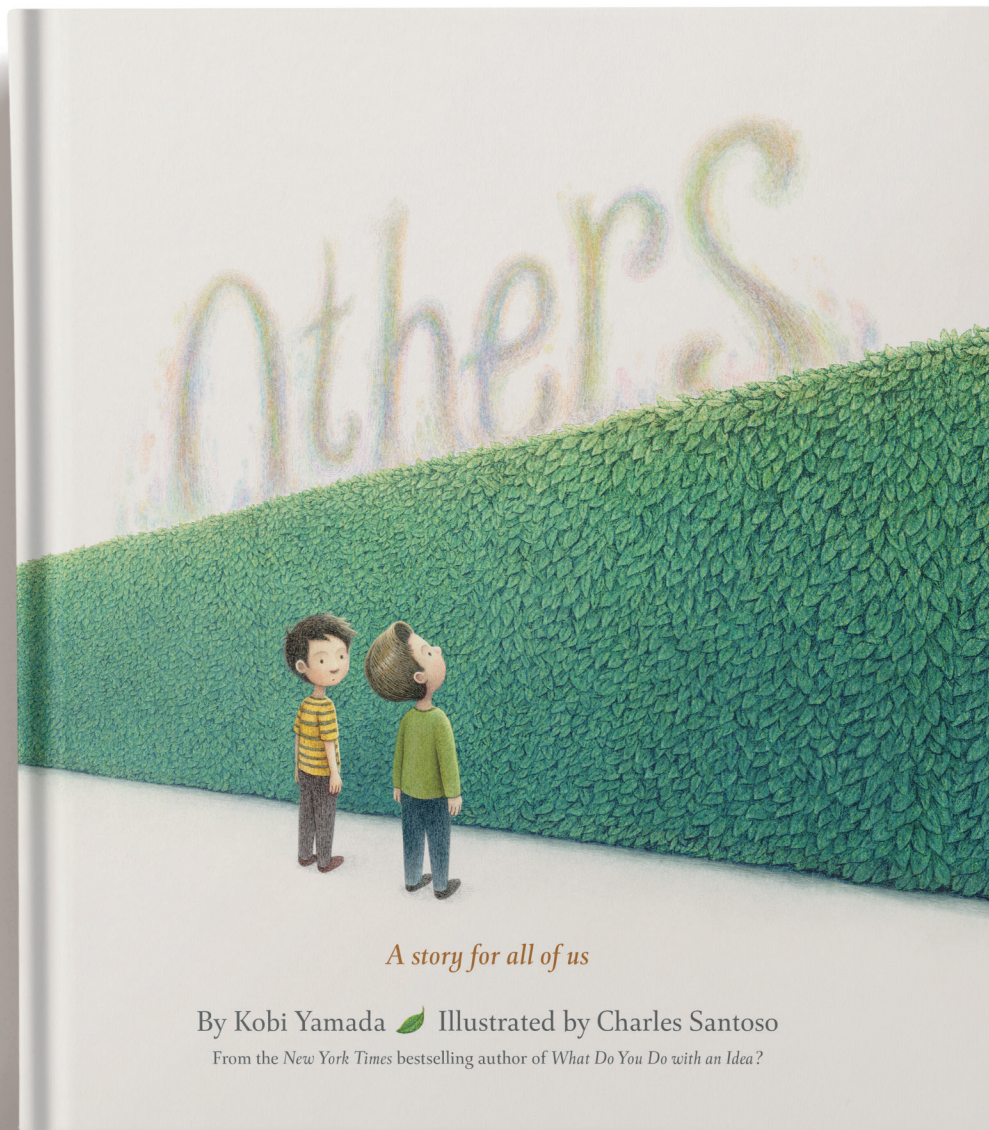


An Educator's Guide to *OTHERS* by Kobi Yamada



ABOUT THE BOOK

Standing on one side of a tall hedge, two children wonder what the people on the opposite side are like. “They’re not like us,” the brown-haired boy in the green shirt insists. The black-haired boy in the striped shirt wonders: “How are they different? Do they have scales and feathers? . . . Do they have sticky tentacles? . . . Do they have hearts and brains like we do? . . . Do you think they think and feel?” As the children imagine who the “others” might be, their conversation reveals how powerful it is to question ideas about differences.

Others is a thoughtful picture book that invites readers to examine how assumptions and misunderstandings can stand in the way of connection. Through simple language and expressive illustration, it opens meaningful conversation about perspectives, empathy, and belonging. In the classroom it can be used to help students reflect on their assumptions, how they approach differences (fear vs. curiosity), help make connections with classmates, and develop a deeper understanding of the diverse world they share.

AGE RANGE:

4–8 years | Grades Pre-K–3

THEMES:

Empathy | Belonging and connection | Assumptions | Diversity

WHAT WE LOVE ABOUT THE BOOK:

Gentle humor | Inspires curiosity | Challenges perspectives | Showcases shared humanity



ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR



Kobi Yamada is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *What Do You Do with an Idea?*, *Finding Muchness*, *Because I Had a Teacher*, and many other bestselling, award-winning books. In addition to being the creator of inspiring books and products, he is also the president of Compendium. He lives with his family in the Pacific Northwest.



Charles Santoso loves drawing little things in his little journal and dreaming about funny, wondrous stories. He gathers inspiration from his childhood memories and curiosities he discovers in his everyday travels. He is the creator of *Happy Hippo* and has illustrated many books, including *Finding Muchness* by Kobi Yamada and the *New York Times* bestseller *Odder*. He lives in Singapore.

author photos by Paul Gibson



READ AND TALK ABOUT *OTHERS*

This book is an opportunity to remind the kids in your classroom that you think of them not just as students, but as fellow humans! And as humans, we all have feelings, including sometimes feeling scared or unsure about people or things that we can't see, or don't yet know or understand.

Use *Others* to help students explore how those feelings can change when we slow down, ask questions, and imagine what life might be like from another person's point of view.

As you read *Others* together, keep in mind these ways of exploring the story to help students connect it to their own experiences:

- How we think about ourselves and think about others
- How reflecting on our thinking and feelings deepens our understanding of ourselves and others
- How we can use questions to learn about the way the world is and to imagine what the world could be
- How we can learn to see things from someone else's perspective



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Use these questions to help spark conversation and encourage students to share their ideas. Also give them the chance to ask and answer questions of their own, letting students know you are interested in hearing what they think.

- What questions are being asked in *Others*? What questions do you find yourself asking?
- Why do you think the brown-haired boy in the green shirt is so sure that “others” are different? What questions would you ask the brown-haired boy about why he thinks the “others” are so different? How do your questions compare with the questions asked by the black-haired boy in the striped shirt?
- The boys are separated from the “others” by a tall hedge. Why do you think the author and illustrator chose to put something in the way of seeing the others? What do you think the hedge might stand for? How might not being able to see someone affect what we think about them?
- How do you get ideas about people you see or spend time with, like people at school or in your neighborhood? How do you get ideas about people you don’t see very often or who live far away from you? How do you think other people get ideas about you?
- What do you notice about how the boys talk to each other? Do they listen to each other? How do their ideas change as they talk?
- What do you think of how the black-haired boy in the striped shirt imagines what “others” might be like? Why do you think he decides to investigate what is on the other side of the hedge?
- How do people sometimes decide things without having all the information? Have you ever felt sure about something before you knew if it was really that way? Why do you think that happens?
- Why do you think the brown-haired boy becomes less sure about how “others” are different as the story goes on? What in the book makes you think that he is changing his mind?
- After the black-haired boy goes over the hedge, the boys disagree about who is “here” and who is “there.” Why do you think each boy feels like he is “here”? What does this tell us about how where you are can change how you see things?
- The story ends with the question: “Maybe we are all here together?” Why do you think the author wrote it as a question? What do you think that means? How might being “all here together” change the way we think about others?

