



Book of the Month

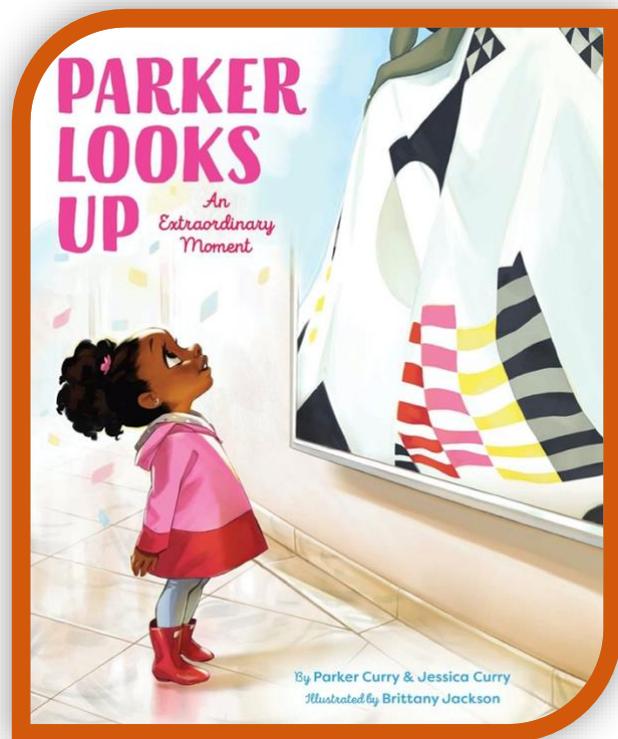
Presented by ADL's Education Department

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.

Parker Looks Up: An Extraordinary Moment

Parker Curry and Jessica Curry (Authors),
Brittany Jackson (Illustrator)

When Parker Curry came face-to-face with the portrait of First Lady Michelle Obama at the National Portrait Gallery, she didn't just see the First Lady of the U.S. She saw a queen—one with dynamic self-assurance, regality, beauty, and truth who captured this young girl's imagination. When a nearby museum goer snapped a photo of a mesmerized Parker, it became an internet sensation. Inspired by this visit, Parker, and her mother, Jessica Curry, tell the story of a young girl and her family, whose trip to a museum becomes an extraordinary moment, in a moving picture book. Parker sees the possibility and promise, the hopes and dreams of herself in this powerful painting of Michelle Obama.



ISBN: 978-1534451865

Publisher: Aladdin

Year Published: 2019

Age Range: 4–8

Book Themes

Identity, Role Models, Representation, Race, Black History Month

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](#).

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|-----------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|
| ■ brilliant | ■ froze | ■ paintings | ■ spellbound |
| ■ easel | ■ imagined | ■ portrait | ■ strong |
| ■ extraordinary | ■ loomed | ■ possibilities | |
| ■ familiar | ■ magical | ■ powerful | |
| ■ First Lady | ■ museum | ■ real | |

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 think the girl is looking at?
- What do you think the book might be about?
- Who wrote the book? (Explain that book is written by Parker Curry, the girl featured in the book, and her mother, Jessica Curry.)

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 else does Parker love in addition to the museum? (page 5)
- How do Parker, Gia and Ava feel about the fish in the picture they are looking at? (page 17)
- Who is Michelle Obama? (page 26) Explain that Michelle Obama, a Black woman and wife of Barack Obama, the first Black President, was the first Black First Lady.

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

- What happens in the story?
- Who is Parker? What are some of her interests and personality traits?
- What is it like in the museum? What do Parker, Gia and Ava see?
- What is your favorite painting that they see? What do you like about it?
- Have you ever visited a museum? What was it like? What did you see?
- When Parker sees the painting of Michelle Obama, why do you think she “froze in her tracks?” What do you think she is feeling and thinking?

- Why do you think that Parker notes that Michelle Obama has “rich brown skin” just like her? Why is that important? Have you ever had an experience like that?
- What are some of the words Parker’s mother uses to describe Michelle Obama? What words do you know and what do they mean?
- What words do you want to know more about?
- Why do you think Parker noticed that Michelle Obama has “rich brown skin just like Parker?”
- Why do you think that Parker, after seeing the portrait of Michelle Obama, felt “powerful and strong?” Can you think of something you’ve seen, heard or read that made you feel “powerful and strong”? Why do you think you felt that way?
- What is a role model? What is it like when you see yourself in someone else?
- What is the message of the book?

