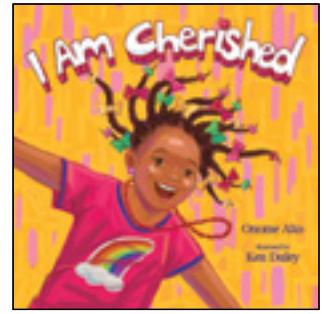


EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO *I AM CHERISHED*

Written by Onome Ako, illustrated by Ken Daley



9781443194495

Parents, teachers, librarians, and caregivers can use this guide to introduce *I Am Cherished* to classrooms and learning environments in impactful ways. The discussion prompts and activities are best suited for kindergarten to Grade 5 but can easily be tailored for other ages.

Inspired by Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop's three deep reading approaches, this guide encourages:

- Engagement with the book by inviting students' personal reflections and connections
- Appreciation of craft by exploring the author's and illustrator's creative decisions
- Examination of social themes by encouraging discussion of community, culture, and inclusion

BOOK SUMMARY

Kikelomo feels excited on her first day of school but is hurt when classmates mock her name. That evening, her parents comfort her, explaining that "Kikelomo" means "a child who is cherished" in Yoruba, her mother's language. This conversation reminds Kikelomo of the love she feels at home. The following day, Kikelomo confidently shares the meaning of her name with her class and encourages everyone to say it correctly. Moved by her story, Kikelomo's classmates and teacher share the stories behind their own names. This uplifting story nurtures children's pride in their identity and encourages children and adults alike to value the significance of names.

BEFORE READING

Start with the following activities to spark conversation to help students draw upon their own first day of school experiences.

- **Back-to-School Connection:** Invite students to share how they felt on their first day of school, or how they imagine they might feel. What gave them excitement, nerves, or a sense of being special?
- **Icebreaker Activity – "First Day Feelings Circle":** Give each student a sticky note or paper to draw or write a word showing their feelings on that first day. Gather these together in a circle on a chart or board. As a group, look at all the feelings and discuss the range of emotions expressed.
- **Optional Extension:** Pair students to share a first-day memory before returning to the group. Encourage them to share a reflection on their partner's experience and what they would do to contribute to and/or enhance a positive first-day-of-school experience for others.
- **Pre-Reading Wrap-Up Reflection:** After the discussion, ask: "Do you think Kikelomo may have felt some of these same emotions on her first day? Let's read to find out."
- **Cover Talk:** Study the book cover as a class. What details stand out? What feelings does the cover suggest?

DURING READING

Try the activities below to keep students engaged while the story unfolds, encouraging them to listen closely, make connections, and think about the experiences of the characters.

- **First Reactions:** How do Kikelomo's classmates respond to her name, and how does that make her feel? Which illustrations help you understand her emotions?
- **Turning Point:** What changes for Kikelomo after she talks with her family? How does the illustrator show this shift in her mood?
- **Sharing the Story:** How do her classmates react when they learn what her name means? What might they be thinking or feeling?
- **Personal Connection:** Do students know the origin or meaning of their own names or nicknames? How do they feel when someone pronounces their name correctly — or incorrectly? Would they react differently than Kikelomo did? Is there anything they can learn from how Kikelomo reacted?

AFTER READING

Use these activities to help students reflect on the story, share their thoughts and ideas, and connect it to their own experiences.

- **Engaging with the Book:** Why are names important? How did Kikelomo's feelings change from the start to the end? What is your experience explaining something about yourself to help others understand you? In what ways do you feel cherished as Kikelomo did?
- **Appreciating Art:** What descriptive words are used to help readers feel the story's emotions? How are colors, facial expressions, and background details used to support the storytelling? What do you notice about the characters in the book? What do you feel about how Mom, Dad, and friends around the circle are represented?
- **Thinking About Social Issues:** Why is it important to learn and pronounce names correctly? How can we help everyone feel included in our class? Work together to create a classroom "Respecting Names" pledge.



GRADE LEVEL	CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS*	EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES
Kindergarten	<p>Belonging and Contributing: Developing identity and self-image through stories reflecting diverse communities.</p> <p>Self-Regulation and Well-Being: Exploring feelings and learning respectful engagement with peers (honouring names, first-day-of-school emotions).</p> <p>Literacy and Mathematics Behaviors: Making connections with texts, listening actively, and sharing their own name stories.</p> <p>The Arts: Expressing feelings through visual art (e.g., creating name portraits).</p>	<p><i>First Day Feelings Circle</i> (drawing emotions)</p> <p><i>Personal Connection</i> (sharing name stories)</p> <p><i>Name Portraits</i> (art activity)</p>
Grade 1 & 2	<p>Language – Oral Communication & Reading: Making personal connections to texts; identifying key ideas and details (Kikelomo's feelings).</p> <p>Health/SEL: Recognizing and respecting differences in others.</p> <p>Social Studies – Heritage and Identity: Exploring family traditions and cultural identity (naming practices).</p> <p>The Arts – Visual Arts: Using design elements to represent identity through symbols and colors.</p>	<p><i>My Name Story</i> (writing/drawing and sharing)</p> <p><i>Cover Talk</i> (observing and discussing illustrations)</p> <p><i>Name Portraits</i> (visual art)</p> <p><i>Name Word Search</i></p>
Grade 3 & 4	<p>Language – Reading & Writing: Analyzing character feelings; writing personal narratives.</p> <p>Social Studies – Heritage and Identity: Investigating cultural heritage and diversity in Canada.</p> <p>Health/SEL: Developing strategies for inclusion, empathy, and respect.</p> <p>The Arts – Visual Arts/Drama: Communicating identity and empathy through art and performance.</p>	<p><i>My Name Story</i> (short narrative writing)</p> <p><i>World of Names Map</i> (cultural geography)</p> <p><i>Respecting Names Pledge</i> (class charter)</p> <p><i>Drama Role-Plays</i> (introducing names respectfully)</p> <p><i>Name Word Search</i></p>
Grade 5	<p>Language – Reading: Examining themes of respect, inclusion, and identity; identifying author's message and point of view.</p> <p>Social Studies – People and Environments: Exploring equity, diversity, and citizenship; building inclusive communities.</p> <p>Health/SEL: Discussing real-life scenarios of exclusion and inclusion; creating classroom norms for belonging.</p> <p>The Arts – Drama: Role-playing scenarios (introducing names respectfully, practicing pronunciation) to deepen empathy.</p>	<p><i>Appreciating Craft</i> (analyzing author's word choices and illustrations)</p> <p><i>Respecting Names Pledge</i> (civics link)</p> <p><i>Compliment Circle</i> (SEL reflection)</p> <p><i>Drama Role-Plays</i> (equity and inclusion scenarios)</p>