



# How to facilitate important conversations with kids using diverse and inclusive books

STEFANIE PAIGE WIEDER, M.S.ED.

The need for diverse and inclusive books for children is abundantly clear. When children see themselves represented in books, it increases their feelings of positive self-worth. Conversely, when children rarely or never see themselves reflected in books, they receive the message that they are outside of what is acknowledged and accepted as “normal.”

Furthermore, research shows that without thoughtful adult intervention, children develop bias. Two studies by researchers at the University of Toronto and their collaborators from the US, UK, France and China, show that infants as young as six months old demonstrate racial bias in favor of members of their own race and racial bias against those of other races. Early childhood anti-bias education expert, Louise Derman-Sparks, explains:

“By the age of two, children begin absorbing socially prevailing stereotypes, attitudes and biases about themselves and people different from themselves. They begin to show discomfort or fear or even dislike toward a person with a different skin color, different language or with a physical disability.”

Books that depict people from all walks of life help combat this. But they can't do the work alone.

## Why the need for adult conversation around these books?

Adults play a key role in answering questions about a book such as providing explanations and factual information, or modeling for kids how to do research to get additional information. Talking explicitly about issues like culture, race, religion, abilities and sexual orientation can be awkward for adults. But for children, it's not awkward. It's essential. They are already thinking about these topics and making sense of them in their own way, whether adults talk with them about it or not. If a child does express a stereotype or incorrect notion about others, it is important for the adult to gently correct their thinking.

Diverse and inclusive books are a critical and welcome part of children's lives. As adults, it's our role to make sure children receive and understand the messages of these books with open hearts and clear minds.

What do the children in your life see in the books they read?

## Questions to ask

Here are some examples of questions adults can ask before, during and after reading diverse and inclusive books.

### Begin with questions that prompt children to think about their own identities:

- What language/languages do you understand? What languages have you heard? Is there a language you'd like to learn?
- What color is your skin? Your hair? Your eyes?
- What are some things you are good at?
- What special holidays does your family celebrate?
- What kinds of foods do you like to eat?
- Who are the people in your family?
- What do you like to do for fun?
- What is something that people might not know about you that you would like them to know about you?

### Next, ask about others:

- What do you notice about how this character looks? How this character acts?
- How are you similar to this character? How are you different?
- How do you think this character is feeling? Have you ever felt that way?
- Why do you think the character did this? Would you have done the same thing?
- This character lives in a different country/is from a different culture. What would you like to learn about that country/culture?

**Stefanie Paige Wieder, M.S.Ed**, is Director of Education & Content at Barefoot Books and a child development expert with over 25 years of experience working with schools, clinical settings and children's products. She earned her dual master's in Early Childhood General & Special Education / Infant & Parent Development & Early Intervention from the Bank Street Graduate School of Education and her B.A. from Harvard University.

To correspond with Stefanie please contact her at [stefanie.wieder@barefootbooks.com](mailto:stefanie.wieder@barefootbooks.com).

For media inquiries, please contact [publicity@barefootbooks.com](mailto:publicity@barefootbooks.com).

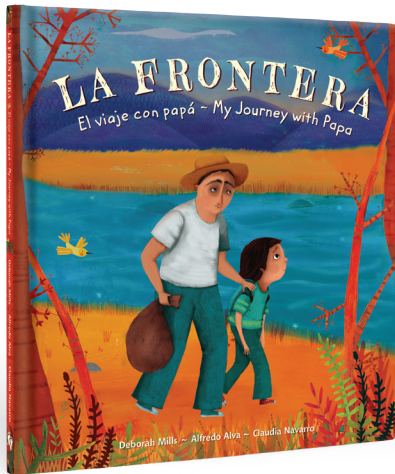
Visit [barefootbooks.com/diversebooks](https://www.barefootbooks.com/diversebooks) to learn more.



**Barefoot Books**  
step inside a story

[www.barefootbooks.com](https://www.barefootbooks.com)

## Recommended Diverse & Inclusive Books



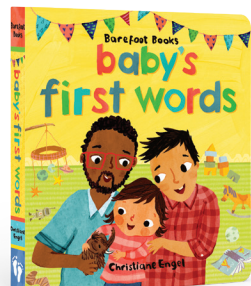
### La Frontera El viaje con papá / My Journey with Papa

Join a young boy and his father on an arduous journey from Mexico to the United States to find a new life. Told in both Spanish and English, this story of perseverance will help parents and educators talk with children about immigration, resilience, empathy and belonging.

AGES 4 – 10 9781782853886 **\$17.99 USD**

**“A must have for classrooms, libraries and bilingual collections”**

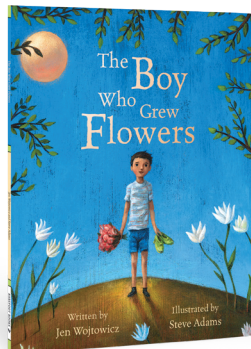
—*School Library Journal*, starred review



### Baby's First Words

This simple, cheerful story with over 100 vocabulary words follows a multiracial family with two dads through an ordinary day. Offers a useful tool for starting age-appropriate conversations about similarities and differences among families. Also available in bilingual Spanish.

AGES 0 – 3 9781782858720 **\$7.99 USD**



### The Boy Who Grew Flowers

Inspired by her brother's experience of life on the autism spectrum, Jen Wojtowicz tells the story of a growing friendship between a young boy with an unusual talent and a girl with limb length discrepancy.

AGES 4 – 10 9781846867491 **\$8.99 USD**



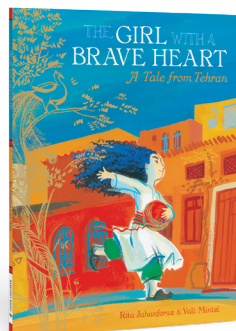
### Here and There

A young boy, Ivan, struggles during the early stages of his parents' separation but eventually finds hope in the beauty and music of nature.

