

Y is for Young

JOY FUL

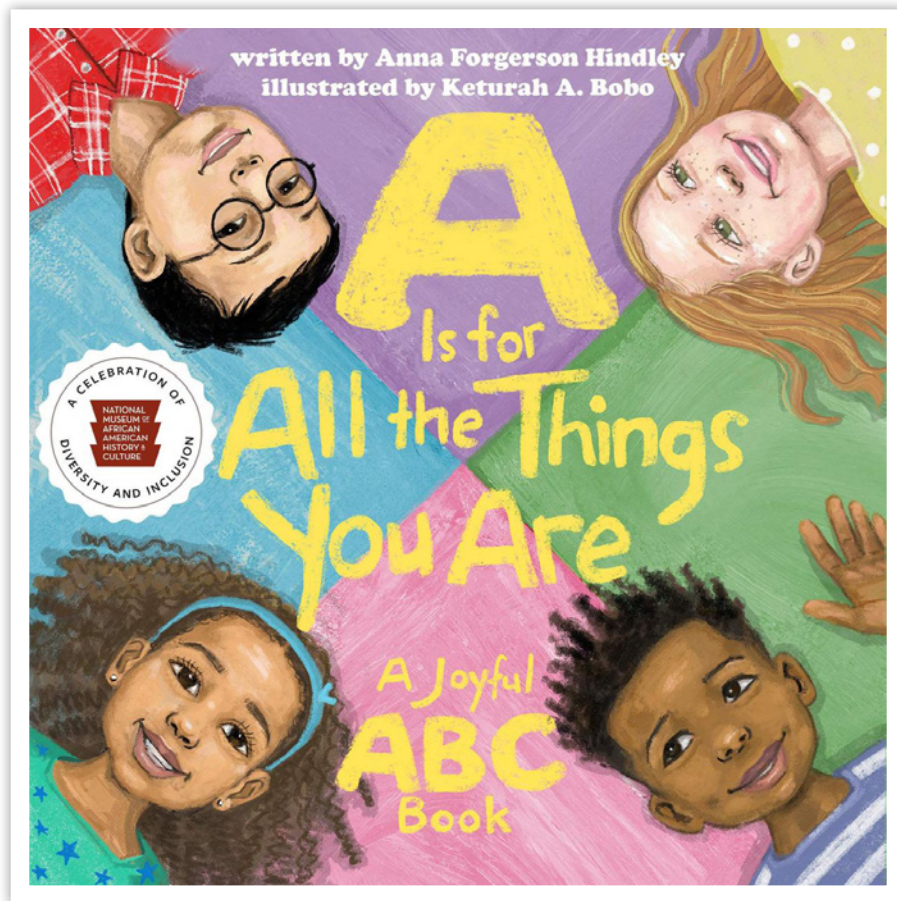


A NMAAHC KIDS ABCs ACTIVITY BOOK

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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Y is for Young:

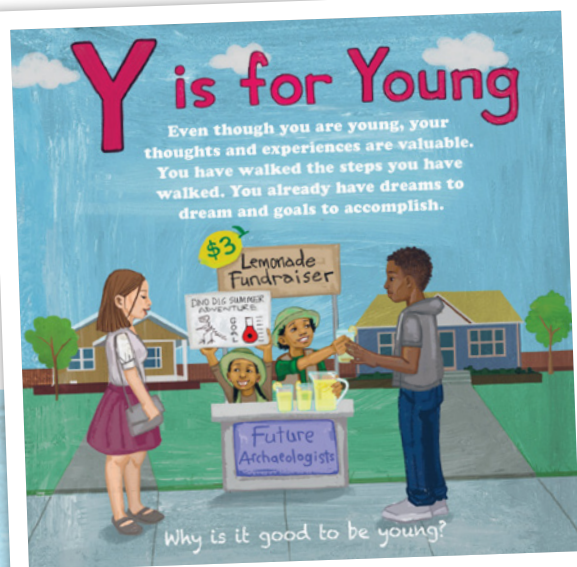
Even though you are young your thoughts and experiences are valuable. You have walked the steps you have walked. You already have dreams to dream and goals to accomplish.

Why is it good to be young?

Naturally, our little ones' accomplishments delight us! We look forward to and take pride in their first smile, the first time they roll over on their own, their first steps and first words, and their first signs of independence and understanding of our big world. Their increasing capacities often become our reassurance that we are doing well at the job of raising them. Yet one of the paradoxes of caring for infants and toddlers is that our joy over their growth and our attention to the ways they are changing can keep us from recognizing and appreciating where they are right now, in *this* moment, exactly as they are. Being present, paying attention, showing our joy in simply being with them in the here and now, sends a message to our children that they are more than their accomplishments, that their value to us is not just in what they can do, but is simply because they are who they are.

Though it's hard to believe between two and four in the morning on the third night your child has kept you awake, the early years pass very quickly. In the blur of everyday fatigue and busyness, how young our little ones are and all of their needs are constantly at the forefront of our minds (and rightly so). Our essential attention to this can make it difficult to notice that while our infants and toddlers are learning a lot at a uniquely rapid pace, we too are learning a lot about ourselves, love, and patience.

During our children's youngest years, let yourself feel the quickly passing youngness of children and the ways you've grown and changed in the midst of it all. Pay attention to the now of your lives together and what your little one is doing and being today, rather than where they are going tomorrow. Right now is where the living is. Relish it. Tomorrow will come on its own, and you and your little one will get there together.



