Family Diversities Reading Resource

100+ picture books to value children’s families

Launched to mark Homelessness Week
Notes for Readers

The books included in this resource are those available on loan from the Sibthorp Library at Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln. When accessing the books through other libraries, or making purchases, readers should be aware that, in some cases, other editions are available.

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Foreword

This project began in the autumn of 2005, when Teachers’ TV recorded part of a programme at Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln. The input from students to this event was highly significant, and, although much of the footage was not included in the final programme, the issues which were highlighted suggested that there was an interest in engaging with the representation of families in primary school classrooms.

A selection of children’s books showing diverse families was introduced into sessions as a part of the BA (Hons) Primary Education with QTS (Qualified Teacher Status). This generated some interesting discussions, particularly about how children see their own homes and family backgrounds represented (and unrepresented) in primary schools, and how schools can begin to address homophobic and other bullying. The exploration of issues raised, presented at a NAPE (National Association of Primary Education) Conference in March 2007, provided the catalyst for formalising the project.

The Family Diversities Reading Group began to meet formally in mid 2007, consisting of the Children’s Literature Librarian, students from across the three years of the degree programme and a member of academic staff. A collection of books was gathered from the Sibthorp Library at Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln and the range enlarged by further purchases.

The rationale for the project was underpinned by research suggesting that difficult and controversial issues were not being addressed by providers of initial teacher education. Furthermore, cross-cutting cultural perspectives suggested that children in other global settings were being exposed to such complex or controversial issues. This raised questions as to how schools in England might address and explore, in their classrooms and libraries, the diverse family experiences of children. That the family life of children should be regarded as difficult or controversial to address in schools provided a further catalyst for exploration and analysis.

This project set out to develop an annotated bibliography suitable for use by teachers, students and teacher educators. Whilst it is by no means exhaustive, and will be updated on an ongoing basis, the intention was to provide a range of age-appropriate texts that could be used by carers and parents, by schools, and in other child-care settings, to value and to support a diverse community of learners. Additionally, the intention was to provide a resource that could be used by schools in communities with apparently limited diversity to help children and teachers to consider the nature of society and the family in England in the twenty-first century. Set against the backdrop of the Every Child Matters agenda, a high divorce rate, the introduction of civil partnerships, news coverage of immigration and migrant workers and a rise in the number of people remaining single for a number of years, this project sought to represent the range of ways of living in England at the present time.

The project has also identified a range of books to help to consider difference in a range of forms. These texts provide a more generic approach to difference, which teachers (and others) may use to facilitate discussion and to support children’s lived experience.
The project group was self-selecting from across the three years of the BA (Hons) in Primary Education with QTS. All those interested in participating met on a regular basis during the summer and autumn of 2007. Significant thanks must be expressed to core members of the group: Louise Crowther, Rachel Day, Dawn Deakins and Sarah Joyce. Their collaboration, colleagueship and reviews have contributed to the depth and range of this resource. Other teachers and students reviewed a selection of the books and shared their professional expertise.

Thanks must also be expressed to the University College; to Programme Leader, Kathleen Taylor; to the Director of Library and Knowledge Services, Emma Sansby; to all the staff in the Sibthorp Library; and to the Head of Learning and Teaching, Claire Taylor, for the provision of resources and funding for aspects of the project.

Janice Morris
Children's Literature Librarian

Dr Richard Woolley
Senior Lecturer
Introduction

To think of children’s families as being a source of controversial issues in primary schools is challenging: we do not choose where or when we are born; we do not select our birth parents; and we may have little control over the circumstances that affect our patterns of home life as we grow up.

Children may live with one or two parents, their parents may live separately and have new partners or spouses giving them more than two parents. They may have been adopted and be aware of this and have questions about their birth parents and the circumstances surrounding their adoption. Their parents or carers may be bisexual, gay, lesbian or transgender. They may live in circumstances that are different from their peers: in houses of varying sizes, in flats, on boats or in trailers, in urban or rural locations, or in temporary accommodation. Children may live in a family of two people – comprising themselves and an adult; they may have siblings or may live in an extended family made up of different generations. Some children will live apart from their brothers or sisters. Other children will live in more than one location, sharing their time between different adults. Some are looked after by a foster carer and may or may not have contact with their parent(s). Some children are separated from a parent who works away regularly, is serving in the armed services, is in prison, or has died.

Classrooms include children with diverse experiences of family life. Sometimes these circumstances change dramatically and unexpectedly and this raises many questions in their minds. The level of security and care experienced by children can vary over time. It is in this context that teachers and other childcare professionals seek to nurture individual development and to promote learning. How we as teachers seek to maximise learning is affected by the ways in which we appreciate the backgrounds and life experiences of the children in our care.

It is often the differences between children that impact on the ways in which they relate to one another. Bullying can arise from perceived differences in family income, social class, ethnicity, attitudes to school, ability and disability, sexuality, personality traits, confidence, family background — indeed any difference (whether real or perceived).

This project focuses on similarity and difference, particularly in relation to differences in families, to consider how teachers can be pro active in promoting diversity and valuing difference. The books reviewed in this project provide quality resources to encourage discussion and support learning. They seek to develop respect for those living in circumstances similar to or other than our own, and to help children to see positive images of their own situations.

Sometimes we communicate what we value through our words, actions, attitudes and the resources we make available in our classrooms. However, we can also reveal what we value by the things that we omit. If the texts that we share with children always show families as having two parents of different gender, how does this impact on those living with another model of family life? If a child is being raised by their grandmother or an uncle, how can they find positive images of that setting that give reassurance and value their experience?
Users of this resource will make their own judgements on the quality of the texts included. We would encourage this, and acknowledge that some people will disagree with the books that we have selected and rejected. Details of some of the texts that were not selected during the review process are included at the end of this booklet, for information and to promote further discussion.
# Books by Subject

## Adoption
- And Tango Makes Three
- Dora’s New Brother!
- Family Book, The
- Josh and Jaz Have Three Mums
- Koala for Katie, A
- Meet the Family: My Mum
- Meet the Family: My Dad
- Milly, Molly and Different Dads
- Molly’s Family
- My Family is Forever
- My Parents Picked Me
- Picnic in the Park
- Real Sisters
- What’s My Family Tree?
- When Joel Comes Home
- Who’s in a Family?

## Black & Asian Families
- African Princess, An
- All Families Are Special
- Amazing Grace
- Boy on the Beach, The
- Busy Week, A
- Cleversticks
- Day with Daddy, A
- Grace and Family
- Grandfather and I
- Grandma’s Saturday Soup
- Letters from Around the World
- Lights for Gita
- Lucy’s Quarrel
- Mum’s Late
- Our Gracie Aunt
- Pass It, Polly
- Samir’s Eid
- Sammy Goes Flying
- Silver Shoes
- So Much
- That’s My Mum
- Will there be a Lap for Me?

## Difference / Acceptance / Inclusion
- African Princess, An
- All Families Are Special
- Amazing Grace
- And Tango Makes Three
- Boat, The
- Boy Who Cried Fabulous, The
- Broken Bird
- But Martin!
- Cleversticks
- Colour of Home, The
- Dad and Me in the Morning
- Daft Bat
- Different Dragon, The
- Giraffes Can’t Dance
- I’m Special I’m Me!
- It’s Okay to be Different
- Jump!
- Katie Morag and the Two
- Grandmothers
- King and King
- Lion Who Wanted to Love, The
- Mama Zooms
- Mice Next Door, The
- Milly, Molly and Different Dads
- Molly’s Family
- Not-So-Wicked Stepmother, The
- One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dads, Blue Dads
- Pass it, Polly
- Princess Smartypants
- Real Sisters
- Ringo the Flamingo
- Something Else
- Story of Ferdinand, The
- Toby’s Doll’s House
- Two Eggs, Please
- Two Left Feet
- You’re too Big!
- We are Britain!
- William’s Doll

## Carers / Children in Care / Looked After Children
- All Families Are Special
- Milly, Molly and Different Dads
- Mum’s Late
- Our Gracie Aunt
- What’s My Family Tree?
- Who’s in a Family?

## Divorce and Family Separation
- All Families Are Special
- Are We Nearly There Yet?
- Dad’s in Prison
- Day with Daddy, A
- Don’t Let Go!
- Family Book, The
- Grace and Family
John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat
Meet the Family: My Dad
Meet the Family: My Mum
Milly, Molly and Different Dads
Molly's Family
Not-So-Wicked Stepmother, The
On the Day his Daddy Left
Princess and the Castle, The
Two Homes
Visitors Who Came to Stay, The
What's My Family Tree?
Who's in a Family?
You Will Always Be My Dad

**Families: Mum and Dad**
African Princess, An
Balloon for Grandad, A
Billy and Belle
Boy on the Beach, The
Boy Who Cried Fabulous, The
Busy Week, A
Christy's Dream
Colour of Home, The
Daddy's Lullaby
Dad's in Prison
Dora's New Brother
Friday Nights of Nana, The
Grandma's Saturday Soup
Horse for Joe, A
Jump!
Koala for Katie, A
Letters from Around the World
Lights for Gita
Lucy's Quarrel
Mice Next Door, The
My Family is Forever
My Parents Picked Me!
Our House on the Hill
Piggybook
Samira's Eid
Sammy Goes Flying
Silver Shoes
So Much
That's My Mum
When Joel Comes Home

**Families: Two Dads**
And Tango Makes Three
Family Book, The
Milly, Molly and Different Dads
One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dads, Blue Dads

Picnic in the Park
Who's in a Family?

**Families: Two Mums**
All Families Are Special
Asha's Mums
Different Dragon, The
Emma and Meesha My Boy
Family Book, The
Heather Has Two Mommies
If I Had a Hundred Mummies
Josh and Jaz Have Three Mums
Molly's Family
Picnic in the Park
Who's in a Family?

**Family Life**
African Princess, An
All Families Are Special
Amazing Grace
Are We Nearly There Yet?
Balloon for Grandad, A
Billy and Belle
Boy on the Beach, The
Boy Who Cried Fabulous, The
Busy Week, A
Christy's Dream
Dad and Me in the Morning
Daddy's Lullaby
Dad's in Prison
Day with Daddy, A
Don't Let Go!
Dora's New Brother!
Families
Family Book, The
First Day of School, The
Friday Nights of Nana, The
Gorilla
Grandfather and I
Grandma's Saturday Soup
Grace and Family
Harry's Home
I'm Special I'm Me!
Jump!
Katie Morag and the Two Grandmothers
King and King
Letters from Around the World
Lights for Gita
Lucy's Quarrel
Mama Zooms
Meet the Family: My Dad
Meet the Family: My Mum
Mice Next Door, The
Milly, Molly and Different Dads
Molly’s Family
Mum’s Late
My Family is Forever
My Mum and Our Dad
One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dads, Blue Dads
Only the Best
Our House on the Hill
Pass It, Polly
Piggybook
Princess and the Castle, The
Real sisters
Samira’s Eid
Sammy Goes Flying
Silver Shoes
So Much
That’s My Mum
Truth About Families, The
Welcome to the World Baby
What’s My Family Tree?
Who’s in a Family?
Where’s My Teddy
Will there be a Lap for Me?

Gender Stereotypes
Amazing Grace
Boy Who Cried Fabulous, The
Jump!
Katie Morag and the Two
Grandmothers
Pass It, Polly
Piggybook
Prince Cinders
Princess Smartypants
Story of Ferdinand, The
Toby’s Doll’s House
Two Homes
William’s Doll

Minority Ethnic Families
African Princess, An
All Families Are Special
Amazing Grace
Asha’s Mum
Balloon for Grandad, A
Billy and Belle
Boy on the Beach, The
Busy Week, A
Cleversticks
Colour of Home, The
Day with Daddy, A
Families
Family Book, The
Friday Nights of Nana, The
Grace and Family
Grandfather and I
Grandma’s Saturday Soup
Lights for Gita
Lucy’s Quarrel
Meet the Family: My Dad
Meet the Family: My Mum
Mum’s Late
Only the Best
Our Gracie Aunt
Pass It, Polly
Picnic in the Park
Princess and the Castle, The
Real Sisters
Samira’s Eid
Sammy Goes Flying
Silver Shoes
So Much
That’s My Mum
We are Britain!
Welcome to the World Baby
What’s My Family Tree?
Will there be a Lap for Me?

Homelessness
Boat, The
Colour of Home, The
Way Home

Living Alone
Boat, The
Harry’s Home
John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat
Way Home

Mixed ‘Race’ / Dual Heritage Families
African Princess, An
Balloon for Grandad, A
Billy and Belle
Grace and Family
Lucy’s Quarrel
Real Sisters
Sammy Goes flying
Silver Shoes
That’s my Mum
Single Parent: Father
All Families Are Special
Are We Nearly There Yet?
Day with Daddy, A
Family Book, The
Gorilla
Meet the Family: My Dad
Molly, Molly and Different Dads
Molly’s Family
My Mum and Our Dad
Picnic in the Park
Toby’s Dolls House
Two Homes
Visitors Who Came to Stay, The
What’s My Family Tree?
Who’s in a Family?
William’s Doll
You Will Always Be My Dad

Single Parent: Mother
All Families Are Special
Are We Nearly There Yet?
Day with Daddy, A
Family Book, The
Harry’s Home
First Day of School, The
Meet the Family: My Mum
Molly’s Family
Mum’s Late
My Mother’s Getting Married
My Mum and Our Dad
On the Day his Daddy Left

Our Gracie Aunt
Picnic in the Park
Princess and the Castle, The
Two Homes
Visitors Who Came to Stay, The
Who’s in a Family?
You Will Always Be My Dad

Step-Families
All Families Are Special
Family Book, The
Grace and Family
Meet the Family: My Dad
Meet the Family: My Mum
My Mother’s Getting Married
Not-So-Wicked Stepmother, The
Picnic in the Park
Prince Cinders
Princess and the Castle, The
Toby’s Dolls House
Truth about Families, The
Visitors Who Came to Stay, The
What’s my Family Tree?
Who’s in a Family?
William’s Doll
You Will Always Be My Dad

Traveller Families
Christy’s Dream
Horse for Joe, A
Where’s My Teddy
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Annotated Bibliography
African Princess, An

Author: Lyra Edmonds
Illustrator: Anne Wilson
Date of publication: 2004
Place of publication: Sine Loco
Publisher: Doubleday
ISBN: 0-385-60617-6

Annotation:

This story is based on the author’s life and highlights a family with different ethnic backgrounds. Lyra’s dad is white and her mum is black. This book is excellent in highlighting that every family is different.

When Lyra is told that she is an African princess, the children at school say, ‘Don’t be silly!’ These responses encourage Lyra’s mama and dad to take her to Africa so she can explore her family tree and discover who she is. The insertion of the speech - “Remember to be proud of who you are” - towards the end of the story gives the reader an important message that difference and diversity should be valued.

The illustrations are vibrant and display Lyra’s journey and excitement; they will appeal to the reader. The story may engage girls rather than boys due to the princess theme. However, the underlying messages about acceptance and inclusion will hopefully attract all children and can lend themselves to classroom use and discussion.

Some of the text has slightly complex ideas and contains figurative language such as ‘...palm trees everywhere wave their arms at me.’ Although this creates an image for the reader, it may need some explanation. Therefore parts of this text would be more appropriate for an older child when reading independently.
All Families Are Special

Author: Norma Simon
Illustrator: Teresa Flavin
Date of publication: 2003
Place of publication: Morton Grove, Illinois
Publisher: Albert Whitman and Company

Annotation:

This a lovely book in which children in a classroom tell their teacher all about their families. It is a very inclusive book with a whole host of family models represented throughout.

The main message is that all families are special, whatever their make-up. The language is American (e.g. mom). A diverse range of ethnic backgrounds is represented. The book represents single parent, divorced, nuclear, adoptive and extended families, those from different parts of the world, twins, step-families, families separated by distance and families of different sizes.

The book concludes with a discussion of the sad and happy times experienced by families. There is a positive message that families are there for each other in the sad times and celebrate together in the good times. This might be a little idealistic – but overall the portrayal of diverse family life provides a useful and positive resource for any classroom.

The book has appealing illustrations which take up the majority of each page. It is appropriate for use with children in Key Stage 1 as a shared text, and for any discussion about My Family in primary school classrooms.
**Amazing Grace**

**Author:** Mary Hoffman  
**Illustrator:** Caroline Binch  
**Date of publication:** 1991  
**Place of publication:** London  
**Publisher:** Frances Lincoln  
**ISBN:** 0-7112-0670-8

**Annotation:**

Grace loves stories in a range of formats and loves to make up her own. She dearly wants to play Peter Pan in the school play, but she is a girl and she is black. Her classmates comment on this.

Grace has a wonderful imagination and loves to play out adventure stories. Her imagination crosses traditional gender stereotypes and she imagines being a pirate, doctor, soldier and explorer. She lives with her mother and grandmother – both of whom are drawn upon to participate in her stories at times. In the end, Grace gets to play Peter Pan. This is a very affirming story of being able to achieve that to which you aspire.

The illustrations are colourful and appealing and take the form of watercolour style pictures. Each page includes a detailed illustration, with a small element of text.

This book would be ideal as a shared text with a class of children in Key Stage 1 or lower Key Stage 2. It would also be suitable as a general text within a school library. It is particularly effective in challenging gender stereotypes.
**And Tango Makes Three**

Authors: Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson

Illustrator: Henry Cole

Date of publication: 2005

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers

ISBN: 0-689-87845-1

Annotation:

This is an excellent book and the reviewers’ overwhelming favourite within the collection.

It is about the relationship between two male penguins and how, with the zoo keeper’s help, they hatch out a baby penguin and make a family. This book is excellent in addressing family diversity and instantly highlights this within the second page which comments on: ‘Everyday families of all kinds…’ It has appealing, touching, emotion-filled illustrations and is very suitable for reading aloud. It is ideal for use within the classroom as a shared text and for independent readers.

The book is based on a true story, which contributes a realistic quality to the text and adds weight to the issues raised. Furthermore, its strength is how it subtly and cleverly presents a different and loving family through the use of animal characters; this would be of great interest to children. It implies through the characters that a child with two dads is just as much loved as a child with a mum and a dad.
Are We Nearly There?

Author: Louis Baum
Illustrator: Paddy Bouma
Date of publication: 1986
Place of publication: London
Publisher: Bodley Head Ltd
ISBN: 0-370-30692-9

Annotation:
This book outlines a story about a day out a boy has with his dad.

At first it may appear to the reader that the father is a single parent, however the end of the story reveals that the dad has in fact had a day out with his son who does not live with him, but lives with his mother instead. Because this revelation is made towards the end of the story it subtly and calmly deals with the topic of family separation. The expectation is that father and son are travelling to a special destination. The fact that this is mum’s home is not anticipated. This, in particular, is a strength of the book. Because this book is written in the third person it allows a child whose family has separated to understand that it doesn’t just happen to them.

The story could be read in other ways: Simon may live equally between mum and dad’s homes, or indeed he might live with his dad and be visiting mum for a while. This is not clear and provides a variety of opportunities for discussion with children.

The repetitive dialogue between father and son make it an ideal read aloud text for young children. The simple vocabulary, supported by colourful, realistic illustrations, would most probably appeal to younger readers.
Asha’s Mums

Authors: Rosamund Elwin and Michele Paulse
Illustrator: Dawn Lee
Date of publication: 1990
Place of publication: Toronto, Canada
Publisher: Women’s Press
ISBN: 0-88961-143-2

Annotation:

Asha’s Mums looks at how differing family units can become an issue for the children involved in them when they encounter misunderstandings and prejudices in their everyday lives.

The story begins when Asha’s teacher declares that Asha “can’t have two mums.” It is interesting to note that in this story it is the teacher who shows her ignorance while Asha’s friends are clearly aware, and accepting, of Asha’s family.

As the issue is brought to the attention of Asha’s classmates, it arouses curiosity. Here again Asha’s friends serve to represent the accepting natural capacity of children by loyalî supporting Asha, declaring that there is nothing wrong with having two mums, in the same way one can have ‘two aunts …[or]… two grandmas.’

A strength of the book is that it tackles prejudice head-on, rather than skirting over the issue. This comes not only in the form of the teacher but also in a classmate who declares that ‘it’s bad’ to have two mums. Asha responds that having two mums is not a big deal. They are a family, and they love each other.

The book is particularly suitable for use with children in upper Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2. For a contrasting response from a teacher see Molly’s Family.
**Balloon for Grandad, A**

**Author:** Nigel Gray  
**Illustrator:** Jane Ray  
**Date of publication:** 1988  
**Place of publication:** London  
**Publisher:** Orchard Books  
**ISBN:** 1-85213-125-X

**Annotation:**

This is a lovely story about a boy and his balloon. Unluckily, Sam’s balloon is caught by the wind and blows away. Although Sam is upset about this, he starts to imagine the balloon floating to his Grandad, Abdulla, who lives in a different part of the world.

This is an excellent representation suggesting that although members of a family may live apart, it does not stop them from being a family. This is definitely the strength of this book.

Most of the vocabulary is accessible and will appeal to readers in Key Stage 1. However, some words such as “sandgrouse” may be unfamiliar and will need some explanation.

The illustrations are lovely and provide detail to enhance the text.
Billy and Belle

Author: Sarah Garland

Date of publication: 1993

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Picture Puffins

ISBN: 0-14-054437-2

Annotation:

When mum goes into hospital to have a baby, Belle gets to go to school with her older brother, Billy. It is pets’ day at school and Belle causes havoc when she accidentally releases all the pets – whilst looking for her spider. The story concludes when Billy and Belle meet their new baby brother.

This story incorporates a traditional nuclear family of mum, dad and two children. This is a mixed “race” family. Dad takes care of the children while mum is in hospital having had the baby, which could be used to address some gender stereotypes. A variety of cultural backgrounds are represented when each child in the class is introduced with their particular pet.

The illustrations are bright and busy, with a great deal going on. In places the use of speech bubbles can be a little difficult to follow. The book would be appropriate to use with children in the Foundation Stage or Key Stage 1. There are some lovely humorous moments.

Cover illustration used with permission:
**Boat, The**

Author: Helen Ward

Illustrator: Ian Andrew

Date of publication: 2004

Place of publication: Dorking

Publisher: Templar Publishing


Annotation:

*The Boat* is a story about a man who lives alone in a house on a hill, with only his vast collection of animals for company. Fear and prejudice against the old man keep the distance between the old man and the villagers on the opposite hill. A young boy sees what the villagers do not: a man that is not ‘to be frightened of’.

However, when it begins to rain excessively, the man’s home begins to flood. The boy, although not welcomed at first, begins to load the animals into a boat and rows them back to a safer shore. The boy does this several times and then comes back to bring the man to safety. When the boy takes the man to his own village, the man realises that the villagers have given shelter to all of his animals. Saying, ‘Thank you’ leads to the man being invited into and included in the village.

This story is about a community pulling together through a natural disaster. Furthermore, it sends a message of inclusion and acceptance to the reader. This is the main strength of the story.

The pencil illustrations are delicate and extremely detailed and support what the text suggests, which would help an independent reader. The font used for text is unusual and gives the book additional character.

With a variety of complex sentences and more complex vocabulary, this book may appeal more to an older child in Key Stage 2.
Boy on the Beach, The

Author: Niki Daly

Date of publication: 2005

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Bloomsbury


Annotation:

This book tells of a boy and his family at the beach on a hot summer’s day and of his excitement and fun at the beach. The boy goes exploring… but soon he starts to feel lost and alone. He is found quickly by a lifeguard who returns him to his parents. The enjoyment of a day at the beach comes across well and the story is reassuring and affirming of family life.

Although never referred to explicitly, the book illustrates a variety of people – of all shapes and sizes and from different backgrounds. The family represents a traditional nuclear family of mother, father and child.

The book is full of gentle humour. The illustrations are bright and appealing with plenty of detail to engage the reader.
**Boy Who Cried Fabulous, The**

**Author:** Leslea Newman  
**Illustrator:** Peter Ferguson  
**Date of publication:** 2004  
**Place of publication:** Toronto  
**Publisher:** Tricycle Press  
**ISBN:** 1-58246-101-5

**Annotation:**

Roger is always late for school. He finds everything to be “fabulous” on the way and is often distracted.

His teacher is furious when Roger arrives late for school. Later, his parents are extremely cross when he arrives home very late. Roger is a white boy from a family with a male and female parent. That Roger wears a bow tie, jacket and shorts suggests that the story is set in a bygone age.

In the end, Roger finds a wider vocabulary to describe the world that he encounters. However, he still maintains his very positive outlook. His parents come to realise his special gift for seeing the world in such a positive way – and declare him a “fabulous son.”

The book includes a good mixture of illustrations, showing life in what can be assumed to be a US neighbourhood. A diverse community is represented.

There is a subtext to the book, identified by some commentators who claim that “fabulous” is a word often used by gay men (particularly in the United States). If this is true, then the way in which the parents embrace the word at the end of the book is affirming of their son’s sexuality. However, to read the text on this level may be more appropriate for a secondary school or adult audience: it will not be immediately apparent to children of primary age without significant explanation. In a primary school setting the book may be most useful in exploring difference in general terms.

The illustrations in the book are colourful and support the text well. They seem to be more from the 1950s than the twenty-first century, when the book was actually published.
Broken Bird: a tale of true love

Author: Michael Bond

Date of publication: 2006

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Puffin Books


Annotation:

Broken Bird doesn’t realise that he is different from other birds when he hatches from his egg. However, he soon senses that he is different from his brothers – as he has only one wing. Soon his is left alone with just one thin wing when the others fly away.

He makes the most of his situation, choosing to walk instead of fly. He meets different creatures and sees different places. Whilst on his travels he meets Scary Bird: named by her sisters because her one wing is expected to scare others away.

The two birds discover friendship and love. They work together to build a nest and start a family… and even learn to fly together.

This is a heart warming and endearing tale of difference and love. The two birds find that they complement each other.

The illustrations are lovely and support the story effectively. This book will be enjoyed by children in Key Stage 1. It is ideal for exploring issues of disability and difference.
**Busy Week, A**

**Author:** Sue Graves  
**Illustrator:** Melanie Sharp  
**Date of publication:** 2004  
**Place of publication:** London  
**Publisher:** Franklin Watts  
**ISBN:** 0-7496-5305-1  

**Annotation:**

This is a story about a little girl called Rani who tries to help her family but who sometimes makes things worse.

The story follows Rani through the course of the week, with pairs of statements about whom and how she helped, coupled with humorous illustrations showing her disasters. The story includes illustrations of characters from different ethnic backgrounds. As such it presents an inclusive image of family and community life.

The rhyme in the text makes it enjoyable to listen to. There is little text in the book but a great deal that could be explored through discussion. The humour in the illustrations will appeal to children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. It would form a good starting point for a consideration about how children help.
**But Martin!**

**Author:** June Counsel  
**Illustrator:** Neal Layton  
**Date of publication:** 2005  
**Place of publication:** London  
**Publisher:** Picture Corgi  
**ISBN:** 0-552-55138-4  

**Annotation:**

*But Martin!* explores the differences between four children and a character that is even more different - Martin the green Martian!

The four children in the story, Lee, Lloyd, Billy and Angela are physically different and have different characteristics. By using four very different children in the story, the book is able to present the very unusual Martin as just another character, no more different than any of the others, rather than standing out because of his differences. This message of accepting and valuing differences permeates the book.

The book is careful to assign traits and characteristics fairly among the four children, so none is perceived as *better* than the others. The main strength of the book is in the way it shows the children as a group of friends, together despite their differences, and their welcoming of the new, strange character. It shows that we can learn from each other and benefit from differences, such as from the way Martin can teach the others how to spell ‘people’.

The book is particularly appropriate for children in Key Stage 1.
**Christy’s Dream**

**Author:** Caroline Binch  
**Date of publication:** 1999  
**Place of publication:** London  
**Publisher:** Mammoth  
**ISBN:** 0-7497-4294-1

**Annotation:**

Christy has always wanted a pony. He has read about them and has saved his pocket money to try and buy one. He lives with his family and their flat is always full of brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces. However, he is not at home a great deal; he prefers to spend time at the local horse project instead. He is at his happiest with the horses.

Christy’s mother does not like horses, but his father loves them. The boy and his grandfather visit the market, where Christy finds a horse that he loves and wants to buy. Christy ends up back at the market where he buys the horse – all on his own. He dreads having to tell his mother of the purchase and waits days before doing this. In the end Ma is won over.

The story is set in a real area of Dublin where children look after their horses amidst the tower block estates. The family members appear to be travellers who have settled in a flat. The interaction between Christy and his parents is fascinating. This is an engaging and endearing story of a boy with a dream.

The watercolour illustrations are beautiful – typical of Caroline Binch’s work. They present a realistic image of family life. This book will enjoyed by children in Key Stage 2 – particularly if they have a love of horses.

For other books by this author/illustrator see:  
*Amazing Grace*  
*Grace and Family*  
*The Princess and the Castle*  
*Silver Shoes*
Cleversticks

Author: Bernard Ashley

Illustrator: Derek Brazell

Date of publication: 1992

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Collins

ISBN: 0-00-663855-4

Annotation:

Ling Sung has started school and has decided that he doesn’t like it because he cannot do the things that all the other children seem able to do. He feels like he does not fit in and wants to stay at home where he feels more included.

One day, Ling Sung discovers that he can do something that the other children cannot and something that even his teacher struggles with: he uses chopsticks to eat his food. This leads to greater acceptance from the other children – who want to learn to use chopsticks just like him. Ling Sung feels much better and decides that school is not such a bad place after all.

This story not only explores the themes of being different, accepted and included but also subtly includes families from different minority ethnic groups and religious backgrounds. The message in the book could be used with all ages but the text is perhaps most suitable for children in upper Key Stage 1. It could be used with individuals or with a whole class.
**Colour of Home, The**

Author: Mary Hoffman  
Illustrator: Karin Littlewood  
Date of publication: 2005  
Place of publication: London  
Publisher: Francis Lincoln  
ISBN: 1-84507-425-4 (Big Book)

Annotation:

Hussan joins a new school, having come from Somalia. He paints a picture of his former home, but then develops the picture to show the devastation he has witnessed. Fela comes to translate for and to speak with Hassan and his teacher about the picture. The book shows a two parent family with children. There is a very positive ending – despite the trauma the child has faced.

The story addresses some of the issues faced by children who enter school from another location or cultural setting and who have a very limited knowledge of the English language. Hussan does not feel comfortable in his new surroundings; he knows few words and does not eat because he does not recognise the food. His story of being a refugee develops in a way that gradually unfolds. This gradual revelation makes the story engaging and increasingly challenging.

This is a moving story suitable for children in Key Stage 2. The illustrations are appealing and age appropriate. It could be used to address stereotypes or to develop discussion about events in the news.

Cover illustration used with permission:  
**Dad and Me in the Morning**

*Author: Patricia Lakin*

*Illustrator: Robert G Steele*

*Date of publication: 1994*

*Place of publication: Morton Grove, Illinois*

*Publisher: Albert Whitman and Company*

*ISBN: 0-8075-1419-5*

*Annotation:*

This touching and heartfelt story reveals how different families may communicate. The story explores the close relationship between Jacob and his father, when they wake up early one morning to watch the sun rise. Jacob explains, “Dad and I have ways of speaking to each other, like signing or lip reading or just squeezing each other’s hands. That’s our secret sign.”

The story shows how children with a hearing impairment can communicate (which some children may be unaware of). It also presents a warm and tender portrayal of a parent-child relationship.

The book is probably most appropriate for children in upper Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2 because of the vocabulary used and the simplicity of the story. However, the message is appropriate for all ages. It could be read individually or used with a whole class. The illustrations are beautiful.
Daddy’s Lullaby

Author: Tony Bradman
Illustrator: Jason Cockroft
Date of publication: 2002
Place of publication: London
Publisher: Bloomsbury
ISBN: 0-7475-5559-1

Annotation:

This book tells the story of a father who arrives home from work on Friday evening. He finds his young baby still awake in his/her cot. This now becomes daddy's time to have a cuddle and to “take stock” of what he has in life. He takes the baby in his arms and goes round each member of his sleeping family saying how lucky he is.

The book demonstrates the father's warmth and love for his family. The text is supported by wonderful illustrations which provide a feeling of warmth and security. The book represents an apparently traditional nuclear model of family life. It presents a positive image of fatherhood and of a man expressing his feelings.
Dad’s in Prison

Authors: Sandra Cain and Margaret Speed

Illustrator: Claire Heronneau

Photographs: Zul Mukhida

Date of publication: 2002

Place of publication: London

Publisher: A & C Black


Annotation:

Simon and Mark share the story of when their dad was sent to prison. Police officers visited their house and arrested dad – although he told the boys not to worry.

After dad is convicted, a Visiting Order arrives which enables them to make a visit to the prison, a three hour coach journey from home. The children visit with their mum. They have to go through the process of queuing and being searched.

A very touching moment comes when Mark has to put his toy Panda in a locker – as no personal possessions are allowed into the prison. “When the visit to your dad is over, we’ll let Panda Bear out” says the prison officer. This stands in stark contrast to dad – who will stay incarcerated.

The book shows the detail of a prison visit, the need for mum and dad to have time to talk alone and the opportunity for the children to play with the resources provided. The sadness shown when visiting time ends is moving – and the sense that dad has been sent a distance away from his family is realistic. The book explores a good range of issues faced by families with a close relative in prison. It concludes with handwritten letters shared between the father and his children. The boys look forward to his return.

This book uses illustrations and photographs to enhance the storyline. It may be used to support children who are separated from parents or carers because of imprisonment. Although the tone is quite light it presents the opportunity to explore issues in greater depth in appropriate circumstances. It may also be useful for those in prison to read with their children.
**Daft Bat**

*Author:* Jeanne Willis  
*Illustrator:* Tony Ross  
*Date of publication:* 2006  
*Place of publication:* London  
*Publisher:* Anderson Press  
*ISBN:* 1-84270-476-1  

**Annotation:**

This book tells the story of how all the wild, young animals think that Bat is mad – as they believe she gets everything the wrong way round. Bat talks about using an umbrella to keep her feet dry and notes that if the river rises she will get her ears wet! The animals tell the Wise Owl that Bat is mad and could be dangerous. However, Wise Owl soon has the animals hanging upside down from a tree so they can see Bat’s point of view!

This is a wonderful book. Its message of trying to look at other people’s points of view, which may make you think differently, is clear and superbly demonstrated. There are parts where you need to rotate the book to read the text (“upside down”) which children (and adults) will love.

The illustrations are lovely - with some super expressions on the faces of the animals. The reviewers thoroughly enjoyed reading this book.

The font size of the text aims it at children in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2, but it could be used throughout the primary phase as an effective starting point for discussions on difference, inclusion and acceptance.
Day with Daddy, A

Author: Nikki Grimes

Illustrator: Nicole Tadgell

Date of publication: 2004

Place of publication: New York

Publisher: Scholastic

ISBN: 0-439-56850-1

Annotation:

A young boy spends the day with his father. They visit the park and play basketball together and play on the slide and the swings. Dad is very positive about his son’s abilities. They eat lunch together and then visit the cinema. The boy wants the day to pass slowly so that he can enjoy his father’s company to the maximum. He gains enough “happy” to see him though the week until his dad’s next visit.

Although the boy feels too grown up to let his mum kiss him goodbye in the morning, he lets her kiss him in the evening as he knows she has missed him all day.

This is an affirming story of a child with two parents who are separated and who both love him very much. The book is beautifully illustrated. The story is brief and each page includes a limited amount of text in a large font. It is suitable for use with children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
**Different Dragon, The**

**Author:** Jennifer Bryan  
**Illustrator:** Danamarie Hosler  
**Date of publication:** 2006  
**Place of publication:** Ridley Park, PA  
**Publisher:** Two Lives Publishing  
**ISBN:** 978-0-9674468-6-8  

**Annotation:**

*The Different Dragon* starts with a story at bedtime for Noah, told by one of his two mothers, Go-Ma. When the story begins the illustrations take the reader inside Noah’s imagination and a new world begins to form.

