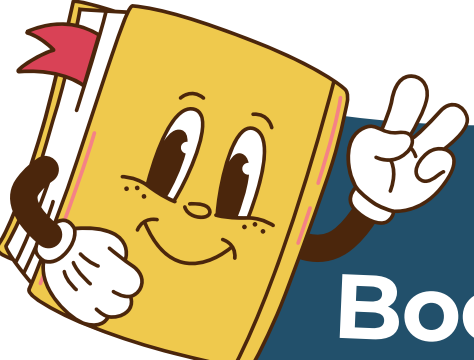




The Conflict Center's Book Talk Guide FOR TEACHERS!

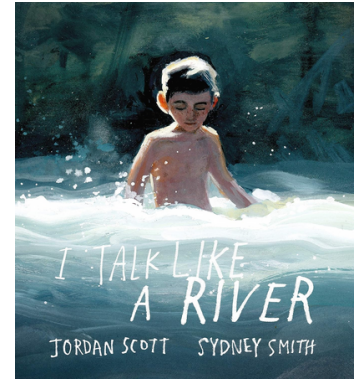
BOOK BASICS

I Talk Like A River

By Jordan Scott (Author) and Sydney Smith (Illustrator)

Viking Books for Young Readers, 2020

Grades 1-4



ABOUT THE BOOK

When a boy who stutters feels isolated, alone, and unable to communicate in the way he'd like, it takes a kindly father and a walk by the river to help him find his voice. Compassionate parents everywhere will instantly recognize a father's ability to reconnect a child with the world around him. A book for any child who feels lost, lonely, or unable to fit in and for those who empathize with those feelings.

WHAT THE BOOK TEACHES: THE BIG IDEAS

- When some people talk, they stutter. Stuttering is a speech condition where people repeat sounds, words or phrases; prolong sounds; or have difficulty getting sounds out (being stuck or blocked). Children may be teased or bullied based on their stuttering.
- When someone is bullied, teased or mocked, we can choose to act as allies or upstanders instead of doing nothing and acting as bystanders.
- When it's hard to convey certain feelings or concepts, we can use similes and metaphors to help explain and understand things. In the book, the boy's dad uses a simile to compare the boy's stuttering to the way a river moves and sounds.

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

- (Pre-reading) What do you see on the cover of the book? What is the title of the book and what do you think it means? What do you think the book will be about?
- What is the story about?
- What does the boy think about words? Why does he think about words a lot?
- Why does the boy hope he doesn't have to talk? Why do his classmates look at him when he is asked a question?
- The boy says "All they hear is how I don't talk like them." What does he mean by this?

(Note: Here you may need to explain that the boy stutters, which is a speech condition where people repeat sounds, words or phrases, prolong sounds or have difficulty getting sounds out.

- Instead of watching, giggling and laughing at him, what could the boys' classmates do instead, to help him feel included?
- Why do you think the boy feels scared? Why does he want to go home?
- What happens when the boy's dad picks him up from school?
- What does the dad say about how the boy talks? How does this make the boy feel?
- When the boy talks to his class about how he talks like the river, how do you think he feels?
- Why do you think the book is called I Talk Like a River?
- Why do you think the author wrote this book?

WAYS TO EXTEND THE BOOK

- **Stuttering and Differences.** Talk with students about how the boy in the book stutters. Ask if they know what stuttering means and explain that stuttering is a speech condition where people repeat sounds, words or phrases; prolong (extend or draw out) sounds or have difficulty getting sounds out. Be mindful if there are students in your class who stutter and prepare accordingly. Ask: When the boy talks in class and the other kids sometimes stare, giggle or laugh, how do you think the boy feels? Remind them that the boy says to himself, "All they hear is how I don't talk like them." Share/elicit that we all have differences based on aspects of our identity (i.e., appearance, ability, race, religion, gender)—among our family, friends and classmates. Point out some of those differences.. Ask: What should we do when we see others are different from us? Stress the importance of understanding, accepting and supporting differences in others and that differences are part of life and who we are.
- **Allyship.** Ask students: What is an ally? Elicit/explain that an ally is someone who helps or supports others, especially when someone is treated unfairly. Ask: Have you ever been an ally to someone when they were treated unfairly? In the book, how could other students be an ally to the boy? Brainstorm a list of ideas and then invite students to draw a picture of one of the ideas, what it looks and sounds like. The picture should include the boy talking and the ally helping. When finished, have students share with the rest of the class and display them around the room.
- **Descriptive Words: Similes and Metaphors.** Ask students: What does the boy's dad mean when he says, "You talk like a river." Explain/elicit that the boy speaks the way the water moves—"bubbling, whirling, churning and crashing." Explain that talking "like a river" is a simile. Explain that similes and metaphors compare two different things that are similar in a specific way; using them helps to explain things that are sometimes difficult to explain. Re-read the book and find other similes or metaphors (e.g., "I stay quiet as a stone," "I feel a storm in my belly," "My eyes are filled with rain."). Invite students to share other similes or metaphors they might know, like "busy as a bee" or "brave like a lion." Then have students write their own similes/metaphors, creating a collage or drawing to accompany it. Share with the class.

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:

