



Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

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 early childhood and elementary aged 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.

El Deafo

Cece Bell (Author and Illustrator)

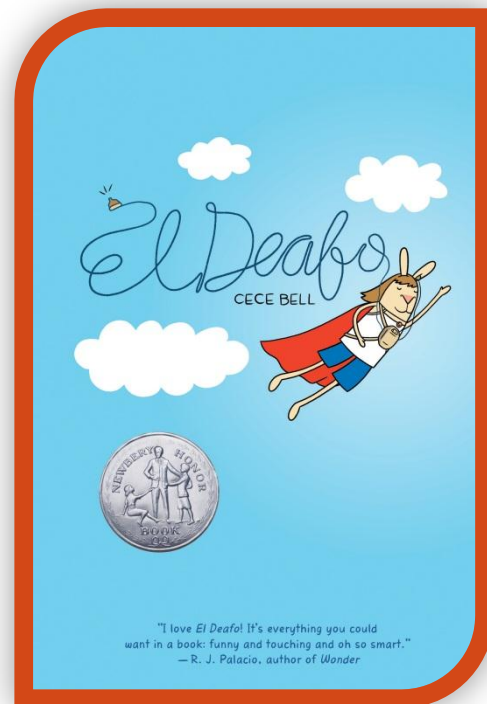
The Phonic Ear gives Cece the ability to hear—sometimes things she shouldn't—but also isolates her from her classmates. She really just wants to fit in and find a true friend, someone who appreciates her as she is. After some trouble, she is finally able to harness the power of the Phonic Ear and become "El Deafo, Listener for All." And more importantly, declare a place for herself in the world and find the friend she's longed for. This graphic novel takes place over the course of Cece's elementary school years and explores identity, friendship and disabilities.

ISBN: 978-1419712173

Publisher: Amulet Books

Year Published: 2014

Age Range: 8–12



Book Themes

People with Disabilities, Ableism, Identity, Friendship, Being an Ally

Key Words

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

- adore
- audiologist
- deaf
- foreign
- access
- context clues
- disability
- headphone

- hearing aid
- lip-read
- persuasion
- superhero
- humiliation
- meningitis
- phonic
- knowledge
- microphone
- powerful

Discussion Questions

If the students read the book in small groups or as a whole class, ask discussion questions throughout their reading in order to check comprehension and engage them on a deeper level. These questions can also be used as writing prompts. When students have finished the book, choose from these questions to guide a group discussion:

- What is the book about?
- Why do you think the author decided to make the story a graphic novel?
- How would you describe Cece's personality?
- What are some of the ways in which everyday life is set up for people who are hearing? How are some of those same things challenging or difficult for people who are deaf?
- How did Cece feel when she attended a school with other kids who were deaf or hearing impaired? What did she learn there?
- How did Cece feel in her new school where she is the only student with a hearing aid?
- In what ways do Cece's friendships (with Emma, Laura, Ginny and Martha) make her happy and comfortable and in what ways are those friendships difficult?
- Would you want to be Cece's friend? Why or why not?
- In what ways did Cece have to stand up for herself, especially with her friends? How do you think she felt when she did that?
- Did you ever have to stand up for yourself the way Cece did? How did you feel?
- How does Cece use the "sonic ear" to her advantage?
- How does Cece come up with the name "El Deafo?" Why do you think she likes daydreaming about being a superhero?
- What happens at Ginny's slumber party? How does Cece feel?
- What is Cece's reaction to learning sign language? Why do you think she feels that way? How do you think you might feel in her situation?
- In Cece's friendship with Martha, why do you think at first she didn't want Martha to know she was deaf?
- How does Cece change and grow throughout the book?
- Over the course of the book, how does Cece feel about being deaf?
- What happens in the end?
- What is the message of the story?

Extension Activities

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

1. Write and Draw the Next Chapter of the Book

At the end of *El Deafo*, Cece and her classmates make “warm fuzzy” (i.e. positive feeling) bags based on a story their teacher read aloud and then the students exchange the warm fuzzies with each other. Cece gives one to her friend Martha and they end up having a conversation about their friendship, promise to be friends and Cece tells Martha about “El Deafo.” Re-read the last few pages of the book aloud (p.230-233) and ask students: *What do you think happens next in the story? Do you think Martha and Cece stay friends? What happens with Ginny and Mike? How is the rest of fifth grade for Cece? What other adventures do you think Cece will have as “El Deafo?”* Have students imagine what happens next in the book and write another chapter of the book. Because it is a graphic novel, students should write the next chapter in both words and pictures. They can then share their chapters with the rest of the class.

