



# 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 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.

## I Walk With Vanessa

Kerascoët (Illustrators)

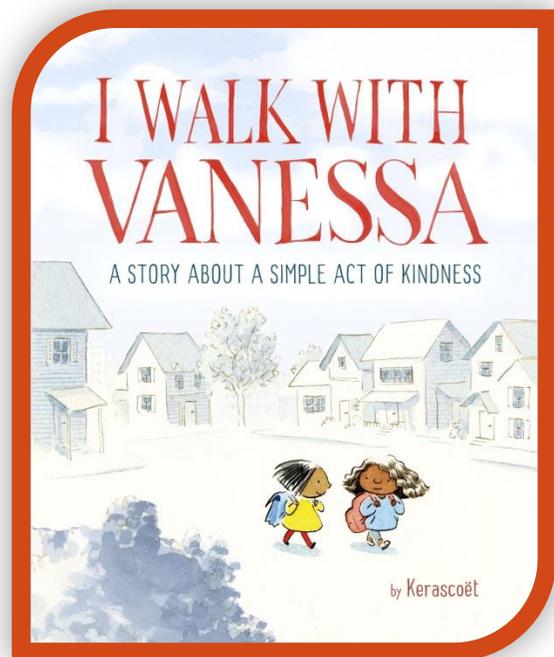
This simple yet powerful wordless picture book tells the story of one girl who inspires a community to stand up to bullying. The book explores the feelings of helplessness and anger that arise in the wake of seeing a classmate treated badly and shows how a single act of kindness can lead to an entire community joining in to help.

ISBN: 978-1524769567

Publisher: Schwartz & Wade

Year Published: 2018

Age Range: 4-8



### Book Themes

Friendship, Being an ally, Bullying and mean behavior, Community, Strength in numbers

### Key Words

*I Walk with Vanessa* is a wordless picture book. However, there are words that children will need to know and understand as you read the book together. Discuss and define these words with children prior to reading the book. Do not focus on students' retention of all the words; instead make sure they understand the words enough to follow the story and use them as appropriate while reading the book. You can also post the words and point out to students when they appear in the story. See also ADL's [Definitions Related to Bias, Injustice and Bullying for Elementary Age Children](#).

- aggressor
- ally
- brave
- bullying
- bystander
- community
- friend
- name-calling

- mean
- target
- teasing

### Discussion Questions

**This is a wordless picture book.** Before reading the book aloud, explain to children that this book has no words so that when you do the “read aloud,” you will show them the pictures and ask them what is happening. Before “reading,” ask these pre-reading questions:

- What is the title of the book?
- Who and what do you see on the cover of the book?
- What do you think the book might be about?

As you “read” the book aloud, ask questions to check comprehension and keep the students engaged, especially since there are no words. Below are some sample questions that correlate to specific page numbers. While reading, at each page ask students what they notice and what is happening.

- What is happening with Vanessa and her family? (page 1)
- What do you notice about Vanessa during her first few days of school? (pages 2-5)
- What happens to Vanessa after school? (pages 6-7)
- How does Vanessa feel? What happens with the other girl who sees what happens? (pages 8-11)
- What does that girl do? (pages 12-13)
- How do you think the girl feels and how do you know? (pages 15-19)
- What does the girl do to support Vanessa? (pages 20-23)
- What happens next? (pages 24-31)
- How are things different for Vanessa now? (page 32)

After “reading” the book aloud, ask some or all of the following discussion questions:

- What happens in the story?
- What happens to Vanessa and how does she feel? How do you know?
- Has anything like that ever happened to you or someone you know?
- What does the other girl see that is happening to Vanessa? What does she do about it?
- What words would you use to describe the girl who helped and supported Vanessa?
- Have you ever done anything like that?
- What happen after the girl picked up Vanessa from her house in the morning? How do the other children get involved?
- How does the story end? How do you feel when the story ends?
- Why do you think the book is called *I Walk with Vanessa*?
- What do you think is the message of the book?
- What was it like to read a wordless book?

## Extension Activities

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

### 1. Write Words for the Book

After reading the book once, have students pass around the book one-at-a-time and each student will verbalize what is happening on one page when it is their turn to hold the book. They can describe the setting or situation, explain what's happening or create dialogue. For example, on page 1 someone might say, "Vanessa and her family moved to a new town. They had a lot of stuff to unpack." After the entire book has been read, have students go back to their seats and write out the sentence(s) and/or dialogue that they described for their particular page. If you have more students than pages of the book, have some students work in pairs. After all the students have written their pages, come back together and read the book aloud together again with the pictures and the words together.

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**NOTE:** Younger children may just be able to write a few words using invented spelling or you can have them dictate what they want to say and you write it for them.

