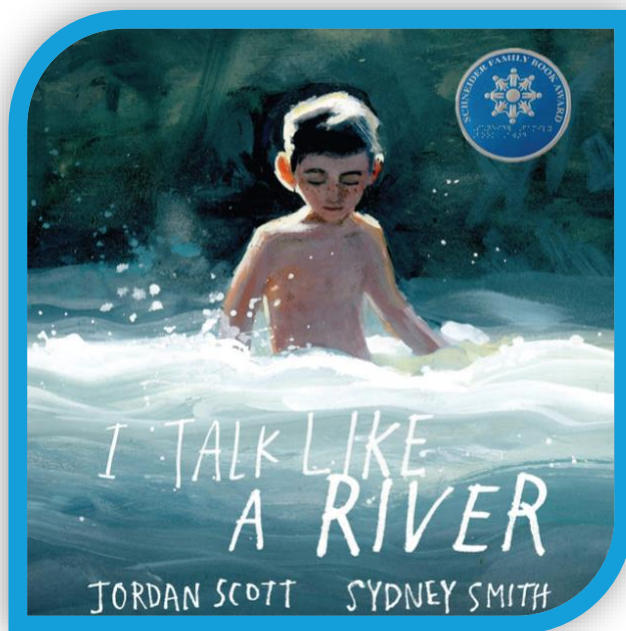




Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Department

About the Book of the Month Parent/Family Discussion Guide: This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A World of Difference® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For parents, guardians and family members, reading the books listed on this site with your children and integrating the concepts into your interactions with them is an excellent way to help children grapple with and learn about these important principles.



I Talk Like a River

Jordan Scott (Author), Sydney Smith (Illustrator)

ISBN: 978-0823445592

Publisher: Neal Porter Books

Year Published: 2020

Age Range: 6-9

Book Themes

Disabilities and Ableism, Stuttering, Teasing, Family, Acting as an Ally

About the Book

I wake up each morning with the sounds of words all around me. And I can't say them all...

When a boy who stutters feels isolated, alone, and incapable of communicating in the way he'd like, his concerned and compassionate father and a walk by the river helps him find his voice. Parents and families everywhere will instantly recognize a father's ability to reconnect a child with the world around him.

Conversation Starters

Whether you read the book along with your child or your child reads it on their own and you discuss it later, use these open-ended questions to deepen the conversation. Remember not to judge their

responses and to listen thoughtfully and engage in a conversation that helps them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes.

- What happens in the story?
- Why do you think the boy stays quiet a lot of the time in school?
- Why does the boy's Dad take him to the river?
- How do you think the boy feels when his Dad says, "You talk live a river?" What does it mean to you?
- How do you think the boy feels when his classmates turn and look at him or giggle when he speaks?
- What do you think you could do in a situation like that to help or support the boy?
- The day after the boy and his Dad go to the river, what happens when the talks about the river in class? How do you think the boy feels?
- Why do you think the author wrote this book?
- What is the message of the book?

Talking Points

Below are some important considerations that will make this a learning opportunity for your child and your family.

1. What it Means to Stutter

Talk with your child about the boy in the book and how he stutters. Ask your child if they know what it means to stutter and whether they know anyone who stutters. Explain that when someone stutters, they may repeat parts of words (repetitions), stretch a sound out for a long time (prolongations), or have a hard time getting a word out (blocks). People who stutter know what they want to say but sometimes have difficulty saying it. Talk with your child about how the boy feels when he stutters and how his classmates treat him when he stutters. Elicit about what the boy experienced and how they think they boy felt.

Share with your child about another child who stutters who was in the news recently. Explain that thirteen-year-old Brayden Harrington connected with President Biden in New Hampshire when Biden was campaigning for President. President Biden also stuttered and talked with Brayden about his experiences. Together, watch the YouTube video [13-year-old Brayden Harrington speaks at Democratic National Convention](#) and what he learned from Joe Biden.

We reached out to Brayden Harrington and he shared the following advice for teachers and students for how to support students who stutter or who have other speech challenges.

Brayden's Advice for Supporting Students

- Do not finish students' sentences for them.
- If a student is stuttering, be patient and wait for them to finish what they are saying. This will help to build their self-confidence.
- Be aware that if a student is new to the school or new to a group of people, that can increase their stuttering due to discomfort or anxiety.

