



the conscious kid

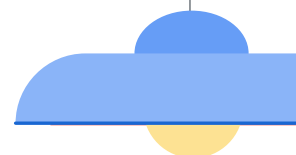


A curated list of teacher-facing materials and evaluation criteria to affirm and reflect students' identities and to help facilitate important conversations about [equity, racism, and belonging](#).

Fighting racism and injustice is a lifelong journey of understanding ourselves, our power, our history and the role we play in perpetuating it. Starting to talk about race and equity at a young age is critical to creating awareness and lasting change, and books are one of the most effective and practical tools for initiating these conversations.

We are grateful to the experts at [The Conscious Kid](#) for curating this list of books and resources. Their organization is dedicated to equity, disrupting racism, and promoting positive racial identity development in youth. The Conscious Kid follows guidelines supported by Critical Media Literacy (CML) and Critical Race Media Literacy (CRML) to inform their recommendations.

These critical approaches are intersectional and not only concerned about representation in the content, but also about the representation and power relationships behind the ownership, production, and creation of the content itself. These books are also teacher-validated with many in the list of top-requested reading materials from the [#ISeeMe program](#) at DonorsChoose.



This list of book titles and supporting materials is by no means exhaustive, and we hope to continue adding to it. In addition to the list, The Conscious Kid has also recommended helpful guidelines and questions to use when selecting inclusive and identity-affirming content:



Identify power relationships

Who are the central figures and who is controlling the narrative? Are there biases in how relationships are handled among various identities? Who is benefiting from this story?

Derman-Sparks, 2013
Perez-Huber et al., 2018



Support counter stories

Include texts that push back against deficit-narratives of people of color and center the knowledge and experiences of marginalized groups. Select books that name and acknowledge racism and those whose lives are affected by it daily.

Delgado, 1989
Solórzano & Yosso, 2002
Martinez et al., 2017



Avoid savior narratives

Select stories where characters from marginalized groups are empowered to create their own change as opposed to being saved or rescued by someone else.

Yosso, 2002
Aronson, 2017



Beware of tokenism

Regularly seeing only “one” person of any group teaches children about who is more or less important.

Derman-Sparks, 2013

Watch for invisibility

What children do not see in their books also teaches them about who matters and who does not. Absence or minimal portrayals of marginalized groups teaches young people about their perceived worth by showing whose stories and lives are worthy of being celebrated.

Derman-Sparks, 2013
Perez-Huber et al., 2018



Steer clear of stereotypes

Expose young people to empowering non-stereotypical imagery and text in order to help counter biased messaging.

Derman-Sparks, 2013



Foster healthy racial identity

Counter whiteness as the norm or definition of success and avoid books where characters of color only succeed when conforming to white values or norms.

King, 2018
Seale et al., 2000



Re-evaluate the “classics”

Re-evaluate “classic” books or stories which can convey and reinforce outdated values and messaging of sexism, racism, antisemitism, ableism, or colonialism.

Banks, 1993
Derman-Sparks, 2013

Question what is being reinforced

Question what values, rules and laws are being reinforced and be aware of how these might marginalize or disregard the experiences of some communities.

Banks, 1993

Kellner & Share, 2005

Oakland Public Library, 2017



Choose social justice books

Choose social justice books to help push back against embedded biases and reinforcing values of sexism, racism, ableism, antisemitism, transphobia, Islamophobia, etc.

Santora, 2018



Model taking action

Select books that demonstrate children and adults engaging in action for racial equity, and working in solidarity with members of marginalized communities.

Funk et al., 2016



Consider the author's background, perspective and expertise

When reading stories about marginalized communities, aim to support authors from within the community. By supporting authors of color, we can push back against systemic racism while gaining expertise directly from the communities being written about.

Ladson-Billings, 1995

Kellner & Share, 2005

Reese, 2018

Acknowledge intersectionality

Select books that acknowledge the overlapping effects of various forms of discrimination based on race, skin, color, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, faith, class, family structure, disability, sexual orientation, etc., and how various identities interact to create specific experiences.

Crenshaw, 1988

Derman-Sparks, 2013



Seek out specificity

Avoid monolithic depictions of people of color and books that generalize the experiences of race, culture or ethnicity. Select books that provide specific and nuanced experiences of the identity being depicted.

Reese, 2018



Pre-K - 2	A Boy and a Jaguar	Alan Rabinowitz	Catia Chien	
Pre-K - 2	A Different Pond	Bao Phi	Thi Bui	Reader's Guide
Pre-K - 2	All Because You Matter	Tami Charles	Bryan Collier	
Pre-K - 2	Alma and How She Got Her Name	Juana Martinez-Neal	Juana Martinez-Neal	Alma Lesson Guide
Pre-K - 2	Always Anjali	Sheetal Sheeth	Jessica Blank	
Pre-K - 2	Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909	Michelle Markel	Melissa Sweet	
Pre-K - 2	Cora Cooks Pancit	Dorina K. Lazo Gilmore	Kristi Valiant	Teaching Guide
Pre-K - 2	Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut	Derrick Barnes	Gordon C. James	
Pre-K - 2	Dreamers	Yuyi Morales	Yuyi Morales	Educator's Guide
Pre-K - 2	Each Kindness	Jacqueline Woodson		Teaching Guide
Pre-K - 2	Eyes That Kiss in the Corners	Joanna Ho	Dung Ho	Teaching Guide
Pre-K - 2	Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story	Kevin Noble Maillard	Juana Martinez-Neal	
Pre-K - 2	Grandpa Grumps	Katrina Moore	Xindi Yan	
Pre-K - 2	Hair Love	Matthew A. Cherry	Vashti Harrison	
Pre-K - 2	Here is the World: A Year of Jewish Holidays	Lesléa Newman	Susan Gal	
Pre-K - 2	I Am Enough	Grace Byers	Keturah A. Bobo	Teaching Guide Activity Sheet
Pre-K - 2	I Am Every Good Thing	Derrick Barnes	Gordon C. James	Teaching Guide
Pre-K - 2	I Dissent: Ruth Bader Ginsburg Makes Her Mark	Debbie Levy	Elizabeth Baddeley	Teaching Guide
Pre-K - 2	I Love My Hair	Natasha Tarpley	E. B. Lewis	

Grade Level	Title	Author	Illustrator	Supporting Materials
Pre-K - 2	In My Mosque	M.O. Yuksel	Hatem Aly	Teaching Guide
Pre-K - 2	It Began With a Page: How Gyo Fujikawa Drew The Way	Kyo Maclear	Julie Morstad	
Pre-K - 2	Kamala and Maya's Big Idea	Meena Harris	Ana Ramírez González	Teaching Guide
Pre-K - 2	Lailah's Lunchbox	Reem Faruqi	Lea Lyon	Teaching Guide
Pre-K - 2	Lift	Minh Lê	Dan Santat	
Pre-K - 2	Mae Among the Stars	Roda Ahmed	Stasia Burrington	
Pre-K - 2	Mama's Nightingale: A Story of Immigration and Separation	Edwidge Danticat	Leslie Staub	
Pre-K - 2	Missing Daddy	Mariame Kaba	bria royal	
Pre-K - 2	My Papi Has a Motorcycle	Isabel Quintero	Zeke Peña	Teaching Guide
Pre-K - 2	Planting Stories: The Life of Librarian and Storyteller Pura Belpré	Anika Aldamuy Denise	Paola Escobar	Teaching Guide
Pre-K - 2	Queen of Tejano Music: Selena	Silvia López	Paola Escobar	
Pre-K - 2	Rescue and Jessica: A Life-Changing Friendship	Jessica Kensky and Patrick Downes	Scott Magoon	Teaching Guide
Pre-K - 2	Sing A Song: How "Lift Every Voice and Sing" Inspired Generations	Kelly Starling Lyons	Keith Mallett	
Pre-K - 2	Sulwe	Lupita Nyong'o	Vashti Harrison	Curriculum Guide
Pre-K - 2	The ABCs of Black History	Rio Cortez	Lauren Semmer	Teaching Guide
Pre-K - 2	The Boy Who Thought Outside the Box: The Story of Video Game Inventor Ralph Baer	Marcie Wessels	Beatriz Castro	
Pre-K - 2	The Day You Begin	Jacqueline Woodson	Rafael López	Teaching Guide
Pre-K - 2	The Most Beautiful Thing	Kao Kalia Yang	Khoa Le	

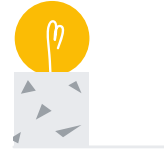
Grade Level	Title	Author	Illustrator	Supporting Materials
Pre-K - 2	The Name Jar	Yangsook Choi	Yangsook Choi	Teaching Guide
Pre-K - 2	The Nian Monster	Andrea Wang	Alina Chau	Teaching Guide
Pre-K - 2	The Ocean Calls: A Haenyeo Mermaid Story	Tina Cho	Jess X. Snow	
Pre-K - 2	The People's Painter: How Ben Shahn Fought for Justice with Art	Cynthia Levinson	Evan Turk	
Pre-K - 2	The Proudest Blue	Ibtijah Muhammad		
Pre-K - 2	We Are Water Protectors	Carole Lindstrom	Michaela Goade	Teaching Guide
Pre-K - 2	When Aidan Became A Brother	Kyle Lukoff	Kaylani Juanita	Teaching Guide
Pre-K - 2	When We Were Alone	David Alexander Robertson	Julie Flett	Teaching Guide
Pre-K - 2	Where Are You From?	Yamile Saied Méndez	Jaime Kim	Teaching Tips
Pre-K - 2	Your Name Is A Song	Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow	Luisa Uribe	Teaching Guide
3 - 5	All Thirteen: The Incredible Cave Rescue of the Thai Boys' Soccer Team	Christina Soontornvat	N/A	Teaching Guide
3 - 5	Brown Girl Dreaming	Jacqueline Woodson		Teaching Guide
3 - 5	Dream Builder: The Story of Architect Philip Freelon	Kelly Starling Lyons	Laura Freeman	
3 - 5	El Deafo	Cece Bell		Teaching Guide
3 - 5	Front Desk	Kelly Yang		Teaching Guide
3 - 5	George	Alex Gino		Teaching Guide
3 - 5	King and the Dragonflies	Kacen Callender	N/A	
3 - 5	Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History	Vashti Harrison	Vashti Harrison	
3 - 5	Ruth and the Green Book	Calvin Alexander Ramsey	Floyd Cooper	Teaching Guide

Grade Level	Title	Author	Illustrator	Supporting Materials
3 - 5	Schomburg: The Man Who Built a Library	Carole Boston Weatherford	Eric Velasquez	Teaching Guide
3 - 5	Separate Is Never Equal	Duncan Tonatiuh	Duncan Tonatiuh	Educator's Guide
3 - 5	Shining Star: The Anna May Wong Story	Paula Yoo	Lin Wang	Teaching Guide
3 - 5	The First Rule of Punk	Celia C. Pérez	N/A	
3 - 5	The Undefeated	Kwame Alexander	Kadir Nelson	Teaching Ideas
3 - 5	The Whispering Town	Jennifer Riesmeyer Elvgren	Fabio Santomauro	Resources for Teachers
3 - 5	Three Keys	Kelly Yang	N/A	Teaching Guide
3 - 5	Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre	Carole Boston Weatherford	Floyd Cooper	Teaching Guide
3 - 5	Ways to Make Sunshine	Renée Watson	Nina Mata	
3 - 5	We Are Still Here!: Native American Truths Everyone Should Know	Traci Sorell	Frane Lessac	
3 - 5	Woke: A Young Poet's Call to Justice	Mahogany L. Browne, Elizabeth Acevedo, Olivia Gatwood	Theodore Taylor III	
6 - 8	An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States for Young People	Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Adapted by Jean Mendoza and Debbie Reese		Teaching Guide
6 - 8	Ancestor Approved: Intertribal Stories for Kids	Cynthia Leitich Smith	N/A	
6 - 8	Black Enough	Ibi Zoboi		
6 - 8	Genesis Begins Again	Alicia D. Williams		
6 - 8	Harbor Me	Jacqueline Woodson		Teaching Guide
6 - 8	Indian No More	Charlene Willing Mcmanis and Traci Sorell	N/A	Teaching Guide

