



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 educators, adult family members and other caregivers of children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

New From Here

Author: Kelly Yang

When the coronavirus hits Hong Kong, ten-year-old Knox Wei-Evans's mom makes the last-minute decision to move him and his siblings back to California, where they think they will be safe. Suddenly, Knox has two days to prepare for an international move—and for leaving his dad, who has to stay for work. At his new school in California, Knox struggles with being the new kid. His classmates think that because he's from Asia, he must have brought over the virus. At home, Mom just got fired and is panicking over the loss of health insurance, and Dad doesn't even know when he'll see them again, since the flights have been cancelled. And everyone struggles with Knox's blurting-things-out problem. As racism skyrockets during the Covid-19 pandemic, Knox tries to stand up to hate, while finding his place in his new country.



ISBN: 978-1534488304 Publisher: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers
Year Published: 2022 Age Range: 8-12

Book Themes

Acceptance, Acting as an Ally, Anti-Asian Bias, Covid-19 Pandemic, Family, People with Disabilities, Socioeconomic Status

Key Words

Discuss and define these words with students prior to reading the book and remind them of the meanings as they come up in the book. See ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#).

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|------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| ■ anxious | ■ embarrass | ■ illegal | ■ memorabilia | ■ racism | ■ unbearable |
| ■ autonomy | ■ endorsement | ■ impulsive | ■ neighborhood | ■ sanitize | ■ uncomfortable |
| ■ bias | ■ exception | ■ initiative | ■ offensive | ■ scaffolder | ■ unhygienic |
| ■ challenges | ■ expensive | ■ innocently | ■ pandemic | ■ self-imposed | ■ virus |
| ■ collective | ■ generation | ■ immigration | ■ passionate | ■ siblings | ■ vulnerable |
| ■ complicated | ■ health | ■ inclusive | ■ patience | ■ state of emergency | |
| ■ constraints | ■ insurance | ■ incubation | ■ preoccupied | ■ stereotype | |
| ■ disability | ■ humiliation | ■ indefinitely | ■ pride | ■ therapist | |
| ■ discrimination | ■ hyper-focus | ■ isolation | ■ quarantine | | |

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Discussion Questions

If the students read the book in small groups or as a whole class, ask discussion questions throughout their reading in order to check comprehension and engage them on a deeper level. Some of these questions can also be used as writing prompts. When students have finished the book, choose from these questions to guide a group discussion:

- How would you describe what the book is about in one word or one sentence?
- When you first meet some of the characters (i.e., Knox, Bowen, Lea, Mom, Dad), what are they like? How are they different by the end of the story? What causes these characters to change and evolve throughout the story?
- Why does the family decide that they all (except Dad, for now) need to go the U.S.? How does everyone feel about that?
- Why does Mom tell Lea that people are “very afraid of Chinese people right now?” Why do you think she says that?
- How does Knox feel about leaving Dad and leaving Hong Kong? What does Knox think it will be like when he is separated from his dad?
- When they first come to the U.S., the kids are still attending their Hong Kong school online. Knox writes a haiku, “I want to learn/From a human, not a box/Because a human cares/and a box stares.” What do you think Knox is saying about his online classes with this haiku?
- During the pandemic, did you attend online school? What do you remember about that experience?
- How does Knox feel about school? What is challenging for him about school?
- What are some things that Knox notices when they go to Aunt Jackie’s house in Walnut Creek compared to where they live (e.g., houses are “nicer,” grass is greener, she says the public schools are better with a swimming pool)? In this scene and throughout the book, Knox notices the differences between people who have less money and people who have more money. What are some other examples of him noticing this?
- When Knox visits his new school, he notices that there is “no one who looks like me.” What does he mean by this? How does he feel about this?
- When Mom is talking with the school secretary about the school, she mentions that Knox has ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). How does Knox feel when he learns this?
- Later in the book when Knox talks with his dad about his ADHD, what does his dad say about it that makes him feel better? What does it mean to “hyper-focus on certain things” and how is this helpful for Knox to know?
- Knox discovers that there is another Asian student in his class named Christopher. Why do you think Christopher reaches out to Knox and says he can sit near him?
- When Knox finds out that Christopher also has ADHD, how does he feel? What does he learn about ADHD when he talks with Christopher about it?
- At first, why doesn’t Knox tell his new classmates that he is from Hong Kong? What happens when he later blurts out that he is from Hong Kong?

