

A LEARNING GUIDE TO

DERRICK BARNES

GORDON C. JAMES

CREATORS OF *CROWN: AN ODE
TO THE FRESH CUT*

**I AM
EVERY
GOOD
THING**



THIS BOOK IS AN AFFIRMATION. IT'S A CELEBRATION OF BLACK BOY JOY.

I Am Every Good Thing beautifully supports the first goal of [Anti-Bias Education](#)—Students will gain self-awareness, confidence, and pride in themselves. The goal is for them to love themselves. (From [Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves](#) by Louise Derman-Sparks, Julie Olsen Edwards, and Catherine M. Goins.) It will support you building a strong classroom community with your students.

THIS IS A BOOK IN WHICH EVERY CHILD CAN SEE THEMSELVES.

**IT'S A BOOK THAT REMINDS US OF THE HUMANITY OF
BLACK CHILDREN AND OURSELVES.**

This guide was written by Tiffany Jewell. Tiffany Jewell is a Black biracial writer and Montessori educator. She is the author of the *New York Times* #1 bestseller *THIS BOOK IS ANTI-RACIST*. She spends her time baking bread, building LEGOs, watching British detective shows, and dreaming up how she can dismantle white supremacy. She lives on the traditional lands of the Pocumtuc and Nipmuc with her two sons, her husband, and a turtle she's had since she was nine.

Find her on Instagram: [@tiffanymjewell](#)



FOR THE ADULTS...

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

When will little Black boys become a “threat” to you?

Why are Black girls perceived as less innocent than white children?

Are Black and Brown children given less attention and support in this classroom community?

Adultification bias is a form of bias/prejudice towards Black children (in particular)—when the adults believe Black children are more mature and older than they actually are. They are held to the same standards as adults rather than children and are denied childhood (unlike their white peers), and it’s assumed they need less comfort, attention, support, care, protection, nurturing, and love than white children (who are afforded innocence well into adulthood).

For more information:

- [When Did My Baby Become a Threat to You?](#)
(Article about this video can be found [here](#).)
- <https://endadultificationbias.org/>
- [When My Beautiful Black Boy Grows from Cute to a Threat](#)
- [What’s Lost When Black Children Are Socialized into a White World](#)

Derrick Barnes dedicates this book to young Black boys who are no longer with us because they’ve been killed by adults (mostly police murders). Learn about Tamir Rice, Trayvon Martin, EJ Bradford, Jordan Edwards, Michael Brown, Jordan Davis, and Julian Mallory. Look at them, read about them, learn their names, and notice they were children who were denied their childhood (and adulthood).

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Do you know yourself?

How does your socialized (and racialized) identity impact your students and the school community?

Understand that you have biases and they influence how you view the children and families you work with. Work to unlearn your biases and name this work with others.

(Example: You believe Black children are loud and troublemakers. Recognize this belief you hold is biased and untrue. Every time that bias creeps into your consciousness, address it. Notice you hold the bias, where it comes from, and actively dispel it. Spend time with your students, observe, and let go of the imbalanced expectations you hold for the young folks and their families that you hold in your community.)

Change the language you use—move from the lens of deficit and disruption to one that embraces the whole child.

(Example: Instead of using the term *minority* to describe Black and Brown students, use *Global Majority*. Ask children and their families how they describe their skin color and what language they use at home. Empower children with language rather than disempower them.)

Understand the privileges and power you hold. Be in a state of constant growth and transformation.

FURTHER READING

Books for the adults to read:

Hood Feminism—Mikki Kendall

I’m Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness—Austin Channing Brown

The Fire Next Time—James Baldwin

I Am Not Your Negro—James Baldwin

Are Prisons Obsolete—Angela Y. Davis

Women, Race, & Class—Angela Y. Davis

Sister Outsider—Audre Lorde

Biased—Jennifer L. Eberhardt

How to Be an Anti-racist—Ibram X. Kendi

PRE-READING...

Show the cover of the book to students. “*I Am Every Good Thing!*” Ask them, “What are some things that are good for you?” Create a list together. Let students know good things are things that can help you feel safe, loved, cared for, excited, happy, seen, valued, proud, etc.

“As we read through this book, you’ll notice there are a lot of interesting and exciting words. Some of them you might know what they mean, some of them you may not, and that’s okay. What are some of your favorite words?” Write each word on an index card and place them in a word box. Students may want to add to this anytime, and they may want to come back to the box when they’re working on a story/work/etc.

WHO WROTE THESE WORDS AND CREATED THESE ILLUSTRATIONS?

Introduce students to the author and illustrator.

- Visit their websites: <https://derrickdbarnes.com/> and <https://www.gordoncjames.com/>.
- Show students pictures of the creators and their works.
- Walk through the book without reading the words and ask students what they notice, what they’re curious about, what they think the book will be about.
- Book Derrick and Gordon for a classroom visit at penguinclassroom.com!



ACTIVITIES...

AFFIRMATION STATION

This book is filled with affirmations. An affirmation is a positive statement that can remind you you are worthy, amazing, powerful, and smart (among many other awesome things).

Create an affirmation station in your classroom!

Materials needed: a mirror, strips of paper (cut to size so students may write a full sentence on them), colorful pencils, a laminated list of positive words, colorful washi tape

Share with students that you will work together to create a wall (or door, or window) of affirmations. The mirror is to help us all see ourselves. When sitting at the mirror, look deeply into your own eyes and see that joy and wonder inside of you. You may be moved to write something positive on a piece of paper, like something we read in the book: “I am a difference maker.” or, “I am hilarious.” or “I can help.” or, “I bring joy with me.” You may want to decorate your affirmation, and when you are done with it, you may take some of the colorful tape and find the perfect spot for it on the wall. We will fill up the wall with positive words and statements about who we are!

This could be done as a group activity during the morning circle. This could also be set up as an independent work. *If you are remote/virtual teaching, encourage students and families to create this for their homes and/or create a virtual wall where students can contribute their affirmations.

“I AM” BOOKS (STAND-ALONE WORKS OR CONTINUAL ONGOING WORK)

Encourage students to be their own author/illustrators in writing a short book about them. These can be growing, never-ending books to add on to all year long, and into their next years! Introduce this to students, letting them know “we will be writing our own stories and sharing our good things.”

Share the following prompts with students to help them create a new page in their books:

- Who are you?
- What is your name?
- What do you love?
- What do you fear?
- What do you hold dear to you?
- What have you worked really hard at until you got it just right for you?
- Who is in your family? You are a member of your family— share the names of your folks, your family, the folks you give tight hugs to, who you are here for, and who is here for you.
- I am what I say I am! I am...(Have students create a list or draw pictures of all the things they are.)
- What are your superpowers?
- What force of nature are you?
- Who are your ancestors? (*Ancestor* may be a new word for your students, and you may need to share with students what/who an ancestor is.)
- Who inspires you? Who do you look up to?
- What kind of ancestor will you be?

Create a list of good things and write a list poem together.

Have young folks write a list poem about “your good things.”

*If you are remote/virtual teaching, students may work on their books on paper or digitally. There are still opportunities to share their books, stories, or illustrations! Have each student share with the class, their virtual author visit in which they share their completed book and take questions, comments, and compliments.

ACTIVITIES...

LEAD THE WAY

Create time and space for each child to be a leader in the classroom! Create a list of leaders with your students!

Ask them “What is a leader? Who is a leader?”

Share models of leaders to them: the bold leader and the quiet leader; the young leaders and the older leaders; leaders of different gender expressions, races, and ethnicities (of various social identities), et al. This can be done by sharing books, pictures, short discussions, videos, and research projects, introducing leaders from your local community as guest speakers, etc. (Be creative!)

Leaders collaborate with others. They don’t work alone. They learn and grow, listen and share. What do you think keeps a leader going? What is their energy source? What is their light source? What is yours?

Remind students they are all leaders and share with them ways you’ve observed them leading. (“I noticed you started a game at recess.” “You led us in a fun dance the other day.” “I saw you took charge and collected supplies for your group today.”)

*If you are remote/virtual teaching, offer students the chance to lead a lesson, have a morning meeting, or share/read aloud during your sessions.

COOOOOL BREEZE!

Study the work of wind!

Ask students “What is a breeze? What is wind?”

Collect their answers using a T chart:

What we know about the wind...	What we’d like to know more about the wind...
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Make paper airplanes to fly. Fly these on calm days, mildly breezy days, and very windy days. Use the scientific method! Make predictions! Have students share which weather conditions led to their best flight moments!

*If you are remote/virtual teaching, you can still create this chart together. Ask students to go outside and stand still. Do they feel a breeze? Can they see the wind’s effect on the environment around them? Ask them to draw or write down their observations.

Send home instructions and materials for making several different types of paper airplanes. Ask students to fly these on a day when there isn’t a lot of wind and on a day when there is. (Use the scientific method! Make predictions!) Have students share what they noticed on the calm days and the breezy days. Did the airplanes fly differently?



ACTIVITIES CONTINUED...

GOOEY CENTERS!

Bake cinnamon rolls. Here's a kid-friendly [recipe](#). There are also boxed mixes and ready-to-bake canned rolls. All are delicious! Bake them together as a community meeting. Explore them all the way to the core!