Throughout the story Noah prompts Go-Ma with how he wants the story to develop. It is Noah who asks for a mean dragon to appear in the story, but also Noah who decides the dragon is crying because it is sad. It is this that prompts the tale of the dragon who feels he is pressured to act in a certain way because this is what is expected of him. Noah explains to the dragon that he can be who he wants to be, because there are all sorts of different dragons in the world.

This is a charming story that examines difference and acceptance. A sub-theme, which is hardly touched upon, is that Noah has two mums: this might be a discussion point echoing themes of difference and how children have different families.

The book is quite text-heavy in some places and contains some challenging vocabulary (such as *luminescence*), so would be good for use as a shared text with children in lower Key Stage 2 or as an independent reader in upper Key Stage 2. The illustrations are colourful and attractive and support the text well.
Don’t Let Go!

Author: Jeanne Willis
Illustrator: Tony Ross
Date of publication: 2002
Place of publication: London
Publisher: Andersen Press

Annotation:

This story represents a family made up of a mum, dad and daughter. It focuses primarily on the relationship between daughter and father. It may be that mum and dad are separated – as dad refers to the girl riding “from ours to yours.”

The story is about a dad teaching his daughter how to ride a bike – he does not let go until his daughter says so. Whilst the girl is scared of being let go of too soon, the father is scared of letting go. This illustrates the close relationship between father and daughter, which is a strength of this book.

The illustrations are delicate and really enhance the text. It is ideal for younger readers. The rhyme all the way through the story makes it an enjoyable read and provides a rhythm that will be enjoyed by individual readers or when shared with a whole class.
Dora’s New Brother!

Author: Dee Shulman

Date of publication: 1993

Place of publication: London

Publisher: The Bodley Head


Annotation:

This book looks at issues of adoption in families that already have a child. Dora lives with mum and dad, and has a granddad and grandma. Her new brother, Sasha, is adopted from abroad (although the country is never specified). Dora is initially very excited about her new brother and tells everyone at school.

The excitement continues when Sasha arrives and Dora loves playing with and looking after him. However, Dora soon discovers that there is a down side to having a little brother and becomes very annoyed with Sasha for spoiling her games and ruining her work.

However, when Sasha goes away with mum for a couple of days, Dora begins to appreciate how much she loves Sasha and how much she misses him. This book presents a balanced picture not only of adoption but also of coping with new siblings, acknowledging some of the challenges and difficulties whilst still showing a loving family. The story ends with Dora welcoming Sasha home and loving him exactly as he is.

The story would be useful as a shared text for discussion with children in Key Stage 1 who have younger siblings, when a baby is born or when talking about adoption. Much of the text is in speech bubbles – which some children may find appealing.
Emma and Meesha My Boy: a two mom story

Author: Kaitlyn Considine
Illustrator: Binny Hobbs
Date of publication: 2005
Place of publication: New England
Publisher: Kaitlyn Considine
ISBN: 1-4134-1600-4

Annotation:

As part of the introduction to the characters of this story, the book makes what is almost a passing comment relating to Emma having two mums; the two mums are an element of the story but not its main focus. The rest of the story is about Emma's relationship with Meesha, her cat, and the things Emma's mums, 'Mommy' and 'Mama', say to her when she plays with Meesha.

The bold text on the page introducing the mums – 'That makes two' – is unnecessary and draws slight attention to an aspect of the story that could have been left as totally incidental. It is the only point in the story where an issue of the two female parents is made, apart from in the subtitle of the book. The latter reflects Kaitlyn Considine's purpose in writing the book – to make available more texts showing two mothers that she could use with her own children.

Mama and Mommy take turns in giving Emma advice when she tries out different activities with her cat. The book raises issues of how to care for a pet appropriately and ends with Emma finding happiness when she treats Meesha with care and attention.

The book is American, and includes the American spelling of 'mommy'. It has bold, colourful illustrations and uses simple and accessible language. It is aimed at children aged 3 – 6 years. The use of rhyme adds to the appeal of the text.
Families

Author: Debbie Bailey
Illustrator: Susan Huszar
Date of publication: 1999
Place of publication: Toronto
Publisher: Annick Press

Annotation:

This book uses photographs more than words and is aimed at pre-school or children in a Reception class. It is an accessible book which shows positive images of a traditional nuclear family consisting of a mother, father, sibling and grandparents. The pictures demonstrate people from all walks of life, and different ethnic backgrounds.

This is a lovely book that looks at the everyday things that children do with other family members. The book uses carefully selected photographs that avoid gender stereotyping, for example both mum and dad cook at different times. At the end of each section - each focussing on a different family member - there is opportunity for discussion through the inclusion of questions.

One drawback is that the book uses some American spelling of words.
**Family Book, The**

**Author:** Todd Parr  
**Date of publication:** 2003  
**Place of publication:** New York  
**Publisher:** Megan Tingley Books  
**ISBN:** 0-316-73896-4

**Annotation:**

*The Family Book* introduces younger children to the concept that there are many different kinds of family. Using short, simple sentences and bold and bright illustrations the book gets across this message in a very clear, appealing and accessible way.

Whilst looking at the different compositions, habits and preferences of families, the book also focuses on what “all” families do – such as celebrating special days together and helping each other to be strong. This is reinforced at the end of the book by outlining that there are lots of different ways to be family, and that all families are special.

This book is very attractive to look at and uses very clear and accessible language. It would be an excellent introduction to family diversity with young children.

Other books by Todd Parr in the same series include:


See also *It’s Okay to be Different.*
First Day of School, The

Author: Toby Forward
Illustrator: Carol Thompson
Date of publication: 2004
Place of publication: London
Publisher: Doubleday
ISBN: 0-385-60192-1

Annotation:
This book presents a refreshing look at children who have working mums. The little boy telling the story takes the reader through his first day at school and mum’s first day back at work.

Both the text and the illustrations draw parallels between the boy’s day and his mother’s day including break time, work and friends. Both show mum and the boy thinking about each other. The book presents working mothers in a positive light, helped by the parallels. It challenges the sometimes expressed notion that working mothers do not love their children as much as those who stay at home.

The illustrations are attractive and fit well with the text. This book would be useful as an independent or shared reader for children in the Foundation Stage or Key Stage 1.
Friday Nights of Nana, The

Author: Amy Hest
Illustrator: Claire A Nivola
Date of publication: 2001
Place of publication: Cambridge, Massachusetts
Publisher: Candlewick Press
ISBN: 0–7636–0658-8

Annotation:

This story is effective in highlighting family diversity and gives the reader an insight into a Jewish family as a girl and her nana prepare for the Sabbath. This is the main strength of the book as it concentrates on not just a family, but also on the family’s religious practices. The end of the book illustrates a family including: grandma, parents, daughter, son, uncles, aunts and cousins. This again displays a diverse family.

The illustrations are excellent in capturing the family’s love for each other and also their religious beliefs. The last illustration and the one on the cover of the book itself are extremely imaginative and show the family through a window: the reader gains insight by looking in on family life. The illustrations are a further strength in highlighting family diversity.

There are certain spelling variations due to its American origin. The Americanisms, ‘gray’ and ‘favorite’ may need some explanation in terms of spelling, but mirror the English meaning. Therefore, children would hopefully understand them in the context of the story.

This book would be an excellent resource for the classroom to provide a point of discussion about different families and their religious beliefs and practices.
Giraffes Can’t Dance

Author: Giles Andreae
Illustrator: Guy Parker-Rees
Date of publication: 2000
Place of publication: London
Publisher: Orchard Books

Annotation:

This book tells of a giraffe called Gerald who is laughed at because he cannot dance as well as all the other animals in the jungle.

He is given some advice that changes the way he thinks about this difference, and uses difference to his advantage. The book doesn’t challenge any particular stereotype – it challenges many of them. It shows the reader that being different can be fun and that difference is to be celebrated.

When Gerald finds music that inspires him to dance he finds that the other animals accept him and praise his talent.

This story could be added to any collection of children’s picture books and could be read as an amusing and thought-provoking story with a class. The excellent use of rhyme reflects the music referred to in the text. The illustrations are lively and appealing and contain a great deal of detail.
**Gorilla**

Author: Anthony Browne  
Date of publication: 1992  
Place of publication: London  
Publisher: Little Greats / Random Century  

Annotation:

This is a magical story about how a father buys his daughter a toy gorilla for her birthday: she loves gorillas.

Although the book does not explicitly state that the father is a single parent, it is implied through the text and through the illustrations. It focuses particularly upon a child's thoughts and feelings of isolation and concentrates on the relationship between father and daughter.

During the progression of the book a child's toy transforms into a live gorilla. Whether this is meant to be the girl's dream is unclear, however, the gorilla seems to provide a metaphor for what the girl hopes for or how she wants her relationship with her dad to be.

Whilst the outcome of the story is a positive relationship between daughter and father, the adventure with the gorilla may seem scary to some children. The story raises some interesting points about family relationships, but would need to be used sensitively. How the relationship between Hannah and her father is transformed is not addressed.

The illustrations are extremely interesting and realistic and bring the characters to life. Although, this text has a lot of monosyllabic words and simple sentences, it also has some polysyllabic words and complex sentences. This book would appeal more to children in upper Key Stage 1 and early Key Stage 2.

Other books by this author include:

*Piggybook* (included in this collection)

A lovely book showing a child's appreciation of their mother, with beautiful illustrations.

A lovely book showing a child's appreciation of their father, with beautiful illustrations.
Grace and Family

Author: Mary Hoffman
Illustrator: Caroline Binch
Date of publication: 1995
Place of publication: London
Publisher: Frances Lincoln

Annotation:

Grace and Family takes a look at different family structures through the eyes of Grace. To Grace, her family has always meant her mum, her Grandma and her cat, but Grace struggles to reconcile her family with the families she reads about in her story books.

When Grace’s dad invites her over to The Gambia to visit him and his new family Grace sees the family she “ought” to have: a mum, dad, brother, sister and a dog. But she is one person too many for this arrangement and feels there isn’t a place for her in this new family.

The story also touches on Grace’s feelings of being stretched between her two families and she feels that there isn’t enough of her to go round.

Grace and Family picks up on the important point that many children’s books portray a stereotypical image of what a family ought to be. It uses Nana to explain to Grace - and to the reader – that families come in all different shapes. This point is emphasised when Nana asks Grace if she would like to get rid of her, as a grandmother doesn’t appear in many of the story books either!

Throughout the story Nana explains to Grace that: “Families are what you make them.”
Grandfather and I

Author: Helen E Buckley
Illustrator: Jan Ormerod
Date of publication: 1995
Place of publication: London
Publisher: Viking
ISBN: 0-670-86375-0

Annotation:

This book is extremely effective in portraying a family relationship and focuses in particular on the relationship between a child and his/her grandfather. The illustrations imply that the child does have a mum and dad and the text does not explicitly state that the grandfather is a carer for the child. There is a sense of an extended family.

The story concentrates particularly upon the child’s interpretation of his/her own family, implying a strong bond with his/her grandfather because he doesn’t rush like mums and dads.

A great strength of this book is the balance of pictures and text, making it extremely accessible for young readers. Furthermore, the repeated text throughout makes it a good text to read aloud. Similarly, the abundant use of monosyllabic vocabulary and the repetition make it ideal for independent reading. The illustrations are delicate and mirror the text by cleverly portraying the closeness the child has with his/her grandfather, further illustrating that families are all different. A further strength of the book is that is illustrates positive images of a black family. It is interesting to note that out of four reviewers three thought the child was female, and one male. The book does not make this explicit.

A second book in the series is Grandmother and I, which addresses issues in a similar manner. Publication details are identical. ISBN 0-670-86374-2.
Grandma’s Saturday Soup

Author: Sally Fraser

Illustrator: Derek Brazell

Date of publication: 2005

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Mantra Lingua

ISBN: 1-84444-939-4 (Panjabi and English)

Annotation:

This story interleaves a child’s daily routine in the UK with how it reminds them of their grandmother’s stories of life in Jamaica. The clouds, snow, snowballs and newly emerging spring bulbs each remind Mimi of an ingredient in Grandma’s Saturday soup.