- What happens at recess when the kids play “coronavirus tag” and they tell Christopher he is the virus? How do Christopher and Knox feel about this? Later in the book when Christopher says he doesn’t want to play coronavirus tag, what does Knox do? What does he mean when he says it’s “offensive?”
- When the kids decide to have a garage sale to make money so they can pay for a plane ticket for their dad to come to the U.S., how do they work together? What goes wrong and how do they try to fix it?
- When Knox asks Bowen what he misses about Hong Kong, Bowen says “Being able to fit in” and he says later he misses not being the only Asian kid in his class. What does Bowen mean by this? Why doesn’t Bowen feel like he “fits in” in the U.S.?
- Have you ever felt like you didn’t fit in? What was that like?
- After a racial incident in the park, Bowen says to Knox, “People look at you and they see a white kid. They look at me and they see a virus carrier.” The Wei-Evans siblings are biracial (white and Asian) and from an outside perspective, Bowen presents as fully Asian and Lea and Knox do not; some people see them as white. How is Bowen treated differently because of this and how does he feel about this? How are aspects of our identity sometimes visible and sometimes not?
- When Bowen and Knox have a conversation about whether to give some homeless people money, they both have different perspectives about whether to do that. What is each of their perspectives?
- What do the siblings find out about their own family being homeless at some point?
- What happens when the virus starts to show up and spread in the U.S. and specifically in the Bay Area (San Francisco, California)? How do different people react?
- Do you remember how you felt when you first heard about the Covid-19 pandemic? What happened and how did you feel?
- When the siblings discuss Mom’s name when she was growing up (Wei Wei) and how people mispronounced it, how do they react?
- Mom says, “There are going to be people in life who try and make you feel bad for being different. Don’t let them?” Can you relate to this and if so, how?
- When Christopher and Knox post on Nextdoor (an app for neighborhood goods and services) about Christopher’s family restaurant, what examples of anti-Asian bias and other forms of racism do they see in the comments? How do they feel and what do they do?
- When Knox googles what to do when you hear a racist statement, what does he learn? What does ICEE (interrupt, correct, educate and echo) stand for and do you think that advice is helpful? How can you apply that advice to experiences you’ve seen or had with bias and hate?
- Mom tells the kids a story about racist graffiti found on a restaurant where her parents worked when she was a child; a cleaning crew showed up and washed it away and others in the community helped. She says, “Words of hate will always be overpowered by words of love.” Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Please explain.
- What happens when Knox starts to feel ill? Why does he compose recordings in his head for his brother, sister and Mom?

- Knox and his siblings develop several plans and schemes to help their parents and their family. What was positive about those plans and when did it go in a negative direction?
- What was your reaction to these adventures and have you ever done something similar?
- How does the family come together after they think Knox has Covid?
- What happens when Bowen and Knox come face-to-face with the man who called Bowen a racist slur? What do they say to him?
- What is your favorite, most memorable or most impactful scene(s) from the book and why?
- How did you feel when the book ends? What do you think might happen next, if the story were to continue?
- Why do you think the author decided to write the book from the perspective of Knox?

Extension Activities

Below are activities that can be done with students in order to extend the learning from the book.

1. Reader's Response Writing Activities

What do you Think Happens Next?: Elicit or share a quick summary of the last few pages of the book including the following: Knox is released from the hospital and finds out he doesn't have Covid; Bowen, surrounded by his family, comes face to-face with the man who called him a racist name; all three of the siblings are in online school and Bowen helps Lea and Knox while Mom works from home; Dad decides to stay in the U.S. and try to find a job. Engage students in a discussion by asking: *What do you think will happen next? What do you think happens with the three kids? Does Dad find a job? What happens with Christopher and his family? Does the bias against Asian people continue?* Have students then write the next few pages based on what they think will happen next. When completed, invite students to share their additional pages with the class. You can also put all these pages together into a new book and share with families and the school community.

Get to Know Author Kelly Yang: The book is written by Kelly Yang, who is an author of many books for young people. First, read aloud (or have students read silently) the "Author Note" on pages 355-357 about why she wrote *New from Here*. Then, brainstorm a list of questions students have about Kelly Yang and what more they want to know about her, including where she grew up, her inspiration for writing the book, aspects of her identity and their relevance to the book, other books she wrote, her interests and hobbies, family life, relevant quotes, etc. Possible sources for their research can include: (1) her [website](#), (2) her social media posts on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook (3) articles written about her or interviews with her like [this one](#). (4) this [Sutori](#) about Kelly Yang and (5) additional online research. The final culminating project of their research may include one of the following ideas: an extended "author bio" page, a timeline of Kelly Yang's life, or a video (or audio) simulated interview between the author and a journalist (one student plays the author and another plays the interviewer).

Text to Self: My Pandemic Story: Talk with students about the main characters' experiences related to the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, including the siblings attending online school (via zoom), having to quarantine (to limit or forbid movements of people or goods to prevent the spread of disease or pests), having to find masks, buying a lot of food (stockpiling), worrying that they have the virus, etc. Ask students: *Can you relate to any of these experiences? How so? What is a strong feeling you had during the Covid-19 pandemic? What is something memorable or impactful that happened during the pandemic? How did you feel reading about the pandemic in a novel?* Engage students in a pre-writing conference or have students talk with someone sitting near them, responding to some or all of the questions, focusing on sharing their experiences, memories and feelings.

If they don't have memories themselves, they can share what their parents/families have shared with them. Then have students write about those thoughts, experiences, memories and feelings related to the Covid-19 pandemic or highlight one story or situation. The essay can be called "My Pandemic Story" and in it, they can share their story and how it connects with the book. You can then have students share their essays with the class. As inspiration, you can share (before or after writing) the essays that students submitted to Kelly Yang on her website, [What's Your Pandemic Story?](#)

[Note to Teacher: If you haven't already discussed the Covid-19 pandemic with students or if you feel it could be emotionally difficult or challenging because of your students' experiences, either don't do this reader's response activity or do a preliminary assessment of how students feel about talking about it. Be mindful to prioritize students' safety and emotional well-being.]

