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 as well. 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. In exploring ideas such as fairness, kindness, open-mindedness and being vocal, children begin the task of recognizing injustice and knowing how to stand up for themselves and others.

Each activity booklet offers suggestions of how to begin the lifelong work of having a positive sense of self and others with your early learner, how to support their language development and how to build the foundations of literacy.
R is for Resourceful:

Figuring out how to solve a problem means you are resourceful. When you face an obstacle, be creative and keep trying!

What tools - or resources - have you used to solve a challenge?

Many of the qualities shared in previous Joyful ABCs activity booklets are elements of resourceful children. When a child is supported to be creative, daring, open-minded and persistent, they’re being empowered to practice resourcefulness and to own the internal conviction that, “I can figure this out. I am not helpless in this situation.”

Our young children learn best when involved in hands-on activities that engage their imaginations and invite them to find their own individual solutions to interesting problems. This is the opposite of asking children to find someone else’s answers to someone else’s questions. We can support this kind of learning by encouraging the creative reuse of materials a child already has, rather than continually believing or expecting that new items are required, or are what’s best. Combining game pieces from various “incomplete” sets is an invitation to invent a whole new game. Engaging our little ones in repairing broken toys teaches them new skills and builds a sense of competence.

This resourcefulness can carry over into human relationships. When quarrels and hurt feelings come between children, we can support them to problem solve rather than us stepping in to “fix it.” As they figure out their own solution with our help, we reinforce their view of themselves as being intelligent, thoughtful and resourceful.

“Making a way out of no way” is a core theme throughout the stories of African American history and culture told in NMAAHC exhibits. These stories teach us that there is great strength and beauty in being able to create unique and effective solutions in the midst of challenging situations. As you learn about some of these stories in this booklet, we invite you to continue exploring African American history to inspire your child’s, as well as your own, resourceful character.

What You’ll Need:

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

- Miscellaneous nature and found materials
- 3 to 5 sticks, chopsticks or plastic utensils
- Tape or rubberbands
- A large piece of paper
- Newspaper or a plastic tablecloth
- Recycled materials
- Patterned paper
- Fabric scraps

Tip:

Build an at-home creativity kit full of all the supplies and recycled materials you’ll need for future ABC art and play activities. Find the supplies list here!
EXPLORE

In early childhood, children learn best through doing! Explore this week’s theme with your child by trying this engaging experience inspired by our museum collection.

Being Resourceful is Helpful

We are resourceful when we use supplies (or resources) that we have around us to solve a problem or to help others in a creative way. Builders in this photograph gathered simple materials like wooden boards and bars to create shelters, or small homes, for people to live in while they came to Washington, D.C. to protest poverty. Their small buildings made sure that people had a safe place to sleep and live. Try creating your own building using recycled materials.

1. First, talk to your child about your own neighborhood or town. What kinds of buildings or places are important for people to have? Where can people get food? Where can people get help? Where do people learn or play? Then, gather recycled materials like cardboard boxes and plastic containers or bottles.

2. Work together with your child to stack and arrange boxes, cut out windows and doors and attach boxes together with tape. (Encourage creative problem solving and choice making. Remember the goal of this project is to imagine and create, not accurately replicate!)

3. Decorate the boxes and bottles by drawing on paper first and gluing it to the materials, or by drawing directly on the recycled materials. What words and details can you add to show people what the places you’re building are? Consider looking at pictures of similar places in your real town to get inspiration!

Talk about the little community you built. How did you use recycled resources to create important buildings people need?
CREATE

Create art inspired by this week’s theme!

**Being Resourceful is Creative**

Artist Gregory Coates is resourceful. He uses unusual materials to make his art! Once, when he lost his paint brushes and paints, Gregory used coffee and dirt to make colors and used palm leaves as his canvas. Another time he used feathers from a torn pillow, dipped in paint, to make a brightly colored work of art like the one pictured here. In this project, we’ll think resourcefully and make paintings with natural and found materials.

