



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.

New Kid

Jerry Craft (Author)

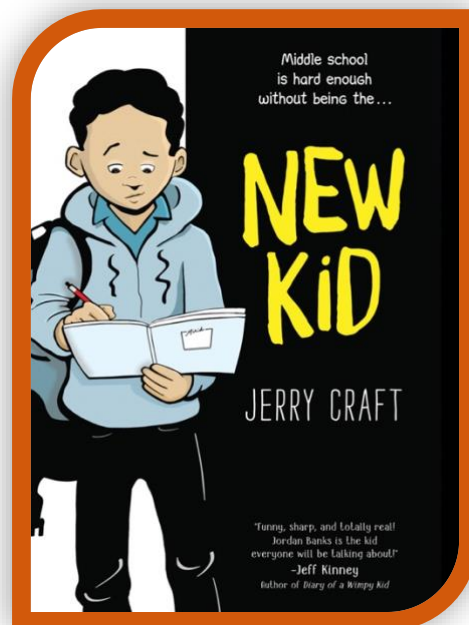
Seventh grader Jordan Banks loves nothing more than drawing cartoons about his life. But instead of sending him to the art school of his dreams, his parents enroll him in a prestigious private school known for its academics, in which Jordan is one of the few kids of color in his entire grade. As he makes the daily trip from his Washington Heights apartment to the upscale Riverdale Academy Day School, Jordan soon finds himself torn between two worlds—not really fitting into either one. Can Jordan learn to navigate his new school culture while keeping his neighborhood friends and staying true to himself?

ISBN: 978-0062691194

Publisher: Quill Tree Books

Year Published: 2019

Age Range: 8–12



Book Themes

Identity, Race and Racism, Microaggressions, Acting as an Ally, Similarities and Differences

Key Words

Discuss and define these words with students prior to reading the book and remind them of the meanings as they come up in the book. See also ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#).

- afford
- associate
- blamed
- body language
- chameleon
- embarrassing
- hierarchy
- overwhelmed

- | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| ■ complain | ■ escalated | ■ humiliating | ■ polemic |
| ■ concussion | ■ expensive | ■ insignificant | ■ stresses |
| ■ daunting | ■ financial aid | ■ Kwanzaa | ■ threatening |
| ■ detention | ■ gossip | ■ mansion | ■ traitor |
| ■ diversity | ■ handshake | ■ metaphor | ■ villa |

Discussion Questions

As students read the book in small groups or as a whole class, ask discussion questions throughout their reading to check for comprehension and engage them on a deeper level. Some of these questions can also be used as writing prompts.

When students have finished reading the book, choose from the following questions to guide a group discussion:

- What is the book about?
- When you initially meet Jordan, what do you learn about him? To what extent does your impression of him change? If so, how does it change?
- How does Jordan feel about attending the new private school? Why does he feel that way?
- How do his parents feel about Jordan attending the new school?
- When Jordan's father says, "Don't let anyone talk down to you," what does he mean, and why does he say that? Have you ever felt "talked down to?"
- What happens when Jordan first meets Liam?
- What do you notice about the differences between Jordan's neighborhood and the environment at Riverdale Academy Day School?
- When Jordan attends the first day of school, what does he notice? What is his reaction?
- What do you notice about the school?
- Why does Jordan think, "Hallelujah," when he sees Maury for the first time? Have you ever felt similarly when you noticed someone who was like you, when most others were not?
- Why do the other kids call Maury "Maury-o?" How do you think Maury feels about that?
- Andy asks Jordan, "What are you anyway?" What does this mean? Have you ever been asked something like this? How did it make you feel?
- How does Jordan feel when he meets Drew?
- When you read Jordan's cartoon about the cafeteria "hierarchy," what did you think of it? What about a drawing of your cafeteria hierarchy look like?
- What stereotypes and microaggressions (see below "Extension Activity" #2 for more about microaggressions) did you notice in the book? What messages do they send to the target and others? How do you think the target feels?
- When you read "Jordan's Tips for Taking the Bus," what do you notice about how he portrays the different neighborhoods as he travels from home to school? Can you relate to that?

