

Z is for Zany

JOY FUL

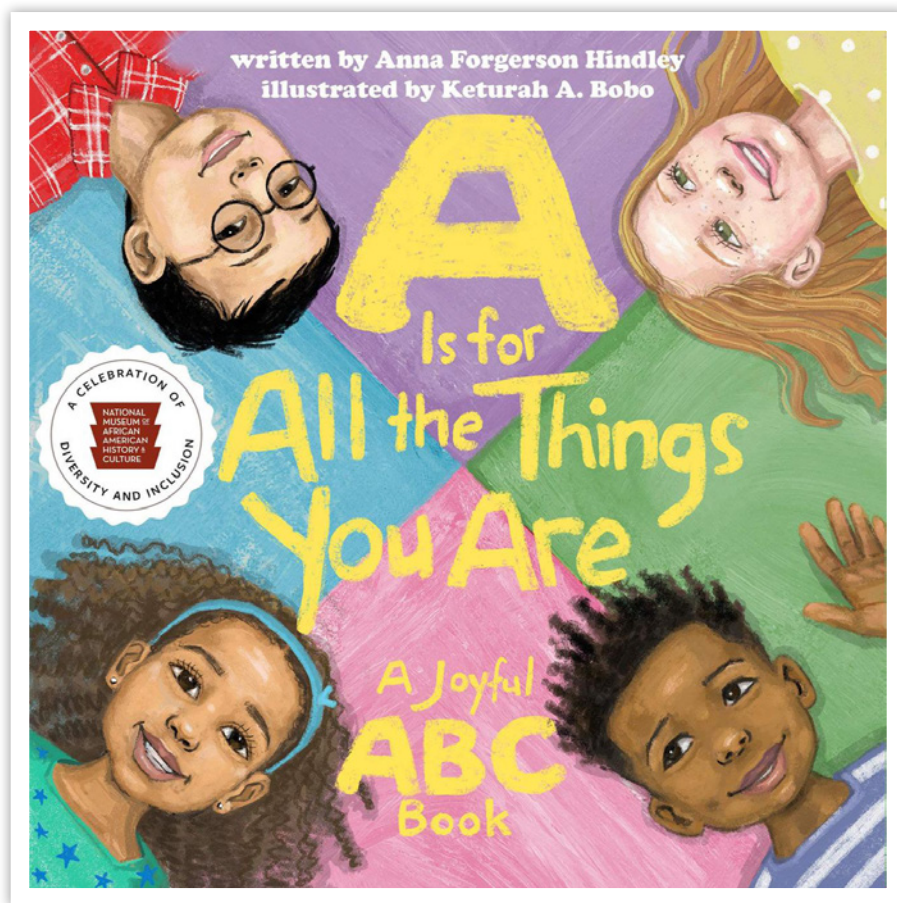


A NMAAHC KIDS ABCs ACTIVITY BOOK

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
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Z is for Zany:

You move to the beat of your own drum. *You are a one-person parade going through life and demonstrating ALL the AMAZING things you are!*

From A to Z, your child has so many amazing and special characteristics. One of the most unique attributes of childhood is the unabashed joy and zaniness that children embrace and radiate. Children are naturally zany - silly, unconventional and unique! Silly movements, funny words and big laughs readily show up during playtime and can be encouraged during everyday activities from bath time to mealtime to cleaning up. Silly voices while reading and unexpected results during science experiments invite zaniness into the learning process, making it more meaningful and fun.

Though it's not often measured or described by academic tests or milestone standards, silliness is an essential part of your child's development into a confident, creative and caring person. Providing and encouraging the freedom to be zany allows your child to have internal confidence in being themselves, see situations in unique ways and expands their capacity to accept others different from themselves. Whether it shows up through dance, music, play or spontaneous imagination, there's no right way to be zany. Embrace all of the messes, laughs, and creativity wherever and however they show up.

Yet, the joyful zaniness embodied in childhood is often diminished as society demands that we conform, be uniform, follow the rules and "stay inside the lines." As adults in the lives of young children, we can help our children maintain their zaniness. All children need the opportunity to take up space, act freely and to simply be silly without judgement or being reprimanded for being "off task." When our children want to wiggle, giggle and be free, offer them helpful language to name these feelings by observing and asking, *"I see you are moving in a zany way. Your joy is beautiful! How are you feeling right now?"* We have the power to create environments that not only have planned time for our children to be extra zany but also make space for playfulness to happen when it happens. Remember, children are worthy to experience joy - fully and freely - and so are you.