At first it may be presumed that Grandma lives in Jamaica, but by the end of the book it is clear that she lives locally and that the family visit each Saturday to enjoy her stories and the special soup.

The book is beautifully illustrated – showing life in Jamaica and in a very wintry UK. There is a real sense of warmth between the family members. A traditional nuclear family is presented, with Grandma living close by.

This book is available in twenty-nine dual language editions.
Harry’s Home

Author: Laurence Anholt

Illustrator: Catherine Anholt

Date of publication: 1999

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Orchard Books


Annotation:

Harry lives in the city. His Granddad lives in the country, and writes to Harry. Harry receives a farm set for his birthday... along with a train ticket.

Granddad comes to take Harry for a visit to the countryside. Harry leaves his mum for the first time.

Harry experiences life away from home, and life on a farm. He learns to care for the animals. He learns that animals and people have their own homes – their own special places.

The illustrations will appeal particularly to children in Key Stage 1, although some pages include a good deal of text which will make this book appropriate as a shared text. On some pages the text is quite simple, and often fits the shape of the illustrations. However, this is not consistent and means the book will not be suitable for individual reading by some children. The illustrations are detailed and provide the opportunity for discussion and for a teacher or other adult to develop the story and the comprehension of the story with children.

This is a warm and accessible book, which addresses the love between child and parent, extended family relationships, the contrast between urban and rural life and the ways in which homes are important.
Heather Has Two Mommies

Author: Leslea Newman
Illustrator: Diana Souza
Date of publication: 2000
Place of publication: Los Angeles
Publisher: Alyson Wonderland
ISBN: 1-55593-543-0

Annotation:
This book looks at the life of Heather, including her first day at playgroup. Heather feels loved and is happy to have two mums until she starts attending the playgroup and hears everyone else talking about their families. At this point, Heather realises that she does not have a dad.

The group leader and the other children talk about their families and it becomes clear that all parents including single parents, gay parents, lesbian parents, step-parents and adoptive parents are special and that the important thing is that members of families love one another. The book shows a range of family models in a positive manner.

The book is illustrated with pencil drawings, alongside illustrations created by children. This tenth anniversary edition is not as colourful or eye catching as other books in the collection.

The book has notes for parents, carers and teachers which may be helpful when considering how to address some of the issues it raises. It is from the US and includes some American spelling of words.
Horse for Joe, A

Authors: Margaret Hird and Ann Whitwell

Illustrator: Olivia Keith

Date of publication: Undated

Place of publication: Trowbridge

Publisher: Wiltshire Traveller Education


Annotation:

This book tells of a boy’s desire to have a horse and of the ways in which he might be prepared to get one. It gives insights into the life of traveller families, through Joe’s family. We learn what the members of Joe’s family do for a living.

The photographs in the book give it a good sense of reality whilst the watercolour images are appealing and warm. There is a sense that the story includes elements of fiction and non-fiction writing.

Despite the well-painted pictures this book is not as eye catching as many other books in the collection. The story could have been stronger. Overall, it appears a little dated.

The book is recommended as a starting point for discussions about the different places in which people live and their different homes. Older children will enjoy it as an independent reader. Some of the paragraphs are long and would be accessible to more confident readers; there are shorter and more direct sentences for those who are less confident.
If I had a Hundred Mummies

Author: Vanda Carter

Date of publication: 2006

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Onlywomen Press

ISBN: 978-0-906500-910

Annotation:

If I Had a Hundred Mummies considers the trials and tribulations that would be faced if a child had just that – a hundred mums. There would be endless bedtime stories, masses of kisses and people to care, the need for a huge house and a whole range of clutter and junk! However, there might also be plenty of holidays, lots of sweets and plenty of ice creams.

There would be a hundred people to keep an eye on the child and to make sure that she ate her greens. The prospect of one hundred mothers seems daunting and to bring a mixed range of positives and drawbacks.

The punch line is that one hundred mothers is not an exciting prospect, but having two is just fine. This is an unexpected end to the book. It provides an affirming message to children with two mums.

This is a super book to read aloud. The rhyme makes it appealing to the ear and children will find the content amusing and engaging. The illustrations are colourful and eye-catching. It could be accessed by children across the primary phase as an individual reader or a shared text. Its strengths contrast with The Daddy Machine (see Notes on Other Books).
I’m Special, I’m Me!

Author: Ann Meek
Illustrator: Sarah Massini
Date of publication: 2006
Place of publication: London
Publisher: Little Tiger Press
ISBN: 1-84506-043-1

Annotation:

This is a story about Milo, a boy who is rejected by his friends because they do not think him acceptable to take on the role of various characters in their games. For example, he is not strong enough to play the lion. He manages to turn this negative feeling into a positive, with the help of his mother and a little imagination.

This is a lovely story which could provide support and inspiration for children who feel a little different or unaccepted. Milo soon realises that by being positive, using his imagination and realising his own potential he is as special as everyone else.

The illustrations are lively and engaging.

The book is appropriate for use in both Key Stages 1 and 2. It could be read individually or with a whole class. It might also be used specifically with children who feel that they don’t fit in.

Ann Meek won the Search for a Story New Author Prize for this book.
It’s Okay to be Different

Author: Todd Parr

Date of publication: 2001

Place of publication: New York

Publisher: Megan Tingley Books

ISBN: 0-316-66603-3

Annotation:

This bright and extremely eye catching book shows many varied ways of being different.

It includes representations of children with different abilities, physical features and characteristics and children showing a range of emotions. It includes children with “different moms” and “different dads” and children who are adopted.

This book will appeal to children in the Foundation Stage and possibly in lower Key Stage 1. It looks at various and varied differences between children and affirms that it is ok to be different. The book concludes with a positive message from the author.

See also The Family Book.
John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat

Author: Jenny Wagner
Illustrator: Ron Brooks
Date of publication: 1979
Place of publication: London
Publisher: Puffin Books
ISBN: 0-14-050306-4

Annotation:

Rose’s husband died a long time ago. Now she lives with John Brown, her dog. They keep each other company and are happy together.

One evening, Rose notices a visitor in the garden but John Brown cannot see them. Although Rose wants to give the visitor some milk, John Brown continues to say that no one is there. He goes outside and confronts the Midnight Cat. He tells it to go away.

John Brown remains adamant that there is no visitor in the garden, until Rose sees the cat clearly for herself and puts out a bowl of milk. Whenever Rose is not looking, John Brown tips the milk away. However, when Rose becomes ill John Brown realises that the company of the Midnight Cat might help her to recover. He lets the cat into the house, Rose becomes well again and the cat purrs with contentment.

This is a lovely story showing an older single woman. It could be used to explore issues of singleness and of how we react when a new member enters the family. It also shows how much people appreciate and love their pets.

The book includes detailed pencil drawings which show the home and the emotion of the characters. It is suitable for children in Key Stages 1 and 2.
Josh and Jaz Have Three Mums

Author: Hedi Argent
Illustrator: Amanda Wood
Date of publication: 2007
Place of publication: London
Publisher: British Association for Adoption and Fostering
ISBN: 978-1-905664-12-2

Annotation:

Joshua and Jasmine are twins. They have two mums, Mummy Sue and Mummy Fran, and a puppy called Bumps.

Josh and Jaz’s teacher explains that all the children in the class are going to draw their family tree. This unsettles the twins: they lose their appetites and don’t want to play when they get home. Eventually they are able to explain to their mums why they are upset – as they are concerned because everyone else at school seems to have a mum and a dad and they are different.

The mums retell the story of how the twins were adopted. Their birth mum and dad had been unable to learn how to take care of them, “because they took bad drugs that made them sick.” They talk about the different kinds of families in which children grow up. The children realise that they actually have three mums and a dad.

Together, the family draws out the children’s family tree. The children take it to school and feel accepted and valued by their teacher and classmates.

This is an affirming story about adoption and same-sex parents, which also affirms other models of family life. The book is suitable to use with children in Key Stage 1. The illustrations are of a good quality. Issues are dealt with in a realistic and supportive manner.
**Jump!**

**Author:** Michelle Magorian  
**Illustrator:** Jan Ormerod  
**Date of publication:** 1992  
**Place of publication:** London  
**Publisher:** Walker Books  
**ISBN:** 0-7445-2073-8  

**Annotation:**

This is a story about a boy, Steven, who watches his sister at ballet class every week. He longs to join in with the plieing and jumping. His mother thinks that real boys don’t dance; they play sports like basketball. However, when Steven asks if he can play basketball his mum tells him that he will need to grow first and that, in any case, they don’t have a hoop or a ball.

Steven gets the opportunity to take part in the ballet’s performance and demonstrates his skill for jumping in a dance specially created around a basketball theme. Both his parents are extremely proud of him and his mum comes to believe that he will make a fine sports player or dancer one day.

This is a good book to use when addressing gender stereotyping and issues around acceptance. The book shows a mixture of boys and girls at the dance class – showing that this is normal practice.

The illustrations are clear and life-like. This book is suitable for use with children in Key Stage 1 and Lower Key Stage 2.
Katie Morag and the Two Grandmothers

Author: Mairi Hedderwick

Date of publication: 1992

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Collins Picture Lions

ISBN: 0-00-664273-X

Annotation:

Katie Morag’s two Grannies are like chalk and cheese and she is caught between the two when glamorous Grannie Mainland arrives for the fair. Grannie Island is plain and tough and thinks Grannie Mainland is silly for all of her “fancy ways” and the way the men fawn over her.

A dilemma arises when Grannie Island’s prize sheep, Alecina, gets covered in mud just before she is due at the show field. Katie realises how her two very different Grannies can work together by using Grannie Mainland’s cosmetics to clean up Alecina in time for the fair.

When Alecina wins the show, thanks to Grannie Mainland, Grannie Island realises that Grannie Mainland is not so silly after all, and stops mocking her “fancy ways”.

A strength of this book is the range of female characters it presents. Although Grannie Mainland is portrayed as quite weak and “girly,” and Grannie Island could be viewed as being too “hard”, Katie Morag provides a strong female role model for young girls.

It is not clear how Mr and Mrs McColl are related to Katie; she appears to live with them at the Post Office. Whilst the family relationship is unclear, there is a positive sense of an extended family. This is an interesting and appealing story set on an island in Scotland.

The book shows how differences are valuable and that people should work together. This could have been developed further by Grannie Mainland playing a more active role in resolving the problem, as her only contribution was to provide the equipment and she was unaware of the plan. This interaction and cooperation between the two Grannies would have sent a stronger message.
King and King

Authors: Linda de Haan & Stern Nijland
Illustrators: Linda de Haan & Stern Nijland
Date of publication: 2000
Place of publication: Berkeley, CA
Publisher: Tricycle Press

Annotation:

King and King looks at marriage from the point of view of a prince – turning around the focus of many traditional tales. When the queen insists that the prince get married and take over as king, there begins a search for a suitable partner, which does not turn out as expected. A host of eligible princesses are presented to the prince but he is unmoved by any of them. When the final princess arrives she brings along her brother, and “it was love at first sight”.

One strength of the book is that it avoids stereotyping the princes; rather it shows them as any other prince in a story or traditional tale would be characterised. With regard to the story itself, more time could have been spent exploring about the princes’ relationship and seeing them interact, but this is a minor criticism.

The sequel to the book, King, King and Family, has not been included in this collection. A brief discussion of this is included in the Notes on Other Books section of this resource.

The illustrations in King and King are original and attractive and will be enjoyed by children of various ages.

Companion books could include Babette Cole’s Prince Cinders and Princess Smartypants, both which provide an alternative take on a traditional tale.
Koala for Katie, A

Author: Jonathan London
Illustrator: Cynthia Jabar
Date of publication: 1993
Place of publication: Morton Grove, Illinois
Publisher: Albert Whitman and Company

Annotation:

On a trip to the zoo, Katie gets a special present that helps her realise how much her adoptive parents love her. The book explores adoption through the character of Katie and the toy Koala she ‘adopts’ at the zoo.