AGES 3 – 8 9781782857419 **\$16.99 USD**

**“[O]ffers affirmation and hope for kids navigating parental separation. . . Needed everywhere.”**

—*Kirkus Reviews*



### The Girl with a Brave Heart A Tale from Tehran

Written by Israeli pop star Rita Jahanforuz, this tale from her native Tehran shows the power of empathy breaking down walls between two lonely people: a young girl who lives with her stepfamily and an isolated elderly woman who has trouble caring for herself and her home.

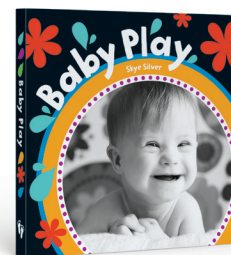
AGES 4 – 10 9781846869310 **\$8.99 USD**



### Mindful Kids 50 Mindfulness Activities for Kindness, Focus and Calm

Build healthy habits by practicing mindfulness throughout your day. Kid-friendly illustrations on both sides of the cards provide easy-to-follow steps for each practice. The cards and 8-page instructional booklet include tips for children of a wide range of abilities, making this deck an inclusive tool for nurturing inner peace and strength.

AGES 4+ 9781782853275 **\$14.99 USD**



### Baby Play Happy feelings for little ones

Invite little ones to play! Illustrations feature photographs of a wide variety of babies, family situations and caregivers, offering an inclusive representation of caregivers and siblings lovingly interacting with baby. Find other titles in the Baby's Day series online. Also available in bilingual Spanish.

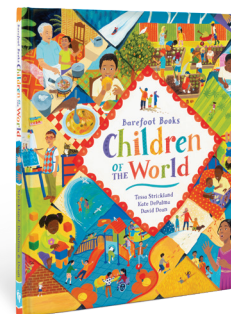
AGES 2 – 4 9781782857495 **\$7.99 USD**



### My Big Barefoot Book of Wonderful Words

Discover the original English-language version of our celebrated word book! With its urban setting and diverse cast of characters, Wonderful Words is carefully crafted to break down stereotypes and build crucial vocabulary for our modern world. Each scene teems with people, places and things, labeled for learning new words. Also available in bilingual Spanish and French.

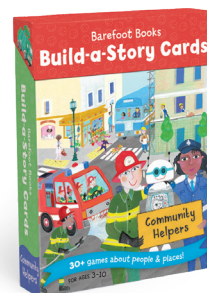
AGES 2 – 6 9781782850922 **\$19.99 USD**



### Barefoot Books Children of the World

Every child has a story — and this book tells them all. With *Children of the World*, you'll rediscover the everyday moments, important occasions and big ideas that make childhood special all over the world. Both playful and thought-provoking, *Children of the World* makes for a delightful family, library or classroom read-aloud that's sure to spark timely discussions about diversity, inclusion and acceptance.

AGES 3 – 10 9781782852964 **\$19.99 USD**



### Barefoot Books Build-a-Story Cards Community Helpers

Explore the importance of teamwork, responsibility and kindness with the 30+ games in this Story Cards deck! While they piece together 12 character, 12 setting and 12 object cards, children will think through the ways people, institutions and vehicles work together to make a community a better place.

AGES 3 – 10 9781782857402 **\$12.99 USD**

# Hello Parents, Educators and Caregivers!

We all want our children to grow up to become caring and socially conscious citizens of the world: self-confident, curious and compassionate. This “My Story” activity is designed to help children think more deeply about the themes presented in *Barefoot Books Children of the World*, as well as to reflect on what makes each of us special.

Through books, thoughtful discussions, and activities like this one, we can help children feel confident in their unique identities, identify and express their feelings, and develop empathy towards others.

## Instructions:

- Print out the My Story activity on the next page (double-sided if possible) and fold it in half.
- Keep *Barefoot Books Children of the World* accessible for kids to look at as they work.
- If you have more than one child who has completed the activity, help children to notice what is similar and different about their “stories” when they are done.

## Tips:

### Self Portrait:

Offer children a mirror to use when completing the self-portrait. Provide drawing materials that offer many gradients of color, like crayons and colored pencils, so that children can try to match their skin color, eye color and hair texture as accurately as possible. For children who are not yet creating representational drawings, help them choose colors that match their appearance for scribbling.

### Names:

Help children look up the meaning of their names online or in a naming book. For children who are not yet writing their names or drawing representational pictures, write their name for them and allow them to scribble on it.



### Family:

Family means different things to different people. If your child would like to include pets or family friends in the portrait, that is great! For children who are not yet creating figurative artwork, ask them who is in their families and write down their words. Then allow them to scribble or make marks creatively.

### Hopes & Dreams:

Encourage kids to look at some of the images in *Barefoot Books Children of the World* if they need inspiration! For children who are not yet creating representational drawings, ask them in simple language what they would like to do when they are older. Record their words and let them scribble in the space.



Enjoy!

Stefanie Paige Wieder, M.S.Ed.  
Child Development Specialist  
Director of Education & Content

 **Barefoot Books**  
step inside a story

[www.barefootbooks.com](http://www.barefootbooks.com)

## My Hopes & Dreams

What will happen in your story?

Draw what you would like to do if you had the chance!



Find Barefoot Books Children of the World and other diverse & inclusive books at [www.barefootbooks.com](http://www.barefootbooks.com).

# My Story



My Self-Portrait What do you look like?



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Draw yourself here!



Barefoot Books

## My Name

What's your name? Does it have a meaning?



Write your name.  
Draw what it means  
or what you'd like  
it to mean.

## My Family

Who is in your family?



Draw your  
family here!