



Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Department

About the Book of the Month: This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of *A World of Difference*® Institute, ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For educators, adult family members and other caregivers of children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

Alma and How She Got Her Name

Juana Martinez-Neal (Author & Illustrator)

If you ask her, Alma Sofia Esperanza José Pura Candela has way too many names: six! How did such a small person wind up with such a large name? Alma turns to Daddy for an answer and learns about Sofia, the grandmother who loved books and flowers; Esperanza, the great-grandmother who longed to travel; José, the grandfather who was an artist; and other namesakes, too. As she hears the story of her name, Alma starts to think it might be a perfect fit after all—and realizes that she will one day have her own story to tell.

ISBN: 978-0763693558

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Year Published: 2018

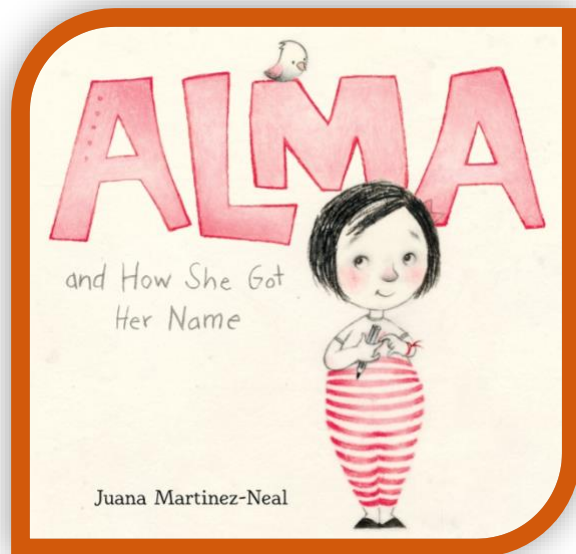
Age Range: 4–8

Book Themes

Identity, Culture, Importance of names, Family

Key Words

Discuss and define these words with children prior to reading the book. Do not focus on students' retention of all the words; instead make sure they understand the words enough to follow the story and remind children of their meanings as they come up in the book. You can also post the words and point



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out to students when they appear in the story. See also ADL's [Definitions Related to Bias, Injustice and Bullying](#) or [Education Glossary Terms](#).

- ancestors
- artist
- fits
- poetry
- sailor
- spirits
- together
- travel

Discussion Questions

Before reading the book aloud, ask these pre-reading questions:

- What is the title of the book?
- Who and what do you see on the cover of the book?
- What do you think the book might be about?

As you read the book aloud, ask a few discussion questions periodically throughout reading to check for comprehension and keep the students engaged. Below are some sample questions that correlate to specific page numbers.

- What does Alma think about her name? (page 4)
- What did José, Alma's grandfather, do for a living? (page 14)
- Where does the name Alma come from? (page 27)

After reading the book aloud, ask some or all of the following discussion questions:

- What is the book about?
- Why does Alma think her name "never fits?" What does she mean by this?
- What does Alma learn throughout the course of the book?
- What does Alma find out about her name and who she is named after?
- What do you know about the story of your name?
- How does Alma make connections to her relatives that she was named after?
- Do you ever think about what you have in common with your relatives?
- Did any of the characters in the book (a relative/ancestor of Alma's) stand out to you? Who was it and why did they stand out?
- How does Alma feel in the end when she learns more about the origin of her name?
- What do you think is the overall message of the book?

Extension Activities

Below are activities that you can do with children in order to extend the learning from the book.

1. The Story of My Name

Ask students again: *What is the book about?* Remind them that in the book, Alma learns the story of her name. You can also read the “Note from Juana” (author) in the back of the book on page 31, where she shares the story of her name. Then ask: *How does Alma feel about her name before she learns more about it? How does she feel after she learns about it? How do you feel about your name? What do you like and what don't you like about it?* Explain to students that people's names are often very important to them and that people name their children for a variety of reasons including: family tradition, relatives/ancestors, culture, religion, meaning of the name, a favorite book or movie character, nickname, etc. Explain something about the origin of your name and then ask students: *What do you know about your name—your first, middle or last name?* Children may know nothing, a little or a lot.

For homework, have students ask their parents/family members the reason they were given their name and/or have them do online research to learn more about their name. The next day, have students share what they learned, either in pairs or small groups. As a culmination, have students create posters with their names written on them, along with original drawings, pictures, online images and/or additional words that represent something about their names. For example, if Alma did one, she might include pictures of all her relatives that she was named after. Engage students in a discussion by asking: *What are the different ways people are named? What do our names have to do with our identity and culture? How did we find out more about our names? How do you feel about your name now that you know more?*

2. Write to the Author

Have students write a letter/email to the author of the book, Juana Martinez-Neal. In the letter, have students share at least three things: (1) something they liked about or learned from the book, (2) something about the story of their own name; see activity #1, and (3) a question they have for the author. You can determine potential questions by brainstorming with students what they want to know about her, what it's like to write children's books, how she came up with the idea for *Alma and How She Got Her Name* or something about the story of Juana's name. Have students conference with each other to write several drafts of their letter/email, share them aloud with the rest of the class and finally mail/email them to the author. Juana Martinez-Neal's [website](#) includes her contact information. If students receive responses from the author, those can be shared as well.

3. Act Out Your Favorite Scene

Select a favorite scene from the book and have the students act it out, either working as a whole class or in small groups, depending on the scene and the number of people needed. First, brainstorm the different parts of the book or scenes that students like (e.g., when Alma tells her Daddy that her name is too long, when Alma learns about some of her relatives/ancestors Sofia, Esperanza, José, etc., when Alma talks with her Daddy after learning more about her name). Ask students to think about what might have happened right before and after that scene and act those parts out as well. If possible, write dialogue for what the main characters and other might say or use the actual dialogue from the book. Students can then act it out for the class, other classes and/or invite parents in to watch it.

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and other educational resources on Latino/a people, identity and culture.

Curriculum Resources

8 Ideas for Teaching National Hispanic Heritage Month, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/8-ideas-for-teaching-national-hispanic-heritage-month.

Diverse Books Matter, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/diverse-books-matter.

Role Models and Stereotypes: Misty Copeland's Story, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/role-models-and-stereotypes-misty-copelands-story.

Who Am I? Identity Poems, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/who-am-i-identity-poems.

Websites

Anti-Bias Education

www.adl.org/what-we-do/promote-respect/anti-bias

Provides training program offerings for pre-K through 12th grade school communities—educators, administrators, youth and families—which focus on the development of an inclusive culture and respectful school climate by addressing issues of bias and bullying.

Dos and Don'ts with Special Diversity Events

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/dos-and-donts-with-special-diversity-events

“Dos and Don'ts” to help schools host special diversity events that are thoughtful and create environments that are inclusive and safe for all multicultural students.

Early Childhood FAQs: The Question Corner

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/question-corner

A collection of answers to frequently asked questions about anti-bias issues faced by early childhood professionals and family members interested in promoting respect for diversity among young children.

National Hispanic Heritage Month

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/national-hispanic-heritage-month

A collection of ADL resources to help educators and students understand and celebrate the achievements, contributions, culture and history of Hispanic and Latino-Americans.

Talking to Young Children about Bias and Prejudice

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/talking-to-young-children-about-prejudice

The process of countering negative attitudes with positives begins at an early age. This resource points to three major issues that are important to keep in mind when talking to children about prejudice and discrimination.

Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

People, Identity & Culture, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-7=1&tid\[201\]=201&tid\[202\]=202&tid\[203\]=203&tid\[204\]=204&tid\[205\]=205&tid\[206\]=206&tid\[207\]=207&tid\[208\]=208&tid\[209\]=209&tid\[210\]=210&tid\[211\]=211&tid\[212\]=212&tid\[213\]=213&tid\[214\]=214&tid\[215\]=215](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-7=1&tid[201]=201&tid[202]=202&tid[203]=203&tid[204]=204&tid[205]=205&tid[206]=206&tid[207]=207&tid[208]=208&tid[209]=209&tid[210]=210&tid[211]=211&tid[212]=212&tid[213]=213&tid[214]=214&tid[215]=215)

People, Identity & Culture: Latino/Hispanic, Latino-American, Hispanic-American, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[210\]=210](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[210]=210)