

R2² Unified Reading Club

“Read TWogether - Rise TWogether”

**Special
Olympics**
Virginia



Special Olympics
**Unified Champion
Schools®**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This resource began as the brainchild of Judy Deichman, Coordinator of Library Services for Richmond City Public Schools. She saw a need to teach empathy to students in an effort to create more socially inclusive environments for all students.

Building on the content Judy created, Special Olympics Virginia designed this resource for librarians and media specialists across the state. The first six books are geared for primary grade students and the next four books are for secondary grade students.

PURPOSE

Unified Champion Schools initiatives promote social inclusion and positive school climates by bringing students with and without intellectual disabilities together. Whole school engagement activities, such as reading books celebrating differences and empathy, promote social inclusion.

This Read TWOgether - Rise TWOgether Unified Reading Club resource provides safe, structured ways students can explore differences and similarities, and work to become more understanding, inclusive, and caring friends.

This resource focuses on core social skills such as: Empathy and Inclusion Skills, Perspective-Taking, Naming and Sharing Emotions, Empathic Listening, Social Action, Belonging, and Acting - Feeling - Thinking.

BEFORE YOU START

The title Read TWOgether - Rise TWOgether promotes inclusive youth leadership opportunities for students. Educators are encouraged to pair students with and without intellectual disabilities together to read a book or part of a book to their peers.

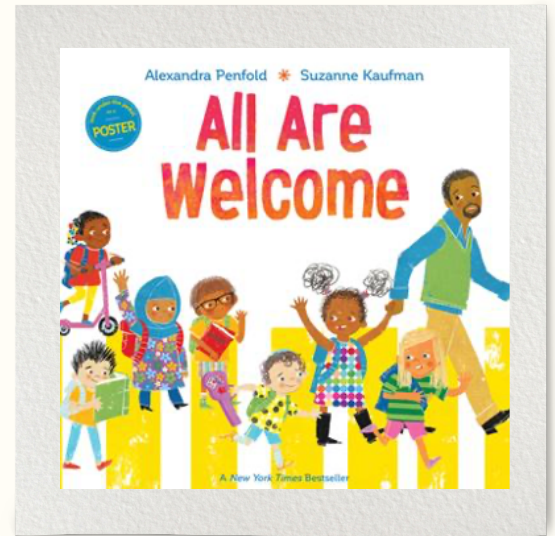
Inclusive student leadership teams may also lead respect awareness campaigns such as Choose to Include, Be YOUnified and Lead with Unity; Live with Inclusion. Free pledge banners, stickers and wristbands for youth leaders can be requested at [choose-to-include-and-youunified-flyer-new-10-13-23.pdf](#).

ALL ARE WELCOME

Written by Alexandra Penfold and Suzanne Kaufman

All Are Welcome follows kids through their school day, activities, and homes while repeating the message that, no matter their race, family makeup, clothes, religion, or ability, everyone belongs. The kids arrive at school on foot, in a wheelchair, in a taxi, and eat foods from their diverse cultures for lunch.

Through simple, powerful language, Penfold and Kaufman remind us that everyone, regardless of their background or differences, has a place where they can feel safe and included. For teachers, this book is an excellent tool to introduce important conversations about diversity, tolerance, and inclusion in the classroom.



Before You Start Reading

Ask: On the first day at a new school or group gathering, have you ever worried that other children may not welcome you or want to be your friend? Many children all over the world feel that way. What can you do to make others feel welcome?

Show: Look at the children and activities on the cover of the book. Talk about the similarities and differences you see.

Connect: Let us read this book together and see if we can find a child in the pages that looks just like you or who is doing something you like to do.

During Reading-Engagement Tips

Ask: How do you think your friends are like you and different from you? How do you show kindness to people who are different from you? What are some kind things you do for each other? Why is it important to be kind?

Show: Look at all of the children and parents saying hello and goodbye. Talk about how each home is different. Everyone practices different routines, faiths, eating habits, and ways of getting to school. Families have different hair, skin, and eye color and come from places from all around the world. As we read the book, look carefully at the interesting kids and activities, and talk about the many differences you see. Think about why the differences make each person interesting and the school community stronger.

