



# Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Department

**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 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.

## Your Name is a Song

Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow (Author),  
Luisa Uribe (Illustrator)

Frustrated by a day full of teachers and classmates mispronouncing her beautiful name, a little girl tells her mother she never wants to come back to school. In response, the girl's mother teaches her about the musicality of African, Asian, Black-American, Latinx and Middle Eastern names on their lyrical walk home through the city. Empowered by this newfound understanding, the young girl is ready to return the next day to share her knowledge with her class.

ISBN: 978-1943147724

Publisher: The Innovation Press

Year Published: 2020

Age Range: 5–10



## Book Themes

People, Identity and Culture, Diversity, Importance of Names, Bullying

## 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 students of the words' 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. For definitions that are differentiated for young children, see ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#).

- |           |               |             |
|-----------|---------------|-------------|
| ▪ battle  | ▪ magnificent | ▪ streetcar |
| ▪ calming | ▪ melody      | ▪ swayed    |
| ▪ choke   | ▪ pretended   | ▪ tinker    |
| ▪ hip-hop | ▪ pronounce   | ▪ wrinkled  |
| ▪ jig     | ▪ stomp       |             |

## Discussion Questions

Before reading the book aloud, ask some or all of these pre-reading questions:

- What is the title of the book?
- Who do you see on the cover of the book?
- What do you think the book might be about?

As you read the book aloud, ask a few discussion questions periodically throughout reading to check for comprehension and keep the students engaged. Below are some sample questions that correlate to specific page numbers.

- Why do you think the girl is standing by herself? (page 3)
- How does the boy react when the girl says her name? (page 15)
- Why do you think the girl doesn't want to go to school? (page 26)

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

- What is the book about?
- How does Kora-Jalimuso feel when her teacher and classmates are not able to say her name correctly?
- Why do you think she feels that way?
- What does Kora-Jalimuso's Mom say and do? What advice does she give to Kora-Jalimuso?
- Do you agree that names are like songs? Why do you think that?
- What happens when Ms. Anderson cannot say Kora-Jalimuso's name? What does Kora-Jalimuso do? How does she feel?
- Why do you think the author included in the back of the book the pronunciation (how it sounds) for each of the students' names?
- How do Kora-Jalimuso's thoughts and feelings change throughout the book?
- Why do you think the author decided to write this book?
- Have you ever had an experience like Kora-Jalimuso? What happened?
- How do you feel about your name?

- How does the book end? What do you think will happen next?
- Why do you think it's important to try to pronounce people's names correctly?
- How do you think Kora-Jalimuso would feel if her teacher and classmates made sure they learned how to say her name correctly?

## Extension Activities

Below are activities for students that can extend learning from the book.

### 1. My Name

Ask students: *What is the book about?* Elicit that the book is about names, and how they are pronounced and sometimes mis-pronounced. Ask students: *How does Kora-Jalimuso feel about her name? How does she feel when others mis-pronounce it or don't even try to say it right? How do you feel about your name? What do you like and not like about it?*

Explain to students that people's names are often very important to them. Pronouncing them right is also key and can make people feel badly when their names are mis-pronounced or when others tease them about their name. You can look together in the back of the book (on pages 40-42) where the author provides information about each of the names in the book, how the name is pronounced and the cultural, religious or racial origin of the name.

Watch [the video](#) of the author pronouncing each of the names in the book. Explain that people's names come from a variety of sources including family tradition, ancestors, culture, religion, meaning of the name, a favorite book or movie character, nickname, etc. Explain something about your name or ask a student who may know something about their name. Then have students turn and talk with a partner about what they know about their name, what they want to know about their name and what questions they have. Have them learn more about their name by going home and asking their parents/family members and/or using a search engine to explore their name (i.e., language(s) of origin, meaning, popularity, etc.). As a culmination, have students make a short video of them saying their name, pronouncing their name correctly and sharing something about their name. Model this by sharing something about your name and model pronouncing your own name by using different strategies (i.e., saying it slowly, "chunking" it, using rhyming words for certain syllables, etc.). When students have completed their videos, share those with the class and possibly send home to families.

**Note to Teacher:** Conversations in the classroom about names can be difficult or upsetting for some children. Be mindful that some children may not know much about their name. Further, children who are adoptees may have two names--a birth name and another name; they may or may not know much about either. Be sure to know the accurate names of students who are transgender or non-binary and do not "dead name" (referring to a trans person by the name they used before they transitioned) them. In addition, when talking with students about names, especially names for which you may be unfamiliar, rather than saying the names are "difficult to pronounce," say "I need more practice saying the name." Do not make up nicknames for children; if they have a nickname, wait for them to tell you.

### 2. Explore Feelings

As the book unfolds, Kora-Jalimuso, the main character, experiences a lot of feelings. As you read the book, ask children to infer how she is feeling and how they know. For example, in the beginning of the book, Kora-Jalimuso is standing by herself away from the other children who are playing. Ask: *How do you think Kora-Jalimuso feels? How do you know?* There are a variety of feelings expressed

and as you go through the book, elicit what those feelings are. These feelings could include sad, lonely, mad, frustrated, excluded, surprised, curious, happy, worried, relieved, calm. Generate a list of feelings that are reflected throughout the book and record them on the board/ smartboard. Have students use these feeling words to create self-portraits with themselves conveying a feeling or have them create emojis based on the feeling words. Each student could create an emoji for a different feeling, and you can create a class feeling dictionary book. For virtual classrooms, you can create a digital/shared album of images that students can use for classroom check-ins.

### 3. Write and Illustrate What Happens Next in the Book

Remind students how the book ends by re-reading pages 31-39. Ask students: What happens at the end of the book? Remind students about how Kora-Jalimuso made her classmate's names, including her own, into songs and this helped them learn how to pronounce the names. Ask students: *What do you think happens after Kora-Jalimuso's classmates say her name correctly? How does she feel? What do you think happens the next day? What do you think will happen when there is a new student at school and the students have to learn their name?* Have students imagine what might happen if the book continues for a few more pages by brainstorming some ideas. Then, have them apply their ideas to writing and/or drawing the next few scenes and pages, as they imagine the book continuing. When completed, students can share their pages with the rest of the class by posting them on the wall and moving around the room gallery-style to see all the ways in which students imagined the story continuing. You can also invite parents and family members in for a whole class reading of the book and include the students' additional pages.

## ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and educational resources on people and identity, culture and bias.

### Curriculum Resources

Diversity Books Matter, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/diverse-books-matter](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/diverse-books-matter).

Dolls Are Us, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/dolls-are-us](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/dolls-are-us).

Identity-Based Bullying, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/identity-based-bullying](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/identity-based-bullying).

Who Am I? Identity Poems, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/who-am-i-identity-poems](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/who-am-i-identity-poems).

### Websites

Creating an Anti-Bias Learning Environment

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/creating-an-anti-bias-learning-environment](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/creating-an-anti-bias-learning-environment)

Provides tips for the classroom educator to create an anti-bias learning environment.

Let's Get it Right: Using Correct Pronouns and Names

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/lets-get-it-right-using-correct-pronouns-and-names](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/lets-get-it-right-using-correct-pronouns-and-names)

An educator resource about using accurate pronouns and names to convey understanding and respect for all people, especially for those who are transgender, gender non-conforming and non-binary.

Safe and Inclusive Classrooms for All

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/safe-and-inclusive-schools-for-all](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/safe-and-inclusive-schools-for-all)

Tips to foster a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment.

**Children's Books**

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

[People, Identity & Culture](#)

[People, Identity & Culture: Similarities & Differences](#)