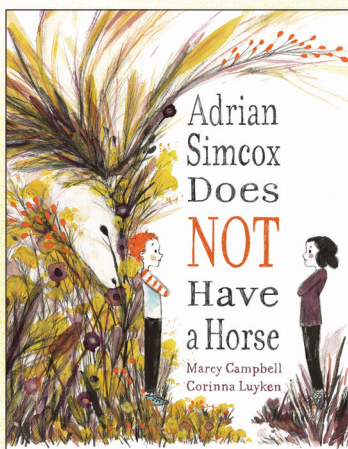
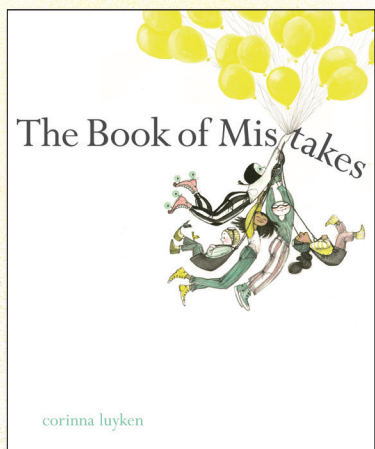
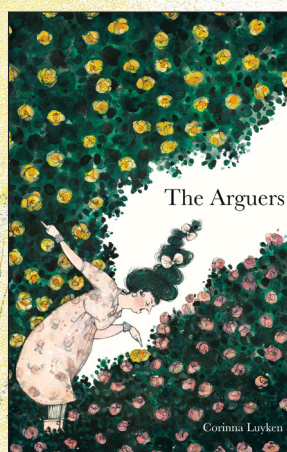
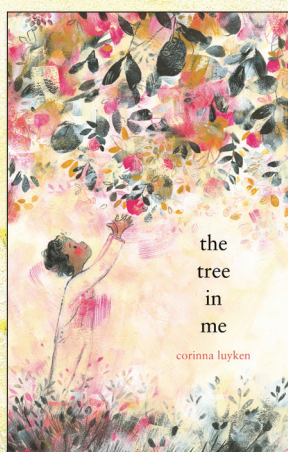
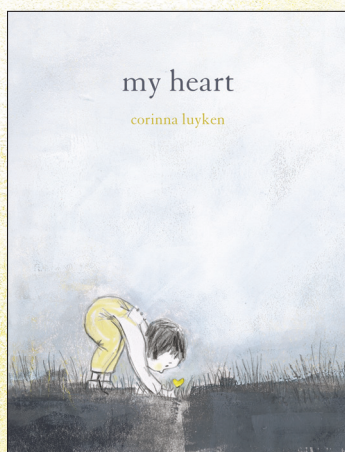
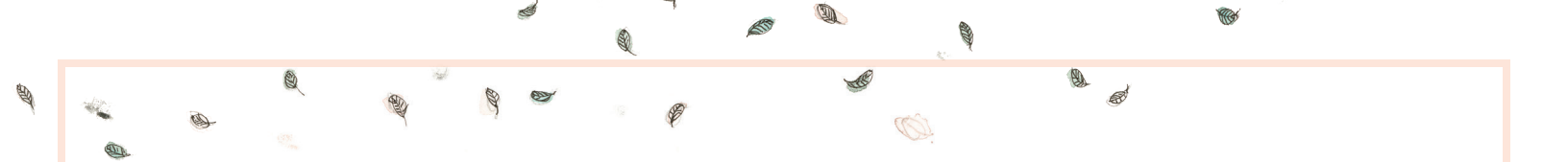


# Bring SEL into your class or library with Corinna Luyken!



Social Emotional Learning Guides to Six Beloved Picture Books





**PICTURE BOOKS** are valuable because they become the extra teacher in our classroom. They are the lessons to be learned about life and the lens through which we can see ourselves more clearly. Many picture books, since they are targeted for younger children as a general rule, deal with social and emotional topics because picture books are designed to teach through story, and young children (and the not-so-young) then have a less intimidating way to learn these life lessons. SEL & picture books are essentially about figuring out how we want to be as humans, and learning how to interact with ourselves and others.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL—[casel.org](http://casel.org)) defines social and emotional learning (SEL) as “the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.”

## CASEL\* delineates these five core competencies for SEL

### SELF-AWARENESS

- The abilities to understand one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts

### SELF-MANAGEMENT

- The abilities to manage one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations.

### SOCIAL AWARENESS

- The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.

### RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

- The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.

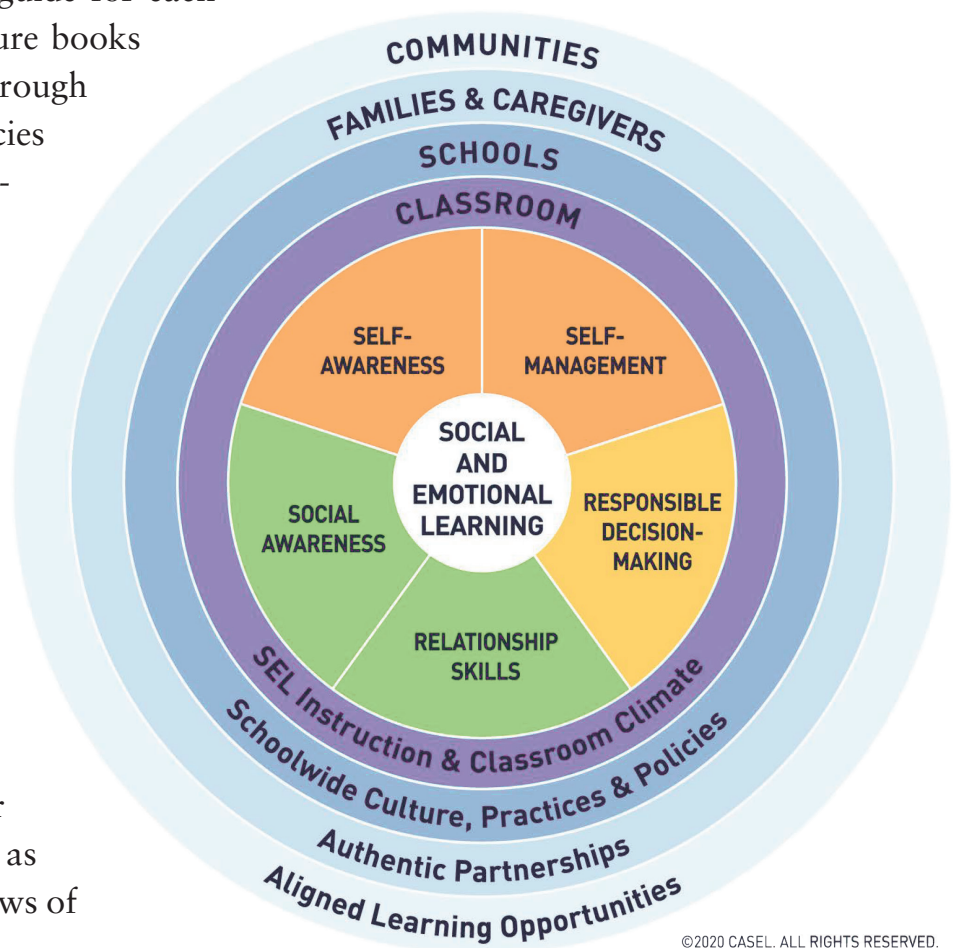
### RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

- The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.

\*Definitions from [casel.org/sel-framework/](http://casel.org/sel-framework/)

Using these competencies as a lens through which to select and guide with picture books can be beneficial for educators, and also provide targets for conversation when discussing books in the classroom. Corinna Luyken’s picture books have been favorites for **#ClassroomBookADay**, as they each provide a strong basis for opening kids’ hearts and minds, promoting discussion, and creating openings for bringing social and emotional learning into the classroom in an organic way.

Here you will find a short guide for each of six Corinna Luyken picture books that showcase SEL topics through the CASEL core competencies as well as themes, visual elements to explore, other titles to create text sets around similar themes, and additional activities around the SEL themes in her books. Corinna Luyken’s picture books have the commonality of treating ourselves, our communities, and others with compassion & understanding—a worthy message for adults to share with kids as they are developing their views of the world!



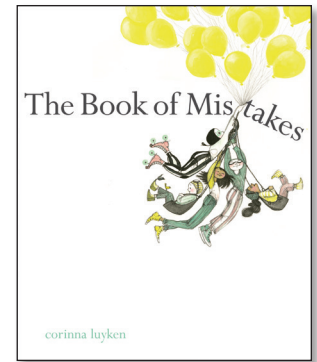
**This guide was created by:** Jillian Heise, NBCT, [@heisereads](https://www.instagram.com/heisereads)

**Jillian Heise** is a National Board Certified Teacher with one Masters degree in Reading/Language Arts + another Masters in Library & Information Science. She has been an elementary Library Media Specialist in southeastern Wisconsin since 2017. Prior to that, she taught 7th & 8th grade ELA in the Milwaukee area for eleven years with an additional year out of the classroom working with adults as a literacy consultant. As founder of **#ClassroomBookADay** (inspired by Donalyn Miller’s #bookaday) in 2014, Jillian has become a passionate advocate for the value of picture book read alouds and the power of shared stories to build classroom community and student engagement. She dedicates her practice to supporting all students through access to inclusive literature that develops empathetic humans who will positively contribute to our global society. Jillian was a member of the 2026 Caldecott Committee and served as Chair of the WI State Reading Association’s Children’s Literature Committee for eight years. You can find Jillian online at [Heise Reads & Recommends](https://www.heisereads.com) and [@heisereads](https://www.instagram.com/heisereads).

# The Book of Mistakes

★ “This will lead kids to see their own so-called mistakes in a new, more positive light.”

—*Booklist*, starred review



## THEME FOCUS

- creativity
- accepting mistakes can be opportunities
- metacognitive perspective (narrator/artist)
- perseverance
- making the best of a situation
- turning a negative into a positive

## VISUAL ELEMENTS FOCUS

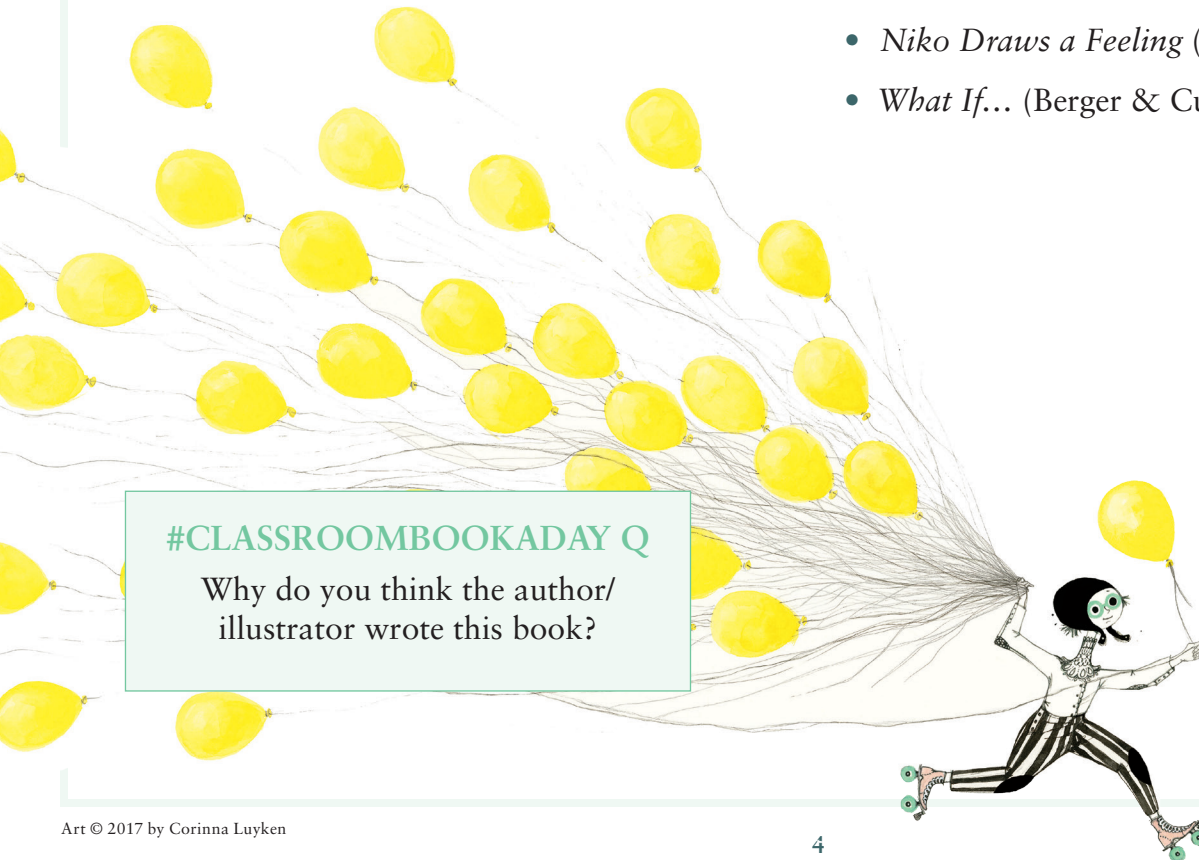
- surprises with zooming in & out of the big picture/frame
- perspective of “narrator”
- use of spot color

## CREATE A TEXT SET AROUND PERSEVERANCE, PROBLEM-SOLVING, & PERSPECTIVE IN ART

- *A House for Every Bird* (Maynor & Juanita)
- *Angel Draws a Dinosaur* (Giron)
- *Arlo Draws an Octopus* (Mortensen & Sayegh)
- *Bad Drawer* (Fishman and Friends)
- *Don't Think of Tigers* (Latimer)
- *I Can't Draw* (Martin & Biggs)
- *Milo Imagines the World* (de la Peña & Robinson)
- *My Pen* (Myers)
- *Niko Draws a Feeling* (Raczka & Shin)
- *What If...* (Berger & Curato)

## #CLASSROOMBOOKADAY Q

Why do you think the author/illustrator wrote this book?



## SEL Qs

*NOTE TO EDUCATORS: Be aware that sometimes the questions get personal and it may not be best for kids to answer in front of others. These can also be used as personal reflection questions during/after reading.*

### SELF-AWARENESS

- How does it feel when you make a mistake?
- Does making a mistake mean you give up and have to start all over?

### SELF-MANAGEMENT

- If you are frustrated because you made a mistake, what are some tools you can use to calm your emotions and move forward?

### SOCIAL AWARENESS

- If a friend makes a mistake, what can you do to support them?

### RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

- If a classmate makes a mistake, how can you work together to solve the problem?

### RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

- If you hear a classmate making fun of someone for making a mistake, what can you do?

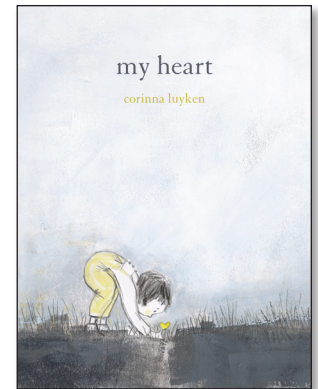


### SUGGESTED EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- **Drawing/Art:** Have students start a drawing. Then drop a dot of ink/paint onto the drawing or make a big mark in the middle with a marker. Ask students to take that “mistake” and add to or change their piece to create something new out of it.  
\*Tip: Be sure to let students know ahead of time what you will be doing. Some students will need the forewarning to not be upset about their drawing being “ruined,” and you can connect it to what happens in the book.
- **Writing:** Have students write a small moment personal narrative about a time they made a mistake. Ask them to make sure to share how they handled it and how they felt about it.



# My Heart



★ “This must-buy for librarians and teachers has myriad educational uses; it begs to be read aloud, and it is a masterful blending of text and illustration.” —*School Library Journal*, starred review

## THEME FOCUS

- self-acceptance
- perspectives
- resilience
- emotions
- feelings
- hope

## VISUAL ELEMENTS FOCUS

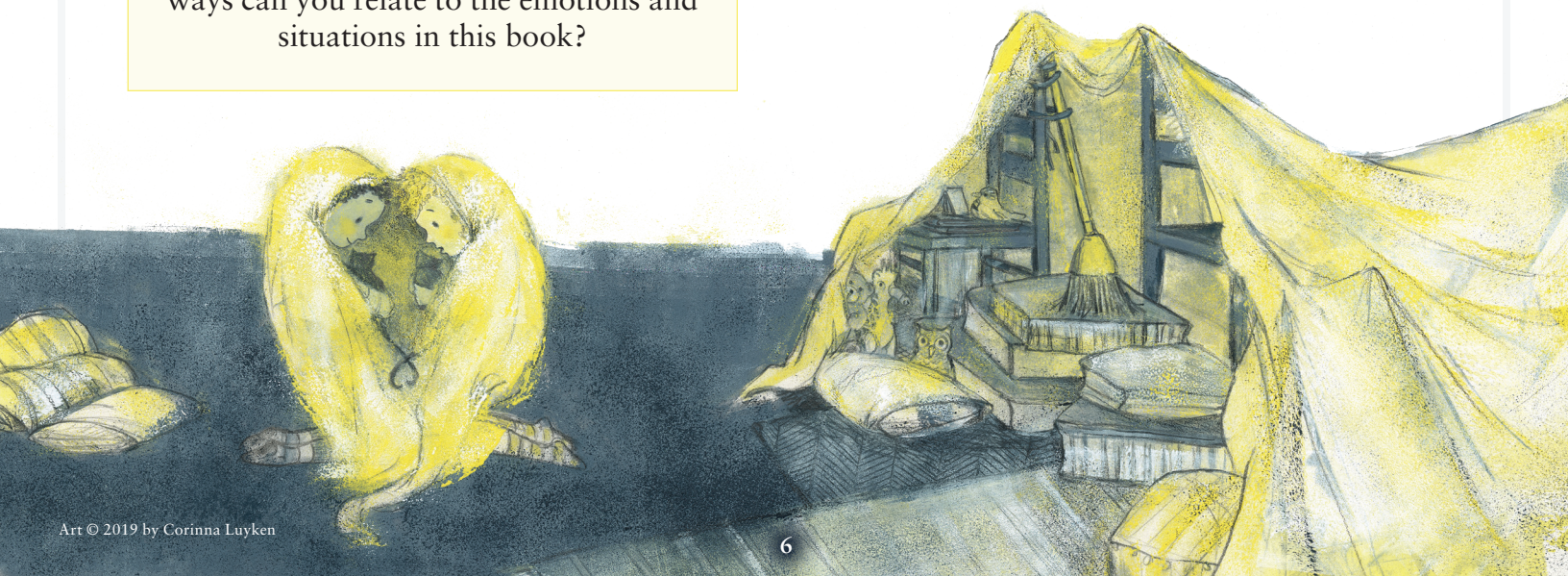
- use of pencil drawings
- yellow as a spotlight color
- repeating symbol (heart)

## #CLASSROOMBOOKADAY Q

What did you notice about the writing in this book compared to other books we have read? (It’s a poem.) In what ways can you relate to the emotions and situations in this book?

## CREATE A TEXT SET AROUND SHOWING HEART

- *A Heart Just Like My Mother’s* (Nargi & Cis)
- *In My Heart: A Book of Feelings* (Witek & Roussey)
- *My Heart Fills with Happiness* (Smith & Flett)
- *I Will Dance* (Flood & Swaney)
- *The Rabbit Listened* (Doerrfeld)
- *Raven’s Ribbons* (Spillett & Ramirez)
- *A Roof!* (Sy & Tingtungco)
- *The Wishing Flower* (Irving & Alizadeh)
- *Show the World!* (Dalton & Peoples)
- *Words and Your Heart* (Neal)



## SEL Qs

*NOTE TO EDUCATORS: Be aware that sometimes the questions get personal and it may not be best for kids to answer in front of others. These can also be used as personal reflection questions during/after reading.*

### SELF-AWARENESS

- Look at the cover of the book . . . pay attention to your emotions/feelings. Now take off the jacket and look at the case cover . . . do your feelings change?

### SELF-MANAGEMENT

- On the last page of the book the author writes, “I get to decide.” What do you think that means? How might you apply that to your own life?

### SOCIAL AWARENESS

- Notice which pages have little to no yellow on them. What emotion do they portray? How might someone show you on the outside that they are feeling that way on the inside?

### RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

- There are several pages in this book where there is a second person around. What role is that person playing? How do you see them making an impact?

### RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

- Think of a time when you may have treated someone unkindly, or someone was unkind to you . . . What needed to happen to help fix the hurt?
- If another person is showing on the outside that they are feeling gray or down on the inside, what could you do to help bring some more “yellow” out in their hearts?

### SUGGESTED EXTENSION

#### ACTIVITIES

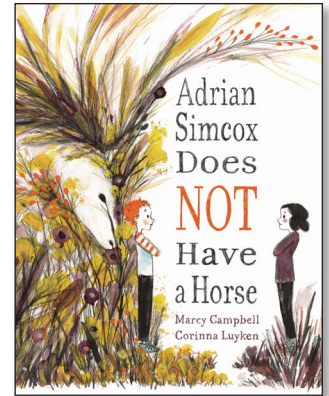
- **Drawing/Art:**

1. Go in search of heart-shaped objects all around you—inside or outside. Take pictures, or draw your observations, and share.
2. Draw several scenes to show the ways you see your heart at different times. Be sure to include heart shapes, both obvious and more hidden, in each picture.

- **Writing:** Using the text from *My Heart* as a model, write a list poem of all the ways you show, or feel, or see your heart in different situations. Start lines of the poem using the stems from the book: “My heart is . . .” “My heart can . . .” “Some days it’s . . .” “There are days it is . . .” “My heart is . . .”

\*Tip: To understand the flow of this poem model, teachers can write out the lines of the text from the book on paper to use as an example for students to see where line breaks and stanzas begin and end.

# Adrian Simcox Does NOT Have a Horse



★ “Campbell has masterfully created a story which will teach your young ones kindness without their realizing they are learning anything at all. All primary teachers and school librarians will want this title in their collections.”

—*School Library Connection*, starred review

## THEME FOCUS

- assumptions/judgement
- kindness
- empathy
- socioeconomic differences
- imagination
- what is real/not real
- listening with compassion
- perception

## VISUAL ELEMENTS FOCUS

- use of negative space
- hidden repeating symbol (horse)
- use of limited color palette

## CREATE A TEXT SET AROUND PERSPECTIVES ON FINANCIAL STRUGGLE

- *The Cot in the Living Room* (Burgos & D’Alessandro)
- *Emilia Wishing* (Medina & Mora)
- *Faith Takes the Train* (Augustine & Mokshini)
- *Last Stop on Market Street* (de la Peña & Robinson)
- *Lulu and the Hunger Monster* (Talkin & Murray)
- *Old Blue is My Home* (Judge)
- *A Place for Us* (Ransome)
- *Saturday at the Food Pantry* (O’Neill & Magro)
- *Yard Sale* (Bunting & Castillo)
- *The Yellow Postcard: A Story About Food and Community* (Allen)



## #CLASSROOMBOOKADAY Q

What is this book really about? What happens in the story (summary) and what lessons does that teach you that you could apply to your own life (theme)?

## SEL Qs

*Be aware that sometimes the questions get personal and it may not be best for kids to answer in front of others. These can also be used as personal reflection questions during/after reading.*

### SELF-AWARENESS

- If you know someone at school gets free lunch, does that make you think differently about them? Why? [recognizing prejudice/bias]
- If you get free lunch at school, do you feel other kids treat you differently if they know? How does that make you feel?

### SELF-MANAGEMENT

- Compare what Chloe does when she yells from the monkey bars that Adrian is lying and can see that made him “really sad” & when she meets him and keeps the words from coming out. What feelings/thoughts make her change what she says when at his house?

### SOCIAL AWARENESS

- How do you think Adrian is feeling on the first page when he is all alone at the end of the lunch table?

### RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

- What can Chloe do differently the next time she is around Adrian at school, in front of other people?

### RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

- Have you ever seen, or made someone feel, left out of a group? How did it make you feel? How do you think it made them feel? What could you do in the future when you see that happening to a classmate?

