the book for inspiration. Ex: Every Voice Matters; Be Kind, Peace, You Are Braver Than You Think, To Have a Friend Be a Friend, Believe in Yourself, Be You!, Follow Your Heart, Be Brave!, Together is Better. Make a class list to use with either of the next two activities.
2. Create Say Something! stations for students to rotate through. Stations can include a painting/art station, a poetry station, a dress-up station, a poster making station, etc. Encourage students to think of something they want to say from the list generated earlier.
3. Say Something! Signs: Signs and posters allow people to creatively use their voice to inspire others. Invite the class to create their own signs using a variety of materials. You can have speech bubbles cut out to use in the signs/posters. When finished, allow each to share their work and take a group photo of all holding up their signs.

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