

Q is for Questioning

JOY FUL

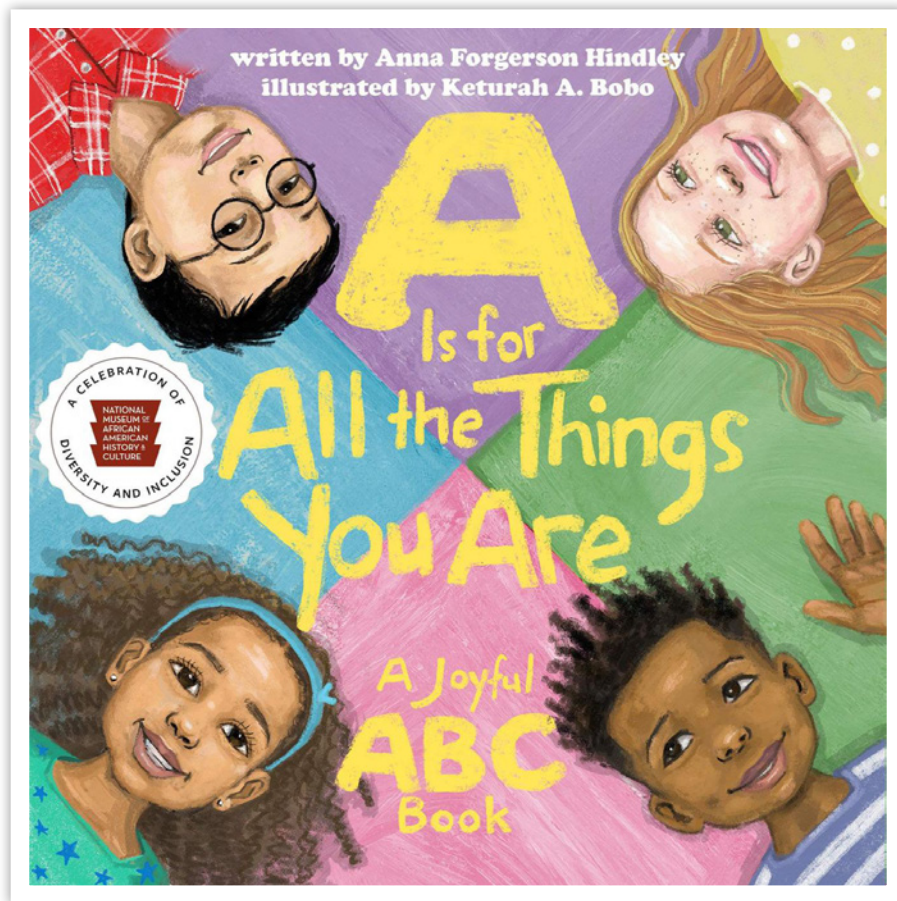


A NMAAHC KIDS ABCs ACTIVITY BOOK

INFANT AND TODDLER EDITION

Brought to you by the National Museum of African American History and Culture Early Childhood Education Initiative.
Inspired by the children's book, A is for All The Things You Are: A Joyful ABC Book written by Anna Forgerson Hindley
and illustrated by Keturah A. Bobo, ©2018 Art by Keturah Ariel LLC.

Funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.



A is for All the Things You Are was written to affirm our children and empower them to see themselves as many things at once – daring and loving, creative and just, amazing and zany – and everything in between. The book offers wonderful opportunities for conversations with children to build their vocabularies, strengthen their sense of self and deepen their joy in and acceptance of human diversity. The illustrations allow them to see not only themselves, but others in the same positive light. By seeing positive images of children of different colors, genders, abilities, classes, and other social identities, we nurture the child's comfort and joy in human diversity so deep caring connections can be made across humanity.

Each activity booklet offers suggestions of how to begin the lifelong work of having a positive sense of self and others with your infant or toddler, how to support their language development and how to build the foundations of literacy.

A Is for All the Things You Are: A Joyful ABC Book
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 © 2018 Smithsonian Institution (text)

Q is for Questioning:

How does a kite fly? Why is the sky blue? What are clouds made of? Being curious and asking questions helps you make sense of our complex world.

