



# Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

**About the Book of the Month:** 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 educators, adult family members and other caregivers of early childhood and elementary aged children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

## Sonia Sotomayor: A Judge Grows in the Bronx

Jonah Winter (Author), Edel Rodriguez (Illustrator)

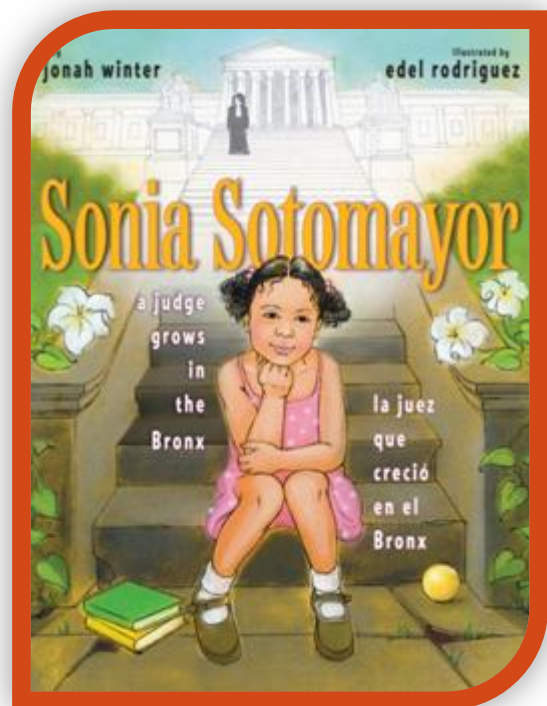
Long before Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor took her seat in our nation's highest court, she was just a little girl in the South Bronx. Justice Sotomayor didn't have a lot growing up, but she had what she needed—her mother's love, a will to learn and her own determination. With bravery she became the person she wanted to be. This is a timely biography of one of the foremost women leaders in the United States. The book is bilingual (English and Spanish).

ISBN: 978-1442403031

Publisher: Atheneum Books for Young Readers

Year Published: 2009

Age Range: 4–8



### Book Themes

Culture, Identity, Prejudice, Determination

### Key Words

Discuss and define these words with children prior to reading the book. Do not focus on students' retention of all the words; instead make sure they understand the words enough to follow the story and remind children of their meanings as they come up in the book. You can also post the words and point out to students when they appear in the story. See also ADL's [Glossary of Education Terms](#).

- blossom
- culture
- detective
- diabetes

- dominoes
- encyclopedia
- honor
- housing project
- judge
- Latina
- lawyer
- poverty
- precious
- Prejudice
- racism
- sexism
- subway
- Supreme Court
- switchboard operator
- wages

### Discussion Questions

Before reading the book aloud, ask pre-reading questions:

- What is the title of the book?
- Based on the title, what do you think the book might be about?
- Have you heard of Sonia Sotomayor? What do you know about her?

As you read the book aloud, ask a few discussion questions periodically throughout the reading to check comprehension and keep the students engaged:

- Why did Sonia's mother work so hard? (page 5)
- Why did Sonia change her mind about becoming a detective? (page 15)
- When Sonia became a judge, what did people think of her? (page 24)

After reading the book aloud, ask some or all of these discussion questions:

- What happened in the story?
- What words would you use to describe Sonia Sotomayor?
- Do you think Sonia had a happy childhood? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Sonia initially wanted to be a detective?
- As you listened to the story, what did you learn about Sonia's Puerto Rican culture?
- When Sonia went to Princeton University, she said she felt almost like she was "on another planet?" What made her say that?
- Why did Sonia eventually decide to become a judge?
- In what ways did Sonia's childhood help her become a person who fights for justice?
- What kind of prejudice did Sonia Sotomayor face herself? How do you know?
- How did you feel when you found out that there has never been a Latina(o) Supreme Court Justice?
- How do you think Sonia's mother felt sitting in the audience when the announcement was made about her becoming a Supreme Court Justice?
- What were some of the "bumps on the path" that Sonia encountered?
- How do you think Sonia felt when people called her a "racist" because she was said she was proud to be a Latina judge?
- What is the message of the story?

## Extension Activities

Below are activities that you can do with children in order to extend the learning from the book.

### 1. Write and Illustrate Additional Pages of the Book

In the last scene of the book, President Obama announces his nomination of Sonia Sotomayor as the next Supreme Court Justice. She then encounters some “bumps on the path” to getting there. Read aloud the last few pages of the book and ask students: *What do you think might happen next in the story if it were to continue? What do you think happens after Sonia becomes the nation's first Latina Supreme Court Justice? What kinds of decisions do you think she might make in her position? What will it be like if and when she goes back to her old neighborhood?* Have students imagine what would happen in the book if it continued for a few more pages. Instruct them to take their ideas and write and/or draw the next scene or two as they imagine it. If younger students want to write but cannot do so, you can transcribe for them. When completed, students can share their drawings and pages of the book with the rest of the class and you can invite family members in for a whole class reading.