- How does the book explore the importance of names? When the teacher keeps confusing Deandre with Drew, how does it make Drew feel? What do you think is going on?
- In what ways do some of the characters act as allies to those who are targeted?
- When Drew and Jordan have a long conversation for the first time, what do you learn about each of them? How are their experiences at home and at school similar and different?
- After Jordan's parents attend back to school night, how do they express to Jordan that they understand the challenges he faces there?
- What is Jordan's Mom's explanation for why she wants Jordan to attend a mostly white school? What do you think about her reason?
- What does Jordan reflect on when he has dinner with his Gran'pa? How does the Chinese food (learning to eat pepper steak in addition to his all-time favorite shrimp lo mein) make Jordan think about his friendships at school? How is the food a metaphor, and what does it represent?
- After some of the school vacations, what does Jordan learn about his classmates' family vacations? How does he feel about that?
- When Drew receives basketball cookies, a KFC gift card and a chocolate Santa from his Secret Santa, how does he feel? When he finds out why she chose those gifts, what does he learn?
- How does Jordan feel when he goes to Liam's house for the first time? Why does Liam ask Jordan not to judge him?
- In "Jordan's Soul'ed Out" drawing, why does Jordan say his Dad thinks he's losing him? What does he do to compensate?
- When Andy and Drew have an argument in the cafeteria and Andy falls, what happens? What assumption does Ms. Rawle (the teacher) make? Who stands up for Drew and how do they do that?
- When Ms. Rawle reads Jordan's drawings about names, what is her initial reaction? What do she and Jordan talk about? What impact does that have on her? What did you learn from the conversation?
- How did you feel when the book ended? What do you think will happen next?
- What are the overall themes of the book? What message is the author communicating through the story?

Extension Activities

Below are activities that can be done with students in order to extend the learning from the book.

1. Reader's Response Writing Activities

Get to know the author: Have students get to know Jerry Craft, the author of *New Kid*. Explain to students that they will conduct research about him that will culminate in a project. First, as a class, discuss with students what they want to know about the author such as: where he grew up, his inspiration for writing the book, aspects of his identity and their relevance to the book, other work written and illustrated by him, his interests and hobbies, family life, awards and recognitions he has received, relevant quotes, etc. Possible sources for their research can include: (1) Craft's website (<https://jerrycraft.com/>), (2) his social media posts on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, (3) interviews he has conducted and (4) other online research. The final culmination of their research may include one of the following project ideas: an extended "author bio" contact page, a timeline of his life including work he has written or illustrated, a PowerPoint presentation, or a video (or audio) simulated

interview between the author and a journalist (one student plays the author and another plays the interviewer).

Write the next chapter in the book: Have students consider what might happen next in the book and then write and illustrate an additional chapter of how they think it could continue. Remind students how the book ends by asking the following questions: *What do you think the summer will be like for Jordan? Do you think he will hang out with his neighborhood friends, school friends or both? What do you think it will be like for him next year at school when he's no longer a "new kid?" What about his friendships with Liam, Drew and others?* Instruct students to write the next chapter of the book as they imagine it would continue. The next chapter can be the next day, next month, next school year. They can write and illustrate the next chapter in the same style of the book.

Two worlds: The concept of living in two different worlds is an important theme in the book. Jordan's home neighborhood is mostly people of color and mixed income. His school is predominately white and upper middle class/wealthy. You can ask students for some examples of when that was highlighted (e.g., students at Riverdale making assumptions about him, his neighborhood friends calling him "private school.") Ask students: *Have you ever felt like you were living in two worlds? How so? What was that like for you? How did you feel? Did you ever bring the two worlds together (as Jordan did with) and how did that go?* Have students turn and talk with someone sitting near them about a situation in which they felt like they were living in two worlds—and share what that was like. Have students then write an essay on that experience, sharing what happened, what they did, what others did, how they felt, etc.

2. Microaggressions: Intent vs. Impact

In the book, we see many examples of microaggressions. Define **microaggressions** as:

The everyday slights, indignities, put-downs and insults that people of color, women, LGBTQ populations and other marginalized people experience in their day-to-day interactions. Microaggressions can appear to be compliments but often contain a "metacommunication" or hidden insult to the target group. Microaggressions are often outside the level of conscious awareness of the people who say them, which means they can be unintentional. Microaggressions may be communicated verbally and/or nonverbally.

