

Teaching diversity through reading.

Diversity, inclusion, and tolerance are topics where books can prove to be an invaluable aid in helping to teach children about different cultures and experiences and understanding a character's point of view.

In primary schools, children need to learn about all aspects of diversity and feel empowered to discuss what makes all of us unique, valued and respected in terms of **culture, race, ethnicity, gender, education, disability, identity, nationality, religion, sexuality, neurodiversity, social background, and beliefs.**

This list of books on the topic of diversity aims to provide KS2 teachers with suitable texts to help generate cross-curricular discussion, empathise with diverse characters, and provide a stimulus for written work.

Diversity – suggested topic books for KS1 and KS2 primary aged children

The Island by Armin Greder

A visually powerful picture story about a shipwrecked man who is at first treated with suspicion and fear, and then subjected to blame, prejudice, and hate. The clever progression and downward spiral of the village society's behaviour are beautifully choreographed through the artwork and this is an ideal text to both discuss with 9-11-year-olds in KS2 and use as the basis for modelled writing.

Migrants by Issa Watanabe

A breathtaking wordless picture book that depicts a group of migrants on a dangerous journey. The animal characters are illustrated in a stark, startling, and colourful – almost camera obscura style. The Vermeer-like level of detail is such that children (and teachers) can pore over each image, each time picking out an unrealised nuance or secret message. This book is perfect for discussion in KS2, but I'd also be tempted to use it as a challenging visual comprehension for GCSE English literature students – particularly those studying *As You Like It* or *The Tempest*. Destined to be a modern classic.

Journey to Jo'Burg by Beverley Naidoo

A compelling story about the power of perseverance and humanity in the face of adversity and racism. Set in apartheid-era South Africa, 13-year-old Naledi runs away to find her mother in Johannesburg, where she works in a white-only area as a maid. A modern classic, this is a moving class reader for years five and six.

We're Off To Find A Fairy by Eloise White & Cory Reid

A beautifully illustrated picture book story about a diverse range of characters on a quest to find a fairy. Along the way they travel through magical and evocative landscapes, punctuated by lyrical and alliterative verse and call and respond questions. An ideal book to read to EYFS classes, and a great source of ideas for cross-curricular art projects.

Amazing Women of the Middle East by Wafa' Tarnowska

An inspirational book that chronicles the lives of 25 influential and powerful women through history, including Nefertiti, Zenobia, Somayya Jabari and Maha al Balushi. The bold graphics and absorbing narrative biographies make this a great resource for both the classroom, and further learning in the school library.

George by Alex Gino

When their teacher reveals the class play for this term will be *Charlotte's Web*, George really wants the lead role of Charlotte. But there's a problem – everyone thinks George is a boy and the teacher says no. George knows she's always been a girl, and together with Kelly, forms the perfect plan. A sensitive and empathetic novel, and one that is invaluable to help discuss trans themes with primary school children.

The Undefeated by Kwame Alexander

A powerful illustrated black history told through snapshot biographies of key figures and inspirational poetry by leading BAME writer Kwame Alexander. Covering slavery, politics, segregation, and recent events in America, this accessible and unique picture book is an ideal starting point for topic work on Black History Month in KS2.

Sunflower Sisters by Monika Singh Gangotra and Michael Dias-Hayes

Despite comments from their conservative Aunty, Amrita and Kiki are empowered to wear their fabulous outfits to the family weddings. With vivid illustrations and lyrical text, this uplifting story provides an excellent opportunity for teachers to help children discuss how to deal with negative comments and colourism, and how to celebrate heritage, family and inner strength.

Tusk Tusk by David McKee

An outstanding picture book, suitable for reading with KS1 and discussion with KS2 that depicts two races of warring elephants. This is an invaluable book to help teach children about diversity, reconciliation, and the effects of history. There's also a politically realistic twist at the end.

Wonder by RJ Palacio

10-year-old Auggie just wants to be treated like any other child – but after years of home education, he isn't looking forward to going to a school – especially since he fears being targeted due to his facial disfigurement. At times painfully frank, this is a great book to read with year five and six classes to provoke discussion and encourage empathy.

