

Social Justice Books for Kids

Below are kids' books we recommend, organized by chapter topic. Book descriptions are from Goodreads unless otherwise noted.

Book lists to check out

The Council on Interracial Books for Children offers “10 tips for analyzing books for racism and sexism” to help us think about the books already on our shelves:

cmascanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/article-10-ways-to-analyze-childrens-books-for-sexism-and-racism.pdf

A Mighty Girl provides book lists, searchable by age, for many different social issues:
amightygirl.com/books

Class Action has a list of books about class for children that is brief and so an accessible place to start: classism.org/resources/resources-for-children

A project of Teaching for Change has a list of environmental justice books for children, young adults, and educators: socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/environment

Lee & Low Books, the largest multicultural children's publishing company, lets you search for books by topic and by age/reading level: leeandlow.com/collections

The San Francisco Public Library lists books by ethnic heritage, specific to Black Lives Matter, and specific to LGBTQ+: sfpl.org/kids#

ACT for Social Justice lists books for children and young adults:
act4socialjustice.com/awesome-social-justice-books-kids

We Read Too is an app created by Kaya Thomas for finding kids' books by authors of color about people of color: weradtoo.com

Parenting for racial justice

For Early Readers (preschool and early elementary)

***My Grandma/Mi Abuelita*, by Ginger Foglesong Guy, Greenwillow Books, 2007 (pre-K+)**

Follow an imaginative boy and his family as they take a faraway trip above the clouds and across the sea to visit the boy's beloved grandma. Simple words in both English and Spanish provide valuable bilingual vocabulary lessons on every page.

***Ten, Nine, Eight*, by Molly Bang, Greenwillow Books, boardbook edition, 1996 (age 1+) A** counting and going-to-bed book for toddlers that features a Black dad and his daughter at bedtime, dismantling the stereotype that Black fathers are absent and unsupportive.

***All the Colors We Are: The Story of How We Get Our Skin Color/Todos los colores de nuestra piel: La historia de por qué tenemos diferentes colores de piel*, by Katie Kissinger, Redleaf Press, 2002 (pre-K+)** This bilingual (English/Spanish) book offers children a simple, scientifically accurate explanation about how our skin color is determined by our ancestors, the sun, and melanin. It is filled with photos that capture the beautiful variety of skin tones, and it supports freedom from myths and stereotypes associated with skin color, helping children build positive identities as they accept, understand, and value our rich and diverse world.

***Shades of People*, by Sheila M. Kelly, Holiday House, 2010 (pre-K+)** People come in lots of shades, even within the same family. This exploration of one of our most noticeable physical traits uses vibrant photos of children and words to inspire young people to both take notice and to look beyond the obvious.

***Hip Hop Speaks to Children: A Celebration of Poetry with a Beat*, edited by Nikki Giovanni, Sourcebooks, 2008 (pre-K+)** Poetry can have both a rhyme and a rhythm. Sometimes it's obvious; sometimes it's hidden. But either way, make no mistake: poetry is as vibrant and exciting as it gets. Readers will HEAR poetry's rhymes and rhythms in this collection of more than 50 poems and songs, from Queen Latifah to Gwendolyn Brooks, Langston Hughes to A Tribe Called Quest!

***Love*, by Matt De La Pena, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2018 (pre-K+)** This is one of those kids' books that brings on the tears—it is so wonderful. Love is the foundation for all social justice, and this book puts the elusive concept of love into words. One page includes: “And it's love in the made-up stories your uncles tell in the backyard between wild horseshoe throws.” The

illustrations show all kinds of folks and all kinds of situations. It is amazing. (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***Feast for 10*, by Cathryn Falwell, HMH Books for Young Readers, 2003 (age 1+)** A counting book that features an African American family shopping for food, preparing dinner, and sitting down to eat, this is a lively read-aloud text paired with bright collage illustrations.

***We March*, by Shane W. Evans, Roaring Book Press, 2012 (pre-K+)** On August 28, 1963, more than 250,000 people gathered in our nation's capital to participate in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, which included Martin Luther King Jr.'s historic "I Have a Dream" speech. Through simple yet compelling illustrations, this book conveys the thrill of the day, brought to life for even the youngest readers.

***I'm Your Peanut Butter Big Brother*, by Serena Alko, Alfred A. Knopf, 2009 (pre-K+)** Alko's lyrical and jazz-like text and vibrant illustrations capture the excitement of a new baby for an older sibling, while celebrating the genuine love of family. *Baby brother or sister, will you look like me? I blend from semisweet dark / Daddy chocolate bar and strawberry cream Mama's milk. / My hair is soft crunchy billows of cotton candy. / I'm your peanut butter big-brother-to-be.*

***My People*, by Langston Hughes, Atheneum Books, 2009 (age 1+)** Langston Hughes's spare yet eloquent tribute to his people has been cherished for generations. Now, acclaimed photographer Charles R. Smith Jr. interprets this beloved poem in vivid sepia photographs that capture the glory, the beauty, and the soul of being a Black American today.

***Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message*, by Chief Jake Swamp, Lee & Low Books, 1997 (age 1+)** This book offers a special children's version of the Thanksgiving Address, a message of gratitude that originated with the Native people of upstate New York and Canada and that is still spoken at ceremonial gatherings held by the Iroquois, or Six Nations.

***Cassie's Word Quilt*, by Faith Ringgold, Alfred A. Knopf, 2002 (pre-K+)** Cassie takes us on a tour of her home, neighborhood, and school, introducing dozens of words along the way. Young readers will love the simple storyline and beautifully designed spreads, each with its own quilt motif.

***The Skin I'm In: A First Look at Racism*, by Pat Thomas, B.E.S., 2003 (pre-K+)** This book encourages kids to accept and be comfortable with differences in skin color and other racial characteristics among their friends and in themselves.

***Chocolate Me!* by Taye Diggs, Square Fish, 2015 (K–3)** The boy in this book is teased for looking different from the other kids—his skin is darker, his hair curlier. He tells his mother he wishes he could be more like everyone else, and she helps him see how beautiful he truly is.

***A is for Activist*, by Innosanta Nagara, Kupu Kupu Press, 2012 (pre-K+)** This is an ABC board book for families that want their kids to grow up in a space where activism in all of its various forms is embraced.

***Bein’ with You This Way*, by W. Nikola-Lisa, Turtleback Books, 1997 (pre-K+)** An African American girl visits the park and rounds up a group of her friends for an afternoon of fun and playground games. The children discover that despite their physical differences, they are all really the same.

***The Other Side*, by Jacqueline Woodson, G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2001 (pre-K+)** Clover’s mom says it isn’t safe to cross the fence that segregates their African American side of town from the white side where Anna lives. But Clover and Anna strike up a friendship and get around the grownups’ rules by sitting on top of the fence together. From Angela Berkfield: I love this book because it illustrates how simple it can be to bridge the divide—and how good kids are at doing it.

***The Chicken Chasing Queen of Lamar County*, by Janice N. Harrington, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007 (pre-K+)** Meet one smart chicken chaser: she can catch any chicken on her grandmother’s farm except one—the elusive Miss Hen. From Angela Berkfield: This book is fun to read with my kids, because we used to live on a farm and they spent a lot of time chasing chickens and figuring out ways to catch them. Finding commonality is fun and important.

***Not My Idea: A Book About Whiteness*, by Anastasia Higginbotham, Dottir Press, 2018 (pre-K+)** This book was motivated by an interview with Toni Morrison in which she said, “White people have a very, very serious problem, and they should start thinking about what they can do about it.” Also: “Take me out of it.” Are we talking with young white children about racism, white supremacy, and white privilege? This book is a helpful way to get the conversation started. (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***Let’s Talk About Race*, by Julius Lester, HarperCollins, 2008 (K–3)** Julius Lester says, “I write because our lives are stories. If enough of those stories are told, then perhaps we will begin to see that our lives are the same story. The differences are merely in the details.” Now Mr. Lester shares his own story as he explores what makes each of us special.

***Last Stop on Market Street*, by Matt de la Pena, G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2015 (pre-K+)** Every Sunday after church, CJ and his grandma ride the bus across town. But one day, CJ wonders why they don't own a car like his friend Colby. Why doesn't he have an iPod like the boys on the bus? How come they always have to get off in the dirty part of town? Each question is met with an encouraging answer from grandma, who helps him see the beauty—and fun—in their routine and the world around them.

For Middle Readers (elementary)

***Rosa*, by Nikki Giovanni, Square Fish, 2007 (pre-K–3)** Excerpt: *She had not sought this moment but she was ready for it. When the policeman bent down to ask “Auntie, are you going to move?” all the strength of all the people through all those many years joined in her. She said, “No.”* This is an excellent picture-book account of Rosa Parks' historic choice.

***Fiona's Lace*, by Patricia Polacco, Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman Books, 2014 (pre-K–3)** This is an Irish story about poverty, labor, migration, tragedy, perseverance, and resilience. I read it with my kids, then we looked at our family tree and saw that their great-great-great-grandparents came from Ireland. Knowing our history is crucial for understanding the way forward. Our brains and bodies have been colonized, and it takes a lot to look at the painful history of the USA—land theft, genocide, and slavery. It also takes a lot of work to keep our family's stories alive; they can so easily become assimilated into the “white” story. (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***The Great Migration: An American Story*, by Jacob Lawrence, HarperCollins, 1993 (grade 1+)** This is a simple and powerful book that can help illustrate connections between race and class and causes of migration. (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***Rad American Women A to Z*, by Kate Schatz, City Lights Publishers, 2015 (grade 2+)** American history was made by countless rad—and often radical—women. Twenty-six diverse individuals are profiled in this book, including artists and abolitionists, scientists and suffragettes, rockstars and rabble-rousers, and agents of change of all kinds. Young readers will be captured by the bright visuals and easily modified texts, while the subject matter will stimulate and inspire high-schoolers and beyond.

***Show Way*, by Jacqueline Woodson, G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2005 (pre-K–3)** In this story, which spans generations, Soonie's great-grandma was just seven years old when she was sold to a big plantation without her ma and pa, and with only some fabric and needles to call her own. She pieced together bright patches with names like North Star and

Crossroads, patches with secret meanings made into quilts called Show Ways—maps for slaves to follow to freedom.

***Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom*, by Carole Boston Weatherford, (grade 1+)** This book tells the story of Harriet Tubman’s courage and faith that freed many souls from the bondage of slavery. While telling of Harriet’s courageous acts, the book focuses more on her faith in God and internal battle with trusting His timing.

***Sky Sisters*, by Jan Bourdeau Waboose, Kids Can Press, 2000 (pre-K+)** This book covers themes of sisterhood, connection with nature, and Ojibway culture and language, and can spark some great conversation with kids. Also, you get to “see” the northern lights!

***Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut*, by Derrick Barnes, Bolden, 2017 (K+)** This book is so much fun! I love it! The author says it “focuses on the humanity, the beautiful, raw, smart, perceptive, assured humanity of black boys/sons/brothers/nephews/grandsons, and how they see themselves when they highly approve of their reflections in the mirror.” (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***Sitting Bull: Lakota Warrior and Defender of His People*, by S.D. Nelson, Abrams, 2015 (grade 2+)** This book is an accessible history of the very difficult story of white expansion into native territory in the dakotas. It has beautiful illustrations and is told mostly in Sitting Bull’s words. Powerful and important. (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***The World Is Not a Rectangle: A Portrait of Architect Zaha Hadid*, by Jeanette Winter, Beach Lane Books, 2017 (pre-K+)** I have to admit I did not know who Zaha Hadid was, and it was so fun to learn about this incredible Iranian woman through a children’s book. This is a good example of a way to do some research with your kids. (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***The Word Collector*, by Peter H. Reynolds, Orchard Books, 2018 (pre-K+)** We need diverse books, and this is a particularly good one. A young Black boy is collecting words. He does such an amazing job of it that it makes me want to collect words too! (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***I am Harriet Tubman*, by Brad Meltzer, Dial Books, 2018 (K+)** Yes! Harriet Tubman was amazing and this book is so super cool and inspiring and just—wow! This book shows the strength, brilliance, and generosity of the spirit. This book shows how awful slavery was, but mostly how amazing was the resilience in the face of it. It shows white people in solidarity with black folks too, which is important for our kids to see, and for me to see too! (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***Malcolm X: A Fire Burning Brightly*, by Walter Dean Myers, Amistad, 2003 (grades 2–5)**

This is a compelling account of the life of one of the most controversial and misunderstood men of the 20th century. From the troubled childhood of Malcolm Little to the assassination of Malcolm X, Myers shows the influences on and the personal strengths of this fiery leader.

***This Book Is Anti-Racist: 20 Lessons on How to Wake Up, Take Action, and Do the Work*, by Tiffany Jewell, Frances Lincoln Children's Books, 2020 (grade 2+)** This book was written to help children and young adults feel empowered to stand up to the adults who continue to close doors in their faces. This book gives them the language and ability to understand racism and the drive to undo it. Though sometimes tagged for grades 6–10, younger grades can be guided through it thoughtfully, a few pages at a time.

Parenting for economic justice

For Early Readers (preschool and early elementary)

***A House Is Not a Home*, by Anne Liersch, North-South Books, 1999 (pre-K+)** Winter is coming and the animals are busy building a house to keep themselves warm and cozy. The hares gather stones from the field, Hedgehog helps Wild Boar get wood from the forest, Deer lays the stone wall, and Fox mixes the concrete in this book that shows how cooperation and compromise are important tools when it comes to building friendships.

***Love As Strong As Ginger*, by Lenore Look, Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1999 (pre-K+)** Katie loves to show her grandma how to dress a Barbie, and GninGnin loves to show Katie how to make rice dumplings. More than anything, Katie longs to go with GninGnin to work, to crack a mountain of crabs alongside her at the crab cannery. One day Katie gets her wish, but nothing is the way she'd imagined—and she develops an understanding of the sacrifices her grandma has made to give her granddaughter a brighter future.

***Two White Rabbits*, by Jairo Buitrago, Groundwood Books, 2015 (pre-K+)** In this moving story, a young child describes her and her father's travel north toward the US border. They travel mostly on the roof of a train known as The Beast, but the little girl doesn't know where they're going. As many thousands of people, especially children, in Mexico and Central America continue to make the arduous journey to the US border in search of a better life, this is an important book.

***The Streets Are Free*, by Kurusa, Annick Press, 1981, fifth printing 2014 (pre-K+)** Based on a true story about the barrios on the outskirts of Caracas, Venezuela, this is such a powerful story

of kids taking things into their own hands and getting what they need. (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Factory Maker's Strike of 1909*, by Michelle Markel, Balzer + Bray, 2013 (K+)** This picture book is about Ukrainian immigrant Clara Lemlich and the plight of immigrants in America in the early 1900s. It tackles topics of activism and the US garment industry and the timeless fight for equality and justice.

***Muskrat Will Be Swimming*, by Cheryl Savageau, Tilbury House, 1996 (pre-K+)** This is a gorgeous book with themes of poverty, Native American worldviews, respecting the natural world, bullying, and finding our own power. It is such a good book. (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***Spuds*, by Karen Hesse, Scholastic Press, 2008 (pre-K+)** This is a heartwarming story set in the backwoods of Maine that glows with integrity, love, and true family values. Ma's been working so hard, she doesn't have much left over. So her three kids decide to do some work on their own: in the dark of night, they steal into their rich neighbor's potato fields in hopes of collecting the strays that have been left to rot.

***Town Is by the Sea*, by Joanne Schwartz and Sydney Smith, Groundwood Books, 2017 (pre-K+)** This book tells the story of a young boy who is the son of generations of coal miners and will likely be a coal miner himself when he grows up. It is beautiful and holds hardship and beauty simultaneously. (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***Those Shoes*, by Maribeth Boelts, Candlewick, 2009 (pre-K+)** *But all the kids are wearing them!* Any child who has ever craved something out of reach will relate to this warm, refreshingly realistic story. All Jeremy wants is a pair of "those shoes," the ones everyone at school seems to be wearing. But Jeremy's grandma tells him they don't have room for "want," just "need," and what Jeremy needs are new boots for winter. Jeremy eventually realizes that the things he has—warm boots, a loving grandma, the chance to help a friend—are worth more.

***The Teddy Bear*, by David McPhail, Square Fish, 2005 (pre-K–K)** A young boy loses a beloved teddy bear, which is then found by a homeless man. As time passes, the boy forgets about his bear, and the bear is as treasured by the man as he was by the boy. Circumstances bring them together and the little boy is able to react with compassion.

***Yertle The Turtle*, by Dr. Seuss, Random House Books for Young Readers, 1958 (pre-K+)** Dr. Seuss provides this amazing social commentary in the form of rhyming turtles. My kids love this one. In real life it takes more than a sneeze to topple tyrants and tyrannical systems, nevertheless

this story provides an illustration of the climb to the top and what it's like to be on the bottom of the pile. (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***The Dumpster Diver*, by Janet S. Wong, Candlewick, 2007 (pre-K+)** Anyone can dive for treasure in the ocean, but Steve dives for it in his neighborhood dumpster! As he delves into the trash each weekend, he encourages his young neighbors (a.k.a. the Diving Team) to see the potential in what others throw away. With a bit of imagination, trash can be transformed into treasure—and as the Diving Team soon discovers, it might even help a friend in need.

