



Monthly Featured Book

Presented by ADL's Education Department

About the Monthly Featured Book: 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.

Linked

Gordon Korman (Author)

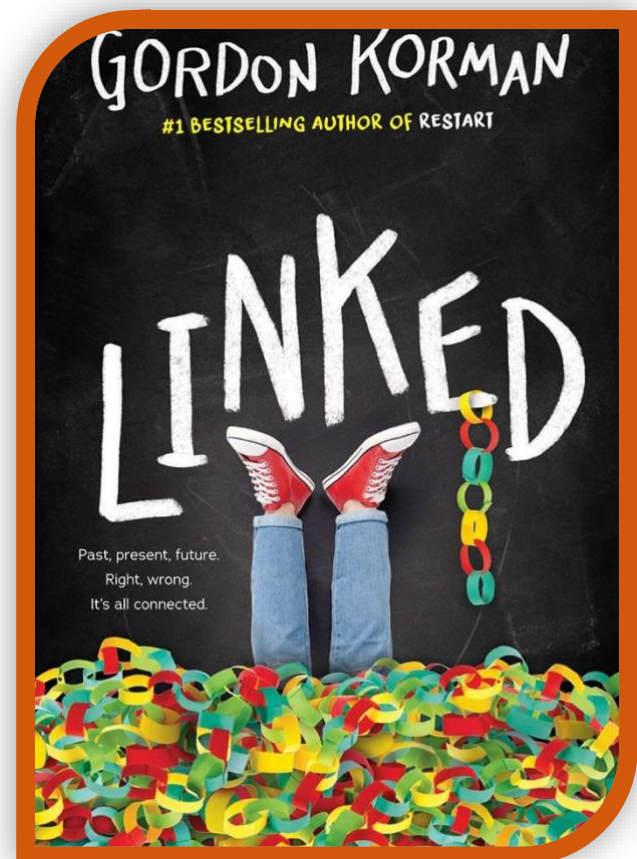
Link, Michael, and Dana live in a “quiet” town. But it's woken up very quickly when someone sneaks into school and vandalizes it with a swastika. Nobody can believe it. How could such a symbol of hate end up in the middle of their school? Who would do such a thing? Because Michael was the first person to see it, he's the first suspect. Because Link is one of the most popular guys in school, everyone's looking to him to figure it out. And because Dana's the only Jewish girl in the whole town, everyone's treating her more like an outsider than ever. The mystery deepens as more swastikas begin to appear. Some students decide to fight back and start a project to bring people together instead of dividing them further. The closer Link, Michael, and Dana get to the truth, the more there is to face—not just the crimes of the present, but the crimes of the past.

ISBN: 978-1338629118

Publisher: Scholastic Inc.

Year Published: 2021

Age Range: 8-12



Book Themes

Hate symbols, Antisemitism, Holocaust, Acting as an ally, Taking action

Key Words

Discuss and define these words with students prior to reading the book and remind them of the meanings as they come up in the book. See also ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#).

- | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| ■ antidote | ■ graffiti | ■ paranoid | ■ sue |
| ■ antisemitism | ■ heritage | ■ perpetrator | ■ swastika |
| ■ apathy | ■ Holocaust | ■ prank | ■ synagogue |
| ■ bar mitzvah | ■ humiliate | ■ privacy | ■ traumatize |
| ■ culprit | ■ infamous | ■ revenge | ■ undeniable |
| ■ democracy | ■ insensitive | ■ sacrifice | ■ vandalize |
| ■ disobedience | ■ Ku Klux Klan | ■ sensationalize | ■ white supremacists |
| ■ exasperation | ■ manipulate | ■ sinister | |
| ■ exterminate | ■ media | ■ slander | |
| ■ free speech | ■ optics | ■ speculation | |

Discussion Questions

If the students read the book in small groups or as a whole class, ask discussion questions throughout their reading in order to check comprehension and engage them on a deeper level. Some of these questions can also be used as writing prompts. When students have finished the book, choose from these questions to guide a group discussion.

- What is the book about? What happens in the book?
- When you first meet some of the characters (Michael, Link, Dana, Caroline) what are they like? How do they change and evolve throughout the story?
- How does Michael feel when he first sees the swastika?
- When Dana comes into the school after the swastika is found, what does she feel? Why? [If additional prompting is needed, why does she feel like she's being looked at with curiosity even more than she normally is?]
- How does Dana feel when she sees the swastika? Why does Dana experience this moment differently than other students? What do you think Dana means when she says, "It's the real thing, painted in anger and hatred?"
- Several of the characters note that a swastika is not only a symbol of antisemitism, but of hate in general. What are your thoughts about this?
- What does Mr. Brademas, the principal, do when the first swastika is found? What does he say to the students? Do you think it was an effective thing for him to do in that situation? Please explain.

- Why do you think the students don't seem to like the "tolerance education unit?" What do you think the school should have done instead to educate the school community about bias and hate?
- Why do people start talking about how the Ku Klux Klan were in the area forty years ago and the Night of a Thousand Flames, when KKK groups all over the west burned crosses? (More on the Ku Klux Klan [here](#).)
- When Link and his parents talk about the swastikas and past incidents of burning crosses in the town, Link says, "But it wouldn't be a threat to our family." In what ways is Link's father right that his family wouldn't be harmed by antisemitism? Do you think acts of antisemitism are only a threat and only cause harm to Jewish people? Please explain your thinking.
- What do you find out about Link's family and the Holocaust? How does Link feel when he learns about his mother's side of the family?
- What happens when Link tells Dana that he found out his family is Jewish and that during the Holocaust, his grandmother was given to nuns to escape the Nazis?
- Why do you think it's important to Link that he has a bar mitzvah? How do others' (family, friends, peers) reactions to Link's decision to have a bar mitzvah?
- When Link thinks to himself, "My life should be about something, even if I haven't figured out what it is yet," what does he mean? Have you ever felt this way? Please explain.
- What happens at the student government meeting? How do the students come up with the idea of the chain with six million links?
- When Michael thinks to himself, "The worst part of what's happening to us has always been that we have no way to fight back," what does this mean? Have you ever felt similarly when bias or injustice were taking place? How do the students "fight back?"
- How does the mood and feeling of the story shift when the students decide to do something? Why do you think the mood changes when the students decide to create the chain of links?
- In what ways does ReelTok's amplification of what's happening in Chokecherry have an impact?
- What happens when the school runs out of paper to make the links? How does the rest of the community, country and world get involved?
- Why do you think so many people participate in their chain of links project?
- When Dana reflects on the Holocaust by saying "It's called a crime against humanity because all humans co-own the responsibility never to forget it," what does she mean? What does this quote mean to you?
- How did you feel when the students reach their goal of six million links?
- When you find out the two people who painted the swastikas, how did you feel? What are your reflections of who did it and why they did it?
- What happens when it is revealed that Link drew the first swastika? What are the different responses among his family, friends and peers? What are Link's self-reflections about why he did it?
- How did you feel when Link was able to have his bar mitzvah despite what happened? Were you surprised by how his friends and peers supported him? Please explain.
- What is the role of forgiveness in the book?
- How did you feel about the speech Link made at his bar mitzvah?

- In the end, what did Link learn about antisemitism, the Holocaust and himself?
- Does the book shed light on why people draw hate symbols? If so, how?
- How did you feel when the book ends? If the story continued, what do you think might happen next?
- Why do you think the author chose to write the novel from the perspective of different characters?
- Why do you think the book is called *Linked*?
- What is the overall message of the book?

Extension Activities

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

1. Reader's Response Writing Activities

Diary Entries of a Character: Have students select one of the main characters of the book: Link, Michael, Dana, ReelTok (Adam Tok), Jordie, Caroline, Pamela, George Rowley (Link's dad) Mr. Bradema (principal), or Link's grandmother. Then have students write a collection of diary entries for the chosen character, writing 5-8 diary entries that the character might have kept before, during or after the book's events. Remind students that the character's thoughts and feelings are very important in a diary as well as their reaction to day-to-day events and other activities that take place throughout the book. Invite students to focus on their character's perspective. *How do they observe the events of the story? What assumptions do they make about other characters they interact with? What thoughts might they have that they wouldn't want to share with others, but share in their diary? What are their wishes and hopes? What are their fears?* You may choose to have students engage in prewriting discussions with a partner about their character in order to get their ideas out. After students have completed the diary entries, have them share their writing with the class and consider creating an online collection of all the diary entries.

Reflections on Social Media: Social media plays a large role in the book. Ask students to reflect on how social media was incorporated throughout the book (e.g., students posting photos and selfies of the swastika, ReelTok coming to Chokecherry and posting stories, interviews and commentary about what was happening in the town, people across the country and world learning about what happens at the school and sends links and other words of support, etc.). Ask students: *To what extent does the way social media was portrayed in the book resonate with? Was the role of social media realistic in terms of how young people and others use social media? What impact does social media—both positive and negative—have on what's happening in Chokecherry?* Then have students write a reflective essay on the use of social media throughout the book, citing examples and providing analysis. As another option, have them write a self-reflective essay about their own use and experience of social media and the ways in which it can be both helpful and harmful. Have students share their essays with the class.

Experiences with Bias and Injustice: Elicit from students that in the book, we learn about how antisemitism impacts several of the characters in the book, the school, and the community of Chokecherry. We also learn about the connection one of the characters has to the Holocaust, as well as the town's connection to Ku Klux Klan activity in prior years. Ask students: *What did you learn about antisemitism from reading the book? How did it impact different characters in the book? How does antisemitism impact the town and society in general?* Then have students self-reflect on other examples of bias and oppression they have either experienced, witnessed and heard about. This can include ableism, ageism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, weightism, anti-trans bias, anti-Muslim bias,

religious bias, etc. Have students explore what happened, how they felt, if anyone said or did anything including themselves, and how they think the experience fits into the larger context of that oppression. If time permits, have students turn and talk with someone sitting near them to share that experience and then have them write an essay that reflects on this experience.

2. Hate Symbols

Much of the book focuses on the swastikas that are found around school and how impactful they are. Ask students: What is a symbol? Elicit/explain that a symbol is a person or a concept that expresses, represents, stands for or suggests an idea, quality, belief, action or material object. Explain that symbols take the form of words, sounds, gestures, ideas or visual images and are used to convey other ideas. Brainstorm with students the different symbols that they know about, which can be positive (e.g., emoji), neutral (e.g., logo for a product or social media platform, or negative (e.g., swastika).

Then ask: What is a swastika? Explain that according to ADL's Hate Symbols database, since 1954:

"The **swastika** has served as the most significant and notorious of hate symbols, antisemitism and white supremacy for most of the world outside of Asia. Its display is prohibited in Germany and some other countries, leading some right-wing extremists to devise variants or alternatives to the swastika that would evoke a similar effect. In the United States, the swastika is overwhelmingly viewed as a hate symbol."

You can learn more about the swastika here. Ask students: *What happens in the book when students and staff see the swastikas? How does it make them feel? How does it make the Jewish student(s) feel? How are hate symbols harmful to individuals? How are they harmful to communities and society in general?* After exploring hate symbols (see lesson plan below), have students think about a symbol they would like to create that expresses the opposite of hate—for example: respect, diversity, inclusivity, belonging, equity or justice. Provide time for students to create those symbols (either paper or digital) then share with the class and consider placing them on walls around school or share on the school's website.

