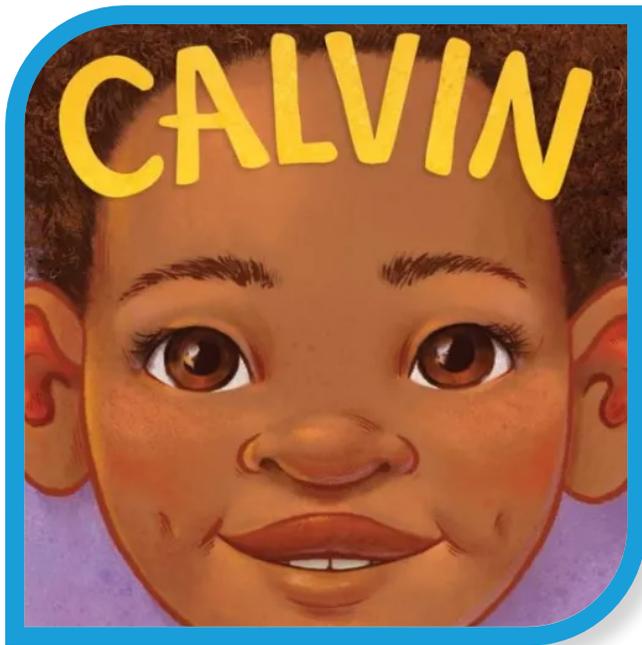




Monthly Featured Book

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.



Calvin

JR and Vanessa Ford (Authors), Kayla Harren (Illustrator)

Age Range: 4-8

Year Published: 2021

Book Themes

Transgender People and Identity, Family, Gender Identity, Acceptance

About the Book

Calvin has always been a boy, even if the world sees him as a girl. He knows who he is in his heart and in his mind but he hasn't yet told his family. Finally, he can wait no longer: "I'm not a girl," he tells his family. "I'm a boy--a boy in my heart and in my brain." Quick to support him, his loving family takes Calvin shopping for the swim trunks he's always wanted, back-to-school clothes and a new haircut that helps him look and feel like the boy he's always known himself to be. As the first day of school approaches, he's nervous, and the "what-ifs" gather up inside him. But as his friends and teachers rally around him and he tells them his name, all his "what-ifs" begin to melt away.

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 will help them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes.

- What happens in the story?
- Who is Calvin, and what do we learn about him while reading the book?

- Why do you think Calvin is scared to tell his parents that he is a boy? What happens when he tells them?
- What word does Calvin's dad use to describe Calvin? Have you ever heard the word transgender? What does it mean to be transgender?
- How does Calvin feel when he gets new clothes and gets his hair cut? How can you tell?
- What are the "what-ifs" that Calvin feels? Have you ever had that "what-if" feeling? What happened?
- On the night before school starts after the summer break, how does Calvin feel?
- How do the students, teachers and principal treat Calvin? What impact does this have on Calvin?
- What makes Calvin feel "safe and happy" when he is at school? How can we help make others feel "safe and happy" at school and other places?
- How did you feel when the book ends? What do you think will happen next?
- Why do you think the author wrote this 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. Transgender People and Identity

Talk with your child about a key theme in the book: what it means to be transgender. Ask your child what they learn about Calvin in the beginning of the book—that he is transgender. Go to and re-read page 8 in the book where transgender is described as follows: "Being transgender means other people think you are one gender, but inside, you know you are a different one." Then discuss how this relates to Calvin. Remind your child when Calvin says, say, "I'm a boy in my heart and my brain." You can say something like: "Being transgender means that when you were a baby, people may have thought you were a girl but later you told them you are actually a boy" (or the other way around). You can also say that this feeling can happen at a young age or later on. Talk about people you might know who are transgender: a friend, classmate, family member, friend of the family, famous person (athlete, politician, actor, gamer, etc.) or a character in a movie, TV show or book (like Calvin in the book). You can also talk about what we can do to help transgender people feel supported and accepted.

[Note: The book focuses on the support, acceptance and inclusivity of Calvin and does not explore the bias faced by transgender people. However, depending on your child's age, maturity and familiarity with this topic, you may want to also consider discussing the challenges and bias faced by people who are transgender, including bullying, stereotyping, exclusion, name-calling, media bias, discrimination, etc.]

2. Safety, Acceptance, Support and Inclusivity

Talk with your child about how Calvin feels when he is going to tell his parents that he's a boy and how he feels about his first day back at school after the summer break. Remind your child that Calvin feels fearful and worries about the "what-ifs" as he faces those challenges. He is scared they won't accept or support him. Ask your child what happens when Calvin tells his parents and grandparents; elicit that he is supported and accepted by them. During his first day back at school, Calvin says he feels "safe and happy." Ask your child what happens at school that helps to make Calvin

feel “safe and happy.” Some examples include: the principal uses his name, his friend Violet knows his name and knows and accepts that he is a boy, his cubby, mailbox, desk name tag and lunch chart all have Calvin’s name on them. Talk with your child about a time either they or someone they know was worried about feeling safe, accepted, or included in a new or different situation and you can share an experience like that you have had. Elicit from your child what they or the other person needed in that situation to help them feel safe and accepted. Then discuss how we can help make others feel safe, accepted and included in school, at home, in our communities and beyond. Share your own ideas and experiences as well.

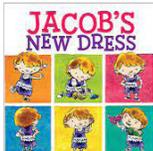
3. Feelings and How We Express Them

Talk with your child about the different feelings expressed in the book. Feelings such as fear, pride, relief and happiness are expressed throughout the book in words, facial expressions and body language. As you read the book together, ask about how a character is feeling by asking “How does ____ feel right now? How do you know?,” encouraging them to explore the words, facial expressions and body language they see in the book. Identify and define the words that are used in the book and then with your child, share other feeling words they have felt themselves or other feeling words they’ve read or know about. Help your child understand how feelings are expressed and expand their feelings vocabulary by sharing other feeling words. To build empathy and understanding, ask your child how they might feel in a similar situation as Calvin (or other characters in the book), or if they have had similar feelings about a different situation. When reading other books together or talking about what happens at school, focusing on feelings is a helpful part of expanding children’s feelings vocabulary and their learning how to express feelings and “read” the feelings of others.

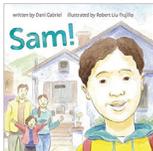
Other Books You Might Like



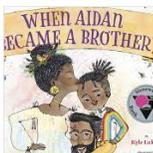
Call Me Max <https://www.adl.org/call-me-max>



Jacob's New Dress <https://www.adl.org/jacobs-new-dress>



Sam! <https://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/sam>



When Aidan Became a Brother <https://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/when-aidan-became-a-brother>

ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and other resources on allyship, transgender people and identity, and acceptance.

- Be an Ally: Six Simple Ways <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/be-an-ally-six-simple-ways>
- Beyond the Binary: Discussing Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Identity in K-12 Schools <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/beyond-the-binary-discussing-transgender-and-gender-non>
- Children's Books about People Who are LGBTQ+ <https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?f%5B0%5D=topic%3A1584>
- Early Childhood Frequently Asked Questions <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/question-corner>
- Let's Get it Right: Using Correct Pronouns and Names <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/lets-get-it-right-using-correct-pronouns-and-names>
- LGBTQ+ Pride Month and Education Resources <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/lgbtq-pride-month-and-education-resources>
- Safe and Inclusive Schools for All <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/safe-and-inclusive-schools-for-all>
- Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk>
- Why We Need Diverse Books <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/why-we-need-diverse-books>