Connect: How do you get to and from school? Have you ever ridden on a bus? How about a taxi? Do you walk to school alone or with your family?

After Reading

Ask: Would you like to attend this classroom? What makes people feel welcome here? What did you learn that you would like to try in your school classroom?

Show: Point out some things children are doing in the pictures that tells you they are being kind to one another.

Connect: You might hear people say that someone different is weird. Why do you think they might say that? Is the difference weird? What do you think are the good things about getting to know people who are different from us?

Activities for Students

1. Draw a picture of a group of people you meet with. That might be a classroom, sports group, faith group, or other interest area. Show the differences of looks, colors, activities, and actions of the people in your group. Show how your community is stronger because of all the differences and kindnesses that make people feel welcome.
2. Create a Poster that reads, "All Are Welcome Here." Be creative with images that show warmth and interest in people's uniqueness. Make sure to include children with different abilities.
3. Create a playground picture that shows people of varied abilities enjoying playground equipment designed for everyone's use.
4. Make a list of all the places that you go where you feel welcome. What are some ways you can make someone else feel welcome there? Write a list of five kind things you can do and make a plan to do them.
5. Say something when you see someone feeling sad or unwelcomed. Speak up to let the child know you care. Tell them they are important and that they are welcome to play with you. Be kind.

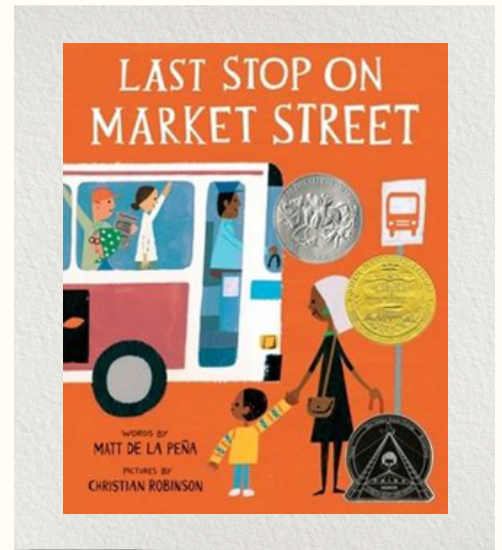


LAST STOP ON MARKET STREET

Written by Matt de la Peña and Illustrated by Christian Robinson

Last Stop on Market Street is an award-winning book, both for content and the illustrations, that teaches life lessons while taking a city bus to a soup kitchen. CJ and his Nana share intergenerational family stories about empathy, kindness, and understanding.

Key vocabulary: aboard, lurched, and rhythm. Also, a great opportunity to define empathy for the students.



Before You Start Reading

Ask: Where do you think CJ and his grandmother are going and what may happen along the way?

Show: Show the students the full wrap-around cover book jacket and ask them to predict what the story might be about.

Connect: Ask the students if they have ever ridden on a city bus? Have a few children share a detail about the ride. Share with the students, "This will help us understand the story better."

During Reading-Engagement Tips

Ask: Where do you think CJ and his nana might be going? Any ideas? Have you ever wished you could do something your friends were doing? I think this happens to all of us and if you understand that feeling, you are showing empathy.

Show: Stop on the page with the perfect rainbow over the soup kitchen. What does a rainbow mean in this book? CJ's nana always finds the wonderful in everything and has a positive attitude.

Connect: Stop on the rhythm lifted CJ page. Have the students discuss with their neighbor about how the music changes CJ's mood. It gives him a "feeling of magic." Ask the students if music has ever changed their mood. Do they feel the magic of music?

After Reading

Ask: How has CJ changed throughout the story?

Show: Show the illustrations again throughout the book and discuss how they were made: paint, collage, etc.

Connect: Play snippets of different moody music and ask the students to express how they feel. They can show through their faces or their bodies, if you need to get the wiggles out.

Activities for Students

1. Create an Acts of Kindness chart with students suggesting all the different acts that happen within the book. This can be a group, partner or individual activity.
2. Have the students draw their own soup kitchen and create a menu of foods that they would like to serve people. Discuss eating at a soup kitchen and relying on a soup kitchen for food. Do the patrons get to choose their meals? Ask how they would feel about eating at a soup kitchen and depending on it for their meals.
3. Make a t-chart and have students detail the differences between a city bus and a school bus.
4. Have the students color a rainbow and write affirmative words on each band to remind them to look on the brighter side of life.



