



Talking about Race and Discrimination with Children

A Children's Book List for Anti-Racist Activism

- As early as 3–6 months of age, babies begin to notice and express preference by race (Bar-Haim, 2006).
- Between the ages of 3 and 5, children begin to apply stereotypes, categorize people by race, and express racial bias (Winkler, 2009).
 - White North American children begin to report negative explicit attitudes toward people of color as early as age 3 (Baron, 2006). By age 3, children also use racist language intentionally — and use it to create social hierarchies, evoke emotional reactions in people of color, and produce harmful results (Van Ausdale, 2001).
- By 6 years of age, children demonstrate a pro-white/anti-Black bias (Baron, 2006). Adolescents, when looking at Black people's faces, show higher levels of activity in the area of the brain known for its fight-flight reactions (Telzer, 2013).



To counter racist socialization and racial bias, experts recommend acknowledging and naming race and racism with children as early and as often as possible. Children's books are one of the most effective and practical tools for initiating these critical conversations, and can also be used to model what it means to resist and dismantle oppression.

Beyond addressing issues of race and racism, this children's reading list focuses on taking action. It highlights resistance, resilience and activism; and seeks to empower youth to participate in the ongoing movement for racial justice. Children not only need to know what individual, institutional, and internalized racism looks like, they need to know what they can *do* about it.

These books showcase the many ways people of all ages and races have worked to disrupt racism, and highlight how race intersects with other issues, such as capitalism, class, and colonization. The majority of books center BIPOC, whose lives and bodies have been on the front lines of racial justice work, yet whose stories often go untold. The essential work of white activists is also included — to underscore that anti-racist work is not the responsibility of BIPOC; and exemplify the ways white people have stood up against racial injustice. This list was curated by critical literacy organizations, [The Conscious Kid](#) and [American Indians in Children's Literature](#).

Article and book list: <https://blog.usejournal.com/31-childrens-books-to-support-conversations-on-race-racism-and-resistance-9dbabc28360e>

Something Happened in Our Town by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, and Ann Hazzard, illustrated by Jennifer Zivoin

Something Happened in Our Town follows two families — one white, one Black — as they discuss a police shooting of a Black man in their community. The story aims to answer children's questions about such traumatic events, and to help children identify and counter racial injustice in their own lives. Includes an extensive Note to Parents and Caregivers with guidelines for discussing race and racism with children, child-friendly definitions, and sample dialogues. Ages 4–8.

Watch the read-a-long on YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcOhOFGcWm8>



GRACE BYERS

I Am Enough



I Am Enough by Grace Byers, illustrated by Keturah A. Bobo

"Like time, I'm here to be, and be everything I can." The little girl in this story shines like the sun. She sings, soars, and stands like the mountains. "Like the winner, I'm here to win, and if I don't, get up again." She is strong and smart and loving and kind, but most importantly, she is herself, and that will always be enough.

Harper Collins Publishing has a great discussion guide and activity, linked below. The activity allows kids to celebrate each others differences!

Discussion Guide: <https://bit.ly/308uRRT>
 Activity: <https://bit.ly/2U3T4Vg>

Below are links to a few more book lists of books on race and diversity.

