# Contents

Acknowledgments vii

Introduction xiii

1. What Difference Does Reading Aloud Make? 1

2. Building Community by Reading Aloud the First Thing Every Day 7

3. Putting Language in the Air—Sharing the Music—by Reading Aloud 84

4. Continuing the Music with Poetry Throughout the Year by Reading Aloud 113

5. Supporting the Writing Workshop by Reading Aloud 131

6. Building Bridges Across the Curriculum by Reading Aloud 150

7. Closing the Day with a Chapter Book Read-Aloud 180

A Closing Word 210

Support for the Six Opportunities to Read-Aloud 212

Works Cited 215

Index 217
Acknowledgments

A c k n o w l e d g m e n t s are a tricky thing. There is always the risk of leaving out someone who has been profoundly important in the journey. There is also the risk of creating a laundry list so long and tedious that no one really reads it or cares. So we begin this task with those concerns. First, we wish to acknowledge those folks to whom we share a debt of gratitude. We gratefully acknowledge our tireless editor, trusted friend, and “goddess of goodness,” Lois Bridges. Lois was there for us from the first mention of this idea to the last drop of ink on the very last page. She was our lighthouse, our fortress, our guardian, and our guide. The journey would have been much less of a joy without her. So to Lois-the-goddess-Bridges, goes our first and most heartfelt thanks.

During the summer of 2003, a group of dedicated book lovers, the original BBB’s (Books, Beach, and Beverages), met in Gulf Shores, Alabama for a long weekend to explore new books. Those hours of reading, discussing, and celebrating over three hundred new treasures planted seeds that would eventually grow into a book proposal for Lois Bridges. To each of these friends: Christy Johnson, Kristi Adams, Mary Kay Hodges, Pat Mathis, Nancy Johnson, Sara Jane Tarter, and Georgina Pipes, we say thank you for those joyous hours together. We hope you find this book useful in your work with children.

And, of course, each of us has individuals to acknowledge. We’ll begin with Lester.

I am one of those fortunate few who has the opportunity to spend a great deal of time in schools and classrooms across the nation. I love those moments when children make connections and see themselves as fully worthy and smart human beings. I cherish those moments when I get to be part of that and I gratefully acknowledge all the many children and teachers around the country who have played a role in shaping my vision of the many ways picture books can be a viable part of the instructional day.

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story only intensified the passion for books that has led to this project so many
years later. You are a living example of the power of story in the lives of children. I
eagerly await the day I hold your first novel in my hand. I know that day is
coming.

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I have never met a principal who more clearly demonstrates the notion of putting
children first in every decision, every day, in every way. A project like this one has
the potential of becoming an unwieldy and daunting task. However, the daily
phone conversations and the steady stream of email keeping communication open
and flowing have made this project a joyous and productive adventure. At times I
have felt as if we were Lewis and Clark moving in search of one more bookstore,
one more book—just one more book with a focus on friendship, another angle on
civil rights, or a book that could be a model for making smooth transitions be-
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right word or one more delicious book. Phone call after phone call (he in North
Carolina with me in Alabama), email after email, hour after hour, his excitement
and energy never wavered. Ten years ago, when I first met and heard him read
aloud at a Mid-South Reading and Writing Institute in Birmingham, AL, I became
captivated by his talent, his enthusiasm, and amazing ability to mesmerize an
audience with the cadence of his voice as he put the language of a breathtaking picture book into the air. Since that time my respect for him has only increased as I have come to appreciate that whether he is in front of thousands of teachers at a national conference or a single classroom of children at Woodmeade Elementary, he is the consummate educator, author, and friend.

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interfere for long with their work in doing what is right for children. I would not have been able to complete this book with the joy and passion I hold if it were not for their steadfast devotion to the children we serve.

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Introduction

We’re betting that you can recall at least one teacher who had the power to whisk you away on the written word. It may have been an elementary teacher who read from a favorite chapter book every day right after lunch or perhaps she shared a new picture book every day and took the time to examine the art with you. It may have been a teacher in junior high or middle school who so admired poetry that he simply couldn’t imagine a day passing without putting poetry in the air. Or maybe you had a high school teacher who so loved the sound of language that she “took valuable time” from each period to share a short piece only to comment on the artful writing.

We’re betting you are like us and can recall that feeling of drifting away, pulling farther and farther from the shores of reality on the tide of language crafted by an artful writer and played on the voice of a talented and passionate reader. We are betting you, like us, can trace your love of language to the music in the voice of at least one significant adult who took the time to make the sounds of written language a part of the legacy he or she wanted to leave with you.

Lester can trace that legacy all the way back to his preschool years. As Lester pointed out while at Hamline University (2002): “I was an onlooker, a lusting voyeur. I sat perched on the wide arm of that oversized chair looking over the shoulder of my brother. He sat next to my mother, open book spread across his lap. He was in first grade, I was going on five and I was in awe. I watched in amazement as my brother placed his finger under a word and it spilled forth from his mouth filling the air with sounds.

“I listened to the music of that rhythmic language—‘I do not like them, Sam-I-am. I do not like green eggs and ham.’ . . . ‘One fish, two fish, red fish, blue fish.’ . . . ‘The sun did not shine. It was too wet to play. So we sat in the house all that cold, wet day.’

“It was that music that I carried with me around our upstairs apartment. I walked about chanting, ‘I do not like them here or there. I do not like them anywhere. I do not like green eggs and ham. I do not like them, Sam-I-am.’
I was an onlooker, an eavesdropper longing to join the magical club of readers. I wanted to place my finger under a word, just so, and have those words spilling forth from my mouth. I wanted to sit in the big chair next to my mother with a book spread across my lap. I wanted to make the music that was somehow trapped on the page waiting for the touch of a magic finger. I wanted that finger to be mine.

“I listened and watched every evening. I carried the music everywhere chanting the memorable language that continued to resonate long after.

“I did, of course, hold the books and lick the tip of my index finger before carefully turning each page. I did chant the music as I touched the words and I did believe with the faith of a child that I had found that magic.

Then I went to first grade. I met Dick and Jane. I met Spot. I met Sally. I met Puff—‘See Dick. See Jane.’ ‘Run Spot.’ ‘Oh, Sally!’ ‘Get down Puff.’ I sat in small circles as we took turns telling everyone to ‘Look,’ or ‘Get down’ or ‘Run, run, run.’ We took turns saying those words, touching them with our fingers, but the music was gone. There was no memorable language. Nothing would resonate long after. I did not walk about chanting, ‘Oh Sally. Look, look, look.’ ‘Get down Puff, get down.’ I did not want to read. I wanted to ‘Run, run, run!’

“I did, of course, learn to read. As I recall that was neither a remarkable event nor a struggle. Just another occurrence in the journey called childhood.

“The remarkable thing is that I did not long to read. Somehow the magic and the music had vanished. I was in third grade before I even heard the music again. And when I did, it played on the slow-paced, deep and smooth, southern voice of Mrs. Hand, our school librarian.

“It was in the library, once each week. It started with Uncle Remus Tales and moved to weekly adventures with Henry and Violet and Jesse and Benny as they struggled to survive in that old boxcar with their adopted dog, Watch. I longed to be Henry, the brave leader. I longed to dam up the stream and make a pool that doubled as the refrigerator. I could taste the cold milk and feel the crack in Benny’s cherished pink cup as I drank with him.”

It was Mrs. Hand who revived the music I longed to hear. And I continued to cherish the sound of it. I can still hear her voice. Strong and smooth—a little richer than most women I knew then—like thick velvet. It’s a quiet voice that can come alive when Brer Rabbit begs his captor, “Please, whatever you do, don’t

throw me in that briar patch!” It’s a compelling voice that pulls you along like a
current running downstream through a story. Even now, if I will quiet myself and
listen, I can hear her voice and I am carried away by that same current. I am hid-
ing away with Henry and Jesse and Violet and Benny in an old boxcar. I wash the
dishes, including little Benny’s treasured pink cup, in the waterfall. I help care for
Watch when he has a thorn in his paw and I cheer for Henry when he brings milk
and food home to the boxcar.

I can smell the library in the elementary school where I was a student. I can
feel the cool hard surface of the wooden chair I sat on and the table where I rested
my head on my folded arms. I can see Mrs. Hand, our librarian, in her special spot
holding a book she obviously treasures as she looks from the page to our eyes
knowing that she was working her magic with that voice. She was casting a spell
and she knew it, a spell that would last a lifetime.

