

# Tacos Anyone? by Marvie Ellis, illustrated by Jenny Loehr

## Identities & Themes

- Disability/Neurodiversity (Autism)
- Feelings

## Teacher Reflection Questions

1. How do you make space for all students to notice and name their emotions in your classroom environment? How can you be more intentional in giving your students different opportunities to do this?
2. More and more classrooms have students on the autism spectrum. What can you do to help your students show empathy, respect and compassion to students on the spectrum?

## Background Information for Teacher

The taco or burrito roll is a sensory integration technique that helps children with sensory processing needs gain a sense of security, stability, and body awareness. This is also referred to as a compression roll, a term some prefer to avoid microaggressions toward Latinx children from non-Latinx adults. This activity can be calming and relaxing and help children have a better understanding of where they are in space. Always consult a doctor or certified therapist before doing an activity such as this with a child.

Note that this book is one in a series of books by this author that focus on exploring the diversity of individuals with autism. We also have Keisha's Doors by the same author and illustrator in our 4th grade curriculum.

**Discussion Hint:** Many children have a friend, relative, or classmate on the autism spectrum. Helping children understand people with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) is important because they can't always tell someone is on the autism spectrum by looking at them. Children don't need a long medical lecture. Give a brief explanation about why their friend might behave differently than they do and a chance to ask questions. You could say:

*"Our brains all work a little differently from everyone else's. All of us are good at some things and not so good at others. Autism is one way people's brains work differently. You can't always tell someone is on the autism spectrum by looking at them. Our friends on the autism spectrum might be really smart about some things. They might also have a harder time with loud noises, bright lights, or strong-tasting foods than other people do. And they might need a little extra help from friends to get to know other people or to know what to do about how people around them are feeling."*

See the **Ability and Neurodiversity Primer** for more information about visible and invisible disabilities.

## 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

## Read this to the students before reading the book:

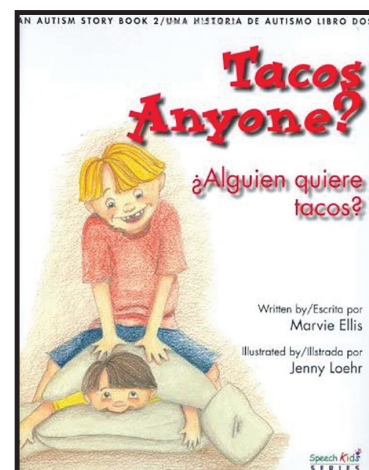
Michael is a young boy with autism. Michael's brother, Thomas, wishes he could play with him, but Michael usually just gets up and walks away. Listen to how Thomas learns to communicate and play with Michael, told through Thomas's perspective.

## Discussion Questions (essential questions bolded)

1. **What are some of the characteristics of autism that Michael displayed?** (not communicating through talking or listening, not engaging in play with someone else, jumping up and down on his bed for hours, screaming, slapping himself on the leg)
2. How do you think Thomas feels about not being able to communicate and play with him?
3. **What does Michael do in therapy with Ms. Karla that helps him communicate with his family?** (bounce on balls, play with playdough, sign language, whistle, play with macaroni, puzzles, rolling up like a taco)
  - How do you think these things help him?
4. **What does Thomas learn about his brother from Ms. Karla?** (To watch and listen to him carefully, that Michael doesn't like wet paint on his hands)
5. **How can you be more understanding of others who may have difficulty communicating with you like Michael does with Thomas?**

## Journal Prompts & Extension Activities

1. When have you had a hard time understanding someone or when did you feel like others didn't understand you? How did it feel?
2. How can you be a better friend to someone who may struggle to be understood by others?
3. **Calming Activities:** Ask students: *What are some things that you do to calm or soothe yourself?* Create a class list of different calming or soothing activities and ideas. Discuss which activities/ideas can be done in the classroom or at school as needed. Put classroom structures and procedures into place so that children can turn to these ideas when they need to during the day to help them stay focused, engaged, or calm. Display this list in the classroom for children to refer to throughout the year as needed, and add to it as children have more ideas to share.



## Literacy Connections

- Realistic fiction
- Personal narrative
- Identify details in the text
- Compare and contrast events
- Compare and contrast characters
- Identify theme or main message
- Describe characters/  
Character development
- Character point of view
- Use illustrations/pictures/  
photos to gain information
- Make predictions
- Make inferences
- Make text connections (to  
self, text, the world)
- Describe major plot events
- Sequence events
- Vocabulary in context