

# Great Reads!



I use a lot of literature with students. Books have a way of speaking to us and reaching places inside of us in ways no one else can.

\*\*Starred books indicate those that I really, really, really love!

## Books about feelings

- \*\**“The Way I Feel”* by Janin Cain
- *“Today I Feel Silly: And Other Moods that Make My Day”* by Jamie Lee Curtis
- \*\**“When Sophie Gets Angry – Really, Really Angry”* by Molly Bang
- *“The Way I Feel”* Books by Cornelia Maude Spelman
- *“When I’m Feeling...”* Books by Trace Moroney
- *“The Feelings Book”* by Todd Parr
- \*\**“Let’s Talk About Feeling Afraid”* by Joy Berry
- *“How Are You Peeling?”* by Saxton Freymann

What an original! This book features produce that you’d buy from a farmer’s market that is carved or decorated to show emotion! Students love to see how each veggie, fruit, or starch is looking, and it’s a great introduction to facial expressions. I use it K-2, but it could be used for older grades.

- \*\**“Visiting Feelings”* by Lauren Rubenstein

This story is so peaceful, both the words and pictures. I love how the author shares the important message that feelings are visitors, they come and go, and we should acknowledge and entertain them for as long as they stay. It’s important that kids learn that difficult feelings won’t last forever. I look forward to using this story with my K-1 friends, but I think my 2nd-5th graders would enjoy the message too.

## Books about friendship

- *“How to Lose All Your Friends”* by Nancy Carlson

I use this book with young students (K-2) to discuss behaviors that don't lead to making or keeping friends. This is eye opening because many students who struggle with friendships are displaying a few of these negative behaviors, and they begin to see that. It's also a great way to open a discussion about what behaviors DO lead to making and keeping friends.

- \*\**"Making Friends is an Art"* by Julia Cook

This book is great for 2nd grade and up. The story is told using colored pencils as characters, and each color represents a different kind of personality. I like it most because Brown is struggling to make friends and he has to learn to make positive changes for others to want to be around him. It's uplifting and many students can relate to it as they are also learning how to become better friends.

- *"How Do I Stand in Your Shoes?"* by Susan DeBell

I use this book with 2nd and 3rd graders to help them understand empathy. The story is cute and it gives real examples of how to have empathy for others.

- *"A Visitor for Bear"* by Bonny Becker

This is a cute story for primary students about why having friends is important. Along with Bear in the book, students talk about how life is more fun when you have friends to share it with.

- *"Hunter's Best Friend at School"* by Laura Malone Elliot

I use this book with primary grades to talk about friendships and following. It opens discussions about how sometimes our friends make bad choices and we shouldn't follow along.

- \*\**"Chester's Way"* by Kevin Henkes

This book is absolutely adorable! It tells the tale of a seemingly perfect friendship between two mice and what happens when a new mouse wants to join their play. The story is perfect for 2nd and 3rd graders (and probably older students too) who are learning how to maintain friendships while exploring new ones.

- *"The Rainbow Fish"* by Marcus Pfister

This is an oldie but a goodie! Most students have heard this story before, but it's a great one to tell again while discussing the importance of sharing in friendships.

- \*\**"The Rainbow Fish and the Big Blue Whale"* by Marcus Pfister

This continuation of the Rainbow Fish is all about misjudging another before really knowing them. I use this story with 2nd and 3rd graders a lot as a way to discuss how we make judgments based on appearances or first impressions, and we can miss out on a great friendship if we don't give people a chance. Students just seem to 'get it' with this book.

- *"My Best Friend"* by Mary Ann Rodman

I like this story because it discusses how sometimes we feel we need to change something about ourselves in order for others to like us. I use this with older students (mostly grade 3) to talk about finding friends who like you just as you are. We also discuss the difference between things we might need to change to be a better friend (ex: how we talk to others, our attitude) and the things we shouldn't have to change (ex: the way we dress, what we eat for lunch).

- *“City Dog, Country Frog” by Mo Willems*

This adorable story shows how friendships can change over time and that change is healthy because it leads us to new things and new friends. This is a super important message for elementary students because their friendships are ever changing and it can be really hard for some to understand.

- *“Franklin’s Secret Club” by Paulette Bourgeois*

Kids love Franklin! In this story, the sweet turtle and his friends learn the lesson that creating clubs can lead to exclusion, which isn't very friendly. It opens good discussion about including vs. excluding and how each make us feel. I use it K-2 mostly.

