

January Reads 2021



As parents and educators, we're thinking about ways to start the new year with confidence, empathy, and the courage to make a difference. These books help us remember to be proud of who we are and appreciate the beauty of the world – and the individuals – around us.

This list includes classics and new releases, and the books cater to different reading levels, interests, and moods. Books which are available in English are noted along with other languages in which they have been published. The list is organized alphabetically by title.



A Girl Like You

Author: Frank Murphy and Carla Murphy

Illustrator: Kayla Harren

Publisher: Sleeping Bear Press, 2020

Publisher's recommended age: 5+

This book invites girls to **shake off preconceived notions of what a girl is** and embrace **talents, body image, likes, and dislikes** in a celebration of their own individuality. Each page reminds readers to **embrace what makes them unique...and to be their own advocates**, promoting individuality, inclusion, kindness, and courage throughout. The group of friends, beautifully represented by Kayla Harren, is multi-racial and includes a girl who uses a wheelchair and a girl who wears hijab. **This book is full (of) affirmations to show the girl in your life just how unique she is. Try new things, be brave, choose kindness, and wear what makes you happy.**

Available Languages: English, German



Be a King

Author: Carole Boston Weatherford

Illustrator: James E. Ransome

Publisher: Bloomsbury USA Childrens, 2018

Publisher's recommended age: 5+

Explicitly linking elements of Dr. King's life with a call for individual activism, this book reminds us that, **from loving one another to standing up for social justice, no voice is too small to make an impact.** The illustrator intersperses **beautiful watercolour illustrations** of King's life with pictures of students engaging in a class project on social justice. Weatherford has said that she hopes her readers **“understand that freedom was not free and that people of conscience must speak their minds and live their values.”** In this book she reminds us that those ideals can be lived out at every age, and in many ways, big and small.

Available Languages: English



Be Kind

Author: Pat Zietlow Miller

Illustrator: Jen Hill

Publisher: Roaring Brook Press, 2018

Publisher's recommended age: 3+

This **beautifully simple, yet complex** book engages readers in questioning what it means to be kind. After a student is laughed at in the lunchroom, the narrator tries and fails to comfort her, then wonders, “What does it mean to be kind anyway?” The book imagines **different ways to be kind and empathetic**, from using people’s names to sticking up for someone when others are unkind. **But it also acknowledges the fact that it’s not always easy**, and can even be scary. **These days, it seems more important than ever for books to show young people how to act with thoughtfulness, civility and kindness.**

Available Languages: English, Italian, French, Chinese, Japanese, Korean



Everything is Beautiful, and I'm Not Afraid

Author: Yao Xiao

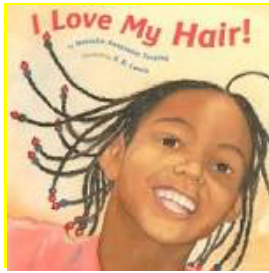
Illustrator: Yao Xiao

Publisher: Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2020

Publisher's recommended age: NA

This **lovely, biting, heartbreaking, charming semi-autobiographical** graphic novel explores the experiences of a queer, Chinese immigrant living in NYC, **balancing independence and tradition, freedom and family, honesty and acceptance.** The book includes selections from Xiao’s monthly serial *Baopu* (**Autostraddle**) and new work, combining to create a thought-provoking essay on **what it's like to navigate the complexities of seeking belonging – mentally and geographically.** **Through it all is a search for authenticity** and the result is at once **self-reflective, colourful, melancholic but uplifting.**

Available Languages: English, Italian



I Love My Hair!

Author: Natasha Anastasia Tarpley

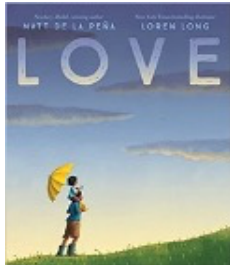
Illustrator: E.B. Lewis

Publisher: Little Brown Books for Young Readers, 2001

Publisher's recommended age: 4+

This **seminal picture book** about a young girl learning to love her hair was inspired by the author's own memories of her hair-combing ritual with her mom. Tarpley aimed **to create a whimsical story that encouraged kids not only to love their hair, but also to explore and find joy in their own imaginations.** The **beautiful watercolor illustrations emphasize the loving family interactions and add to the warm feel of the story.** As they move out from the intimacy of her bedroom to the whole globe, the **pictures and text reflect the expanding horizons of the child's world as she learns to be proud of her distinctive hair and her heritage.**