### SUGGESTED EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

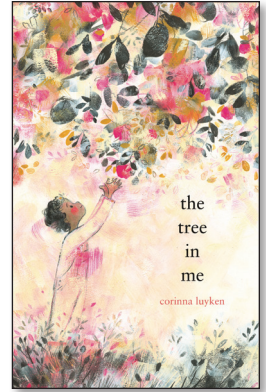
- **Drawing/Art:** First have students find all of the hidden horses throughout the pages of the book. Then choose an animal to illustrate. They should try to draw the animal without drawing the animal! Draw the scene around the animal (perhaps using plants like in the book) to create the negative space image of the animal you chose.
- **Writing:** Have students write a small moment personal narrative about a time they assumed something about someone, or judged them, and then found out they were wrong. Ask them to make sure to share how it made them feel when they discovered they were wrong.



# The Tree in Me

★ “This heartfelt picture book harmoniously conveys the interconnectedness of humans and nature.”

—*Shelf Awareness*, starred review



## THEME FOCUS

- seeing the beauty within
- celebrating strength
- connection with nature
- connection with animals
- connection with others
- parts of trees

## VISUAL ELEMENTS FOCUS

- limited color palette
- techniques for showing light emanating
- showing motion & emotion

## CREATE A TEXT SET AROUND FINDING INNER STRENGTH

- *All the Stars in the Sky* (Coulson & Nelson)
- *Ambitious Girl* (Harris & Valdez)
- *Brave* (Alvitre)
- *Big* (Harrison)
- *The Day You Begin* (Woodson & López)
- *Eyes that Kiss in the Corners* (Ho & Ho)
- *I Am Every Good Thing* (Barnes & James)
- *I Got Next* (Peoples-Riley)
- *What I Am* (Srinivasan)
- *Your Name is a Song* (Thompkins-Bigelow & Uribe)

## #CLASSROOMBOOKADAY Q

Why do you think I chose this book to read to you today?

## SEL Qs

*NOTE TO EDUCATORS: Be aware that sometimes the questions get personal and it may not be best for kids to answer in front of others. These can also be used as personal reflection questions during/after reading.*

### SELF-AWARENESS

- What roots do you have that keep you grounded in knowing yourself?

### SELF-MANAGEMENT

- How do you keep yourself strong, while also staying able to bend when needed?

### SOCIAL AWARENESS

- What roots, similar things, and/or closeness keep you connected with others in your community?

### RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

- On the pages with kids together, how do you see them supporting each other while honoring their own individual strengths and needs?

### RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

- Consider the last stanza, which starts “Because there is . . .” How could that help you think about how you might interact with others around you in various situations?

### SUGGESTED EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- **Drawing/Art:**

1. Create your own version of the tree within you in any medium. Add details for things on and/or inside the tree, as well as things next to and/or around the tree, and things supporting the tree.
2. Create your own self-portrait using one of these pages as inspiration: “is part apple,” “and part sun,” “and bee,” “and a sky too,” or “I can see.”

- **Writing:** Write about what holds you up. It can be a poem, a narrative story, a technical explanation - showing the elements, people, things, feelings that give you strength or connect you with your community.



# Hello, Ocean!

“Share this with young beach wanderers who are learning how to preserve the beauty of the shores.”

—BCCB



## THEME FOCUS

- appreciation of nature
- mindfulness & noticing
- working together
- taking care of nature
- beach garbage/cleanups
- setting

## VISUAL ELEMENTS FOCUS

- beachy colors
- textures (brayers, sponges, brushes, plastic netting & monoprinting)
- passage of time through color intensity

## CREATE A TEXT SET AROUND OCEAN EXPLORATION

- *A Beach Tail* (Williams & Cooper)
- *A Day for Sandcastles* (Lawson & Leng)
- *Here Comes Ocean* (Fleming & Zakimi)
- *Crab Cake: Turning the Tide Together* (Tsurumi)
- *I Hear You, Ocean* (George & Mok)
- *Maya Makes Waves* (Gabeira & Kaulitzki)
- *My Ocean Is Blue* (Lebeuf & Barron)
- *The Ocean Calls: A Haenyeo Mermaid Story* (Cho & Snow)
- *The Ocean Gardener* (Anganuzzi)
- *Rocket Says Clean Up* (Bryon & Adeola)
- *Wonder Walkers* (Archer)

## #CLASSROOMBOOKADAY Q

How do you think the main character felt at the point when the events changed in this book?



## SEL Qs

*NOTE TO EDUCATORS: Be aware that sometimes the questions get personal and it may not be best for kids to answer in front of others. These can also be used as personal reflection questions during/after reading.*

### SELF-AWARENESS

- Look at the endpapers in the front of the book and reflect on how they make you feel. Now turn to the endpapers at the back of the book and reflect on your feelings. Do different colors change your emotions?

### SELF-MANAGEMENT

- When you see the girl's face on the "Oh" page, what emotions do you think she's feeling? Turn the page. How does she react to those emotions in a productive way?

### SOCIAL AWARENESS

- Flip through the pages for a picture walk. Focus on the girl's body language. What does it tell you about how she's feeling throughout the events of her day?

### RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

- What could you do if you encountered someone leaving trash at the beach or out in nature? Would you say something or take action in some way?

### RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

- What are some ways kids can help with the problem of beach trash/ocean clean up?

### SUGGESTED EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

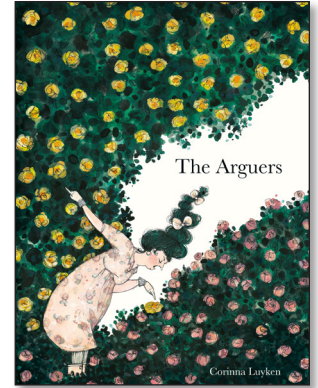
- **Drawing/Art:** Collect items that can create textures like what the illustrator used or what was part of the beach garbage (sponges, netting, rope, flip-flops, socks, straw, plastic sacks, gloves, etc.). Get paints and have students use the unconventional/recycled items as their "brushes" to create textures on paper similar to the beach and water throughout the book.
- **Writing:** Take your class outside on a mindful nature walk. Have them jot down all the things they notice (with their eyes and other senses), feel, and encounter along the way. Find a spot to sit and write hello poems to the nature they saw. This could be individual for older students or a class poem for younger grades. \*If you don't have a safe nature walk area around you, find a high-quality video to share.



# The Arguers

★ “Spare, witty, snipped sentences portray all, making this a perfect read-aloud—and no one can argue with that.”

—*School Library Journal*, starred review



## THEME FOCUS

- arguing for argument's sake
- being a good community member
- helping solve problems
- big problems vs. little problems
- absurdity & exaggeration in fairy tales
- following a crowd

## VISUAL ELEMENTS FOCUS

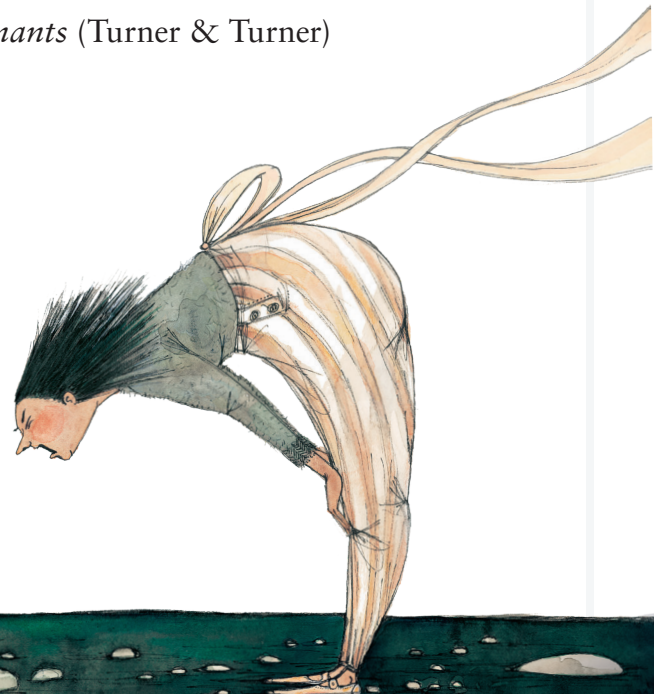
- variations in hair movement
- showing emotions through facial expressions
- variations in page compositions / layouts

### #CLASSROOMBOOKADAY Q

What do you think was the tipping point that helped resolve the main conflict in this story?

## CREATE A TEXT SET AROUND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- *Bookie & Cookie* (Gómez)
- *Draw the Line* (Otoshi)
- *The Fort* (Perdew)
- *How to Apologize* (LaRochelle & Wohnoutka)
- *I'm Sorry You Got Mad* (Lukoff & Kwon)
- *Mine!* (Fleming & Rohmann)
- *Rulers of the Playground* (Kuefler)
- *Sumo Libre* (Cepeda)
- *That's (Not) Mine* (Kang & Weyant)
- *The War Between the Vowels and the Consonants* (Turner & Turner)



## SEL Qs

*NOTE TO EDUCATORS: Be aware that sometimes the questions get personal and it may not be best for kids to answer in front of others. These can also be used as personal reflection questions during/after reading.*

### SELF-AWARENESS

- Think about a time you argued with someone. What led you to feel like you needed to argue?

### SELF-MANAGEMENT

- What are some strategies that could help you calm down when you feel yourself getting angry with someone else?

### SOCIAL AWARENESS

- How are other people affected by an argument someone is having? What happened in this book that escalated things?

### RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

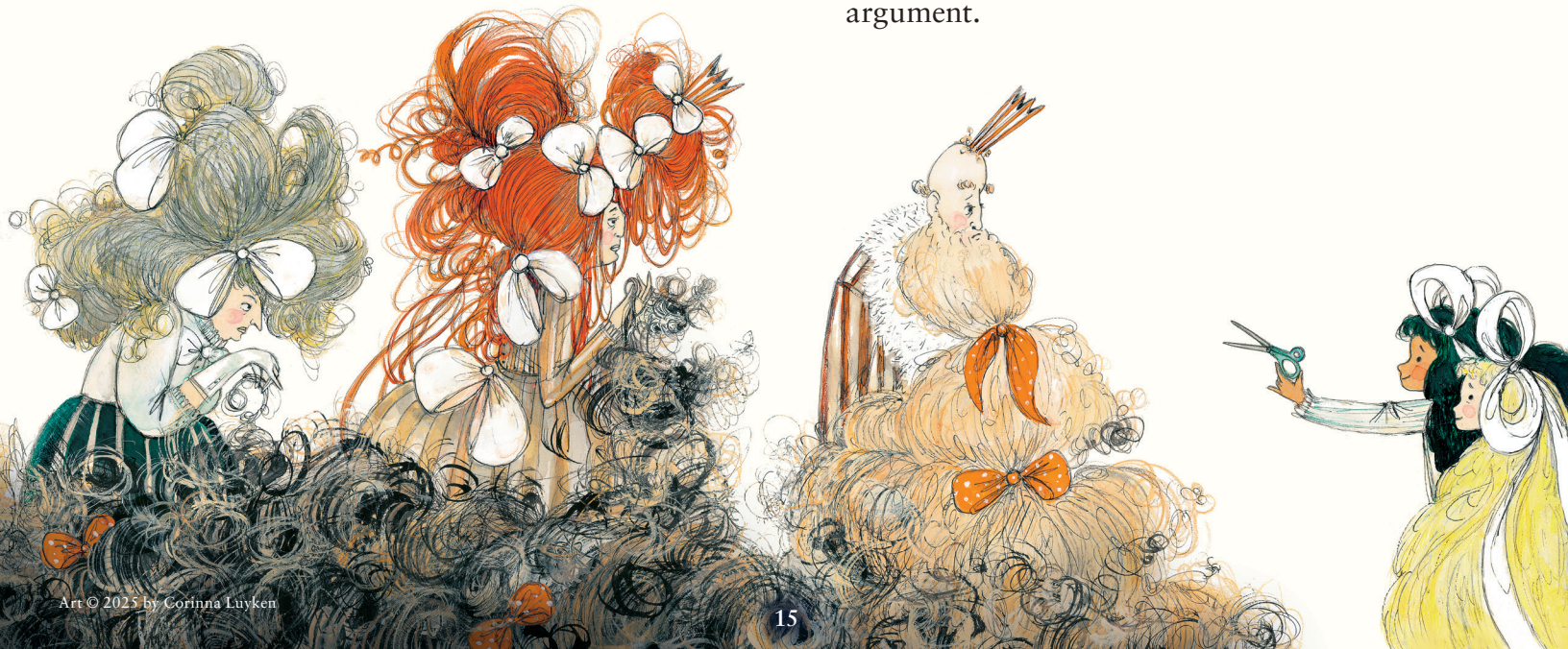
- How can you make sure everyone feels heard during an argument?

### RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

- How could they have prevented this from getting out of control?

### SUGGESTED EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- **Drawing/Art:** Divide a paper into two parts. On one side, draw two characters having an argument. Pay attention to what their facial expressions and body language would look like. On the other side of the paper, draw what these characters would look like if they were working together. You can use color, line weight, and perspective to emphasize emotions.
- **Writing:** Have students make a list of times they have argued with someone. Have them choose one that they would like to write a different beginning or ending for. They should think about their own actions during the argument and if they could have changed course or changed the outcome with their actions or comments. Reflect on whether they could have made the situation better and how they could apply that to future situations when they might be in an argument.



# About Corinna Luyken



Corinna Luyken is the author/illustrator of six picture books, *Hello, Ocean!*, *The Arguers* (a School Library Journal Best Book of the Year), *The Tree in Me* (an NCTE Notable Poetry Book and Indie Bestseller), *My Heart* (a *New York Times* Bestseller), *ABC and You and Me*, and *The Book of Mistakes* (an NPR Best Book of the Year), and the illustrator of several other books, including *Patchwork* and *Adrian Simcox Does NOT Have a Horse*. She lives in Western Washington, near the Salish Sea, with her family.

## Praise for Corinna Luyken's books

“I will read this book to every group of students I teach for the rest of my career . . . This book is absolutely magical.”

—Colby Sharp, Nerdy Book Club on *The Book of Mistakes*

★ “Sensitive, stunning words and pictures speak directly to young hearts.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review for *My Heart*

“Luminous and joyous, a fruit pie feast for the eyes as well as the soul.”

—*New York Times Book Review* on *The Tree in Me*

“The art is an excellent complement [with] brushy foliage that repeatedly reveals Adrian’s imaginary horse. A good conversation starter.”

—*Kirkus Reviews* on *Adrian Simcox Does NOT Have a Horse*

★ “A perfect read-aloud—and no one can argue with that.”

—*School Library Journal*, starred review of *The Arguers*



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