- *\*\*“Enemy Pie” by Derek Munson*

I love how this story twists and turns to show how friendship can form when you least expect it. I read this book with my 2nd and 3rd grade friends to discuss how looking for the positive in people can lead to great friendships.

- *“The Invisible Boy” by Trudy Ludwig*

You will fall in love with Brian, a quiet and kind child, who is overlooked by teachers and classmates. This story captures the essence of the quieter kids who do things that others might not notice. A great story to share a different perspective on friendship – that it doesn't always look like two kids laughing and hollering together; sometimes it looks like two kids quietly drawing together or simply enjoying each other's quiet company. Introverts rejoice!

- *“Pink Tiara Cookies For Three” by Maria Dismondy*

Need a book to address the tricky number three in friendships? Here it is! Particularly for girls, playing in three's doesn't always work out well for everyone involved, and feelings can quickly be hurt. I have many, many conversations with my girls about allowing friends to have other friends, and this story will definitely help! Wonderful for all girls K-5.

## **Books about diversity and tolerance**

- *\*\*“It’s Okay to Be Different” by Todd Parr*

Through colorful pages and simple, fun words, this story offers a great message about respecting differences. In kid-friendly ways, Todd begins the important discussion about tolerance of differing abilities, body sizes, skin colors, families, interests, and more. The note written in the

back of the book makes it extra special for students. I use it with K-2, but older students would enjoy Todd's style too!

- *\*\*“The Family Book” by Todd Parr*

Another great one from Todd. This story focuses on all the ways that people can be family, from traditional, to single parent, step-parents, adoptions, and even same-sex parents! It also covers how families choose to express their love for each other differently. While reading this one, I always hear students' excitement when they see a page that represents a family like theirs; it honors ALL kinds of families, which is what I LOVE most about it! I use with K-2.

- *“You and Me Together” by Barbara Kerley*

This story consists of few words and beautiful pictures from around the world! I use this story to initiate discussion about the many ways families spend time together. It could be used with any grade.

- *\*\*“The Sneetches” by Dr. Seuss*

An oldie but a goodie! Through Dr. Seuss's powerful rhymes, students hear how it feels to be treated differently based on appearances. This cute story is a great opener to all kinds of activities about diversity/tolerance. I use this mostly with grades 2 and 3, but all grades could benefit from the message.

- *\*\*“If Only I Had a Green Nose” by Max Lucado*

I absolutely love this tale of a seemingly strange fad of painting your nose green, and everybody is jumping on board! The story shows how 'fitting in' isn't all that it's cracked up to be, as the rules are ever changing and you can never keep up. This book starts meaningful discussions about being yourself instead of someone else. I use this with my 2nd-5th graders.

- *“The Crayon Box that Talked” by Shane DeRolf*

This short story uses different colored crayons to show that amazing things can happen when we focus on each other's strengths. I compare the crayons sharing a box with the students sharing a classroom, and we discuss how each of us adds something unique to our class. Students K-2 enjoy this tale.

- *\*\*“Whoever You Are” by Mem Fox*

The pictures in this book are beautifully painted to showcase diversity around the world. What I love most about this book is that it explains how we are all connected, even if we look, sound, or live differently (we all bleed, cry, smile, love). It's very heartwarming. I use this K-2.

- *“The Potato Chip Champ” by Maria Dismondy*

A much needed story about accepting those who may be less fortunate than you. This wonderful story addresses the haves and the have not's and teaches kids a lesson in character – that

empathy and kindness gives you more than anything you can buy! This story will put a smile on your face and warmth in your heart!

### **Books about self-esteem/identity**

- *\*\*“I’m Gonna Like Me!” by Jamie Lee Curtis*

This story follows two characters through the ups and downs of one day at home and school. I particularly love how the story shows that it’s okay to forgive and like yourself even when you make mistakes! Such an important message for young children! I use this K-2, but the high levels of detail make it work for older students too.

- *“What I Like About Me!” by Allia Zobel Nollan*

A super cute story featuring all kinds of different looking children. What’s great is that all the characters appreciate what makes them unique. This fun book can be bought in giant size (which kids love!) with activities for students to do after hearing the story. It works for K-2 level.

- *“You Be You” by Linda Kranz*

This story is told using pictures of brightly painted rocks resembling fish! Students are amazed at all the detail while learning that being yourself is always better than trying to follow the crowd. This could be used K-3.