One of the story’s strengths is the way it emphasises the love Katie receives from her adoptive parents and makes clear that they too are her real parents, even though they have no biological connection. It shows the family doing normal family activities (in this case, going to the zoo), making it clear that this family unit is no different to others.

The book touches on the concept of Katie being chosen by her adoptive parents, which makes her special, but it would have been beneficial to develop this aspect in greater detail. There is the potential to develop this concept through discussion with children.

Something the book could have handled better is when the characters are discussing Katie’s (and the koala’s) birth mothers. Here the emphasis is on how the children are given a better life with a loving adoptive family. A consequence of this, however, is that the birth parents are painted in a slightly negative way. This would have to be handled carefully with children so they can understand that there can be a variety of reasons for adoption.

The foreword to the book provides information for parents and carers on adoption. This will also be useful for teachers using this book with their class. It advises how to deal with questions from children about adoption. This advice is echoed through the characters of the book, who are open and honest with Katie about where she came from.
Letters Around the World

Author: Thando Maclaren

Illustrators: Luz and Kate Pope

Date of publication: 2004

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Tango Books

ISBN: 1-85707-617-6

Annotation:

This is a beautifully presented book which shows families from around the world. It shows a child with pen pals in various places. Each pair of pages reveals a different pen pal family, their location, home, family members and hobbies. A special envelope contains a pen pal letter to accompany each entry.

Children from India, the Caribbean, Indonesia, New Zealand, and east Africa share correspondence. Each one corresponds more than once and shares aspects of their life and their interests.

The book ends with a Pen Pal Game which folds out from the back of the book. It provides the opportunity for children to explore the information from one country.

This is a highly engaging, bright and appealing book which will help children to appreciate the lives of children around the globe. The twelve letters are fascinating and are supported by other brief information and illustrations. This book is ideal for use with children in Kay Stage 1 or Key Stage 2. Teachers will be able to adapt the content to provide further differentiated activities and to promote research by their children.
**Lights for Gita**

Author: Rachna Gilmore  
Illustrator: Alice Priestly  
Date of publication: 1994  
Place of publication: Toronto  
Publisher: Second Story Press  
ISBN: 0-929005-61-9  

Annotation:  
This book focuses on the Hindu story of Divali. Gita, a young girl, is excited at the prospect of some of her friends from school visiting her home to see the lights and join in the celebrations. It is her first Divali in her new home, and she thinks of all her relatives celebrating back in India.  

However, the bad weather prevents the fireworks from being lit and some of her friends have to cancel their visit because of the icy conditions. Eventually the *diyas* light up the icy night and Gita sees that Divali can be celebrated – even in a new and different environment. The book shows Gita preparing for the celebrations with her mum and dad. It provides an interesting insight into celebrations in the home, supported by an interesting and engaging storyline.  

The book has wonderful illustrations and will appeal to children in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2.  

It is a useful resource for looking at how people in the Hindu faith celebrate Divali in both New Delhi and in the UK.
Lion Who Wanted to Love, The

Author: Giles Andreae

Illustrator: David Wojtowycz

Date of publication: 1999

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Orchard Books

ISBN: 1-86039-913-4

Annotation:

Presented in verse, The Lion Who Wanted to Love tells the story of Leo, a brave little lion who wants to look for love and to make friends with the other animals in the jungle. This attitude sets him apart from his pride, and Leo sets out on his own.

The story takes the reader along with Leo on his journey. He helps and makes friends with the other animals through his kindness. Daring to be different is a key theme and is shown to have its rewards in the end. When Leo is nearly swept over the waterfalls his new friends, who have been looking for a way to thank Leo, rush to his rescue and work together to pull him back from the edge.

A strength of this book is the moral/message that it conveys. The ending of the book offers a distinct way of thinking, showing the reader that they can be who they want to be and that they need not conform or act in a particular way because others tell them to do so. It teaches that as long as we can open our minds to accept the world, we will find much love and can make dreams come true. It is realistic in showing that this way is not always easy.

One disturbing point comes early on in the story when Leo’s mother tells him that he has no place in the pride because he is unwilling to hunt. This raises issues of the rejection which can come through being different and would need to be addressed sensitively with children.

This story challenges stereotypes and presents opportunities for meaningful discussions about the value of being different.
**Lucy’s Quarrel**

**Author:** Jennifer Northway  
**Date of publication:** 1997  
**Place of publication:** London  
**Publisher:** Scholastic Children’s Books  
**ISBN:** 0-590-54279-6

**Annotation:**

This is a beautifully illustrated story about two cousins who have a quarrel. Lucy has been talking about her forthcoming birthday party far too much and this has irritated Alice. When they quarrel and refuse to apologise to one another Lucy faces the prospect of holding her party without her best friend. One child is black and the other is white, although this is incidental to the story. The book illustrates an extended mixed ‘race’ family.

The book presents a realistic view of how friends relate to one another and some of trials that they face. Children will recognise the common experience of “falling out”.

The text explores what a good relationship the children have and how they miss each other but find it difficult to say sorry. In the end they are reunited.

This book is particularly recommended for use with children in Key Stage 1.

Further texts by the same author and in the same series are:

Mama Zooms

Author: Jane Cowen-Fletcher

Date of publication: 1993

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Scholastic

ISBN: 0-590-45775-6

Annotation:

*Mama Zooms* is the story of a little boy and his mother, who is in a wheelchair. The boy tells of all the things he and his mum do together and the games they play using the wheelchair, which takes on a variety of roles including a racing car, ship, racehorse and aeroplane.

Mama Zooms presents a rare example of a parent using a wheelchair and shows that disability does not have to affect a person's capabilities as a mother or playmate.

The small amount of text follows a simple and repetitive pattern and is suitable for young children. The illustrations are attractive and go well with the text. This is a light-hearted book that may introduce the idea to children that some people use wheelchairs. It would be useful as a shared or independent text with children in the Foundation Stage or Key Stage 1.
Meet the Family: My Dad

Author: Mary Auld

Date of publication: 2003

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Franklin Watts

ISBN: 0-7496-4884-8

Annotation:

My Dad is a book that looks at different families, focusing primarily on the dad. Although it includes a variety of families, its weakness is that it omits some areas. For example it does not display foster families or a family with two fathers.

The writing mainly consists of monosyllabic words and simple sentences, therefore aiming it towards a younger audience. It is extremely accessible and has a balance of writing and photographs on each page. These photographs are extremely effective and add meaning to the text. Furthermore, they display people from different ethnic groups. This is a further strength of the text. The page layout lends itself to classroom use and the book could provide a point for discussion, especially within the Foundation Stage when addressing the topic My Family. The book has photographs which are bright and appealing to the eye. The text is large and bold. It would be ideal for use with a whole class as a part of a PSHE lesson. It might also be used with older children to promote discussion.

This book also contains an interactive section which has a glossary of family words and an activity where children can draw their own family tree. Very positively it states that ‘every family tree is different’. This book ends with ‘what is your dad like?’ Although this allows children to think of their own dad it might not appeal to children that do not have a dad or regard someone else as a father figure.
Meet the Family: My Mum

Author: Mary Auld

Date of publication: 2003

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Franklin Watts


Annotation:

As with the book My Dad, this book focuses on a variety of families including step and adoptive families. However, although it addresses the concept of ‘two mums’ this is in the sense of a mum and step mum and not a lesbian couple. Therefore, as with the book My Dad, this book could have portrayed a wider variety of families.

The photographs support the text well and are extremely effective in highlighting family diversity. They not only display people of different ethnicities but they also show mums with disabilities. This is one of the book’s strengths. The writing mainly consists of monosyllabic words and simple sentences making it very suitable for use with a younger audience. It is extremely accessible and has a balance of writing accompanied by photographs on each page.

This book also contains an interactive section which has a glossary of family words and an activity for the children to draw their own family tree. It states that ‘every family tree is different’. The list of words that can be used to describe a mother is useful as it helps to avoid any confusion. This book ends with ‘what is your mum like?’ Although this allows children to think of their own mum it may not appeal to children that do not have a mum or look up to someone else as a mother figure. This book would be appropriate for use in a group situation to promote discussion or for use in a PSHE lesson.
**Mice Next Door, The**

**Author:** Anthony Knowles

**Illustrator:** Susan Edwards

**Date of publication:** 1991

**Place of publication:** London

**Publisher:** Macmillan Children’s Books

**ISBN:** 0-333-44977-0

**Annotation:**

This book tells the story of a group of mice, the Hardy family, which moves in next door to another family. The story outlines the stereotypes of having mice living next door – as perceived by the father and told by the children of the neighbouring family.

The father has a negative attitude to the new neighbours, because they are different, yet the mother seems more positive and welcoming. She sees ignorance and sometimes hypocrisy in what the father is saying.

In the end, because of the mice’s helpfulness, the father’s stance is altered and the families become friends. The mice could represent any new family moving into an area. The book challenges the stereotypes held by the father – and the focus on a family of mice makes it possible to apply the ideas to a range of settings and to discuss them in abstract ways which do not directly affect particular individuals.

The book needs to be used sensitively as some of the expressions used by the father may be a little “close to the bone” depending on the circumstances of the children reading the text. It may be best used as a shared text, rather than being read by individual children, so that a teacher can support discussion and address any stereotypes or prejudices held within a class.
Milly, Molly and Different Dads

Author: Gill Pittar

Illustrator: Chris Morrell

Date of publication: 2002

Place of publication: Gisborne, New Zealand

Publisher: MM House Publishing


Annotation:

Milly and Molly learn how different dads can be in a story with a message of acceptance of difference.

The story begins with Sophie, whose dad has left the family home. Prompted by this the other children in Sophie’s class talk about their dads. In the pages that follow the reader is introduced to many different types of dads and family relationships, including: two dads, absent dads, stay-at-home dads, step-families, disabled dads and adoptive dads.

One strength of the story is that it presents this wide range of dads and family compositions as normal and acceptable, not as something different or unusual. The children share their own experiences of dads and no one is challenged if their experience is different (for example, Milly replies to Elizabeth, who has two dads, with the simple answer, “I've only got one dad”).

The illustrations of the children and their dads represent a diverse range of ethnicities, and show all the children in happy scenes with their fathers. The children with absent or disabled dads appear content with their situations, which are perfectly normal to them.

Towards the end of the book there are some touching moments as Alf and Mrs Blythe confide that their dads have died, while Sophie squeezes into the group to “softly” say that her dad is deaf.

continued/…
The book reaches its conclusion, however, without returning to the original issue of Sophie’s dad. Perhaps this should have been returned to and addressed, possibly by the children offering advice to Sophie on how to deal with the change in her situation, especially as at least one of the children has already said their dad now has a new family. Whilst this lack of resolution is a weakness in the book, it will provide the opportunity for a teacher to develop a discussion with their class, possibly offering advice during a Circle Time activity. The sense of unity and togetherness within the class is a very positive aspect of the book.
**Molly’s Family**

Author: Nancy Garden

Illustrator: Sharon Wooding

Date of publication: 2004

Place of publication: New York

Publisher: Farrar Straus Giroux

ISBN: 0-374-35002-7

Annotation:

This book is excellent in highlighting family diversity. When Molly draws a picture of her family a boy says, “‘You can’t have a mommy and a mama’” and then further suggests that, “That’s not a family.” This upsets Molly and she begins to question what Tommy has said. However, when she questions her two mums they say that she has a birth mother and an adoptive mother and they further suggest, “There are lots of different kinds of families.”

The dialogue within this book adds significant weight to the text itself and allows the reader to understand that families are diverse. The dialogue again continues when Tommy poses the same question Molly asked her mums to their class teacher. The sensitive way in which this character answers this question is a strength of the book.

The discussion between the teacher and the children initiates a variety of responses: ‘I don’t have a Daddy,’ ‘I have a grandma and a mommy and a daddy and two brothers,’ ‘I just have a daddy,’ and ‘I have a daddy and a mommy’. This not only highlights family separation and single parents, but it also highlights the importance of teaching about family diversity in classrooms. It would have been even more appropriate however if a child had a carer. The child’s realisation that, ‘There even were different kinds of families in her very own class,’ makes a very realistic and reassuring ending.

