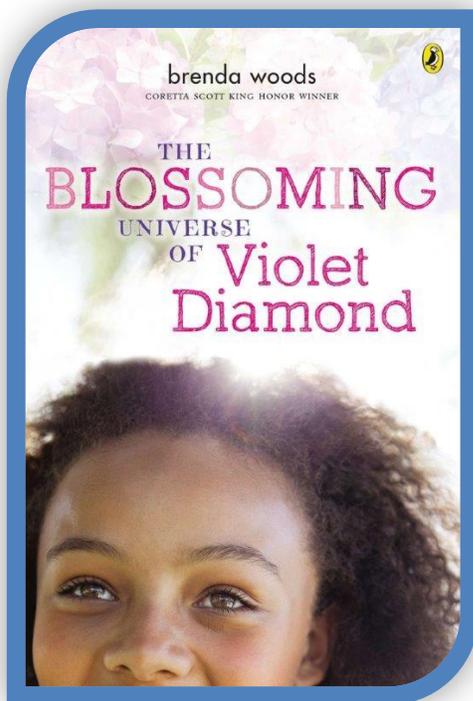




# Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

**About the Book of the Month Parent/Family Discussion Guide:** This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For parents, guardians and family members, reading the books listed on this site with your children and integrating the concepts into your interactions with them is an excellent way to help children grapple with and learn about these important principles.



## The Blossoming Universe of Violet Diamond

Brenda Woods (Author)

ISBN: 978-0147514301

Publisher: Puffin Books

Year Published: 2015

Age Range: 8–12

### Book Themes

Identity, Race, Racial pride, Family, Self-esteem

### About the Book

Violet is smart, funny and biracial. But her African American father died before she was born and she has grown up with just her white mother and white older sister. She attends a white school and lives in a mostly white town. Now that she's eleven, Violet is determined to learn more about her African American heritage. She seeks out her grandmother, a famous Afrocentric artist. And as Violet reclaims her lost heritage, her confidence in herself grows and she starts to blossom into her whole, wonderful self.

## Conversation Starters

Whether you read the book aloud or children read it on their own and you discuss it later, use these open-ended questions to deepen the conversation. Remember not to judge their responses and to listen thoughtfully and engage in a give-and-take that helps them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes.

- What is the book about?
- Why do you think Violet wants a cat so much? Have you ever wanted a pet and how did you feel when you got one?
- Have you ever been the “only” of something (like Violet was) and how was that for you?
- How do you feel about the time we spend with different sides of our family? How might you like that to change, if at all?
- How do you think Violet and her grandmother Bibi felt when they met each other for the first time?
- What was the visit like for both of them? How was it similar to or different from when you spend time with your grandparents?
- What did Violet learn about the African American side of her family and herself during the visit with Bibi?
- Do you think Violet felt like she “belonged” when she was with the other side of her family? Can you relate to this?
- In reading the book, what did you learn about being biracial?
- How did you feel when the book ended? What do you think might happen next?

## Talking Points

Below are some important considerations to highlight in order to make this a learning opportunity for your child and your family.

### 1. Identity

The theme of identity looms large in the book. Violet is biracial but has never met any people from the African American side of her family. She lives in a predominately white town and is the only black student in her class. She regularly gets asked if her Mom and sister are related to her and this makes her angry. When Violet finally connects with her African American family, the book highlights the cultural aspects of their African American identity as well as discussions of race and racism. Reading and talking about the book is an opportunity to discuss your child's identity (which can include race, religion, ethnicity, gender, family structure, etc.) in its complexity. Talk with your child about identity and the ways that our identity manifests through culture, values, connections and the way we experience the world. At the same time, these aspects of identity do not encompass everything that makes up a person's identity. Talk with your child about what aspects of their identity are important to them and discuss the extent to which they feel accepted in their family, community and school for who they are. Your family may or may not have a strong cultural identity and that can also be discussed. Explain that different groups have both similarities and differences from each other. Those differences are part of life and make it interesting and shouldn't be barriers to connecting with and forming friendships with people of different groups.

## 2. Being Biracial

Being biracial is a central theme in Violet's life and the book. Violet reflects on this a great deal, noticing that black and white people treat her differently (e.g. She says, "To white people, I'm half black. To black people, I'm half white."). You can explain what it means to be biracial (relating to, or involving people from two races) or multiracial (composed of or representing various races). If your child is biracial or knows someone who is, explain that because their identity is made up of two or more races, all of those sides are important and should be acknowledged and affirmed. In the book, Violet thinks to herself, "50% black + 50% white = 100% Violet? Is that what I am, a percentage?" This illustrates the importance of not thinking of biracial/multiracial people as a percentage but more as a whole person who is made up of different parts. Biracial/multiracial people will often be viewed in a particular way from the outside world (based on what they look like) but how they view themselves in their complexity is very important to nurture and value.

## 3. Family

The book explores what it means to be a family. Violet is distressed that when she is out in the world, people sometimes assume her sister and mother are not part of her family because of how they look. In addition, she feels like she is missing a piece of herself because she doesn't know the African American side of her family. Talk with your child about your own family as well as different kinds of families that are part of your lives. It is important to emphasize that there are different kinds of families and if your family is unfamiliar with families that are different than yours, find examples through books, movies and television shows. Ask your child what are the most important things that make a family and elicit/explain that what connects people as a family is mutual love, a sense of belonging and taking care of one another. There can be families that include people of different races/ethnicities, families with two Dads or two Moms, blended families (step-parents and step-siblings), families headed by one parent or another family member, etc.

## Other Books You May Like

*Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/brown-girl-dreaming.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/brown-girl-dreaming.html)

*One Crazy Summer* by Rita Williams-Garcia, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/one-crazy-summer.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/one-crazy-summer.html)

*The House You Pass on the Way* by Jacqueline Woodson, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/the-house-you-pass-on-the-way.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/the-house-you-pass-on-the-way.html)

*The President Looks Like Me and Other Poems* by Tony Medina, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/the-president-looks-like-me.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/the-president-looks-like-me.html)

## ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on identity, race and racial pride.

### Curriculum Resources

"Dolls Are Us," *Current Events Classroom*, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/dolls-are-us.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/dolls-are-us.html).

"Who Am I? Identity Poems," *Current Events Classroom*, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/who-am-i-identity-poems.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/who-am-i-identity-poems.html).

## Websites

### Parent, Family and Caregiver Resources

[www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/parent-family-and-caregivers.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/parent-family-and-caregivers.html)

Strategies, tips, guiding principles and resources to help parents, family members and caregivers impart values and principles to the children in their lives.

### Black History Month Resources

[www.adl.org/education-outreach/early-childhood](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/early-childhood)

A listing of PreK-12 curriculum and other resources to bring the themes of Black History Month to the classroom during February and throughout the year.

### Glossary of Education Terms

[www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/glossary-of-education-terms.pdf](http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/glossary-of-education-terms.pdf)

A glossary of anti-bias education terms often associated with and provide a common, working language for ADL's anti-bias programs and resources.

### Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race

[www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/race-talk.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/race-talk.html)

Provides strategies and advice for talking with young people about race and racism.

### Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events

[www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/table-talk-family-conversations.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/table-talk-family-conversations.html)

Table Talk provides parents and family members with the tools they need to engage their families in conversations about important news stories and other timely discussions about societal and world events. Each guide includes a topic summary, questions to start the conversation and dig deeper, ideas for taking action and additional resources.