Although I had the power to take hold of that sound with my ear, I still could
not echo it with my voice. That would come in a few more years.²

In the fifth grade my family moved to Key West. It was supposed to be a short
stay, so we rented a furnished place. It had no television. The weather was warm
and pleasant even in the fall evenings and filling the time outdoors with my
brother and friends was no challenge. But the night, the dark and quiet night, was
another thing altogether. We played cards and board games, but that grew old
quickly. I resorted to reading a book at my mother’s suggestion. We bought a copy
of the Wizard of Oz. It took only a few pages before I was hearing the music, the
rhythm of the story, the voices of the characters and finding myself living among
Dorothy, the Tin Man, the Cowardly Lion, and the Scarecrow. I was marching
down the yellow brick road, I kept watch for that wicked, wicked witch and I
feared—even in my dreams—those flying monkeys. You see, I had found it. And
once you do, it is yours forever.

It was that voice, and I am sure of this, that led me to believe there was some-
thing worth the effort in a chapter book. It was that voice that showed me print
could have life in the hands of one who loved words and language and stories. I
didn’t, of course, realize all this at the time. No that came years later, long after
Mrs. Hand had retired and unfortunately even after her death. That insight came
in layers over the years. It started when I began reading aloud, first to my own stu-
dents in first grade and later for my son and then for teachers in workshops and
for my college students and in schools where I’ve been invited (like a storyteller)

². From Lester L. Laminack, Hamline University Magalog.
to come read aloud to groups of children. I began to realize that people of all ages
love to be caught up in that current, love to be swept away from the banks of
onlooking and carried through the flow of a story to another place and time.
That’s when I began to pay attention to how that happens.

I realize now that Mrs. Hand was a master at the art of reading aloud. She not
only brought life to stories; she was a living demonstration of the art itself. With-
out even knowing it we sat in her spell and became her apprentices. I realize now
that my love of words and language and stories has one of its roots tapping into
that history, pulling life-sustaining energy from the demonstrations of a single li-
brarian, Mrs. Hand.

The legacy of story, the legacy of the rhythm and music of language is a
most powerful force in the lives of readers and writers. There is a flow, a current
in the language of literature that will resonate long after the book is closed. It is
on that current that we move our oral and written language forward as literate
beings. We challenge each of you to consider the legacy you are leaving with
your students. Will the sounds of language resonate long after they leave you? Will
artful language find its way to the voices of your students’ spoken words and writ-
ten works? Will your voice echo in their ears when they open a book and read
it cold?  

It’s unfortunate, but many teachers feel they don’t have time for reading aloud
or that reading aloud is a treat for students when they have finished their work or
as a transition right after lunch, or on rainy days when the kids are trapped in-
doors. We hope to convince you that reading aloud is not a luxury or a treat, but
that it is essential to the literate lives of students. Lester is fond of saying that if he
were in charge of the world (that’s a scary thought isn’t it), teachers would read
aloud as many as six times every day. We know that sounds like a lot of time taken
from other things; hold on and we’ll try to lay out a plan of action that may make
it more manageable than you first imagine.

First, it is important to think of each as an opportunity to layer another read-
aloud experience into your day. It is important to also remember that each time
you seize an opportunity to read aloud during the day, it is an instructional act.
Finally, remember that each of the opportunities to read aloud is deliberate and
carefully planned; they are not simply to fill time, entertain, or reward behav-
ior. For now, we’ll briefly outline the focus of the six opportunities for reading
aloud. Then, throughout the chapters, we’ll flesh them out one at a time and

include annotated lists of books we have found to be especially effective for each opportunity.

**Reading Aloud Across the Day and Throughout the Curriculum**

The first opportunity for reading aloud is at the beginning of the day. The very first thing we do as a class is to gather for a read-aloud. The focus of this reading is building community and needs to include books that feature characters learning to recognize that our similarities as human beings are more powerful than the outward and individual differences that set us apart. This segment should also include books that help each of us be more caring and supportive as we learn to participate as members of a developing community within the classroom.

The second opportunity for reading aloud is to simply put the sound of written language in the air. This reading time features books or other selections with lyrical language, poetic prose, striking imagery, rich description, alliteration, assonance and consonance, playfulness, puns, humor, rhyming, and rhythm. This read-aloud could easily be done as a transition between two events in the daily routine. If you and your students need a few minutes to put things away, refocus, and gather new things—there will always be that stagnant in-between time. Think of this read-aloud as the hinge between two segments in your day. If it is done daily, students will come to understand they must make the transition quietly and quickly in order to hear the story. It is also a nice way to establish a time frame for transitions—everyone should be ready when the book is closed. One more thing: When all minds are traveling along the current of the story, all minds are together in the moment. So, as you close the book, you will have everyone’s attention to make any transitional comments about the language before moving on into the next segment of your daily routine.

The third opportunity for reading aloud can serve the same purpose, sharing the same focus, but features poetry exclusively. We are concerned that poetry gets slighted in the curriculum and in the classroom. Even though children’s publishers are paying more attention to poetry, we are not seeing the amount of time devoted to it increasing—at least not in the schools and classrooms we have been able to visit and work with. So it is with this in mind that we encourage you to make time for poets and poetry every day. In Chapter 4, we flesh out a plan for
using poetry across the week and offer a list of poetry collections and anthologies that will be useful for this read-aloud opportunity.

The fourth opportunity for reading aloud should support the writing workshop. This is not to be done in place of the writing workshop, rather it should extend or scaffold work done in minilessons or when conferring. This read-aloud opportunity needs to feature text selections that are already familiar to the community of learners—texts previously shared in one of the other read-alouds. The purpose is to immerse writers in demonstrations of well-crafted written language. Read-alouds here should feature moves made by other writers to show potential, to extend invitations, to encourage exploration, and to lead the writers in our community toward new options within their own work. Material shared most likely will feature selected segments from the second, third, and sixth opportunities for read-alouds as well as short pieces from newspapers, magazines, and so on. It is essential to note that this read-aloud features segments and not whole texts. We find this works well as a way of refocusing learners right after lunch.

The fifth opportunity for reading aloud should be part of a content area. For example, during a unit of study focused on the civil rights movement in the United States, we would start every class period with a carefully selected picture book. Chapter 6 provides an in-depth look at a specific collection of picture books selected to support a study of civil rights. The collection detailed there will extend the content presented in any textbook, layer in vocabulary, and help students develop a visual image of events from that period in history. We use this more thorough collection as an example of what can be done for any topic in the curriculum. Then, to support other areas of the curriculum, we have put together several other collections of picture books that are featured in our book, _Building Bridges Across the Curriculum with Picture Books and Read-Alouds_ (2006, Heinemann). While we recognize that the lists aren’t exhaustive, they do provide a demonstration of the potential held within a carefully selected collection of picture books.

The sixth and final opportunity for reading aloud comes at the absolute end of every day. If time is needed to put the room in order and gather book bags and jackets, then these tasks should be completed before this final read-aloud. The focus of this selection should be on leading students toward sustaining a story in their minds and features a well-chosen chapter book, even with the youngest children. The goal is to have students leave school creating images of the events in the ongoing story, to have that language linger in their minds, and to have them thinking throughout the evening about the lives of the characters and what may
happen tomorrow. Then, if we are lucky and use our voices well, we will have them begging for just one more chapter.

Well, there you have it and we can already hear some of you out there mumbling something under your breath about how much time this will take and how you don’t have enough time already to meet the demands of the day. Consider this: Time is like a budget; as teachers, we live on a “fixed income” when it comes to time. We have only so much and know we will not get any more. When creating a budget, most of us set priorities and make tough decisions. We decide where to put our resources on the basis of what we value and consider most essential. The six read-aloud opportunities will consume some portion of our budgeted time; there is no question about that. The question we beg you to consider is the value of reading aloud to your students. Will the investment of valuable time pay off in other ways? Hang on—as we move through the chapters, we will address the time investment and the payoff for each read-aloud.
Building Community by Reading Aloud the First Thing Every Day

I always read aloud, in my most dramatic voice, when I first meet students. It’s the fastest way I know to bond with kids.

Regie Routman

Ralph Peterson (1992) contends that “[t]he primary goal at the beginning of a new year or term is to lead students to come together, form a group, and be there for one another. . . . In making learning communities with their students, teachers make use of ceremony, ritual, and rite in an effort to create a place where students feel they belong” (13, 15). Establishing ceremonies and rituals and routines with students gives them a sense of peace. There is a calming effect that comes from knowing what to expect, knowing the parameters, knowing how the day will pass, and sensing that you belong here—that you are cared for and needed. “Whether we’re a preschooler or a young teen, a graduating college senior or a retired person, we human beings all want to know that we’re acceptable, that our being alive somehow makes a difference in the lives of others” (Rogers 2003, 162).