3. What is Antisemitism?

Ask students: What is antisemitism? Define antisemitism as: the marginalization and/or oppression of people who are Jewish based on the belief in stereotypes and myths about Jewish people, Judaism and Israel. Ask students: *Where do you see examples of antisemitism in the book? Where does it show up?*

Explain and elicit that antisemitism (as with other forms of oppression) can show up in many different ways, including stereotypes and attitudes about Jewish people, scapegoating, name-calling and bullying, online expressions of bias and hate, swastikas and other hate symbols scrawled in public spaces, antisemitic rhetoric, vandalism in synagogues and other places, hate crimes like the shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue, and more. Antisemitism is not only about demeaning and attacking the Jewish community; it is often a symptom of a more significant issue. Individuals who hold ideologies of bias and hatred against the Jewish people will often hold hateful beliefs about other groups (e.g., Black people, Muslim people, LGBTQ people) who are marginalized. You can use ADL's [Pyramid of Hate mini-lesson](#) to help illustrate the prevalence of bias, hate and oppression in our society, and exploring examples at each level of antisemitism.

ADL does an audit every year of antisemitic incidents. In 2021, [ADL tabulated 2,717 antisemitic incidents](#) throughout the U.S., representing a 34% increase from the 2,026 incidents in 2020. Incidents in K-12 schools, colleges and universities increased in 2021 and were flat compared to the

five-year average. The *Audit of Antisemitic Incidents* accounts for assaults, vandalism and harassment, but we know that there are many unreported incidents of antisemitism, from jokes to microaggressions to online posts that “normalize” antisemitism. Ask students: *What did you learn about antisemitism from reading the book?* Then ask: *What can we do to act as an ally or advocate when we see or hear about antisemitism?* Brainstorm some ideas and follow up on them as appropriate.

4. School Wide Project

Ask students: *What project did the students come up to share their perspective about the swastikas drawn around their school?* Remind students that the students came up with the idea of creating 6,000,000 paper links to show how they are connected and to also represent the 6 million Jewish people murdered during the Holocaust. As a result of the swastikas and learning about the Holocaust, antisemitism and other forms of oppression, the students decided to take on a project to work together. Ask: *What impact did the project have on the students and school? What impact did it have on the community and society in general? What message did it convey?* As a class or a school, consider what issues of bias, discrimination or oppression you see in your community and for which they want to do something about. As a class (or school), brainstorm ideas of issues in the school or community and explore what they might do as a school or community to address them. Think together about how you would take this on, come up with an action plan and timeline and implement it. You can also explore with students other real life young people who have challenged bias and injustice, either in their own communities or society at large.

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and educational resources on antisemitism, hate symbols, acting as an ally and responding to incidents.

Curriculum Resources

Antisemitic Incidents: Being an Ally, Advocate and Activist, www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/antisemitic-incidents-being-ally-advocate-and-activist.

Challenging Antisemitism: Debunking the Myths and Responding with Facts, www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/challenging-antisemitism-debunking-myths-and-responding-facts.

Children of the Holocaust: A Discussion Guide, www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/children-holocaust-discussion-guide.

Pyramid of Hate (student mini-lesson), www.adl.org/education/mini-lesson/student-pyramid-of-hate.

Swastikas and Other Hate Symbols, www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/swastikas-and-other-hate-symbols.

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.)

A Guide for Responding to School-Based Incidents

www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/guide-responding-school-based-bias-incidents

Provides a place for a school to report a bias or hate incident and get the support they need to strengthen their responses to school-based incidents of bias and bigotry. A guide for educators and school administrators is available as a supplement for incident prevention protocols and practices.

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 "[Antisemitism Today](#)."

The Hidden Child Foundation

www.adl.org/holocaust-education/hidden-child-foundation

The Foundation seeks to educate all people about the consequences of bigotry and hatred so that never again will anyone suffer the atrocity, the injustice and the agony of the Holocaust.

No Place for Hate®

www.noplaceforhate.org

An ADL student-inspired school-wide program to create a more equitable and inclusive school climate, catered to a school's unique culture and needs.

Resources to Address and Challenge Antisemitism

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/helping-students-make-sense-of-news-stories-about-bias-and

Education resources you can use in your classroom and home to help young people understand and challenge antisemitism.

Children's Books

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

[Books about Bias, Discrimination & Hate](#)

[Books about Jewish Culture & Antisemitism](#)