ACTIVITIES TO EXPLORE OTHERS

CIRCLE AROUND

Help students understand that while we are each unique, we also have a lot in common. In this activity, students respond to a series of identity statements by stepping into a circle if the statement describes them or staying in place if it does not, allowing everyone to see patterns of similarities and differences.

You'll need to develop statements that reflect the diversity and shared experiences of your students as well as some of the statements below drawn from *Others*. Start off the activity with statements that highlight where students might have differences, such as favorite activities, foods, pets, or places they live, then move toward statements that show what everyone has in common.

As students respond, encourage them to notice who is inside the circle and who is not, without discussion or judgment. After all the statements have been read, reflect as a group on what they noticed about how they are similar and different, and how shared humanity connects them.



VARIATION: Have students raise their hands or stand up in place—whatever works best so that students can see each other's responses.

STATEMENTS DRAWN DIRECTLY FROM *OTHERS* COULD INCLUDE:

- I have a head and body.
- I have scales.
- I have feathers.
- I have a big bushy tail.
- I have sticky tentacles.
- I have a motor and wheels.
- I have a heart and a brain.
- I think and feel.
- I cry when I am sad.
- I cry sometimes when I mess things up or feel embarrassed.
- I get hurt feelings.
- I feel lonely sometimes.
- I get scared sometimes.
- I have a hard time sleeping sometimes.
- I have a family.
- I have a birthday.



ACTIVITIES TO EXPLORE OTHERS

TWO SIDES TO THE STORY

In this activity, students observe and draw a partner before creating a self-portrait, exploring and reflecting on how they see “others”, how others see them, and how they see themselves.

Pair students up and have them sit facing each other. Make sure each student has their own piece of paper that’s been folded in half and a marker. Partners will take turns observing and drawing one another. Ask them to take a quiet moment to look at each other’s faces and think about what they notice. To loosen things up, invite everyone to make a few silly faces together before refocusing.

Students should then draw their partners on the left side of the folded paper. Once finished drawing their partner, have pairs exchange papers and draw a self-portrait opposite their partner-drawn portrait. Provide mirrors and encourage students to notice their own faces and draw with the same care.

After the self-portraits are complete, have partners exchange papers again and talk about what they see versus what their partner saw, and what they want others to see about them. Students can ask questions to discover new things they wouldn’t know just by looking at their partner. Give time for them to reflect and then add additional pictures, symbols, words, etc. to their partner’s portrait.

How do these additions deepen their understanding of one another and what they show beyond first impressions? Come together as a group to share what students learned about their partners and themselves and what it takes to learn about someone else as well as how first impressions do not always tell the whole story.



VARIATION: Put the focus completely on learning about “others” by having students use the outside of their folded paper to draw (or write) what their partner looks like and the inside to draw or write things they’ve noticed or learned by asking questions about their partner, such as what they enjoy or ways they are kind.



ACTIVITIES TO EXPLORE *OTHERS*

WHAT'S THERE?

In *Others*, the black-haired boy in the striped shirt gets curious and climbs over the hedge to see what's there. Help kids express their own curiosity about the world around them with a display that highlights people, cultures, and places they want to learn more about.

Start by sharing a large world map and locating your community on it. Invite students to talk about where they live and share experiences or places in their community that are important or special to them. Mark your community on the map.

Next, ask students to name and briefly describe places anywhere in the world they have visited or may have heard about through stories, family connections, travel, or the media. As students share, mark each place on the map. Then provide sticky notes and invite them to use the map as a space for sharing whatever it is they wonder about these—or any other—places.

Each week, select a few questions to investigate as a class. Have **EXPLORATION STATIONS** (see page 9 for more info) set up with picture books, maps, images, short videos, music recordings, simple nonfiction texts, and more. As students research and rotate through the stations, encourage them to notice how people live and what makes each place special, such as food, music, clothing, languages, celebrations, homes, and games.

To guide their explorations, ask them to list or draw things they learn about the people and culture of a place. Have students share their discoveries with the class and add new information or pictures to the map, bringing the class discussion back to the similarities and differences they notice with their own community.



VARIATION: Turn your classroom into another country! Choose a country together, then create experiences that let students imagine what it might be like to live or visit there. Invite them to dance to music, try out simple greetings, explore sights and objects from homes or markets through videos or artifacts, taste or pretend to taste traditional foods, play a children's game from that country, and watch short clips of celebrations or daily life. Encourage students to imagine themselves living, playing, and celebrating in that country, noticing what is similar to and different from their own community.





Exploration Station Resources:

National Geographic Kids: Destination World

kids.nationalgeographic.com/videos/topic/destination-world

National Geographic Kids: Explore Countries

kids.nationalgeographic.com/geography/countries

One Globe Kids

oneglobekids.org/

PBS KIDS: Let's Go Luna!

pbslearningmedia.org/collection/luna-pbskids/

PBS LearningMedia: World Cultures

pbslearningmedia.org/collection/world-cultures-pbskids/

The Plate Show Podcast

pbslearningmedia.org/collection/theplateshowpodcast/

Read Your World: Cultural & Geographic Perspectives

readyourworld.org/multicultural-reading-resources/diversity-book-lists-for-kids/#geography



ACTIVITIES TO EXPLORE *OTHERS*

HERE AND THERE

Explore the idea of “here” and “there” and how the meaning of these words changes as you move your own place and perspective. Start with rereading *Others* and focusing on how the characters use “here” and “there,” inviting students to not just notice the words themselves but also how the speaker’s location and perspective shapes what those words mean. Then share one or both Sesame Street videos (below) that explain “here” and “there” and talk about how the words express presence, relationship, and point of view. Ask students how the characters in the book and the videos feel about these words. Does one word make them feel a part of what’s happening? Does one create distance or separation?

Pair students up to invent and demonstrate their own explanations of “here” and “there.” They can use props, drawings, or they can role-play to show how location and perspective affect meaning. Afterward bring the class together to reflect on what they noticed. Point out that “here” and “there” help us show where we are, how we see things, and how we relate to others. Encourage them to keep noticing how “here” and “there” change depending on perspective.

Sesame Street: Grover And Herry Explain Here & There

[youtube.com/watch?v=9m-kbBamg_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9m-kbBamg_U)

Sesame Street: Brian & Kermit Here And There

[youtube.com/watch?v=qk4s38mnu5s&t=2s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qk4s38mnu5s&t=2s)



INSPIRE MORE CURIOSITY AND CONNECTION WITH OTHERS

In your classroom: Family Album

Invite student families to create and share a short digital family album. Families choose photos that highlight important moments—such as celebrations, hobbies, outings, pets, favorite places, or everyday activities—and add short captions or descriptions. For students who may not have photos readily available, provide a digital camera or other device for capturing current home or community experiences. When albums are ready, have students present them to the class. Encourage questions and conversation to learn more about each other’s lives, reflect on what makes each family special, and celebrate the diversity of families in the community. (Note: Before any photo sharing begins, follow your school’s photo release permissions for use in the classroom.)

In your community: Senior Reading Buddies

Help students get to know and build meaningful connections with older adults in your community through shared reading and conversation. Partner with a nearby senior center, assisted living program, or retirement home, and plan a series of visits (either in person or online) where students read to seniors, seniors read to students, and both share and compare perspectives as they discuss stories together. Prepare students beforehand with discussion prompts and clear expectations so they feel confident and comfortable engaging with their reading buddies. Encourage students to ask questions about their senior partner’s experiences, such as favorite childhood books, places they’ve lived, or memorable celebrations, so they can discover more about each other’s stories.

