



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.

Mama and Mommy and Me in the Middle

Author: Nina LaCour and Kaylani Juanita (Illustrator)

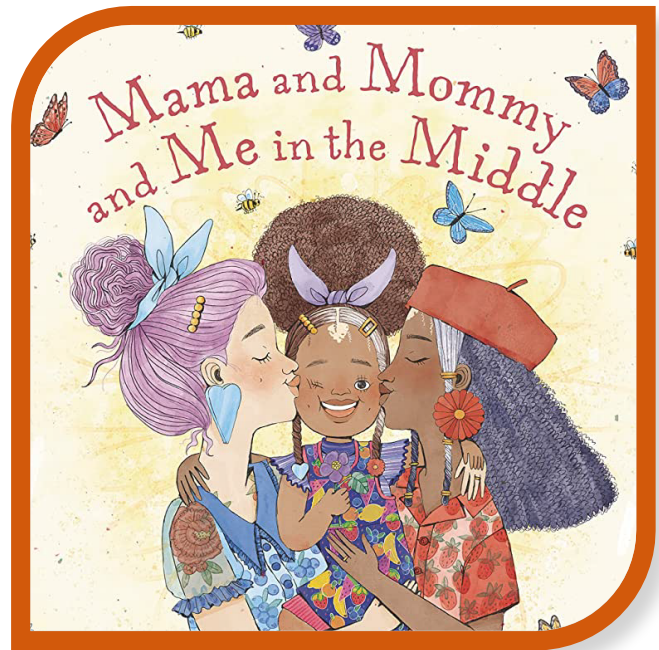
For one little girl, there's no place she'd rather be than sitting between Mama and Mommy. So when Mommy goes away on a work trip, it's tricky to find a good place at the table. As the days go by, Mama brings her to the library, they watch movies, and all of them talk on the phone, but she still misses Mommy as deep as the ocean and as high as an astronaut up in the stars. As they pass by a beautiful garden, the girl gets an idea . . . but when Mommy finally comes home, it takes a minute to shake off the empty feeling she felt all week before leaning in for a kiss.

ISBN: 978-1536211511

Publisher: Candlewick

Year Published: 2022

Age Range: 3-7



Book Themes

Family, Kinds of Families, LGBTQ+ People, Missing Someone

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](#).

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|----------|-----------|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| ■ cafe | ■ faraway | ■ middle | ■ packages | ■ tricky |
| ■ deep | ■ helper | ■ mind | ■ plan | ■ work trip |
| ■ errand | ■ hiding | ■ missing | ■ projector | |
| ■ family | ■ idea | ■ neighborhood | ■ remember | |

Note to Teacher:

This book is about a girl who has two moms. As you prepare to read the story, consider the students in your classroom and the different kinds of families represented among them. Be especially sensitive to children in your class for whom this may be close to home. The book is a wonderful opportunity to explore the concept that there are many kinds of family structures with different family members. Reading and discussing the book provides an opportunity to show value for and affirm all kinds of families. In addition, because the discussion guide explores the concept of family in general, be mindful of children in your classroom who may be going through sensitive or difficult issues in their families and modify accordingly.

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?
- 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:

- Who did the other children in the class miss? (Page 8)
- What is the weather like where Mommy is calling from? (Page 15)
- What chores does the girl help Mama with? (Page 24)

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?
- Who is the family? What kinds of things do they do together as a family?
- Who is in your family? What kinds of things do you do together as a family?
- In what ways is the family in the book similar to and different from your family?
- When Mommy goes on a work trip, how do the daughter and Mama feel? How do you know?
- While missing Mommy, what do the daughter and Mama do to feel better? What do you do to feel better when you miss someone?
- What is the “plan” that the daughter and Mama come up with for when Mommy comes home?
- Why does the daughter get a little sad again when Mommy comes home? What is she remembering?
- How did you feel when the book ends?
- What do you think the author called the book *Mama and Mommy and Me in the Middle*?

Extension Activities

Below are activities that can be done with students in order to extend the learning from the book.