Link for Read Aloud

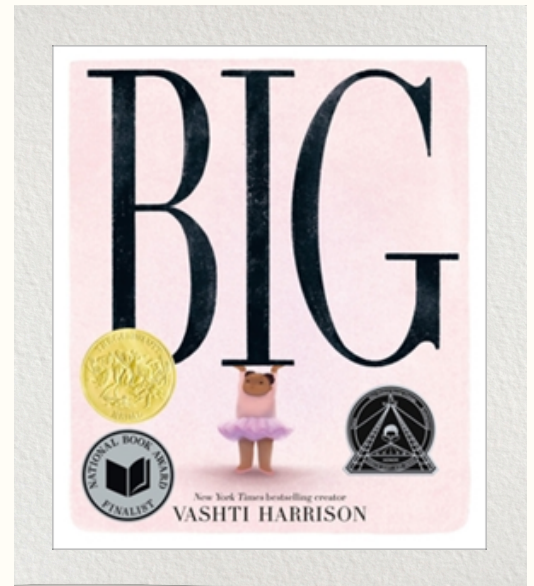
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=RqggKnqoAmhYnvjB&v=G-Rau8rrelU&feature=youtu.be>

BIG

Written by Vashti Harrison

BIG is the first picture book written and illustrated by Vashti Harrison. It follows a child's journey and truly shows the power of words, both positive and negative. It is an award-winning book receiving the Caldecott Medal, the Coretta Scott King Honor Award, and is a National Book Award finalist. The use of the bright pink color is a deliberate action by the author to emphasize that bright colors make a person stand out and the author herself felt like she should be small and not draw attention to herself when she was a young child. This is empathy through story telling.

Key vocabulary: advice, exposed, judged, invisible, recital, considerate, and compassionate.



Before You Start Reading

Ask: Why do you think the word BIG is in all capital letters? Do you think the author did this deliberately?

Show: Show the children the cover of the book underneath the book jacket. Look at all of the words. Are they positive or negative words? Read each of the words aloud to the students.

Connect: Have the students pick their favorite word from the cover. Let a couple of students share why they choose their particular word.

During Reading-Engagement Tips

Ask: Ask the students about the words written in pink around the main character on pages 5 and 6. Read each word aloud and look at the face of the main character. What is she feeling?

Show: On page 7 the mood of the story definitely changes. The main character's face shows a different emotion. Show the students the ground on the page where she is running away from the dance class. It looks like the ground is breaking. Why would the author do this?

Connect: The main character is feeling small. Have you ever felt small? Did adults or other children make you feel small? Can you see how as we go through the story the main character is getting too big for the pages of the book?

After Reading

Ask: Can you feel the emotions of the girl on the pages without any words?

Show: Show the pages of the book again that fold out into a poster, making space for the main character. Discuss how she is feeling.

Connect: How does the main character react when people want to change her? What is her response? Aren't you too big to be crying? Have you tried being smaller? Why can't you just fit in? These sentences force action upon the girl. Has anyone ever said this or something similar to you?

Activities for Students

1. The author uses color to show mood throughout the book. Have the students draw a picture where the color crayon they use sets a tone/mood.
2. Have each student create a poster with a self-portrait in the center, surrounded by descriptive words written in color that makes them feel worthy.
3. Have the students create a short wordless story with just pictures. Is it hard to express feelings with no words? Words have so much power, both good and bad.
4. Make an Anchor Chart with the words used in the book, listing the Positive Words in one column and the Negative Words in a second column. Are there any words that could be positive and negative?