Grade Level	Title	Author	Illustrator	Supporting Materials
6 - 8	Lucky Broken Girl	Ruth Behar	N/A	
6 - 8	Miles Morales	Jason Reynolds	N/A	
6 - 8	New Kid	Jerry Craft	Jerry Craft	Teaching Guide
6 - 8	Pet	Akwaeke Emezi		Teaching Guide
6 - 8	Piecing Me Together	Renée Watson		Teaching Guide
6 - 8	Say Her Name	Zetta Elliott	Loveis Wise	
6 - 8	The Hill We Climb	Amanda Gorman	N/A	Teaching Guide
6 - 8	This Book Is Anti-Racist: 20 Lessons on How to Wake Up, Take Action, and Do The Work	Tiffany Jewel	Aurelia Durand	Teaching Guide
6 - 8	Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky	Kwame Mbalia	N/A	Teaching Guide
6 - 8	We Are Not Free	Traci Chee		
6 - 8	We Rise, We Resist, We Raise Our Voices	Wayne and Cheryl Willis Hudson		Teaching Guide
9 - 12	All Boys Aren't Blue	George M. Johnson		
9 - 12	American Street	Ibi Zoboi		
9 - 12	Apple (Skin to the Core)	Eric Gansworth		
9 - 12	Children of Blood and Bone	Tomi Adeyemi		Teaching Guide
9 - 12	Clap When You Land	Elizabeth Acevedo	N/A	Teaching Guide
9 - 12	Dear Martin	Nic Stone		
9 - 12	Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century	Alice Wong	N/A	
9 - 12	From a Whisper to a Rallying Cry: The Killing of Vincent Chin & the Trial that Galvanized the Asian American Movement	Paula Yoo	N/A	

Grade Level	Title	Author	Illustrator	Supporting Materials
9 - 12	Hearts Unbroken	Cynthia Leitich Smith	N/A	
9 - 12	I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter	Erika L. Sánchez	N/A	
9 - 12	Just Mercy	Bryan Stevenson		Teaching Guide
9 - 12	March (trilogy)	John Lewis, Andrew Aydin	Nate Powell	
9 - 12	Not Your Princess: Voices of Native American Women	Lisa Charleyboy, Mary Beth Leatherdale	N/A	
9 - 12	Patron Saints of Nothing	Randy Ribay		
9 - 12	Punching the Air	Ibi Zoboi and Yusef Salaam		Teaching Guide
9 - 12	The Best We Could Do: An Illustrated Memoir	Thi Bui	Thi Bui	Teaching Guide
9 - 12	The Poet X	Elizabeth Acevedo		Teaching Guide
9 - 12	The Sun Does Shine	Anthony Ray Hinton		
9 - 12	We Are Not Yet Equal: Understanding Our Racial Divide	Carol Anderson		

Additional Resources



American Indians in Children's Literature

Provides critical analysis of Indigenous peoples in children's and young adult books.

Disability in KidLit

Dedicated to discussing the portrayal of disability in middle grade and young adult literature. They publish articles, reviews, interviews, and discussions examining this topic from various angles—and always from the disabled perspective.

#DisruptTexts

A crowdsourced, grass roots effort by teachers for teachers to challenge the traditional canon in order to create a more inclusive, representative, and equitable language arts curriculum that our students deserve.

DonorsChoose #ISeeMe

Supporting classroom requests from underrepresented educators and from all teachers who seek materials that reflect their students' identities.

Zinn Education Project

Introducing students to a more accurate, complex and engaging understanding through teaching of people's history. Free lessons for middle and high school, coordinated by Rethinking Schools and Teaching for Change.

How To Talk To Kids About Race

A YouTube playlist videos in which authors, experts, and parents share how to have conversations about racism with children.

YouTube Kids — [For preschoolers: Togetherness.](#)

This playlist uses short videos and songs from creators like Sesame Street to show that all people deserve respect.

YouTube Kids — [For kids 5+: Understanding Each Other.](#) This playlist covers topics such as race, bias, and activism in stories, talks and songs. It also provides information about the civil rights movement.

Social Justice Books

A project of Teaching for Change, a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide teachers and parents with the tools to create schools where students learn to read, write and change the world.

The Conscious Kid

An education, research and policy organization dedicated to equity and promoting positive racial identity development in youth. They support organizations, families, and educators in taking action to disrupt racism in young children. They also promote access to children's books centering underrepresented groups and authors.

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