- *“Spaghetti in a Hot Dog Bun” by Maria Dismondy*

This adorable story shows readers how to stay true to yourself and love what makes you unique, even if others are trying to make you feel badly about it. It shows students how to rise above adversity. I use this with grades 1-3.

- *“Zero” by Kathryn Otoshi*

Told through numbers, this interesting book tells a story of Zero, who wants to count like the other numbers. Zero’s journey to self-acceptance is all about finding your own meaning and purpose, regardless of what makes you different. This would be great with 1st-3rd graders.

### **Books about cooperation and teamwork**

- *“Friends Afloat” by Eliza Rosenbaum*

This cute story shows how a group of animals come together to weather a storm by each using their strengths to help. I use this K-1 to talk about how each of them have something to add to their classroom team. The best part about this story is that it was written by a fourth grader! Pretty awesome!

- *“Stone Soup” by Jon Muth*

The message in this book is very powerful. It shows how three visitors to a village that is untrusting of new people help them begin to open up and share. This book shows what amazing things can happen when people cooperate. I would use this in grades 2-5.

- *“The Little Red Pen” by Janet Stevens & Susan Stevens Crummel*

Told through the use of desk supplies, this super cute story shows how big tasks can seem impossible by ourselves, but doable when we work as a team. Grades 2-3 enjoy this adventurous tale.

### **Books about bullying**

- *“Being Bullied” by Joy Berry*

This small book gives big insight into what bullying is, how it makes us feel, and what to do about it. I like that it’s straightforward about the different kinds of bullying and keeps it simple for young students. I use this with K-2 students.

- *“Teasing” by Joy Berry*

I use this in combination with “Being Bullied” to discuss the difference between bullying and teasing. Often, students will call every mistreatment bullying after we talk about it, and this book helps stop that. I use this K-2.

- *\*\*“One” by Kathryn Otoshi*

I cannot tell you how much I LOVE this book! It is so powerful that students talk about it all year after reading it and can’t wait to hear it again. Through simple splotches of color, readers see how bullying can flatten us and how it can grow bigger if no one stands up. This book is empowering to bystanders and shows how someone who bullies can change if given the chance. I use this K-2, but this is a children’s book that older students would love too!

- *\*\*“Nobody Knew What to Do” by Becky Ray McCain*

This is my favorite for teaching about bystanders and how to stand up instead. This story shows how different kinds of bullying (physical and emotional) affect everyone in the school, not only the target. It’s empowering and eye opening for the students to hear. What I like most is that it shows how talking to an adult helps the bullying stop (students need to feel like this is true). I use this 2nd-5th grade.

- *\*\*“Just Kidding” by Trudy Ludwig*

This story shows an important part of bullying that happens among friends when someone thinks they’re simply joking around. The book shows the emotional impact harsh jokes can have and some positive ways of coping. I use this 2nd-5th, particularly with boys.

- *\*\*“Say Something” by Peggy Moss*

I love how the author gives a big message about speaking up through beautiful words and pictures. In particular, it shows how we sometimes don't speak up until it's us who are being picked on, then we know how it feels. This is a great book for talking about the power of bystanders and to practice what you might say if you saw someone being bullied. I use this with 2nd-5th graders.

- *"The Juice Box Bully" by Bob Sornson*

This is an incredible story of students sticking together to put a stop to bullying in their class. I love how they honor their classroom promise and help a new member of their class who chooses to show his fear through bullying instead of trying to make friends. This book offers great ideas for creating a classroom promise to help end bullying. I use this with 2nd-3rd graders.

- *\*\*"The Weird Series" by Erin Frankel*

This three part series (Weird, Dare, and Tough) shows a unique look into bullying through perspectives of the target, bystander, and the person doing the bullying. Like no other bullying books I've seen, this series offers readers direct insight into why bullying happens, why people remain bystanders, and finally, how they have the power to stop bullying. Also, there are ideas for activities and projects to do after reading each! These stories are aimed for 3rd graders, but could be used with 2nd-5th graders.

- *"The Tease Monster" by Julia Cook*

Using monsters as characters, this story talks about the difference between teasing that is friendly and teasing that is hurtful. This is a great book to use to teach students that not all mean behavior is bullying! Great for K-2.

