

# Stories Matter Books (Schools)

## Early Elementary

**We're Different, We're the Same**, by Bobbi Jane Kates (gr pre-k+)

Who better than Sesame Street to teach us that we may all look different on the outside—but it's important to remember that deep down, we are all very much alike.

**Whoever You Are**, by Mem Fox (gr pre-k+)

Every day all over the world, children are laughing and crying, playing and learning, eating and sleeping. They may not look the same. They may not speak the same language. Their lives may be quite different. But inside, they are all alike.

**The Skin You Live In**, by Michael Tyler (gr pre-k+)

With the ease and simplicity of a nursery rhyme, this lively story delivers an important message of social acceptance to young readers.

**Yo! Yes?**, by Chris Raschka (gr pre-k+)

An effective, unusual 34-word story of the beginnings of a friendship, accompanied by wild and wonderful illustrations. Against pastel backgrounds, in vibrant, colorful images, an African-American boy and a white boy meet on the street.

**Skin Again**, by bell hooks (gr pre-k+)

Celebrating all that makes us unique and different, *Skin Again* offers new ways to talk about race and identity.

**Brick by Brick**, by Charles R. Smith, Jr. (gr pre-k+)

The home of the United States president was built by many hands, including those of slaves, who undertook this amazing achievement long before there were machines to do those same jobs.

**Rosa**, by Nikki Giovanni (gr pre-k+)

Fifty years after her refusal to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama, city bus, Mrs. Rosa Parks is still one of the most important figures in the American civil rights movement. This tribute to Mrs. Parks is a celebration of her courageous action and the events that followed.

**The Case for Loving**, by Selina Alko (gr pre-k+)

For most children these days it would come as a great shock to know that before 1967, they could not marry a person of a race different from their own. That was the year that the Supreme Court issued its decision in *Loving v. Virginia*.

**Two Friends: Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass**, by Dean Robbins (gr pre-k+)

Two friends, Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass, get together for tea and conversation. They recount their similar stories fighting to win rights for women and African Americans.

**I am Jazz**, by Jessica Herthel (gr pre-k+)

From the time she was two years old, Jazz knew that she had a girl's brain in a boy's body. She loved pink and dressing up as a mermaid and didn't feel like herself in boys' clothing.

**Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress**, by Christine Baldacchino (gr pre-k+)

Morris is a little boy who loves using his imagination. But most of all, Morris loves wearing the tangerine dress in his classroom's dress-up center. The children in Morris's class don't understand.

**Annie's Plaid Shirt**, by Stacy B. Davids (gr pre-k+)

Annie loves her plaid shirt and wears it everywhere. But one day her mom tells Annie that she must wear a dress to her uncle's wedding.

**Tough Boris**, by Mem Fox (gr pre-k+)

Boris von der Borch is a mean, greedy old pirate--tough as nails, through and through, like all pirates. Or is he? When a young boy sneaks onto Boris's ship, he discovers that Boris and his mates aren't quite what he expected.

**The Paper Bag Princess**, by Robert Munsch (gr pre-k+)

This bestselling modern classic features a princess who rescues a very snooty—and ungrateful—prince.

**Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909**, by Michelle Markel (pre-k+)

The true story of the young immigrant who led the largest strike of women workers in U.S. history.

**The Name Jar**, by Yangsook Choi (gr pre-k+)

Being the new kid in school is hard enough, but what about when nobody can pronounce your name? Having just moved from Korea, Unhei is anxious that American kids will like her. So instead of introducing herself on the first day of school, she tells the class that she will choose a name by the following week.

**Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match/Marisol McDonald No Combina**, by Monica Brown (gr pre-k+)

Try as she might, in a world where everyone tries to put this biracial, Peruvian-Scottish-American girl into a box, Marisol McDonald doesn't match. And that's just fine with her.

**Salam Alaikum**, by Harris J (gr pre-k+)

Salam Alaikum means “Peace be upon you.” It is the greeting that Muslims around the world use to say “hello” and “good-bye.”

**The Barefoot Book of Children**, by Tessa Strickland (gr k+)

An immersive, multifaceted picture book designed to offer young readers a glimpse into the diversity of the human experience promotes thought through questions about how other children live, what they eat, what games they play, and how are they different and alike.

**The Great Big Book of Families**, by Mary Hoffman (gr k+)

This fun and fascinating treasury features all kinds of families and their lives together. Each spread showcases one aspect of home life—from houses and holidays, to schools and pets, to feelings and family trees.

\*\*\*

**The Day You Begin**, by Jacqueline Woodson (gr k+)

There are many reasons to feel different. Maybe it's how you look or talk, or where you're from; maybe it's what you eat, or something just as random. It's not easy to take those first steps into a place where nobody really knows you yet, but somehow you do it.

**I Could Do That! Esther Morris Gets Women the Vote**, by Linda Arms White (gr k+)

With lively text and humorous illustrations as full of spirit as Esther herself, this striking picture book biography shows how one girl's gumption propels her through a life filled with challenges until, in 1869, she wins the vote for women in Wyoming Territory – the first time ever in the United States.

**From Far Away**, by Robert Munsch and Saoussan Askar, art by Rebecca Green (gr k+)

When Saoussan immigrated with her family from war-torn Lebanon, she was only seven years old. This picture book tells the story of how she had to adjust to her new home in Canada.

**We March**, by Shane W. Evans (gr 1+)

On August 28, 1963, a remarkable event took place—more than 250,000 people gathered in our nation's capital to participate in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The march began at the Washington Monument and ended with a rally at the Lincoln Memorial, where Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his historic "I Have a Dream" speech, advocating racial harmony.

**Separate is Never Equal**, by Duncan Tonatium (gr 1+)

Almost 10 years before Brown vs. Board of Education, Sylvia Mendez and her parents helped end school segregation in California.

**Let's Talk About Race**, by Julius Lester (gr 1+)

In this acclaimed book, the author of the Newbery Honor Book *To Be a Slave* shares his own story as he explores what makes each of us special.

**Seeds of Change: Planting a Path to Peace**, by Jen Johnson (gr 2+)

As a young girl in Kenya, Wangari was taught to respect nature. She grew up loving the land, plants, and animals that surrounded her -from the giant mugumo trees her people, the Kikuyu, revered to the tiny tadpoles that swam in the river.

## Middle Grades

**Poetry for Young People**, by Langston Hughes (gr 3+)

Showcasing the extraordinary Langston Hughes, it's edited by two leading poetry experts and features gallery-quality art by Benny Andrews that adds rich dimension to the words.

**Silent Days, Silent Dreams**, by Allen Say (gr 3+)

In this longform "imagined" biography about James Castle, author-illustrator Say plays with artistic and literary formats. Castle was born deaf and premature in Idaho, was considered to be autistic and dyslexic, and was abused and bullied for his inability to speak or read. He was discouraged from creating art by his parents and principal, and had his art supplies confiscated and artworks destroyed many times, yet he still created a huge and compelling body of work.

**The Land of Forgotten Girls**, by Erin Entrada Kelly (gr 3+)

Two sisters from the Philippines, abandoned by their father and living in impoverished circumstances in Louisiana, fight to make their lives better.

**The First Rule of Punk**, by Celia C. Perez (gr 3+)

When Malu has to move away from her dad and everything she knows, she takes her love of punk music with her. When classmates label Malu a coconut (brown on the outside and white on the inside), she is determined to prove to her school and herself that she is proud of her Mexican roots.

**The Heart of a Chief**, by Joseph Bruchac (gr 3+)

Chris Nicola's life is complicated. He lives on the Penacook Indian Reservation and goes to school in town. At school, things are going great--he's been selected to lead a group project on using Indian names for sporting teams. But it's another story at home.

**George**, by Alex Gino (gr 3+)

When people look at George, they think they see a boy. But she knows she's not a boy. She knows she's a girl. With the help of her best friend, Kelly, George comes up with a plan. Not just

so she can be Charlotte in the school play *Charlotte's Web* -- but so everyone can know who she is, once and for all.

**One True Way**, by Shannon Hitchcock (gr 3+)

Welcome to Daniel Boone Middle School in the 1970s, where teachers and coaches must hide who they are, and girls who like girls are forced to question their own choices. Presented in the voice of a premier storyteller, *One True Way* sheds exquisite light on what it means to be different, while at the same time being wholly true to oneself.

**Inside Out and Back Again**, by Thanhha Lai (gr 3+)

Hà has only ever known Saigon: the thrills of its markets, the joy of its traditions, and the warmth of her friends close by. But now the Vietnam War has reached her home. Hà and her family are forced to flee as Saigon falls, and they board a ship headed toward hope—toward America.

**I Am Malala (Young Readers Edition)**, by Malala Yousafzai (gr 3+)

When the Taliban took control of the Swat Valley in Pakistan, one girl spoke out. Malala Yousafzai refused to be silenced and fought for her right to an education.

**Rad American Women A-Z**, by Kate Schatz (gr 3+)

American history was made by countless rad—and often radical—women. By offering a fresh and diverse array of female role models, we can remind readers that there are many places to find inspiration, and that being smart and strong and brave is rad.

**Cool Salsa: Bilingual Poems on Growing Up Latino in the United States**, by Lori Marie Carlson (gr 4+)

Growing up Latino in America means speaking two languages, living two lives, learning the rules of two cultures. *Cool Salsa* celebrates the tones, rhythms, sounds, and experiences of that double life. Here are poems about families and parties, insults and sad memories, hot dogs and mangos, the sweet syllables of Spanish and the snag-toothed traps of English. Here is the glory—and pain—of being Latino American.

**Amina's Voice**, by Hena Khan (gr 4+)

A Pakistani-American Muslim girl struggles to stay true to her family's vibrant culture while simultaneously blending in at school after tragedy strikes her community in this compassionate, timely novel.

**The Misadventures of the Family Fletcher**, by Dana Alison Levy (gr 4+)

With four brothers, a dog, a cat, school projects, soccer matches, and a grumpy neighbor, the Fletchers are your typical American family...with two dads, and siblings who are adopted kids from various ethnic backgrounds.

**Save Me a Seat**, by Gita Varadarajan (gr. 4+)

Joe's lived in the same town all his life, and Ravi's family just moved to America from India. Joe and Ravi don't think they have anything in common -- but soon enough they have a common enemy (the biggest bully in their class) and a common mission: to take control of their lives.

**One Crazy Summer**, by Rita Williams-Garcia (gr 4+)

Eleven-year-old Delphine has it together. Even though her mother, Cecile, abandoned her and her younger sisters, Vonetta and Fern, seven years ago. When the girls arrive in Oakland in the summer of 1968, Cecile wants nothing to do with them and sends Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern to a summer camp sponsored by a revolutionary group, the Black Panthers, where the girls get a radical new education.

\*\*\*

**Tortilla Sun**, by Jennifer Cervantes (gr 5+)

When twelve-year-old Izzy spends the summer in her Nana's remote New Mexico village, she discovers long-buried secrets that come alive in an enchanted landscape of majestic mountains, whispering winds, and tortilla suns.

**The Stars Beneath Our Feet**, by David Barclay Moore (gr 5+)

It's Christmas Eve in Harlem, but twelve-year-old Lolly Rachpaul and his mom aren't celebrating. They're still reeling from his older brother's death in a gang-related shooting just a few months earlier. Then Lolly's mother's girlfriend brings him a gift that will change everything: two enormous bags filled with Legos.

**Counting by 7s**, by Holly Goldberg Sloan (gr 5+)

Willow Chance is a twelve-year-old genius, obsessed with nature and diagnosing medical conditions, who finds it comforting to count by 7s. It has never been easy for her to connect with anyone other than her adoptive parents, but that hasn't kept her from leading a quietly happy life...until now.

**Esperanza Rising**, by Pam Munoz Ryan (gr 5+)

Esperanza thought she'd always live a privileged life on her family's ranch in Mexico. She'd always have fancy dresses, a beautiful home filled with servants, and Mama, Papa, and Abuelita to care for her. But a sudden tragedy forces Esperanza and Mama to flee to California and settle in a Mexican farm labor camp.

**Home of the Brave**, by Katherine Applegate (gr 5+)

Kek comes from Africa where he lived with his mother, father, and brother. But only he and his mother have survived. As he waits for word of his mother's fate, Kek weathers the tough Minnesota winter by finding warmth in his new friendships, strength in his memories, and belief in his new country.

**A Long Walk to Water**, by Linda Sue Park (gr 5+)

A Long Walk to Water begins as two stories, told in alternating sections, about a girl in Sudan in 2008 and a boy in Sudan in 1985. The girl, Nya, is fetching water from a pond that is two hours' walk from her home: she makes two trips to the pond every day. The boy, Salva, becomes one of the "lost boys" of Sudan, refugees who cover the African continent on foot as they search for their families and for a safe place to stay.

**Refugee**, by Alan Gatz (gr 5+)

Josef is a Jewish boy living in 1930s Nazi Germany. With the threat of concentration camps looming, he and his family board a ship bound for the other side of the world. Isabel is a Cuban girl in 1994. With riots and unrest plaguing her country, she and her family set out on a raft, hoping to find safety in America. Mahmoud is a Syrian boy in 2015. With his homeland torn apart by violence and destruction, he and his family begin a long trek toward Europe. All three kids go on harrowing journeys in search of refuge. All will face unimaginable dangers -- from drownings to bombings to betrayals. But there is always the hope of tomorrow.

**Yes! We Are Latinos**, by Alma Flor Ada and Isabel Campoy (gr 5+)

A collection of narrative poems meant to represent young Latinos of diverse and multiple backgrounds. All of the selections start with the statement, "My name is..." followed by a bit about where the narrators live, how they came to the United States, and how their families' cultural identities are shaping their future. Each entry is followed with another short narrative that includes historical references to contextualize the "child's" story.

**Twelve Days in May: Freedom Ride 1961**, by Larry Dane Brimner (gr 5+)

On May 4, 1961, a group of thirteen black and white civil rights activists launched the Freedom Ride, aiming to challenge the practice of segregation on buses and at bus terminal facilities in the South. As the Riders traveled deeper into the South, they encountered increasing violence and opposition. Archival documents and rarely seen images to tell the riveting story of the little-known first days of the Freedom Ride.

**Brown Girl Dreaming**, by Jacqueline Woodson (gr 5+)

In vivid poems, she shares what it was like to grow up as an African American in the 1960s and 1970s, living with the remnants of Jim Crow and her growing awareness of the Civil Rights movement.

**The Crossover, Booked, Rebound** by Kwame Alexander (gr 5+)

An accomplished author and poet, Alexander eloquently mashes up concrete poetry, hip-hop, a love of jazz, and a thriving family bond. The effect is poetry in motion. It is a rare verse novel that is fundamentally poetic rather than using this writing trend as a device. There is also a quirky vocabulary element that adds a fun intellectual note to the narrative. This may be just the right book for those hard-to-match youth who live for sports or music or both. (Trilogy)

**Hidden Figures (Young Readers Edition)**, by Margot Lee Shetterly (gr 6+)

Before John Glenn orbited the earth, or Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, a group of dedicated female mathematicians known as “human computers” used pencils, slide rules, and adding machines to calculate the numbers that would launch rockets, and astronauts, into space.

**Piecing Me Together**, by Renée Watson (gr 6+)

High school junior Jade is an "at-risk" student from a rough neighborhood in Portland, OR. She is also a talented collage artist, and she attends an elite private school on scholarship. More than anything, she wants to go on a study abroad week offered at her school to use her Spanish skills. Instead, she is given an invitation to join Woman to Woman, a mentorship program for young women like her: poor and black. Her mentor, Maxine, is from a more privileged background, and Jade doesn't see what she can learn from her. But in spite of her early resistance to Maxine, Jade begins to open up and gain confidence, and, eventually, she is able to express the importance of her family, her community, and her art.

**If I Ever Get Out of Here**, by Eric Gansworth (gr 6+)

Lewis "Shoe" Blake is used to the joys and difficulties of life on the Tuscarora Indian reservation in 1975. What he's not used to is white people being nice to him -- people like George Haddonfield, whose family recently moved to town with the Air Force. As the boys connect through their mutual passion for music, especially the Beatles, Lewis has to lie more and more to hide the reality of his family's poverty from George.

**March Trilogy**, by John Lewis (gr 6+)

Discover the inside story of the Civil Rights Movement through the eyes of one of its most iconic figures, Congressman John Lewis.

**The Complete Maus**, by Art Spiegelman (gr 6+)

It is the story of Vladek Spiegelman, a Jewish survivor of Hitler's Europe, and his son, a cartoonist coming to terms with his father's story. Maus approaches the unspeakable through the diminutive. Its form, the cartoon (the Nazis are cats, the Jews mice), shocks us out of any lingering sense of familiarity. Maus is a haunting tale within a tale.

**The Shadow Hero**, by Gene Luen Yang (gr 7+)

In the comics boom of the 1940s, a legend was born: the Green Turtle. He solved crimes and fought injustice just like the other comics characters. But this mysterious masked crusader was hiding something more than your run-of-the-mill secret identity--The Green Turtle was the first Asian American superhero.

**Black Panther: A Nation Under Our Feet**, by Ta-Nahisi Coates (gr 6+)

When a superhuman terrorist group that calls itself The People sparks a violent uprising, the land famed for its incredible technology and proud warrior traditions will be thrown into turmoil. If Wakanda is to survive, it must adapt--but can its monarch, one in a long line of Black Panthers, survive the necessary change?

**Ms. Marvel, Volume 1: No Normal**, by G. Willow Wilson (gr. 6+)

Kamala Khan is an ordinary girl from Jersey City - until she is suddenly empowered with extraordinary gifts. But who truly is the all-new Ms. Marvel? Teenager? Muslim? Inhuman? As Kamala discovers the dangers of her newfound powers, she unlocks a secret behind them as well.

## Young Adult

**The Hate U Give**, by Angie Thomas (gr 8+)

Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed.

**Dear Martin**, by Nic Stone (gr 8+)

Justyce McAllister is top of his class and set for the Ivy League—but none of that matters to the police officer who just put him in handcuffs. And despite leaving his rough neighborhood behind, he can't escape the scorn of his former peers or the ridicule of his new classmates. Justyce looks to the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for answers. But do they hold up anymore? He starts a journal to Dr. King to find out.

**The House on Mango Street**, by Sandra Cisneros (gr 8+)

Told in a series of vignettes – sometimes heartbreaking, sometimes deeply joyous – it is the story of a young Latina girl growing up in Chicago, inventing for herself who and what she will become.

**American Street**, by Ibi Zoboi (gr 8+)

On the corner of American Street and Joy Road, Fabiola Toussaint thought she would finally find *une belle vie*—a good life. But after they leave Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Fabiola's mother is detained by U.S. immigration, leaving Fabiola to navigate her loud American cousins, Chantal, Donna, and Princess; the grittiness of Detroit's west side; a new school; and a surprising romance, all on her own.

**Children of Blood and Bone**, by Tomi Adeyemi (gr 8+)

The Children of Blood and Bone is influenced by Adeyemi's West African heritage, and in it she bends religious deities (the Orisha) and a diverse landscape into a refreshing new take on fantasy. The Children of Blood and Bone is told from multiple points of view, as Inan and Amari, children of the iron-fisted king, and Zélie and Tzain, siblings who have suffered greatly under the king's regime, find themselves on a dark, magic-filled quest for power.

**Girls Like Us**, by Gail Giles (gr 8+)

Quincy and Bidy are both graduates of their high school's special ed program, but they couldn't be more different: suspicious Quincy faces the world with her fists up, while gentle Bidy is frightened to step outside her front door. When they're thrown together as roommates in their first "real world" apartment, it initially seems to be an uneasy fit.

**All American Boys**, by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely (gr 8+)

In this novel, two teens—one black, one white—grapple with the repercussions of a single violent act that leaves their school, their community, and, ultimately, the country bitterly divided by racial tension.

**Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda**, by Becky Albertalli (gr 8+)

Sixteen-year-old and not-so-openly gay Simon Spier prefers to save his drama for the school musical. But when an email falls into the wrong hands, his secret is at risk of being thrust into the spotlight. Now change-averse Simon has to find a way to step out of his comfort zone before he's pushed out—without alienating his friends, compromising himself, or fumbling a shot at happiness with the most confusing, adorable guy he's never met.

**The Summer I Wasn't Me**, by Jessica Verdi (gr 8+)

The road signs leading to New Horizons summer camp promise a new life for seventeen-year-old Lexi. Ever since her mom found out she was in love with a girl, her broken family has been pulled even further apart. But Lexi swears she can change. Denying her feelings is harder than she thinks. And when she falls heads over heels for one of her fellow campers, Lexi will have to risk her mother's approval for the one person who might love her no matter what.

**Persepolis**, by Marjane Satrapi (gr 8+)

In powerful black-and-white comic strip images, Satrapi tells the story of her life in Tehran from ages six to fourteen, years that saw the overthrow of the Shah's regime, the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, and the devastating effects of war with Iraq. The intelligent and outspoken only child of committed Marxists and the great-granddaughter of one of Iran's last emperors, Marjane bears witness to a childhood uniquely entwined with the history of her country.

**March Trilogy**, by John Lewis (gr 6+)

*Discover the inside story of the Civil Rights Movement through the eyes of one of its most iconic figures, Congressman John Lewis.*

**The Complete Maus**, by Art Spiegelman (gr 6+)

*It is the story of Vladek Spiegelman, a Jewish survivor of Hitler's Europe, and his son, a cartoonist coming to terms with his father's story. Maus approaches the unspeakable through the diminutive. Its form, the cartoon (the Nazis are cats, the Jews mice), shocks us out of any lingering sense of familiarity. Maus is a haunting tale within a tale.*

***The Shadow Hero***, by Gene Luen Yang (gr 7+)

*In the comics boom of the 1940s, a legend was born: the Green Turtle. He solved crimes and fought injustice just like the other comics characters. But this mysterious masked crusader was hiding something more than your run-of-the-mill secret identity--The Green Turtle was the first Asian American superhero.*

***Black Panther: A Nation Under Our Feet***, by Ta-Nahisi Coates (gr 6+)

*When a superhuman terrorist group that calls itself The People sparks a violent uprising, the land famed for its incredible technology and proud warrior traditions will be thrown into turmoil. If Wakanda is to survive, it must adapt--but can its monarch, one in a long line of Black Panthers, survive the necessary change?*

***Ms. Marvel, Volume 1: No Normal***, by G. Willow Wilson (gr. 6+)

*Kamala Khan is an ordinary girl from Jersey City - until she is suddenly empowered with extraordinary gifts. But who truly is the all-new Ms. Marvel? Teenager? Muslim? Inhuman? As Kamala discovers the dangers of her newfound powers, she unlocks a secret behind them as well.*

## **Resources**

School Library Journal Diversity and Cultural Literacy Toolkit:

<https://www.slj.com/2018/03/diversity/diversity-cultural-literacy-toolkit/>

Teaching Tolerance: <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources>

We Need Diverse Books: <https://diversebooks.org/>

CBC (Children's Book Council) Diversity Initiative:

<http://www.cbcdiversity.com/resources/teachersandlibrarians>