Around the world: Pen Pals

Connecting with pen pals gives students valuable opportunities to learn about and celebrate different cultures, perspectives, and everyday experiences while fostering potential long-term friendships. Collaborate with organizations or educational platforms that facilitate pen pal exchanges—such as ePals (epals.com), Global PenFriends (globalpenfriends.com), and PenPal Schools (penpalschools.com)—or follow the example of “A Pen Pal Project for Elementary School” (edutopia.org/article/pen-pal-project-elementary-school) and start your own. Another approach is exchanging photos and descriptions of ordinary or special days with another classroom through iEARN’s One Day in the Life program (projects.us.learn.org/project/one-day-in-the-life). Encourage students to reflect on their pen pal experiences by sharing stories, surprises, and discoveries with their classmates.



Together Earth Venn Diagram

Make copies and share the reproducible Together Earth Venn diagram to help visually demonstrate similarities and differences and reinforce the final question in *Others*:

"Maybe we are all here together?"

These circles look like planet Earth with one Earth for writing or drawing general characteristics of "others," the people you find everywhere in the world, and the other Earth for writing or drawing the characteristics of "you," including the student's own interests and experiences.

The place where the Earths overlap is for things that you have in common with others, like feelings, hearts and brains, birthdays, or needs such as food, water, and sleep.

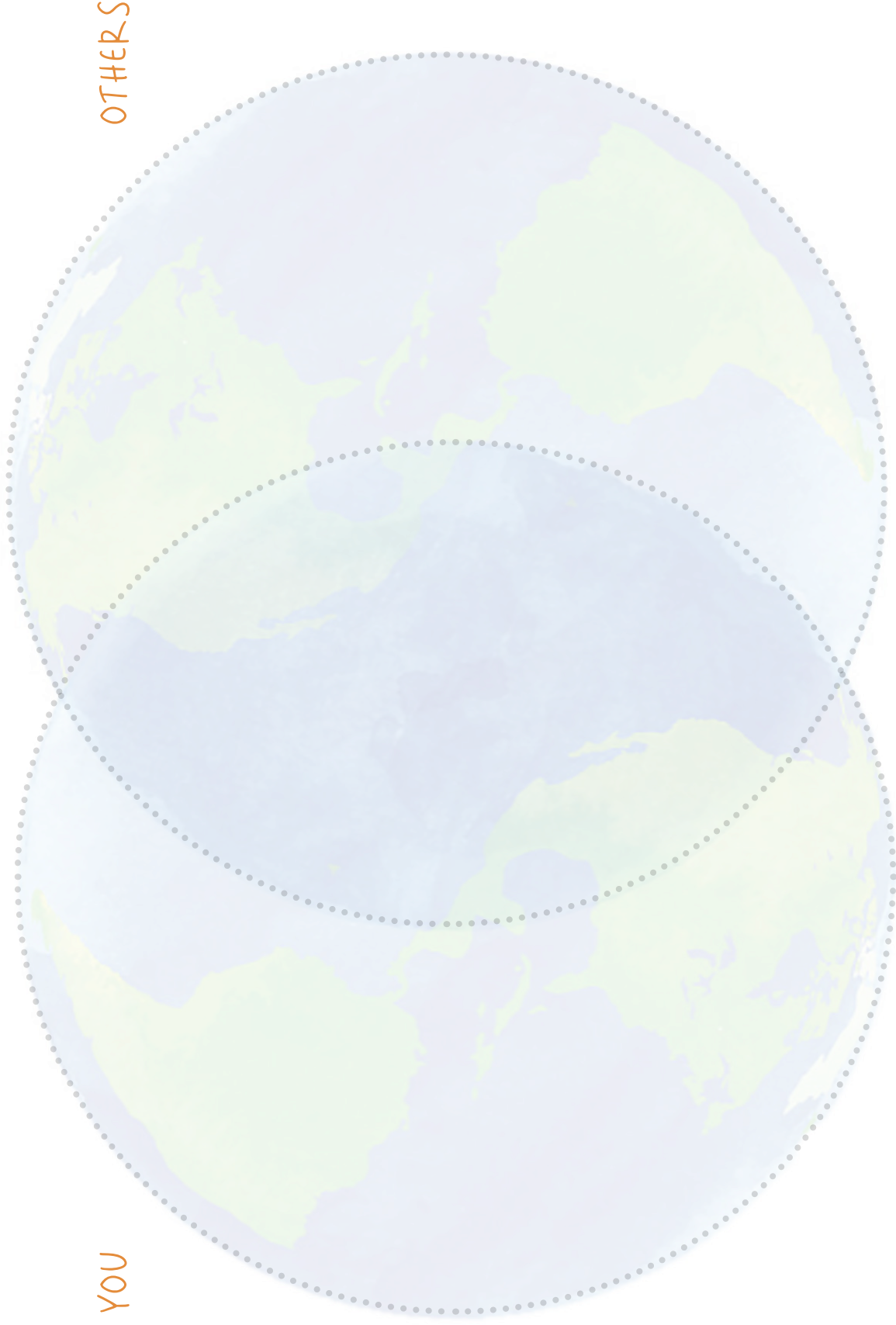
You'll want to help students understand that the "others" circle is for things they know some people have or do, but that they don't.