Link for Read Aloud

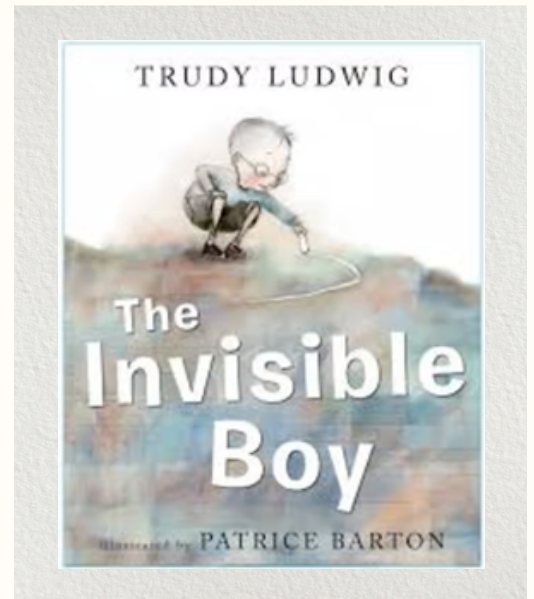
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeCKhziH8dg>

THE INVISIBLE BOY

Written by Trudy Ludwig and Illustrated by Patrice Barton

The Invisible Boy teaches students about feelings and about people who are different from themselves. This is a great book to teach inclusivity and kindness. The main character, Brian, is quiet and shy. He is not included at lunch or at recess. A new student arrives in his class and Brian is nice and kind to him. The book includes a discussion guide and resources.

Key vocabulary: invisible and glances.



Before You Start Reading

Ask: Notice the cover of the book. Do you see a boy? Is he invisible? What does it mean to be invisible? How would you feel if people acted like you were invisible?

Show: How can you show someone that is invisible? Can you see them?

Connect: How would you feel if you were invisible? Would it be awesome? Do you wonder why the author called this book *The Invisible Boy*?

During Reading-Engagement Tips

Ask: How does the illustrator make Brian look different from the rest of the children? Can you imagine how Brian must feel when the teacher does not notice him?

Show: Show the illustration of Brian drawn in black, white, and gray. The other children are drawn in color! Why did the author do this?

Connect: Stop at the kids laugh page. Look at Brian's expression on his face. What is he feeling? Have you ever felt like this? What is making him feel this way?

After Reading

Ask: Why do you think Brian is drawn in color on the cover of the book? Did looking at Brian's expression and talking about his feelings help you understand the book?

Show: Show the illustrations and talk about their effects on the tone of the story and how they aided in expressing Brian's feelings.

Connect: How did Justin make Brian feel included? Would you do the same thing? What would you do differently?

Activities for Students

1. Does your school have a bench on the playground for students to use when they do not have a playmate? Could you write a letter to the principal of your school to suggest a bench?
2. Create a petition with your classmates to have students sign and present it to the principal or PTA.
3. Brian had a special talent for drawing. What are your special talents? Students should draw or write their talents around a self-portrait.
4. Have the students create a word cloud using Wordle to showcase their talents.
<http://www.wordle.net/>



Link for Read Aloud

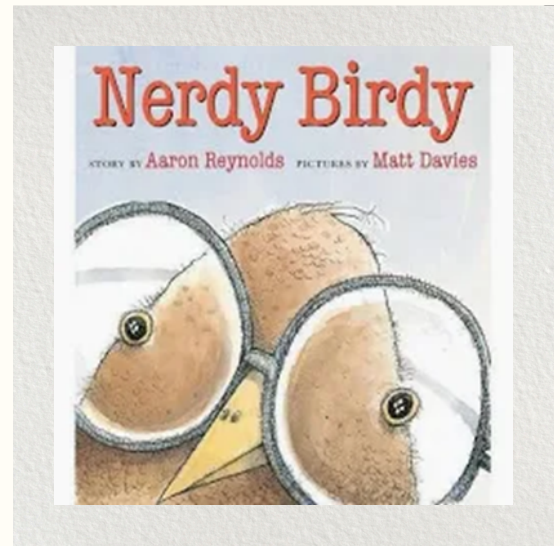
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=Aaww8Nslcw8KiqCD&v=cNHc2XCultQ&feature=youtu.be>

NERDY BIRDY

Written by Aaron Reynolds and Illustrated by Matt Davies

Nerdy Birdy examines characters that display empathy, kindness, and understanding. The main character confronts exclusion and faces a moral dilemma. The main character also displays integrity.

Key vocabulary: empathy, confused, exhausting, and lonely.