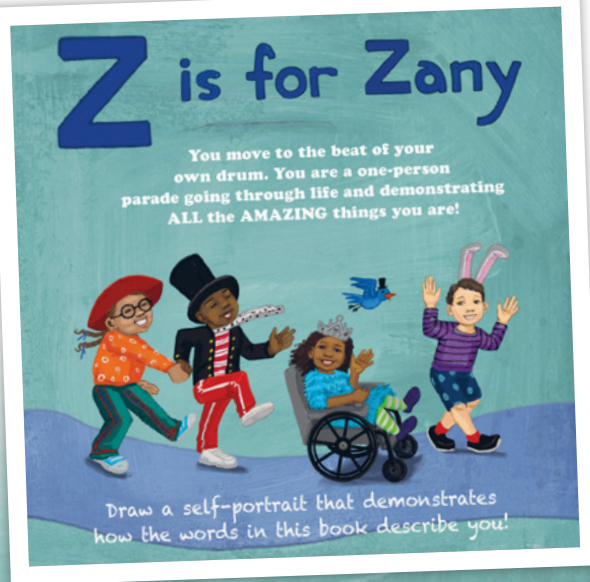
What You'll Need:

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

- Paper
- Collage materials (See page 3.)
- Glue
- Scissors

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!](#)



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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.



Zany Moves

Sometimes our bodies move in slow and organized ways like standing in lines to wait our turn or sitting calmly to relax. But it's important to find time to move our bodies in zany ways too! Being zany with our bodies means moving freely in ways that are fun, silly or natural. Zany moves feel good and can express who you are. Try the following zany and creative ways to move:

Dance! Put on some music and have a dance party. See how the music makes you feel, then move your body. Use the beat of the song to decide if you move fast or slow. Jump, march, roll, and twirl around the room.

Pose. Try posing like the dancer in this photograph. Her heels are together and her knees are open wide. Her arms cross over one another and her hands rest on opposite knees. How does it feel to hold your body in this way? Can you imagine what her next move would be? This is a photo of dancer, singer, and activist Josephine Baker doing a dance move called the Charleston. Josephine Baker danced in a lot of zany ways. Find a video and try dancing along with her!



Take a step. How many different ways can you move from one side of the room to the other? Make short, stiff movements like a robot. Wiggle your arms and glide around like an octopus. Hold your body in the smallest shape you can, then explode up and out like a firework. How does it feel to move in this way?

CREATE

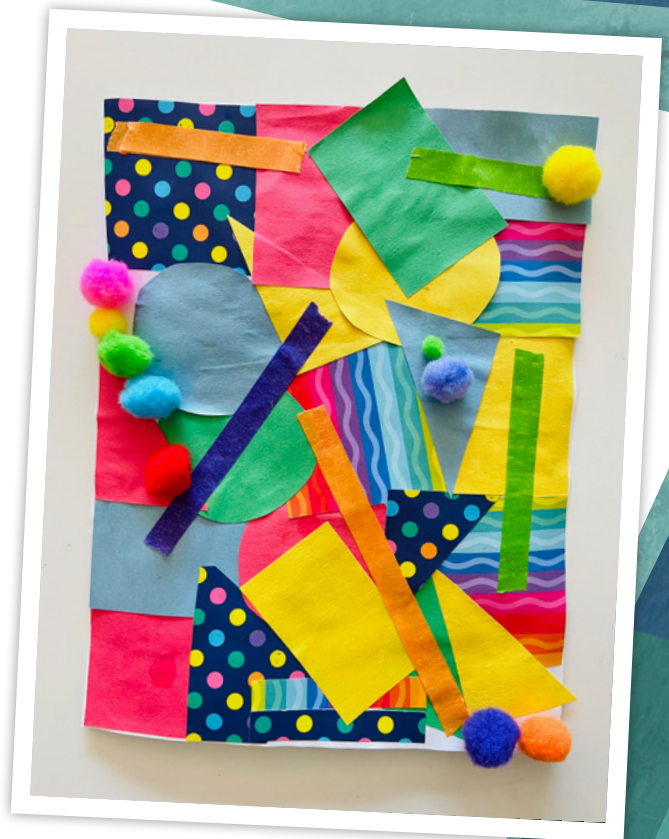
Create art inspired by this week's theme!

The Zany Parts of Me

This quilt is made from many pieces of fabric in different patterns, shapes and colors. Look closely. What do you see? Just like this quilt, you have layers of different thoughts, feelings and experiences. Every part of you is important and combines to make a beautiful, unique and zany *you*! Create a collage, inspired by this quilt, that celebrates all of the amazing parts of who you are!

- 1 Gather materials for your collage: pictures and words from newspapers and magazines, used wrapping paper or fabric scraps, patterned cardstock, paper shapes in your favorite colors, pom poms, colorful tape and ribbon, stickers, sequins, and other 3D materials.
- 2 Glue the pieces to a large piece of paper. You can arrange pieces in a pattern or place them in a way that just feels right to you. Have fun and trust your instincts.

When you're finished, talk about the different parts of your collage. How does your collage tell a story about who you are or what you like?



LEARN

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

Telling Zany Stories

When you use your imagination, you can tell zany stories! With your mind, you can create funny characters, imagine new worlds and make up silly things to say. Your stories can make other people laugh or just make you smile. Try the activities below to boost the skills and creative thinking you'll need to write and tell imaginative stories!

