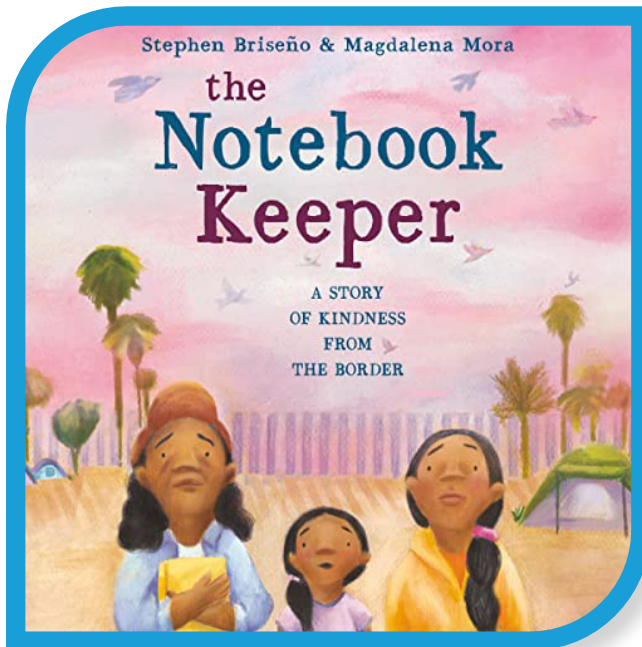




# Monthly Featured Book

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.



## The Notebook Keeper

Author: Stephen Briseño and Illustrator Magdalena Mora

Age Range: 4-8

Year Published: 2022

### Book Themes

Empathy, Kindness, People Who are Refugees, Asylum, Leaving Home

## About the Book

In this moving picture book, Noemi and Mamá flee their home in Mexico, and head for the U.S. border. There, they look for “The Notebook Keeper”— the person in charge of a ledger for those waiting to cross, and they add their names to the book. As the days turn into weeks, and hope dwindles, the little girl looks for empathy and kindness around her— and inside herself. One day, when the Notebook Keeper’s own name is called to cross, Noemi and her Mamá are chosen, for the generosity in their hearts, to take her place.

## Conversation Starters

Whether you read the book aloud with your child or your child reads it on their own and you discuss it later, you can use these open-ended questions to deepen the conversation. Remembering not to judge their responses, listen thoughtfully and engage in a give-and-take will help them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes.

- What happens in the story?
- Why are Noemi and Mamá leaving where they live? Have you ever heard about people who had to leave their home because it wasn't safe?

- Why do you think Noemi can only take what she can carry with her? How do you think she decided what would be best to bring?
- Who is the notebook keeper? Why does she keep track of where people are in line?
- What do you know about Belinda? What personal qualities (or personality traits) does Belinda have that make her a good notebook keeper?
- What are Noemi and Mama waiting for? What is it like for them to wait?
- What happens when Noemi and Mamá become the notebook keepers? How do they treat those who are waiting?
- As we read the book, what were you thinking and feeling?
- How did you feel when the book ends? What do you think will happen next?
- Why do you think the author wrote this story?

## Talking Points

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

### 1. People Who are Refugees and Seeking Asylum

Talk with your child about the people in the book, including Belinda, Noemi and Mamá, who are refugees. Explain that refugees are people who have to leave their home country because it is unsafe, and then try to move to a new, safer country. Ask your child why they think that Noemi and Mamá had to leave their home country (Mexico) and try to move to a new country (the U.S.). Remind them or re-read the first page when Mamá says to Noemi, "Now Papá is gone. The streets are unsafe. We are leaving, too." Explain that there are people all over the world who have to leave the country they live in because it is unsafe or dangerous (because of war, violence, being mistreated, natural disaster, etc.). When Noemi and Mamá arrive at the border between Mexico (the country where they live) and the U.S. (where they are going), that's when they have to wait to seek asylum. Explain that "asylum" is a kind of protection that lets someone stay in a country instead of being "deported" (sent back) to a country where they are afraid for their safety. In this case, Noemi and Mamá are seeking asylum in the U.S. At the border, they meet Belinda, the notebook keeper, who keeps track of the order in which the refugees will meet with U.S. officials to try to move to the U.S. Talk with your child about how they think Noemi and Mamá feel about having to leave their home and then go to a completely new country. Be mindful that this topic may be distressing for children and be sensitive to their emotional needs while discussing the topic. To learn more about refugees and seeking asylum, you can together read the Author's Note on page 32 and you can also do research together to learn more about others around the world who are refugees.