The Missing by Michael Rosen

This collection of poems, diary entries, archive records, and narrative presents the personal story of Michael Rosen's quest to trace his family history and offers children an accessible and relatable account of what happened to Jewish families in the Holocaust. An essential resource for KS2 classes learning about WW2. Read our full review [here](#).

For Everyone by Jason Reynolds

A book for children who imagine, who dream, who think and who have ambition. This book – which comprises of one performance poem spread over pages using graphic design and space to help convey the message – speaks to those who have been put down, denigrated, ridiculed, and made to doubt themselves. This is a great book to read and discuss with higher ability groups in year 6 or use as the basis for a KS2 assembly.

The Boy at the Back of the Class by Onjali Rauf

A multi-award-winning story told from the point of view of nine-year-old Ahmet, a refugee from Syria starting school in London. Poignant and moving, the diverse range of experiences, hurt and friendships he experiences are compelling reading. Highly recommended for years five and six class reading.

Funky Chickens by Benjamin Zephaniah

A fun and catchy series of performance poems that children aged 7-11 will enjoy reading out loud. The poems cover a range of themes including sewage, the queen, racism, and pollution. Benjamin Zephaniah also has an extensive library of performances of the poems in this book on his Youtube channel.

Fly Me Home by Polly Ho Yen

A tremendous story of isolation, magic, fantasy, and the difficulties of adapting to new and foreign surroundings. Leelu wishes she could fly back home to her father, thousands of miles away. When someone starts leaving magical gifts outside her front door, maybe that dream will become a reality... A distinctive book that is ideal for group reading with mixed ability classes in upper KS2.

The Arrival by Shaun Tan

A spellbinding graphic novel where the story of a man who leaves his family home to search for better work in a foreign land to support them. It is told entirely through atmospheric and emotive pictures. The total lack of words makes the book particularly accessible to reluctant readers and will provoke discussion, debate, and ideas for writing. Recommended for years 3-6.

Pansy Boy by Paul Harfleet

A touching and sensitively illustrated picture book that shows the reader the life of a 7-year-old boy who loves the beauty of nature, writing, art, flowers, butterflies, and the awe of birds in flight. Bullied at school, because he isn't like the other boys, he comes up with a plan to overcome the taunts and show that the world can be a beautiful place. This is a great book to tackle themes of toxic masculinity, intolerance, and playground name-calling, and encourage tolerance and acceptance of everyone's interests and perspectives. The book was inspired by The Pansy Project – where pansies are planted at sites of homophobic and transphobic abuse. Suitable for reading to children in Y3-6, and ideal to discuss with KS2 children in PSHE. There are resources for teachers and pupils, and also an online book reading.

A Kind of Spark by Elle McNicoll

11-year-old Addie tackles people's reactions to her autism by campaigning to right a centuries-old wrong in her home town. Highly recommended for group reading or book clubs in year 6, and ideal to help discuss disability, neurodiversity, and tolerance in school. A Kind of Spark was featured as book of the month for June 2020.

Speechless by Kate Darbishire

Harriet is bullied because of her disability, a disability that prevents her from walking or talking. With sharply described scenes, this book hits home to deter bullying behaviour and make primary aged children think about how they would react in similar situations. A great book for to read alongside Wonder and useful to prompt children to discuss diversity in their own lives.

Can You See Me by Libby Scott

An inspiring and warm-hearted story about 11-year-old Tally and how she sees the world from her autistic perspective. A good story to help children in years 6 and 7, and during the transition to secondary school, empathise with children who appear different and who struggle in new environments due, in part, to neurodiversity. Ideal to read with A Kind of Spark.

Mixed by Arree Chung

A picture book that helps younger children appreciate that colour not a barrier and draws on children's innate sense of right and wrong to sense the futility of racism and the lack of logic to societal prejudice.

