

Book Talk Guide

for teachers

*A comprehensive book guide from
The Conflict Center's Reading for Peace
program*

BOOK BASICS

The Boy with Big, Big Feelings

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Recommended for grades 1-3



ABOUT THE BOOK

The main character has feelings so big that they glow from his cheeks, spill out of his eyes, and jump up and down on his chest. When he hears a joke, he bursts with joy. When a loud truck drives by, he cries. When his loved ones are having a hard day, he feels their emotions as if they were his own. The boy tries to cope by stuffing down his feelings, but with a little help and artistic inspiration, the boy realizes his feelings are something to be celebrated.

“MIRROR & 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.

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.

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WHAT THE BOOK TEACHES - BIG IDEAS!

We all have feelings. Feelings are what happen in your body, heart and mind when something happens or when you react to someone saying or doing something that affects you.

We can have “big feelings” like the boy in the book and others have. This means we feel things strongly, which can feel exciting and great. At other times, having “big feelings” can feel difficult and painful.

While big feelings might feel scary or upsetting at times, **you don’t have to push your strong feelings down, pretend or “control” those feelings.** Feelings make us who we are, make us human, help us connect with others and make friends.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- *(Pre-reading)* Look at the cover of the book and the title. What do you think the book will be about?
- What happens in the story? What is the main message of this book?
- What kinds of feelings does the boy in the story have?
- Why do you think the boy thinks his feelings are bigger than other people’s feelings? Have you ever felt this way?
- What are some of the feelings mentioned in the book? Have you ever had these feelings? What other feelings do you experience?
- Why does the boy try to “stuff all his feelings deep down?” What happens when the boy tries to control or hide his feelings?
- What happens when he meets a girl who is feeling sad and blue? What ends up happening with the two of them?
- What’s good about sharing your feelings with others? How does sharing feelings help people feel more connected?
- What did you learn about feelings by reading the book?

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WAYS TO EXTEND THE BOOK

Feeling words

Ask students: *What are feelings? What kinds of feelings does the boy in the book have?*

You can explain that feelings are what happen in your body, heart and mind when something happens or when you react to someone saying or doing something that affects you.

Re-read the book, and every time a feeling word is read, ask students to call out the feeling word. As they name feelings, record the words on the board or create a feelings wall with all the words. (Feelings words in the book: fear, happy, alone, blue, sad, scared, silly, mad).

Add to the feelings list/wall by asking students to share other feelings they have had. Continue adding to the feeling list/wall as you read other books or talk about what's happening with children. This will help them develop and expand on their "feelings vocabulary," which is helpful in explaining how they're feeling.

You can also make a regular practice of doing a feelings barometer, asking students to select (on a scale of 1-5, or use emojis with different faces) how they are feeling and why.

Drawing feelings

Pick one of the feeling words from the feelings list/wall and ask students: What does the feeling look like? What does it sound like? What color is that feeling? What emoji expresses that feeling? What experiences make you feel that feeling?

Then invite students to pick one of the feeling words and create a drawing or collage about that feeling. This can include colors they associate with that feeling, pictures of experiences related to the feeling, foods, colors and other words, images and symbols connected to the feeling, etc.

Then have students share with the class. You can post on a school bulletin board or make it into a book with all the student's contributions.

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WAYS TO EXTEND THE BOOK

What do I do when I have big Feelings?

Ask students: *What happens in the story when the boy says to himself, “Why me? Why this big, giant heart in a world that’s so heavy and kind?”* Explain/elicit that he’s not always comfortable having such strong feelings, so he tries to “stuff all his feelings deep down.”

Ask: *Why does he do this? Do you ever feel that way?* Then ask: *What can we do when we have very strong or powerful feelings? What are some things you do when you have strong feelings?* Elicit ideas such as: talk to a friend, play a game, take a walk or run, cry, draw, listen to music, be alone, get a hug, etc.

After brainstorming this list, invite students to act out some of their strategies or draw pictures of them.

MORE BOOKS LIKE THIS

- *The Way I Feel* by Janan Cain
- *There Might be Lobsters* by Carolyn Crimi
- *When Sophie Gets Angry, Really, Really Angry* by Molly Bang
- *You are a Burst of Color* by Sook-Hee Choi