- *"Simon's Hook: A Story About Teases and Put-downs" by Karen Gedig Burnett*

A wonderful story about how to not get sucked into other peoples' put-down games! I often have conversations with students who find themselves using so much energy defending against every little slam or tease that comes their way. This story offers great advice about how to avoid getting tangled in that web through the use of fishing metaphors. I would use this with 2nd-5th graders.

### **Books about relational aggression**

- *\*\*"The Secret Olivia Told Me" by N. Joy*

The imagery in this book is powerful! It tells a fascinating tale of a big secret that spreads and the damage it causes. This story is great for 2nd-5th graders to discuss privacy, trust, and forgiveness.

- *"Trouble Talk" by Trudy Ludwig*

This story is perfect for helping students combat the issue of talking about others behind their back. It's a common problem and this story shows real life examples and ways to cope with it. I use this with 2nd-5th graders, girls in particular.

- **\*\*“My Secret Bully” by Trudy Ludwig**

What an important story to hear! Targeted for girls, this book delves into the tricky friend/enemy role and how hurtful it can be. Girls will definitely recognize themselves in this story! I use this 2nd-5th grade.

### **Books about career/work**

- **“Work Song” by Gary Paulsen**

I love how with few words and soft pictures, this story shows readers a variety of jobs that help make a community run, from sun up to sun down. It shows children how each kind of job contributes to our community. I use this K-2.

- **“Everybody Works” by Shelley Rotner**

This straightforward book shows work in all different forms, including students learning in school! There's sure to be at least one profession each student can relate to or aspire to do. This is good for K-2.

- **\*\*“When I Grow Up” by Al Yankovic**

I love the detail and silliness of this story about work! Covering a host of serious and silly jobs, this book encourages kids to dream big and not settle on one thing. I use this with 2nd-3rd graders.

- **“I Can Be Anything!” by Jerry Spinelli**

This is a great imaginative tale for younger students (K-1) about what hobbies and jobs they might want to have as they grow older.

### **Books about gender identity**

- **\*\*“Pink is Just A Color and So is Blue” by Niki Bhatia**

A friendly book to address the pesky opinions of what girls and boys should like and play with! I don't know about you, but I am sick of the limitations placed on young kids simply because of their gender. This colorful book plunges into that topic with ease and shows everyone how much fun it is to just be yourself instead! This book is perfect for K-2 students.

- **“10,000 Dresses” by Marcus Ewert**

Told through bright pictures of magical dresses, this important story captures the courage it takes to be who you are comfortable being, despite gender. It shows the struggle of constricting

gender norms within a traditional family, and the peace that comes with acceptance. This book is good for grades K-3.

- *\*\*“My Princess Boy” by Cheryl Kilodavis*

> This cute story shows the innocence of a child exploring gender roles through play. It sends an important message about acceptance and tolerance of children’s differing interests and identity expression. I particularly love how the author (who’s own son was inspiration for this book) forms direct questions for readers about how they would treat such a princess boy. It’s powerful and much needed! This is appropriate for grades K-2.

- *“Be Who You Are” by Jennifer Carr*

> This descriptive story introduces readers to a young child, born a male who sees himself as female, on a journey to become the gender and person she wishes to be. This book offers great detail about how the child’s family, school, and counselor work together to support the beautiful child through her transformation. This would be a great story to share with a transgender student or to help others understand a student who may be transforming (as long as the transgender student wants to share with others).

### **Miscellaneous books**

- *\*\*“Have You Filled a Bucket Today?” by Carol McCloud*

I love how this story gives children the power to create their own happiness through being kind to others! This empowering tale shows how we all have an invisible bucket that gets filled and emptied throughout our day depending on how we’re treated and how we treat others. There are lots of bucket-filling activities and initiatives that schools carry out all year long! This is great for K-3.

- *“Words Are Not for Hurting” by Elizabeth Verdick*

This book tells children how powerful their words can be! It tells about how hurtful words make us feel, and how we can use our words to help others feel happy. I use this book as an introduction to compliments and how praising others makes everyone feel good! I use this with K-2.

- *“My Mouth is a Volcano!” by Julia Cook*

Through a humorous way, this book talks about interrupting and how to practice being a good listener. It takes an empathetic approach to impulsive talking, and teaches how to keep all those important thoughts in your head until it’s your turn to speak. This would be a good read for K-3.

- *“The Worst Day of My Life Ever!” by Julia Cook*

Told through the child’s perspective, it shows a rough day that happened due to not listening to directions. This is a much needed story for children who struggle to slow down and hear what is being said to them, because they might need to use that information later! This is good for K-3.

- *“A Bad Case of Tattle Tongue” by Julia Cook*

I like using this book to discuss tattling and how ridiculous it can get! Through the use of imagination, the story warns children about what tattling can lead to, and it offers help through 4 specific tattling rules. Teachers love it when I read this book to their class! I use this K-3.

- *“Wilma Jean the Worry Machine” by Julia Cook*

This book takes on an important topic: anxiety in children. Through humorous and very real examples, the character in the story showcases how anxiety can cripple a young child, and that they need help from their parents and teachers. The story also offers hope through strategies to ease worry and normalize it for children. This is great for 2nd-5th graders.

- *“It’s Hard To Be a Verb!” by Julia Cook*

A lovely, comical story of an active, energetic boy. Don’t we all know a few of those? I like how this story sheds light on how active students can learn self-control. I also like how Louis, the young boy in the book, represents many students who have loud and friendly personalities – they mean well, but sometimes go too far. A great book for any grade K-5!

- *“Grief is Like a Snowflake” by Julia Cook*

Told through the eyes of Little Tree, readers learn about death, dying, and ways to cope with grief. A great story to help young kids learn about a tough topic and remember that memories live on forever. I do have to say, when you’re reading this, pay close attention to the pictures, since the story bounces from Little Tree to his father (who’s been cut down) and back; it can get confusing unless you notice the small details on the trees. Any grieving student K-5 could benefit from this cute story. There is also an activity book you can purchase to use with the story.

- *“Personal Space Camp” by Julia Cook*

Louis (from “It’s Hard To Be a Verb!”) is back to learn about respecting personal space. I am often asked to speak to students about keeping hands to themselves and staying out of other peoples’ space, and this book will be a huge help! I particularly like how the story offers several great ideas to use with students to practice staying in their own bubble. Some kids just need it real black and white and this book does that! Great for K-3 (or even older kids who need the lesson). There’s an activity book you can purchase as well.

- *\*\*“Quiet Kid” by Debbie Fox*

Being the quiet kid myself, and now the quiet adult, I think everyone needs a copy of this book! When I read it for the first time, I literally got tears in my eyes because I felt at home, understood, and comforted. We all have quiet kids in our schools and they can sometimes get overlooked because they blend into the background while the loud kids are in your face. Let’s not forget the quiet kids, who have so much to offer! I would love to use this in conjunction with “It’s Hard To Be a Verb!” to discuss the differences between extroverts and introverts, and to let all students feel understood in my school. This story would work well with 2nd-5th graders.

- *“Kindness is Cooler, Mrs. Ruler” by Margery Cuyler*

A wacky teacher, energetic kinders, and a big lesson in kindness! This story is a great way to launch the kindness discussion and start developing a culture of kindness on your school's campus. It gives a natural extension project to try at your school (if only I had had this book when introducing the Kindness Matters bulletin board last year!). Great for K-3.

### **Chapter books for kids**

- *\*\*“Because of Mr. Terupt” by Rob Buyea*

I fell in love with each character in this book and just couldn't put it down! It tells the story through several 5th graders' perspectives as they learn about themselves and a brand new teacher, Mr. Terupt. The students end up learning a whole lot more than what's in the 5th grade curriculum – they learn about acceptance, tolerance, kindness, forgiveness, and true friendship. I seriously cannot wait to use this amazing story in a book club with my 4th and 5th graders! I know each of my students will be able to identify with one or several of the characters in this book.

- *“Wonder” by R.J. Palacio*

Auggie, a new student with a life altering facial deformity, will steal your heart and have you rooting for him through out the entire book! Great for 5th graders and up, this story is told through several characters' perspectives, and will provide each reader with a window into developing empathy and tolerance. Really a must-read and great for group discussions!

- *“There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom” by Louis Sachar*

We probably all know a Bradley Chalkers, a kid who struggles socially and would rather push everyone away than get hurt. This story shows the heart within 'monsters' like Bradley, and the amazing people who begin to accept him. Also, there's an awesome School Counselor, Carla Davis, in the book who never wavers from her position of unconditional positive regard and is truly a role model for our profession. It's a funny and heartwarming story! This would be great for a 4th grade book club.