### 2. Write Biographies of Important Women for Women's History Month

Ask students: *Why is it important that we make note of important women throughout history? Why do we celebrate Women's History Month?* Explain to students that because of the history of sexism in our country and limited opportunities for women (especially in the past), every March we honor the contributions and achievements of women for Women's History Month, as we also should throughout the year. Explain to students that over the course of our country's history, there have been 112 Supreme Court Justices yet there have only been four women on the Supreme Court. Right now, there are three women—Sonia Sotomayor, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Elena Kagan—and the only other woman on the Supreme Court was Sandra Day O'Connor, who retired. Ask students if they can name other important women in our country's history, including the present (e.g., Michelle Obama). Create a list and add to it using the following resources: [Women Who Left Their Stamp on History](#) (Fact Monster), [A List of Women Achievers](#) (Scholastic) and [Women Who Changed The World](#) (Biography Online). Have students choose one woman to learn more about and engage them in undertaking research on this important woman, using books, internet sites and videos to learn more. Their research can culminate in a project using the following options for a presentation: (a) draw a portrait of the person, (b) write an essay about the person, (c) read aloud a speech of theirs, (d) create a timeline about their life, (e) write original diary/journal entries based on their knowledge of the person, etc. (If any student chooses Sonia Sotomayor as their research project, there is an author's note in the back of the book with more information about her.)

### 3. Understand the Use of Metaphor

Discuss the use of metaphors in the book. Reread the first sentence of the book aloud: “You never know what can happen. Sometimes the most beautiful moonflower blossoms in an unexpected place.” Ask: *Who is the “beautiful moonflower” the book is referring to? What does it mean to “blossom” in this case?* If you haven't already talked about the use of metaphor, explain that a metaphor is a word or phrase that is used to make a comparison between people, things, animals or places. Share an example such as: “the snow is a white blanket” or “he is a night owl” and explain that snow is not actually a white blanket but it looks like that and he is not an owl but he stays up late like a night owl. Ask students to share other examples. Read the entire book again and have students call out when they hear a metaphor. There are many examples of metaphors in the book on the following pages: p. 4, 7, 12, 16, 18, 21, 22, 29 and 32. To expand upon this, have students create their own metaphors and turn those into individual or whole class poems.

For more information about the Supreme Court, see [Frequently Asked Questions About the Supreme Court](#).

## ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on anti-bias teaching strategies, gender and sexism and Latino culture.

### Curriculum Resources

“Mo’Ne Davis and Gender Stereotypes,” *Current Events Classroom*, [www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/mo-ne-davis-and-gender-stereotypes.pdf](http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/mo-ne-davis-and-gender-stereotypes.pdf).

“Who is Malala Yousafzai?,” *Current Events Classroom*, [www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/who-is-malala-yousafzai.pdf](http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/who-is-malala-yousafzai.pdf).

“The Civil Rights Act of 1964: 7 Ways to Commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary,” [www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/civil-rights-act-of-1964-7-ways-to-commemorate-the-50th-anniversary.pdf](http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/civil-rights-act-of-1964-7-ways-to-commemorate-the-50th-anniversary.pdf).

“Job Roles Without Gender Boundaries,” in “When I Grow Up I Want to be a...,” *Curriculum Connections*, Spring 2008, [http://archive.adl.org/education/curriculum\\_connections/spring\\_2008/lesson2.html](http://archive.adl.org/education/curriculum_connections/spring_2008/lesson2.html).

“Challenging Gender Role Stereotypes,” in “When I Grow Up I Want to be a...,” *Curriculum Connections*, Spring 2008, [http://archive.adl.org/education/curriculum\\_connections/spring\\_2008/lesson1.html](http://archive.adl.org/education/curriculum_connections/spring_2008/lesson1.html).

### Websites

Anti-Bias Education

[www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education)

Provides training program offerings for pre-K through 12th grade school communities—educators, administrators, youth and families—which focus on the development of an inclusive culture and respectful school climate by addressing issues of bias and bullying.

Early Childhood Anti-Bias Education

[www.adl.org/education-outreach/early-childhood](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/early-childhood)

Provides program offerings and resources specifically for early childhood educators, caregivers and family members with a focus on teaching mutual respect and an appreciation for diversity in an effort of preventing the seeds of prejudice from taking root in young children.

The Question Corner

[www.adl.org/education-outreach/early-childhood/c/the-question-corner.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/early-childhood/c/the-question-corner.html)

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.

### Children's Books

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

Gender and Sexism: Biography and History, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/gender-books.html?gendersub=biography-history](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/gender-books.html?gendersub=biography-history)

Immigrants, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/people-books.html?subpeople=immigrants](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/people-books.html?subpeople=immigrants)

People, Identity and Culture: Latino/Hispanic, Latino-American, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/people-books.html?subpeople=latinohispanic-latino-american-hispanic-american](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/people-books.html?subpeople=latinohispanic-latino-american-hispanic-american)

Racism, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/race-books.html?subrace=racism](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/race-books.html?subrace=racism)

Social Justice, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/social-justice.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/social-justice.html)