

U is for Unique

JOY FUL

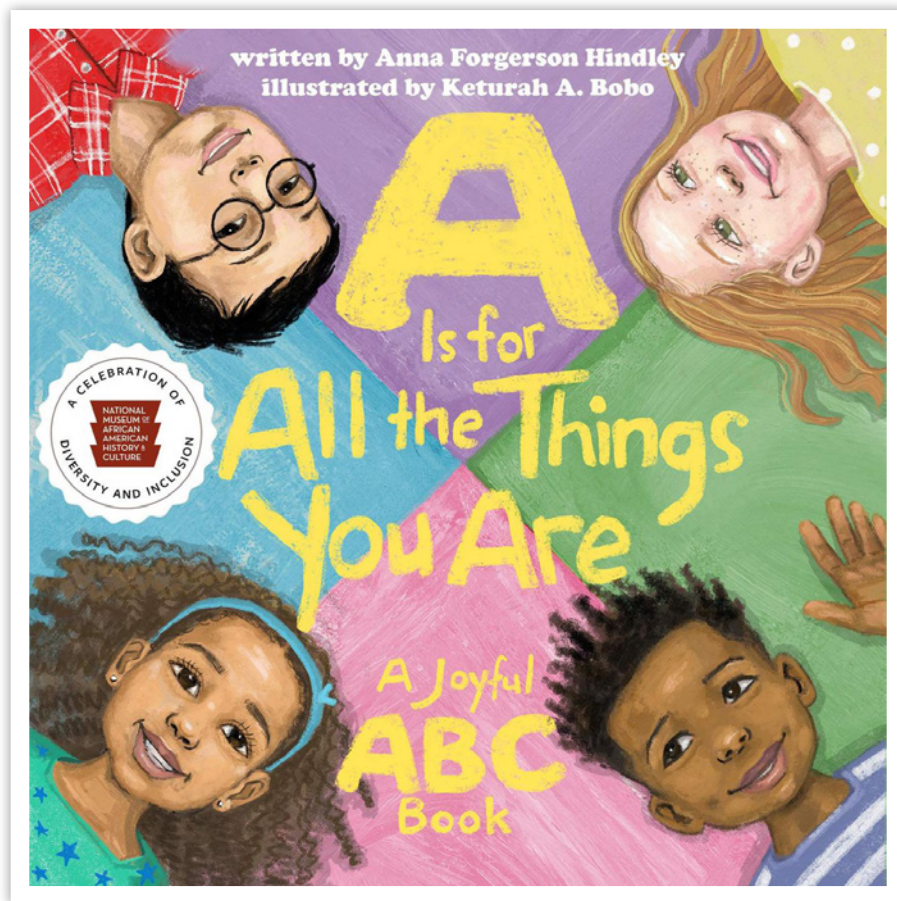


A NMAAHC KIDS ABCs ACTIVITY BOOK

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.

U is for Unique:

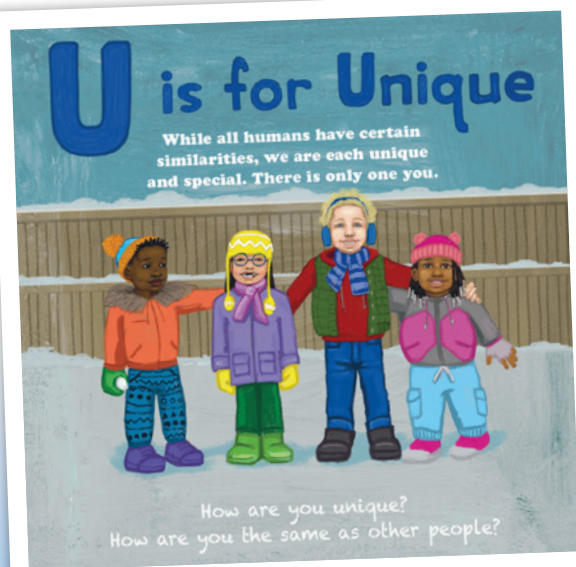
While all humans have certain similarities, we are each unique and special. There is only one you.

How are you unique? How are you the same as other people?

Sometimes, as caregivers, it can feel easier to focus on the similarities our children share with others in their development, growth and personal characteristics. Knowing that they are “just like other kids” can make us feel more confident that they are “okay” or that we are doing child-raising “right.” But if we strive for our children to be the same, we unintentionally practice in-group bias or favoritism towards groups we think are more ideal or like us physically, culturally, neurologically or socioeconomically. In-group bias is one of the most impactful negative biases that create groups - such as communities, sports teams, lunch tables, playgroups, and schools - that lack diversity.

Being different is not only okay, it’s a wonderful and essential part of our world - so, having explicit conversations about what makes your child and others different and unique is important. Talking about favorite hobbies, skills and all the different parts of their identity helps your child to know who they are and who they are not. Start discussions with questions like, “How do you like to spend your time? Now that you’re older, what have you learned? How have you changed?” Learn about who they believe themselves to be and emphasize these are the qualities that make them unique. Remind them that we all get to be different and how special that is.

Helping our children to know that they and the people around them are unique by design encourages them to see differences as a reason for celebration rather than separation.



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

What You'll Need:

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

- Paper
- Markers and crayons
- Miscellaneous items (See page 4.)

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.



I Am Unique!

Unique is another word to describe something that is special and different, like *you*! You are unique. What are three unique things about yourself that you love? It may be something people can see, like your hair texture, or something unseen, like your ability to count really high, or the way you make people laugh.

Every time you learn new skills, meet new people, and have new experiences that help your body and mind grow, you're becoming more special.

Celebrate all of the things that make you unique. Look into a mirror and sing this song:

Tip:

Don't ignore differences. Young children can easily see and name differences. Adults can help them to embrace those differences. If your child is curious about someone's unique way of looking or doing something, let them ask questions. Positive, open communication and supportive relationships allow your child to explore their curiosity in respectful ways.

Sing to the tune of:
London Bridge

I am unique. Yes, I am!
Yes, I am!
Yes, I am!
I am unique. Yes, I am!
I'm very unique.

No one else has hair* like mine.
Just like mine.
Just like mine.
No one else has hair* like mine.
I'm very unique.

*Additional verses can include: heart, mind, laugh, face, eyes, or any part of your unique self!

CREATE

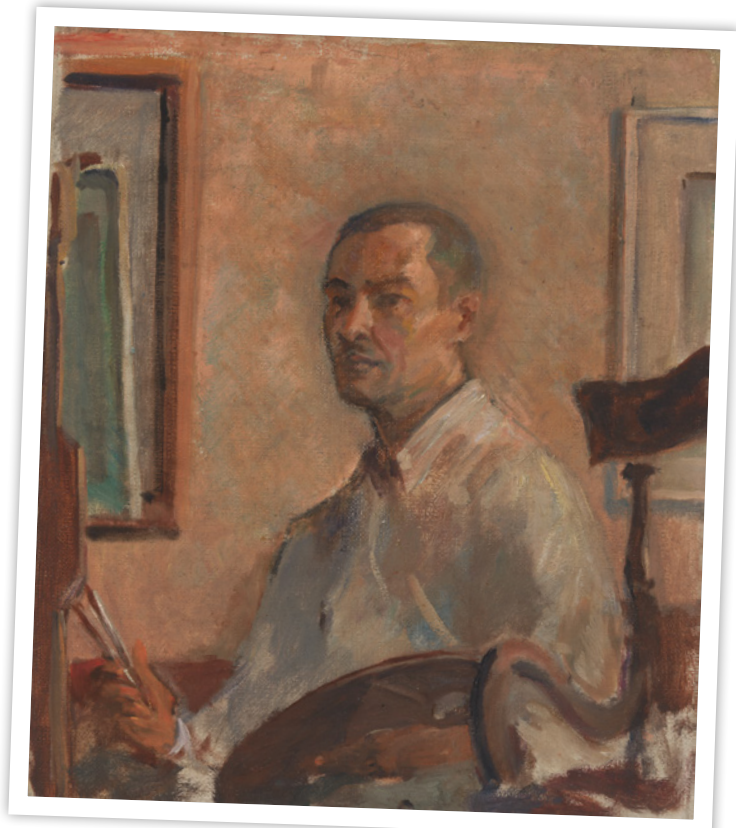
Create art inspired by this week's theme!

