



Navigating Tough Topics

Books that Will Help Children Better Understand Life's Challenges

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2021 Kaigler Children's Book Festival

Overview

- ★ Why Tough Topics
- ★ Scaffolding Conversations
- ★ Characteristics of the Best Books
- ★ Centering Lens for Booktalks
- ★ Sample Booktalks with Program Connections
- ★ Resources for More Connections & Books


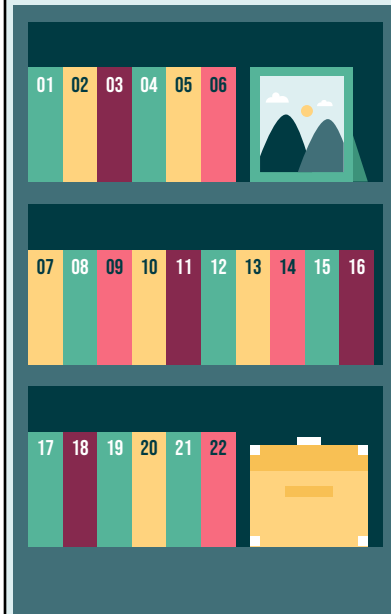


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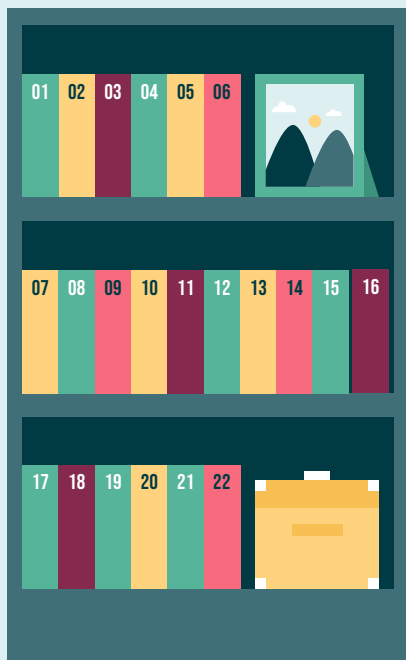
Why Tough Topics?



- ★ **Now more than ever, children have had greater exposure to confusing events and/or situations**
 - Through experience, overheard from an adult, or on social media
- ★ **If we're having a hard time, they probably are too**
 - Let's give them the tools to get through
- ★ **Discussion of these topics can build empathy and lead to positive emotional growth**
 - Better equipped to handle difficult situations



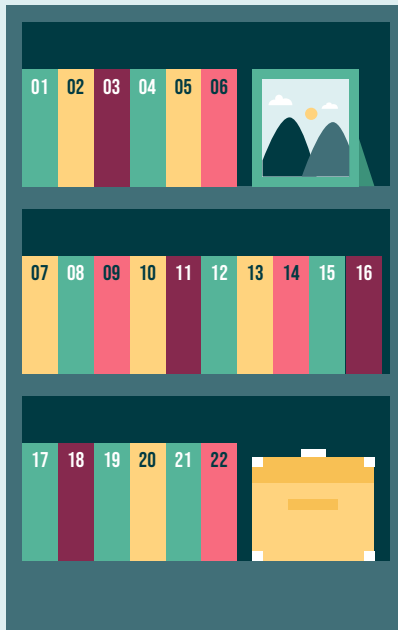
Scaffolding Conversations



- ★ **Focus on the book & have child make predictions about the book's content**
 - Tap into prior knowledge but reinforce learning more from the book
- ★ **Center on child and character connections**
 - Ask how they are like the characters in the book and how they are different.
- ★ **Explore responses to the text & illustrations**
 - How would child feel if they were in the same situation as character? What would they do?
 - What do they notice about character body language, expression, etc. in illustrations?
 - What did they learn from book and what new questions do they have?
- ★ **Make Real-World Connections**
 - How does this relate to child's immediate world?
 - How can they support someone dealing with same problem?
 - Move to action: more reading, hands-on activity, community collaboration, etc.



Characteristics of the Best Books



- ★ **Offer readers mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors***
 - Are children able to build connections with themselves and others?
 - Children may learn something new and/or find comfort in the story
 - Do these stories reflect realistic experiences?
- ★ **Relates the tough topic(s) into a format that is attractive to young readers and easier to understand**
 - Most topics can be adapted into age appropriate conversations
- ★ **Stories and characters are multidimensional**
 - Just like in real life!
 - Characters don't have a singular identity
- ★ **Potential to leave a lasting impression**
 - Is the child reaching for similar books?
 - Does it lead them to asking questions?

*Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop



Centering Lens for Booktalks



- ★ **Librarians can create roadblocks or walls when booktalking tough topics**

Using an othering lens and presenting the book as a title about a particular tough topic: death, racism, grief, body autonomy, gender identity, etc.

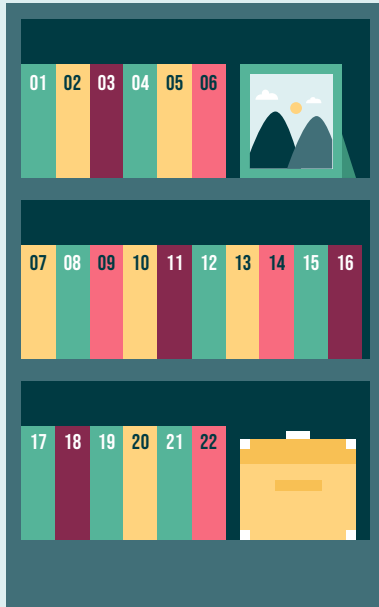
Othering booktalks reinforce the idea that the book is about someone completely and totally different from the reader. Creates an "us vs. them" mentality and prevents full engagement.

- ★ **To engage readers, center the pitch on the exciting adventure or suspenseful plot that will draw in listeners from diverse background.**

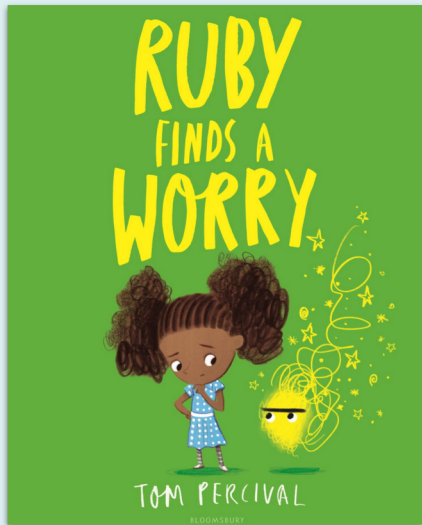
Promotes the universality of experiences, gets kids hooked on the book, and tough topics are explored along the way.



Sample Booktalks with Program Connections



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Tough Topics Addressed:
Worry, Trauma

Genre: Picturebook

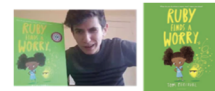
Age: PreK-2

Storytime Activity Guide: Ruby Finds a Worry

by Paula Bea and Savitika Mourthy | May 7, 2020 | Our Blog

What can you do when a worry won't leave you alone?

In this book, Ruby finds a worry that follows her everywhere and grows bigger over time. Follow along to find out how Ruby overcomes her worry. This story is the perfect springboard for talking to 3-8 year old children about their hidden worries and anxieties.



Watch the Virtual Storytime

Purchase a copy of this book

Done with the read aloud? Use these ideas to continue the conversation with your child.

- How are you feeling about COVID-19? Do you have any questions or feelings you want to talk about?
- What are some of the things that make you feel worried?
- It is totally normal to feel worried. What helps you feel better when you are worried?

Things to learn from this book

- Feelings can be overwhelming. Over time, your feelings can get bigger, stronger, and follow you everywhere.
- Difficult feelings show up in different ways. Sometimes, they are physical sensations like a headache or tummy ache. Sometimes, they are a bad mood or a challenging behavior.
- This book describes one way of overcoming overwhelming feelings by identifying the feelings you are going through.

Try this!

- Use this guide to talk about your feelings.
- Draw your worry.
- Make a quiet station.
- Develop and maintain supportive social connections.

Other Ideas

Do these free breathing exercises for kids from Comic Yoga

Read other books about feelings and emotions with your family:



<https://www.tandembayarea.org/storytime-activity-guide-ruby-finds-a-worry/>







Answering Kids' Questions About the Coronavirus

- Looking for help answering your kids' questions about COVID-19? Our fantastic hospital partner, Children's Hospital Colorado, put together this [video](#) where a curious child asks an expert common kid-questions about the virus.

Explaining COVID-19 to kids

- We recommend [COVIBOOK](#) by [Manuela Medina Cruz](#). This free digital book—available in more than 20 languages—offers opportunities for emotional expression and clarity for little ones at this time. Thank you to all of our Child Life Specialists for sharing!
- Starlight knows how stressful and scary health emergencies can be for kids, to help you during this time we have provided tips on [how to talk to kids about coronavirus](#). Read them [here](#) or you can download below.