Before You Start Reading

Ask: Let's look at the back of the book together. Look at this bird. What do you think/infer is going on? Nerdy Birdy is being teased. Use both words as a connection to learning strands.

Show: Show the front cover of the book. What do you notice about the picture?

Connect: Turn to the student next to you. Ask and tell them if you have ever felt bad while being teased by someone. Share your feelings with each other.

During Reading-Engagement Tips

Ask: Stop at, "One day, Eagle flew off to hunt...." page. Can you imagine how Nerdy Birdy feels about Eagle leaving? Ask on several of the pages how Nerdy Birdy is feeling.

Show: Show the illustrations to the children that have a funny portion or item included, e.g. the banana instead of an apple on the computer.

Connect: Why do you think that Nerdy Birdy wanted to be friends with the Vulture? This is a great opportunity to introduce empathy and discuss how it feels to be lonely.

After Reading

Ask: What do you think will happen next, if the story continues? Do you have any questions?

Connect: Have you ever felt lonely? At school or at home? Have you ever been excluded from a group?

Activities for Students

1. Go through the book one more time detailing the feelings and emotions that are either written in the text or are noticed in the characters' faces.
2. On a notecard write the words that Nerdy Birdy or Vulture might say on the last page. Share with the class.
3. Define the word "Bully" on a sheet of chart paper. Have the students list examples from the book that indicate bullying.



Link for Read Aloud

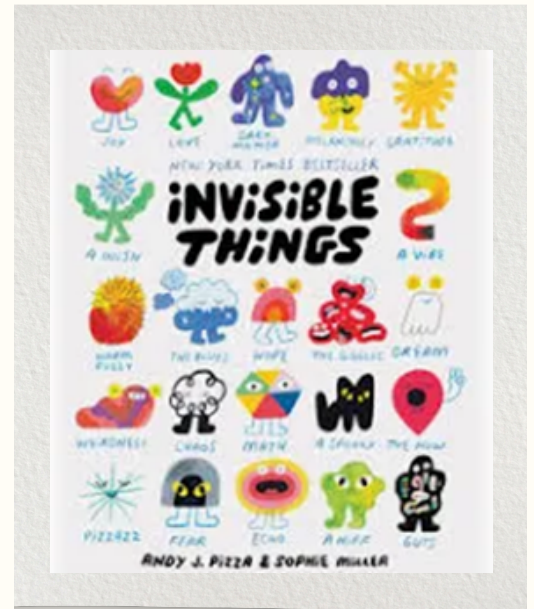
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=TwfXFt7X1JLT80Fo&v=dwHuyt2JfYE&feature=youtu.be>

INVISIBLE THINGS

Written by Andy J. Pizza and Sophie Miller

Invisible Things lets the reader wear a pair of magical glasses that allows us to see all the feelings, ideas, and other Invisible things that we encounter. This book allows the reader to see the sensations they experience every day. It is a great tool to name our emotions and recognize those feelings in the people in our lives.

Key vocabulary: empathy, interact, gallery, patient, gratitude, nostalgia, chaos, melancholy, and gravity.



Before You Start Reading

Ask: Do you know what the word invisible means? What does it look like? Can you see it with special glasses? Can you see your feelings? All of them?

Show: Show the children the cover of the book or the complete book jacket. Look at all of the words. Are they positive or negative words? Read each of the words aloud to the students.

Connect: Can you explain all of the words? Have you felt any of these feelings? Do the pictures help you decide what the words mean?

During Reading-Engagement Tips

Ask: There are many new words in this text for us to explore. If you see any words that you are not familiar with, look at the picture to see if that helps you understand or ask me to explain what it means.

Show: Show each page and leave enough time for students to comprehend or decipher the meaning of the words.

Connect: The book describes feelings as invisible things that are on the inside. You can feel more than one at a time, in a jumble, and that is okay.

After Reading

Ask: Can you explain all of the feelings on the Feelings Chart? Some of them may be new words for you. Do you need me to explain any of them? What are you feeling today?

Show: Show the entire book cover again and see if there is more clarity on the invisible things.

Connect: Do the pictures on the Feelings Chart reflect how you feel? Could you draw a better picture of any of the feelings?

