

# The Conflict Center's Book Talk Guide FOR CAREGIVERS!

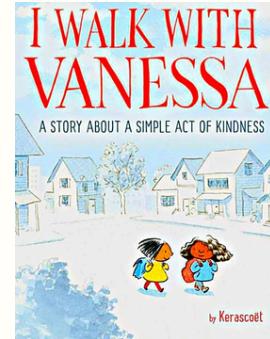
## BOOK BASICS

*I Walk with Vanessa: A Story about a Simple Act of Kindness*

By Kerascoët (Author and Illustrator)

Random House Studio, 2018

Grades K-5



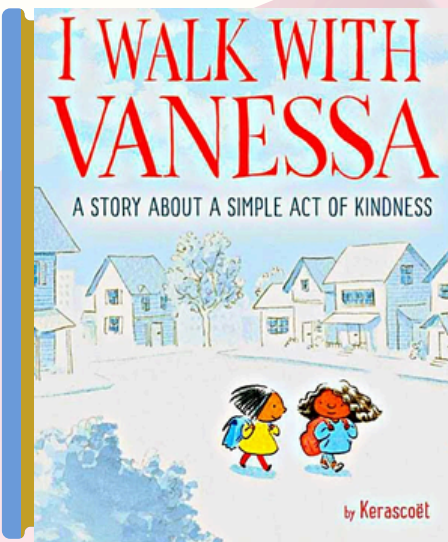
## ABOUT THE BOOK

Inspired by real events, this wordless picture book explores the feelings of helplessness and anger that arise in the wake of seeing a classmate treated badly, and shows how a single act of kindness can lead to an entire community joining in to help. With themes of acceptance, kindness, and strength in numbers, this timeless and profound story will resonate with readers young and old.

(Note: Wordless picture books are helpful in fostering literacy development by inviting children to decode stories using visuals, explore story structure and sequence, and create stories/narrative based on the pictures.)

## WHAT THE BOOK TEACHES: THE BIG IDEAS

- Bullying can cause people to feel hurt, sad, scared and excluded.
- When someone is mean or bullies someone, other people can help that person and make a difference.
- When you help someone by acting as an ally, the allyship can spread so that others join in and help. When this happens, the impact is even bigger and more powerful.



## WHAT ARE “MIRROR AND WINDOW” BOOKS?

Children's books are often referred to as “mirrors and windows.” Coined by Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop in 1990, “mirrors” refer to books where children can see themselves in the characters and stories; those mirrors reflect various aspects of their identity. “Window” books help children look “outside,” to learn about other people, identities and experiences of those who are different from them, helping children learn more about the world outside themselves. Reading for Peace understands the importance of mirrors and windows when selecting books to read with children.

## QUESTIONS TO SPARK CONVERSATION

Because the book is a wordless picture book (i.e., doesn't have any words), while reading the book aloud, you can play soft music while looking at the pictures or while you look at each page, ask the child(ren) to share what they see happening in order to move the plot along.

- (Pre-reading) Let's look at the cover together. What do you think the book will be about?
- What happens to Vanessa on the first day of school? How do you think she feels?
- What happens when the other child sees Vanessa being treated badly? How does she feel?
- What does the other child decide to do to help and support Vanessa?
- What happens when others join to walk with Vanessa to school? How do you think Vanessa feels?
- Has something like that ever happened to you? If not, how do you think you might feel if it did?
- How did you feel when the book ended? What do you think will happen next?
- What's the message of this book?
- How would you describe this book to someone who hasn't read it?

## NUGGETS FOR LEARNING



**Discuss:** Talk about bullying. Engage in a discussion about bullying, first eliciting/explaining what bullying is: when someone who has more power (e.g., bigger, stronger, more friends, in majority group at school, etc.) hurts someone on purpose over and over. Ask about their experiences with bullying, including doing the bullying, being the target of bullying or seeing bullying happening in their school or neighborhood. Ask what happened, how they felt, if anyone helped and what they wished someone did. Think together about what they can do when they see bullying taking place. Some ideas include: be extra nice to and support the target, tell a trusted adult, say or ask something to the person doing the bullying (if it's safe), tell a trusted adult.

**Create:** How to act as an ally. Talk about allyship related to the book. Ask what the child did to help Vanessa after she was bullied. Explain that she acted as an ally, which is when a person supports, helps or stands up for others when they are treated unfairly. Elicit and discuss the qualities of people who act as allies, including the child who helped Vanessa. Some of the qualities might include: courage, caring, kind, nice, brave, leader, good listeners, etc. Together draw a picture of an "ally in action" who is helping someone (it could be the child acting as an ally to Vanessa) and emphasize the allyship qualities you discussed.

**Explore:** The power of numbers. Talk about what happens when the child walks with Vanessa to school, and then it spreads to more and more people; by the end, it seems like the whole school is walking with Vanessa. Ask: How do you think Vanessa felt when all those other children joined in? Show the picture at the end of the book when there are many, many children walking with Vanessa. Talk about how we call that "the power of numbers," when the more people there are, the more supported someone might feel and how it makes a difference. Explore other times when the "power of numbers" makes a difference (clapping for someone after a performance, playing tug of war, attending a protest, voting). If there is time and interest, together make a video or poster about the power of numbers and what it means to them.

## ABOUT READING FOR PEACE

Reading for Peace is a volunteer-led program that brings small-group storytime to elementary schools across the Denver metro area. Each week, volunteers read and discuss books with students that are thoughtfully chosen to support social-emotional learning and build connection. The experience is deeply meaningful for both children and volunteers alike. Learn more at <https://conflictcenter.org/reading-for-peace-program>

## WHAT'S ON OUR SHELF? SIMILAR TITLES:

