



Barefoot Books

step inside a story

Tips for Selecting Diverse and Inclusive Books

- **First and foremost, it should be a good book.** Is it a good story or, in the case of nonfiction, is it interesting and age-appropriate? Are the illustrations artistic and inviting?
- **Seek out diverse human characters.** Books with animal characters certainly have their place, but make sure you have books in your collection that feature diverse human characters too. (See our quiz on the next page to learn about many types of diversity!)
- **Look out for stereotypes.** Does the book contain stereotypes in either the language or illustrations? (Not sure if characters are stereotypical? Do some research on stereotypes that have historically been associated with a particular culture or group of people.)
- **Is it a “window” or a “mirror”?** Books can serve as windows through which children can learn about others, and also as mirrors in which they see their own lives reflected. Will children learn about others or see themselves in the book?
- **Make sure the information is accurate.** If the book talks explicitly about a country, culture, or group of people, it should be specific and precise in its presentation. For instance, a book about Native American characters should include details about the particular tribe or tribes being represented, as opposed to lumping all Native American people or customs into one category.
- **Check to see if it’s relatable.** Books that depict diverse characters doing everyday things help children build empathy by showing that we all share things in common.
- **Think about the author’s and illustrator’s qualifications.** Do the author and/or illustrator come from the culture or group they are depicting? If not, what qualifies them to create this book sensitively, accurately and without bias?



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Professional Development Activity: Diverse & Inclusive Book Quiz

Sit in your classroom's reading area with your teaching team. Now that you're at your students' eye level, evaluate what you see. Take the quiz below and write the number of books next to each question:

- How many books feature **characters of color**? _____
- How many books depict **LGBTQ+ characters**? _____
- How many books depict **people with differing abilities**? _____
- How many books show **religious diversity**? _____
- How many books show **socio-economic (class) diversity**? _____
- How many of the above books **show these characters doing everyday things**? _____
- How many books **feature a main character of color? LGBTQ+? Differently abled? From a minority religion? From a low-income family**? _____
- How many books have been **written and / or illustrated by people who come from the cultures or groups represented in the story**? _____
- How many stories include **language from the country or culture being represented**? _____

What's your total score? What types of books are missing from your collection? It's never too late to diversify your bookshelf!

Find a whole world of diverse and inclusive books at www.barefootbooks.com.