



How to Find Children's and Young Adult Books That Can Help Caregivers Promote Anti-Racism

Katherine E. Speirs, Jennifer Parlin, Jennifer Argyros, Ashley Dixon-Kleiber, Christy Stuth, and Shevonda Joyner

Books can be a great way to help children, from preschoolers to teens, understand other people's experiences and develop compassion and empathy. Books can also help you start or continue a conversation about what it means to be anti-racist.^{1,2} Below you will find information about selecting books that promote anti-racism, making sure all children in your community have access to these books, and using online resources to find books.

Things to Think about When Selecting Books

Below are a few questions to consider when you and your child are selecting books.

- 1. Does the book feature a BIPOC character as the main character?** Help your children find books that feature BIPOC as the main or central character, rather than supporting or background characters, such as the friend or teacher of the main character.



Here are a few terms that may be new.

Anti-racist/anti-racism. To be anti-racist or practice anti-racism is to take active steps in your everyday life to fight racism and promote equity.³

BIPOC stands for **B**lack, **I**ndigenous*, and **P**eople of **C**olor.⁴

*In the U.S., indigenous people are sometimes referred to as American Indians or Native Americans.

We use BIPOC to refer to people who are not white rather than **People of Color** or POC because it is more inclusive in that it specifically names and acknowledges groups of people who have had and continue to have different experiences with injustice and racism in the U.S. However, we recognize that BIPOC is not a perfect term. For example, the group of people in the U.S. who are not white also includes people who are not Black or Indigenous. It also includes Asian and Latinx people, among others.

These resources provide more information about the term BIPOC, including arguments against using it.

- <https://www.nytimes.com/article/what-is-bipoc.html>
- <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/918418825>
- <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/bipoc-meaning-where-does-it-come-from-2020-04-02/>

- 2. Does the book feature BIPOC in a positive light?** Avoid books that create or continue stereotypes and/or cast BIPOC in a negative light. If you do read books that continue stereotypes or cast BIPOC in a negative light with your children, save these books for older children, have a frank discussion about how BIPOC are portrayed, and help your children challenge the stereotypes.



3. Who wrote and illustrated the books your child reads?

Look for books that were written and illustrated by people from a range of racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.

4. Is the book age appropriate? Most children's and young adult books have information on the front or back cover about the intended ages, which you can use as a guideline. It is always a good idea to read a book before giving it to your child to make sure it is appropriate for your child.

5. Does the book match your child's interests? Your child will be more likely to read and reread a book they are interested in. Find books that match their interests and engage them. Make sure your child does not see reading books about BIPOC as a chore or something they have to get through before or instead of reading the books they want to read or doing other activities.

6. Does your child have books that feature BIPOC in a range of settings? Make sure your child has access to books that show BIPOC as everyday people doing everyday activities (going to school, playing with friends) and as heroes, leaders, and people fighting to overcome oppression and racism. Also share with your children books that show BIPOC in the past, current day, and future.

7. Does your child have books that feature characters from a wide range of racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds? Make sure your child has access to books that reflect their background (their race, ethnicity, culture, etc.), as well as books that help them learn about people with other backgrounds. Books that provide a wide range of perspectives will help your child celebrate their background and identity while also learning about people with different backgrounds and identities.

8. Where can you find affordable books? You can buy used books at yard sales, library book sales, used bookstores, or thrift stores; borrow books from your library; and trade books with friends and family. Your community might also have a Little Free Library (a small box or shelf where members of the community leave books for others to take; visit <https://littlefreelibrary.org/> for more information). If there are books you would like to see in your library, ask a librarian if those books can be purchased for the library. If funds are available, most libraries will purchase requested books or help you find another library to borrow them from.

9. Can you buy your books from a locally-owned bookstore or BIPOC-owned bookstore? Use Google to search for locally-owned or BIPOC-owned bookstores in your area or order online from one of the black-owned bookstores on this list from Publisher's Weekly: <https://bit.ly/3yOSOi6>

Help All Children in Your Community Have Access to Books About BIPOC and Written by BIPOC

It is important that public libraries and classrooms have books that are written by BIPOC and include BIPOC characters. For many children, these collections are their main source of books.

