



# Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Department

**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.

## Kamala Harris: Rooted in Justice

Nikki Grimes (Author), Laura Freeman (Illustrator)

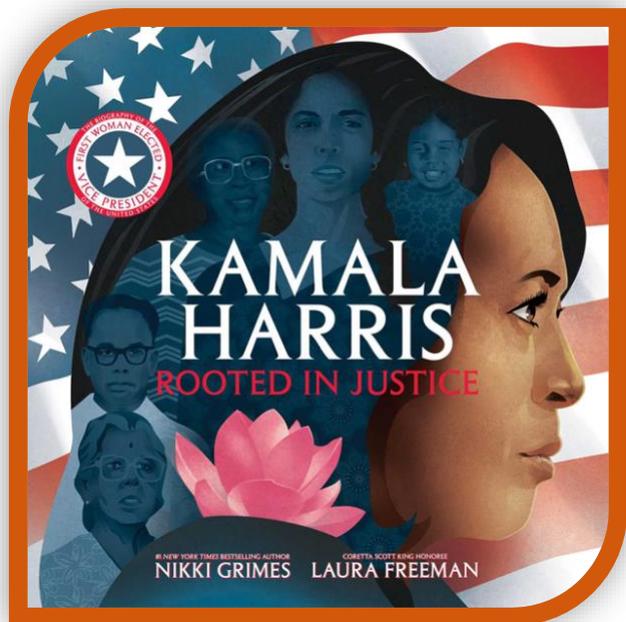
When Kamala Harris was young, she often accompanied her parents to civil rights marches—so many, in fact, that when her mother asked a frustrated Kamala what she wanted, the young girl responded with: “Freedom!” As Kamala grew from a small girl in Oakland to a Senator running for President, it was this long-fostered belief in freedom and justice for all people that shaped her into the inspiring figure she is today. From fighting for the use of a soccer field in middle school to fighting for the people of her home state in Congress, Senator Harris used her voice to speak up for what she believed in and for those who were otherwise unheard. Her dedication led to her becoming the Vice President of the U.S. in 2020.

ISBN: 978-1534462670

Publisher: Atheneum Books for Young Readers

Year Published: 2020

Age Range: 5–10



## Book Themes

People, Identity and Culture, Social Justice, Civil Rights, Elections and Voting, Breaking Barriers

## Key Words

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 remind children of the words' meanings as they come up in the book. You can also post the words and point out to students when they appear in the story. For definitions that are differentiated for young children, see ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#).

- |                |                   |                 |                  |
|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| ■ action       | ■ cultural center | ■ integrate     | ■ public service |
| ■ apartheid    | ■ debate          | ■ justice       | ■ wealthy        |
| ■ campaign     | ■ demonstrations  | ■ legacy        | ■ White House    |
| ■ cancer       | ■ freedom         | ■ long-distance | ■ working class  |
| ■ civil rights | ■ immigrant       | ■ peace         |                  |
| ■ confidence   | ■ inheritance     | ■ poor          |                  |
| ■ contracts    | ■ independence    | ■ protest       |                  |

## Discussion Questions

Before reading the book aloud, ask some or all of these pre-reading questions:

- What is the title of the book? What do you see on the cover?
- What do you know about Kamala Harris?
- What do you think the book might be about?

As you read the book aloud, ask a few discussion questions periodically throughout reading to check for comprehension and keep the students engaged. Below are some sample questions that correlate to specific page numbers.

- What does "Kamala" mean? (page 4)
- How did Kamala feel about moving to Montreal? (page 17)
- Why does Kamala say, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again?" (page 29)

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

- What is the book about?
- How does Kamala's name, which means "lotus flower," relate to her as a person?
- What was Kamala's childhood like and what impact did it have on her as an adult?
- What kind of adventures do Kamala and her sister Maya have when they were children?
- What does it mean that Kamala was part of a program to "integrate" the schools? What impact did this have on her? What did she learn from others?
- Who are some of the famous Black people mentioned in the book (i.e., Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, James Baldwin, Nina Simone, Thurgood Marshall)? Have you heard of any of them? How can we learn more about them?

- What was it like for Kamala to attend Howard University, an all-Black college?
- What happened when Kamala took the bar exam (a test you take to become a lawyer)? What did she learn from that experience?
- When Kamala becomes a Senator, what issues of justice does she work on? Who does she try to help?
- One of the last lines of the book is “Will Donald and Shyamala’s daughter ever get to call the White House home?” What did you think when you read that line? How do you think Kamala felt when she and Joe Biden won the election, and she becomes the Vice President of the U.S.?
- How was the theme of justice (see below for definition) addressed throughout the book? What are some examples of when Kamala fought for justice? What issues of justice are important today?
- Why do you think it’s important now to have a book about Kamala Harris?
- What questions do you still have about Kamala Harris?
- What is the message of the book?

## Extension Activities

Below are activities for students that can extend learning from the book.