Extension Activities

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

1. Identity and Role Models Essay

Ask students: *What is a role model?* Elicit/explain that a **role model** is a person who you look up to or admire. Ask: *As Parker looks at and looks up to Michelle Obama’s portrait, is Michelle Obama a role model to Parker? Do role models share an aspect of identity?* Define **identity** as the qualities, beliefs, etc. that make a particular person or group different from others. This can include race, gender, religion, etc. Explain that in this case, both Parker and Michelle Obama are Black, and Parker noted that Michelle Obama has “rich brown skin just like Parker.” Therefore, Michelle Obama being Black is important to Parker. Sometimes, it’s helpful if the role model looks like you or shares a part of your identity. Explain that a role model can be someone you know (e.g., your camp counselor) or someone in your family (e.g., your mother, your Uncle). It can be someone who you don’t know but admire, like a famous person. It can be someone alive or dead.

With students, brainstorm some qualities and traits you would find in a role model. Then ask students: *Who is your role model?* Invite students to identify a role model and draw a picture or a series of images about the person, including captions on each. The captions can answer questions like: *In what ways do you admire them? What about their personality, accomplishments, talents or who they are as a person makes them a role model to you? Do you share aspects of identity with your role model and why is this important or not important?* When completed, have students share their drawings and captions with the class.

2. Art, Representation and Black History Month

Remind students that in the book, Parker sees the portrait of Michelle Obama in the museum. Explain that in real life, First Lady Michelle Obama’s portrait is in the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, a museum in Washington D.C. You can see her portrait [here](#) and also see the portrait of [President Obama](#). Then, read aloud the note from Amy Sherald (the artist who drew First Lady Michelle Obama’s portrait) on page 38. Re-read the following sentences: “What Parker observed while looking at the portrait of the First Lady was her own greatness” and “Without representation at all, there will be stories that are missing.” Elicit thoughts and questions about the artist means. You can explain that the artist feels it is important and powerful to see images of yourself reflected in art (and other aspects of media like books, movies, TV shows, games, dolls, toys, etc.). This helps people feel good about themselves, follow their dreams, pursue their interests, passions and accomplishments. The

artist explains how she felt the first time she saw a painting of a person who is Black, like her. Ask: *How does this relate to the book and Parker's reaction to seeing a portrait of Michelle Obama?*

Explain that the month of February is Black History Month, a celebration of the history, achievements and contributions of Black people. Explain that the reason a month is dedicated to honoring Black history is because sometimes when history is discussed and taught, Black people and Black history are not included due to racism, bias and exclusion. This is also true for other themed months such as Women's History Month and National Hispanic Heritage Month. For Black History Month and as an activity related to this story, students will identify an important person or time in Black History and create a painting, drawing or portrait of that person or time period. In addition to the drawing, they will write a short description of the person or time, called a "Museum Title Card." When all the drawings are completed, display them around the classroom and create a gallery exhibition. Students can move around the room to look at and read about the art. Parents and family can be invited in to take part in the Black History Month art exhibition.

3. Adjectives and Me

Explain or remind students that an adjective is a word that describes a noun (an object, person or thing). Together, re-read aloud pages 28 and 29, where Parker's mother uses adjectives (and some nouns) to describe Michelle Obama. The adjective words include caring, courageous, dynamic, honest, advocate, confident, smart, mentor, inspirational. With students, define the words they know and engage them in a process to define the words they don't know. Students will then create a word cloud or paper illustration of the words they would use to describe themselves. First, brainstorm adjectives that they already know. Then have them look up additional adjectives in print or online dictionaries or use a resource like [this one](#) or [this one](#). You can also refer to adjectives and other words you may be working on as a class. You can first use yourself as an example and ask students to share adjectives to describe you, adding adjectives to describe yourself, and record the adjectives on the board/smart board. When they have all the adjectives they want to include (5–15 in total) have them create a drawing or word cloud with the words. They can illustrate the page or just leave them as words-only. Then have students share their words with the class.

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and educational resources on identity, representation and role models.

Curriculum Resources

10 Ideas for Teaching Black History Month, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/10-ideas-for-teaching-black-history-month.

Diverse Books Matter, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/diverse-books-matter.

On-Screen Diversity: Why Visibility in Media Matters, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/on-screen-diversity-why-visibility-in-media-matters.

Role Models and Stereotypes: Misty Copeland's Story, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/role-models-and-stereotypes-misty-copelands-story.

Who Am I Identity? Poems, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/who-am-i-identity-poems.

Websites

Black History Month

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/black-history-month

Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month. Here are some lesson plans and resources to help you teach about Black history in your classroom and at home.

Early Childhood FAQs

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/question-corner

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. See also, [How Can I Help Children to Appreciate Diversity?](#)

Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/race-talk-engaging-young-people-in-conversations-about

As a society, public conversations about race and racism have increased in volume and intensity. Here are some suggestions and strategies for having classroom conversations with young people about these issues.

Children's Books

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

[People, Culture & Culture: Black, African American, Caribbean](#)

[Race & Racism: Black, African American, Caribbean People](#)