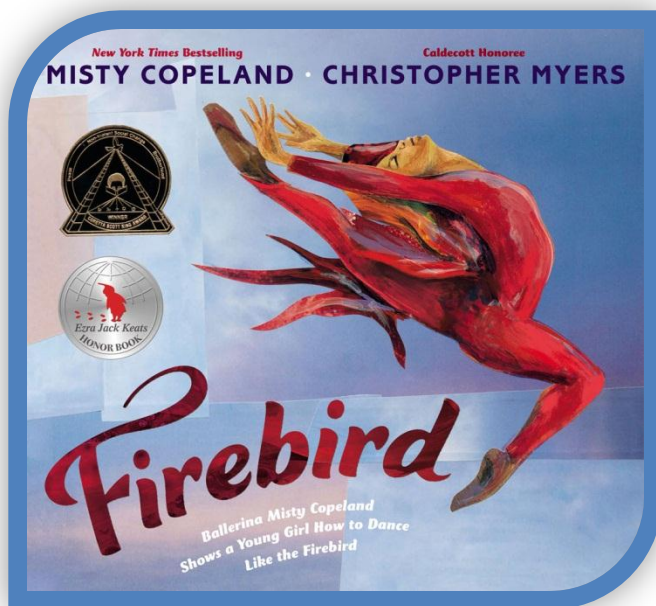




Book of the Month

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.



Firebird

Misty Copeland (Author), Christopher Myers (Illustrator)

ISBN: 978-0399166150

Publisher: G.P. Putnam's Sons

Year Published: 2014

Age Range: 5–8

Book Themes

Role models, Identity, Stereotypes, Affirmation

About the Book

In her debut picture book, Misty Copeland tells the story of a young girl whose confidence is fragile and who is questioning her own ability to reach the heights that Misty has reached. Misty encourages this young girl's faith in herself and shows her exactly how, through hard work and dedication, she too can become Firebird.

Conversation Starters

Whether you read the book aloud or children read 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?

- How does the younger dancer look up to the older dancer?
- What does the older dancer say and do to encourage the younger dancer?
- How do the pictures and images tell the story?
- How do each of them (the younger and older dancer) relate to each other? What do they have in common and what are their differences?
- What dreams do you have and have you ever felt it would be hard or impossible to reach them? If so, what can you do to overcome that feeling?
- How do you think the younger dancer is feeling by the end of the book? How do you know?
- What is the message of the book?
- Why do you think Misty Copeland wrote the book?

Talking Points

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

1. Believing in Yourself

The book is about a professional ballet dancer who is talking with a younger dancer; the professional (older) dancer is encouraging the younger one to continue to work hard, believe in herself and pursue her dreams. The younger ballerina feels she will never achieve what the older ballerina has (e.g. “the space between you and me is longer than forever”). Talk with your child about the other parts of the book where the younger dancer expresses her doubts and the older dancer reassures her and provides encouragement and motivation. Explain that believing in yourself is an important part of reaching your dreams. Of course, it takes more than just believing in yourself—it also takes hard work—but without believing in yourself it is nearly impossible because that belief propels you to do the hard work to try to make it happen. This is also a good opportunity to talk with your child about their particular dreams and how to go about achieving them. At this age, their dreams will be different than when they are older but it is important to acknowledge and encourage children’s dreams at all stages of life.

2. About Misty Copeland and Role Models

Together, read aloud the last page of the book on page 33, which is a letter from the author of the book, Misty Copeland. Emphasize this sentence “But I when I opened up ballet books, I didn’t see myself. I saw an image of what a ballerina should be, and she wasn’t me, brown with tendrils sweeping her face.” Explain that Misty Copeland is a thirty-four year old ballerina. In 2015, she became the first African American performer to be appointed as a Principal Dancer for the American Ballet Theater in its 75 year history. Explain that Misty Copeland has talked about how being the first African American Principal Dancer makes her an important role model for children of color. When she was growing up, she didn’t feel like she had role models of African American ballet dancers. Explain that a role model is a person who is a good example for others, especially young people, to follow. When you don’t see yourself (your race, gender, religion, etc.) in others you hope/aspire to be, it can be difficult to imagine yourself doing that activity, job, etc. Explain the importance of role models in examples of professions we see in the world as well as through the media including books, movies, television shows, online, etc. and ask your child for examples of role models that they both

see and don't see. Talk with your child about how Misty Copeland is the role model to the younger dancer in the book.

3. Stereotypes and their Limitations

Misty Copeland has also talked about the harmful effect of stereotypes that exist in the world of ballet, stating "There's still racism in ballet. For some people, I don't look like a ballerina." Explain to your child that a **stereotype** is the false idea that all members of a group are the same and think and behave in the same way. Tell your child before Misty Copeland became the first in 2015, there had never been an African-American Principal Dancer in the American Ballet Theater (ABT). When she was growing up, most of the ballerinas Misty Copeland saw were white and even though her dream was to be a ballerina, those stereotypes had a negative impact on her feeling like she could reach that dream. Talk with your child about other stereotypes they may have heard about themselves or others. Ask your child what stereotypes they have heard and experienced and what they think is the impact of stereotypes on people. Explain that stereotyping impacts how we see ourselves including our ability to explore different parts of who we are and the interests and dreams we have. It can limit one's opportunities and everyone should be able to pursue their interests, talents and dreams.

Other Books You May Like

28 Days: Moments in Black History that Changed the World by Charles R. Smith, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/28-days-moments-in-black-history.html

Catching the Moon: The Story of a Young Girl's Baseball Dream by Crystal Hubbard, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/catching-the-moon-the-story-of-a-young-girls-baseball-dream.html

Dancing in the Wings by Debbie Allen, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/dancing-in-the-wings.html

I Love My Hair! by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/i-love-my-hair.html

ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and other resources on identity, stereotypes and role models.

Curriculum Resources

10 Ideas for Teaching Black History Month," *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/10-ideas-for-teaching-black-history.html.

Dolls are Us," *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/dolls-are-us.html.

Role Models and Stereotypes: Misty Copland's Story," *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/role-models-and-stereotypes.html.

Websites

Definitions Related to Bias, Injustice and Bullying

www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/definitions-related-to-bias-injustice-bullying.html

A listing of terms and definitions relating to bias, diversity, bullying and social justice concepts written for elementary-age children.

Table Talk: Dolls and Diversity

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

Provides strategies and advice for talking with children about the new diverse representations of dolls.

Parent, Family and Caregiver Resources

www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/parent-family-and-caregivers.html

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

Early Childhood Anti-Bias Education

www.adl.org/education-outreach/early-childhood

Provides program offerings and resources specifically for early childhood educators, caregivers and family members with a focus on teaching mutual respect and an appreciation for diversity in an effort of preventing the seeds of prejudice from taking root in young children.

The Question Corner

www.adl.org/education-outreach/early-childhood/c/the-question-corner.html

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.

Children's Books

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

People, Identity and Culture: Black, African American and Caribbean American People,

www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/people-books.html?subpeople=black-african-american-caribbean

Race and Racism, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/race-racism.html