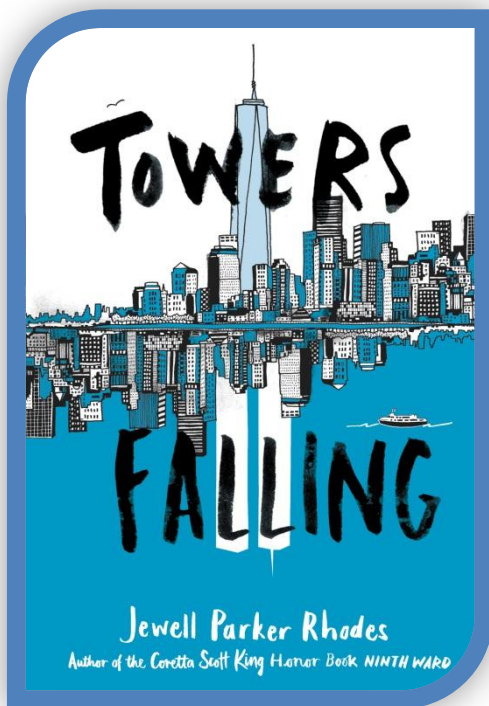




Book of the Month

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.



Towers Falling

Jewell Parker Rhodes (Author)

ISBN: 978-0316262224

Publisher: Little, Brown and Company

Year Published: 2016

Age Range: 8–12

Book Themes

Diversity, Tragic events, Stereotypes, Community, Friendship, Homelessness, 9/11

About the Book

When her fifth-grade teacher hints that a series of lessons about home and community will culminate with one big answer about two tall towers once visible outside their classroom window, Dèja can't help but feel confused. She sets off on a journey of discovery, with new friends Ben and Sabeen by her side. But just as she gets closer to answering big questions about who she is, what America means and how communities can grow and heal, she uncovers new questions, too. Like, why does Pop get so angry when she brings up anything about the towers?

Advance Preparation

Towers Falling is about the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 (9/11) and specifically the Twin Towers in NYC. Although it is done in an age appropriate way, you may want to read the book in

advance to assess whether it is suitable reading for your child; it includes many details about September 11. Also, if you haven't already talked with your child about 9/11, it would be best to tell them about it prior to them reading the book. Some information is below and they will learn more information as they read the book.

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 happens in the story?
- What is the friendship like between Dèja, Sabeen and Ben? What do they have in common and what are the differences between them?
- Have you ever had a friendship like theirs?
- How does Dèja feel about the differences between her and her friends? What conflict is caused by it and what do they learn from each other?
- Was the idea of "social unit" something you could relate to? Who is in your social unit?
- Why does Pop think Dèja is too young to know about 9/11? What do you think about that? When did you learn about 9/11 and how did you find out about it?
- How does Dèja learn about her Pop's connection to 9/11 and what is their conversation like when they talk about it? How does each of them feel?
- What did you know about 9/11 before reading the book and what did you learn by reading the book? What more do you want to know? How does the book give you information about 9/11 through the story of Dèja's class learning about it?
- Why do you think Ben and Dèja decide to visit Freedom Towers? What do they find there and how does that impact them?
- What was the message of the book?

Talking Points

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

1. About September 11

The book is about the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S. and specifically focuses on the Twin Towers. If you haven't already discussed 9/11 with your child, before reading the book you should tell your child about September 11 using some of the information below:

On September 11, 2001, terrorists attacked the United States. They hijacked four airplanes in mid-flight. The terrorists flew two of the planes into two skyscrapers at the World Trade Center ("Twin Towers") in New York City. The impact caused the buildings to catch fire and collapse. Another plane

destroyed part of the Pentagon (the U.S. military headquarters) in Arlington, Virginia. The fourth plane crashed in Pennsylvania. In all, nearly 3,000 people were killed in the 9/11 attacks. The terrorists belonged to a terrorist group called Al Qaeda (ahl KAY-dah), led by Osama bin Laden, who was later killed by the U.S. government in 2011. The group is intensely opposed to the United States and other Western, democratic countries and are especially opposed to the military presence of these countries in Arab nations.