[DOWNLOAD THE TIP SHEET](#)


Tough Topics Addressed:
COVID-19, Death, Loss, Illness

Genre: Picturebook

Age: PreK-2

<https://www.starlight.org/stories/we-are-still-delivering-happiness/>








Tough Topics Addressed:
Moving, Homesickness, Cross-Cultural Friendships





Genre: Picturebook

Age: PreK-2

<https://www.alpenalibrary.org/newkindofwild>



Written by **TANU SHREE SINGH**
Illustrated by **SANDHYA PRABHAT**

Tough Topics Addressed:
Death, Loss, Illness

Genre: Picturebook

Age: K-2

Child Mind Institute:
<https://childmind.org/guide/helping-children-cope-grief/>



Written by **SONIA SOTOMAYOR**
Illustrated by **RAFAEL LOPEZ**

BE DIFFERENT, BE BRAVE, BE YOU



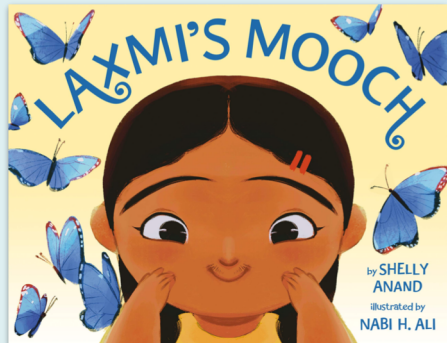



Tough Topics Addressed:
Explaining physical disabilities & health conditions

Genre: Non-Fiction

Age: K-2

Celebrate Disability Awareness Day/Month:
<https://www.readingrockets.org/calendar/ld> and
<http://www.thebenderbunch.com/2016/03/host-disability-awareness-day-at-your.html>



Tough Topics Addressed:
Bullying, Body Positivity, Self-Esteem

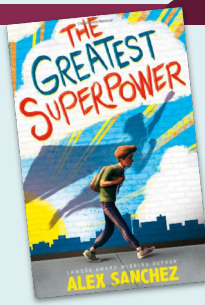
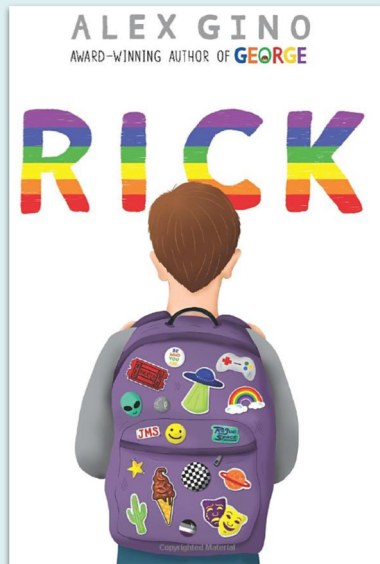
Genre: Picture Book

Age: PK-3

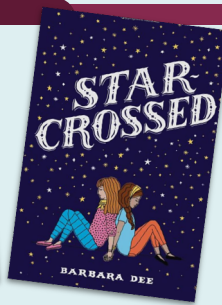


Learning for Justice:

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/i-see-you-you-see-me-body-image-and-social-justice> and <https://www.theclassroombookshelf.com/2021/02/encourage-self-love-with-eyes-that-kiss-in-the-corners/>



Trans Parent, Tween Novel



Bisexual Child, Tween Novel

Tough Topics Addressed:
Asexual Children, LGBTQ Teachers, Spectrum Alliance, Intergenerational Relationships, Cross-Dressing

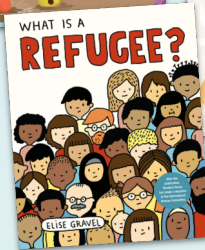
Genre: Novel

Ages: 9-13



Welcoming Schools & GLSEN:

<https://www.welcomingschools.org/resources/> and <https://www.glsen.org/educator-resources>



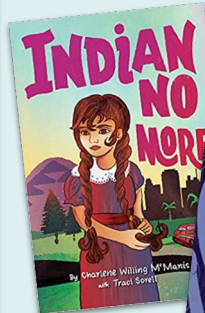
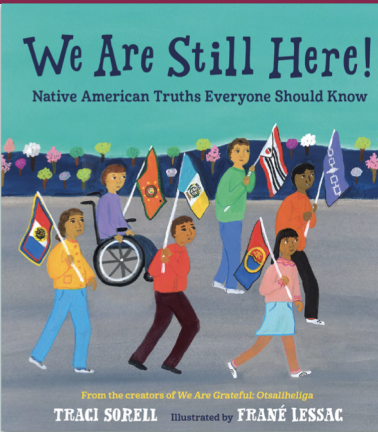
Tough Topics Addressed: Bullying, Immigration, Xenophobia

Genre: Novel

Age: 8-12

PJ Library:

<https://pjlibrary.org/beyond-books/pjblog/june-2018/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-immigration> and <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/spring-2017/toolkit-for-immigrant-and-refugee-children-a-guide-for-educators-and-school>



Novels:
Ages 8-12



Tough Topics Addressed: Hostility Towards Native Americans, Native American History

Genre: Non-Fiction

Ages: 7 and UP

Native American History:

<http://www.beacon.org/An-Indigenous-Peoples-History-of-the-United-States-for-Young-People-P1492.aspx> and <https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360>



CONSENT (FOR KIDS!) BOUNDARIES, RESPECT, AND BEING IN CHARGE OF YOU
RACHEL BRIAN



Tough Topics Addressed:
Bodily Autonomy, Consent

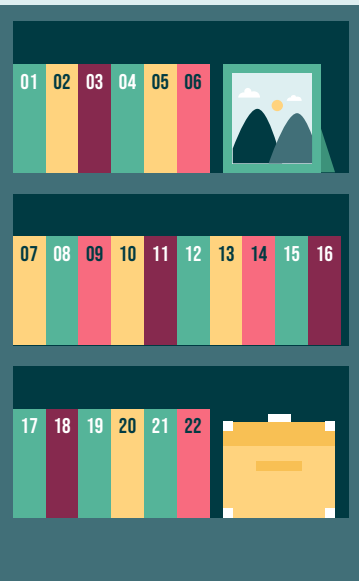
Genre: Non-Fiction

Age: 6-10




Safe Secure Kids:
<https://www.safesecurekids.org/teaching-consent> and
<https://www.blueseatstudios.com/consent-for-kids>

Resources for More Connections & Books



Selected Professional Resources:

- ALSC Tough Topics List - <http://www.ala.org/alscpublications-resources/book-lists/ouphbttops2019>
- ALSC Embracing Gender Identities List - <http://www.ala.org/alscpublications-resources/book-lists/embracinggenderids>
- ALSC Get Ready Get Safe Book List - <http://www.ala.org/alscpublications-resources/book-lists/get-ready-get-safe-book-list>
- Notable Books for a Global Society - <http://www.drsig.org/nbgs.html>
- PBS 10 Books to Help Kids and Grown-Ups Navigate the Pandemic - <https://www.pbs.org/education/families/10-books-to-help-kids-and-grown-ups-navigate-the-pandemic>
- PBS Talking to Young Children About Race and Racism - <https://www.pbs.org/parents/talking-about-racism>
- NPR Struggling to Discuss Tough Topics with a Kid? Here are Books that Might Help - <https://www.npr.org/2020/12/31/952445588/books-to-share-with-kids-during-tough-times>
- Jewish Children's Books that Address Difficult Topics - <https://jlib.org/beyond-book-awards/november-2020-childrens-books-tough-books>
- How Books Can Help Parents Tackle Tough Topics with Kids - <https://www.readrightly.com/books-tackle-tough-topics-with-kids/>
- How to Talk to Kids About Difficult Subjects - <https://www.commonsemmedia.org/blog/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-difficult-subjects>
- Today Show How to Teach Children About Disability at Every Age - <https://www.today.com/parents/how-teach-children-about-disability-every-age-t187942>
- Multnomah County Library's Talking With Kids Blog Series - <https://mp.bccpl.org/seminar/site/%20talking%20with%20kids%22%2F%5B%5D%5D=bundles%20a%20how%20books%20work>
- International Literacy Association Notable Books for a Global Society - <http://www.drsig.org/nbgs.html>
- Jane Addams Children's Book Award (Books Promoting Peace & Social Justice) - <https://www.janeaddamschildrenbookaward.org/>
- Welcoming Schools Gender and LGBTQ Inclusive Resources for Your School - <https://www.welcomingschools.org/resources/>
- Safe Secure Kids Teaching About Consent - <https://www.safesecurekids.org/teaching-consent>
- Comic Book Legal Defense Fund Using Comics to Teach Tough Topics - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=672kxvsoy6E1394>

- BrainPop (Coronavirus) - <https://www.brainpop.com/search?keyword=Coronavirus>
- BrainPop (Free Resources for Supporting Antiracist Education) - <https://blog.brainpop.com/antiracist-education-free-resources-kids/>
- Freedom Reads: Anti-Bias Book Talk Series - <https://socialjusticebooks.org/freedom-read/>
- Social Justice Books' Booklists - <https://socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/> and Educational Articles - <https://socialjusticebooks.org/articles/>
- Learning for Justice Addressing Anti-Asian Bias - <https://www.learningforjustice.org/the-moment/march-15-2021-addressing-anti-asian-bias>



Thanks

Contact: jcnaidoo@slis.ua.edu

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