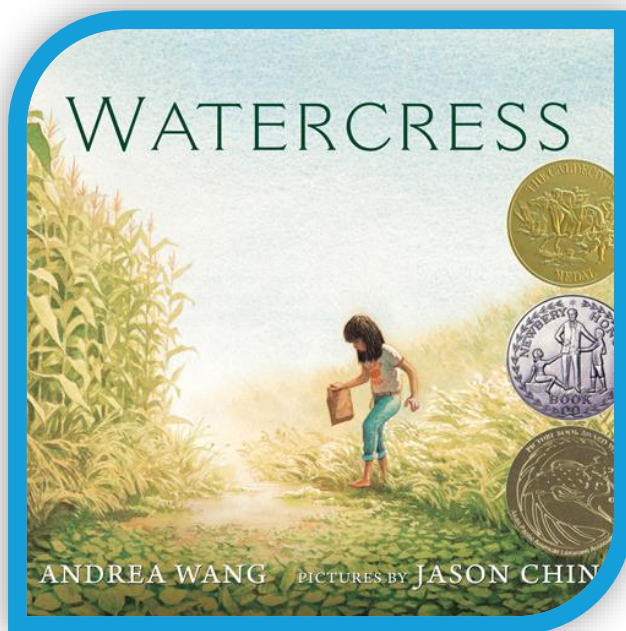




# Monthly Featured Book

Presented by ADL's Education Department

**About the Monthly Featured Book:** 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.



## Watercress

Andrea Wang (Author), Jason Chin (Illustrator)

ISBN: 978-0823446247

Publisher: Neal Porter Books

Year Published: 2021

Age Range: 4-8

## Book Themes

Asian American People, Identity and Culture, Immigration, Socioeconomic Status and Classism, Power of Memory

## About the Book

Driving through Ohio in an old Pontiac, a young girl's parents stop suddenly when they spot watercress growing wild in a ditch by the side of the road. Grabbing an old paper bag and some rusty scissors, the whole family wades into the muck to collect as much of the muddy, snail covered watercress as they can. At first, she's embarrassed. Why can't her family get food from the grocery store? But when her mother shares a story of her family's time in China, the girl learns to appreciate the fresh food they foraged. Together, they make a new memory of watercress.

## Conversation Starters

Whether you read the book along with your child or your child reads 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 conversation that helps them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes.

- What happens in the story?
- As we read the book, what were you thinking and feeling?
- What are your impressions of the girl and her brother? What are your impressions of the parents?
- What happens when the parents notice the watercress on the side of the road? What does the watercress mean to the parents?
- Why do you think the parents have a “longing for China?” Have you ever longed for a place?
- What does the girl mean when she says she feels “ashamed” of her family, and later when she says she feels “ashamed of feeling ashamed?”
- When the girl reflects on the fact that “free is bad” because it means “hand-me-down clothes” and “roadside trash-heap furniture,” what does she mean by this? What in the book’s pictures tell you that?
- What story does the mom share about her brother and what happened in China? How does the girl feel when she’s listening to the story? How do you know?
- What are some of the memories explored in the book? Do you have a memory that is special, important or meaningful to you?
- How did you feel when the book ended?
- Why do you think the author wrote this book?

## Talking Points

Below are some important considerations that will make this a learning opportunity for your child and your family.

### 1. Power of Memory

Talk to your child about an important theme in the book: the power of memory. Ask your child what a memory is and explain that a memory is “something learned or experienced that is kept in your mind.” As a way to elaborate on the power of memories, share a memory of your own and why it’s important to you. Ask your child about some of the memories explored in the book and why they are meaningful or important to the characters in the book. Explain that a memory can be large or small; it can be an object, food, experience, person, photo, trip, something said, or something else. Ask your child to share any memories they have, explaining that a memory can be from a while ago or something that happened recently. Ask your child to reflect on why that memory is important and how keeping something in your mind can be a positive feeling or a sad or negative feeling. We can also reflect on and learn from memories.

