

A Mother for Choco by Keiko Kasza

Identities & Themes

- Family structure: Adoption/foster
- Kindness
- Identity safety

Teacher Reflection Questions

1. Think of a time when you were in a group and felt like an outsider. Why did you feel like an outsider? Was there anything someone in the group could have said to help you feel welcomed? How does that experience affect you today?
2. What questions can you ask that help children find answers when it comes to understanding how they belong and fit in?

Background Information for Teacher

Other people's actions affect the way we feel and may even affect the way we view ourselves. Sometimes well-meaning adults send messages that promote bias and reinforce stereotypes. In the book, Choco is rejected by other animal mothers because he does not look like them, causing him to feel bad about being a bird and hopeless to find a family where he belongs.

The positive relationship between Mrs. Bear and Choco encourages children to recognize that families can include people who are different from one another. What truly matters are the actions we take to care for one another and meet each other's needs, which helps us discover belonging. Using a lens of compassion and curiosity allows us to ask what is needed rather than to assume we know.

This book can be a metaphor for children who are adopted or in foster care.

See also the **Diverse Family Structures Primer** in this guide.

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:

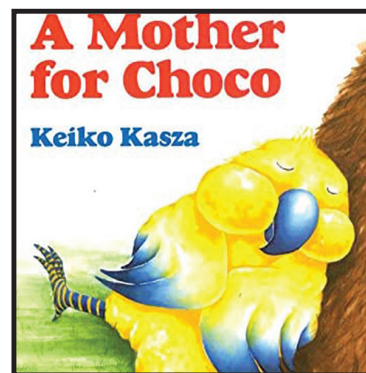
This is a story about a little bird who needs a family. At first Choco searches for a family that looks like him. Then he meets Mama Bear who loves him just the way he is, even though they don't look like each other. To his surprise, he discovers that love, attention, laughter, and nurturing are really what he needs.

Discussion Questions (essential questions bolded)

1. **Why did Ms. Giraffe, Mrs. Penguin, Mrs. Walrus, and the other animals say they couldn't be Choco's mother?**
2. How would you feel about this if you were Choco?
3. **Why did Choco think that Mrs. Bear couldn't be his mother?**
4. What kinds of things did Choco think mothers would do? Do only mothers do that?
5. Describe the relationship between Mrs. Bear and Choco. What do you think will happen next?
6. Mrs. Bear didn't assume she knew what Choco wanted. Instead she asked him. When someone around you is upset, how do you find out what they want and need?
7. **What makes a family?**
8. **By looking at the illustration on the page where Choco meets Mrs. Bear's family, what do you think the author was trying to teach us about families?**

Journal Prompts & Extension Activities

1. During the story Choco experienced many different emotions. Draw or write about each of the emotions you saw him experience.
2. Draw or describe a funny illustration from the book and explain why it was funny to you.
3. **Giving Compliments:** Choco was having a bad day until he found acceptance for who he is. One way to show acceptance is to compliment people specifically for how they are doing something. Compliments that are kind and specific helps to show acceptance and caring for others. Specific compliments say more than just "Good job!" Model how to give specific compliments. Then, act out something like swimming or playing a sport, and ask for specific compliments. Give students a chance to act out something for a partner and receive a specific compliment from their partner.
4. **Compliment Tag:** Brainstorm with kids a list of actions or verbs or jobs that people could act out to a partner. Display the words for kids to choose from. Divide the class into two lines (A and B) that meet in the front of class. In the front of class, have a shortened version of these directions posted to guide the students. Teach this to a student helper and model how to do the activity with them before you have the class begin.
 - Student at the front of line A — Step to center and begin acting out or pantomime the action or verb (swimming), with as much detail as possible.
 - Student at the front of line B — Step into the center and say, "Hello, (student name). What are you doing?" and begin to act out and copy what they are doing.
 - Student A — Answer, "I'm (swimming)."
 - Student B — Give a specific compliment. Describe what you like about what you see, use adverbs or adjectives. For example, "I like the way you(are swimming so fast) or I like the way you(stretch your arms out far when you swim!"). Be specific.
 - Student B — "Thank you, I have to go (enter a creative reason to leave after thanking their partner for the compliment)."
 - Both partners give a high five or fist bump and go to the end of the line.
 - The next students at the front of each line go, using a different verb/action.



Literacy Connections

- Fantasy
- Identify details in the text
- Compare and contrast characters
- Identify theme or main message
- Describe characters/ Character development
- Character point of view
- Make predictions
- Make inferences
- Sequence events