Boost Literacy

Learning to write takes lots of practice and strong fingers. The marks you make when drawing are the first steps to learning to write. Those lines and shapes will one day turn into letters and those letters will turn into words - words that can write a letter, grocery list, or silly story.

Try these zany activities to practice making lines and shapes without any paper:

- Use ribbons or streamers to dance your lines in the sky. Make wiggly waves that go up and down or side to side. Twirl a spiral shape, starting with small arm circles that get bigger and bigger and bigger!
- Write in the dark with a flashlight or glowstick! Move the light in straight lines that go in different directions. Play music and zigzag your line to the beat.
- Squirt some shaving cream onto a tabletop or the shower wall. Use your finger to draw shapes or practice letters. When you are done, wipe the surface smooth and create something new!

Learn Letters

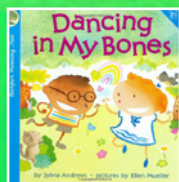
The letter Z is not only the last letter of the alphabet but also a letter that has a lot less appearances in a child's vocabulary and everyday experiences. To build your child's familiarity with this special letter, point it out whenever you can! Each time a "z" pops up in a book or finds its way into your day, talk about it with your child, make the zzz sound and invite them to trace the letter (or all of the letters in that word) in the air with their fingers. To get started, try this: Show your little one **zucchini**s at the grocery store. Make the zzz sound as you **zip** up their jacket! Trace a Z into the air during **pizza** night. For extra fun, try telling a zany story that includes as many words as you can think of that start with Z or have a Z in them!

EXPLORE MORE

Continue learning with your little one using these recommended resources:

Books

Get silly during a storytime with the books below!



Dancing in My Bones

by Sylvia Andrews,
illustrated by Ellen Mueller



The Nonsense Show

by Eric Carle



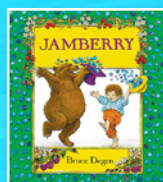
Ella Sarah Gets Dressed

by Margaret Chodos-Irvine



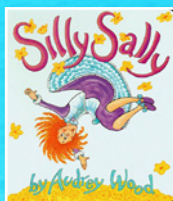
The Book With No Pictures

by B.J. Novak



Jamberry

by Bruce Degen



Silly Sally

by Audrey Wood

Tip:

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

Online Resources

Support your little one to move, play and think in creative, expressive ways with the resources below.

- ★ [It's Dance Your Favorite Dance Day](#) - Sesame Street
- ★ [Aziz Ansari and Grover Get Ridiculous](#) - Sesame Street
- ★ [5 Ways to Help Your Children Express Themselves](#) - Sunshine House Early Learning Academy
- ★ [7 Habits of Highly Playful Parents and Happy Kids](#) - Nurture and Thrive
- ★ [Promoting Preschoolers' Emergent Writing](#) - NAEYC

TO OUR NMAAHC KIDS COMMUNITY

At the National Museum of African American History and Culture, our collections tell stories of resilience, stories of triumphs, and stories of people who have, throughout history, shown great creativity and built precious human connections often under oppressive circumstances. These stories hold so many valuable lessons but one that served as the constant foundation and inspiration for the *Joyful ABC Activity Book Series* was this: Adults have a special responsibility to center joy, foster positive identity development and offer loving, understanding support for young children as they begin to write their own stories. Our hope was that every booklet would be a tool for supporting children to live, grow and be resilient in a diverse world where injustice and bias still exist.

From the moment they are born, the pages of our children's stories are filled with messages they absorb from the world around them about who they are, who others are and what their similarities and differences mean. Some of these messages can be true and empowering, and others can be false, oppressive, and destructive. So, while our children's unique hearts and minds play an important role in the trajectory of their life story, these outside messages can too.

What children believe about themselves impacts their ability to face negative messages, challenges, bias, and injustice. Knowing that they are worthy of respect and love makes a powerful difference in determining what makes it onto the pages of our children's stories. From *A is for Amazing* to *Z is for Zany*, Joyful ABC Activity Books were designed to communicate these essential messages to children: *You matter. You are wonderful just as you are. You have the power to change the world.* We hope that these messages become core parts of their stories.

While our booklets offer activities and resources to celebrate and nurture twenty-six characteristics in our little ones, it's so exciting and inspiring to know that they are everything from Amazing to Zany and so much more! Our little ones are still adding to this list, growing in their skills and knowledge, and discovering who they truly are day by day. As they move through the chapters of their life, delight in the way their story unfolds. Find a balance between supporting your little one and giving them space to write a unique story. And remember, though your little one is at the start of their story, that doesn't mean you're at the end of yours. Keep filling your own pages too.

Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your story.

Early Childhood Education Initiative



Credits

Objects

- Josephine Baker performing at the Folies Bergere by Walery, 1926-1935. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift from Jean-Claude Baker. [2016.135.2](#)
- *Scrap quilt made by Elizabeth Salter Smith* by Elizabeth Anne Salter Smith. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. [2013.162.7](#)

Original Artwork

- Bluebird (cover, page 3) © 2018 Art by Keturah Ariel LLC