



Monthly Featured Book

Presented by ADL's Education Department

About the Monthly Featured Book: 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.



BIG

Vashti Harrison (Author and Illustrator)

Age Range: 4-8

Year Published: 2023

Book Themes

Diversity, Importance of Names, People, Identity
Weightism and Sizeism, Self-Esteem, Teasing,
Name-Calling and Bullying, Power of Words

About the Book

This book traces a child's journey to self-love and shows the power of words to both hurt and heal. With spare text and exquisite illustrations, this emotional exploration of being big in a world that prizes small is a tender portrayal of how you can stand out and feel invisible at the same time.

Note for Parents and Families:

This book is about weightism and sizeism, which is very common among young people and in schools today. The National Education Association's (NEA) report on size discrimination says, "For students (targeted by weightism), the school experience is one of ongoing prejudice, unnoticed discrimination, and almost constant harassment. From nursery school through college, students experience ostracism, discouragement, and sometimes violence." According to the [Centers for Disease Control](#), approximately one in three overweight girls and one in four overweight boys report being teased by peers at school, and peers regard overweight children as undesirable playmates." As you read this book together, be sensitive and attuned to how your child is understanding the meaning of the book and issues of bullying, name-calling, body shaming, bias and discrimination due to weightism or sizeism. You may want to read the Author's Note in the back of the book to explore the author's thoughts and experiences about weightism.

Conversation Starters

Whether you read the book aloud with your child or your child reads it on their own and you discuss it later, you can use these open-ended questions to deepen the conversation. Remembering not to judge their responses, listen thoughtfully and engage in a give-and-take that will help them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes.

- What happens in the story?
- What words does the girl call herself in the beginning of the book?
- How did the girl's feelings about herself change throughout the book? Why did those feelings change?
- How does the girl feel when she's being called names?
- The book reads, "One day she finally let it all out..." How does the girl "let it out?" How do you think she felt after she "let it out?"
- Have you ever felt like you wanted to "let it all out?" What happened and how did you feel? How did you let it out?
- In the book, how are words used to hurt? How are words used to help?
- Have you ever seen, heard about or experienced something like what happened to the girl? What happened and how did you feel?
- How did you feel as you were reading the book? What are some words you would use to describe your feelings?
- Why do you think the author wrote this book? What is the message in the story?

Talking Points

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

1. Name-Calling and Bullying

Talk with your child about a major theme of the book: name-calling and bullying. Ask your child what happens in the story and focus in on how the girl in the story is teased, called names and bullied. If your child doesn't offer the word bullying, explain that bullying is "when a person or a group behaves in ways—on purpose and over and over—that make someone feel hurt, afraid or embarrassed." Ask your child to share examples of when the girl in the book faces name-calling and bullying. Some examples include: she is called names, she is laughed at, others tell her that she's "too big" to play on the swing, she's told the tutu she's wearing is "no good," she's told she's being too serious or it was just a "joke." As you share these examples, you can together look at the pictures of when that is happening, asking your child how they think the girl feels as she's hearing those words. While sharing these examples, help build empathy rather than focusing on the hurtful words. Elicit that the name-calling and bullying that is happening to the girl is based on prejudice about her appearance and specifically her size/weight. Ask your child if they have seen name-calling or bullying at their school (either based on weightism/sizeism or something else) and if so, what happened. Share that when bullying happens, others around them can do different things and make different choices. There are usually people observing the bullying and they can either not do anything (act as a bystander) or they can do something (act as an ally).

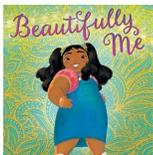
2. Acting as an Ally

When prejudice and bullying happen, there are several different ways that others around the target can respond. Talk with your child about the different ways someone can act as an ally in those situations, explaining that an ally is “someone who helps or stands up for someone who is being bullied or the target of bias.” Ask your child if anyone acted as an ally to the girl in the story and elicit that we didn’t see ally behavior in the story, except if you consider the girl acting as an ally to herself. Explain that some of the ways we can act as an ally are (1) to support the target, whether you know them or not, (2) not participate in the bullying, which can make a big difference, (3) tell the person doing the bullying to stop, (4) tell a trusted adult and (5) get to know people instead of judging them. These ways are illustrated in ADL’s [6 Ways to be an Ally](#). Ask your child how they could have acted as an ally to the girl in the book, based on ideas from the 6 Ways, or other ideas. Share with your child situations in which you have acted as an ally to others or when someone acted as an ally to you. Ask your child if they have ever seen ally behavior or if they have ever acted as an ally when someone faced prejudice or bullying or how they might in the future.

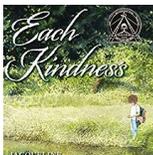
3. Power of Words

Talk to your child about the power of words, especially as it relates to the book. Elicit from them the different words that are used to describe the girl in the book. Remind them that in the beginning of the book, the girl uses these words to describe herself: caring, considerate, creative, free, fun, graceful, nimble, smart. Then, when she’s on the swing, we see others calling her names and using hurtful words. Then at the end, we see the girl using words to describe herself again: compassionate, creative, funny, gentle, good, imaginative, kind, smart, sweet. You can go back to those pages and look and read them together. Elicit or share the meanings of some or all of the words. Then ask your child: *How do the words make the girl feel? How did you feel while hearing or reading the words?* You can share that these words and words in general have the power to make people feel good/positive or they help or they can make people feel bad/negative or hurt. Share an example from your own life when words made you feel good or bad (helped or hurt). Ask your child if a word has ever been used to describe them and how it made them feel. Then you can both share words that you would use to describe yourselves.

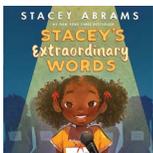
Other Books You Might Like



Beautifully Me <https://www.adl.org/beautifully-me>



Each Kindness <https://www.adl.org/each-kindness>



Stacey's Extraordinary Words <https://www.adl.org/staceys-extraordinary-words>



Starfish <https://www.adl.org/starfish> (Note this is a chapter book for ages 8-12)

ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and other resources on allyship, bullying, and weightism/sizeism.

- 6 Ways to be an Ally <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/6-ways-be-ally-en-espanol>
- Children's Books About Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention <https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?f%5B0%5D=topic%3A7238>
- Children's Books About Size Bias <https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?f%5B0%5D=topic%3A1603>
- Early Childhood Frequently Asked Questions <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/question-corner>
- Identity-Based Bullying <https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/identity-based-bullying>
- National Bullying Prevention Month Resources <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/national-bullying-prevention-month>
- Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk>
- What Bullying Is and Is Not <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/what-bullying-and-not-en-espanol>
- What is Weight Bias? <https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/what-weight-bias>