

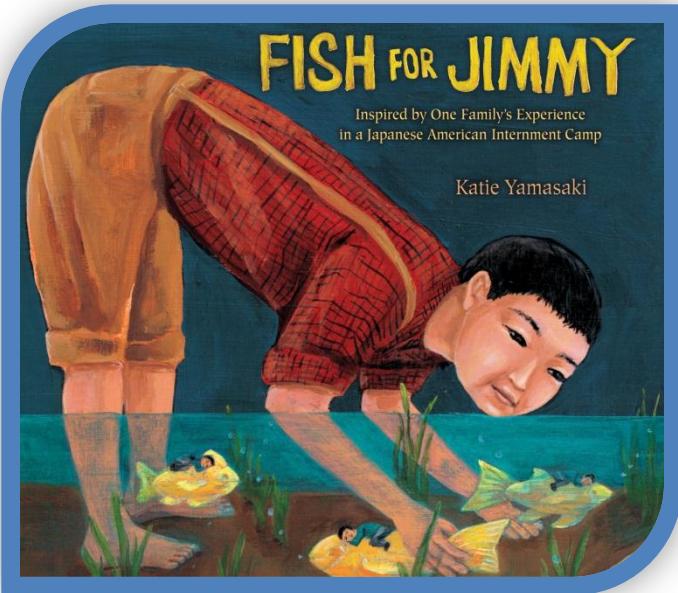


Anti-Defamation League®

# 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.



## Fish for Jimmy

Katie Yamasaki (Author and Illustrator)

ISBN: 978-1452111902

Publisher: Holiday House

Year Published: 2013

Age Range: 7-11

## Book Themes

Prejudice, Discrimination, Japanese-American Internment Camps, Family, Helping others

## About the Book

The world has become a scary and confusing place for Taro and his brother, Jimmy. First, three men come to the door to take their father away. Then Taro, Jimmy and their mother, along with other Japanese families, must leave their home to move far away, where they live in a barrack that is surrounded by a fence with locked gates and armed guards. Jimmy can't eat the unfamiliar food and is becoming listless and frail. Taro refuses to just watch his brother suffer. He is determined to help.

This book deals with a difficult period of U.S. history: the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Conversations about bias, discrimination and injustice will be an important part of the discussion so it is important to consider whether you have raised these topics with your child in the past and how you will approach the subject. The book conveys a strong message that during the most difficult times in life, it is important that we help each other.



## Preparation for Reading

Prior to reading the book, you will need to give your child a little background on the Japanese Internment Camps during World War II. In ways that your child can understand, explain that more than 60 years ago, the Japanese government bombed Pearl Harbor, which is in Hawaii. The next day, the United States declared war on Japan. The U.S. government feared that Japanese-Americans who lived here may not be loyal to our country and required more than 100,000 American citizens of Japanese descent to leave their homes and businesses and to live in internment camps. They will learn more about the internment camps as they read the book. Many years later, the U.S. government admitted they made a mistake, publicly apologized for the internment and offered each individual camp survivor some compensation.

To learn more, you may also want to read aloud the last page of the book ("Dear Reader," p. 33) in which the author describes how *Fish for Jimmy* is based on a true story from her family's history and provides some historical context.

## 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 was the story about?
- How do you think Taro felt when his father was taken away?
- How do you think you would feel if you were in Taro's shoes?
- What was it like at the internment camps?
- How do you think Jimmy was feeling at the internment camp? How could you tell?
- Why do you think Taro snuck out of the internment camp to get fish for Jimmy?
- Do you think you would ever do something like that for a brother or sister?
- Have you ever heard about internment camps? What do you think of them now?
- Can you think of other situations you've heard about that are similar to internment camps?
- Why do you think the government forced Japanese Americans to live in internment camps?

