

# Using Picture Books to Talk about Racial Diversity

MY  
“FAV”  
5

5 strategies,  
5 recommendations,  
5 questions

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Talking to young children about racial diversity can seem difficult but using picture books can make it easy. Let me walk you through some of the steps I use when using picture books.



*5 strategies* – to help you preview the book, prepare to read it with your students, and facilitate purposeful discussion.

*5 recommendations* – to provide you with prescreened books that are a great fit for foundational conversations with students.

*5 questions* – that students normally ask when discussing this topic. Answer the questions listed and then brainstorm some additional questions.

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1. Take a Deep Breath – The topics are difficult, but the conversations do not have to be. The fact that you want to have these conversations is so important. It is invaluable. Before you begin reading a picture book, before you initiate a conversation, before you answer a question from your students (or children), take a deep breath. This will give you a moment to **reflect and center your thoughts**.

2. Read the book before you read it to your students – I know this may seem like, “Duh! Of course.” What I mean by read the book is more than a surface read. Stop after every page. **Create one question** that a student might ask. Answer the question.

3. Before you read to your class, place the book in the “featured” book section of your classroom – Allowing your students to **preview the book** is a great way to create excitement and interest. The students may share the book with a reading buddy and start to have individual conversations. When you introduce the book to your class, there is a level of familiarity with the pictures and some of the words so that students can really think about the message and engage in meaningful conversation.

4. Be honest, but do not overcomplicate – As you pre-read the book a second time, **think of examples** from current events, sibling dynamics, school events, other books, or classroom activities to which the students can relate. When you read to the students, allow them to share examples that resonate for them.

Ex. My cousin has a mom who is white and a dad who is black.

5. Read the book to your students more than once – Read the book more than once so students can **gain deeper understanding** and have **more robust conversation**. Set a purpose for each read.

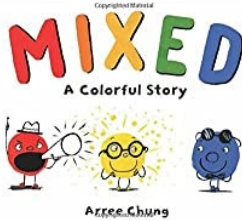
Ex. First Read – Examine all of the pictures. What we see is just as important as what we hear. Does the picture match the words? Have you ever been to a place like this?

Second Read – focus on 3 or 4 power words (courage, advocate, choice)

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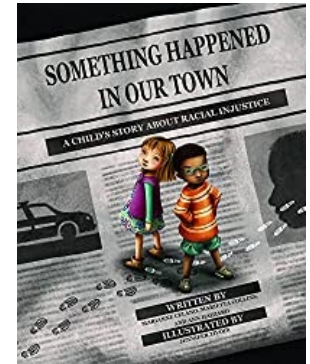
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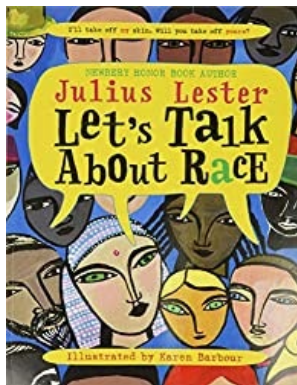
Mixed by Arree Chung illustrates the concept of segregation by using colors. Chung helps young learners to see how segregation can happen and understand one reason why it should end.

2.

Something Happened in Our Town by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, and Ann Hazzard follows the conversations of a Black family and a White family as they discuss the shooting of a Black man in their town. The conversations explain why unfair treatment happens and how it can be combated.



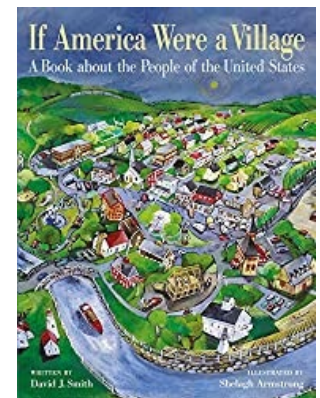
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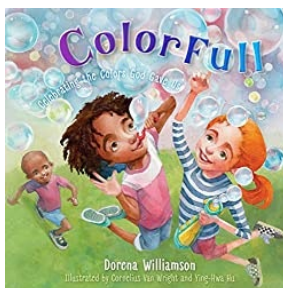
Let's Talk About Race by Julius Lester discusses how we all have a story. That story is more than our race and skin color. Lester also emphasizes how underneath it all, we really are the same.

4.

If America were a village by David J. Smith shrinks the population of America down to 100 people. This makes it easier for students to understand how many people speak a certain language, represent a particular race or religion, and many other important elements of this diverse land.



5.



Colorful by Dorena Williamson is a beautifully illustrated picture book that shows young learners why it is important to see ALL the colors in this world. Let us not be colorblind. Let us be colorful.

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1.

Why would people want to be separate from other people?

2.

Why are some people white and some people brown?  
Why can't we all just look the same?

3.

Do people still want to be separated today?

4.

My parent said that \_\_\_\_\_ people are better than \_\_\_\_\_ people. What do you think?

5.

How many races are there?

Notes:

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