

X is for Xenial



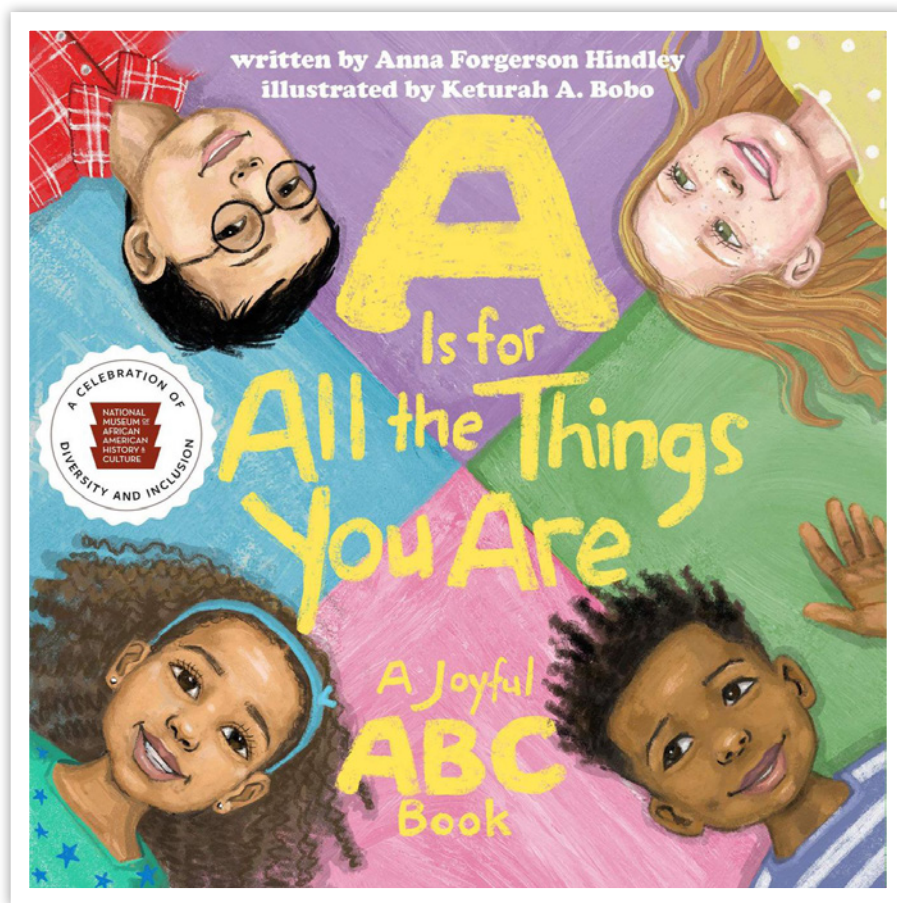
# JOY FUL

**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 Forgeron 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.



# X is for Xenial:

It's simple to be xenial. Welcome others, especially strangers or guests, and make them feel at home. That is an important way to act every day!

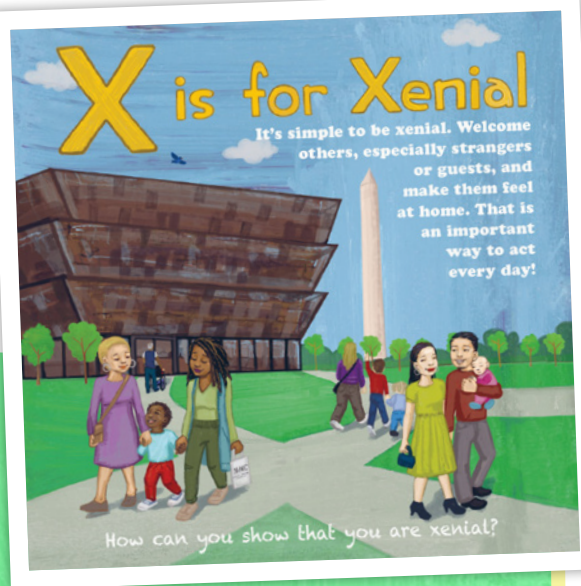
## How can you show that you are xenial?

Our children are naturally xenial (zee-nee-uhl!) and have their own unique ways of being welcoming to the people around them. They may love to peek their heads over restaurant booths to smile at new people, wave to our postal workers, hug their friends or they may take some time to finally say “hi!” Connecting with others is part of being human and since there are many ways to do so, sometimes children need our support.

Think together about ways to start friendships and create welcoming spaces. Start conversations with *I-wonder* statements and introduce words like *xenial* and *welcoming* before meeting or spending time with people. *I wonder how we can be welcoming to our new neighbors. I wonder what's a xenial way we can play at the playground.*

While some children may be eager to embrace new and old loved ones with hugs, there are many ways to greet people that allow our children to make connections and still honor their own boundaries and those of others as well. Without instilling fear or judgement of strangers or different people, we can nurture children's natural inclination of welcoming others while practicing personal safety by discussing boundaries and different ways to connect. Waving, smiling or offering a quick nod are common ways to spark relationships and make others feel welcome and accepted in our presence. Let your little one know that whether they meet new people or see old friends, your child can choose how they would like to be welcomed and they can also ask others how they'd like to be greeted.

The beautiful thing about being xenial is that it is only the start to important, strong and special relationships with people. If we can support our children to take those first welcoming steps and also recognize the good feeling that comes with being welcome, accepted and respected, we're guiding them to a future of fulfilling and precious human connections.



*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.

- Sidewalk chalk
- Paper
- Markers and crayons

### 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.



## Welcoming Conversations

**We all have stories to share.** As the host of The Oprah Winfrey Show, Oprah would sit on this couch with different people from all over the world and invite them to share their personal stories and feelings. Oftentimes, before people share their stories, they need to feel welcome and comfortable. Oprah made people feel welcome on her show because she was kind, listened closely when people spoke and asked good questions. Because Oprah was xenial, people were able to learn more about each other and build special relationships.

You can be xenial too when you talk to people and welcome them to share their thoughts, feelings and stories. Welcome a family member or friend to share their story with you - then, try talking to someone new! Show the person that what they say matters to you by asking questions and listening to their responses. Share your own ideas and stories too. Start your conversation with a question like the ones below:

*What books do you like to read?*

*What is your favorite snack?*

*How do you like to play?*

*When was the last time you were silly?*

### Tip:

We often start conversations with new people by asking, "What's your name?" Knowing someone's name and saying it correctly is a wonderful way to make people feel welcome and respected. It can be challenging to remember new names and to pronounce names properly but it's important. Caregivers, learn more about [why pronouncing names correctly matters](#) and then talk to your little one about ways they can remember and say new names.



# CREATE

Create art inspired by this week's theme!

## Welcoming Art



### **Art has the power to bring people together.**

Through art, we can express ourselves, celebrate our cultures and share our dreams. We can even learn new things about ourselves and others and discover what we have in common.

Making art on the sidewalk is a great way to connect with other people in your community, including people you haven't met yet! Work together as a family to draw a welcoming chalk mural outside of your home.

Try these ideas for welcoming others to help your mural grow:

- **Write a welcoming message.** What xenial words can you think of? Try adding a phrase like, "All are welcome!" or "You are loved."
- **Make your mark.** Introduce yourself to your neighbors by drawing a picture of yourself and your favorite things. Try tracing your hand or foot, or your whole body! What else can you add?
- **Invite neighbors to play!** Draw a hopscotch grid on the ground. Create squiggly lines that people can follow, spirals they can spin in, or Xs for people to jump on.



How does it feel to share your art with others? How will your mural welcome guests or people walking by?

### **Tip:**

In addition to having explicit conversations, modeling inclusive, kind behavior daily and examining your own biases are the most significant ways to raise inclusive, kind children who are xenial to others.



# LEARN

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

## Welcoming Spaces

**X marks the spot!** What are some of your favorite places in your community? What makes you feel welcome there? There are many ways people help us to feel welcome in different spaces. Someone may wave to you when you walk into the library. The owner of the corner store may make time to ask you about your day. This week, think about welcoming places in your community and practice letter writing and language skills during the art activity below.



## Learn Letters

Write a letter **X** in the middle of your paper. At each of the X's four points, draw a picture of a place where you feel welcome. Draw details that show what makes each place special to you. Then, add roads, walking paths, trees, or other things that might connect these places together.

## Boost Literacy

As your child draws, ask them about the different places they are drawing. Why is that a special place for you? Who do you know or see there? What makes you feel comfortable or happy when you're there? Asking questions that help your little one to think more deeply about everyday places and experiences gives them an opportunity to learn and use new vocabulary, and practice storytelling.



### Tip:

You can show that you are xenial when welcoming someone new to your community. When you make a new friend, share your map of favorite places with them and invite them to explore a place with you.



# EXPLORE MORE

Continue learning with your little one using these recommended resources:

## Books

When we're xenial, we make new friends! Enjoy these stories about friendship with your little one.



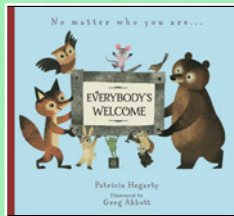
### **All Are Welcome**

by Alexandra Penfold,  
illustrated by Suzanne Kaufman



### **Be Kind**

by Pat Zietlow Miller,  
illustrated by Jen Hill



### **Everybody's Welcome**

by Patricia Hegarty,  
illustrated by Greg Abbott



### **Hey, Wall: A Story of Art and Community**

by Susan Verde,  
illustrated by John Parra

**Tip:**

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

## Online Resources

Use the resources below to support your child in being xenial and building relationships with others.

- ★ [Saying Hello and Hola! Song](#) - Sesame Street
- ★ [Breaking the Ice](#) - Sesame Street
- ★ [11 Ways of Teaching Kids to Be Inclusive of Others](#) - Verywell Family
- ★ [How Adults Communicate Bias to Children](#) - Greater Good Magazine

# 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

- Couch from the set of *The Oprah Winfrey Show* in Harpo Studios. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of Oprah Winfrey. [2016.7.7](#)
- Advertisement for Coke from *Ebony* Magazine, 1976-1979. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of the Strait Family. [2016.103.1](#)

### Original Artwork

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