



# 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 ADL Education's programs. 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.

## A Day with No Words

Tiffany Hammond (Author) and  
Kate Cosgrove (Illustrator)

This colorful and engaging picture book shares what life can look like for families who use nonverbal communication, using tools to embrace their unique method of speaking. The story is written from the boy's first-person perspective and highlights the bond between mother and child and follows them on a day where they use a tablet to communicate with others. The book normalizes communication outside of verbal speech and provides an affirming representation of neurodiversity and autism.

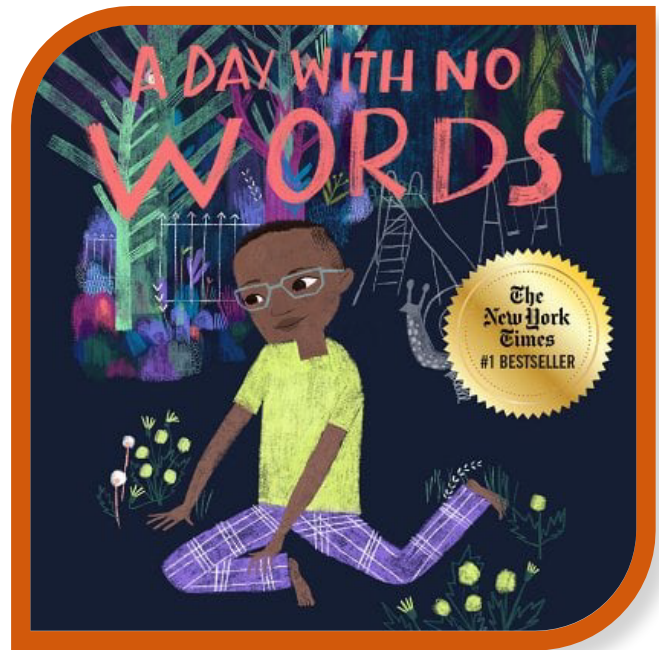
ISBN: 978-1736949795

Publisher: Wheat Penny Press

Year Published: 2023

Age Range: 5-8

(Note: Compelling picture books can be used for all ages of students.)



## Book Themes

People with Disabilities, Accommodations, Metaphors and Language, Nonverbal/Nonspeaking Communication

## Key Words

Discuss and define the words below with students prior to reading the book. Rather than focus on students' retention of all the words, make sure they understand the words enough to follow the story and remind students of the words' meanings as they come up in the book. You can also post the words and point out when they appear in the story. For definitions that are differentiated for young children, see ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#).

- |              |               |              |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| ■ abandon    | ■ comfortable | ■ stress     |
| ■ anxiety    | ■ crease      | ■ surrounded |
| ■ autistic   | ■ diverse     | ■ thrash     |
| ■ bobbing    | ■ screen      | ■ twirl      |
| ■ cashier    | ■ smooth      | ■ unique     |
| ■ chattering | ■ sneer       |              |

## Discussion Questions

Before reading the book aloud, ask some or all of these pre-reading questions:

- Look at the cover of the book and please describe it.
- Who and what do you see?
- What do you think the book will be about?

As you read the book aloud, ask a few discussion questions periodically throughout reading to check for comprehension and keep the students engaged. Below are some sample questions that correlate to specific page numbers:

- Why does the boy tap on his tablet? (Page 5)
- How does the boy share his thoughts with others? (Page 16)
- How does the mom feel upset here and how can you tell? (Page 26)

(Note: You can also provide some alternative, nonverbal ways for students to show comprehension, such as drawing, miming, striking a pose or using an emoji on what they saw and felt, the plot points, or imagining future situations that the main characters might experience.)

After reading the book aloud, engage students in a discussion by asking some or all of the following discussion questions:

- What happens in the story?
- How does the boy describe the different voices he hears around him? What is your favorite way he describes different people's voices?
- How does the boy explain why he does not speak? How does the tablet help him "be heard" to others? What makes you feel "heard?"
- What makes the boy more comfortable when they spend time at the park?
- What does the boy like to do in the park? What do you like to do in the park or playground?
- When one of the other moms at the playground sneers, "That boy is handicapped," how does the boy's mom feel? How do you know? (Note that the word "handicapped" is considered to be a mean/offensive/biased/harmful term for people with disabilities. Use "people with disabilities" or "has a disability" instead.)
- What does the boy's mom say to the other mom? Why does she say that?
- Have you ever had to say or do something when someone said something mean, rude, prejudiced or hurtful to someone you care about? What was that like?
- How did you feel when the book ended?
- How do the pictures help to tell the story?
- What do you think is the main message of the book?
- Why do you think the author wrote this book? What do you think the author is trying to say to her readers?

## Extension Activities

Below are activities for students that can extend learning from the book.

### 1. People with Disabilities and the Tools they Need

Ask students: *What did you learn about the boy in the book?* Explain/elicite that the boy does not use his voice to communicate. Explain that the boy has a disability called autism and that is why he does not use his voice and uses a tablet to communicate with others. First you can share/elicite that the term disability means “a mental or physical condition that restricts an individual’s ability to engage in one or more major life activities (e.g., seeing, hearing, speaking, walking, communicating, sensing, breathing, performing manual tasks, learning, working or caring for oneself).”

