

V is for Vocal

JOY FUL

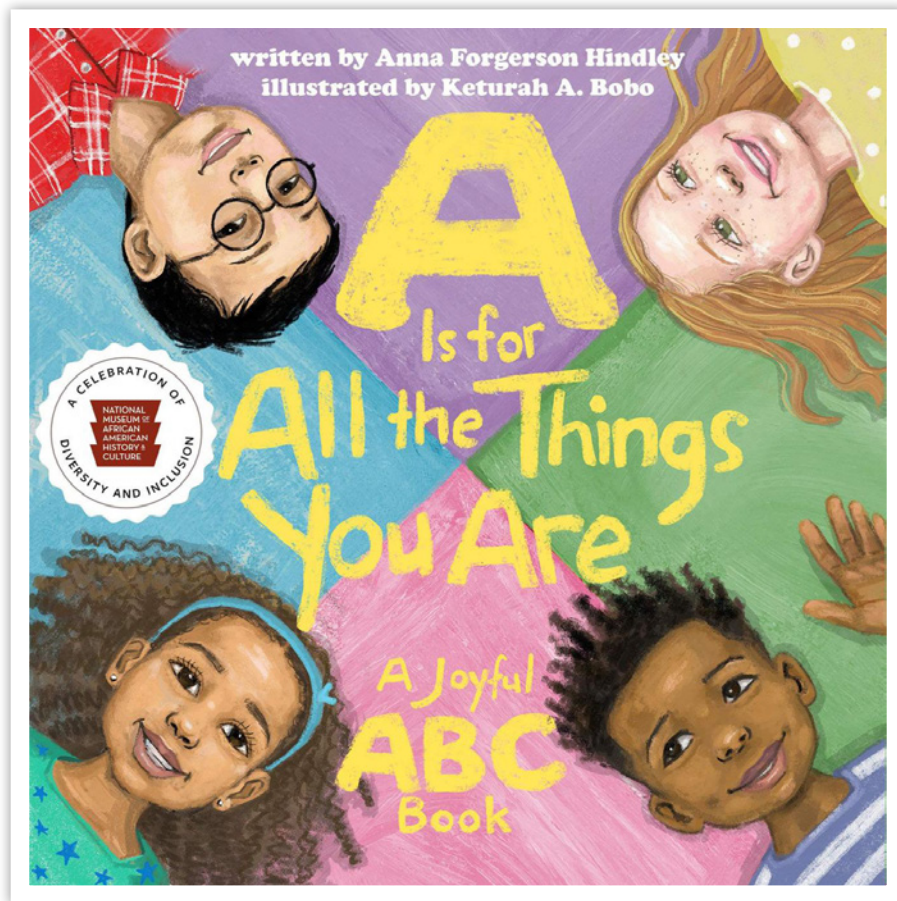


A NMAAHC KIDS ABCs ACTIVITY BOOK

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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V is for Vocal:

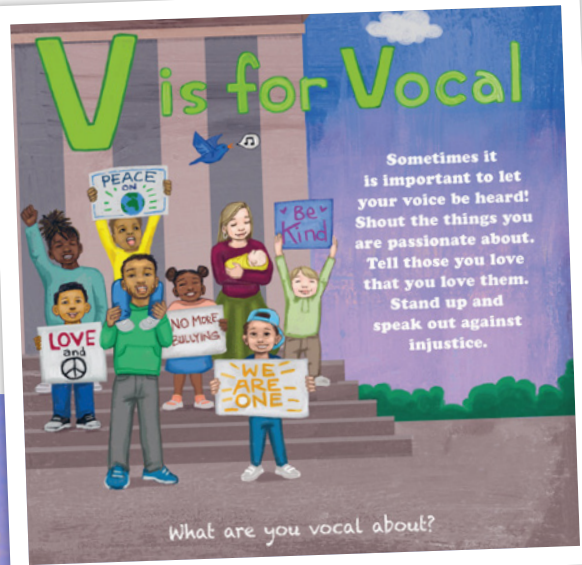
Sometimes it is important to let your voice be heard! Shout the things you are passionate about. Tell those you love that you love them. Stand up and speak out against injustice.

What are you vocal about?

