



# Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

**About the Book of the Month:** This collection of featured books is from our Recommended Multicultural and Anti-Bias Books for Children. 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 early childhood and elementary aged children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction is an excellent way to talk about these important concepts in your classroom.

## Jacob's New Dress

Sarah and Ian Hoffman (Authors) and Chris Case (Illustrator)

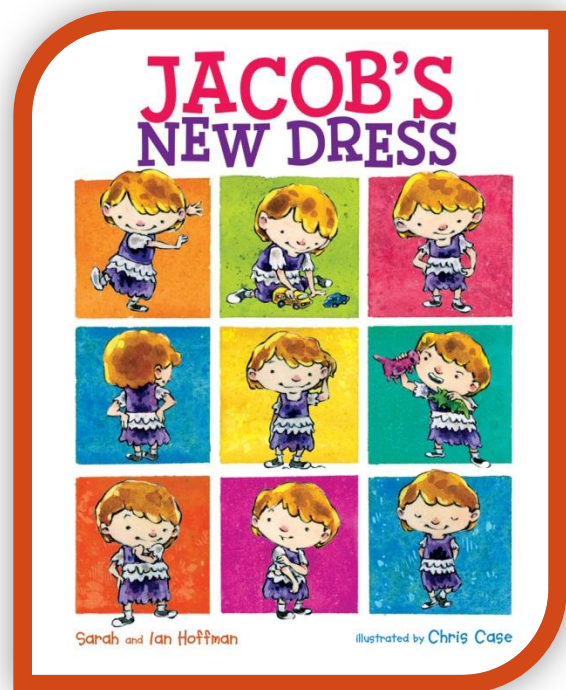
Jacob loves playing dress-up, when he can be anything he wants to be—a pirate, a bird, a firefighter. But he also wants to just be himself and wear his favorite thing... a dress! Now Jacob has a new dress that he made himself and what he wants most of all is to wear it to school. Will Mom and Dad let him? This heartwarming story speaks to the unique challenges faced by boys who don't identify with traditional gender roles and promises to spark discussions of gender, identity and self-confidence.

ISBN: 978-0807563731

Publisher: Albert Whitman & Company

Year Published: 2014

Grade Level: Preschool–2



Jacket art © 2014 by Chris Case

## Key Words

Discuss and define these words with children prior to reading the book and remind children of their 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. See ADL's [Definitions Related to Name-Calling, Bullying and Bias](#).

- armor
- comfortable
- gender
- hubbub
- imagination
- invented
- matching
- proud
- role
- sewing machine
- snug
- sprinted
- stereotype
- surrounding

## Discussion Questions

Before reading the book aloud, ask pre-reading questions:

- What is the title of the book?
- Based on the title, what do you think the book might be about?
- Does the picture on the cover give us any clues?

As you read the book aloud, ask a few discussion questions periodically throughout the reading of the book to check comprehension and keep the students engaged.

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**NOTE:** If you notice children giggling as you read, pause and ask them to share why they are giggling.

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- How is Jacob's mom feeling about his request to wear a dress to school? (Page 9)
- What would you do if you saw a child grab something away from another child, like Christopher did when he stole Jacob's "dress-thing," his towel made into a dress? (Page 14)
- How do you think the children will react when they see Jacob wearing the dress that he made with his mom? (Page 21)

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

- What happened in the story?
- When they play dress-up, how do some of Jacob's friends and classmates feel about Jacob wanting to be a princess?
- Christopher says that boys can't wear dresses. Why does he say that?
- How does Jacob's mom feel when Jacob tells her what happened at school?
- When Jacob comes downstairs in a towel that looks like a dress, what do his parents think?
- How does Jacob feel about his 'dress-thing' (his towel made into a dress)?
- There are a few points in the book where Jacob says he can't breathe. How do you think he was feeling in those moments?
- How is Jacob feeling when he sews the dress with his mom? How do you know?
- How does Jacob's dad feel about him wearing a dress to school? How do you know?
- How do you think Jacob felt when he was told to play tag on the girls' team? Why?
- Do you think that Emily is a good friend to Jacob? Why or why not?
- How can we help children like Christopher become comfortable with and respectful of Jacob's choices?
- What was your favorite part of the book? What part didn't you like?
- How does Jacob feel at the end of the story?
- Can you think of other examples where people think boys or girls should not wear or do certain things? How do you feel about that?
- Why do people feel uncomfortable when a boy wears a dress?

## Extension Activities

Below are activities that you can do with children in order to extend the learning from the book.

### 1. Describe and Draw a Character

With students, make a list of the different characters in the book. Have them name all of the characters they can remember and write their names on the board or chart paper (Jacob, Emily, Christopher, Dad, Mom, Ms. Wilson the teacher). Explain to students that they are going to work in pairs or groups of three to create a drawing and description of one character of their choosing. After they have gotten into their pairs or triads, instruct them to choose one of the characters and (1) draw a picture of the person, (2) write 3–6 words around the picture which describe the person (adjectives) that may include their physical characteristics, their personality and their feelings and (3) write at least one quote (what the person said) from the story. After their drawings and descriptions are completed, hang all of the pictures around the room and have students do a “gallery walk” to look at all of their classmates’ work.

### 2. Write or Illustrate Additional Pages of the Book

In the last scene of the book, we see Jacob telling Christopher that he is proud of his dress and then he and his friend Emily happily play tag in their dresses. Read aloud the last few pages of the book again and ask students: *What do you think might happen next for Jacob? How do you think he will talk about his day with his parents? What do you think Christopher will say and do next?* Have students imagine what would happen in the book if it continued for a few more pages. Instruct them to take their ideas and write and/or draw the next scene as they imagine it. If younger students want to write but cannot do so, you can transcribe for them. When completed, students will share their drawings and written work with the rest of the class.

### 3. Talk About Gender Roles and Stereotypes

Talk with students about gender roles and stereotypes. Start the conversation by asking, *In the story Jacob’s New Dress, why were some people uncomfortable with Jacob wearing a dress?* Using age-appropriate language, explain to students that some people in our society hold “stereotypes” about the ways boys and girls should behave and play, what they should wear and what interests they should have. Ask: *Can you share a time when this happened to you or someone you know? Can you think of other situations or places where boys are “supposed” to be one way and girls are “supposed” to be another way?* Make a list of those ideas, which could include colors, clothes, toys, games (board, video and apps), television shows, etc. Use toys as an example and emphasize the point that there is no such thing as a “boy toy” or a “girl toy” because regardless of their gender, children can like any and all kinds of toys. Ask for examples of this in their lives. Explain that because of this stereotyping, girls and boys sometimes get messages about what they are supposed to like and be interested in and this limits their ability to explore many different parts of themselves. An additional option is to have children look through magazines and cut out images which depict people in non-gender stereotypical roles and create individual or class collages.

To bring the conversation to a close, ask students: *What can we do about stereotyping in our classroom so that everyone can do what they like to do regardless of their gender?* There are additional resources below if you want to explore this topic further.

## ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on anti-bias education and gender roles and norms.

- *Current Events Classroom* "[Toys and Gender](#)"
- *Curriculum Connections* "[When I Grow Up I Want to Be... Moving Beyond Gender Barriers in Our Lives](#)"
- [Discussing Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Identity and Issues](#) (Suggestions and Resources for K-12 Teachers)
- [Anti-Bias Education Programs and Resources](#)
- [Early Childhood Anti-Bias Education Programs and Resources](#)
- [How can I prevent gender bias in young children?](#) (Miller Early Childhood Question Corner)
- [What are examples of books for young children that break stereotypes?](#) (Miller Early Childhood Question Corner)