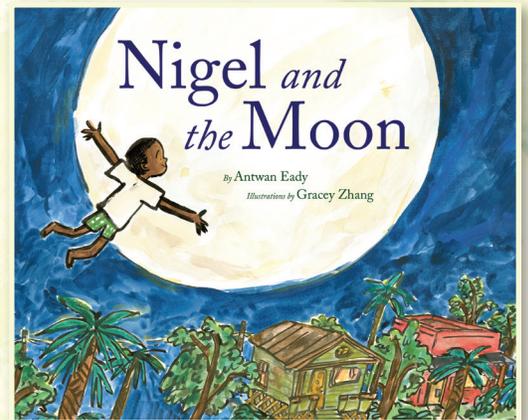
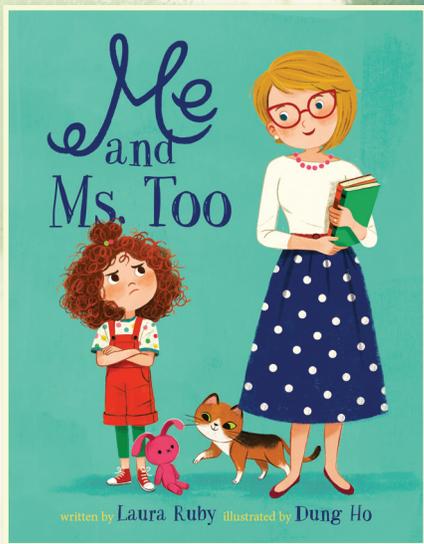


# Picture This: Family

## CLASSROOM KIT



**INCLUDES**  
downloadable posters  
for your classroom  
or library, discussion  
questions, extension  
activities, and  
curriculum tips

## Implementing a Family Picture Book Unit in the Classroom

There are as many kinds of families as there are people in the world, and nothing impacts a child's life more than family. Children's earliest thoughts, feelings, experiences, and ideas originate from the interactions they have within their family, and these set the stage for how children will engage with the broader world around them. There are a multitude of children's books that focus on family, exploring both the uniqueness of each family as well as the universal experiences that all families share. As educators, it is both our joy and responsibility to connect children with excellent books that help them celebrate family and inspire them to grow and learn alongside their own family.

### Tips For Planning & Organizing Your Unit

A picture book unit that focuses on family will involve not only the children, but of course include their family members. While we will share these stories in a classroom or library, the books encourage the children to reflect, to talk about their families, and to discuss these stories with their family members.

The books in this unit will be read aloud to young children, while older students can read the books independently, in pairs, or in small groups. Reading these books as a unit is powerful because students are given the opportunity to make connections between the stories, the characters, and their own lives.

Introduce the unit by having the children share something about their family. You can ask the children to bring in a family photo, a keepsake, or a drawing of their home or family. Discuss similarities and differences, celebrating both the diversity and universality of their families.

As you read and discuss each story, encourage the children to ask questions, to share their observations, and to articulate the connections they make between the book's characters, setting, or events and their own experiences. Then give

the children opportunities to respond to the stories in a variety of ways, perhaps using the activities featured in this guide. After reading all the books, draw comparisons between them. How are they similar? How are they different? Which was your favorite? Why?

You can read these stories aloud numerous times, because children's understanding develops gradually, and with each reading they will have new discoveries, wonderings, and reflections. (This is why children often ask us to reread their favorite stories!) Rereading the books will also be helpful when the children respond to questions about them, because they will be better equipped to cite specific details from the texts to support their answers.

These books easily lend themselves to a multidisciplinary unit of study. You can integrate reading, social studies, foreign language, and science activities into a unit centered around the books. Integrating multiple curricular areas will enrich the unit of study by providing children with a deeper learning experience.

Your picture book unit should culminate with an activity that brings the children's families together. For example, you might invite family members to come to school for a reading party, or arrange a field trip to a nearby park for a shared celebration of families.

The following picture books featured in this unit reflect the joys and challenges of belonging to a family:

- ***Hundred Years of Happiness*** by Thanh Hà Lại; illustrated by Phung Nguyen Quang & Huynh Kim Lien
- ***Me and Ms. Too*** by Laura Ruby; illustrated by Dung Ho
- ***Nigel and the Moon*** by Antwan Eady; illustrated by Gracey Zhang

Teaching Materials in this kit were prepared by Sue Ornstein, an educational consultant with more than 30 years of elementary teaching experience.

# Hundred Years of Happiness



*Written by*  
Thanhà Lại

*Illustrated by*  
Phung Nguyên Quang and Huynh Kim Liên



# Hundred Years of Happiness

By Thanh Hà Lại; Illustrated by Phung Nguyễn Quang & Huynh Kim Liên

## About the Book

An lives with her parents and grandparents, and she loves her family's Vietnamese traditions. But An's grandmother has become distant and forgetful, sometimes not even recognizing that An is her granddaughter. An and her family hope that by cooking a special treat that dates back to her grandparents' wedding, it will help to awaken her grandmother's memory and bring her back to them, even if only for a little while.

## Discussion Questions

- Read the second page of the story, focusing on the description of Bà: "...a blankness claims her expression and a thin smoke clouds her eyes...At times Bà forgets who An is." How has Bà changed as she ages?
- What are gấc seeds? Why are they important to Ông?
- What steps do Ông and An follow to grow the gấc fruits?
- What special power do An and Ông think Bà has?
- What are gấc fruits like? What do An and Ông make with them?
- How does Bà react when she tastes the sticky rice?
- How do Ông and An feel when Bà remembers her wedding?
- Do you know anyone whose memory has changed with age? How would/does it make you feel? How can you help that person?

## Extension Activities

**Asked and Answered.** Have the children interview a grandparent or older relative to learn about their life growing up. They can ask questions about their grandparent's childhood, country of origin, traditions, and best memories. Have the children write down the questions and answers to share with the group. Then discuss the similarities and differences between their grandparents' experiences.

**What's Cooking?** In this story, xôi gấc is a beloved family recipe. Show the children the recipe at the back of the book. Then, have the children ask their parents, grandparents, or other relatives if the family has their own special recipes. Ask the children to bring a recipe into school, and then collate the recipes to create a class cookbook to distribute to the children. As an extension, schedule a Family Food Festival during which the children bring in a food to share with the class. (For this activity, the foods' ingredients must be listed in case any of the children have allergies.)

**Plant a Seed.** Discuss how An and her grandfather plant the special gấc seeds together to grow the fruit they need for their recipe. Then make a class chart of fruits and vegetables that the children might like to grow. Choose several from the list (or have the children vote to determine which are the most popular choices) and bring those seed packets into the classroom. Provide each child with a small cup, soil, and a seed of their choice. Have the children plant their seeds in an individual cup. Have the children care for their seed and observe its growth.

**Just the Facts.** Show the children where Vietnam is located on a map. Using books or Internet resources, research the country of Vietnam and list facts on a chart. Then as a group, compose an informational piece about Vietnam. Introduce the structure of a topic sentence, related facts, and a closing sentence. As an extension, have the children choose another country to research as a group or individually, and then have them compose their own informational piece about the country.

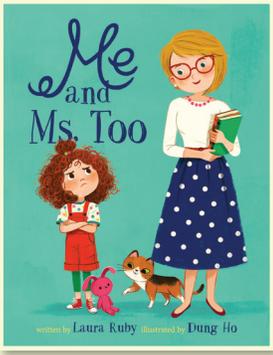


# Me and Ms. Too



By **Laura Ruby**

Illustrated by **Dung Ho**



# Me and Ms. Too

By Laura Ruby; Illustrated by Dung Ho

## About the Book

For as long as she can remember, it's always been just Molly and her dad. But when Ms. Blue marries her father and joins in their activities, Molly is upset. Must Ms. Blue always come too? Molly is unhappy until she realizes that families come in all shapes and sizes, and perhaps she is ready for her own family to grow and change.

## Discussion Questions

- Look at the illustrations on the pages before the story begins. What do you think is happening? How is Molly feeling? How can you tell?
- After Molly's Dad marries Ms. Too, what are some things that changed? How does Molly feel about these changes?
- How does Molly feel at the wedding? What does her dad say about their new family?
- How does Ms. Too get her nickname?
- What happens when Molly and Ms. Too visit the zoo? What does Molly realize?
- How do Molly's feelings and actions change?
- How does Ms. Too change?
- What makes a family a family?

## Extension Activities

**Fun with Favorites.** Ask the children about Molly's favorite activities and list them on a chart (e.g., baking, swimming, going to the zoo, swinging, reading). Have the children choose which of these activities they like best. They should indicate their choice in some way, such as adding a tally mark or posting a sticky note beneath their preferred activity. Analyze and discuss the data. How can this information be organized and shared? As a class, create a graph to represent the data. Then discuss the results. Which activity is the most favorite? The least favorite? How many more votes did the most popular choice get than the others? How does a graph make it easier to discuss data?

**The Joy of Reading.** Discuss how Molly loves to go to the library and select her favorite books. Organize a Book Day during which the children will have the opportunity to share one of their favorite books with the class. You can visit the library so the children can choose a book, or have them bring in a favorite book from home. The children should create a

poster to accompany their book. It should include a summary of the book and why it is their favorite. Younger children can make a drawing about their book. Have the children share their books with each other and together celebrate the joy of reading!

**A Tree Grows.** Discuss how families come in all shapes and sizes, and how Molly's family grew when her father married Ms. Blue. Draw a family tree to show the relationships in Molly's family. Then tell the children they will be making their own family tree. First, they will need to gather information about their family members and bring it to school. Then they will use that information to create their family tree. For younger students, provide a template for the family tree. Older students can also use a template, or they can draw the family tree themselves. Display the family trees in the classroom so the children can see how many different kinds of families there are.

**Tell Me a Story.** In this book, Molly tells the story of her father marrying Ms. Blue. She includes details and events, and she describes how these events made her feel. She also explains how her relationship with Ms. Blue changed over time. Discuss how these are the elements of a good personal narrative story. Personal narratives are most interesting when they focus on a problem or change in the main character's life. Ask the children to think about something that happened with their family and then write a personal narrative about it. They should write about a problem (e.g., the family dog keeps running away) or a change (e.g., a new baby sister or brother joins the family) and describe what happened. Their stories should have a beginning, middle, and end, and they should include details to bring the story to life. Have the children share their stories by displaying them or reading them aloud to their classmates.

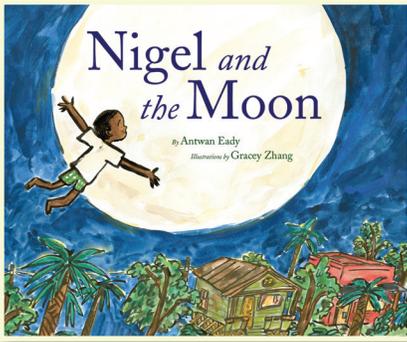


# Nigel *and the* Moon



*By* Antwan Eady

*Illustrations by* Gracey Zhang



# Nigel and the Moon

By Antwan Eady; Illustrated by Gracey Zhang

## About the Book

Nigel has big dreams, but he only tells them to the moon. Nigel feels different from his classmates, and he is worried that they will make fun of his dreams or laugh at his parents' jobs during career week. But Nigel is surprised to learn that he and his classmates are more connected than he thought, and that finding his voice and sharing his dreams is not actually scary at all!

## Discussion Questions

- What are Nigel's dreams? Why does he share his dreams only with the moon?
- What is career week? How does Nigel feel when he and his schoolmates travel to the library to read about different jobs?
- What do you notice about Nigel and his classmates? How do you think Nigel feels?
- Nigel thinks about telling the world his dreams, but he "quivers at the thought." What does this mean? Why does he feel this way?
- What jobs do Nigel's classmates' parents have?
- What are Nigel's parents' jobs?
- What happens on the final day of career week?
- What does Nigel realize about his parents' jobs? What does he realize about his own dreams?
- How do you think Nigel feels after he shares his dreams with the class?

## Extension Activities

**When I Grow Up.** Discuss Nigel and his classmates' dreams for their future. Ask the children what jobs their parents have, and then ask them to think about what they might want to be when they grow up. Have them write a narrative about why they made this choice. As an extension, plan a Career Day in which the students come dressed as their future occupation. Or, as in Nigel's class, invite parents to school to talk about their careers.

**Book It.** Just as Nigel's class goes to the library to read books about different jobs, you can plan a class trip to the library. As an alternative, you can bring a collection of books about jobs into the classroom. Have the children read several of these books and discuss the jobs featured in the book. Are they interested in those jobs? Why or why not? How are the jobs similar? How are they different?

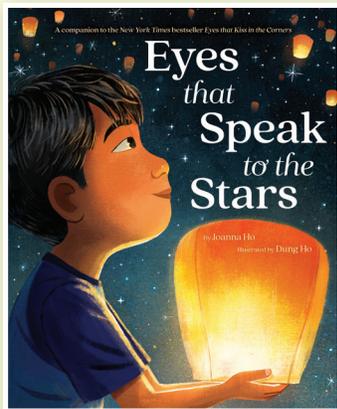
## I am Special.

Nigel feels different than his classmates. Discuss why this might be. Also discuss how everyone is different from each other, but that this is what makes each of us special and unique. Discuss how Nigel is special and ask the children to think about why they are also special. Have them write about why they are unique and add illustrations to accompany their writing. Younger children can dictate their thoughts to an adult and then add the illustrations.

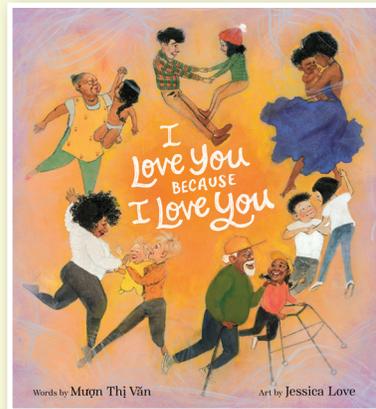
**Moonlight, Starlight.** When Nigel looks out at the night sky, he sees the moon and it brings him comfort. Discuss what else Nigel might see in the night sky (e.g., stars and constellations, planets, clouds, different phases of the moon). Ask the children what they see in the sky at night. Have them observe the night sky at home and prepare to share their observations with the class the next day. They can orally share what they saw in the night sky, but also draw or paint their observations. Older students can write about their observations of the night sky.



# More Picture Books Centered Around Family



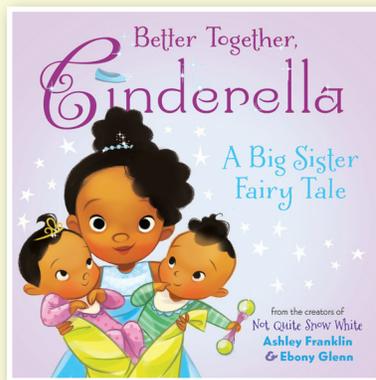
**Eyes that Speak to the Stars**  
By Joanna Ho  
Illustrated by Dung Ho



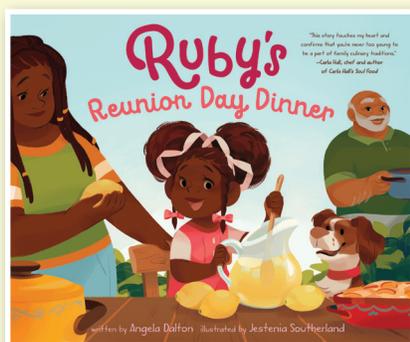
**I Love You Because I Love You**  
By Mỵn Thi Vn  
Illustrated by Jessica Love



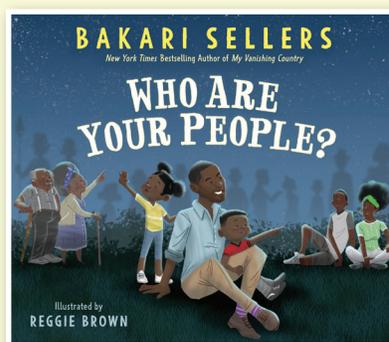
**When Lola Visits**  
By Michelle Sterling  
Illustrated by Aaron Asis



**Better Together, Cinderella**  
By Ashley Franklin  
Illustrated by Ebony Glenn



**Ruby's Reunion Day Dinner**  
By Angela Dalton  
Illustrated by Jestenia Southerland



**Who Are Your People?**  
By Bakari Sellers  
Illustrated by Reggie Brown