The illustrations are delicate, attractive and realistic and support the text. Although this would be a great book for discussion, the text is quite small lending itself more to independent reading. The simple sentences would appeal to a younger reader, however the topic presented within the book would lend itself to both Key Stages 1 and 2.
Mum’s Late

Author: Elizabeth Hawkins

Illustrator: Pamela Venus

Date of publication: 1999

Place of publication: Sine Loco

Publisher: Tamarind Ltd

ISBN: 1-870516 40-0

Annotation:

*Mum’s Late* is a story about a group of children waiting to be collected from school by brothers, carers, mothers and fathers. This positively highlights family diversity. However, it doesn’t explicitly state whether or not the mother and father are single parents.

A further strength of this book is that the author cleverly weaves a story around the topic of family diversity. The main story is about a boy waiting for his mother to pick him up from school and although she is only five minutes late his imagination conjures up many reasons why she has not yet arrived. The story ends reassuringly when Jerome’s mum arrives.

The boy’s thoughts are highlighted through blue/grey illustrations which contrast with the colour ones which demonstrate reality. The illustrations are life-like, delicate and highlight family diversity. They particularly concentrate on families from different ethnic backgrounds. This is a further strength of this children’s book. Furthermore, there is a balance of pictures and text per page making it an ideal book to read with a class. The pictures support and add meaning to the text which also means that the book lends itself to independent reading.

Some ideas are amusing e.g. the idea that Jerome’s mum has been squashed by an elephant. However one is more disturbing, playing on the teacher’s suggestion that mum has been “held up”. Jerome imagines her being help up by robbers, although their gun is clearly a toy. The book shows children that it is ok to worry if their parent/carer is late and suggests that other children experience the same feelings. In the end there is a positive outcome and reassurance. The text is quite simple and generally composed of monosyllabic vocabulary and simple sentences, aiming it at a younger reader.
My Family is Forever

Author: Nancy Carlson

Date of publication: 2006

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Puffin Books

ISBN: 0-14-240561-2

Annotation:

This book shows the life of a young girl who has been adopted. She wonders about her birth parents and details how she was chosen specially by her parents. The main message is that it is not looking similar that makes a family – it is the love and care shared with one another. The child feels very positive about her adoptive family and her life.

The book shows that families care for each other in good times and bad. It touches on the adoption process. The book also addressed gender stereotypes – showing mum and dad undertaking a range of roles.

The book is well illustrated with a range of bright and appealing pictures.
**My Mother’s Getting Married**

Author: Joan Drescher

Date of publication: 1986

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Methuen Children’s Books

ISBN: 0-416-95590-8

Annotation:

This book is about the relationship between Katy and her mum and how Katy feels about her mum getting married.

Issues are portrayed and explored sensitively. The book has a good sense of realism, which is a strength. Katy anticipates a range of problems when Ben marries her mum including the possibility that her mum will love her less.

Although Katy is reassured by the end of the book her worries do not totally disappear. This adds a further sense of realism to the story which might allow children going through this situation to relate to the story.

The illustrations are lovely and demonstrate the close relationship between Katy and her mother. The text is quite simple and would appeal to a young audience. The topic of step families and feelings in relation to them could be used as a discussion point for groups or in a classroom setting.
**My Mum and Our Dad**

Author: Rose Impey

Illustrator: Maureen Galvani

Date of publication: 1990

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Penguin

ISBN: 0-670-82561-1

Annotation:

This book is really clever and imaginative - providing a witty and honest portrayal of family life. It outlines two different families: one with a boy and his mum and one with a dad and his two daughters. The text does not overtly state that the mum and dad in this instance are single parents, however with no mention of another parent and illustrations that only portray one mum and one dad it implies that in both cases that they are single parents. One strength of this book is that it presents two families within one story.

The story is about the perspectives of both the children and the adults. The first part of the story outlines what the boy and mum do not like about each other and this theme continues into the second half of the story with the dad and the two girls. Ironically, the qualities that the children don’t like about their parents and the qualities that the parents don’t like about their children are the same. This adds a hint of humour and realism to the story. Furthermore the realistic and delicate illustrations add meaning to the text.

The shape that the words form on the page mirrors what the words suggest. So when the story gives images of children rushing, the text itself rushes across the page. This adds interest to the text and hopefully will encourage reading.

The gentle rhyme inserted into sections of the story and its abundance of interesting verbs would make this story lovely to read aloud with children. Furthermore, its collection of simple sentences and monosyllabic vocabulary would most probably appeal to boys and girls within Key Stage 1 or early Key Stage 2. The book subtly shows how families can be different in terms of who is in a family, but at the same time demonstrates the love that they share.
**My Parents Picked Me! A first look at adoption**

**Author:** Pat Thomas  
**Illustrator:** Lesley Harker  
**Date of publication:** 2003  
**Place of publication:** London  
**Publisher:** Hodder Wayland  
**ISBN:** 0-7502-4266-3  

**Annotation:**

This book explores different ways of being family. Sometimes people live with their birth parents, sometimes with different relatives and sometimes they are adopted into a completely new family. It acknowledges that all children have birth parents but that it can be difficult for them to stay together. It outlines the process of fostering and then adoption.

A strength of the book is that it acknowledges that adoption can be a slow and complex process. This is used to emphasise how special adoptive families can be. A variety of families are used in the illustrations, which adds to the inclusive emphasis within the book. The normality of wanting to ask questions about birth parents is modelled effectively – and is a further strength.

The book includes questions to encourage children to think about their families – particularly if they have been adopted.

The book concludes with a glossary, suggested further reading and useful addresses of support networks. There is a section outlining “how to use this book”.

The illustrations are stylised, colourful and appealing. The book will be useful for any child in the primary phase of education who has been adopted. Other children will find it useful when considering the different patterns of family life.
**Not-So-Wicked Stepmother, The**

Author: Lizi Boyd

Date of publication: 1987

Place of publication: New York

Publisher: Viking Kestrel


**Annotation:**

The fictional tale of *The Not-So-Wicked Stepmother* instantly challenges the stereotype of stepmothers portrayed in fairytales and immediately begins with a child’s perception of stepmothers based upon the connotations gained through the reading of her books: ‘I have read about stepmothers in my books…’

The main strength within this book is how it subtly addresses divorce and how it portrays the child’s thoughts and feelings in relation to her new stepmother and how her thoughts develop and change.

The text is written in the third person, which allows the writer to make the child’s thoughts explicit to the reader. The writer concentrates on the character’s feelings highlighting the hopes for her mum and dad to get back together. The story also demonstrates how the character gradually grows to like her stepmother. This maintains an element of realism.

The illustrations are quite simple, but effectively portray the changing and developing relationship between the child and stepmother. This book would appeal to readers in upper Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2 due to the range of vocabulary and the amount of text. Some of the spellings are American. It could also be used within the classroom as a starting point for discussion.
On the Day His Daddy Left

Authors: Eric J Adams and Kathleen Adams
Illustrator: Layne Johnson
Date of publication: 2000
Place of publication: Morton Grove, Illinois
Publisher: Albert Whitman & Company
ISBN: 0-8075-6072-3

Annotation:

On the Day His Daddy Left is a story that addresses divorce and family separation. It is based around a boy, Danny, who asks a variety of people whether his parents’ divorce is his fault. He presents this ‘secret question’ on a piece of paper. The answers to this question are all ‘No’. However, this does not stop him questioning his parents’ divorce. The choice of characters illustrates who children could talk to when going through a similar experience to Danny. One of the most interesting, perhaps, is his friend Cindy whose parents are also divorced; he finds he is not alone in his situation.

When Danny gives his mum the piece of paper she writes ‘No’ on to the back and she says every time he needs to ask this question he should turn it over and read the answer. Because Danny asks himself this question a lot during the days and weeks after his daddy left, it eventually falls apart and floats away in the wind. This presents a hopeful and positive image to the reader.

However, the writer shows the complexity of a child’s thoughts and feelings in relation to divorce and states: ‘he kept on asking questions about the day his daddy left. Lots of questions. And he always will.’ This adds a hint of realism to the story and suggests that although one question has blown away with the wind, it does not prevent others from being asked. The realism is definitely one of the strengths of this book as it makes it more true to life and allows children who have parents who are divorced or separated to feel that they are not alone. The final lines suggest that there will always be questions about the day Danny’s father left; this leaves the story unresolved, but perhaps this also adds to the realism of the situation.

The last page contains advice on talking to children about divorce. This may be of use to parents, carers and teachers. The illustrations are realistic and support the text displaying the boy’s emotions successfully. The text employs a range of sentence types and descriptive vocabulary, which engage the reader effectively. The repetition of the phrase ‘on the day his daddy left’ reinforces how much the issue is on Danny’s mind. This book would be a useful classroom text when addressing the topic of divorce and feelings, but could also be read independently.
One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dads, Blue Dads

Author: Johnny Valentine
Illustrator: Melody Sarecky
Date of publication: 1994
Place of publication: Los Angeles
Publisher: Alyson Wonderland
ISBN: 1-55583-848-0

Annotation:

The book refers to the parents of Lou, who are both male and blue. The dads are shown engaging in a range of day to day activities. The fact that Lou has two dads is not an issue in the story. Throughout the book Lou is asked by his friend if his dads are different to her dad, and then his friend wonders why they are blue. The answer is simple: they just are. At the end an additional character appears whose name is Jean: her dads are green.

The book is cleverly written so that the issue is that the dads are blue. The fact that they are both male is incidental. This makes it possible to consider diversity in families, focusing on an aspect of difference which does not require an immediate consideration of sexuality or gender.

The book shows that two parents can be of any gender and colour and still be good parents. It has appealing illustrations and the rhyming is engaging and reminiscent of the Dr Seuss series.

The book will be enjoyable for children to read or to hear read aloud. It is suitable for inclusion in a collection of picture books; older children will find it useful as a starter for discussion and reflection. It provides a positive and humorous illustration of same-sex parents with which some children will identify.

The book is American and includes the US spelling of “mom”.
Only the Best

Author: Meguido Zola
Illustrator: Valerie Littlewood
Date of publication: 1981
Place of publication: London
Publisher: Julia MacRae Books
ISBN: 0-86203-047-1

Annotation:

This lovely story explores a father's journey to find the best gift possible for his newborn child. He seeks advice from his wife, family and friends – who all suggest that love is the best gift.

The father thinks that this is an impractical suggestion and so goes to a toyshop to buy a gift. However, when he gets there he changes his mind and moves to another shop where he gets another idea, and so the journey goes on... Eventually, he finds the perfect gift, reflecting the advice he was given at the start of the story.

The story explores the theme of families from different religious backgrounds and demonstrates the love that is shared between a parent and their child. The story includes a lot of repetition, which may engage younger children, but there is also a good deal of text, meaning that the book may be most suitable for children in Year 2 and above. The story could also be used with groups or a whole class.

The illustrations are detailed and lifelike.
Our Gracie Aunt

Author: Jacqueline Woodson
Illustrator: Jon J Muth
Date of publication: 2002
Place of publication: New York
Publisher: Hyperion Books for Children
ISBN: 0-7868-0620-6

Annotation:

When a brother and sister are taken to stay with their mother’s sister because their mother neglects them, they wonder if they will ever see their mother again.

This is an atmospheric book with appealing illustrations. It is written from the point of view of Johnson, the young brother of Beebie. The children consider whether to open the door to Miss Roy (a social worker), and show a sense of loyalty to their mother; they are used to being left alone for prolonged periods.

The children are cared for by their aunt, Gracie, who lives in a lovely home with toys. They quickly warm to her. She had lost touch with her sister after an argument, but is willing to accommodate the two children.

Later, there is a reunion with their mother, who explains that even when you love someone you can’t always take care of them. The text raises a wide variety of issues about why families can’t always live together, although the specific reasons are not made clear; mum clearly has difficulties which mean that she cannot care for the children at the present time. The issues are handled very sensitively and the mother is not characterised as a bad parent. This is a tender and caring story which might be particularly useful when supporting looked after children.

