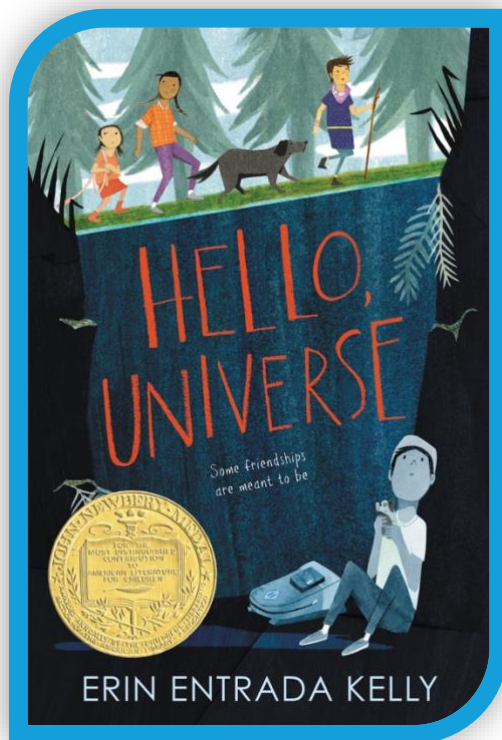




Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

About the Book of the Month Parent/Family Discussion Guide: 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 parents, guardians and family members, reading the books listed on this site with your children and integrating the concepts into your interactions with them is an excellent way to help children grapple with and learn about these important principles.



Hello, Universe

Erin Entrada Kelly (Author), Isabel Roxas (Illustrator)

ISBN: 978-0062414151

Publisher: Greenwillow Books

Year Published: 2017

Age Range: 8–12

Book Themes

Bias, Bullying, Identity and Culture, Friendship, People with Disabilities

About the Book

In one day, four lives weave together in unexpected ways. Virgil Salinas is shy and kindhearted and feels out of place in his crazy-about-sports family. Valencia Somerset, who is deaf, is smart, brave and secretly lonely, and she loves everything about nature. Kaori Tanaka is a self-proclaimed psychic, whose little sister, Gen, is always following her around. And Chet Bullens wishes the weird kids would just stop being so different so he can concentrate on basketball. They aren't friends, at least not until Chet pulls a prank that traps Virgil and his pet guinea pig at the bottom of a well. This disaster leads Kaori, Gen and Valencia on an epic quest to find missing Virgil. Through luck, smarts, bravery and a little help from the universe, a rescue is performed, bullying behavior is put in its place and friendship blooms.

Conversation Starters

Whether you read the book along with your child or your child reads it on their own and you discuss it later, use these open-ended questions to deepen the conversation. Remember not to judge their responses and to listen thoughtfully and engage in a give-and-take that helps them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes.

- What happens in the story?
- When you first meet Virgil, Valencia, Chet and Kaori, what were your impressions of them and how did that change as you read the book?
- There are a lot of pets and animals in the book. Why do you think the author included so many and what did they mean to each of the main characters?
- Why does Virgil's family call him "Turtle" and how does he feel about the nickname? Have you ever been given a nickname and how did you feel about it?
- What is Chet's relationship with Virgil and Valencia? In what ways does he target them for bullying? How did you feel while reading those sections?
- Chet says that his Dad tells him that respect comes in two ways: fear or admiration. What does respect look like to you? Do you agree or disagree with Chet's Dad?
- What happens in the woods to Virgil and what role does each of the characters play in what happens to Virgil and the rescue?
- What character in the book do you most identify with and why?
- Why do you think the author ended the book with someone texting Valencia a single word, "hello?"
- How did you feel when the book ended?
- What do you think is the overall message of the book?

Talking Points

Below are some important considerations to highlight in order to make this a learning opportunity for you and your child.

1. Bullying and Identity-Based Bullying

Talk with your child about bullying and the different ways we behave and roles we take on when we are faced with bias and bullying, using examples from the book. Explain that **bullying** is when a person or a group behaves in ways—on purpose and over and over—that make someone feel hurt, afraid or embarrassed. The roles include:

Aggressor: Someone who says or does hurtful things on purpose and over and over.

Ally: Someone who helps or stands up for someone who is being bullied or the target of prejudice.

Bystander: Someone who sees bullying or prejudice happening and does not say or do anything.

Target: Someone who is bullied or treated in harmful ways by a person or group of people on purpose over and over.

You can find a link to these and other definitions, including those differentiated for elementary students, [here](#). Highlight how these are behaviors—not people—and that people can change their behaviors. Explain that no one engages in just one of these behaviors and we have probably all played each of these roles at different times or in different situations. Ask your child about the times they have engaged in each of these behaviors, why they acted as they did, and how they felt in those situations. Also, emphasize that there are many different ways they can [act as an ally](#) in bias and bullying situations. Explain that “identity-based bullying” is bullying that targets the person and an aspect of their identity such as race, gender, religion, disability, etc. Talk together about the ways that Chet engaged in bullying directed at Virgil and Valencia because of their disabilities and other aspects of their identities.

2. Identity and Culture

Identity and culture are important aspects of the book. Explain that **identity** is the qualities, beliefs, and characteristics that make a particular person or group different from others. Talk to your child about the aspects of your identity and culture which can include race, ethnicity, heritage, religion, ability, etc. Talk about some of the characters in the book and their identity and culture: Virgil and his family are Filipino which means they are from the Philippines; Kaori is Japanese and her family is from Japan; we don't hear much about Valencia's race/ethnicity in the book but being a person who is deaf is an important part of her identity. Talk with your child about what aspects of their identity are important to them and discuss the extent to which they feel accepted in their family, community and school for who they are. Your family may or may not have a strong cultural identity and your family's cultural background can include more than one culture—all of these are good topics for conversation. Explain that different groups have both similarities and differences from each other. Those differences are part of life and make it interesting and shouldn't be barriers to connecting with and forming friendships with people of different groups. Emphasize the many friendships in the book that were between people of different races and cultures.

3. People with Disabilities

In the book, we learn about people with disabilities and bias against them through the characters of Valencia (who is deaf) and Virgil who has learning disabilities; both of them spend part of their day in their resource room at school. With your child, reflect on the disabilities referenced in the book and discuss how each of the characters deals with it as well as the bias they experience. Find out what questions your child may have about disabilities and if relevant, together discuss [suggested language for people with disabilities](#). Define **disability** as a mental or physical condition that affects a person's movements, senses or activities. Using the book, discuss the feelings expressed and situations faced by Valencia and Virgil and their interactions with others in school and home. Adults sometimes tell children not to notice or pay attention to a person's disability. It is important to convey that while prejudice against people who are disabled is wrong, noticing someone's disability is understandable and a part of who they are. You can also talk with your child about the extent to which their school (and other places in the community) is accessible and welcoming for people with disabilities and what they think is needed to make it better.

Other Books You May Like

Posted by John David Anderson, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/posted

The Misfits by James Howe, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/the-misfits

Out of My Mind by Sharon Draper, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/out-of-my-mind

Wonder by R.J. Palacio, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/wonder

ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on bias, bullying, people with disabilities.

Curriculum Resources

Cyberbullying: Understanding and Addressing Online Cruelty, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/cyberbullying-understanding-and-addressing-online-cruelty.

Identity-Based Bullying, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/identity-based-bullying.

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

Words That Heal: Using Children's Literature to Address Bullying, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/words-that-heal-using-childrens-literature-to-address.

Websites

Be An Ally: Six Simple Ways

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/be-an-ally-six-simple-ways

Some simple things a student can do to be an ally to targets of name-calling and bullying.

Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention Strategies and Resources

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/bullying-and-cyberbullying-prevention-strategies

Provides a collection of ADL resources on bullying and cyberbullying for educators, administrators, students and families and caregivers.

Parent, Family and Caregiver Resources

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/parent-family-and-caregiver-resources

Strategies, tips, guiding principles and resources to help parents, family members and caregivers impart values and principles to the children in their lives.

Safe and Inclusive Schools for All

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/safe-and-inclusive-schools-for-all

Provides information about how to promote a safe, respectful and inclusive school community.

Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk

Provides the tools parents and family members need to engage their families in conversations about important news stories and other timely discussions about societal and world events. Includes discussion guides containing a topic summary, questions to start the conversation and dig deeper, ideas for taking action and additional resources. See [Table Talk: What Bullying Is and Is Not](#).

Children's Books

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

Bullying Awareness & Prevention, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-2=1&tid\[165\]=165&tid\[166\]=166&tid\[167\]=167&tid\[168\]=168&tid\[169\]=169](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-2=1&tid[165]=165&tid[166]=166&tid[167]=167&tid[168]=168&tid[169]=169)

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)