1. Favorite or Most Memorable Scene

Ask students: *What was your favorite part of the book? What part or scene in the book was most memorable or important to you?* With students, brainstorm a list of scenes from the book that students liked or found memorable (e.g., when Mommy left for her work trip, when the girl's classmates share who they miss, when the girl and Mama talk to Mommy on the phone, when they make a welcome home banner for Mommy, when Mommy comes home). After compiling a list of parts and 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 or most memorable and why. Based on their selected scene, have students draw a picture of that scene. For students who are able to write, invite them to also write words or sentences that describe the scene or words the characters are saying (or you can write the words for students not yet writing). Create a new book with all of the students' drawings together or display them on the bulletin board.

2. Kinds of Families

Ask or remind students about the family in the book, specifically who is in the family. Elicit from the students that the family includes a young girl and her two moms, Mama and Mommy. Ask students: *Who is in your family?* Have students share the different members of their family and the composition of their families. Point out that there are different kinds of families with different members of the family and some people have more than one family. Create a semantic web by drawing a circle on the board and writing "Family" in the middle. Then ask students: *What does a family look like? What does a family feel like? What does a family act like? What makes a family a family?* As students share words and phrases, record them on the semantic web, connecting some words to the word "Family" and connect other similar words/phrases to each other within the web. Students may share things like: live together, eat together, love, shop together, take care of me when I'm sick, celebrate holidays, do chores and errands, read books, play, sometimes argue or disagree, etc. Then ask: *How do these words connect with the family in the book?* Elicit that in the book, the family lives together and shares a home; they eat meals together; they do errands and chores for the family, they care for and love each other; and they comfort each other when they feel sad, especially about missing Mommy when she is on a work trip. Point out that while families are different in several ways, there are some things that are similar about families. Additional optional activity: invite students to draw pictures of their families, naming each person and writing some words around the picture (you can help younger children) that make a family a family (e.g., love, chores, home, holidays, relatives, eat). Share with the class and hang on the bulletin board or create a book called "Our Families."

3. Missing Someone

Ask students: *What happens when Mommy goes on a work trip? How do the daughter and Mama feel when Mommy is away? Who else in the book misses someone?* Elicit from students that the daughter and Mama miss Mommy very much when she goes on a work trip. When the daughter goes to school, she discovers that other children in her class also miss someone they love (Olive misses her sister, Miguel misses his papa and Chloe misses her cat). Ask: *What parts of the story show they miss someone?* Elicit from students that you can tell they miss someone by the words they use, the expressions on their faces, how they hold their bodies. Ask: *When you miss someone, how do you feel?* Elicit words and ideas from students. Then ask students to either stand up or sit in their chairs and use their face or body to show how they feel when they are missing someone; remind them not to use words. As they do this, have students look around the room and notice the facial expressions and body of their classmates and then share what they see and notice. Then ask students: *In the story, what did the*

daughter and Mama do to feel better while they were missing Mommy? (i.e., they watch movies, they call her on the phone, they look at a picture and snuggle, they share with each other how they feel, they plan something special for when Mommy comes back). Then ask: *When you miss someone, what makes you feel better?* As students share ideas, record their responses on the board/smart board. Explain to students that when they miss someone, there are many different things they can do to feel better, including many on this list. As an additional optional activity, have students create simple postcards for someone they miss, with a picture on one side and a message to the person on the other.

(Note to Teacher: Be mindful and prepared that children may share that they miss someone who is absent from their lives for painful or traumatic reasons including death, illness, incarceration or other legal issues.)

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and other educational resources on kinds of families and LGBTQ+ people and topics.

Curriculum Resources

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

What is Marriage Equality? <https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/what-marriage-equality>

Who Am I? Identity Poems <https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/who-am-i-identity-poems>

Websites

LGBTQ+ Pride Month and 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/resources/tools-and-strategies/safe-and-inclusive-schools-all>

Children's Books

Books about LGBTQ+ People and Heterosexism <https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?f%5B0%5D=topic%3A1584>

Books about Kinds of Families <https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?f%5B0%5D=topic%3A1628>