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# WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF BOOKS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN THAT BREAK GENDER STEREOTYPES?

From the ADL's Miller Early Childhood Initiative Question Corner

Children's books play a role in socializing children to cultural norms of which gender is component of that socialization. Critical examination of children's books and careful selection of gender neutral stereotyped children literature can effectively expose young children to diversity in gender roles. (Hill, Roberts, 2003).

## References

The following books are examples of children's books that break gender stereotypes.



### [Allie's Basketball Dream](#)

[Barbara E. Barber](#) (Author), [Darryl Ligasan](#) (Illustrator)

Determined to play basketball, a girl shows her friends, father, and boys who told her she can't play, that girls can play basketball, too.

[Grade Level: K-2]

### [Amazing Grace](#)

[Mary Hoffman](#) (Author), [Caroline Binch](#) (Illustrator)

A young African-American girl discovers that she can do anything she sets her mind to.

[Grade Level: Pre-K-3]

### [Ballerino Nate](#)

[Kimberly Brubaker Bradley](#) (Author), [Robert W. Alley](#) (Illustrator)

After attending a student ballet performance with his kindergarten class, Nate decides he wants to become a ballet dancer, but is discouraged by his second-grade, sports-loving brother, who pronounces, "You can't... You're a boy," and reminds Nate at every turn that his dream is for girls' and will require him to wear pink shoes and a dress. Despite his parents' reassurance, Nate is still apprehensive when he begins a ballet class and learns that he is the only boy enrolled. Nate's mother takes him to a real ballet performance, where he sees that half the dancers are men. Nate gets to meet one of the dancers, who agrees that a man can't be a ballerina, because that means "woman dancer." Instead, he tells Nate that he hopes some day to be a top ballerino, and Nate feels good about his new pursuit at last.

[Grade Level: Pre-K-3]

### [Daddy's Wedding](#)

Written by [Michael Willhoite](#)

In this sequel to "Daddy's Roommate," Nick is asked to be the best man at his father's and Frank's wedding. In this story, Nick talks about the gathering of family and friends, the food and the ceremony.

[Grade Level: K-2]

### [Drum, Chavi,Drum!/Toca, Chavi, Toca!](#)

[Mayra Dole](#) (Author), [Tonel Tonel](#) (Illustrator)

Chavi is determined to play the drums on the school float during Miami's Calle Ocho parade, but everyone--from her music teacher to her own loving mother--is convinced that because she is a girl, she cannot possibly be good enough. Chavi knows differently, and she practices on anything she can get her hands on: pans, paint cans, car hoods. She just knows she's good, and before the book is over, so does everyone else.

[Grade Level: K-3]

### [Elena's Serenade](#)

[Campbell Geeslin](#) (Author), [Ana Juan](#) (Illustrator)

Elena, a young girl who lives in Mexico, dreams of being a glassblower like her father. When Papa rebuffs her dream by commenting, "Who ever heard of a girl glassblower?," Elena takes one of his old glassblowing

pipes, disguises herself as a boy, and sets off to Monterrey, home of Mexico’s “great glassblowers.” Along the way, she discovers that she can play sweet songs on the pipe, and when she finally reaches her destination, she creates beautiful ornaments which are shaped by the tunes she plays on her pipe. Elena eventually creates a crystal swallow to carry her back home, where she disguises herself as an elderly man and shows her creations to Papa. When she finally reveals her identity, Papa realizes how special his daughter is.

[Grade Level: K-4]

### **[Heroines and Heroes/ Heroínas y Heroes](#)**

[Eric Hoffman](#) (Author), [Eida De Vega](#) (Adapter), [Judi Rosen](#) (Illustrator)

Two children play an imaginative game and realize that both girls and boys can save the day.

[Grade Level: Pre-K -3]

### **[Justin and the Best Biscuits in the World](#)**

[Catherine Stock](#) (Illustrator), [Mildred Pitts Walter](#) (Author)

A young boy learns that cooking and cleaning aren’t just “women’s work.”

[Grade Level: K-3]

### **[Keepers](#)**

[Felicia Marshall](#) (Illustrator), [Jeri Hanel Watts](#) (Author)

An African-American boy gives his grandmother a special birthday present, his carrying on the family story-telling traditions.

[Grade Level: K-6]

### **[King and King](#)**

[Linda de Haan](#) (Author), [Stern Nijland](#) (Author)

The queen of a small, unnamed country presses her son to take a wife so that she can retire. The prince, who “never cared much for princesses,” caves in and agrees to wed, but none of the potential spouses appeal to him, until Princess Madeleine shows up and the prince falls in love with her brother, Prince Lee. A “very special” wedding ensues and everyone lives happily ever after.

[Grade Level: K-2]

### **[Max the Stubborn Little Wolf](#)**

[Marie-Odile Judes](#) (Author), [Joan Robins](#) (Author), [Martine Bourre](#) (Illustrator)

A little wolf dreams of becoming a florist rather than a hunter as his father demands. Papa Wolf cooks up several plans to convince him to change his young mind, but Max cannot be persuaded.

[Grade Level: Pre-K-2]

### **[Mom and Mum are Getting Married](#)**

[Ken Setterington](#) (Author), [Alice Priestley](#) (Illustrator)

When Rosie's two moms tell her about their decision to get married, she is disappointed that the small celebration planned will not afford her the opportunity to be a bridesmaid or flower girl. Rosie finds another option—she and her brother will carry the rings—and a happy wedding ensues. Marriage of same-sex couples is normalized and celebrated in this story without the issue ever being explicitly raised as contentious or a matter of right and wrong.

[Grade Level: K-3]

### **[The Berenstain Bears No Girls Allowed](#)**

[Jan Berenstain](#) (Author), [Stan Berenstain](#) (Author)

Brother bear is angry because sister bear can do "boy" things better than him. He decides to make a club with other male cubs to exclude her.

[Grade Level: Pre-K-3]

### **[The Day Hans Got His Way: A Norwegian Folktale](#)**

[David Lewis Atwell](#) (Reteller), [Debby Atwell](#) (Illustrator)

A Norwegian folktale about a husband and wife switching roles for the day.

[Grade Level: K-3]

### **[The Long Red Scarf](#)**

[Nette Hilton](#) (Author), [Margaret Power](#) (Illustrator)

When grandfather can't find a woman to knit him a scarf, he learns to knit his own.

[Grade Level: K-3]

### **The Paper Bag Princess**

[Robert Munsch](#) (Author), [Michael Martchenko](#) (Illustrator)

A princess rescues the prince she is supposed to marry by outsmarting a dragon, but when the prince is not at all grateful and is more concerned with her appearance, she decides not to marry him.

[Grade Level: Pre-K-3]

### **The Sissy Duckling**

[Harvey Fierstein](#) (Author), [Henry Cole](#) (Illustrator)

Elmer is a duckling that enjoys doing much different things than other male ducks his age. His father is ashamed and tries to teach him how to play sports, he gets bullied in school, and eventually decides to run away from home. Only when Elmer saves his father's life and nurses him back to health that his father realizes that he should be proud of his brave son.

[Grade Level: K-3]

### **William's Doll**

[Charlotte Zolotow](#) (Author), [William Pene DuBois](#) (Illustrator)

A story about a boy who wants a doll, something only his grandmother seems to understand.

[Grade Level: Pre-K-3]

For more children's books on other topics of anti-bias behavior see our [Online Children's Bibliography](#).