The idea of setting the day in motion with a read-aloud is more than just a way to start the day. This particular ceremony is, as Regie Routman notes, the
fastest way to bond with kids. Clearly, as we establish the pattern of opening the day with a read-aloud devoted to building community, we are bonding with our students; but they are also bonding with one another and with the authors, illustrators, and characters we feature. So opening the day with a carefully selected read-aloud has many layers of benefit.

Peterson (1992) goes on to say:

Ceremonies aid students in making the transition between daily life and classroom living by turning thoughts toward schooling. . . . When ritual is incorporated into an opening ceremony, it gets everybody on the same page, so to speak. . . . Ritual has a centering effect. . . . Ritual makes it possible to dwell in an experience, to exist in feeling ways, to simply be one with the moment. (16, 20–22)

When we gather around a story first thing in the morning, we are leading students to lean in, to join with the characters and with each other as we examine the lives of those characters and the impact of their decisions. We lead them to examine life through the lens of another, to see the challenges faced; and, more important, to realize how our responses to life’s challenges can make all the difference. The rituals involved in getting ready for the morning read-aloud will quickly become a shared routine in the community of learners; in many ways these will help define the community. “Ritual is a way of connecting to a larger community. It is more than talk. It is made up of symbolic acts that ground family and community life. Rituals such as taking up a position in a circle, taking oaths, making pledges, and lighting candles all symbolize that participants are entering into a different reality” (Peterson 1992, 20).

Every morning, as you begin the day with this first read-aloud, what rituals will you establish? Will there be a designated spot for all to gather? Will each student have a designated place? Will there be any talk before the book is shared? Will you always begin by telling how you selected the book? Will there be talk during the reading or after? Will there be clearly defined or understood ways of entering into the conversation? Obviously, these are issues to ponder as we make the first read-aloud of the day a significant part of the community’s life. Whatever rituals you establish, we strongly recommend that you include the selection’s title and introduce the author and illustrator (if appropriate) as if they are present and guests in your community that morning. When a familiar author or illustrator is featured, acknowledge what is known about the person.

Beginning the day with a read-aloud can yield benefits throughout the day and across the weeks and months of your time together. Consider the energy
harnessed by having all the minds in your classroom community come together and focus on the language and events of the story you are putting in the air. Consider the power of beginning your day with all that energy traveling on a common current; every member of the community rubbing shoulders with the same characters—pondering their dilemmas, cheering their accomplishments, and sharing in the pain of their struggles and losses. Consider having the cumulative effect of all those readings as a common touchstone across the days and weeks and months of a school year.

Consider the rich discussions that could develop within your community and the opportunities that may arise for modeling how to explore a topic and form an opinion, how to dialogue with others, how to voice an opinion, or how to disagree in a civil and respectful manner. Consider the opportunities you could have for hosting frank conversations about choices, friendship, and treatment of others, respect for differences, and a myriad of other topics that could center on the characters in stories rather than on individuals in the classroom community. Consider the effectiveness of a well-chosen book at the most timely moment. And as we said in the introduction, consider the power of books that feature characters learning to recognize that our similarities as human beings are more powerful than the outward and the individual differences that distinguish us one from another. What if we had opportunities to get to know people as human beings with emotions and intellect and heart and soul before we knew the labels that separate and build walls and foster hatred? What if?

Mr. Rogers, our beloved television neighbor (and one of Lester’s heroes), wrote that “[a]s human beings, our job in life is to help people realize how rare and valuable each one of us really is. . . . It’s our job to encourage each other to discover that uniqueness and to provide ways of developing its expression” (Rogers 2003, 137). Clearly, this is one of the goals of this first read-aloud.

In this chapter we feature books to help you show children how rare and special they are while also coming to realize that each of their neighbors is equally valued. The books will help demonstrate that we can love and support the learning of one without diminishing the capacity to love and support others. We feature texts to help students understand that life brings challenges and joys and fears and worries. We can use the books to help students know that they, like the characters they meet, can face challenges and know the full range of human emotions in healthy ways. The conversations these texts can help us ignite are important. Through the first read-aloud of a carefully chosen book, we can help students recognize that it is a part of human nature to feel all the emotions. But, more important, we help them to internalize positive ways to react to those emotions.
Books for Building Community

This first collection of books is organized under one big umbrella: Building Community. Under that umbrella we have carefully clustered several sets of books around related themes. So now we invite you in to explore books from the following eleven shelves—books we believe will help you and your students establish a caring and thoughtful, open and accepting community.