- Make an extra effort to support students who stutter or those who have other speech issues, especially if they are being teased, made fun of or bullied. This can include being an extra nice to them, asking them to do something, or saying something that uplifts them.
- For teachers: If you have a student in your class who stutters or has another speech issue, talk with them privately to come up with a hand signal or nod to do when they don't want to be called on in class. Also, talk with them privately about class jobs and whether they want to (or not) have a job that requires a lot of speaking, such as answering the class phone.

If you want to explore more on this topic with your child, visit [SAY: The Stuttering Association for the Young](#), which provides many helpful resources. More facts and information can be found at [Stuttering 101](#).

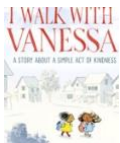
2. Acting as an Ally

Talk to your child about what happens to the boy in school when he stutters. Elicit/explain that the boy doesn't talk much or and is silent a lot in school. Sometimes, when he does talk, the other kids stare at him or giggle. Ask students: *How do you think the boy feels when this happens? If you were in the boy's class, how could you support him or help?* Talk to your child about whether they have ever seen or experienced teasing, name-calling or bullying about students who stutter, those with speech issues or based on some other aspect of their identity. Ask: *How can you support that person? How can you act as an ally?* Explain that an **ally** is someone who helps or stands up for someone who is being bullied or the target of bias. Share ideas for ways they can act as an ally when they see bias, bullying or teasing and share your own thoughts and experiences about what you have done to intervene as an ally when you see bias or bullying take place.

3. Metaphors and Language

Talk with your child about “figurative” (i.e., descriptive) language and how using certain words and images makes a story or a character come to life in a different way. Explain that there are several metaphors in the book. Ask your child if they have talked about metaphors in school yet and define **metaphor** as a word or phrase that is used to make a comparison between two things that aren't alike but have something in common. Share examples of metaphors such as “the snow is a white blanket” or “he is a night owl.” Explain how, in the example of “the snow is a white blanket,” that the snow isn't actually a white blanket, but it can feel like that because it covers the ground like a blanket covers you and snow can feel good and cozy to you, like a blanket. Elicit other examples of metaphors. Then re-read the book and together, identify metaphors throughout the book (e.g., “quiet as a stone,” “storm in my belly,” “eyes fill with rain,” and “even the river stutters.”). Talk about what these metaphors mean and ask your child why they think the author used them. You can discuss how this kind of language helps the reader see and feel it more deeply than just regular words and sentences. Come up with some metaphors together about people, places and things. When reading other books together, point out the metaphors.

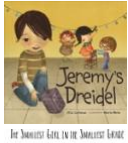
Other Books You May Like



I Walk with Vanessa by Kerascoët, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/i-walk-with-vanessa



Each Kindness by Jacqueline Woodson, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/each-kindness



Jeremy's Dreidel by Ellie Gellman, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/jeremys-dreidel



The Smallest Girl in the Smallest Grade by Justin Roberts, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/the-smallest-girl-in-the-smallest-grade

ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on ally behavior, disability and ableism, and bullying/teasing.

Curriculum Resources

"The Present" and Living with a Disability, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/the-present-and-living-with-a-disability.

Websites

6 Ways to Be an Ally

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/6-ways-to-be-an-ally-en-espanol

Some simple things a student can do to be an ally to targets of name-calling and bullying. (Also in Spanish.)

Parent, Family and Caregiver Resources

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/parent-family-and-caregiver-resources

Strategies, tips, guiding principles and resources to help parents, family members and caregivers impart values and principles to the children in their lives.

The Question Corner: Early Childhood FAQs

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/question-corner

A collection of answers to frequently asked questions about anti-bias issues faced by early childhood professionals and family members interested in promoting respect for diversity among young children. See [How Should I Respond When Children Notice Differences in Others?](#)

Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk

Provides the tools parents and family members need to engage their families in conversations about important news stories and other timely discussions about societal and world events. Includes discussion guides containing a topic summary, questions to start the conversation and dig deeper, ideas for taking action and additional resources. See [What Bullying Is and Is Not](#).

Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

Ability, Disability & Ableism, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-0=1&tid\[160\]=160&tid\[161\]=161&tid\[162\]=162&tid\[163\]=163](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-0=1&tid[160]=160&tid[161]=161&tid[162]=162&tid[163]=163)

Bullying Awareness & Prevention, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-2=1&tid\[165\]=165&tid\[166\]=166&tid\[167\]=167&tid\[168\]=168&tid\[169\]=169](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-2=1&tid[165]=165&tid[166]=166&tid[167]=167&tid[168]=168&tid[169]=169)