Book Collections in Public and School Libraries, Classrooms, Child Care Centers, and Before or After School Programs:

Make sure these collections include books for children of all ages with BIPOC in a range of settings and include books written or illustrated by BIPOC. When they do, thank the teacher or librarian and tell them that you support including books written by BIPOC authors and about BIPOC characters.

If books need to be added to these collections:

- Request that the librarian or teacher purchase books about BIPOC characters and books written by BIPOC authors. Share the resources found in this publication for locating books.
- Donate new or gently used books to the library, classroom, or program.
- Ask parents or local businesses to donate money or books or organize a fundraising drive.
- Ask the school or library board to make funds available to purchase books about BIPOC characters and books written by BIPOC authors.

Classroom Lessons: Pay attention to the books that are used as part of classroom learning. Books used during history

lessons should provide an accurate history that includes BIPOC and the injustices committed against them. At least some of the books used during English or Language Arts lessons should be about and/or written by BIPOC and present BIPOC as everyday people as well as heroes or trailblazers. Books that create or continue stereotypes should be avoided, especially for younger children. If these books are used, they should be placed in historical context and the teacher should directly address and dispel stereotypes. If changes need to be made, ask to speak with your child's teacher or principal and organize other parents and teachers to address the issue.

Online Resources for Finding Books

Use these resources along with the list of *Things to Think about When Selecting Books* to find books that promote anti-racism.

1. **Diverse Book Finder** <https://diversebookfinder.org/>
This list was put together by a research team at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. The books are for children in kindergarten through grade three and are written in English or are English bi/multilingual. The website includes a search feature to help you thoughtfully select books. There is information about how to use the website and search feature here: <https://diversebookfinder.org/first-time-here-welcome-to-diverse-bookfinder/>
2. **Black Lives Matter in Children and YA Literature** <https://bit.ly/3yHvVgv> This Google document of resources provides information about books for preschoolers through teens. The author of this list is not identified.



3. **Listopia on goodreads.com** https://www.goodreads.com/list?ref=nav_brws_lists Goodreads.com is a social media website owned by Amazon where people can recommend and rate books. You can use the Listopia page to search for lists of books by and about BIPOC. Here is an example of one of these lists: https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/149170.Children_books_with_dark_skinned_main_characters
4. **The Conscious Kid** <https://www.theconsciouskid.org/book-lists> The Conscious Kid organization has put together several lists of children's books that can help you find books to promote anti-racism. There are lists of children's books by AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) authors; Black authors; about Dr. MLK, Jr.; by Latinx authors; and about race and identity, among others. The books on these lists are for preschoolers through young adults and are written in English.
5. **Where to Find Diverse Books** <https://tinyurl.com/diversebookresource> This website was put together by the We Need Diverse Books organization and includes several lists of books featuring characters representing a wide variety of races, ethnicities, and cultures. Books on this website are for preschoolers through young adults.
6. **Books with Characters of Color** <https://bit.ly/3wxDwf5> This list of children's books with BIPOC main and supporting characters was put together by Common Sense Media and is searchable by child's age (preschoolers to teens).



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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Cooperative Extension

AUTHORS

KATHERINE E. SPEIRS, Ph.D.

*Associate Specialist, Early Childhood/Childhood Development
Norton School of Human Ecology*

JENNIFER PARLIN

*Assistant Agent; Family, Consumer and Health Sciences
Pima County Cooperative Extension*

JENNIFER ARGYROS, M.S.

*Program Director
Family Resource Centers, Santa Cruz County*

ASHLEY DIXON-KLEIBER, M.S.

*Assistant Area Agent; Family, Consumer and Health Sciences
Gila County Cooperative Extension*

CHRISTY STUTH, MPH, RDH

*Area Associate Agent; Family, Consumer and Health Sciences
Coconino County Cooperative Extension*

SHEVONDA JOYNER

*Program Coordinator, Sr.
Arizona Project WET*

CONTACT

KATHERINE E. SPEIRS

kspeirs@arizona.edu

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