From the beginning of their lives, babies give us clear, vocal messages that their bodies and minds need us. And we, loving adults, respond. We feed them, keep them clean and warm, rock them and gaze into their eyes with love. Soon, they develop differentiated cries that we begin to interpret: one cry for hunger, and another for fatigue, a different cry for pain or boredom, and another for feeling too hot or cold. Our response teaches them to trust us, and that their voice matters and sparks change. From this, words and phrases come, and eventually full sentences, conversations and powerful toddler demands that tell us: *I want! I need! I love! I feel! Notice me!*

This explosion of sounds and words is one of the earliest steps in the development of a little one's sense of self. They begin recognizing that words have power and what they say can make a difference in their world and yours. During this stage, your words make a powerful difference, too. Babies and toddlers are inspired to speak by the adults around them. The way we use our voices to talk, sing and read to them makes them want to try it out themselves. Early sounds, gurgles, coos and first words are often attempts at imitating our words and tones. Simply, our voices and vocabularies become theirs too.

This week, vocalize your feelings, narrate what you want your little one to see in the world, and support them to advocate for their needs by providing words and phrases such as “yes, we can!” or “no, I don’t like that!” Remember, when you use your voice, you help your little one to vocalize their thoughts, feelings and needs too, which creates the foundation for advocating for what is fair and just for themselves and others throughout their



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What You'll Need:

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

- Cardboard tube
- Books



EXPLORE

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

Learning to Talk

Our words are powerful. Use your words to help your little one grow in their language skills and vocabulary, while also modeling how to be vocal about things that matter to you, by singing, talking and reading with them every day. Incorporate opportunities for growing your child's voice in everyday moments like the ones below.

- **Sing during bathtime!** Singing during routines helps introduce new words. It also builds a sense of trust between you and your child by helping them know what will happen next when that special song is sung. Try [this one!](#)
- **Read while you wait.** Bring along a book during outings and errands to grow language skills and vocabulary. Read while you wait in line, ride on the subway or wait for your turn at the doctor's office. Try books that encourage your little one to be confident in their voice, like *Feminist Baby Finds Her Voice!* by Loryn Brantz or *What Does the Baby Say?* By Karen Katz.
- **Talk at the grocery store.** Grocery stores are filled with a variety of items, colors, sounds and people, making them a great place for boosting your little one's vocabulary. Describe the colors of vegetables and packaging as you walk through aisles. Talk about what you're taking off the shelves. Count boxes or cans in a display!



EXPLORE

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

Learning What My Voice Can Do

Little ones are always experimenting with what their voices can do, testing out different volumes and learning how people respond to them. Boost your toddler's confidence in their voice and their early language development by inviting them to use their voice in playful ways. Using a cardboard tube and museum objects as inspiration, invite your little one to playfully use their voice in the following ways:

- **Pretend to talk into a microphone.** Ask your little one to show you how quiet or loud their voice can be, to sing their favorite song or to tell you a story!
- **Play the trumpet.** The trumpet shown here belonged to Louis Armstrong, a talented African American musician. Watch a video of him playing his trumpet and use a cardboard tube to play along. *Toot toot!*
- **Honk a horn!** Make the sounds of a car horn, train whistle or a rocket blasting off into the tube. What other sounds can you make together?

Tip:

Use story times as opportunities for your child to see what their voice can do! As you read together, invite your toddler to repeat words and make the sounds of things they see in the illustrations.

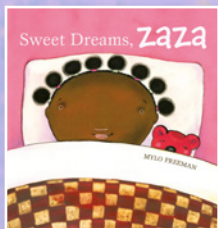


EXPLORE MORE

Continue learning with your little one using these recommended resources:

Books

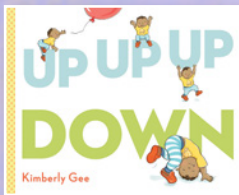
Read stories about the ways that little ones share their voices with us every day!



Sweet Dreams, Zaza
by Mylo Freeman



“More More More,” Said the Baby
by Vera B. Williams



Up, Up, Up, Down!
by Kimberly Gee



Baby Talk
by Stella Blackstone

Tip:

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

Online Resources

Learn about what language and literacy development looks like for infants and toddlers.

- ★ [Make Everyday Moments Talking Moment](#) - Sesame Street in Communities
- ★ [10 Ways Babies Learn When We Sing to Them](#) - NAEYC
- ★ [Supporting Language and Literacy Skills from 0 to 12 Months](#) - Zero to Three
- ★ [Toddler Milestone: Talking and Understanding](#) - BabyCenter

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

- Trumpet owned by Louis Armstrong, 1946. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. [2008.16.1-3](#)
- Red Cadillac Eldorado owned by Chuck Berry, 1973. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Donation of Charles E. Berry. [2011.137.1](#)
- Cordless microphone used by Rakim to record *The 18th Letter*, 1997. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of Rakim. [2016.10.1](#)

Program Photos

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

Original Artwork

- Bluebird (cover, page 2); Textured Sky (pages 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) © 2018 Art by Keturah Ariel LLC