***Night Job*, by Karen Hesse, Candlewick, 2018 (pre-K–3)** When the sun sets, Dad's job as a school custodian is just beginning. What is it like to work on a Friday night while the rest of the city is asleep? Newbery Medalist Karen Hesse's quietly powerful story of a boy and his father is tenderly brought to life by G. Brian Karas in this luminous tribute to an enduring, everyday sort of love.

For Middle Readers (elementary)

***Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez*, by Kathleen Krull, HMH Books for Young Readers, 2003 (grade 1+)** When Cesar Chavez led a 340-mile peaceful protest march through California, he ignited a cause and improved the lives of thousands of migrant farmworkers. But Cesar wasn't always a leader; as a boy, he was shy and teased at school. His family slaved in the fields for barely enough money to survive. Cesar knew things had to change, and he thought maybe he could help change them.

***La Frontera: El Viaje con Papa/My Journey with Papa*, by Deborah Mills, Alfredo Alva, and Claudia Navarro, Barefoot Books, 2018 (K+)** This is a true story told in English and Spanish of when Alfredo and his father immigrated from Mexico to the US. (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***Brick by Brick*, by Charles R. Smith Jr., Amistad, 2013 (grade 1+)** Did you know that the original White House, to be the home of George Washington, was built with slave labor? This book tells the story in verse. It makes the connection between slave labor and profit very clear (most books don't do that). It provides a clear example of the intersection between race and class in a way young kids can easily understand. (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***Each Kindness*, by Jacqueline Woodson, Nancy Paulsen Books, 2012 (grade 1+)** Chloe and her friends won't play with the new girl, Maya, who wears hand-me-downs and plays with old-fashioned toys. Every time Maya tries to join Chloe and her gang, they reject her. Eventually, Maya stops coming to school altogether. When Chloe's teacher talks about how even small acts

of kindness can change the world, Chloe is stung by the lost opportunity for friendship and thinks how much better it could have been if she'd shown Maya a little kindness.

***¡Sí, Se Puede!/Yes, We Can!: Janitor Strike in L.A.*, by Diana Cohn, Cinco Puntos Press, 2005 (grade 2+)** This bilingual story is set against the backdrop of the successful janitors' strike in Los Angeles in 2000. Every night, Carlitos sleeps while his mother cleans as a janitor in one of the skyscrapers in downtown LA. Eventually his mother explains that she can't make enough money to support him and his abuelita the way they need and so she and the other janitors have decided to go on strike. Carlitos and the kids in his class join the marchers with a special sign!

***The Hundred Dresses*, by Eleanor Estes, HMH Books for Young Readers, 2004 (grade 4+)** At the heart of this story is Wanda Petronski, a Polish girl who is ridiculed by her classmates for wearing the same faded blue dress every day. Wanda claims she has 100 dresses at home, but everyone knows she doesn't and bullies her mercilessly. The class feels terrible when Wanda is pulled out of the school, but by that time it's too late for apologies. Maddie, one of Wanda's classmates, decides she is "never going to stand by and say nothing again."

***Crenshaw*, by Katherine Applegate, Feiwel & Friends, 2015 (grade 4+)** Jackson's family has fallen on hard times. There's no more money for rent, and not much for food either. His parents, his little sister, and their dog may have to live in their minivan. Again. Author Applegate shows in unexpected ways that friends matter, whether real or imaginary.

***I Can Hear the Sun*, by Patricia Polacco, Puffin Books, 1999 (grade 1+)** A boy visits a park every day, where he helps the park's caretaker look after the geese. He is from a home for homeless children, and when he finds out that he is to be moved to a permanent placement, away from the geese he loves, he taps into some incredible magic and flies away with the geese. A tear-jerking combination of magic and realism. I have a hard time reading any of Patricia Polacco's books without crying, and this one is no different. (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***Just Juice*, by Karen Hesse, Scholastic Paperbacks, 1999 (grade 2+)** Letters and numbers still don't make sense to Juice Faulstich. She'd rather skip school and spend the day at home in the North Carolina hills. But when the bank threatens to repossess her family's home, Juice faces her first life-sized problem.

YA

Note: Mature 9- and 10-year-olds could read these books or adults could read aloud with them.

***The Benefits of Being An Octopus*, by Ann Braden, Skypony, 2018 (grades 3–7)** Written by a friend of mine, this book is being held up nationally as one of the best books for having complex

conversations with middle-schoolers about rural poverty, gun violence, domestic violence, and the opiate crisis. It is also being used by fourth- and fifth-grade teachers because these are issues that students are dealing with. It is a book about finding voice and power and allies. It is a book about being an ally. It is really, really good. (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***The Mighty Miss Malone*, by Christopher Paul Curtis, Yearling, 2013 (grade 6+)** “We are a family on a journey to a place called Wonderful” is the motto of Deza’s family. Deza is the smartest girl in her class in Gary, Indiana, singled out by teachers for a special path in life. But the Great Depression hit Gary hard, and there are no jobs for Black men. When Deza’s beloved father leaves to find work, the family goes in search of him and ends up in a Hooverville outside Flint, Michigan. The twists and turns of their story reveal the devastation of the Depression.

***The Whispering Road*, by Livi Michael, Putnam Juvenile, 2005 (grade 6+)** I really love this book. It’s hard to find books that approach poverty from a resiliency and systems perspective (rather than deficit or blame), and this book does an excellent job. While Michael is writing about the realities of poverty in the mid-19th century, it is not hard to draw comparisons to today. Joe and the wonderful friends he meets along the way do an excellent job of telling the story of poverty as something that presses upon the poor instead of initiating with the poor. What a bunch of characters! It was hard to put the book down. (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***Song of the Trees*, by Mildred Taylor, Puffin Books, 2003 (grade 4+)** With the depression bearing down on her family and food in short supply, Cassie Logan isn’t sure where her next meal will come from. But there’s one thing she knows will always be there—the whispering trees outside her window, a steady source of comfort to her. When Mr. Andersen tries to force Big Ma to sell their valuable trees, Cassie can’t sit by and let it happen. She knows her family needs the money, but something tells her that they need the trees just as much.

