



amazeworks

CAGED

**Lesson for Educators and
Caregivers**

amazeworks.org

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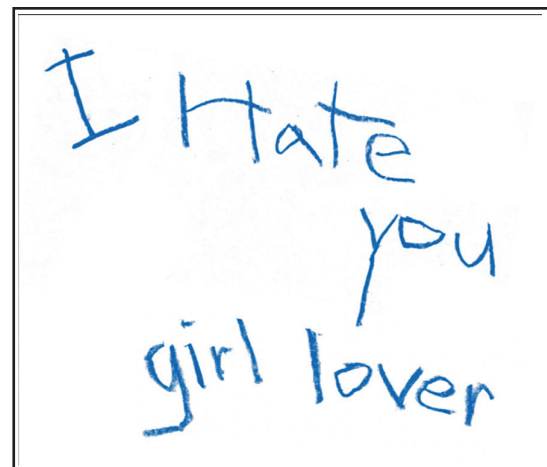
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History of AmazeWorks

AmazeWorks began in 1996 because of an incident of bias towards a 2nd grade student with two lesbian mothers. In response to this incident, the family worked with a committed group of educators, parents, school psychologists, and community members to create a program to talk about diversity in a way that helps children learn about themselves and the people around them. This group's belief that every child should see their family structures, identities, and lived experiences reflected in positive mirrors in the classroom led to the creation of AmazeWorks and our foundational Elementary Curriculum, rooted in Anti-Bias Education. AmazeWorks was incorporated in 1996 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.



Our Process

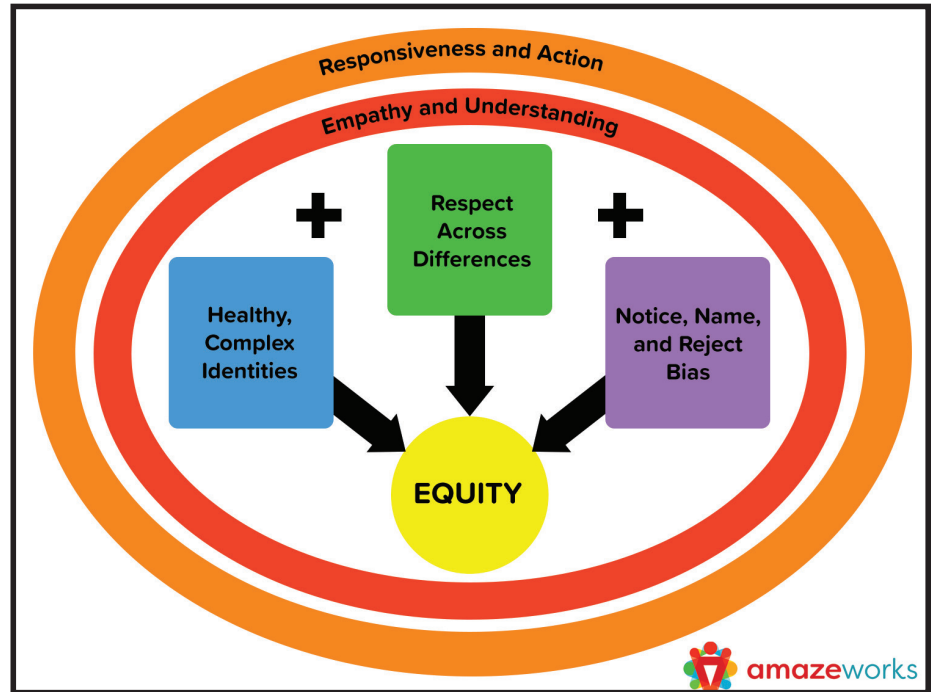
AmazeWorks carefully curates the books we use in our curriculum, identifying books that are written and illustrated from authentic voices as much as possible. We utilize task forces of educators, community members, parents, and specialists to vet and provide feedback on the books and lessons to ensure that the curriculum truly reflects the tenets of Anti-Bias Education and does not reinforce harmful stereotypes of different groups of people.

The curriculum was created using a backwards design process. Discussion questions and journal prompts are guided by the Six Facets of Understanding framework (Wiggins and McTighe).

AmazeWorks Anti-Bias Education Model and Conditions for Belonging Framework

The Elementary Curriculum is centered around the AmazeWorks Anti-Bias Education model, developed from the work of Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards in early childhood.