Activities for Students

1. The authors have provided FREE coloring pages to accompany their book. They are online and are a downloadable zip file. <https://www.andypizza.com/invisiblethingsbook>
2. Have each student create their Feelings Chart with their own pictures to display the feelings. Younger students can be given a chart with the Words already printed and they just illustrate.
3. The authors have created Feelings Flash Cards that can be purchased for use with your students.



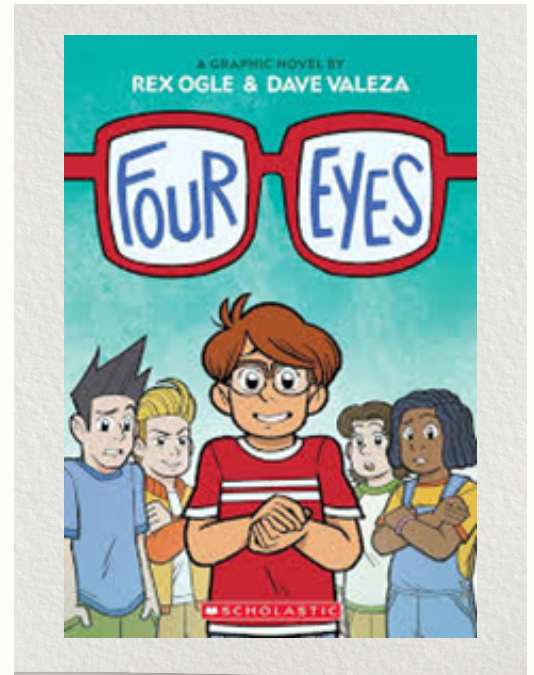
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=m1KUHLQ7PjxbBbeM&v=Y27amleqn3c&feature=youtu.be>

FOUR EYES

Written by Rex Ogle and Illustrated by Dave Valeza

Four Eyes is a humorous and heartwarming middle-grade memoir about a boy starting sixth grade who struggles with bullies, a difficult home life, and his new, "ugly" glasses, which make him feel even more self-conscious. The story follows the main character, Rex, as he navigates the challenges of going to middle school, including the loss of friends from elementary school, all while dealing with his blurry vision and the embarrassment of needing glasses. It's a coming-of-age story about finding your place and standing up for yourself, told through a graphic novel.

The themes of the story are bullying, family issues, trying to fit in, accepting who you are, and the whole process of growing up and secrets to help... or if remaining invisible is the only way to survive middle school.



Before You Start Reading

Ask: Do you know what the word memoir means? Discuss the meaning of the word and the correlation to the author.

Show: Show the cover illustration. What do you think the main story line is about?

Connect: Do you wear glasses or do any of your friends? Did they get them during elementary school or during their secondary journey? Does it make a difference?

During Reading-Engagement Tips

Ask: Invisibility is discussed on page 46. Do you think invisibility is a main theme in middle school or high school?

Show: Show the illustration of school life in the hallways. Does it look like a pleasant experience?

Connect: How was your transition to middle or high school and life in the hallway?

After Reading

Ask: Why do you think the author chose to write about his life in middle school and needing glasses?

Show: Show the pages that contrast Rex's lifestyle versus his father's. Discuss the many differences.

Connect: Do you live in a blended family environment or do any of your friends? It is a very common occurrence. Discuss the challenges many kids and families face with your classmates.

Activities for Students

1. Create a poster for the main character from the book. Make sure you detail their likes, dislikes, their characteristics and challenges.
2. Write a letter to a character giving advice or asking questions about their choices.
3. Make a playlist of songs that represent key moments in Rex's journey with a sentence explaining each song choice.
4. Write and perform a skit showing a scene between Rex and a new student based on empathy and kindness.



Link for Interview with Author

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyp7cxTADH8>

INVISIBLE

Written by Christina Diaz Gonzalez and Illustrated by Gabriela Epstein

Invisible is a graphic novel that follows a group of middle school students that are thrown together to complete a school community service project. Can five overlooked kids make one big difference? There's George, the brain; Sara, the loner; Dayara, the tough kid; Nico, the rich kid; and Miguel, the athlete. They think they are invisible to the rest of the school for various different reasons.