Parenting for disability justice

For Early Readers (preschool and early elementary)

***My Friend Isabelle*, by Eliza Woloson, Woodbine House, 2003 (pre-K+)** This is a heartwarming story of two friends, Charlie and Isabelle. Charlie tells about the things they like to do together and also how he and Isabelle, who has Down syndrome, are different. The book encourages readers to think about what makes friendships special and how our differences can make the world more interesting.

***Hands and Hearts*, by Donna Jo Napoli, Harry N. Abrams, 2014 (pre-K–2)** A mother and daughter spend a sunny day at the beach together, where they swim, dance, build sandcastles, and, most importantly, communicate. But their communication is not spoken; rather, it is created by loving hands that use American Sign Language. Readers will learn how to sign 15 words using American Sign Language with the help of sidebars that are both instructive and playful.

***I Can, Can You?* by Marjorie W. Pitzer, Woodbine House, 2004 (age 1+)** This is a delightful board book full of babies and toddlers with Down syndrome going about the business of their lives. Presented in crisp, uncluttered full-colour photographs, these children swim, take a bottle, share, eat spaghetti, laugh, play in the park, and more...looking adorable all the while!

***The Animal Boogie*, by Debbie Harper, Barefoot Books, 2000 (ages 0–5)** This book features children from many cultures and differently abled children. The rhymes and music encourage children to experiment with movement. Everyone will want to get up and dance to this toe-tapping favourite!

***Susan Laughs*, by Jeanne Willis, Henry Holt & Co, 2000 (pre-K+)** Told in rhyme, this story follows Susan through a series of familiar activities. She swims with her father, works hard in school, plays with her friends... It's a portrait of a busy, happy little girl, and it's not until the end of the story that we learn Susan uses a wheelchair. Told with insight, and without sentimentality, here is an inspiring look at a spunky girl whose physical disability is never seen as a handicap.

***Max the Champion*, by Sean Stockdale and Alex Strick, Frances Lincoln, 2013 (pre-K+)** Max loves sports. As he gets up, eats breakfast, and heads off to school, he dreams of competing in world-class sporting events. This is an inclusive picture book that shows disabled children and children without disabilities mixing and enjoying different sports in a natural way.

***My Silent World*, by Nette Hilton, Hachette Australia, 2009 (pre-K+)** This is a lyrical description of how a deaf child treasures her silent world and how it's changed by a cochlear implant, which she sees at first as an intruder.

***Zoom!* by Robert Munsch, Cartwheel, 2004 (pre-K+)** Young daredevil Lauretta puts her brand new wheelchair to the ultimate test—and saves her brother!

***Cinderella's Magical Wheelchair: An Empowering Fairy Tale (Growing with Love)*, by Jewel Kats, Loving Healing Press, 2011 (pre-K+)** In a kingdom far, far away lives Cinderella. As expected, she works endlessly for her cranky sisters and stepmother. She would love to attend the royal costume ball and meet the prince, but her family is dead set against it. In fact, they've gone so far as to trash her wheelchair! But an unexpected magical endowment to her wheelchair

launches an enchanted evening and a dance with the prince. This fairytale shows that people with disabilities can overcome abuse.

For Middle Readers (elementary)

***King for a Day*, by Rukhsana Khan, Lee & Low Books, 2014 (K+)** In two fierce battles, Malik takes down the kites flown by the bully next door. Then Malik moves on, guiding Falcon into leaps, swirls, and dives, slashing strings and plucking kites from the sky. By the end of the day, Malik has a big pile of captured kites—but then the bully reappears, trying to take a kite from a nearby girl. With a sudden act of generosity, Malik finds the perfect way to help the girl.

***Not So Different: What You Really Want to Ask About Having a Disability*, by Shane Burcaw, Roaring Brook Press, 2017 (grades 1–4)** Shane Burcaw was born with a rare disease called spinal muscular atrophy, which hinders the growth of his muscles. This hasn't stopped him from doing the things he enjoys (like eating pizza and playing sports and video games) with the people he loves, but it does mean that he routinely relies on his friends and family for help.

***Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key*, by Jack Gantos. Harper Trophy, 2001 (grades 5–6)** The first in a five-book series about a boy with ADHD and his family, this book finds Joey dealing with some challenging family dynamics, such as alcoholism and separated parents.

***Rules*, by Cynthia Lord, Scholastic Press, 2006 (grades 4–7)** Twelve-year-old Catherine just wants a normal life, which is near impossible when you have a brother with autism and a family that revolves around his disability. But the summer Catherine meets Jason, a paraplegic boy, and Kristi, the next-door friend she's always wished for, it's her own shocking behavior that turns everything upside down and forces her to ask *what is normal?*

***Alchemy and Meggy Swann*, by Karen Cushman, Clarion Books, 2010 (grades 3–7)** Meggy Swann has just come to London with her only friend, a goose named Louise. Meggy's mother was glad to be rid of her, and her father, who sent for her, doesn't want her after all. Meggy is appalled by London—dirty and noisy, full of rogues and thieves, and difficult to get around in (not that getting around is ever easy for someone who walks with the help of two sticks).

***Wonder*, by RJ Palacio, Alfred A. Knopf, 2012 (grades 3–7)** August Pullman was born with a facial difference that up until now has prevented him from going to a mainstream school. Starting fifth grade at Beecher Prep, he wants nothing more than to be treated as an ordinary kid. The story begins from Auggie's point of view but soon switches to include the POVs of his classmates, his sister and her boyfriend, and others. These perspectives converge in a portrait of

one community's struggle with empathy, compassion, and acceptance. (There is extensive critique of this book by disability communities, which is crucial to look up and reflect on while reading. -Angela Berkfield)

***Al Capone Does My Shirts, Al Capone Shines My Shoes, and Al Capone Does My Homework,* by Gennifer Choldenko, Puffin Books, 2006 (grades 5–6)** This is a series of books focused on Moose's family in the 1930s, who lives on Alcatraz where Moose's father works as a guard. Little sister Natalie is autistic. The books do a great job of portraying full characters with lots of depth.

***Paperboy,* by Vince Vawter, Delacorte Press, 2013 (grades 5–6)** This story takes place in Memphis in 1959. "Little Man" Victor, an 11-year-old boy who stutters, takes over his best friend Rat's paper route while Rat is visiting his grandparents. Little Man has various encounters with Rat's customers, with the paper route posing challenges and introducing Little Man to life's daily obstacles.

***El Deafo,* by CeCe Bell, Harry N. Abrams, 2014 (grades 3–7)** Starting at a new school is scary, even more so with a giant hearing aid strapped to your chest! At Cece's old school, everyone in her class was deaf. Here she is different. This funny and perceptive graphic-novel memoir about growing up hearing-impaired is also an unforgettable book about growing up, and all the super and super-embarrassing moments along the way.

***Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus,* by Dusti Bowling, Sterling Children's Books, 2017 (grades 3–7)** Aven Green loves to tell people she lost her arms in an alligator-wrestling match or a wildfire in Tanzania, but the truth is she was born without them. And when she moves with her parents across the country, she knows she'll have to answer questions about her body over and over again. Her new life takes an unexpected turn when she bonds with Connor, a classmate who also feels isolated because of his own disability.

***The Autism Acceptance Book: Being a Friend to Someone with Autism,* by Ellen Sabin, Watering Can Press, 2006 (grades 1–4)** This is an activity book, a conversation starter, and an educational tool that helps kids learn to embrace people's differences and treat others with respect, compassion, and kindness. It teaches children about autism, helps them imagine how things might feel for those with autism, and encourages them to think about how they can show understanding and acceptance of people with autism.

Parenting for gender justice

The following book descriptions are from www.genderspectrum.org unless otherwise noted.

For Early Readers (preschool and early elementary)

***All of Me! A Book of Thanks*, by Molly Bang, The Blue Sky Press, 2009 (age 1+)** In colors as bright as sunshine, Caldecott Honor Illustrator Molly Bang presents a young child who is thankful for the world around them.

***Neither*, by Airlie Anderson, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2018 (pre-K–3)** In this colorful and touching story that celebrates what makes each of us unique, a little creature that's not quite a bird and not quite a bunny—it's “neither”—searches for a place to fit in.

***C is for Consent*, by Eleanor Morrison, Phonics by Finn, 2018 (age 1+)** Finn's parents encourage him to make his own choices about receiving and offering physical affection. This book teaches babies, toddlers, parents, and grandparents that it is okay for kids to say no to hugs and kisses and that what happens to a person's body is up to them—helping children grow up confident in their bodies, comfortable with expressing physical boundaries, and respectful of the boundaries of others.

***How Mamas Love Their Babies*, by Juniper Fitzgerald, The Feminist Press at CUNY, 2018 (pre-K–3)** Illustrating different ways that mothers provide for their children—including by dancing at a strip club—this children's book is the first to depict a sex-worker parent. By introducing and normalizing the idea of bodily labor, it provides an expanded notion of working mothers overall and challenges the idea that only some types of work result in good or appropriate parenting.

***My Body! What I Say Goes!* by Jayneen Sanders, Educate to Empower Publishing, 2016 (pre-K–4)** The crucial skills taught in this book will help children protect their bodies from inappropriate touch, empowering them to say in a strong and clear voice, “This is my body! What I say goes!” In-depth discussion questions will further enhance learning and help initiate important family conversations about body autonomy.

***Families, Families, Families!* by Susanne Lang and Max Lang, Random House, 2015 (age 2+)** A host of animals portray all kinds of families: “If you love each other, then you are a family.”

***Truly Willa*, by Willa Naylor, Createspace, 2016 (pre-K+)** This book, written by eight-year-old Willa, who's a transgender girl, tells Willa's story of growing up transgender and how she becomes an advocate for other transgender children.

***All I Want to Be Is Me*, by Phyliss Rothblatt, CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2011 (pre-K+)** This book shows the diverse ways young children experience and express their gender, giving voice to those who don't fit into narrow gender stereotypes and just want to be free to be themselves. It offers a wonderful way for children to learn about gender diversity, embracing different ways of being, and being a true friend.

***A Fire Engine for Ruthie*, by Lesléa Newman, Clarion Books, 2004 (pre-K+)** Nana has dolls and dress-up clothes for Ruthie to play with, but Ruthie would rather have a fire engine.

***Goblinheart*, by Brett Axel, East Waterfront Press, 2012 (pre-K+)** Using “fairy” and “goblin” in lieu of female and male, this is a timely allegorical fairytale. A youngster named Julep, who lives in a forest tribe, insists on growing up to be a goblin rather than a fairy. The tribe learns to accept that Julep is a goblin at heart, eventually coming around to support the physical transition that must be made for Julep to live as a goblin.

***I am Jazz*, by Jessica Herthel, Dial, 2014 (pre-K+)** This is the story of a transgender child based on the real-life experience of Jazz Jennings, who has become a spokesperson for transgender kids everywhere.

***Look Like a Girl*, by Sheila Hamanaka, Harper Collins, 1999 (pre-K+)** In this book, exuberant girls seem to burst both the limits of the page and the confines of traditional expectations. Each child, while engaging in typical childhood activities, is imagining a life as free and wild as that of a tiger, dolphin, mustang, condor, or wolf.

***Roland Humphrey Is Wearing a WHAT?* by Eileen Kiernan-Johnson, Huntley Rahara Press, 2012 (pre-K+)** This is the story of a little boy's quest to be his authentic self, dressed in pink and festooned with sparkles, in a world that frowns upon boys who like “girly” things. Written in verse, it playfully raises important questions about gender norms, acceptance, and friendship.

***Tutus Aren't My Style*, by Skeers, Linda. Dial. 2010 (pre-K+)** Emma loves lizards and pirates and cowboy boots, so when a package arrives from Uncle Leo, she doesn't know what to do with the ballerina costume inside. “I don't know how to be a ballerina,” she says. But when she decides to make her own rules about how to be a ballerina, Emma's style prevails in her triumphant dance debut.

***Virgie Goes to School with Us Boys*, by Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard, Aladdin, 2005 (pre-K+)** The youngest and the only girl in a family of five boys, Virgie works hard to convince everyone she is old enough, strong enough, and smart enough to attend the school set up by the Quakers for recently freed blacks in Jonesborough, Tennessee. She eventually convinces her

family that she can make the seven-mile walk to board at school each week and handle the job of “learning to be free.”

***When Kayla Was Kyle*, by Amy Frabikant, Avid Readers Publishing, 2013 (pre-K+)** Kyle doesn't understand why the other kids at school call him names. He looks like other boys but doesn't feel like them. Can Kyle find the words to share his feelings about his gender—and can his parents help him to transition into the girl he was born to be?

***Are You a Boy or Are You a Girl?* by Sarah Savage, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2017 (grades 1–2)** This book leaves it up to the reader to decide the gender of the main character. It includes all forms of gender expression, and it allows parents and children to begin to break down the barriers of gender and to talk about what different stereotypes and roles mean to them.

***Sparkle Boy*, by Leslea Newman, Lee & Low Books, 2017 (K–3)** When older boys at the library tease Casey for wearing “girl things,” Jessie realizes that Casey has the right to be himself and wear whatever he wants. Why can't both she and Casey love all things shimmery, glittery, and sparkly? Here is a sweet, heartwarming story about acceptance, respect, and the freedom to be yourself in a world where any gender expression should be celebrated.

***The Paper Bag Princess*, by Robert Munsch, Annick Press, 2018 (pre-K–2)** The Princess Elizabeth is slated to marry Prince Ronald when a dragon attacks the castle and kidnaps Ronald. In resourceful and humorous fashion, Elizabeth finds the dragon, outsmarts him, and rescues Ronald—who is less than pleased at her un-princess-like appearance.

***What Makes a Baby*, by Cory Silverberg, Triangle Square, 2013 (K–3)** This book teaches kids about conception, gestation, and birth in a way that works regardless of whether or not the kid in question was adopted, conceived using reproductive technologies at home or in a clinic, through surrogacy, or any of the other wondrous ways we make babies these days. It doesn't gender people or body parts.

***When Aidan Became a Brother*, by Kyle Lukoff, Lee & Low Books, 2019 (pre-K–3)** After he realized he was a trans boy, Aidan and his parents fixed the parts of life that didn't fit anymore, and he settled happily into his new life. Then Mom and Dad announce they're going to have another baby, and Aidan wants to do everything he can to make things right for his new sibling from the beginning—from choosing the perfect name to creating a beautiful room to picking out the cutest onesie. But what does “making things right” actually mean?

For Middle Readers (elementary)

***A Quick Guide to Queer and Trans Identities*, by J.R. Zuckerberg and Mady G, Limerence Press, 2019** Covering the essential topics of sexuality, gender identity, coming out, and navigating relationships, this guide explains the spectrum of human experience through informative comics, interviews, worksheets, and imaginative examples. It's a great starting point for anyone curious about queer and trans life, and helpful for those already on their own journeys!

***Sex Is a Funny Word: A Book about Bodies, Feelings, and YOU*, by Cory Silverberg and Fiona Smyth, Triangle Square, 2015 (grades 2–5)** A comic book for kids that includes children and families of all makeups, orientations, and gender identities, *Sex Is a Funny Word* is an essential resource about bodies, gender, and sexuality that is much more than the “facts of life” or “birds and the bees.”

***The Gender Wheel*, by Maya Christina Gonzales, Reflection Press, 2018 (grades 2–5)** This body-positive book depicts a wide range of bodies and goes into the origins of the current binary gender system. It addresses how we can learn from nature to see the truth that has always existed and envision a new story that includes room for all bodies and genders.

***The Misfits (series)*, by James Howe, Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2003 (grades 5–7)** “Kids who get called the worst names oftentimes find each other. That's how it was with us. Skeeze Tookis and Addie Carle and Joe Bunch and me. We call ourselves the Gang of Five, but there are only four of us. We do it to keep people on their toes. Make 'em wonder. Or maybe we do it because we figure that there's one more kid out there who's going to need a gang to be a part of. A misfit, like us.”

***Rickshaw Girl*, by Mitali Perkins, Charlesbridge Publishing, 2008 (grades 2–5)** Ten-year-old Naima longs to earn money to help her poor Bangladeshi family, but her talent in painting traditional patterns, or alpanas, is of no use. Disguised as a boy to drive her father's rickshaw, she wrecks the vehicle, threatening the family's sole livelihood. Her solution is to steal away, disguised as a boy, to a repair shop and offer her services painting decorations on the rickshaws. She's surprised to find the owner is a woman.

***Wandering Son, Volumes 1–6*, by Shimura Takako, Fantagraphics, 2011–13** Fifth grade: threshold to puberty. Shuichi Nitori and his new friend Yoshino Takatsuki have happy homes and loving families and are well liked by their classmates. But they share a secret that complicates a time in life that is awkward for anyone: Shuichi is a boy who wants to be a girl, and Yoshino is a girl who wants to be a boy. Takako portrays Shuichi and Yoshino's private journey with affection, sensitivity, gentle humor, and grace.

Parenting for collective liberation

Many books don't fit into just one category—and some books, though they may address a single issue, are excellent for use in talking about how other issues are connected.