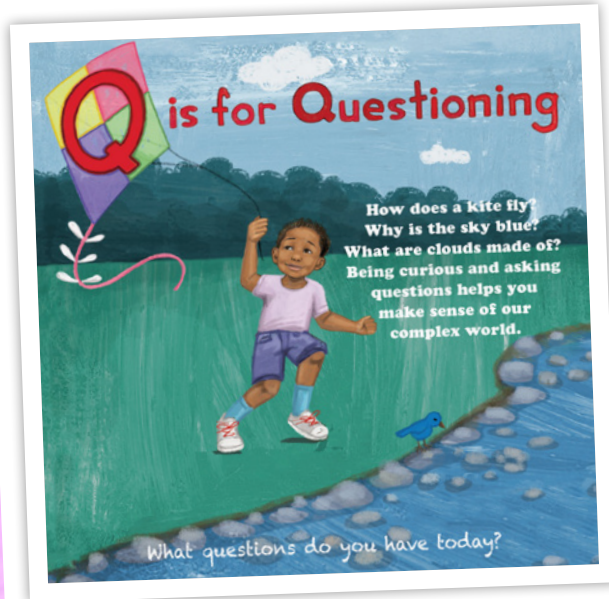
What questions do you have?

The ability to wonder, be curious, and create questions in one's mind is one of the most profoundly important aspects of brain development. Long before babies and toddlers have language to ask questions, their brains are curiously working to understand new stimuli and to organize their experiences in ways that help them make sense of the world. They do this by observing, listening, reaching and grabbing over and over again.

Even without words, they let us know the questions that are prodding their brains. The newborn gazes intently at the human face (*Who is this person? Are they familiar or new to me?*). Around ten months, babies begin to point at what is interesting (*What is that? What does it do?*). Toddlers cautiously poke at a new food (*What does this feel like? Is it hot or cold? Shall I try it?*), and try out their limited vocabulary to create questions (*Daddy bye-bye? Where shoe?*).

We can nurture this brain development by closely observing our little ones and providing them with answers to their unspoken questions. When we allow them whatever time they need to explore what is new and different, we empower a child's sense of wonder and curiosity rather than a sense of wariness and fear.

This week, as your infant or toddler discovers what is new to them in a world that is so familiar to us, see the world through their eyes and share their surprise and wonder.



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What You'll Need:

The following supplies are suggested for the experiences in this booklet.

- Water
- Plastic bin
- Drinking straw
- Plastic cups
- Water toy



EXPLORE

In early childhood, children learn best through doing! To explore this week's theme, try the activity below with your infant or toddler.

Asking Questions

Babies and toddlers have questions. Every day, babies and toddlers make attempts to figure out how the world works. Though they can't yet share their questions with words, they will often express their curiosity to us in other ways.

A toddler pointing out the window at people and cars can be a question. A baby staring at the face of a person they've just met can be a question. A toddler looking at and reaching for an object across the room can be a question.

Help your little one ask questions. In moments like these, say the question you think your child may have out loud. Acknowledging the curious looks, touches and pointing of our young children honors their questioning minds and supports them in their early language development.

Where are those people and cars going? Who is this person holding me? Can I have that thing over there?



[Studio portrait of a baby by Rev. Henry Clay Anderson](#)

Give simple questions and ask more questions! After asking their questions, provide simple answers, narrate what you see and share descriptive words. Then, ask more questions about what your child is feeling and seeing.

The people outside might be going to work or school right now. Do you want to go outside too? This person is my friend and they're so happy to meet you. Do you want me to hold you now? Here's the toy you wanted. What are you going to do with it now?

EXPLORE

Explore this week's theme with your toddler by trying this engaging experience inspired by our museum collection.

Question-Guided Play

Play time is a great time for asking questions and for nurturing little ones' curiosity. During their play, toddlers make choices that reflect their interests, look closely and touch to help themselves learn more, and express their thoughts and feelings with sounds, facial expressions and body movements. Each movement, choice and sound they make is an opportunity for us to further their learning by asking questions. Start with questions about what will happen next, why something is happening or how your little one is feeling about what's happening.

