



"At the end of the day, no matter where we come from or how we got here...we're all just human beings."—MJ Calderon (author)

How do I talk to young kids about Immigration?



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An Introductory Lesson Guide for Grades K–2 to Be Used Alongside *A Kids Book About Immigration* by MJ Calderon

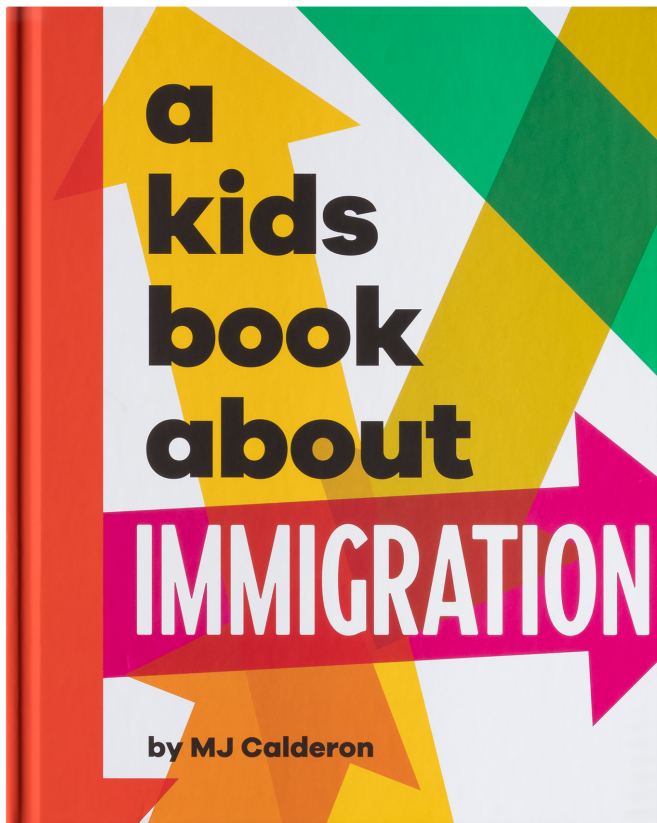
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Jessica Danelson Onyegam holds a B.A. in Bilingual/ESL Education and is a former bilingual early childhood educator with more than a decade of teaching experience. Her time spent in the classroom centered around teaching the whole child with an emphasis on relationship building, embracing cultural diversity, and navigating crucial conversations. She currently lives in Austin, Texas where she manages curriculum and continues to advocate for policy and systems changes that benefit ALL kids.

Dear Educator,

How do we convey to kids what immigration really means? How do we explain all the difficult decisions people make when they choose to leave their home country to start over somewhere new? *A Kids Book About Immigration*—read alongside the use of this guide—will help! The book breaks down many of the complexities of immigration while reminding us all that, no matter where we come from, we are all human and should be treated as such.

A Kids Book About Immigration is meant to be an *introduction* to the topic. Continue to reference culturally relevant children’s literature and other materials throughout the year to continue the conversation and to foster student (and adult) learning. Thank you for taking the time to prioritize these crucial conversations in your classroom!





Educational Standards

This book can be integrated into a variety of different areas of Kindergarten-Grade 2 curricula, including, but not limited to, National English Language Arts, Social Studies, and Civics standards. The following are National Civics and Social Studies Standards:

- Center for Civic Education: National Standards for Civics and Government (K-4) Content Standards:
 - (I) What is government and what should it do?
 - E. What are the purposes of rules and laws?
 - (II) What are the basic values and principles of American democracy?
 - C. Why is it important for Americans to share certain values, principles, and beliefs?
 - D. What are the benefits of diversity in the United States?
 - E. How should conflicts about diversity be prevented or managed?
 - F. How can people work together to promote the values and principles of American democracy?
 - (V) What are the roles of the citizen in American democracy?
 - C. What are important rights in the United States?
 - D. What are important responsibilities of Americans?
 - E. What dispositions or traits of character are important to the preservation and improvement of American democracy?



Educational Standards (Cont.)

- National Council for Social Studies: College Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies Standards
 - Dimension: Civics
 - D2.Civ.2.K-2. Explain how all people, not just official leaders, play important roles in a community.
 - D2.Civ.7.K-2. Apply civic virtues when participating in school settings.
 - D2.Civ.9.K-2. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions while responding attentively to others when addressing ideas and making decisions as a group.
 - D2.Civ.10.K-2. Compare their own point of view with others' perspectives.
 - Dimension: Geography
 - D2.Geo.7.K-2. Explain why and how people, goods, and ideas move from place to place.
 - D2.Geo.9.K-2. Describe the connections between the physical environment of a place and the economic activities found there.
 - D2.Geo.12.K-2. Identify ways that a catastrophic disaster may affect people living in a place.



Instructional Planning & Tips

- *English Language Arts standards are embedded throughout this lesson, and, depending on the purpose of the read aloud, can address all domains of literacy: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For more information, reference your state educational standards. You can also reference the national Common Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy K–5 for more information.*
- *A Kids Book About Immigration is a great addition to any Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curricula. According to CASEL, SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. SEL opportunities are embedded throughout this lesson, especially within opportunities for student talk, so be sure you are allowing ample time for students to reflect, connect, and respond throughout the reading of the book.*
- *When lesson planning, reference your state educational standards to ensure strong alignment to your grade level and content area as well, especially when discussing topics that could be mislabeled or misunderstood. Always reference your local and state education legislation and policies to have a clear understanding on any limitations that may be in place, and to allow for proper planning and facilitation of the lesson.*
- *Additional Note: Certain educational censorship laws are for teachers and affect what they can and cannot say in the classroom; this by no means limits or impacts the ability of students to discuss these topics authentically and with full transparency.*



Adult Pre-Work

Before engaging students in a conversation around immigration, the adult facilitating must have a certain level of cultural competency and comfort around the topic. This includes assessing your own biases and gaps around immigration and continuously learning about it. Be cautious of speaking in general terms about the immigrant experience, as this can vary greatly person to person, and be sure to use asset-based language (focus on people's abilities) when discussing marginalized groups of people.

Understand that some children will have connections and questions as you are reading. They may share their own experiences with immigration or those of someone they know. They may have misunderstandings or further questions. (For example, students might think all immigrants are undocumented people or are refugees.) Many times, the most common issue arises when the adult has not done the pre-work which prepares them to support, and anticipate and answer questions from, children (Remember: We don't always have all the answers!). The adult's role is to be the facilitator in this discussion, and to address any student misconceptions as they arise throughout the lesson.

Also, before reading *A Kids Book About Immigration* to kids, establish classroom norms and expectations around tolerance and respect towards others. Be sure to create a safe space where children feel comfortable sharing and asking questions.



Adult Pre-Work (Cont.)

Review the following resources **prior to teaching** to ensure you have laid the groundwork for creating a safe space for your students, and to feel confident navigating these conversations.

- “U.S. Immigration Timeline” [article](#)
“Ten Myths About Immigration”
Learning for Justice [resource](#)
- “Supporting Children From Immigrant Families” [article](#) from NAEYC

If you would like to go even deeper and further immerse and educate yourself on the topic of immigration, consider referencing these additional resources:

- “21 Must Read Books About Immigration” [article](#)
- Learning for Justice Immigration [resources](#)
- “Overview of the Fourteenth Amendment” [resource](#)

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- discuss and explain what immigration is.
- explain reasons why people immigrate.
- make connections to and inferences from the text.

Vocabulary Words

Flash cards for use in the classroom are also available for download on Learning.DK.com.

Immigration / inmigración: When you leave one country and move to another in order to live there

Advocate / advocar: To support or argue on behalf of someone or something

Legal Status / estatus legal: A person's position in society according to the law

Materials

- *A Kids Book About Immigration* by MJ Calderon
- Writing materials (paper, notebooks, pencils, colored pencils, crayons, etc.)
- "Students' Immigration Stories" [video](#)

Introduction

1

Begin by showing students the cover of *A Kids Book About Immigration* and read aloud the title and name of the author. Ask students if they have ever heard the word “immigrant.”

2

Then share the short video entitled “Students’ Immigration Stories” with pupils. Let them know it will help them learn a bit more about immigrants before reading today’s story.

3

Afterwards, ask students if they know anyone who has immigrated. Allow them to turn and talk to one another before you ask a few individuals to share with the whole group.

4

Then share how, together, you are all going to learn about the author’s personal experience with immigration.



Read Aloud Lesson

1. Begin reading *A Kids Book About Immigration* out loud to your students.
2. Read to “but in many cases, the reasons are more complicated” page. Stop and ask the students how many of them have ever moved to a new place. Ask them to turn and talk with one another about their experience, and how they felt during that experience, before asking a few to share with the whole group.
3. Continue reading to “you are an immigrant-like me and my family” page. Stop and clarify for students that, while many of us may have moved, you are an immigrant only when you move to another country. Provide an example that would be easy for them to grasp based on the region in which you live: If I moved from Washington to Oregon, I’m not an immigrant because I have only moved to another state, not a different country (reference a map as you explain to further clarify any misconceptions).
4. Continue reading to “pay a smuggler so we could join her” page. Stop and clarify for students that not all immigrant experiences are the same, and that some immigrants need to pay a smuggler to get into a new country if they do not have certain immigration papers or legal status.
5. Continue reading to “Sometimes it takes more than 10 years!” page. Explain to students that, for some families seeking to move from their home country, waiting isn’t possible due to safety, and, as we just learned, even then families might be denied entry into a new country. Encourage students to imagine how it must feel for families to make the decision to leave home under these circumstances.
6. Continue reading to “Those words are dehumanizing” page. Ask students to think about how it might make people feel when they are called mean words. What should we do when we hear someone using unkind words towards others? Ask them to turn and talk with one another, and then ask a few to share with the whole group.



Read Aloud Lesson (Cont.)

7. Continue reading to “Sometimes people might not want to talk about it” page. Ask students to consider why some people might not want to talk about their experience with immigration. Ask them to turn and talk with one another, and then ask a few to share with the whole group.
8. Continue reading to “And we disagree about our favorite celebrities” page. Ask students to think about things they do with their families. Ask them to turn and talk with one another, and then ask a few to share with the whole group. Encourage students to reflect on how very similar families can be to one another.
9. Continue reading until the end of the book. Ask students about any connections, questions, or feelings they have after reading the book. Allow students to turn and talk before engaging in a whole-class discussion. **Reference the Adult Pre-Work resources for tips and tricks around navigating a conversation about immigration. It is the job of the adult to act as a facilitator for students’ questions and comments, and to validate students’ personal experiences.*
10. Read the “About the Author” page to students, referencing the places mentioned in this section of the book on a map.
11. Ask students, “Why do you think some people might want to immigrate to the United States?” Allow students to turn and talk before prompting them to journal about their thoughts, connections, and questions. Encourage them to draw illustrations that connect to what they write.
12. At the end of the lesson, allow students to share their work with their groups and/or the whole group, depending on time.



Extension Ideas:

A Kids Book About Immigration can be integrated into various content areas and learning opportunities in the classroom such as:

- Social Studies & Civics Connections:
 - Values, principles, and beliefs of American democracy (How should people be treated and what can we do when they are being mistreated?)
 - Rights of American citizens
 - Characteristics of good citizenship
 - Functions of government
 - Real-life examples of immigrants who have influenced their community, state, and/or nation
 - Creating and interpreting timelines for immigration events in the past and present
 - Use and construct maps to describe cultural and environmental characteristics of places
 - Explain how human activities affect the cultural and environmental characteristics of places or regions
 - Compare different accounts of the same historical event
 - Compare life in the past to life today
 - Compare and contrast different points of view
 - Problem-solving and decision-making skills
 - Gather relevant information from various sources when studying a topic

- Language Arts Connections:
 - Discuss the author's purpose for writing the text
 - Ask and answer questions about key details
 - Make connections and inferences to support understanding
 - Synthesize information to create new understanding
 - Compare and contrast experiences in stories
 - Write brief comments on literary texts that demonstrate an understanding of the text
 - Interact with sources in meaningful ways, such as illustrating or writing
 - Teaching biographies/autobiographies
 - Participate in shared research and writing projects



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