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## Grade 1 Book List

### Books that celebrate diversity for 1st graders

Kite festivals, wrestling fiends, a telling bus ride, and a little self-awareness sneak their way into these enchanting, eye-opening tales perfect for your 6-year-old.

by: *Kathryn Baron* (<https://www.greatschools.org/gk/author/kathrynbaron/>)

*Contributing writer: Adizah Eghan*

### Call Me Tree

by: *Maya Christina Gonzalez* - (Children's Book Press, 2014) 24 pages.

This lyrical ode to the tree creatively depicts the parallel journeys of a seed sprouting into a tree and a child growing up. We see a tyke who grows, dreams, and experiences the world around us both as a tree and as a child. Bright watercolor and colored pencil drawings connect the ideas of kids growing into strong — and different — trees with roots and independence to be part of a diverse environment. Trees, often represented by multicultural children in yoga-based tree poses, or *vrksasana*, inspire young readers to be unique, respectful dreamers.

**Perfect for:** Nature lovers and young yogis.

Find *Call Me Tree* ([https://www.worldcat.org/title/call-me-tree/oclc/875403907&referer=brief\\_results](https://www.worldcat.org/title/call-me-tree/oclc/875403907&referer=brief_results)) at your local library.

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### Islandborn

by: *Junot Díaz*, illustrated by: *Leo Espinosa* - (Dial Books, 2018) 48 pages.

In Lola's Manhattan classroom, all of the kids are from other countries. When the teacher asks the students to draw a picture of where their family immigrated from, Lola can't because her parents left the Dominican Republic when she was a baby. So she asks

her family and their neighbors in New York to tell her about the island. Through their vivid memories, she gets to know the tropical beauty, food, and culture of her family's original home. The more she learns, the more she realizes that the island is part of her, even though she can't remember it.

**Perfect for:** Kids who want to learn more about faraway places.

Find *Islandborn*

([https://www.worldcat.org/title/islandborn/oclc/1055277129&referer=brief\\_results](https://www.worldcat.org/title/islandborn/oclc/1055277129&referer=brief_results)) at your local library.

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## It's Okay to Be Different

by: *Todd Parr* - (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2001) 32 pages.

A brightly colored and charmingly eccentric picture book. Parr's illustrations and text celebrate diversity by featuring people of all colors of the rainbow — mostly blue, green, and orange people — and depicting animals with long noses and big ears. This book tackles everything from eating macaroni in the bathtub to accepting adoption in a way that speaks volumes about self-acceptance without preaching a word.

**Perfect for:** Boosting self-esteem.

Find *It's Okay to be Different* ([https://www.worldcat.org/title/its-okay-to-be-different/oclc/44812233&referer=brief\\_results](https://www.worldcat.org/title/its-okay-to-be-different/oclc/44812233&referer=brief_results)) at your local library.

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## Jacob's New Dress

by: *Sarah and Ian Hoffman*, illustrated by: *Chris Case* - (Albert Whitman & Company, 2014) 32 pages.

Little Jacob loves playing dress up. He likes pretending to be a fireman, a pirate, an animal — but his new favorite outfit is a dress he made himself! Naturally, Jacob wants to wear his new dress to school, but his classmates tell him that he's not supposed to wear "girl" clothes. With the help of his parents and his teacher, Jacob learns that there are many ways to be a boy.

**Perfect for:** Parents and children interested in transcending traditional gender roles.

Find *Jacob's New Dress* ([https://www.worldcat.org/title/jacobs-new-dress/oclc/855779218&referer=brief\\_results](https://www.worldcat.org/title/jacobs-new-dress/oclc/855779218&referer=brief_results)) at your local library.  
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## Nino Wrestles the World

by: *Yuyi Morales* - (Roaring Brook Press, 2013) 36 pages.

Niño is an energetic little boy who dons underpants and a bright red lucha libre mask to fight his imaginary competitors. Little ones learn a cultural lesson about lucha libre by reading title cards, nonsensical action words like Fwap, and some basic Spanish vocabulary, too.

**Perfect for:** Little boys who dream big.

Find *Nino Wrestles the World* ([https://www.worldcat.org/title/nino-wrestles-the-world/oclc/793497131&referer=brief\\_results](https://www.worldcat.org/title/nino-wrestles-the-world/oclc/793497131&referer=brief_results)) at your local library.

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## Here Is the World: A Year of Jewish Holidays

by: *Lesléa Newman*, illustrated by: *Susan Gal* - (Harry N. Abrams, 2014) 48 pages.

Readers are invited on a journey through special holidays and ceremonies, from a child's naming ceremony to weekly Sabbath to Chanukah. Told in easy-to-read rhyming couplets, this story offers a fun, educational glimpse inside the Jewish faith and culture. It's definitely worth spending a few extra minutes on each page to admire Susan Gal's textured charcoal and digital collage artwork. For readers who want more information (or parents who want their child to experience using a glossary), there are more detailed descriptions of each holiday in the back of the book — accompanied by a list of corresponding activities and recipes. Don't miss the Simchat Torah: Edible Torah made from a tortilla and pretzel sticks!

**Perfect for:** Understanding Jewish holidays — with hands-on activities and recipes!

Find *Here Is the World: A Year of Jewish Holidays* ([https://www.worldcat.org/title/here-is-the-world-a-year-of-jewish-holidays/oclc/854848143&referer=brief\\_results](https://www.worldcat.org/title/here-is-the-world-a-year-of-jewish-holidays/oclc/854848143&referer=brief_results)) at your local library.

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## I Love My Hair!

by: *Natasha Anastasia Tarpley*, illustrated by: *E. B. Lewis* - (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 1997) 32 pages.  ([/my-school-list/](#))

Every night, little Keyana's mother rubs coconut oil on her scalp and combs her hair. But their sweet mother-daughter bonding is punctuated by "Mama, stop!" moments. No matter how gentle Mama tries to be, tangles can be tough — and sometimes it hurts! This story encourages young African American girls to feel good about their hair and celebrate their heritage. With beautiful watercolors illustrating Keyana's emotions, this book doubles as a great way to teach all children about different hair types — and share in the sometimes-unpleasant experience of having hair combed by a parent.

**Perfect for:** Any child who dreads an ouchy, hair-pulling comb.

Find *I Love My Hair* ([https://www.worldcat.org/title/i-love-my-hair/oclc/35331364&referer=brief\\_results](https://www.worldcat.org/title/i-love-my-hair/oclc/35331364&referer=brief_results)) at your local library.

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## The Steel Pan Man of Harlem

by: *Colin Bootman* - (Carolrhoda Books, 2009) 32 pages.

In *The Steel Pan Man of Harlem*, Trinidadian-born Colin Bootman offers a historical retelling of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* set during the Harlem Renaissance. When Harlem is overrun by rats, a man with a steel pan drum arrives with a promise to drive them out using his musical prowess. But there's a price. Bootman's illustrations capture a vibrant moment in the life of this prominent African American neighborhood.

**Perfect for:** Kids who like historical fiction.

Find *The Steel Pan Man of Harlem* ([https://www.worldcat.org/title/steel-pan-man-of-harlem/oclc/260231090&referer=brief\\_results](https://www.worldcat.org/title/steel-pan-man-of-harlem/oclc/260231090&referer=brief_results)) at your local library.

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## Last Stop on Market Street

by: *Matt de la Peña*, illustrated by: *Christian Robinson* - (G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2015) 32 pages.

CJ and his grandmother ride the city bus after church in San Francisco. As CJ notices that other people have more stuff than he and grandmother, he starts to complain about it. "Nana, how come we don't got a car?" he asks while they're waiting in the rain for the

bus. She responds to this and other gripes with understanding, gentle reproof, and wisdom. When CJ is envious of two boys on the bus playing music on an iPod, Nana points to a passenger with a guitar. “You got the real live thing sitting across from you,” she tells him as the man begins to play. Vibrant illustrations help convey Nana’s belief that people who live in poorer parts of the city become “a better witness for what’s beautiful.”

**Perfect for:** Young children, especially those who sometimes feel deprived.

Find *Last Stop on Market Street* ([https://www.worldcat.org/title/last-stop-on-market-street/oclc/881469289&referer=brief\\_results](https://www.worldcat.org/title/last-stop-on-market-street/oclc/881469289&referer=brief_results)) at your local library.

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## Ganesha’s Sweet Tooth

by: *Emily Haynes and Sanjay Patel*, illustrated by: *Sanjay Patel* - (Chronicle Books, 2012) 40 pages.

Eye-popping, colorful illustrations will enthrall children as much as this fun re-mix of the story about the Hindu God Ganesha. Growing up, Ganesha was like any other kid, except that he had an elephant’s head and rode a magical mouse. Like most children, Ganesha loved sweets, especially laddoo, a traditional Indian dessert. One day he found a “Super Jumbo Jawbreaker Laddoo!” Ganesha didn’t listen when Mr. Mouse warned him not to bite into it. “I’m a god,” he said. “I’m invincible.” Then, “Snap!” he broke a tusk. Ganesha was embarrassed. Mr. Mouse tried to reassure him that all children lose their teeth, but Ganesha was angry. He threw his tusk and accidentally hit the poet Vyasa. The wise poet told Ganesha that the tusk was special and asked him to use it to write down a poem he recited. That poem, called the Mahabharata, has 100,000 verses and is the longest epic ever written.

**Perfect for:** Introducing a new religion to kids.

Find *Ganesha’s Sweet Tooth* ([https://www.worldcat.org/title/ganeshas-sweet-tooth/oclc/757838391&referer=brief\\_results](https://www.worldcat.org/title/ganeshas-sweet-tooth/oclc/757838391&referer=brief_results)) at your local library.

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## King for a Day

by: *Rukhsana Khan*, illustrated by: *Christine Kromer* - (Lee & Low Books, 2014) 32 pages.

On Basant, Malik wakes up early and excited. It's the annual kite festival celebrating the coming of spring in Pakistan and neighboring countries. Really, it's a battle of the kites. Their strings are coated with powdered glass<sup>(1)</sup> designed to slice through opponents' strings and send their kites tumbling to the ground. Sitting in his wheelchair on the roof of their house, Malik clutches his homemade kite, which he calls Falcon. As his sister raises Falcon toward the sky and jumps, Malik tugs the string and the kite leaps. He wants to win, to be king of Basant, but more than anything he wants to beat out the bully next door. The cruel boy throws stones at his sister and calls her names. At the end of the day, Falcon has captured both of the bully's kites and many others in the contest. Malik is enjoying his victories when he hears yelling and sees the bully push a young girl to the ground and grab her kite. He grabs one of the bully's kites and tosses it off the roof to the girl, who picks it up and dances down the street. The illustrations were done in mixed media collage giving texture and a three-dimensional feel to the action in the sky.

**Perfect for:** Sharing positive images of a child succeeding with a disability.

Find *King for a Day* ([https://www.worldcat.org/title/king-for-a-day/oclc/830206086&referer=brief\\_results](https://www.worldcat.org/title/king-for-a-day/oclc/830206086&referer=brief_results)) at your local library.

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## This Jazz Man

by: *Karen Ehrhardt*, illustrated by: *P.G. Roth* - (HMH Books for Young Readers, 2015) 32 pages.

The song in this story, set to the tune of "This Old Man" will get stuck in your head — in a good, toot-tooting, tap-tapping, snapping, drumming kind of way in this clever introduction to African American jazz greats. It's the coolest version of "This Old Man" you've ever heard. "This jazz man, he plays five, 5. He plays bebop, he plays jive, With a Beedle-di-bop! Bebop! Give the man a hand, This jazz man blows with the band." There are no names, but the mixed media illustrations of celebrated musicians offer some clues for grownups. And at the end of the book, you'll find out if you guessed the musicians correctly. Five is Charlie "Bird" Parker on the sax, for example. Altogether, this book has wonderful history of each musician to share with kids.