## Talking Points

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

### 1. Feelings and Empathy

The feelings of the main characters are expressed in a variety of ways (words, facial expressions and body language) throughout the book. These feelings include fear, sadness, excitement, confusion, relief, pride, joy, hopelessness and more. Examining the words and pictures that convey those emotions provides an opportunity to help your child understand how feelings are expressed, expand

their feelings vocabulary and build empathy. As you read the book, ask your child how different characters feel and how they have come to those conclusions. Build empathy and understanding by asking children how they might feel in a similar situation. Because the book is about a difficult subject, be sure to ask them how they feel about what they are reading, give them ample time to express their own feelings and be accepting about all the feelings they share. Don't be surprised if a variety of feelings emerge or very little emotion is expressed. Sometimes feelings can develop later after children have had time to process them.

## **2. Prejudice and Discrimination**

At this age, children are beginning to understand prejudice, discrimination and injustice. They can be challenging topics and before delving in, assess what your child can handle emotionally. Parents sometimes feel hesitant to raise these issues with children because they want to protect them from terrible and scary things. At the same time, it is important that children understand, from an early age, that unfairness and injustice exist in the world. It is also critical that children grow up hearing from the adults in their lives that injustice is not okay. With younger children, use simple terms to explain prejudice and discrimination, sharing the information in small digestible chunks. As children get older, they will hear about and be able to take in more sophisticated information including the large scale, government-sponsored acts of discrimination such as internment camps or slavery, the Holocaust, genocide, etc. When discussing these topics, make sure you have the time and space to answer questions and for children to be able to express their feelings. Follow their lead and their questions. If you don't know the answer to a question, be honest about that and tell them you will find out the answer together. These topics may be discussed in school but because it is important that you impart your values and principles—that discrimination and injustice are unfair and wrong—don't leave it to your child's teacher. Books are an excellent way to open the door to these subjects.

## **3. Helping and Standing Up to Injustice**

*Fish for Jimmy* portrays a tragic time in history that is a source of disgrace for the U.S. government, who admitted many years later that the internment camps for citizens of Japanese-American descent were a mistake. The book focuses on what Taro did to help his brother, who was feeling very sad and hopeless. In talking with young children about prejudice, discrimination and injustice, it is crucial that, along with explaining the horrific nature of the situation, adults highlight examples and opportunities where people helped and did something about it. The "doing something" can take many forms—offering personal assistance, being a friend, resistance, confronting the injustice, writing letters, being an ally, engaging in protest activities, etc. When you raise these topics with your child, always remember to share what people did to help and that made a difference. In addition, you may want to find something you can do together or as a family to stand up to injustice.

## **Other Books You May Like**

*Baseball Saved Us* by Ken Mochizuki, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/baseball-saved-us.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/baseball-saved-us.html)

*A Place Where Sunflowers Grow* by Amy Lee-Tai, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/a-place-where-sunflowers-grow.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/a-place-where-sunflowers-grow.html)

*Flowers from Mariko* by Rick Noguchi and Deneen Jenks, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/flowers-from-mariko.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/flowers-from-mariko.html)

*Passage to Freedom* by Ken Mochizuki, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/passage-to-freedom.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/passage-to-freedom.html)

## ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on racism and people who are Asian-American.

### Websites

Discussing Hate and Violence with Children

[www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/discussing-hate-and-violence.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/discussing-hate-and-violence.html)

Tips for adult family members and caregivers on how to discuss hate and violence with children and how to provide opportunities for children to express how they feel about these troubling issues. Brochure available in English and Spanish.

Parent, Family and Caregiver Resources

[www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/parent-family-and-caregivers.html](http://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.

Helping Students Make Sense of News Stories about Bias and Injustice

[www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/helping-students-make-sense.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/helping-students-make-sense.html)

Provides strategies and resources to help make discussions bias and injustice rich and productive for students. The suggestions build in opportunities for students to read, write, research, speak, listen and understand vocabulary.

### Children's Books

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

People, Identity and Culture Books: Asian, Asian-American, South Asian and Pacific Islander,

[www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/people-books.html?subpeople=asianasian-americansouth-asiansouth-asian-americanpacific-islander](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/people-books.html?subpeople=asianasian-americansouth-asiansouth-asian-americanpacific-islander)

Race and Racism, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/race-racism.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/race-racism.html)