Explain that people with autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), may have challenges with social skills (being and communicating with others, expressing or understanding emotions), repetitive behaviors (doing or saying the same thing several times), speech and nonverbal/nonspeaking communication. People with autism/ASD may also have different ways of learning, moving, or paying attention. Emphasize that not everyone with autism is the same. Ask students: *Why does the boy use a tablet to share his thoughts with others, to communicate?* Elicite that the boy uses the tablet because he cannot use his voice to communicate. Use a different example, such as a wheelchair, to share that people with disabilities need different tools so they can easily and comfortably participate in all of life’s experiences, including at school, home, clubs, games, work, activities, etc. Explain that people with disabilities (in this case, the boy who has autism) needs a tool like the tablet so he can communicate and share his thoughts with others. Ask students: *What are some tools people with disabilities need?* Elicite and share examples such as: eyeglasses, braille, wheelchair, forearm crutches, ramp, hearing aid, captioning, American Sign Language (ASL), fidget tool.

If you have already discussed prejudice and bias with your students, you can also introduce the concept of “ableism,” which is: the disrespect, harm and mistreatment of people who have disabilities based on the belief that there is something “wrong” with people with disabilities (i.e., they are less capable) compared to those without disabilities. You can elicit or share some examples of ableism including making assumptions and having stereotypes about people with disabilities, treating people with disabilities unfairly, using prejudiced or offensive language about people with disabilities, and not providing the tools that people with disabilities need, etc. Elicite/explain one example of ableism in the book. When the boy and his mom go to the playground and one of the other mothers says, “that boy is handicapped.” She assumes that the boy can’t hear what she’s saying and the word “handicapped” is considered to be a rude/mean/biased/harmful term for people with disabilities, which students might or might not know. Ask students: *Where have you seen ableism take place? What can we do about ableism?*

### 2. Nonverbal/Nonspeaking Communication

Ask students: *How does the boy communicate with his family and others?* If students don’t know the word communicate, elicit/explain that communicate means “to share thoughts, feelings or information to another person or group.” Remind students that the boy does not communicate by speaking (using his voice) and he does communicate using his tablet. He says, “I was born like this. No voice from my lips. I am Autistic.” Explain that the boy uses his tablet to communicate because he has autism and does not speak, but he is still communicating. For different reasons, many people who can and do speak also use other ways to communicate besides speaking (verbal communication). Ask students: *What are some ways that people communicate without using their voice?* Examples may include: Using American Sign Language (ASL), texting, using a tablet, drawing, using their face (facial expressions), using their body (body language), pointing, using their hands etc. Engage students in an activity where they share something about themselves (e.g., an activity they like, the weather today, something

about their family) and they must use nonverbal/nonspeaking communication to share that information. After taking turns, process the activity by asking: *How did you decide the way to communicate nonverbally? What was it like to use nonverbal/nonspeaking communication?* To learn more the author's perspective on nonverbal/nonspeaking communication, read aloud some or all of "A Note from the Author" at the back of the book on page 40 and engage students in a brief discussion about her notes.

(Note to Teacher: As you discuss nonverbal/nonspeaking communication, be mindful not to make light of, trivialize or equate nonverbal communication that many people use every day with the nonverbal/nonspeaking communication that the boy in the story and others must use to communicate due to their disability.)

### 3. Metaphors

Explain to students that metaphors are used throughout the book. If you haven't already discussed metaphors, define metaphor as "a word or phrase that is used to make a comparison between two things that aren't alike but have something in common." Explain that using a metaphor sometimes helps the reader see and feel what is being described. Share an example of a metaphor such as "the snow is a white blanket" or "her tears were a river." Explain/ elicit how, in the first example, that the snow isn't actually a white blanket, but it can feel like that because it covers the ground the same way a blanket covers you. You can share that sometimes metaphors elicit feelings and like a blanket, snow can feel positive and cozy to you—similar to a blanket. Re-read the book aloud and invite students to look out for other metaphors as you read, such as: "early morning chases a long night," "big voices that feel like storms in my head," "Daddy's voice is like air," and "the sky has just cried." For each metaphor, ask what things are being compared and why they think the author used that metaphor. Then, have students come up with their own metaphors by using a process as follows (model one together first):

- Think of something you did or experienced for the first time (e.g., ride a bike).
- Describe how you felt when you had this new experience (e.g., scared and excited).
- Name something else that made you feel the same way or brought about similar feelings (e.g., riding on a rollercoaster, saw something spooky).
- Put it all together (e.g., "riding on my bike was a rollercoaster ride.").

Have students work in pairs or triads to come up a few (1-3) metaphors. If time permits, have students turn one of their metaphors into a drawing, poem or a "small moment" piece of writing. To close, elicit/explain that metaphors allow us to share feelings and experiences with others and it helps to build understanding and empathy about that experience.

## ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and other educational resources on people with disabilities, accommodations, ableism and identity.

### Curriculum Resources

Dolls are Us <https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/dolls-are-us>

"The Present" and Living with a Disability <https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/present-and-living-disability>

The Tools I Need: Disability and Accommodations <https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/tools-i-need-disability-and-accommodations>

Who Am I? Identity Poems <https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/who-am-i-identity-poems>

## Websites

A Brief History of the Disability Rights Movement <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounder/brief-history-disability-rights-movement>

'A Day With No Words' can be full of meaningful communication (NPR interview with author Tiffany Hammond) <https://www.npr.org/2023/05/11/1174982594/autism-children-book>

Ability, Disability and Ableism Educational Resources <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/ability-disability-and-ableism-educational-resources>

People with Disabilities and the Accommodations they Need <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/people-disabilities-and-accommodations-they-need-en-espanol>

What Is Autism Spectrum Disorder? (American Psychiatric Association) <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/autism/what-is-autism-spectrum-disorder>

## Children's Books

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>