

T is for Talented

JOY FUL

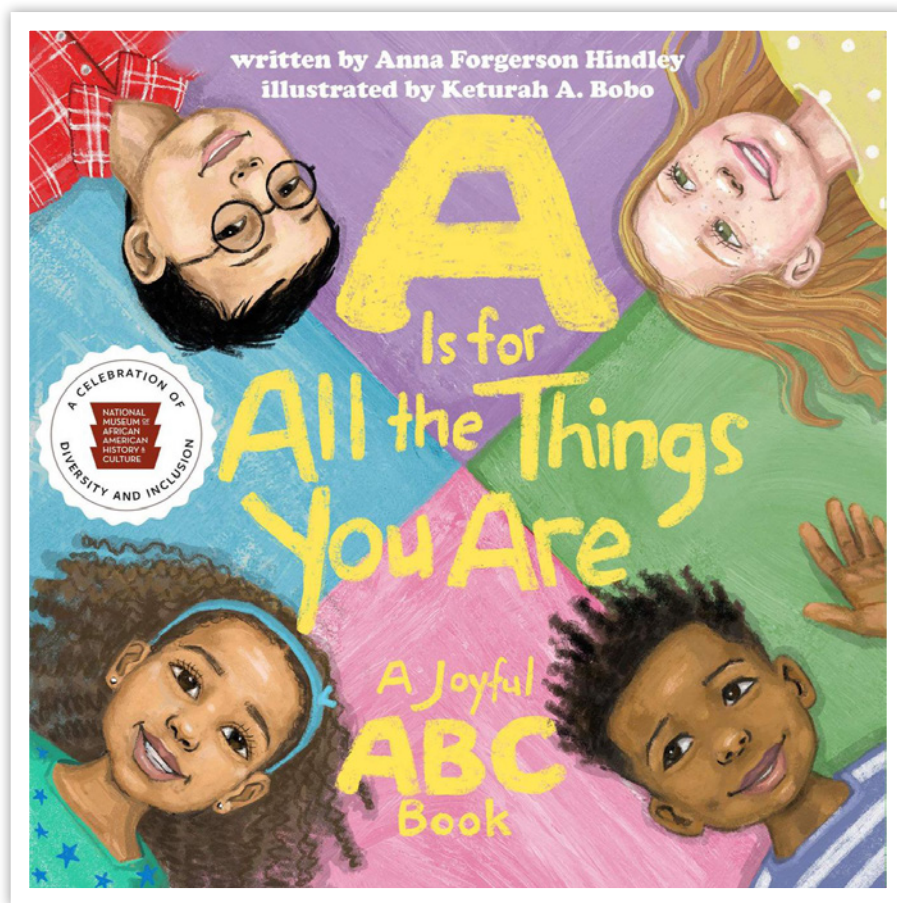


A NMAAHC KIDS ABCs ACTIVITY BOOK

EARLY LEARNERS EDITION - AGES 3 TO 5

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 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.

A Is for All the Things You Are: A Joyful ABC Book
 © 2018 Art by Keturah Ariel LLC (artwork)
 © 2018 Smithsonian Institution (text)

T is for Talented:

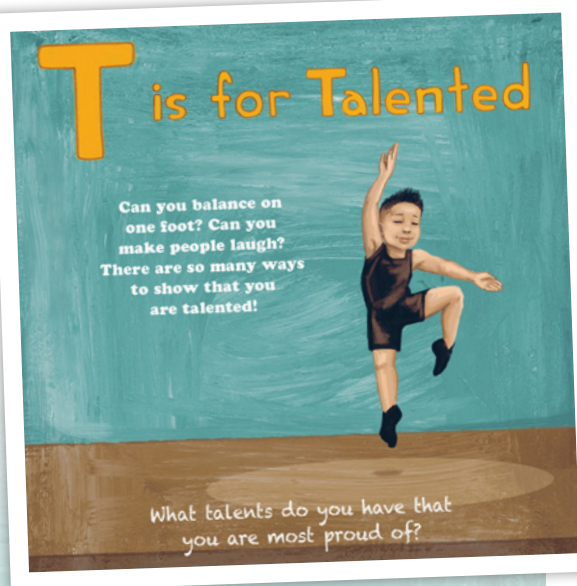
Can you balance on one foot? Can you make people laugh? There are so many ways to show that you are talented.

What talents do you have that you are most proud of?

Your child is uniquely talented, but we don't have to tell you that. When we notice our child has a natural knack for something, as a proud caregiver it's quite easy to expect our children to perform for friends and family. However, this pressure sends a message to our children: Your talents are only valuable when shared and will be judged by others. Instead, work with your young ones to support how they would like to express their talents. Some children are eagerly awaiting recitals and performances, while other children would rather keep it recreational or home-based. When we allow our children to lead in their talents, they will come to understand that talents are about doing your personal best, not about perfection or performance.

When our children choose to perform for us, they're often eagerly waiting for our response. To be supportive, try to use non-judgemental phrases and questions: *What part did you like the best? I watched you the entire time. Tell me what you love about it. I would imagine you are feeling proud. Am I right?*

As your child discovers and explores their talents, anticipate this to be a journey. Young children, get to try things, start new things, and leave things when it feels right for them. Their internal concept of commitment hasn't quite developed, so their experiences with different talents will be evolving. You can expect to notice deep dives into one thing (painting, hip hop dancing, horseback riding, tumbling) and before you know it, they'll move onto exploring another talent. Remember this and support your child to be present in their current interest experience without assuming it will be a part of their life-long identity. The ways that identities and interests change and grow is something to celebrate, not discourage.