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What You'll Need:

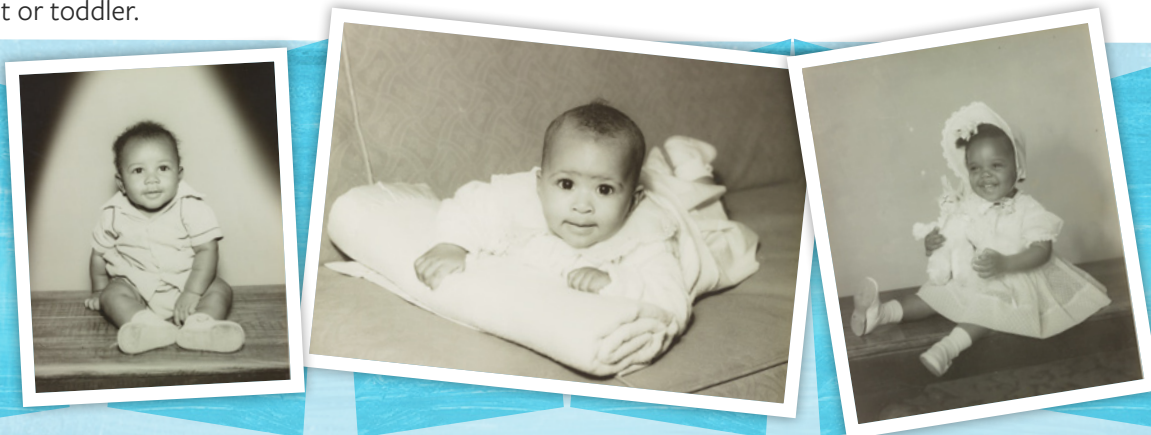
The following supplies are suggested for the experiences in this booklet.

- Pen
- Note cards
- Jar (or small container)
- Markers and crayons
- Paper



EXPLORE

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



Embrace The Now

Enjoy it while it lasts. They grow up so fast. Though these words are often said to encourage caregivers, they can feel dismissive of the complexity of raising a child. In caring for children, there are both joyful and challenging moments (and moments when we need [time to ourselves](#)). We can acknowledge and embrace all of it.

“Embrace the now” should not be a demand for caregivers to be grateful and only focus on the “good.” Rather, embracing the now means acknowledging the significance of all aspects of our children’s lives - not hiding hard times or acting like tough experiences don’t exist by being present in the cries *and* the cuddles. One way to be honest and present, even in the midst of all that our babies and toddlers require, is to find ways to notice, reflect upon, and remember who you and your child are *right now*.

Try this: Create a collection of small note cards that capture who your child is and what is going on in your lives right now. You can write down one sentence or a short story about their unique character and experiences. To get started, try out the following sentence starters and use I-statements to describe life with your little one.

I love...

I am challenged by...

This week, I saw you...

You find joy in...

Right now, it is hard for you to...

Then, add the date to your card and place it in a jar located in an easily accessible spot. (Consider putting a stack of cards and a pen near the jar!) When your child grows older, sharing this collection will affirm for your child that they have always mattered. Taking the time to reflect on these notes for yourself will be a reminder that, even in the unglamorous moments, you were present and have always embraced who your child is.

EXPLORE

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

This is Me!

Your toddler's body, mind and abilities are changing rapidly in their first few years. In the span of 36 months, they grow out of clothes and shoes, add new words to their vocabularies and move from crawling, to walking, to running! In the midst of these changes, they are also building their sense of self and how they are the same and different as other people.

Inviting your little one to create art responding to the same prompt every few months can be a creative way of documenting each of the special stages in their young lives. Ask your toddler to draw a self-portrait. *Draw a picture of you!*

Observe as they create. The way they hold the crayon each time is a sign of their little hands' growing abilities. The colors they choose reflect their current interests. The way they draw their own image shows both their developmental stage and understanding of self at that moment in time. Once their drawing is complete, write a caption that says, "This is me!" (or their name) and their age and store it in a folder or envelope.

Tip:

Children's first recognizable drawings of people don't begin until they are about 3 or 4 years old - and that's okay! Just being able to observe and remember the way their response to this prompt changes over the years will be interesting and special. Remember to [enjoy the many stages](#) of your young child's creative expression.



EXPLORE MORE

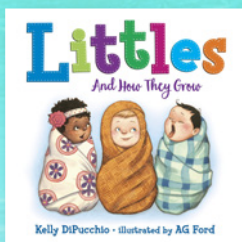
Continue learning with your little one using these recommended resources:

Books

Read these stories to celebrate who your little one is right now.



You Are New
by Lucy Knisley



Littles: And How They Grow
by Kelly DiPucchio,
illustrated by AG Ford



Welcome, Precious
by Nikki Grimes,
illustrated by Bryan Collier



Dear Baby,
by Paris Rosenthal,
illustrated by Holly Hatam

Tip:

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

Online Resources

Discover what our little ones can teach us just by being themselves and ways to empower them to feel capable as they grow.

★ [10 Life Lessons You Can Learn from Children](#) - HuffPost

★ [5 Things We Can Learn About Mindfulness from Toddlers](#) - BabySparks

★ [Spending Time Together](#) - Sesame Street in Communities

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

- Studio portraits of babies by Rev. Henry Clay Anderson, 1948 - 1970s. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of Charles Schwartz and Shawn Wilson. © Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture. [2012.137.16.20](#), [2012.137.16.30](#), [2012.137.15.10](#)

Original Artwork

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