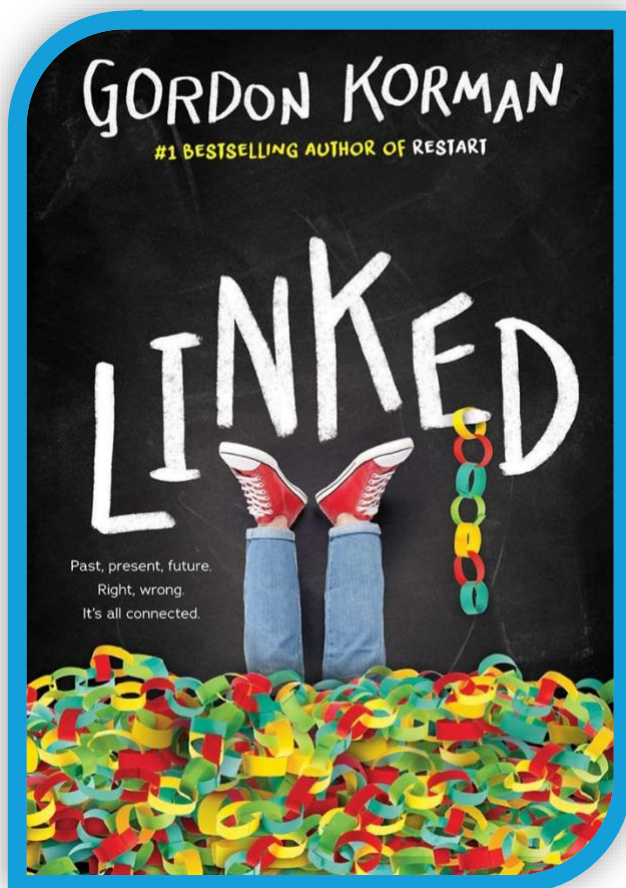




Monthly Featured Book

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.



Linked

Gordon Korman (Author)

ISBN: 978-1338629118

Publisher: Scholastic Inc.

Year Published: 2021

Age Range: 8-12

Book Themes

Hate symbols, Antisemitism, Holocaust, Acting as an ally, Taking action

About the Book

Link, Michael, and Dana live in a “quiet” town. But it's woken up very quickly when someone sneaks into school and vandalizes it with a swastika. Nobody can believe it. How could such a symbol of hate end up in the middle of their school? Who would do such a thing?

Because Michael was the first person to see it,

he's the first suspect. Because Link is one of the most popular guys in school, everyone's looking to him to figure it out. And because Dana's the only Jewish girl in the whole town, everyone's treating her more like an outsider than ever. The mystery deepens as more swastikas begin to appear. Some students decide to fight back and start a project to bring people together instead of dividing them further. The closer Link, Michael, and Dana get to the truth, the more there is to face-not just the crimes of the present, but the crimes of the past.

Conversation Starters

Whether you read the book along with your child or your child reads 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 conversation that helps them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes.

- What happens in the book?
- How do some of the main characters (e.g., Michael, Dana, Link, Caroline) think and feel when they see or hear about swastikas being found around school?
- What does Mr. Brademas, the principal, say and do about the swastikas? What do you think about his response?
- What do you find out about Link's family and the Holocaust? How does Link feel when he learns that his grandmother was Jewish and was hidden during the Holocaust?
- How do the students come up with the idea of the chain of 6 million links? How is the chain symbolic? Has your school ever done a schoolwide project in response to a bias or hate incident?
- How did the project become larger than just their school (in fact, it became known to people across the country and world)? Why do you think so many people wanted to participate in the chain of links project?
- When you find out which two people painted the swastikas, how did you feel? What are your reflections of who did it and why they did it?
- As a result of reading the book, what are your thoughts about why people draw hate symbols?
- How did you feel when the book ended? If the book continued, what do you think would happen next?
- What is the role of forgiveness in the book? Can you share an example?
- Why do you think the author wrote this book? What is his message?

Talking Points

Below are some important considerations that will make this a learning opportunity for your child and your family.

1. What is Antisemitism?

Talk with your child about what antisemitism is, where we see it in the book and where we see it in our community and world. Define **antisemitism** as the marginalization and/or oppression of people who are Jewish based on the belief in stereotypes and myths about Jewish people, Judaism and Israel. Talk with your child about examples of antisemitism in the book. Then elicit/explain that antisemitism (as with other forms of oppression) can show up in many different ways, including stereotypes and attitudes about Jewish people, scapegoating, name-calling and bullying, online expressions of bias and hate, swastikas and other hate symbols scrawled in public spaces, antisemitic rhetoric (talk, words, language), vandalism in synagogues and other places, hate crimes like the shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue, and more. Antisemitism is not only about demeaning and attacking the Jewish community; it is often a symptom of a more significant issue. People who hold biased and hateful beliefs about Jewish people will often hold hateful beliefs and attitudes about other groups (e.g., Black people, Muslim people, LGBTQ people) who are marginalized. You can use ADL's [Pyramid of Hate mini-lesson](#) to help illustrate the prevalence of bias, hate and oppression in our society, and exploring examples at each level of antisemitism. Talk together about what you can

do when you experience, see or hear about antisemitism, and share your own experiences with addressing antisemitism and acting as an ally.

2. Hate Symbols

The book focuses a great deal on the swastikas found around the school and the impact of those swastikas on the school and community. Ask your child: *What are symbols?* Elicit/explain that a **symbol** is a person or a concept that expresses, represents, stands for or suggests an idea, quality, belief, action or material object. Explain that symbols can be words, sounds, gestures, ideas or visual images. Discuss with your child how symbols can be positive like an emoji, neutral like a logo for a product or social media platform, or negative (or biased/hateful) like the swastikas in the book. You can share the meaning of a swastika* or share that it is a symbol that is antisemitic and can also be a symbol of hate in general of specific kinds of bias and hate (racism, heterosexism, etc.). Talk with your child about the impact of the swastikas on individual students, the school and the community as a whole. Ask: Have you ever seen a hate symbol? Did you know what it means? How did it make you feel? How do you think it makes the targeted person or group feel (if that person wasn't you)? How does it impact others? You can also share your own experiences with hate symbols and whether you and/or others have done anything about hate symbols, like the students in the book did when they started discovering the swastikas. Share that while it is important to remove the hate symbol, it is also critical to explore what is underneath the hate symbol—the bias and hate present in that community—and consider what you can do about it. Essentially, it is important to do something as the students in Chokecherry did.

**Note: According to ADL's Hate Symbols database, since 1954 "the swastika has served as the most significant and notorious of hate symbols, antisemitism and white supremacy for most of the world outside of Asia. Its display is prohibited in Germany and some other countries, leading some right-wing extremists to devise variants or alternatives to the swastika that would evoke a similar effect. In the United States, the swastika is overwhelmingly viewed as a hate symbol." (You may need to unpack this definition with your child.)*

3. Working Together to Challenge Bias and Injustice

In the book, the students come up with the idea to create a chain of six million links to show how they are connected and also to represent the six million Jewish people murdered during the Holocaust. Ask your child what impact they think doing the project has on the students, school and community and what impact it has on society in general, since their project made national and international news through social media. Ask them if their school has ever initiated or participated in a schoolwide project like that, especially around hate, bias or injustice. Share examples of young people taking a stand in your community or society in general and encourage your child (or do together) to research times when young people made a difference, either throughout history or in recent times. Share your own experiences with working together to address hate and bias. Encourage them, if there is interest and need, to think with their friends, classmates and school staff what issues of bias, discrimination or oppression they see in your community and then have them brainstorm ideas of what they might do as a school or community to address those issues. You can talk together about whether they want to take this on and if so, come up with an action plan and next steps.

Other Books You May Like



Amina's Voice by Hena Khan, www.adl.org/aminas-voice



Front Desk by Kelly Yang, www.adl.org/front-desk



The Boy at the Back of the Class by Onjali Q. Raúf, www.adl.org/boy-back-class



Towers Falling by Jewell Parker Rhodes, www.adl.org/towers-falling

ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on hate symbols, antisemitism and acting as an ally.

Curriculum Resources

Antisemitic Incidents: Being an Ally, Advocate and Activist, www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/antisemitic-incidents-being-ally-advocate-and-activist.

Pyramid of Hate (student mini-lesson), www.adl.org/education/mini-lesson/student-pyramid-of-hate.

Websites

6 Ways to Be an Ally

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/6-ways-to-be-an-ally-en-espanol

Some simple things a student can do to be an ally to targets of name-calling and bullying. (Also in Spanish.)

10 Ways Youth Can Engage in Activism

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/10-ways-youth-can-engage-in-activism

A list of ideas for bringing social activism into the classroom and outside of the school walls. These strategies can be acted upon individually, organized together as a group and young people can join with a larger effort that is taking place locally or nationally.

A Guide for Responding to School-Based Incidents

www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/guide-responding-school-based-bias-incidents

Provides a place for a school to report a bias or hate incident and get the support they need to strengthen their responses to school-based incidents of bias and bigotry. A guide for educators and school administrators is available as a supplement for incident prevention protocols and practices.

Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk

Provides the tools parents and family members need to engage their families in conversations about important news stories and other timely discussions about societal and world events. Includes discussion guides containing a topic summary, questions to start the conversation and dig deeper, ideas for taking action and additional resources. See "[Antisemitism Today](#)" and "[Hate Symbols](#)."

Resources to Address and Challenge Antisemitism

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/helping-students-make-sense-of-news-stories-about-bias-and

Education resources you can use in your classroom and home to help young people understand and challenge antisemitism.

For Families and Educators

www.adl.org/education/families-educators

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

Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk

Provides the tools parents and family members need to engage their families in conversations about important news stories and other timely discussions about societal and world events. Includes discussion guides containing a topic summary, questions to start the conversation and dig deeper, ideas for taking action and additional resources.

Children's Books

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

[Books about Bias, Discrimination & Hate](#)

[Books about Jewish Culture & Antisemitism](#)