Create a Unique Portrait

A portrait is an artwork that represents a particular person. Sometimes portraits can teach you about what makes that person unique like their personality, style, or their favorite hobbies.

This painting is a portrait that James Amos Porter, painted of himself. Look closely at the details. What do you notice? Can we guess anything about what makes him unique? He is holding two tools in his hands - a paintbrush and a flat surface called a palette, which is where a painter might mix their paints. Those objects tell us that what makes the artist unique is his love for painting and his artistic style!

Create your own self-portrait that is as unique as you are by using objects that you find around your home. Try to use objects in your self-portrait that give a clue about what makes you special. If you enjoy making art, use drawing tools or other art supplies. If you love playing outside, use natural materials.



Self-Portrait by James Amos Porter



LEARN

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

Your Unique Name

Your name is an important part of who you are. It makes you unique! Names can carry special meanings, connect us to our families, stories and cultures, or our names may be ones that our caregivers just felt were “you.” However it’s chosen, your name is a way to tell others, “I’m me!”

Celebrate and share this part of your unique self by writing your name, singing it outloud, and talking about where it came from!



Learn Letters

What’s your name? Invite your child to write their name down in creative ways on a piece of paper. Try writing each letter in a different color. Write your name really big and then, really small. Can you make letters with polka dots? For early writers, write your child’s name down lightly in pencil and model how to trace the lines.

Boost Literacy

Singing songs about your little one’s name is a great way to boost language development while also supporting your child to feel joyful about this part of their identity. Try simple songs like, *What’s Your Name?*, and empowering songs like, *My Name*.

Share the story behind your child’s name with them and talk about other names in your family. Being able to tell their “name story” can help children to feel proud and confident in saying their name out loud.

Tip:

Names are special. When someone tries to change it, says it incorrectly or teases about it, it’s hurtful. In those moments, it can feel scary or difficult for children to stand up for themselves and correct someone. Learn more about [why pronouncing names correctly matters](#) and support your child to share their unique name with others or to learn new names respectfully.

EXPLORE MORE

Continue learning with your little one using these recommended resources:

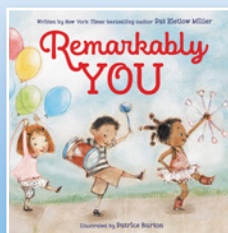
Books

Read the following books with your little one to support your child's growth as a unique individual.



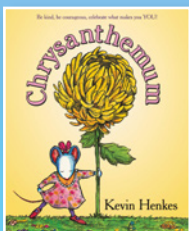
We're All Wonders

by R.J. Palacio



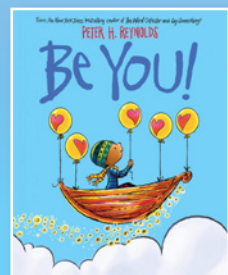
Remarkably You

by Pat Zietlow Miller,
illustrated by Patrice Barton



Chrysanthemum

by Kevin Henkes



Be You!

by Peter H. Reynolds

Tip:

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

Online Resources

Celebrate being unique, as a child and a grown up, with the resources below.

- ★ [“It’s You I Like” Song](#) - Mister Rogers
- ★ [“We Are All Amazing” Song](#) - Sesame Street in Communities
- ★ [Usher and Bert are Unique](#) - Sesame Street
- ★ [Ways to Encourage and Celebrate Your Child’s Uniqueness](#) - Verywell Family

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

- *Self-Portrait* by James Amos Porter, ca. 1935. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, © James Amos Porter. [2014.42.3](#)

Program Photos

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

Original Artwork

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