2. Reading Response Essay

■ Character Analysis

Have students write essays that focus on one character from the book. The person can be one of the main characters including Cece, Cece’s mother or one of Cece’s friends (Emma, Laura, Ginny or Martha). In the essay, students should respond to the following questions: (a) What did you most appreciate about the character and what did you find most frustrating? (b) Was there an important scene in which the character had a realization about something or changed in some way? What was the scene and what happened? (c) Why did you pick the character and what about her or him do you relate to? (d) Describe at least three character traits of the person and include evidence and quotes from the book that illustrate these characteristics.

■ Book Review

Have students write a book review of *El Deafo*. The elements of a book review should include: (1) title, author, genre and theme; (2) personal reflections about the book—how it made you feel and what your thoughts were about it; (3) plot summary—describe what happened without giving away spoilers; (4) characters you loved or disliked and (5) why it is worth reading or not. Consider sharing the reviews on a class blog or using [GoodReads](#) for online reviews.

■ Friendship

Have students write an essay about the friendships in the book and also reflect upon their own friendships. There is a lot of discussion in the book about Cece’s friendships with others. She has strong feelings and opinions about her friendships with others and there are many good insights about friendship in the book. Engage students in a discussion by asking: *How did you feel about Cece’s friendships with Emma, Laura, Ginny and Martha? How were they similar and different? What was positive about the friendships and what was negative? How did Cece resolve her differences with her friends?* After having this discussion, have students write essays that respond to some/all of the following questions: (1) What were Cece’s friendships like and what does she want and need from her friends? (2) Which friendship do you think was the best one for her and why? (3) How did Cece communicate her thoughts and feelings to her different friends? (4) What about Cece’s friendships could you relate to and what are some differences? (5) What do you look for in a friend and is that hard to find?

3. Learn More About Disabilities

Engage students in a discussion about people with disabilities. Be sensitive and thoughtful about whether you have students with disabilities in your class, especially “invisible” ones. First ask students: *What does it mean to be disabled?* Elicit and define **disability** as a mental or physical condition that affects a person’s movements, senses or activities. Introduce them to some of the [language for people with disabilities](#) and expand their understanding of disabilities to include learning, mental and cognitive disabilities as well as physical disabilities. Ask students to share examples of disabilities, including hearing impairments/deaf, visual impairments/blind, learning disabilities such as dyslexia, spinal cord injuries and having to be in a wheelchair, loss of limbs (arms and legs) or the ability to use them, etc. Ask students how people who are deaf or hard of hearing, like Cece from *El Deafo*, communicate with those who can hear (American Sign Language, lip-reading, hearing aid). Discuss the extent to which their school and community are accessible to people with hearing impairments or other disabilities and brainstorm what could be done in the classroom and school to make it more accessible.

See interview with Cece Bell: [‘El Deafo’: How A Girl Turned Her Disability Into A Superpower.](#)

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on anti-bias teaching strategies and disability and ableism.

Curriculum Resources

“Identity-Based Bullying,” *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/identity-based-bullying.pdf.

“Equal Treatment, Equal Access: Raising Awareness about People with Disabilities and Their Struggle for Equal Rights,” *Curriculum Connections*, http://archive.adl.org/education/curriculum_connections/fall_2005/.

“The Sound of Silence in Football: Derrick Coleman,” *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/sound-of-silence-in-football-derrick-coleman.pdf.

Print Material

Communication Guidelines Relating to Ability, www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/communication-guidelines-relating-to-ability.pdf

Suggested Language for People with Disabilities, www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/suggested-language-for-people-with-disabilities.pdf

Websites

Anti-Bias Education

www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education

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.

Anti-Bias Resources

www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/additional-anti-bias-resources.html

These resources provide a wide range of tips, tools and strategies for K-12 educators, administrators,

students and family members to promote diversity and anti-bias behavior in learning environments and society.

Creating an Anti-Bias Learning Environment

www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/creating-an-anti-bias-learning-environment.html

Tips for the classroom educator to create an anti-bias learning environment.

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.

Ability, Disability and Ableism, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/ability-disability.html

Bullying Awareness and Prevention, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/bullying.html