**Perfect for:** Adding a bit of rhythm and history to a picture book.

Find *This Jazz Man* ([https://www.worldcat.org/title/this-jazz-man/oclc/59756245&referer=brief\\_results](https://www.worldcat.org/title/this-jazz-man/oclc/59756245&referer=brief_results)) at your local library.

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## Drum Dream Girl: How One Girl's Courage Changed Music

by: *Margarita Engle*, illustrated by: *Rafael López* - (HMH Books for Young Readers, 2015) 48 pages.

This magnificently illustrated children's book is inspired by the true story of Millo Castro Zaldarriaga. The 10-year-old Chinese, African, and Cuban girl held fast to her love of drums and eventually broke through the double standard of 1920s Cuba, where only men were allowed to play drums. Her story is told in rhythmic verse with a beat you can practically hear. "The drum dream girl dreamed of pounding tall conga drums, tapping small bongo drums, and boom boom booming with long loud sticks on big, round, silvery, moon-bright timbales." Rich, vibrant images capture the movement of sound and Caribbean dreamscape.

**Perfect for:** Anyone with a dream that can't be stopped.

Find *Drum Dream Girl: How One Girl's Courage Changed Music* ([https://www.worldcat.org/title/drum-dream-girl-how-one-girls-courage-changed-music/oclc/879538850&referer=brief\\_results](https://www.worldcat.org/title/drum-dream-girl-how-one-girls-courage-changed-music/oclc/879538850&referer=brief_results)) at your local library.

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## Rosie's Family: An Adoption Story

by: *Lori Rosove*, illustrated by: *Heather Burrill* - (Asia Press, 2001) 32 pages.

A playful beagle puppy named Rosie, adopted by a family of schnauzers, narrates this story that gently yet openly discusses the subjects of adoption and inter-racial adoption. "You may be wondering why I look different from my family. It's because I was adopted," Rosie explains under an illustration of a family portrait with her new mom, dad, and brother Joey. The book doesn't shy away from the difficult emotions shared by many adopted children. Rosie feels loved, but sometimes she gets angry or sad when looking through a special book from her birth family. She also has questions, which her adoptive parents answer honestly. "Are you my real parents?" "What were my birth parents like?"

"Where did I live before?" and "Do I really belong in my family?" Her new mom sums up the message at the heart of this story for adopted children: "Families are the people who will love you and take care of you no matter where you came from." ES (/my-school-list/)

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**Perfect for:** Adoptive parents to read to their children, and teachers to read if there's an adopted child in their class.

Find *Rosie's Family: An Adoption Story* ([https://www.worldcat.org/title/rosies-family-an-adoption-story/oclc/45629910&referer=brief\\_results](https://www.worldcat.org/title/rosies-family-an-adoption-story/oclc/45629910&referer=brief_results)) at your local library.

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## Chato's Kitchen

by: *Gary Soto*, illustrated by: *Susan Guevara* - (Puffin Books, 1997) 32 pages.

This funny satire of the personalities and feuds in East Los Angeles features a cool cat named Chato who can't believe his luck when a delicious-looking family of mice moves in next door. Chato hopes to trick them into becoming his next meal by inviting them over for dinner. He's the one surprised, though, when the mice arrive with a family friend from their old neighborhood, who just happens to be a dog. The book is peppered with Spanish words. The illustrations are amusing, broadly drawn send-ups of the characters.

**Perfect for:** Inner-city children living in lively neighborhoods.

Find *Chato's Kitchen* ([https://www.worldcat.org/title/chatos-kitchen/oclc/29387082&referer=brief\\_results](https://www.worldcat.org/title/chatos-kitchen/oclc/29387082&referer=brief_results)) at your local library.

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