Available Languages: English, Italian



Love

Author: Matt de la Peña

Illustrator: Loren Long

Publisher: Putnam Pub Group, 2018

Publisher's recommended age: 3+

A deeply poignant look at love which tells a difficult truth: **even those who are well loved will eventually learn that the world holds sadness and loss in addition to comfort and sweetness.** Love is a constant on every page, but it is sometimes found in difficulty and trials. The result is a book that is **lyrical and sensitive...likely to leave readers of all ages a little tremulous, and brimming with feeling.** Long's artwork is, in his words, **"a bit raw, a bit vulnerable, a bit messy...flawed here and beautiful there. Kind of like love itself."** In the end, this book has the power to **look into the darkness and still find stars twinkling overhead.**

Available Languages: English, French, Spanish, Japanese, Slovenian



The Black Book of Colours

Author: Menena Cottin

Illustrator: Rosana Faria

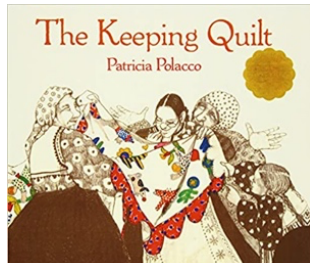
Publisher: Groundwood Books, 2006

Publisher's recommended age: 5+

Through the words of a boy who is visually impaired, the reader embarks on a unique reflection on the nature of color as experienced through **hearing, touch, smell and taste – for example, yellow tastes like mustard but is as soft as feathers. Beautifully designed,** with raised-line tactile drawings and Braille lettering, **this book belongs on the shelves of every...library.** Designed as an **empathy tool for the sighted** (the Braille is too low to be read by many blind readers), this book is a **feat of aesthetic elegance** and **a beautiful philosophical metaphor.**

Available Languages:

English, Italian, Braille, Spanish, Polish, Arabic, Catalan, Korean



The Keeping Quilt

Author: Patricia Polacco

Illustrator: Patricia Polacco

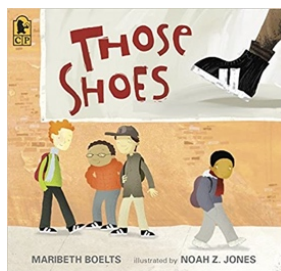
Publisher: Aladdin, 1988

Publisher's recommended age:: 5+

Patricia Polacco's recounting of her family's quilt has become a **beloved classic** in the thirty years since it was first published. When Anna outgrows the dress she wore to emigrate from Russia to America, her mother has an idea: They use a basket of old clothes, each item with a family member and story behind it to "make a quilt to help us always remember home. It will be like having the family in backhome Russia dance around us at night." In **strongly moving pictures that are as heartwarming as they are real,** Polacco tells the story of the quilt over four generations as it is loved and lived by a family whose traditions evolve with the times.

Available Languages:

English, Spanish, Korean, Chinese



Those Shoes

Author: Maribeth Boelts
Illustrator: Noah Z. Jones

Publisher: Candlewick, 2009

Publisher's recommended age: 5+

This is a **heartfelt and realistic** story about everyday **struggles between wants and need and the power of friendship and sacrifice**. Everyone at school has “those shoes” and Jeremy wants a pair too, but his family can't afford them. Jeremy tries to wear a too-small pair he finds at a thrift shop, but he eventually gifts them to a friend. What begins as a simple story about fitting in, ends up **delivering powerful lessons** about yearning and **disappointment, kindness and compassion**, and **being grateful**.

Available Languages: English, Spanish, Chinese



Tutto Storto (All Wrong)

Author: Andrea Falcone and Matilde Piran
Illustrator: Marta Baroni

Publisher: Marietti Junior, 2020

Publisher's recommended age: 11+

Currently only available in Italian, *Tutto Storto* is a **daring new novel for young readers about the escape of two teenagers who want to get away from social and parental constraints**. The reader is immediately **catapulted** into Elisa's furious, **exuberant and vital** mind **like looking through a window into the adolescent experience: a ferment of desires, fears, problems and dreams**. But Elisa offers a new and unexpected perspective, **which describes the “other half” of children with disabilities, the experiences of their “invisible” siblings, and their jealousies**. **Like all good books, it manages to capture every reader, regardless of age**.

Available Languages: Italian