Then they meet someone who truly needs their help, and they must decide whether they are each willing to expose their own secrets to help... or if remaining invisible is the only way to survive middle school.



Before You Start Reading

Ask: Have you ever felt like you are invisible? That no one even knows you are in the room? That you walk down the hallway and people look right through you?

Show: Show the cover illustration. Can you tell by their facial expressions what kind of person each character is?

Connect: Do the group of kids on the back cover look more like friends? Do you think they will make a difference?

During Reading-Engagement Tips

Ask: Do you have friends that are bilingual? Do you speak another language besides English? Do you have friends that speak Spanish as their home language?

Show: Many of the illustrations indicate the anxiety of the characters. What are some of these indications?

Connect: Did you notice that the dates in the book are written in both Spanish and English? Are there signs in your community/school that are bilingual?

After Reading

Ask: Why do you think the author chose to write this book as a bilingual text?

Show: Show the different living arrangements of the students. Are they like yours?

Connect: Do you live in an apartment or a house? Do you live in a neighborhood? Look at pages 196-197. What do you notice about the contents of each character's bag? Which student are you most like? What can you say about their feelings during the story?

Activities for Students

1. Using Adobe Express or Canva, create a poster of your favorite character from the book. Make sure you detail their likes, dislikes, their characteristics and challenges.
2. Some of the characters share the foods prepared in their homes. Create a recipe book with meals inspired by your own culture, your friends' backgrounds, and your life at school. Include names and a short description of each recipe.
3. School cafeterias usually throw away lots of food every day. The students in this book shared that food with the family living in the van just past the school playground. How do you think the family felt about accepting the donated food? Should school cafeterias do something about the food that is disposed of every day?
4. Write a script for a new chapter based on your favorite show/movie with Invisible characters.
5. The characters on pages 196-197 have the contents of their bags listed for all to see. Can you list what is in your bag/backpack? What does that say about you as a person? How does that make you feel? Write a short paragraph about how the characters feel and how you feel about sharing the contents of your bag/backpack?



Link for Interview with Author

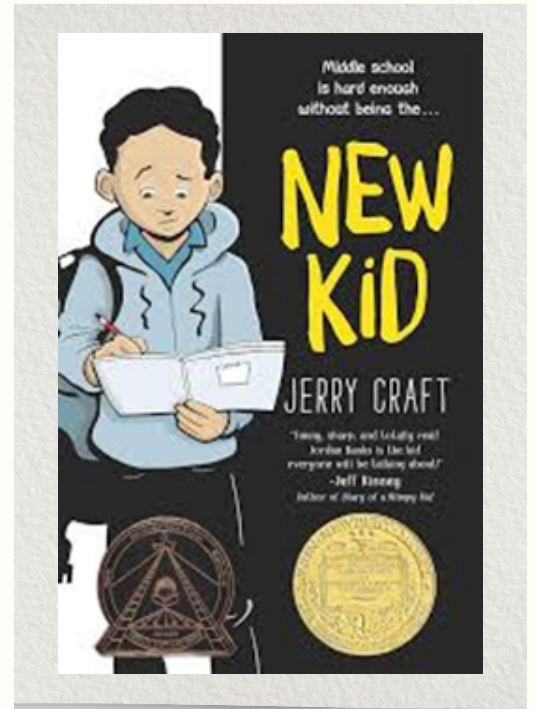
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=5McAriu99MrtNqJf&v=CdIZ5gb0jCg&feature=youtu.be>

NEW KID

Written by Jerryo Craft

New Kid is a Newbery Winner graphic novel that follows a middle schooler assimilating into a new school and making new friends. This book has multiple awards for its message and graphic design.

Each chapter theme is based on a television show, book, movie, or musical making a real-world connection highly relatable to students.



Before You Start Reading

Ask: Have you ever been the odd person out? Have you been the new person in a class or school? Have you ever felt out of place?

Show: Show the cover illustration. Does Jordan's facial expression reveal any clues to how he feels? What facts about Jordan can you discern from the cover text?

Connect: Jordan is starting a new middle school as a 7th grader. Do you think that this will be hard when everyone has already been there for a year? Did you have any issues when you started at a new school?