Introduce your toddler to water play and guide their experience with questions. During bath time or with a plastic bin of water, provide your little one with toys and a plastic cup. Then play with and question your toddler in the following ways:

- Stir, pat and gently splash the water. Ask joyfully and curiously: *What will happen if I do this? Why does the water do that? Do you see those little ripples?*
- Use a straw to blow bubbles in the water. Scoop water up with a cup and pour it out again, quickly then slowly. Ask joyfully and curiously: *Why does the water do that? Would you like to hold the cup? Do you see all of the bubbles?*
- Drop toys into the water. Ask joyfully and curiously: *What will happen if I drop this in the water? Did it go to the bottom? Can you pick it up?*



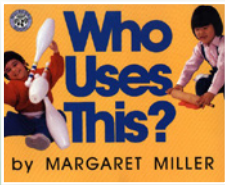
The Way of Life of the Northern Negro: Untitled
by Wayne F. Miller

EXPLORE MORE

Continue learning with your little one using these recommended resources:

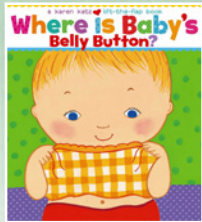
Books

Pique your little one's curiosity with books that ask questions! Babies and toddlers find joy and excitement in guessing what's next during story time.



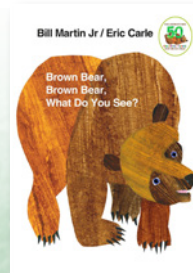
Who Uses This?

by Margaret Miller



Where Is Baby's Belly Button?

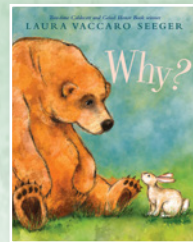
by Karen Katz



Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?

by Bill Martin Jr.

illustrated by Eric Carle



Why?

by Laura Vaccaro Seeger

Tip:

Use your favorite search engine to find read-aloud videos online!

Online Resources

Learn more about how and why infants and toddlers ask questions.



[Using Questions to Support Your Child's Learning - Zero to Three](#)



[Why Toddlers Ask Why - What To Expect](#)



[Understanding Your Child's Behavior: Reading Your Child's Cues from Birth to Age 2 - Vanderbilt University](#)

CONNECT

A Guide for Families and Caregivers

Why do these experiences matter?

A child's identity is both internally constructed and externally imposed. They learn who they are and how they are valued from the words and actions of others and from the way they do or don't make sense of those messages. Their beloved adults (that's you!) are the most important people in their world. The words you give a child to describe themselves and others have lasting power in their lives. When a child has the words to think about their strengths and their worth, they can sort through negative messages and hold on to their sense of being loveable and capable. The experiences in this booklet are invitations for you to use objects, activities and words to support your child's positive identity development, their fascination with how people are both different and the same, and their ability to read emotions and build empathy. In time, experiences like these will also support your child's ability to recognize unfairness or unkindness and to stand up for themselves and others.

What about supporting language development and getting ready to read?

Alphabets, in and of themselves, are not particularly interesting to young children. However, learning letter-filled words to describe the world around them and inside of them (their feelings, experiences and senses) is very interesting to children! Discovering new words, new ways to say things and new ways to think is exciting and essential to a child's literacy and identity development.

In the first three years of life, early language and literacy skills are best learned through everyday moments. The experiences in these booklets invite you to boost your child's literacy through talking, playing and creating together in fun and accessible ways. Some experiences will guide you in helping your infant or toddler "name the universe" with descriptive words for the actions and emotions of themselves and others. Other experiences will encourage you to point out written words and look closely at objects to provide your little one with the beginning connections between the real world, reading and talking.

Every child's path to literacy is different and valid - just like their identity. The experiences in these booklets aim to support you and your child along their unique journey to literacy and a positive sense of self. **Remember to have fun along the way!**

Credits

Objects

- Studio portrait of a baby by Rev. Henry Clay Anderson, 1948–1970s. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of Charles Schwartz and Shawn Wilson, © Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. [2012.137.17.17](#)
- *The Way of Life of the Northern Negro: Untitled* by Wayne F. Miller, 1946 - 1948. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, © Magnum Photos. [2009.24.28](#)

Original Artwork

- Bluebird (cover) © 2018 Art by Keturah Ariel LLC