If needed, break the definition into parts (see color coding above) and talk about the different parts separately. Ask students: *What are some examples of microaggressions in the book?* Share the following examples to help them understand: (1) When Andy tells Ramon (a Latino student who is from Nicaragua) that his mother probably makes better tacos than the school's cafeteria and (2) When Ashley and Ruby assume Jordan lives with his Mom only. Then ask: *Can you think of other examples of microaggressions in the book? How about microaggressions you have experienced, witnessed or used yourself?* Emphasize that even if microaggressions are unintentional, they still have an impact on the target. And when those microaggressions happen regularly, it continues to have a harmful impact.

Together, identify a few microaggressions in the book and create a T-chart with the microaggressions on one side and the hidden message or assumption on the other side. Then, brainstorm ways that they could respond. Here are four possible ways to respond:

- a. **Restate or paraphrase** (Example: "I think I heard you saying _____. Is that correct?")
- b. **Ask for more information** (Example: "Can you say more what you mean by that?")
- c. **Express your feelings** (Example: Let the person know how you feel when they said it and the impact it had on you.)

- d. **Challenge the stereotype** (Example: Give information, share your own experience and/or offer other alternative thinking or language.)

Show some of MTV's [Look Different Microaggressions videos](#). Have students turn and talk with a partner after showing the videos one at a time. After each video, have students talk with their partner about what happened in the video, what was the underlying message and construct a possible response based on the suggested responses above. If you want to explore this topic in depth, see the lesson plan in the "Additional Resources" section.

3. Write Your Own Graphic Novel Pages

New Kid is a graphic novel about race and racism, microaggressions and the challenges of living in two worlds, etc. The author decides to address these topics through a graphic novel. Engage students in a brainstorming session where they consider issues in their school, community or society that they want to address through the telling of a story. Ask: *What is an issue or problem in society you want to address or help solve? What would you like to convey about that issue through a graphic novel or comic? How would a graphic novel or comic be helpful as you try to raise awareness about the issue you chose?* Explain to students that they will create their own comic strips (or a short graphic novel), which can be based on an issue they identify. They will need to decide in advance: what the issue/problem is and how it will be addressed through a comic strip or graphic novel, the characters, the words they will use for the speech and thought bubbles and how many panels/boxes are needed and what each will represent. It might be helpful to have students write out their plot, characters and dialogue in advance. Provide class time and homework time for them to complete their comic and/or graphic novel and then have students share their finished products with the class.

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and educational resources on ally behavior, identity, microaggressions and race and racism.

Curriculum Resources

Experiences with Race and Racism, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/experiences-with-race-and-racism.

Game Changer: Kyle Korver Speaks Truth on Privilege, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/game-changer-kyle-korver-speaks-truth-on-privilege.

Microaggressions in Our Lives, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/microaggressions-in-our-lives.

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

Websites

6 Ways to Be an Ally

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/6-ways-to-be-an-ally-en-espanol

Some simple things a student can do to be an ally to targets of name-calling and bullying. (Also, in Spanish.)

How Should I Talk about Race in My Mostly White Classroom?

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/how-should-i-talk-about-race-in-my-mostly-white-classroom

Strategies for discussing race and racism in classrooms of predominately white students.

Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/race-talk-engaging-young-people-in-conversations-about

As a society, public conversations about race and racism have increased in volume and intensity. Here are some suggestions and strategies for having classroom conversations with young people about these issues.

Safe and Inclusive Schools for All

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

This resource provides information about how to promote a safe, respectful and inclusive school community.

Children's Books

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

People, Identity and Culture, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-](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)

[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)

Race & Racism, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-8=1&tid[217]=217&tid[218]=218&tid[219]=219&tid[220]=220&tid[221]=221)

[8=1&tid\[217\]=217&tid\[218\]=218&tid\[219\]=219&tid\[220\]=220&tid\[221\]=221](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-8=1&tid[217]=217&tid[218]=218&tid[219]=219&tid[220]=220&tid[221]=221)