After students complete their diagrams, have them share and compare with a partner.

Use this time to reinforce that people all over the world, including the person sitting next to them, have many things in common and are part of the same world, even though each person also has their own unique interests and experiences.



My Together Earth by



See what you have in common with others! Where the Earth circles overlap in the middle is where you write or draw things almost everyone has or does. The “you” circle is for things about you. The “others” circle is for things you know some people have or do, but you don’t.

Q&A WITH *OTHERS* AUTHOR, KOBI YAMADA

Can you share how your personal experiences inspired and shaped *Others*?

At its heart, *Others* is a book about empathy and perspective. I believe in the goodness of people, and I believe we don't have to know someone personally to care about them. I wanted *Others* to encourage that goodness and to inspire more curiosity and connection with people all over the world.

I grew up as a mixed-race child whose own father spent much of his early childhood imprisoned in a Japanese American internment camp. This painful history was never really spoken about in our family, but the impact was felt, nonetheless.

I think we all have a desire to be seen and to feel like we belong. I know I do. It's terrible to be misjudged or misunderstood. I think we all benefit tremendously by being open and willing to get to know others and to be part of building community. I've been fortunate to travel extensively and to meet people from different cultures and different parts of the world. Those who are welcoming, kind, and curious went from being strangers to dear friends and have made a lasting impact on me.



What drove you to bring this particular story into the world at this moment?

I decided to write *Others* because it seems that we are constantly hearing about our separateness. This can lead to more judgment and misunderstanding. It is my hope that *Others* might foster more interest and compassion in the people we don't know yet.

I wanted this book to encourage more connection to our common humanity.

This book is packed full of special moments for any reader. Do you have a personal favorite?

One of my favorite moments in *Others* is when one of the two main characters decides to stop making assumptions about the people on the other side of the hedge and instead decides to climb over and see for himself.

I think this is such an important life lesson: We all need to find out for ourselves what we're curious about. It's important that we all take an active role in our own learning.

We may discover that things and people can be different than what we assumed.

Who did you write *Others* for?

I believe picture books can have an ageless quality. A picture book is a great way for readers to explore other ways of seeing and doing things. Things like creativity, courage, and a growth mindset. These are essential life skills.

And because they are skills, we can grow and develop them throughout our lives. With that in mind, I write all my books for a dual audience, both for the children reading the book and the adults who might be sharing the book with them. I think there's tremendous value in these shared perspectives and conversations that can come from a picture book.

Go Behind the Scenes with *Others* Illustrator, Charles Santoso

sites.prh.com/behind-the-scenes-with-charles-santoso



You, Me, and Over There

Draw yourself
and a friend

Draw what
you think is
on the other
side of the
hedge