Mirror by Jeannie Baker

A clever picture book that encourages children to look at a situation from more than one perspective. Great for appreciating and respecting the diversity of different cultures and traditions. Also good for inspiring writing.

And Tango Makes Three by Justin Richardson

A much-discussed picture book – based on a true story 'And Tango Makes Three' provides a sensitive introduction to help younger children understand that not every family unit is the same, and that the key component is love. This is a good text to help foster ideals of respect and tolerance in KS1 and KS2.

The Wheel of Surya by Jamila Gavin

When Marvinder and Jaspal are split up from their mother fleeing civil war in 1947 Punjab, they are forced to set out on a dangerous journey into the unknown to find their father in England – swapping one hostile environment for another. A modern classic that is suitable for more advanced readers in year 6.

Emily Knight I am Becoming... by A. Bello

The third book in this award-nominated series sees charismatic heroine Emily set out to rescue her best friend, not yet realising that arch-foe Necci has much mayhem in store. These fast-paced, fun and fabulous fantasy stories will appeal to children and younger teens who enjoy a story with strong leaders and action. A good addition to year 7 libraries. Also in the series are Emily Knight I am... and Emily Knight I am Awakened...

El Deafo by Cece Bell

A memorable graphic illustrated biography suitable for children in upper KS2 and KS2. This book chronicles the author's childhood experiences using a hearing aid called a 'phonic ear' and how it affected her life and relationships at school and growing up. A compelling read, and ideal for use in reading groups and for class discussion.

Little Glow by Katie Sahota and Harry Woodgate

This charming and heartwarming story follows a shy 'little glow' that spreads positivity and excitement and purpose through many different lands, cultures and life events. With enchanting illustrations, the rhyming verse introduces younger readers to and links Chinese New Year, Ramadan, birthday celebrations, Diwali, Halloween, the 5th of November, Hanukkah and Christmas. An indispensable picture book that will be useful for any celebration topic in EYFS, Little Glow has the sparkle of a modern classic.

Umbrella by Elena Arevalo Melville

A clever picture book that encourages kindness and forgiveness in the face of selfish behaviour that can be corrected. The message that anything is possible is uplifting and heartwarming and encourages EYFS and KS1 children to be inclusive, tolerant, and kind. The distinctive artwork lends this book to inspiring diverse art-related topic work and displays.

High-Rise Mystery by Sharna Jackson

A cracking fast-paced mystery page-turner for KS2 pupils where Nik and Norva set out to solve a serious crime in their tower block before the end of the summer holidays. Ideal for children in years 4-5, or reluctant readers in year 6.

The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank

Anne Frank's classic and unrivalled account of enforced isolation due to discrimination and hatred perpetrated by a regime that developed into organised genocide. This is an abridged version specially edited for children aged 7-12, and ideal for group reading. A powerful warning for future generations narrated from a perspective children of every background will relate to.

101 Awesome Women Who Changed Our World by Julia Adams

A spectacularly detailed collection of short biographies detailing famous, inspiring, groundbreaking, and important women from diverse backgrounds, who have broken down barriers and changed the world we live in over the last 150 years. Accessible, highly illustrated, and empowering, this book is part of a series that deserves a place in every KS2 school library.

I Love My Hair by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley

A modern classic, this picture book tells the story of Keyana, who learns to embrace and love her hair, and her heritage. Perfectly suited to reading in KS1 and using as the basis for discussion in KS2 about ethnic diversity and embracing differences and distinctiveness.

We Are All Born Free by Amnesty International

An invaluable resource to help teach and discuss diversity in a human rights context in KS2 lessons and assemblies. Each of the 30 articles of human rights is covered, with accessible text and thought-provoking illustrations by leading artists. This book is an ideal impetus to inspire whole school events, individual projects, and home learning work.

Six Dots: A Story Of Young Louis Braille by Jen Bryant

The inspirational story of Louis Braille, who lost his sight at the age of five, and the ingenious system he devised to enable him to read text and books using his fingers. This system – named after him – is used widely across the world by millions of people today.