### 2. Bias and Acting as an Ally

Together, re-read pages 18-19 and talk with your child about what is happening on those pages. Ask your child what they think it means when the daughter reflects that “free is bad” because it means “hand-me-down clothes” and “roadside trash-heap furniture.” If your child doesn’t know, explain that the main character may be feeling shame and facing bias because they don’t have much money. Explain/elicit that bias is “a preference, either for or against an individual or group, that affects fair judgment” and that that bias is based on aspects of identity. Because the girl wears clothes that are

handed down (i.e., not new) and the family sometimes get furniture that has been placed on the side of the road as trash, the author is telling the reader that the family may not have much or enough money. The girl expresses feeling “ashamed” of her family, which may be because they don't have much money, or because the family is Chinese (in a community where there are not many or any other Chinese families) and the parents are originally from China and are immigrants. Talk with your child about how the girl is teased and targeted, and what someone could do in that situation to act as an ally, explaining that an ally is: someone who helps or stands up for someone who is being bullied or the target of bias. Share situations where you have acted as an ally and ask your child if they have ever acted as an ally when someone faced bias or bullying or how they might in the future.

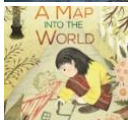
### 3. AAPI (Asian American Pacific Islander) Heritage Month

Talk with your child about how May is Asian American Pacific Islander Month—an annual celebration of the history, achievements and contributions of Asian American people in the U.S. The AAPI community includes those who live in the U.S. and who identify as East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander ([Defining Diaspora: Asian, Pacific Islander, and Desi Identities](#)). Explain that the reason a month is dedicated to honoring AAPI people, history and culture is because sometimes when history is discussed and taught, Asian American people are not included due to bias and exclusion. This is also true for other themed months like Women's History and Black History Month. You can explain that this book focuses on an Asian American family. Make sure to emphasize this is just one story about an Asian American family and while there are similarities within identity groups, there are also many differences. Explain that the stereotypes and generalizations people hold about groups of people can prevent us from seeing them as individuals. Discuss why stereotypes are incomplete and harmful. Share that we can challenge or dispel stereotypes by spending time with people from different cultural and identity groups, and also by reading or watching various stories and narratives about different groups of people.

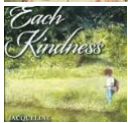
## Other Books You May Like



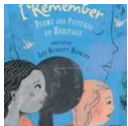
*A Different Pond* by Bao Phi, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/a-different-pond](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/a-different-pond)



*A Map into the World* by Kao Yang, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/a-map-into-the-world](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/a-map-into-the-world)



*Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/each-kindness](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/each-kindness)



*I Remember: Poems and Pictures of Heritage* by Lee Hopkins, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/i-remember-poems-and-pictures-of-heritage](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/i-remember-poems-and-pictures-of-heritage)

## ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on AAPI people, history and culture, challenging anti-Asian bias and acting as an ally, and socioeconomic status.

### Websites

6 Ways to Be an Ally

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/6-ways-to-be-an-ally-en-espanol](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/6-ways-to-be-an-ally-en-espanol)

Some simple things a student can do to be an ally to targets of name-calling and bullying. (Also in Spanish.)

10 Great Books to Read for Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month

[www.adl.org/blog/10-great-books-to-read-for-asian-american-pacific-islander-aapi-heritage-month](http://www.adl.org/blog/10-great-books-to-read-for-asian-american-pacific-islander-aapi-heritage-month)

Recommended books for elementary and middle school to help young people explore the history, experience and culture of the Asian American Pacific Islander community in its complexity and many dimensions.

Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month Resources

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/asian-american-pacific-islander-aapi-heritage-month](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/asian-american-pacific-islander-aapi-heritage-month)

A collection of resources to teach help you teach and celebrate the Asian Pacific American heritage in school, communities and at home.

Challenging Anti-Asian Bias and Acting as an Ally

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/challenging-anti-asian-bias-and-acting-as-an-ally](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/challenging-anti-asian-bias-and-acting-as-an-ally)

Provides a collection of ADL resources on anti-Asian bias and how to act as an ally for educators, administrators, students and families and caregivers.

Parent, Family and Caregiver Resources

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/parent-family-and-caregiver-resources](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/parent-family-and-caregiver-resources)

Strategies, tips, guiding principles and resources to help parents, family members and caregivers impart values and principles to the children in their lives.

The Question Corner: Early Childhood FAQs

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/question-corner](http://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 [Why is it Important to Teach Young Children to Appreciate Diversity?](#)

Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk)

Provides the tools parents and family members need to engage their families in conversations about important news stories and other timely discussions about societal and world events. Includes discussion guides containing a topic summary, questions to start the conversation and dig deeper, ideas for taking action and additional resources. See [What Bullying Is and Is Not](#).

### Children's Books

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

Bias, Discrimination & Hate: Socioeconomic Bias, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[181\]=181](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[181]=181)

People, Identity & Culture: Asian, Asian American, South Asian, South Asian American and Pacific Islander, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[203\]=203](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[203]=203)