During Reading-Engagement Tips

Ask: Do you know what a metaphor and a simile are? There are many in this book. Let's see if we can spot them and analyze them as we come across them.

Show: Look at Jordan's journal of drawings throughout the book. Can you deduce Jordan's feelings and anxiety through his drawings?

Connect: Have you ever made a drawing about how you feel?

After Reading

Ask: Throughout the book (pages 24, 25, 30, 37, etc.) Jordan is pictured with two figures on his shoulders. What do you think they represent? What do they do for Jordan? Do you feel as though you have something that guides or directs you? Do you always listen?

Show: Show the different chapter titles and discuss their significance.

Connect: Do you ever feel that there are books/shows/movies that depict your life or how you feel?

Activities for Students

1. Using Adobe Express guided activity All About Me, choose one character from the book and create their All About Me Page.
2. Stereotyping is when we assume everyone of a certain group is the same based on a simple idea about them. There are many examples of stereotyping in the book *New Kid*. Find three different examples of stereotyping and briefly describe each one making sure to explain/describe the stereotype.
3. The name for each chapter is a play on words for titles of movies or books that really exist. Find the real titles for seven of these books or movies.
4. Design a food truck menu inspired by *New Kid*. Each menu item should represent a character (e.g. "Drew's Double-Decker Confidence Burger" or "Alexandra's Mysterious Mask Nachos"). Include food names, ingredients, and a short reason why each item matches the character's personality.
5. Design a digital quiz or game (Kahoot, Google Forms, etc.) that tests knowledge of the characters and themes in *New Kid*.



Link for Interview with Author

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCy7gjdMvjU>

AMELIA AND ELEANOR GO FOR A RIDE

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan and Illustrated by Brian Selnick

Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride follows the friendship and adventures of Amelia Earhart and Eleanor Roosevelt, two very historic and important figures in U.S. history. The book highlights the boundaries that these two women pushed and how they helped advance and provided opportunities for the women that followed them.

Through this simple and powerful story about two strong women, Ryan imparts suggestions to how these two famous women coped with their world of prejudice against women and their rights.



Before You Start Reading

Ask: Why do you think the illustrations are in black and white? What kind of ride do you think these women undertake? Do you know who Amelia and Eleanor are?

Show: Show the cover illustration. The drawings in this book are by Brian Selznick. Do you know what other books he has authored and illustrated? After looking at the front and back cover, might they be going on two different rides?

Connect: Have you ridden in a plane at night? Have you seen the number of stars in the sky from a plane? Are you interested or wondering about being the pilot of a plane at night?

During Reading-Engagement Tips

Ask: What does the idiom “Birds of a feather” mean?

Show: Show the picture of Eleanor and Amelia. How are these two women famous?

Connect: Have you ever been to Washington, D.C.? Have you looked at the sky at night far away from the city lights? How many stars can you see on a clear night? Does the description of the sky by Amelia fit the image in your mind of the sky at night?

After Reading

Ask: Why do you think the dessert was, “Pink Clouds on Angel Food Cake?”

Show: Show the recipe for the cake and toppings. Do you think this cake would be delicious? This recipe was adapted from *The Presidential Cookbook: Feeding the Roosevelts and their Guests*. This cookbook is a primary source. There are many primary sources that detail both Eleanor and Amelia’s life and events.

Connect: Are you interested in making this dish or possibly something else from this cookbook? Have you tasted angel food cake? How do you think it got its name?

Activities for Students

1. Gather some primary sources about Eleanor Roosevelt or Amelia Earhart. Can you find any facts that align with the story in the book?
2. Do you think this book is nonfiction or historical fiction? Research the events presented in this book and determine if it is biographical or fiction.
3. Create a report on Amelia Earhart about her path to becoming a pilot and her place in aviation history.
4. Eleanor Roosevelt had many points in her life when she influenced her husband, the President, and the U.S. government. Write an essay about her influence and whether or not you believe her influence was right.
5. Create a timeline of either Amelia or Eleanor’s life.
6. Do you think Amelia would have gone on to become even more influential had her flight been successful? Write a short essay about Amelia’s life.
7. Research women in the 1920s and 1930s and report on their roles and restrictions.



Link for Interview with Author

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7Jo91_R5l8