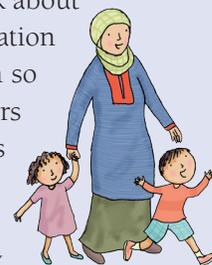


A note from author Robie H. Harris

A Picture Book Conversation About Diversity

Over the years, I have had the wonderful opportunity to create many books for children. And I have had the privilege to hear not only from children about these books, but from parents, educators, librarians, health professionals, and clergy. So many people have said that my books spark the very conversations these adults want to have with children. These are often conversations that adults anticipate will be difficult because the issues involved can be complicated and hard to talk about. Yet these are issues that many adults feel need to be talked about with children. The books I write deal with the topics children, even young children, wonder about, think about, and have questions about. I write about these topics in honest, accurate, and age-appropriate ways and I always include the voices of children.

I wrote *Who We Are! All About Being the Same and Being Different*, a nonfiction picture book about diversity illustrated by Nadine Bernard Westcott, as a way to have just this type of conversation with young children, who are continually trying to understand how all of us are alike in so many ways and different in other ways. Young children spend many of their waking hours trying to make sense of the world they live in. They think about and have endless questions about who they are and who all the other people in their lives are. Early childhood is also a time when young children think about making friends, how they wish to be treated by others, and how others wish to be treated by them. It's when they can begin to learn how to treat someone with respect, especially someone they may meet or see for the very first time and/or who may look or be different from them.



While much that happens in the lives of today's young children is exciting and fun, sometimes their world can be confusing or scary. A young child may hear reports on the radio or see bits of the news on TV and on other digital media, or overhear older kids and adults talking about major news events—local, national, or international. Many of these events now fuel and will continue to fuel a national conversation about diversity, even though young children might not know just what that word means. Given that young children experience diversity and also hear about issues surrounding diversity, it behooves us to listen to and talk with them in their early years about this topic. If we do so, there's a chance that they will be able to figure out ways to get along with others in the diverse world in which they live. Sharing this book with a young child can help spark conversations about diversity and also be a helpful way to respond to a young child's questions or concerns.



My hope is that we have created a book in which all young children can find themselves and that speaks to every child. I also hope that our book will help young children understand why it matters to respect others. And I hope it will spark further conversations about diversity at home, at preschools and daycare centers, early elementary school classrooms, libraries, community centers, healthcare settings, religious institutions, and even among young children themselves. As our nation continues to become even more diverse, and the world becomes even more interconnected, it also matters that children are helped to embrace this diversity so that as they become older, they can become active citizens in our democracy and participants in the larger world in which we all live.



—**Robie H. Harris**, author of *What's So Yummy?*, *What's In There?*, *Who's In My Family?*, *Who Has What?*, *It's NOT the Stork!*, *It's So Amazing!*, and *It's Perfectly Normal*