**What You’ll Need:**

- Miscellaneous nature and found materials
- 3 to 5 sticks, chopsticks or plastic utensils
- Tape or rubberbands
- A large piece of paper
- Newspaper or a plastic tablecloth

**Grown-ups:**

With your little one, create a set of “brushes.” Collect 3 to 5 sticks, chopsticks or disposable utensils to use as the brush handles. Then, add the following materials to the ends using tape or rubber bands to create the brush.

- Short strips of newspaper or thin cardboard shredded with scissors
- Fallen leaves, blades of grass, pine needle bundles or tiny twigs
- Feathers or large cotton balls or pads
- Crumpled paper, aluminum foil or plastic grocery bags
- Yarn, old shoe laces or pipe cleaners

Cover your working surface and set out a large piece of white paper and 2 to 3 paint colors in containers that are shallow but large enough to dip your homemade brushes in.

**Early Learners:**

Pick a brush and gently dip it into the paint. Then, move the brush on your paper to see what pattern it makes! Try long and short strokes. Try dabbing and twirling! Repeat with a new brush and color. What kinds of lines and textures are the different brushes making? How are they different? What does it feel to use the brushes you made?
LEARN

Invite your child to take part in the following experiences to support their literacy and language skills.

Being Resourceful is Caring

Quilt makers often use scraps of fabric leftover from other projects, pieces of old clothing or materials they find to make beautiful quilts. The quilts pictured here are made with tailor fabric samples and fabric scraps sewn together in interesting patterns. That’s being resourceful! Quilters use their resourcefulness to show care to others by creating quilts that help keep people warm and give people a soft surface to lay on. Use the quilt inspired activities below to boost early literacy skills, and letter writing and recognition.

Boost Literacy

Cut patterned paper, old fabric or used clothing or linens into small squares and rectangles about 1 to 2 inches in size. Invite your child to arrange the shapes in quilt-inspired patterns and rows on a cookie tray or flat surface. The pinching motion they’ll use to pick up and move the pieces strengthens the hand muscles and coordination they’ll need for writing.

Learn Letters

Ask your child to arrange shapes to create letters, like “R” for resourceful. Provide them with a written alphabet or letter magnets to guide them. You may also try writing large letters on pieces of paper and encourage your little one to lay the shapes along the lines.

Tip:

Learn more about communities of Black quilters, like the women in Gee’s Bend, Alabama. Read Pearl and Her Gee’s Bend Quilt by Tangular Irby. Watch a video about the resourceful Black women and their beautiful quilts.
EXPLORE MORE

Continue learning with your little one using these recommended resources:

**Books**

Read about creativity and resourcefulness.

- **Be A Maker**
  by Katey Howes,
  illustrated by Elizabet Vuković

- **Boxitects**
  by Kim Smith

- **Maybe Something Beautiful**
  by F. Isabel Campoy,
  illustrated by Theresa Howell

- **I Like Old Clothes**
  by Mary Ann Hoberman,
  illustrated by Patrice Barton

**Tip:**

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

**Online Resources**

Discover how to incorporate creativity and exploration into your child’s everyday play!

- [New Uses for Old Things: Kids Edition](#) - Real Simple
- [Play in Early Childhood: The Role of Play in Any Setting](#) - Center of the Developing Child, Harvard University
- [Ages and Stages: Encouraging Exploration in Young Children](#) - Scholastic
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.

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.

The developmental path to reading is a child's understanding that, "Anything I do or see, I can say! Anything I say can be written! Anything written can be read!" Many booklet experiences will encourage you to engage in conversations about objects and during story times to deepen your child's connection to spoken and written words. Other experiences will invite you to build literacy skills by writing down what your child says, feels or thinks and reading it back to them aloud. Some booklets will introduce fun ways to boost fine motor skills that contribute to a child's writing and reading abilities. The booklets will also recommend books that intrigue children by illustrating the rich diversity of people in the world and providing them with a mirror to their own lives or a window into other lives.

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
- Quilt made from gray, black, brown, blue, and red suiting samples by an unidentified artist, 20th century. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. 2013.162.10

Original Artwork
- Bluebird (cover; pages 3, 4) © 2018 Art by Keturah Ariel LLC