Create an adjective list to describe the rolls as you eat them together!

*If you are remote/virtual teaching, pre-record a "classroom cooking show." Prior to the bake, put together baking supplies for students (also may be coordinated by your PTO, a caregiver volunteer, etc.) so everyone is able to start with the same supplies. Encourage students and families to bake the cinnamon rolls and ask students to report back.

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

Study the work of wind!

What do you see when you look with both eyes, and with one eye open and one eye closed?

Use your power of seeing, observing the world around you. Ask students to be still and notice what happens in a place. Have them share their observations (write them down, pair share, group share, etc.).

Now ask them to look at the same place, but using a hula hoop or a string circle to make the space smaller, more focused. Ask them to notice how their view of what they're observing has changed.

And, finally, ask them to observe through a toilet/paper towel roll with one eye open and one eye closed. Ask them to share their observations. How was this observation different from the other two?

*This activity works well if you are remote/virtual teaching too! (Be sure to offer the supplies needed to all students.)

SOME EXTRAS... (THESE CAN BE IN-PERSON OR REMOTE!)

EXPLORE METAPHORS!

Explore metaphors with students!

Use examples from the book, like "I am Saturday morning in the summertime," and ask them to create their own. Start by doing some together as a group!

SHARE MUSIC TOGETHER!

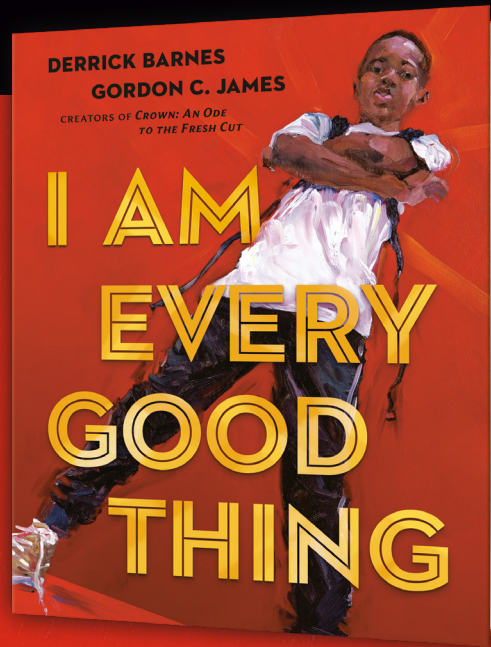
Ask students to share their favorite music or song. What is it they love about it? Give each student (and yourself) a chance to share. Have a classroom movement break/dance party!

FAVORITE SPORTS!

Ask students to share their favorite sport. (Share some unconventional sports too.) What do you love about it? Have students share their favorite sport with their classmates and friends during a movement break outside and play!

Ask students to create a "how to play their favorite sport" book, skit, or video to share with the group.

PRAISE FOR I AM EVERY GOOD THING



★ “Through every stroke readers will see that Black boys are ‘worthy / to be loved.’”
—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “A powerful celebration of Black boyhood, countering many of the negative messages that a racist society puts forth about African American boys.”
—*Booklist*, starred review

★ “[A] beautiful and necessary book that affirms Black boys and their right to thrive.”
—*The Horn Book*, starred review

★ “Page after page of empowering text speaks to energetic children everywhere.”
—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ “Powerfully and ecstatically convey[s] the idea that all Black boys are ‘worthy/ to be loved.’”
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

ABOUT THE CREATORS:

Derrick Barnes wrote the *New York Times* bestseller *The King of Kindergarten*, as well as the critically acclaimed picture book *Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut* (illustrated by Gordon C. James), which received a Newbery Honor, a Coretta Scott King Author Honor, the 2018 Ezra Jack Keats New Writer Award, and the 2018 *Kirkus* Prize for Young Readers. He also wrote the bestselling chapter book series *Ruby and the Booker Boys*. He owns the copy-writing company Say Word Creative Communications and created the popular blog *Raising the Mighty*, where he “chronicles the experience of bringing up four beautiful Black boys in America.” He lives in Charlotte, North Carolina, with his wife and their four sons.

Gordon C. James illustrated the critically acclaimed picture book *Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut* (by Derrick Barnes), which received a Caldecott Honor, a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor, an Ezra Jack Keats New Illustrator Honor, the 2018 *Kirkus* Prize for Young Readers, and a Society of Illustrators Gold Medal. He also illustrated *Let 'Er Buck!:* *George Fletcher; the People's Champion* (by Vaunda Micheaux Nelson). He lives in Charlotte, North Carolina, with his wife and two children.

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