- Celebrating Ourselves and Others
- Believing in Yourself
- Providing a Lens to View the World
- Learning to Value Special People with Special Ways
- Today I Feel . . .
- Overcoming Obstacles and Facing Life’s Challenges
- Meeting Neighbors and Making Friends
- Coping with Taunting, Teasing, and Bullying
- It Happened at School
- A Family Is . . .
- Learning to Say Good-Bye

One final word before you begin perusing the shelves. We clearly recognize that these collections are only a beginning; this list is by no means intended to be exhaustive. At best we see the books here as the base from which we hope you will continue to build as you discover new titles with this first read-aloud in mind.

Building Community Bookshelf One: Celebrating Ourselves and Others

Self-respect and a healthy sense of self-worth may be essential to our ability to appreciate others. Mr. Rogers (2003) said that “[w]e want to raise our children so that they can take a sense of pride in both their own heritage and the diversity of others” (146). For each of us to hold dear a personal identity does not prohibit any of us from recognizing and appreciating the value of the differences others may know as truth. “When you combine your own intuition with a sensitivity to other people’s feelings and moods, you may be close to the origins of valuable human attributes such as generosity, altruism, compassion, sympathy, and empathy” (Rogers 2003, 147). Books selected for this shelf are intended to help
you lead your students to discover or validate an identity as individuals who are important in their own right. In addition, these books can spark the conversations that can help them recognize the significant role each plays in creating community in the classroom, in the neighborhood, and in the world.

**All the Colors of the Earth**
*Written and Illustrated by Shelia Hamanaka*
Mulberry Books/Morrow 1994, **isbn 0–688–17062–5**

Hamanaka’s very short but glorious book tells the reader (and listeners) that regardless of the color of your skin it takes all the ethnic diversity found on earth to make us what we are. From phrases like *roaring brown, whispering gold, tingling pink* to others like *crackling russet*, the author’s craft is a stunning work. The message of this seven-sentence book will surely become a favorite of yours to use for phrasing, beautiful language, adjectives, punctuation, leads, endings, but most of all message....

*Children come in all the colors of the earth and sky and sea.*

**Celebrations**
*Written and Illustrated by Nancy Maria Grande Tabor*
Charlesbridge 2004, **isbn 1–57091–575–X**

Since Mexico and the United States share a border, they also share many citizens, customs, holidays, and celebrations. In this lovely bilingual text (the language appears on all pages in both English and Spanish), Tabor begins with: *All days are special. Every day an important event happens. We choose the days we want to make even more special, and we celebrate those days in many ways.* From the celebration of the New Year through all the major holidays, Tabor explains the customs of each country. What a wonderful resource this will become for the many U.S. classrooms that are home to bilingual children.

**Country Kid, City Kid**
*Written by Julie Cummins*
*Illustrated by Ted Rand*
Henry Holt 2002, **isbn 0–8050–6467–2**

Ben lives in the country and Jody lives in the city, and this is where the book gets interesting. Ben’s perspective about life in the country is told on the left
page while on the opposite page you find Jody’s perspective about her life in the city. The text is interesting but the pictures make this one a must-have as you contrast their lives, their customs and culture. As readers move through the text, they will be there for all the daily occurrences including waking up to the different sounds, traveling to school, shopping for groceries, playing baseball, picking up the mail, shopping for Christmas trees, and finally getting ready for summer camp where the two kids finally meet each other. 

*Country kid, city kid—miles apart but two of a kind.*

**Feathers and Fools**

*Written by Mem Fox*

*Illustrated by Nicholas Wilton*


What happens when we focus on differences in others and let those differences consume our thoughts? Read this enchanted allegory and guide your students to recognize how our fears can alter our perceptions and judgments and ultimately how the choices we make can affect our lives and the lives of others. In this story, the characters are the magnificent peacocks and the elegant swans that begin to distrust each other. Lots of layered meaning may be missed without a thoughtful and reflective teacher to guide and develop the deeper meaning of the story. This is truly a powerful and thought-provoking book.

**Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message**

*Written by Chief Jake Swamp*

*Illustrated by Erwin Printup Jr.*


The author’s note reads: *Native American children are taught to greet the world each morning by saying thank you to all living things. They learn that according to Native American tradition, people everywhere are embraced as family. Our diversity, like all the wonders of Nature, is truly a gift for which we are thankful.* This will be one of your favorite books to read aloud and get your children talking about what community means and how we should embrace diversity rather than let it divide us. Printup’s art respects the customs and culture featured. This very simple message will become a standard for the beginning of your school year.
Hooray for You!
Written and Illustrated by Marianne Richmond
Richmond Studios 2001, ISBN 0–93167444–1
What makes every one of us the special individuals we are? Explore these ideas with your students. Each of them will likely conclude that there is no one else in the entire world quite like him or her. This book will help us learn to appreciate and celebrate those differences. The art is so colorful and delightful that children will chant “read it again.”

I Am America
Written and Photos by Charles R. Smith Jr.
Charles R. Smith Jr. zooms in with his camera lens to feature boys and girls representing a variety of characteristics including color, ethnic background, size, religion, preferences, and more. This book contains bright, crisp photography and minimal text presented in enlarged font. Smith features his own beautiful children on the page with I am a new branch sprouting in my majestic family tree. This one makes a wonderful addition to the community-building focus with the embedded message: No matter how different we are, we are still more alike!

I Call My Hand Gentle
Written by Amanda Haan
Illustrated by Marina Sagona
This thoughtful book was written following Amanda Haan’s observations of young children playing with each other on playgrounds across America and Europe. It features, in very simple language, many of the things little hands can choose to do: hug, throw, hold, protect, share, catch, hammer, write. It also contrasts the gentle with the not-so-gentle: grab, hurt, steal, break. This lovely, nicely written book can be used with children of all ages.

I Like Myself
Written by Karen Beaumont
Illustrated by David Catrow
Karen Beaumont’s dedication tells it all: Wishing every child the magic of self-acceptance and love. This very short, enlarged font text will be very appealing to young children. The story is written in first person with the tiny character drawn to be uniquely different. However, she likes everything about herself and will serve as a springboard for great knee-to-knee conversation.

**I’m in Charge of Celebrations**  
*Written by Byrd Baylor*  
*Illustrated by Peter Parnall*  
Aladdin 1986, isbn 0–689–80620–5

This little book can become the opening to a new way of thinking for your classroom community. So many times, we either skip celebrations or think a celebration has to be an elaborate event for something truly magnificent. However, Byrd Baylor shows us that we can find reasons to celebrate the “everyday and ordinary” things in our lives. She demonstrates how we can have as many celebrations as we choose for any reason we find noteworthy. Read this one to open a tremendous opportunity to begin creating celebrations for the community developing within a new classroom.

**Ish**  
*Written and Illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds*  
Candlewick 2004, isbn 0–763–62344–X

Our years of work with young children and teachers have led us to value and celebrate approximations. That is why we have become so enchanted with this book: *Ish* is a celebration of approximations. In this tiny but awesome book, budding artist Raymon loses faith in himself when his brother’s comments are less than positive. Raymon is on the verge of giving up when he notices that his sister Marisol has snatched one of his crumpled drawings. He dashes up the stairs and follows Marisol to her room only to find a gallery of his crumpled drawings that she has rescued. When Raymon learns to see his work through Marisol’s adoring eyes, he begins to see potential in each of his efforts. Every reader will learn an important lesson along with Raymon, a lesson that invites him to savor his life and his efforts to express himself. *Ish* is a book that is simply too delicious for children to miss!

**Let’s Talk About Race**  
*Written by Julius Lester*  
*Illustrated by Karen Barbour*  
HarperCollins 2005, isbn 0–06–028596–6
Julius Lester writes on the front flap, *I write because our lives are stories. If enough of those stories are told, then perhaps we will begin to see that our lives are the same story. The differences are merely in the details.* His slant is refreshing yet so simple. As you delve deeply into the text, children will grow to realize that underneath their skin they are all exactly the same as every other human being. Lester is reminding us once again that we must lead children to know each other heart to heart, head to head, and soul to soul before we know the details of our differences.

**Peace Begins with You**  
*Written by Katherine Scholes  
Illustrated by Robert Ingpen  

This powerful picture book deals with difficult personal, national, and world issues relating to peace. You and your students will come back to this one again and again as a touchstone when peacemaking is called for. The story reveals the difficulties that occur as conflicts arise and how these can be resolved in ways that avoid having winners and losers—a difficult concept for young children. The text is rather long but valuable for knee-to-knee discussions.

**Shades of Black: A Celebration of Our Children**  
*Written by Sandra L. Pinkney  
Photographs by Myles C. Pinkney  
Scholastic 2000, ISBN 0–439–14892–8*

In this celebration of African American children the Pinkneys invite you to notice the many skin tones that cannot be described with the single word *black.* The beautiful children featured range in shades from creamy white to milky smooth brown, from radiant brassy yellow to gingery brown. In addition, the author and illustrator point out differences in hair—straight, twisted, short, and long. The final focus is eyes and the Pinkneys describe how each set of eyes is different from the other. As a transition from one section to the next, you find the words: *I am Black. I am Unique.* (Read this one along with *The Colors of Us, I Am America,* and *Brown Sugar Babies.)*

**Somewhere Today: A Book of Peace**  
*Written by Shelley Moore Thomas  
Photographs by Eric Futran  
Somewhere Today is a strikingly simple text with one sentence per page followed by a full-page photograph illustrating the meaning of the sentence. Every page gives children an example of living peacefully together: Somewhere today . . . someone is being a friend instead of fighting. The book provides an excellent lead-in to inviting your children to develop their own class book to extend the message of peace.

**A Tale of Two Goats**
*Written by Tom Barber*
*Illustrated by Rosalind Beardshaw*

When you first open this book, Beardshaw’s lighthearted art might lead you to think this is just another cute book for children, but if you linger with it awhile and read the text, you will realize there is a much larger and deeper message. In the oversize book, two farmers live side by side with only two goats as companions. One farmer grows cabbage while the other grows turnips. A fence separates the farms because neither wants the goat of their neighbor to have any of their vegetables. However, the goats don’t see things the same way as the farmers and begin exchanging food. The farmers don’t like that so they build a larger, stronger fence. When that doesn’t stop the goats, they build an even larger, stronger, taller fence. The normally healthy goats soon become sick when they stop eating. It doesn’t take the farmers long to rethink their behavior and tear down the brick wall they finally created to keep the goats separated.

**The Way to Start a Day**
*Written by Byrd Baylor*
*Illustrated by Peter Parnall*

Baylor’s text takes the reader on a journey that explores many different cultures (cavemen, Peru, Aztec, Congo, China, Egypt, and the Pueblo) and how they each celebrate the new dawn. What a perfect book to use to draw a parallel at the beginning of the year as you begin to develop ceremonies and rituals for your classroom community.

**We Share One World**
*Written by Jane E. Hoffelt*
*Illustrated by Marty Husted*
You and I, we share one world,
One golden sun,
One silver moon.

So begins the musings of one young boy perched atop a rock formation staring toward the distant mountains and the pastel sky. As readers turn each page, our narrator speaks of the many things he shares with children everywhere—breathing the air, touching the wind, hearing the waves, and smelling the rain—he speaks of sharing one world. Our young narrator looks in from one corner of each spread into another part of the world where children are depicted in the context of their culture, sharing what our narrator speaks of. In the upper corner of each spread there is a small inset map showing the home continent and country of the children depicted.

Hoffelt and Husted are sisters who merged their talents to celebrate life and help children recognize that as human beings we are more alike than different, to recognize that as citizens of the globe we are all neighbors. (Pair this one with the 1997 Whoever You Are by Mem Fox.)

Whoever You Are
Written by Mem Fox
Illustrated by Leslie Staub

Mem Fox gently and quietly reminds us that no matter where we are or who we are there are others just like us all over the world. While our skin may be different, our homes and schools may be different. Our language may even be different but inside our hearts are the same. We all smile the same. We laugh the same. We hurt and cry the same. This wonderful book is an invitation to children to become aware of all the other ways we are the same, despite our differences. Whoever You Are is a great book to begin community-building on the first day of school. The book is gift enough, but our additional wish for you is that Mem Fox could read the book to your children.

Building Community Bookshelf Two: Believing in Yourself

Some children seem to cross the threshold on the first day of school with confidence and poise. Yet some seem to doubt themselves and their worth to others. For this shelf we’ve pulled several books with characters that reveal a belief that being special is possible even in the face of factors that might defeat many. As
Thank you for sampling this resource.

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