



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

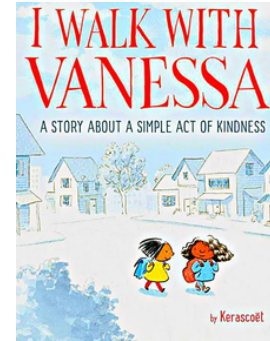
## BOOK BASICS

*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

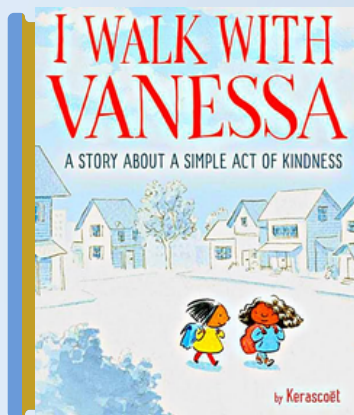
Inspired by real events, this wordless picture book explores the feelings of helplessness and anger that arise in the wake of seeing a classmate treated badly, and shows how a single act of kindness can lead to an entire community joining in to help. With themes of acceptance, kindness, and strength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

## SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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 students to share what they see happening in order to move the plot along.

- (Pre-reading) Look at the cover of the book. What do you think is happening based on the picture and title?
- What happens to Vanessa after her first day of school? How do you think she feels?
- What happens when the other child notices how Vanessa is being bullied? What does she decide to do?
- Have you ever felt like Vanessa or the other child? How so?
- Have you ever helped someone who was treated badly or bullied? What was that like?
- What happens when the child walks with Vanessa to school? Why do you think the other children join in? How do you think this makes Vanessa feel when she is surrounded by other students?
- How did you feel when the book ended?
- What is the message or big idea of the book?

## WAYS TO EXTEND THE BOOK

- **(For Grades K-2): Draw and write a scene.** Ask students: What was your favorite part of the book? What scene was special or memorable to you? Together, brainstorm a list of scenes or parts of the book. Then have the students pick the one they would like to draw and write. Invite them to draw the scene and then write words, dialogue and/or thought bubbles for that page or scene. For students who are not yet writing, have them tell you what they want to say and you can write it for them. Share with the class.
- **(For grades 3-5): Write about or act out a memorable scene.** Ask students: What was your favorite part of the book? What scene was most impactful, powerful, memorable or important to you, and why? Brainstorm a list of scenes from the book and record them on the board. Invite students to pick one scene and write about the scene and why it was impactful, memorable or important to them—either as a short essay or poem. As an alternative, have students work in small groups and act out one of the scenes from the book. Share with the class.
- **(For all grades): Explore allyship.** Ask students: How did the child in the story help Vanessa, who was being treated badly and bullied? Do you know another word for the child that helped and supported Vanessa? Explain/elicit that she acted as an “ally” to Vanessa. Elicit/explain that an ally is someone who supports, helps or stands up for others when they are treated unfairly. Ask: How did she act as an ally to Vanessa? Ask students to think about a time they either acted as an ally, someone acted as an ally to them, or a time they wished someone had. They can share their experiences in pairs or with the whole class. Then explore their feelings around allyship, asking students to share how they feel when someone acts as an ally to them.
- **Allyship can spread.** Ask: What happens in the story when one child acts as an ally? How did that allyship spread? Remind students that the child walked with Vanessa to school so she wouldn't be bullied. Along the way, they picked up other friends. Then there were three of them, then four, then five and then many more. Ask: How do you think Vanessa felt when all those other children joined in walking with her to school? Show the end of the book when there are many, many children walking together with Vanessa. Then, ask each student to call out one word/phrase that expresses how they think Vanessa felt in that moment, and create a group poem that includes all of their words.

## 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:

