

[know your value]

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8 awesome children's books that celebrate diversity

In honor of Read Across America Day, Ciarra Chavarria, who runs the Instagram feed @girlsreadtheworld, gives Know Your Value her top picks.



A six year old girl is reading in her bed at night. Teresa Short / Getty Images

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By Ciarra Chavarria

Read Across America Day, which is on March 2, is a celebration of our “nation of diverse readers.” It’s critical for readers – especially young ones – to see their lives reflected in the books they read. And it’s just as important for them to read about the experiences of others.

Whether you’re looking for stories your children can relate to or you want to encourage them to see the world from someone else’s point of view, check out my top book picks that celebrate this wonderful, diverse world we live in.

Know Your Value editors, writers and experts take care to recommend items we really like and hope you'll enjoy! Just so you know, Know Your Value does have affiliate relationships. So, while every product is independently selected, if you buy something through our links, we may get a small share of the revenue.

1. “Honeysmoke: A story of finding your color” by Monique Fields, [\\$12.75 on Amazon](#)

Amazon

Recommended age: 3-6 years old

Read this if ... you want a book that speaks to your multiracial family.

In a nutshell: Simone is biracial and is not quite the same color as her father, mother or anyone else. But Simone wants to know what her color is, so she sets out to find it. Simone eventually realizes that someone as unique as her needs her own, unique color.

Why I love it: This will appeal to so many biracial kids looking for a way to embrace every part of themselves.

Favorite quote: “Simone wants a color, one that shows who she is on the inside and the outside.”

2. “Thank you, Omu!” by Oge Mora, [\\$17.09 on Amazon](#)

Amazon

Recommended age: 4-7 years old

Read this if ... you want a story about kindness and inclusion of people of all ages.

In a nutshell: Omu has made some delicious soup. It's so yummy that everyone comes knocking on her door for a taste! Omu shares with everyone who asks until she sadly discovers that she didn't leave any for herself. But with one final knock on her door, Omu discovers that she's not the only one with a giving spirit.

Why I love it: This book not only teaches important lessons, but also gives readers a glimpse into the warm Igbo culture of the author's grandmother.

Favorite quote: “Don’t worry, Omu. We are not here to ask ... we are here to give!”

3. “Mary wears what she wants” by Keith Negley, [\\$12.75 on Amazon](#)

Amazon

Recommended age: 4-8 years old

Read this if ... you’re all for challenging gender stereotypes.

In a nutshell: Mary is tired of wearing stuffy, uncomfortable dresses that girls living in her time must wear. So, she decides to do something unthinkable – put on a pair of pants! This book is based on Mary Edwards Walker, who was known as one of the first women to wear pants.

Why I love it: This book introduces readers to a historical figure who challenged society’s expectations of her gender – and does it through stunning illustrations.

Favorite quote: “I’m not wearing boys’ clothes. I’m wearing my clothes!”

4. “Planting stories: The life of librarian and storyteller Pura Belpré by Anika Aldamuy Denise, [\\$14.16 on Amazon](#).

Amazon

Recommended age: 5-8 years old

Read this if ... you want to read about a woman who played a crucial role in promoting bilingual education.

In a nutshell: When Pura Belpré came to America from Puerto Rico, little did she know that a job opening at the library would change her – and so many others’ – lives. Not only was Belpré a beloved librarian who brought stories from her childhood to life with her puppets, but she was also an author.

Why I love it: The story is beautiful to look at and to read, and it showcases one of the first people to recognize the need for young readers to have books that reflected who they are.

Favorite quote: “Pura travels from branch to branch, classroom to classroom, to churches and community centers...planting her story seeds in the hearts and minds of children new to this island who wish to remember la lengua y los colores of home.”

5. “The day you begin” by Jacqueline Woodson, [\\$16.26 on Amazon](#)

Recommended age: 5-8 years old

Read this if ... you want a book that celebrates the differences among us all.

In a nutshell: The children in this book know what it’s like to feel like an outsider. Maybe it’s their skin or hair. Maybe it’s the way they speak – or don’t speak. Maybe it’s their lunch. They wonder, how can they fit in when they and their classmates feel like worlds apart? But when one little girl finally gathers the courage to tell her story, they realize that they might have more in common than they thought.

Why I love it: This immensely talented author and illustrator team has created the perfect book for teaching readers to appreciate that everyone has his or her own story.

Favorite quote: “And all at once in a room where no one else is quite like you, the world opens itself up to make some space for you.”

6. “Yasmin in charge” by Saadia Faruqi, [\\$5.95 on Amazon](#)

Amazon

Recommended age: 5-8 years old

Read this if ... you’re looking for an early chapter book series with a diverse character.

In a nutshell: Yasmin is a spunky, bright second-grader who loves trying new things. In this book, Yasmin tries out being the leader of her class for a day, a chef, a zookeeper and a superhero! “Yasmin in Charge” is fun, engaging and perfect for emerging readers.

Why I love it: Yasmin’s religion and culture are woven so seamlessly and thoughtfully into her story that all readers – no matter their background – can learn from and enjoy her adventures. And I love

the additional learning material at the back.

Favorite quote: “Yasmin and her family are proud of their Pakistani culture. Yasmin loves to share facts about Pakistan!”

7. “Merci Suarez changes gears” by Meg Medina, [\\$15.29 on Amazon](#)

Amazon

Recommended age: 8-12 years old

Read this if ... you’ve got a kid in middle school – or if you’ve ever had a family member with Alzheimer’s.

In a nutshell: Merci Suarez has just started sixth grade at a new school and is feeling awkward about being a scholarship kid. And at home, Merci’s grandpa Lolo, her source of comfort and refuge, has been acting really weird – like getting angry for no reason and forgetting the simplest things. This coming-of-age story with a tough, smart heroine dealing with changes in school and in her family will resonate with so many readers.

Why I love it: There’s no happy ending when you discover that a family member has Alzheimer’s, but even though the author doesn’t dumb it down or dance around such a tough issue, this is ultimately a hopeful story about strength and family.

Favorite quote: “I don’t know what’s going to happen next year, no one does. But that’s OK. I can handle it, I decide. It’s just a harder gear, and I am ready. All I have to do is take a deep breath and ride.”

8. “A velocity of being: Letters to a young reader,” edited by Maria Popova and Claudia Bedrick, [\\$74.78 on Amazon](#)

Amazon

Recommended age: All

Read this if ... you want a keepsake book that celebrates the joy of reading.

In a nutshell: Through a series of letters, prominent figures, including Jane Goodall, Alexander Chee, Shonda Rhimes, Neil Gaiman and more tell readers what books mean to them and how reading shaped their lives.

Why I love it: These letters are funny, profound and enlightening. I know this book will be just as powerful 50 years from now as it is today. Plus, all profits of this book go to the New York Public Library systems.

Favorite quote: “If you have a book in your hand, you can stop being invisible. Because you’re a little more invincible.”

Ciarra Chavarria runs the Instagram feed [@girlsreadtheworld](#), where she regularly posts her latest finds. She’s also a lawyer and the mom of two super cool girls who live in New Jersey.