### 2. Helping and Empathy

Talk with your child about Belinda, the notebook keeper, and how her being kind and empathic helps the people waiting get through that difficult experience. Elicit from your child that Belinda is very helpful and comforting to those waiting at the border. She tells them not to worry and encourages them to think about how they will cross the border soon. She tells them to be patient and to have faith. When Noemi and Mamá become the next notebook keepers, Noemi says, "Mamá and I will encourage, remind, and comfort, like Belinda did." Talk with your child about the word "empathy," explaining that it means being able to imagine and understand the feelings and experiences of another person or

people. When we have empathy, we try hard to understand what another person is feeling or experiencing, especially when they are having strong feelings. In the book, many of the people at the border are scared, worried and sad. Belinda shows empathy towards them, which helps them get through the difficult times. Belinda can relate to those waiting in line because she herself is waiting. Share with your child that you don't have to experience the same thing as another person in order to have and show empathy towards them. Share a time in your own life when you were empathic and ask your child to think about a time when they had empathy for another person or when another person showed empathy for them. Talk about how empathy is helpful to people and it also helps us connect with others, including those who are different in some way.

### 3. Personal Qualities

Engage your child in a conversation about some of the personal qualities/personality traits described in the book. You can define personal qualities as the characteristics that make up and reflect who you are. These characteristics can be positive, negative or neutral, and we all have a variety of personal qualities. First ask your child about Belinda, the notebook keeper, and the words in the book used to describe her personal qualities, eliciting words like kindness, encouraging, patient, happy, generosity and comforting. Define any of these words that your child doesn't already know. Then ask why Belinda chooses Noemi and Mamá to be the next notebook keepers. Elicit from your child that she chose them because of their personal qualities and what the notebook keeper thinks are important qualities to help those waiting in line. Share with your child the words you would use to describe your personal qualities and then ask them what words they would use to describe their own personal qualities and the personal qualities of others (friends, family members, classmates, etc.). Words to describe personal qualities can include brave, moody, nice, strong, careless, hard-working, selfish, friendly, reliable, funny, mean, honest, polite, quiet, silly, and many more. Talk with your child about how we develop our personal qualities over time as we grow up, interact with others and have different experiences. These all shape our personality traits.

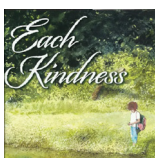
## Other Books You Might Like



Areli is a Dreamer <https://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/areli-is-a-dreamer>



Dreamers <https://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/dreamers>



Each Kindness <https://www.adl.org/each-kindness>



The Journey <https://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/the-journey>

## ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and other resources on immigration and refugees, and empathy.

- Be an Ally: Six Simple Ways <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/be-an-ally-six-simple-ways>
- Children's Books about People who are Hispanic/Latino <https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?f%5B0%5D=topic%3A1621>
- Children's Books about People Who are Immigrants and Refugees <https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?f%5B0%5D=topic%3A1629>
- Early Childhood Frequently Asked Questions <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/question-corner>
- Education Resources on Immigration, Immigrants and Anti-Immigrant Bias <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/education-resources-on-immigration-immigrants-and-anti>
- Huddled Mass or Second Class? Challenging Anti-Immigrant Bias in the U.S. <https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/huddled-mass-or-second-class-challenging-anti-immigrant-bias-us>
- Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk>
- Why is there a Refugee Crisis in Ukraine? (Table Talk) <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/why-is-there-a-refugee-crisis-in-ukraine>
- Why We Need Diverse Books <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/why-we-need-diverse-books>