2. Anti-Asian Bias and Hate

Start this discussion by asking students: *As an Asian American family, what did Knox and his family experience when they moved to the U.S.?* Elicit/explain that Knox and his family experienced anti-Asian bias and racism when they came to the U.S. because there was a great deal of stereotyping, bias and even violence directed at Asian people. This happened in part because the coronavirus originated in China and people blamed China and its people for the virus. In addition, there was a lot of stereotyping that people who are Chinese or Asian had the virus and could transmit it to others. Ask: *What is bias?* Define bias as "a preference, either for or against an individual or group, that affects fair judgment." Ask students to share examples from the book of bias and specifically anti-Asian bias. Some examples include the family not telling anyone where they're from because they worry about stereotyping and bias; the students at Knox's school playing "coronavirus tag" and Knox and his friend Christopher (who is also Asian) are always "it/the virus;" people moving away from Knox's family in line at the grocery store to avoid them; people calling them racial slurs, saying offensive things to them and blaming them for the pandemic; customers stop coming to Christopher's family's Chinese restaurant. Together read the "Author's Note" on pages 355-357 to learn more about Kelly Yang and her family's experiences of anti-Asian bias. Explain/elicite from students that during that time and continuing today, there was an increase in bias, hate, discrimination and violence directed towards the Asian American community. There was an increase in hate crimes against Asian American people. You can learn more about some of the data in [this article](#), [another article](#) and [this report](#). Be mindful not to overload students with upsetting statistics as your goal should be to foster empathy and understanding.

During this time there were also many people, including Asian American people and others, who engaged in speaking out and actions to challenge the bias. For example, the NYC Office of Human Rights created [A Toolkit for Addressing Anti-Asian Bias, Discrimination and Hate](#), the Ad Council/Love Has No Labels created the [Fight the Virus. Fight the Bias.](#) video, what these [six Asian Americans are doing to fight hate in their communities](#) and there were many other efforts and ideas across the country. You can share the Ad Council's short video with the class and then brainstorm ideas for how to address anti-Asian bias or another form of bias and discrimination that is present in your school or community. Then engage students in creating their own PSAs (either print or video) like the Ad Council PSA, or come up with another project you work on together to address and challenge bias.

3. Acting as an Ally

Ask students: *What experiences of bias, bullying and discrimination did Knox and his family face? What other types of bias were experienced by characters in the book such as anti-immigrant bias, classism and ableism?* Refer to some of the examples of bias described above or other examples from the book that took place in school, in the community amongst their peers and others. Talk with students about what it means to act as an ally to someone who is being bullied or the target of bias. Define ally as "someone who helps or stands up for

someone who is being bullied or the target of bias." Ask students: *Did anyone in the book act as an ally to Knox, other members of his family or other people who were targeted by bias and bullying?* Remind students about how Knox (on page 275) googles "how to respond to racist comments" and he discovers a strategy called ICEE which stands for Interrupt, Correct, Educate and Echo. In this case, echo means to "echo statements of support" for the target. Explain that "echoing" is similar to acting as an ally. Then ask: *Have you ever acted as an ally to, or echoed, someone who was targeted based on an aspect of their identity? What happened and how did you feel?* Use **6 Ways to be an Ally** to explore the various ways people can act as allies. Have students think about bias and bullying they have seen, experienced or heard about in their school. Then have them consider ways to act as an ally in one of those situations. Then have students share in pairs or small groups either what happened and how they acted as an ally in that situation or when someone acted as an ally to them or other ally behavior they have seen or witnessed. Have them also describe the impact that they ally behavior had on the person who was targeted. (Note: Remind students not to use specific names or details when describing their experiences of acting as an ally as it could be harmful or detrimental to the students involved in those situations.)

Curriculum Resources

9 Ideas for Teaching Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month <https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/9-ideas-teaching-asian-american-pacific-islander-heritage-month>

Coronavirus and Infectious Racism <https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/coronavirus-and-infectious-racism>

Identity-Based Bullying <https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/identity-based-bullying>

Masks, Identity and Bias <https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/masks-identity-and-bias>

Websites

6 Ways to be an Ally <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/6-ways-to-be-an-ally-en-espanol>

10 Great Books to Read for Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/10-great-books-read-asian-american-pacific-islander-aapi-heritage-month>

Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month Resources <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/asian-american-pacific-islander-aapi-heritage-month-resources>

Challenging Anti-Asian Bias and Acting as an Ally <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/challenging-anti-asian-bias-and-acting-ally>

COVID-19 and Societal Inequities <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/covid-19-and-societal-inequities>

Meet Author Kelly Yang <https://www.sutori.com/en/story/meet-author-kelly-yang--t1yQSicBhCGcdRU9qe4eYtMi>

Children's Books

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

Books about Ability, Disability and Ableism <https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?f%5B0%5D=topic%3A1576>

Books about People Who are Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) <https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?f%5B0%5D=topic%3A1626>