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What You'll Need:

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

- Paper
- Crayons
- Scissors
- Glue

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.

Everyone Has Talents



[Photograph by Charles “Teenie” Harris](#)

Talents are special skills or abilities that people have. People have all kinds of talents and our different talents make us unique. Sometimes our talents feel like something we've always loved. Sometimes, talents take time to find, and most times, talents are skills you've worked hard to strengthen. Do you have a talent that you are proud of? Is it something you can see, like playing the piano? Or is it something unseen, like being a good listener?

Whatever your talents are, showing or growing them with other people adds extra joy to practicing your special skills! The man in this photograph is playing a keyboard outside and sharing his musical talent with the children around him. What talent has someone shared with you? How did it make you feel?

Have a “Family Talent Share.”

Every person in your family has a special talent. Start a conversation about talents with questions like: *What do you love to do? What skills do you use to do that?* Then, make time to joyfully share your talents with each other.

Embrace free play and mistakes.

With open-ended activities, children discover their own interests and skills. Try setting out art supplies, or play dough and tools, without telling them what to make or do. As they explore, model that risk-taking and making mistakes are necessary for discovering and developing talents by joining in and narrating moments where you feel uncertain or “mess up” too.

Do something new and learn together.

Talents take practice. Find an activity that you and your child want to try. Then, explore together by reading or watching a video. Master a dance routine on YouTube. Take an art or movement class. Follow a new recipe together.

CREATE

Create art inspired by this week's theme!

Use Your Talents to Create

Look at *Rutabaga: In The Sky* by McArthur Binion. What do you see first? What colors do you see? Describe the shapes and lines you see. What does it look like to you? Share your idea with someone else. What do they see?

Abstract artists, like McArthur Binion, use their talents to express their ideas and feelings with colors, shapes and lines that make sense to them, but may or may not make sense to other people. When people look at abstract art they see and understand it in different ways.

Create an abstract work of art. As you create, think about how you can make art in a way that feels good to you. How do you want your art to look? Which of your talents can you use to make your art?

- 1 Use crayons to fill one piece of paper with color. Add lines, shapes and doodles! Be playful with your mark making. Try holding more than one crayon in your hand at the same time, or drawing with your opposite hand or with your eyes shut.
- 2 When your page is full, cut or tear the paper into strips and shapes.
- 3 Mix up the pieces and rearrange them on the other sheet of paper to create patterns, new shapes or any design you like. Have fun! Then, use glue to keep the pieces in place.

Tip:

Art exploration is a fun and important part of childhood. With open-ended art projects, children discover their natural talents and how to use them to express themselves.



Rutabaga: In The Sky by McArthur Binion



LEARN

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



Name Your Talents

When a new activity makes you feel happy or using a skill makes you feel proud, you may have discovered a talent! Use a journal to tell stories about how you use your talents, to write about your special skills or to show the talents you are growing. Find a blank book for your journal, or make your own out of paper. Then, fill the pages with writing or pictures that answer the questions below.

- What's one of your favorite things to do? What makes you feel good when you do it?
- What skills do you use to play?
- How do you use skills to help or be kind to others?
- What are you learning how to do?
- Is there something you didn't know before and now you do?

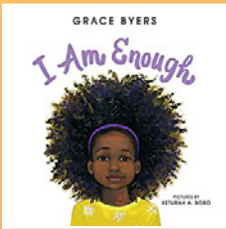
Journals provide children with a special place to practice their writing and language skills freely. When they make shapes, lines or a series of letters to represent their thoughts and feelings, they're practicing writing skills. When they draw a picture, ask your child to describe it. Interpreting their art for you and telling stories gives little ones the opportunity to use new vocabulary and practice literacy skills like talking about events in sequence.

EXPLORE MORE

Continue learning with your little one using these recommended resources:

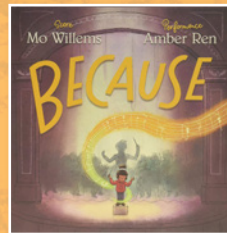
Books

Everyone has talents. Read about the different ways we share and show them!



I Am Enough

by Grace Byers,
illustrated by Keturah A. Bobo



Because

by Mo Willems,
illustrated by Amber Ren



Extraordinary Ordinary Ella

by Amber Hendricks,
illustrated by Luciana Navarro Powell



Hiding Heidi

by Fiona Woodcock

Tip:

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

Online Resources

Talk with your little one about what special skills you both have and find ways to share them with one another.

- ★ [What Makes You Special?](#) - Sesame Street
- ★ [Sharing Talents and Traditions](#) - Sesame Street in Communities
- ★ [Motivating Children Without Rewards](#) - Psychology Today

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

- Photographic print of children and pianist at Terrace Village housing project by Charles "Teenie" Harris, ca. 1956. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift from Charles A. Harris and Beatrice Harris in memory of Charles "Teenie" Harris, © Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. [2014.302.22](#)
- *Rutabaga: In the Sky* by McArthur Binion, 1978-1979. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of McArthur Binion. [2014.160](#)

Program Photos

Doug Sanford, National Museum of African American History and Culture, 2019

Original Artwork

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