“Anti-bias education is a critical approach to teaching and learning that recognizes that change is needed. Anti-bias educators actively challenge prejudices and injustices. They engage in critical thinking and problem solving, supporting all children in developing a fuller understanding of themselves and their place in the world. Anti-bias teaching helps children strengthen their identities as capable and empowered human beings. Through anti-bias education, children identify issues and inequities in their lives, ask questions, consider multiple perspectives and thinking about their lives critically, growing to actively resist prejudice and discrimination. Anti-bias education acknowledges that while education is a human right, in today’s classrooms, schools, and society, biases are shaping the experiences and very futures of children.” (Derman-Sparks et al. Leading Anti-Bias Early Childhood Programs: A Guide for Change. Teachers College Press, 2015.)



Anti-Bias Education (ABE) promotes:

- Empathy and understanding for self and others
- Healthy and complex identity development
- Respect across and appreciation of differences
- The ability to notice, name, and reject bias
- Responsiveness and taking action against bias, prejudice, and discrimination

Infused within Anti-Bias Education is **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)**. When children engage in discussions around identity, difference, and bias, they are developing and practicing the important SEL skills of:

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision-making

CAGED

by Kao Kalia Yang, illustrated by Khou Vue

Book Lesson for Educators and Caregivers

Book Title: *CAGED* by Kao Kalia Yang, illustrated by Khou Vue

Recommended Ages: 7 and up

Note: The figurative language in this book may be difficult for young children to understand. You may need to take more time in explaining the metaphors and guiding children in making inferences based on the text and illustrations.



Book Summary to Share With Children

In this book based on her own experiences, Kao Kalia Yang shares the story of a young Hmong girl born and raised in a refugee camp with her family. Refugees are people who have been forced to leave their homeland because it is no longer safe to stay there. A refugee camp is a place where some people stay, sometimes for many years, while they wait for their immigration papers to be approved by a new country, so they can move there.

The girl spends time playing with her cousins and pretending she can fly away from the camp. When her family's papers are finally approved, it's time to leave the camp. She is unsure about leaving the only life she's ever known, but she's ready because her wings finally arrived.

Note: Based on the age of the child, you may need to give more details about what it means to live in a refugee camp before reading this book. Additionally, some children may find it unsettling or have questions about the men with guns guarding the camp. Watch carefully to determine each child's understanding, allow them to ask questions, and address any misinformation or pre-prejudice they may share.

Reflection Questions for Educators and Caregivers

1. What are your beliefs and potential biases regarding immigrants, refugees, and our immigration system? (Who gets to come here? Who gets to live and work here? Who gets to become a U.S. citizen?)
2. In the story, the children express hope by using their imaginations. When you were a child, what did you imagine? How did you use your imagination as a source of hope?

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Reader's Note

Hmong people are an ethnic group without a country of their own who have traditionally lived in Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, and China. Following the Vietnam War, in which many Hmong fought alongside the U.S., Hmong people were forced to abandon their homes. Many sought refuge in Thailand. The Ban Vinai Refugee Camp was on the Thai/Lao border and operated until 1992. At its peak in 1986, Ban Vinai had 42,868 residents. Many Hmong refugees began coming to the U.S. during the 1970s, and there are over 300,000 Hmong in the United States today. Minnesota is home to over 63,000 Hmong.

For more information about Hmong history and culture, check out these resources:

- "Hmong-Americans in Minnesota." Minnesota Historical Society, <https://libguides.mnhs.org/hmong>.
- Yang, Nancy. "10 Things: Hmong Culture, Food and Language." MPR News, MPR News, 1 Mar. 2015, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2015/03/01/10-things-hmong>.
- "About Us." Hmong Cultural Center, 2018, <https://www.hmongcc.org/about-us.html>.

In the story, Kalia refers to the refugee camp as a cage. In the **Author's Note** at the back of the book, she describes how the inspiration for the book came from a question her daughter asked when seeing pictures of children detained at the U.S.-Mexico border. To help her daughter see the dignity, resilience, and strength of the detained children, she tapped into her own empathy gained from her experience of living in the Ban Vinai Refugee Camp in Thailand as a child, as there are many parallels between her experience and the experiences of children currently being held at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Tens of thousands of children arrive at the U.S.-Mexico border each year as they try to escape conditions like the constant threat of violence and drug trafficking in their home countries. Many are unaccompanied by adults or are separated from their adult family members during the journey or detainment process. The journey to get to the border is long and extremely dangerous. Once at the border, many migrants wait in detainment as part of the U.S.'s immigration policies. Political divisiveness around immigration continues, making progress toward immigration policies that honor the dignity of immigrants slow and arduous.

When reading and discussing this book with children, they will likely have questions, especially after you share the **Author's Note** with them. You may wonder how to

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discuss the current immigration debate with them. As with discussing any human rights issue with children, AmazeWorks suggests the following tips:

- **Listen carefully.** Ask questions and listen to find out what children know and understand, Allow them to share their thoughts and name their feelings.
- **Respond to questions with accurate, developmentally appropriate answers.** Tell the truth and respond in a calm tone. With older kids, you can discuss what's happening in the context of history and connect to other humanitarian crises throughout the world and history. If you and your family have your own stories that relate, talk about them. This will be easier if you identify and manage your own feelings about the immigration debate in advance.
- **Check for understanding.** Observe their body language and behavior for cues about what they are feeling and understanding.
- **Caregivers, be mindful of the news you consume.** Think about the news sources you follow. Model how to look for credible sources and boundaries around social media usage.
- **Reinforce the importance of empathy, dignity, and respect for all.** What children may see on the news or social media is alarming, and it's important that your conversations maintain a respectful tone and uphold the inherent dignity and humanity of all.
- **Reject stereotypes.** Point out the multiple contributions immigrants make to America. Keep learning yourself, so you can be better prepared for supportive conversations with your children.
- **Take action.** Reach out to your representatives, donate to a reliable organization supporting immigrants and immigrant rights, support immigrant-owned businesses, and volunteer if you are able.

Anti-Bias Education Tenets

- Empathy & Understanding
- Healthy Complex Identities
- Respect Across Differences
- Notice, Name, & Reject Bias
- Responsiveness & Action

Social-Emotional Learning Competencies

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Social Awareness
- Responsible Decision Making
- Relationship Skills

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Discussion Questions (*essential questions in bold)

1. On the first page, the girl says she lives in a cage without knowing it. **Why does she use the word, *cage*, to describe the refugee camp?** Look closely at the illustration for clues.
2. **Why are men with guns guarding the camp? Are they protecting the people on the inside of the camp from outsiders or protecting outsiders from the people in the camp? How do you think this feels for families in the camp?**
3. What does Golden Flower mean when she says their people have lost their wings? What will happen when the great Heavens bring them new ones?
4. **The children pretend to fly and float when they play. They hope for and imagine a day when they get to leave the camp. What is something that you hope for and imagine for yourself or others? How do you express or show this hope?**
5. Why do you think the children say the place they imagine is like a movie? What is something you've imagined to be like a movie?
6. **An older man says the children's imaginations are not very realistic. Why do you think he says that? Have you ever been told this? If so, how did you feel?**
7. **Look closely at the faces of the people on the buses who are leaving the camp. What do you think they are feeling? What do you notice that gives you clues about how they feel?**
8. Have you ever had to move away from family or friends, or has a family member or friend ever moved away from you? If so, describe how this felt and how you showed your feelings.
9. The girl has a special bond with her aunt, and she uses the word "beautiful" to describe her. Who are the people who help make your life beautiful?
10. What similarities and differences do you notice between where you live and the camp?
11. **What could you do to support someone who has just moved here and doesn't have a lot of friends yet or someone who is missing their loved ones?**

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Journal Questions

1. In the book, the author talks about how the children use play to imagine flying and going to a place far away. Write about how you've used your imagination in play. Describe what you've imagined, and tell it like a story.
 - a. How do your hopes and dreams come out in this imaginative play?
2. At the end of the book, the girl and her family get ready to leave the camp. Imagine you are the girl, and she's just joined your community or classroom. Write a letter from her perspective to her aunt or Golden Flower describing what it's like here.

Activities

1. Invite children to create a sign that welcomes newcomers to your community. Ask them to consider what would feel welcoming to them.
2. Invite children to write a poem that welcomes refugees and immigrants to your community.

Educators - Create a class poem or have small groups create poems together. Invite students to share in reading it aloud to incorporate multiple voices.

Caregivers - Write a poem yourself with your child by alternating lines, phrases, or even words.
3. Reach out to organizations in your community that support refugees and new immigrants.

Educators - Invite someone in as a guest speaker.

Caregivers - Learn about the organization together. Use this learning to continue the conversation together.
4. Learn more about Hmong history and culture: Encourage your students/children to learn more about Hmong history and culture. Use resources available/recommended by the Hmong Cultural Center in St. Paul, Minnesota. They have a museum and library you can visit if you're in the area, and their website hosts many great resources at <https://www.hmongcc.org/museum-and-library.html>



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Ages 4-8 | \$18.99 | \$24.99 CA

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