Most books by Patricia Polacco (pre-K+) Polacco finds ways to describe human connection and resilience that are stunning and inspire me and my kids to be the kind of human who is creating the fabric of social justice by how they are with other people. She seamlessly weaves in class, race, gender, sexuality, ability, ageism, religion, language, immigration, and more in the most inspiring stories. These are just some of her many wonderful books I started reading to my kids when they were three or four years old: *Mrs. Katz and Tush*, *The Blessing Cup*, *Chicken Sunday*, *Thank you Mr. Faulkner*, *Thunder Cake*, *Pink and Say*, *Mr. Lincoln's Way*, *Mrs. Mack*, *In Our Mothers' House*. (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

For Early Readers (preschool and early elementary)

***My Friends, Mis Amigos*, by Taro Gomi, Chronicle Books, 2006 (age 1+)** Here's a book about the value of making friends with everyone!

***Counting on Community*, Innosanto Nagara, Triangle Square, 2015 (age 1+)** Counting up from one stuffed piñata to ten hefty hens—and always counting on each other—in this book children are encouraged to recognize the value of their community, the joys inherent in healthy and eco-friendly activities, and the agency they possess to make change.

***Feminist Baby*, by Loryn Brantz, Disney-Hyperion, 2017 (age 1+)** Feminist Baby likes pink and blue; sometimes she'll throw up on you! Feminist Baby chooses what to wear, and if you don't like it she doesn't care! Here's a refreshing, clever board book about a girl who's not afraid to do her own thing and wants to make as much noise as possible along the way!

***Baby Feminists*, by Libby Babbott-Klein, Viking Books, 2018 (age 1+)** Before Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Mae Jemison, Frida Kahlo, and others were change-making feminists, they were...babies! In this board book that's perfect for budding feminists, lift the flaps to discover what these iconic figures might have looked like as adorable babies and toddlers. It's an inspiring message that any baby can grow up to make the world a better place for all genders.

***Dreamers*, by Yuyi Morales, Neal Porter Books, 2018 (pre-K+)** In 1994 Yuyi Morales left her home in Xalapa, Mexico, and came to the US with her infant son. She left behind nearly

everything she owned, but she didn't come empty-handed. She brought her strength, her work, her passion, her hopes and dreams...and her stories.

***Malala Yousafzai: Warrior with Words*, by Karen Leggett Abouraya, StarWalk Kids Media, 2014 (K+)** There are many good books about Malala; her story is an important one to tell. She is a school-aged girl in Pakistan who has been a global advocate for girls' access to education. This book doesn't teach collective liberation, but it provides a great opportunity to talk about global issues and how education for girls in Pakistan is connected to education in the US and people here who don't have access to education. This kind of critical thinking is what is needed for collective liberation. (commentary by Angela Berkfield)

***Young Water Protectors: A Story About Standing Rock*, by Aslan Tudor and Kelly Tudor, self-published, 2018 (K+)** At age eight, Aslan Tudor arrived in North Dakota to help stop a pipeline. A few months later he returned—and saw the whole world watching. Read about his inspiring experiences in the Oceti Sakowin Camp at Standing Rock—what happened there and why.

For Middle Readers (elementary)

***A River Ran Wild*, by Lynne Cherry, Harcourt Books, 1992 (pre-K–4)** Cherry traces the ecological evolution of New England's Nashua River: how it was respected by generations of Native Americans, polluted and ultimately deadened in the wake of the industrial revolution, and restored in recent years through the efforts of concerned citizens.

***Sila and the Land*, by Shelby Angalik, Ariana Roundpoint, and Lindsay DuPré, Ed-Ucation Publishing, 2017 (grades 1–6)** This book doesn't claim to represent any specific cultures or teachings, but instead encourages children and youth to seek out knowledge from the territories they are living on. It also aims to inspire other young Indigenous writers and illustrators to believe in their gifts and the power of their stories, and it provides recommendations for readers to learn more and take action.

***RAD Women Worldwide*, by Kate Schatz, Ten Speed Press, 2016 (K+)** Featuring an array of figures, from Hatshepsut (the great female king who ruled Egypt peacefully for two decades) and Malala Yousafzai (the youngest person to win the Nobel Peace Prize) to Poly Styrene (legendary teenage punk and lead singer of X-Ray Spex) and Liv Arnesen and Ann Bancroft (polar explorers and the first women to cross Antarctica), this is a progressive and visually arresting book.

The Birchbark House (series), by Louise Erdrich, Hyperion Books, 2002 (grade 1+)

Nineteenth-century American pioneer life was introduced to thousands of young readers through Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House books. With *The Birchbark House*, this same period is seen through the eyes of the spirited, seven-year-old Ojibwa girl Omakayas. The sole survivor of a smallpox epidemic on Spirit Island, Omakayas, then a baby, was rescued by a fearless woman named Tallow and welcomed into an Ojibwa family on Lake Superior's Madeline Island, the Island of the Golden-Breasted Woodpecker.

***A Young People's History of the United States*, by Howard Zinn, Triangle Square, 2009**

(grade 4+) The viewpoints of workers, slaves, immigrants, women, Native Americans, and others are rarely included in books for young people. Beginning with a look at Christopher Columbus through the eyes of the Arawak Indians and ending with the current protests against continued American imperialism, Zinn presents a radical new way of understanding America's history. In so doing, he reminds readers that America's true greatness is shaped by our dissident voices, not our military generals.

***A Different Mirror for Young People: A History of Multicultural America*, by Ronald Takaki,**

Seven Stories Press, 2012 (grade 4+) A longtime professor of ethnic studies at the University of California at Berkeley, Ronald Takaki was recognized as one of the foremost scholars of American ethnic history and diversity. Rebecca Stefoff, who adapted Howard Zinn's bestselling *A People's History of the United States* for younger readers, turned the updated 2008 edition of Takaki's multicultural masterwork into *A Different Mirror for Young People*.