### 1. Explore Identity and Culture

Explain that Kamala Harris identifies as Black and Jamaican as well as South Asian and Indian. These define her race and culture. Ask students: *What is culture?* Define the word **culture** as the parts of daily life that are seen in food, customs, holidays, music and more that a group of people share. Explain that these parts of culture are often handed down from family members or from one generation to the next. They can also come from the country where the person’s family/ancestors came from. Explain that culture also can include one’s region of the country, whether you live in a city, suburban or rural setting, one’s family traditions including how you celebrate holidays, your religion, etc. Ask students: *What did you notice about Kamala Harris and her family’s culture throughout the book? Were there aspects of her and her family’s life that are part of their culture (e.g., country of origin, what she was named, music, art, etc.)?* Remember that students can identify with more than one race or culture, as Kamala does. After this discussion, have students turn and talk with someone sitting next to them and share what they know about their culture. If time permits, you can then have students create culture flags, where they can make a flag shape with construction paper and then draw (or use photos) pictures, symbols or words that reflect aspects of their culture(s). This activity can also be done by having students talk with their parents/family first about aspects of their culture and then bringing that information to school for inclusion into the culture flags.

### 2. Learn More about Kamala Harris

Ask students: *What did you already know about Kamala Harris before reading the book? From the book, what did you learn about her that you didn’t know before? If you had to use three adjectives to describe Kamala Harris, what adjectives would you use? In your opinion, what are her most important accomplishments?* Explain that one important aspect of Kamala Harris becoming Vice President is that she “broke a barrier.” Ask: *What do you think it means to “break a barrier?”* Elicit that a **barrier** is a limitation or boundary, and breaking barriers means that no one in that identity group ever reached that boundary (or political office, in her case) before. Ask: *What boundary did Kamala Harris break?* Explain that Kamala Harris was elected the first woman, first Black woman and first South Asian

woman elected Vice President of the U.S. Also share with students that there has never been a woman President in the U.S.

As a class, share some of the basic facts you already know about Kamala Harris (from questions above) and then brainstorm a list of questions students still have. Explain to students that they will do a research project to learn more about Kamala Harris and her life. They can start their research with the information in the book (including the back pages where there is more information) and then continue their research with library and internet research. The research projects can be done alone or in pairs and will culminate in one of the following: (1) draw a portrait of Kamala Harris with a short blurb about her, (2) write a few additional pages to the book *Kamala Harris: Rooted in Justice* that covers what you imagine she does as Vice President, (3) write an acrostic poem about her using her first or last name, (4) read aloud a speech (or part of one) of Kamala Harris' and then share what it means to you, (5) write 5–8 original diary/journal entries on what you learned about Kamala Harris based on important moments in her life or day-to-day experiences that shaped her or (6) make a list of questions you want to ask Kamala Harris.

### 3. Write a Persuasive Letter about Justice

Talk with students about the word “justice,” which is a strong theme in the book. Elicit/explain that **justice** is fair treatment and access to resources and opportunity. This means that all people, regardless of their identity, have a fair chance and deserve to get what they need to achieve their goals and dreams. That includes correcting or repairing unfairness experienced by some identity groups/communities.

Ask students: *What does justice mean to you? What are examples of places, spaces and situations where there is a lack of justice (or fairness), or injustice?* These examples can be in the world, country, their community or school. Remind students that in the book, we see many examples of Kamala Harris working to bring more justice to the world (e.g., going to civil rights protests with her parents, marching in front of her apartment building in Montreal, fighting for laws so that workers could earn more money, helping Black law school graduates get jobs in law firms). Brainstorm a list of ideas that they come up with and then have each student select one and write a persuasive letter (to their parents, to their school, to their Mayor, congressperson or President) about that issue. In the letter they should include what the issue is, why they think it is unfair/unjust, what evidence or facts they have, and what they think should be done about it (their “call to action”). Have students engage in the writing process to complete their letters and then send them via email or regular mail to the person.

## ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and educational resources on people, identity and culture, social justice and elections.

### Curriculum Resources

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).

Representing the People: Diversity and Elections, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/representing-the-people-diversity-and-elections](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/representing-the-people-diversity-and-elections).

Social Justice Poetry, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/social-justice-poetry](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/social-justice-poetry).

The 2020 Presidential Election: What Can We Learning from Victory Speeches?,  
[www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/the-2020-presidential-election-what-can-we-learn-from](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/the-2020-presidential-election-what-can-we-learn-from).

### Websites

7 Engaging Picture Books about Voting and Elections  
[www.adl.org/blog/7-engaging-picture-books-about-voting-and-elections](http://www.adl.org/blog/7-engaging-picture-books-about-voting-and-elections)

This blog includes a round-up of picture books for elementary students about voting, elections and the power of democracy. Talking with young children about voting and elections can open doors to conversations about fairness, democracy, citizenship and participation.

10 Ways Youth Can Engage in Activism  
[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/10-ways-youth-can-engage-in-activism](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/10-ways-youth-can-engage-in-activism)

A list of ideas for bringing social activism into the classroom and outside of the school walls. These strategies can be acted upon individually, organized together as a group and young people can join with a larger effort that is taking place locally or nationally.

Civil Rights Movement  
[www.adl.org/education/resources/backgrounders/civil-rights-movement](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/backgrounders/civil-rights-movement)

Provides historical background information, resources and pictures about the Civil Rights Movement.

Teaching about Elections  
[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/teaching-about-elections](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/teaching-about-elections)

Elections provide great opportunities to teach students about civics, how government works, the electoral process, current events and issues, historical context and campaign politics. This page provides education resources, lesson plans and other election-related pedagogical content to assist you in teaching about elections.

### Children's Books

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

[People, Identity and Culture](#)

[Social Justice](#)