



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 educators, adult family members and other caregivers of children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

Frida Kahlo and Her Animalitos

Monica Brown (Author) and John Parra (Illustrator)

This book is based on the life of one of the world's most influential painters, Frida Kahlo, and the animals that inspired her art and life. The Mexican artist Frida Kahlo is remembered for her self-portraits, her dramatic works featuring bold and vibrant colors. Her work brought attention to Mexican and indigenous culture, and she is also renowned for her works celebrating the female form. This story recounts Frida's beloved pets—two monkeys, a parrot, three dogs, two turkeys, an eagle, a black cat, and a fawn—and playfully considers how Frida embodied many wonderful characteristics of each animal.

ISBN:

Publisher:

Year Published: 2017

Age Range: 4-8



Book Themes

Frida Kahlo, Women's History Month, Art and Artists, Personality Traits

Key Words

Discuss and define the words below with students prior to reading the book. Rather than focus on students' retention of all the words, make sure they understand the words enough to follow the story and remind students of the words' meanings as they come up in the book. You can also post the words and point out when they appear in the story. For definitions that are differentiated for young children, see ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#).

- | | | | | |
|--------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|------------|
| ■ accident | ■ easel | ■ independent | ■ painter | ■ spirited |
| ■ animalitos | ■ entertaining | ■ indigenous | ■ photographer | ■ watchful |
| ■ colorful | ■ famous | ■ inspiration | ■ playful | |
| ■ comfort | ■ heritage | ■ intelligent | ■ pyramid | |
| ■ curious | ■ Imagination | ■ mischievous | ■ sensitive | |

Discussion Questions

Before reading the book aloud, ask some or all of these pre-reading questions:

- Describe the cover of the book. Who and what do you see?
- What do you think the title means? (Note that “animalitos” means little animals in Spanish.) Have you heard of Frida Kahlo? Based on the cover, what can you guess about who she is?
- What do you think the book will be about?

As you read the book aloud, ask a few discussion questions periodically throughout reading to check for comprehension and keep the students engaged. Below are some sample questions that correlate to specific page numbers:

- What color is Frida's house? (Page 5)
- What happened to Frida when she was eighteen years old? (Page 14)
- What do Frida's pets do while she paints? (Page 22)

After reading the book aloud, engage students in a discussion by asking some or all of the following discussion questions:

- What happens in the story?
- What did you learn about Frida Kahlo? What was surprising to you?
- What else do you want to know about Frida Kahlo?
- What is your favorite description of one of Frida's animalitos? What do you like about that description?
- Have you ever compared your personality to an animal (i.e., “I am like a cat because _____.”)?
- How does the accident that Frida has when she is eighteen years old impact her life?
- What do Frida's pets mean to her?
- The first page of the book says, “Frida was special.” How do you think Frida Kahlo was special?
- One of the last pages of the book says, “Her paintings were magic.” What do you think the author means by this?
- What was your favorite scene of the book and why? What was your least favorite scene and why?
- What is an artists' job? Why are artists important in our world? Why is it important to learn about famous artists in history?
- Why do you think the author connects Frida Kahlo's animals with her personality traits?
- What do you think the author wants us to learn by reading this book?

Extension Activities

Below are activities for students that can extend learning from the book.

1. Favorite or Memorable Scene

Ask students: *What was your favorite, or your most memorable, scene or part of the book?* With students, brainstorm a list of scenes from the book that students liked or found impactful or memorable (e.g., when you first meet Frida and see all her animals, when Frida takes photos with her father, when Frida is in an accident and has to paint while in bed, when Frida takes naps with her parrot, etc.). After compiling a list of scenes, have students select a favorite or memorable scene. Then have them turn and talk with someone sitting nearby and share what scene in the book was their favorite, most memorable or impactful and why. Based on their selected scene, have students draw the scene and write a few pieces of dialogue and/or thoughts of the people featured in their drawing. If most of the scenes of the book are covered by their illustrations, create a new book with all of the students' drawings together or display them in order on the bulletin board. You could also have students act out/role play some of their favorite or memorable scenes from the book.

2. Learn more about Frida Kahlo

Ask students: *What did you learn about Frida Kahlo from reading the book?* Together, read parts of the "Author's Note" on page 32 to learn more about her. Share some or all of the following information about Frida Kahlo:

- Magdalena Carmen Frida Kahlo y Calderón (1907-1954), usually known as Frida Kahlo, was a Mexican painter. She was known for her surreal (define) and very personal works. She was married to Diego Rivera, also a well-known painter.
- Frida was born in Coyoacán, Mexico. She had polio that left her disabled when she was 6 years old.
- She studied medicine and planned to become a doctor. When she was 18, she was in a traffic accident that badly injured her. Frida began painting, using ideas about things that had happened to her. Her paintings are often shocking in the way they show pain and the harsh lives of women.
- Fifty-five of her 143 paintings are of herself (self-portraits). She was also impacted by native Mexican culture, shown in bright colors, with a mixture of realism and symbolism.

You can show students some of her paintings. There are several online sources to find her paintings and [this website](#) includes a few of her paintings and is geared towards children. Together, discuss the paintings by asking, "What's happening in this painting? What do you notice? What thoughts and feelings come to mind when looking at the painting? What words/adjectives would you use to describe the painting? What do you think Frida Kahlo is trying to say with this painting?" More general questions can include: "What does Frida paint? What can you see in her paintings? What do they make you think of? What do they make you feel?"

Then have students conduct their own research to learn more about Frida Kahlo and her paintings, using book and internet sources like [Britannica Kids](#), [Kid World Citizen](#) and [Kiddle](#). Depending on how much time you have, devote time each day and/or for homework for students to do their research. Have students culminate their research into one of the following projects: a timeline of Frida Kahlo's life including images or photos, a portrait of Frida Kahlo, or a short biography about her. Another idea is for students to create their own self-portraits in the style of Frida Kahlo's art. Many of Frida Kahlo's paintings are self-portraits. Elicit and explain that a self-portrait is a work of art—drawing, painting, photograph, sculpture—that is created by the artist and meant to represent the artist. You can share that Frida Kahlo said, "I paint self-portraits because I am so often alone... because I am the subject I know best." Have students

draw one of her self-portraits and then draw a self-portrait of themselves using a similar style to Frida Kahlo or using their own style.

3. Animals and our Personality Qualities

Elicit from students that in the book, Frida Kahlo's personality is described through describing her "animalitos," (little animals), her pets. Ask: What are personality qualities? You can define personal qualities as the characteristics that make up and reflect who you are. Explain to students that the book describes Frida's personality and compares those traits to her pets. Share the following examples: Like Frida, her parrot was colorful, her cat was playful and independent, her spider monkeys were mischievous, and her turkeys were intelligent and sensitive. Brainstorm other words in the book that describe Frida Kahlo's (and her pets) personality and define those words together. Then brainstorm other words (not in the book) that describe personality traits such as: brave, moody, nice, strong, careless, hardworking, selfish, friendly, reliable, funny, mean, honest, polite, quiet, silly, understanding, cautious loyal, helpful, and many more. Invite students to write some words to describe their own personality (from the brainstormed list and other words), asking them to consider what animals may share those personality traits. You could use an example of a dog and say, "I am like a dog because I am playful, curious, loyal and I love people." Share with students that they may have parts of their personality that may feel opposite at times. For example, "sometimes I want to be around people like a dog and other times I want to chill by myself like a cat." We are many different things, as was Frida Kahlo. Invite younger students to draw a picture of the animal(s) with the words around them and older students can write a short essay or poem that explains how they are like a particular animal(s).

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and other educational resources on women's history, identity and Hispanic/Latin American people, identity and culture.

Curriculum Resources

7 Ideas for Teaching Women's History Month <https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/7-ideas-teaching-womens-history-month>

Bellen Woodard, Identity and "Crayon Activism" <https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/bellen-woodard-identity-and-crayon-activism>

Diverse Books Matter <https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/diverse-books-matter>

Websites

13 Picture Books to Read for Women's History Month <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/13-picture-books-read-womens-history-month>

Teaching Women's History in March and Beyond <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/teaching-womens-history-march-and-beyond>

Women's History Month Resources <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/womens-history-month-resources>

Children's Books

Books about Gender and Sexism <https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?f%5B0%5D=topic%3A1577>

Books about Hispanic/Latin American People <https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?f%5B0%5D=topic%3A1621>