While you are explaining this, answer any questions your child has, ask what they think and be sure to pay attention to their feelings. As they are reading the book or as you read the book together, keep asking what they found out about 9/11. It will also be important to explain that during the terrorist attack, there were a lot of helpers and people who wanted to support those who were in danger, injured and the families of survivors. Firefighters and police officers from all over the city rushed to the scene within minutes of the attack. Cities and towns all over the country sent firefighters and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) to help. People donated blood in case those with injuries needed it. There were new charities formed to donate funds to the victims and rescue workers. During the recovery and cleanup efforts, volunteers and people who worked in construction offered their services to help. If they have more questions or want to do something, explore opportunities to do learn more. This additional resource may help in the conversation:

[Empowering Young People in the Aftermath of Hate.](#)

2. Differences and Friendship

Dèja, Sabeen and Ben, who are classmates in Miss Garcia's class, become very close friends. Despite their differences, they connect, get along well and have a lot in common. Remind your child that Dèja says to Sabeen and Ben "we're different but friends," and ask what they think about that. Explain that the three of them talk about their real experiences based on those identity characteristics (in their case race, religion, housing situation and family structure). Ask your child if she or he can relate to that sentiment and the extent to which they have friends who are different in some way. Stress that the three friends didn't ignore their differences but those differences didn't prevent them from becoming good friends. Emphasize that it is natural to notice and acknowledge differences. However, those differences don't have to get in the way of friendship and connecting with one another.

3. Being an Ally and Helper

In the book, there is a lot of ally behavior and examples where "helpers" make a difference. Define **ally** as someone who helps or stands up for someone who is being bullied or the target of prejudice. Remind your child that when Dèja thought that Ben was being teased for being a cowboy, she said to her classmates: "Don't make fun of Ben." Dèja and Ben support Sabeen when she talks about getting picked on because she wears a scarf or gets harassed when she's in a store by herself—all because of her religion. In addition, the book delves into the many ways that people helped others during 9/11 (see above), including Dèja's Pop, and that is an important aspect to emphasize as well. When tragedy or disasters take place, there are always people who want to help and it is useful to focus on those helpers.

Other Books You May Like

A Shelter in My Car by Monica Gunning, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/a-shelter-in-our-car.html

Gifts from the Enemy by Trudy Ludwig, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/gifts-from-the-enemy.html

Drita, My Homegirl by Jenny Lombard, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/drita-my-homegirl.html

Same Sun Here by Silas House and Neela Vaswani, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/same-sun-here.html

ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on identity, bullying, anti-Muslim bigotry and responding to hate and violence.

Curriculum Resources

"Anti-Muslim Bigotry and Being an Ally," *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/anti-muslim-bigotry-and-being-an-ally.html.

"Beyond Stigma and Stereotypes: What is Homelessness?," *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/beyond-stigma-and-stereotypes.html.

"Identity-Based Bullying," *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/identity-based-bullying.html.

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

Printed Material

Be An Ally: Six Simple Ways

www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/Be-an-Ally-Six-Ways-online-version.pdf

This resource provides simple things youth can do to be an ally to targets of name-calling and bullying.

Websites

Definitions Related to Bias, Injustice and Bullying

www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/definitions-related-to-bias-injustice-bullying.html

A listing of terms and definitions relating to bias, diversity, bullying and social justice concepts written for elementary-age children.

Parent, Family and Caregiver Resources

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.

Empowering Young People in the Aftermath of Hate

www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/empowering-young-people-in-the-aftermath-of-hate.html

A guide for educators and families that provide the tools they need to help young people confront hate effectively in the aftermath of hate violence or terrorism in their community.

Table Talk: Islamophobia and Being an Ally

www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/islamophobia-and-being-an.html

Provides strategies and advice for talking with young people about Muslims, Islamophobia and to be an ally.

Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

Religious Bigotry: Muslim/Muslim American, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/religion-religious-bigotry-books.html?subreligion=muslim-muslim-american

General Anti-Bias: Socioeconomic Bias, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/general-books.html?generalsub=socioeconomic-bias