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### 2. Acting as an Ally

Talk with students about mean behavior that includes teasing, name-calling and bullying. First, ask them to identify when in the book they saw mean and hurtful behavior. In context, provide definitions of some of the following terms:

**Name-calling:** Using words to hurt or be mean to someone or a group.

**Teasing:** Laugh at and put someone down in a way that is either friendly and playful or mean and unkind.

**Bullying:** When one person or a group behaves in ways—on purpose and over and over—that make someone feel hurt, afraid or embarrassed.

Ask students: *What did the girl do when she saw the boy being mean to Vanessa (the new girl at school)? Have you ever seen anyone do something like that at school or you have done that yourself?* Explain that the girl was acting as an ally. Ask: *What is an ally?* Come to a definition of **ally** as someone who helps or stands up for someone who is being bullied.

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**NOTE:** Be sure to say that while we don't know for sure it was bullying, since we do not know if it happened over and over, for the purpose of this discussion we will call it **bullying behavior**.

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Ask: *What are some other ways to be an ally?* Brainstorm a list of other ways, recording the student's responses on the board. If these are not mentioned you can also include the following ways: be nice to the person who was hurt or bullied, tell the person (aggressor) to stop or ask them why they did that, tell a teacher, ask someone else what they think I should do, try to include the targeted person in activities with me and my friends like recess games. Have students draw a picture of a time they acted as an ally to someone or someone acted as an ally to them. If they can't think of an example, have them think about a situation of bullying (directed at them or someone else) and imagine how they would like to act as an ally. Challenge the students to identify an ally behavior that feels right for them and use it the next time they see mean or bullying behavior.

### 3. One, Some, Many, All

In the book, we see how an act of kindness and ally behavior can be contagious and how kindness multiplies. After talking with students about the different ways to act as an ally (above #2), explain

that many of those ally behaviors involve one person and that is very important. At the same time, sometimes the impact can be greater if there are more people who act as allies. Illustrate this point by having the students stand in front of the room, show the difference between one student (1), some (3), many (10-15) or all (all students in the class) as you go from 1 student to 3 students to 10-15 students to the whole class. Ask: *How would it feel to have all of these students being an ally to you?* Explain to students that when it comes to bullying and other mean behavior, one person can make a difference in the way that the girl who was nice to Vanessa did. But then when she included other people, it really helped Vanessa feel safe and included. Share a scenario of a bullying situation and make sure it isn't too specific to a situation that actually happened at school. Then ask: *What could one person do to help or act as an ally? What could some students do? What could many students do? How about all students?* Have a discussion about the strength in numbers, the power of community and the importance of moving from bystanders to allies.

## ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on bullying and acting as an ally.

### Curriculum Resources

Cyberbullying: Understanding and Address Online Cruelty, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/cyberbullying-understanding-and-addressing-online-cruelty](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/cyberbullying-understanding-and-addressing-online-cruelty)

Identity-Based Bullying, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/identity-based-bullying](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/identity-based-bullying)

We Can All Be 'Kid President', [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/we-can-all-be-kid-president](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/we-can-all-be-kid-president)

Words That Heal: Using Children's Literature to Address Bullying, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/words-that-heal-using-childrens-literature-to-address](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/words-that-heal-using-childrens-literature-to-address)

### Websites

Anti-Bias Education

[www.adl.org/what-we-do/promote-respect/anti-bias](http://www.adl.org/what-we-do/promote-respect/anti-bias)

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.

Be an Ally: Six Simple Ways

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/be-an-ally-six-simple-ways](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/be-an-ally-six-simple-ways)

Some simple things a student can do to be an ally to targets of name-calling and bullying.

Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention Strategies and Resources

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/bullying-and-cyberbullying-prevention-strategies](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/bullying-and-cyberbullying-prevention-strategies)

Provides a collection of ADL resources on bullying and cyberbullying for educators, administrators, students and families and caregivers.

**Free Online Course: Building Ally Behaviors**

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/free-online-course-for-educators-building-ally-behaviors](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/free-online-course-for-educators-building-ally-behaviors)

A free 20-minute online course that assists educators in helping students in grades 3-7 move from being bystanders to using ally behavior.

**Ten Things Students Wish Teachers Knew**

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/ten-things-students-wish-teachers-knew](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/ten-things-students-wish-teachers-knew)

A list of things students indicated they wish teachers knew to help them better handle incidents of bullying behavior and be the role models students can confide in.

**Children's Books**

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

Bullying Awareness & Prevention, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[165\]=165&tid\[166\]=166&tid\[167\]=167&tid\[168\]=168&tid\[169\]=169](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[165]=165&tid[166]=166&tid[167]=167&tid[168]=168&tid[169]=169)