Some of the spelling is American e.g. neighbor and tire (tyre). The book is particularly suitable for children in Key Stage 2.
Our House on the Hill

Author: Philippe Dupasquier

Date of publication: 1997

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Anderson Press


Annotation:

Each double page spread in this book presents a month of the year. Alongside a large general view that shows the changing seasons are smaller illustrations showing family life in a home. The illustrations are based on the author’s own home.

A family of four is shown living and celebrating different points in the year. It might be interesting to consider with children what the relationships between the different people are – as the lack of text means that these are implicit rather than overt. Mum cooks, dad baths the children, mum cleans the car, and dad gardens (although the adults could be uncles, aunts, step parents, or carers).

This book provides a great deal of potential for discussion, particularly as it does not include any text except for the names of the months of the year. The illustrations are detailed and appealing to the eye. This book is suitable for all ages.
Pass it, Polly

Author: Sarah Garland

Date of publication: 1994

Place of publication: London

Publisher: The Bodley Head

ISBN: 0-370-31858-7

Annotation:

Pass it, Polly tackles the stereotype that girls should not (or cannot) play football. The characters in the story and the illustrations represent different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, although these are not referred to overtly. The text addresses inclusion on a range of levels.

Polly and her best friend, Nisha, are the only girls to sign up to play in the school’s forthcoming football match. The practice goes badly and both girls are disheartened. After unsuccessfully trying to learn more about football in books at the library, Nisha’s Grandpa shows them how to play. Polly and Nisha work hard and the boys come to see them as valuable members of the team. In the end Grandpa, Mr Patel, is invited to help to coach the team and lots more girls want to join in.

Appropriate football vocabulary is used. The text is divided between the typed narration and handwritten speech bubbles. This would appeal to an independent reader, but less confident readers might struggle with some aspects. It will interest both boys and girls and can be used as a shared or independent reader for children in upper Key Stage 1 or with children in Key Stage 2.
**Picnic in the Park**

Authors: Joe Griffiths and Tony Pilgrim

Illustrator: Lucy Pearce

Date of publication: 2007

Place of publication: London

Publisher: British Association of Adoption and Fostering

ISBN: 978-1-905664-08-5

Annotation:

It is Jason's fifth birthday and he is going to have a picnic party in the local park. He has invited all his friends and their families.

David and his dad arrive with a special birthday cake; Raj and Anita arrive with their daughter Sheila; Jack and Debbie arrive with their two foster children; Mark arrives with his mum and dad; James and Ellie arrive with their two dads; Antonio arrives with his mum and a gift of a balloon; Matt arrives with his dog; Amber arrives with her two mums; Jane and Peter arrive with their children and stepchildren; Lindon and Sandra arrive with their new baby; and Nicola and Carmen arrive with their mum and dad. The picnic turns out to be a celebration of diverse families.

This book is very appealing for children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The illustrations are simple and colourful. The families represented are diverse and include those from different ethnic backgrounds, adoptive and foster families, a child using a wheelchair, children with one and two parents and a single person.

The book includes a place for children to list the members of their family and a template to use to add their own family to the picnic in the park. Overall, this is a very affirming and positive resource.
**Piggybook**

Author: Anthony Browne

Date of publication: 1996

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Walker Books


Annotation:

Anthony Browne has created a hilarious and engaging story of family life.

Mr Piggott and his two sons live as a traditional nuclear family with Mrs Piggott. They have a nice house with a nice garden, a nice car and a nice garage. However, Mrs Piggott has to run the house, feed the family, deal with all the daily chores and fulfil her own responsibilities at work.

When Mrs Piggott does not come home one evening, the family routines fall into disarray and eventually the male family members end up foraging for crumbs of food along the skirting boards!

This is a very amusing story which challenges male chauvinism. Eventually the family is reunited: the children learn to make their own beds, and Mr Piggott and his sons learn to help to run the house. They reform from being pigs to appreciating the shared experience of being a family.

This is a salutary tale challenging traditional male stereotypes. It certainly caused discussion about family roles and values amongst the reviewers and other colleagues.

Anthony Browne’s illustrations warrant close examination (spot the pigs!) and add to the hilarity (despite the seriousness of the issues raised). This book will promote both humour and serious discussion. It is most appropriate for use with older children as very young children may worry that if they have left their own house in a mess and not helped with the housework that Mum might not be there when they get home.
**Prince Cinders**

**Author:** Babette Cole  
**Date of publication:** 1997  
**Place of publication:** London  
**Publisher:** Puffin Books  
**ISBN:** 0-14-055525-0

**Annotation:**

*Prince Cinders* is a gender-stereotype-challenging retelling of the story of Cinderella.

In short, the story demonstrates that it is not always the handsome prince who finds his princess. Babette Cole never fails to make the reader smile, and every page will cause the reader to grin.

The book effectively challenges a range of stereotypes, but turning the three brothers/bullies into housework ‘fairies’ may well reinforce a stereotype in its own way. There is certainly plenty of material to discuss.

This book is recommended as an independent reader for children in Key Stage 2 and as a story for a class to share. Children throughout primary school will find it amusing. The illustrations are detailed and add to the humour.

For a companion book see Babette Cole’s *Princess Smartypants.*
This book is effective in addressing different issues. Not only does it focus upon the death of a parent but it also addresses the process of coming to terms with it. When Genevieve’s father is lost at sea and does not return, Genevieve, her mum and her new brother grieve and then begin to accept his death. When Genevieve’s mum introduces Cedric to her children their relationship develops. Death, grief, single parenthood and step families are topics addressed within the story. The strength of this story is that these topics are not focused upon explicitly. Instead, a story is woven around the issues to engage the reader, whilst subtly addressing several issues.

The main story involves Genevieve imagining that she is a princess of the castle across the sea. However, her fear of water – a result of her father’s death - prevents her from going onto the beach. Cedric builds up her confidence and takes her and her family to the castle where she set all her stories. This makes for a positive ending. The book could provide a stimulus for discussing different types of family, although this is not the main focus of the story.

The watercolour illustrations are lovely and demonstrate the relationship between the members of the family, whilst also supporting the text. They bring the story to life. This book would be suitable to read with a whole class or for children to read independently.

The story may appeal more to girls because of the princess theme, however the wider topics presented within the story will hopefully interest all children. The themes are broad and apply universally.
Princess Smartypants

Author: Babette Cole
Translator: Kanai Datta
Date of publication: 1992
Place of publication: London
Publisher: Magi Publications
ISBN: 1-85430-295-7 (Bengali and English)

Annotation:

As with Prince Cinders, Princess Smartypants challenges gender stereotypes and promotes individuality and difference. This traditional-tale-with-a-difference describes how Smartypants fights to preserve her independence. This particular edition is a dual language book written in English and Bengali.

Princess Smartypants does not want to get married and enjoys being a Ms. Her parents have other ideas however, and present her with a stream of suitors. Eventually, the princess decides to set the princes tasks in order to decide on a husband. The reviewers had much discussion about the relative ages of the princess and the princes: in general, the suitors seemed to be older.

Children will enjoy the weird and wonderful pets that Princess Smartypants has and the exciting, amusing plot. The text is suitable for children in lower Key Stage 2 as an independent reader, or for use with children in Key Stage 1 as a shared text. The illustrations are attractive and humorous – matching the story effectively.
Real Sisters

Author: Susan Wright
Illustrator: Bo-Kim Louie
Date of publication: 1994
Place of publication: Charlottetown, Canada
Publisher: Ragweed Press

Annotation:

*Real Sisters* is a book that is extremely clever in portraying an adoptive family and the thoughts that the adoptive child has. Claire has been adopted by a family that already has one daughter. When she is taunted in the playground because she does not have a ‘real sister’ she begins to question her family situation. However a major strength of this book is that it focuses on the family members’ love for one another despite their different ethnic backgrounds. The main character, Claire, learns that her sister is a ‘real sister’ to her, because of their love.

The illustrations are quite simplistic, but they highlight the sisters’ relationship which again is a strength. The repetition of the phrase “just like a real sister” throughout the book gives it weight and emphasises that they share everything that real sisters have. The book could be used in the classroom as a starting point to discuss bullying and acceptance and would also be ideal for independent reading. It may appeal more to girls because of the topic of sisters. However, the subject matter will hopefully interest both boys and girls.

The text has a balance of simple and complex sentences and thus lends itself to use by an older reader - maybe in late Key Stage 1 or early Key Stage 2. Furthermore, the Americanisms such as ‘mom’ and colloquialisms such as ‘crabby’ may need explanation if a child is reading independently.
**Ringo the Flamingo**

**Author:** Neil Griffiths

**Illustrator:** Judith Blake

**Date of publication:** 2006

**Place of publication:** Swindon

**Publisher:** Red Robin Books

**ISBN:** 1-905434-06-5

**Annotation:**

When Ringo is born, his parents know that something is different. Even with significant help, his mum and dad are unable to help him to walk. As the days, weeks and years pass his parents provide a high level of care. He becomes a popular member of the flock and has a positive attitude to life. Occasionally he feels sad – when he sees the other flamingos racing or flying – but at other times he is happy to be alone and enjoys his own company.

One day a new flamingo arrives and begins to make fun of Ringo because of his differences. The flock chases the stranger away. Later, when fire engulfs the woodland, the birds panic and fly away – leaving Ringo alone. He notices a chick has also been left behind – and uses all his strength to make his way to provide care.

When the flock returns Ringo’s bravery is acknowledged and is never forgotten. He becomes the chief egg and chick sitter.

This sensitive and imaginative story addresses a range of issues. Ringo’s disability and the ways in which he is appreciated and valued by the flock provide a range of points for discussion. The fact that he becomes a protector and subsequently a surrogate father also adds an additional positive message.

The book is well presented with a range of attractive illustrations. The story is dramatic and engaging and will appeal to children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. It provides a positive image of bravery from one who has previously been assumed to need protection.

**Dr Neil Griffiths is an Honorary Graduate of Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln.**
**Samira’s Eid**

**Author:** Nasreen Aktar  
**Illustrator:** Enebor Attard  
**Translator:** Surinder Singh Attariwala  
**Date of publication:** 2002  
**Place of publication:** London  
**Publisher:** Mantra  
**ISBN:** 1-852-69183-2 (Panjabi and English)

**Annotation:**

This book tells the story of a young girl, Samira, and her brother, Hassan, and their experiences of Eid. It explains details about the festival, when it takes place and the kinds of observances and customs that are followed.

The story presents Eid as an enjoyable time where families get together in a loving atmosphere. Samira is shown with her parents and also with her Nani, who arrives towards the end.

This book provides an accessible introduction to the festival of Eid. It will be useful for use in RE lessons and as a resource to show the importance of families. It also provides an opportunity to address the negative stereotypes of Islam that appear in the news media and to provide Muslim children with a positive illustration of a situation that may reflect their own home life.

The illustrations are appealing. The book could be used as a shared text in Key Stage 1 or as an independent reader in Key Stage 2. It is available in ten dual language editions.
**Sammy Goes Flying**

**Author:** Odette Elliott

**Illustrator:** Amanda Welch

**Date of publication:** 1990

**Place of publication:** London

**Publisher:** Andre Deutsch

**ISBN:** 0-233-98528-X

**Annotation:**

Sammy is a young child with older siblings already at school. His brothers and sisters are going on an educational visit to the airport. Sammy wants to go along too.

Sammy believes that he can fly to the stars – and has been there in his dreams. When the siblings head off on the school trip, mum and dad take Sammy on a visit of his own, to see his Gran. Dad is white and mum is black; the book makes no mention of this and provides a very natural picture of family life.

Gran takes them to a fair where there are hot air balloons. She takes Sammy for a ride in one. He is able to report back to the other children.

This is a story about realising an ambition, about imagination and about a young child achieving his dream. It is also about relationships between siblings which are positive and constructive.

This is a colourful and appealing book with accessible text, and which focuses in the main on the illustrations. It would be of interest to children in Key Stage 1 and is ideal for use as a shared text.
Silver Shoes

Author: Caroline Binch
Illustrator: Caroline Binch
Date of publication: 2001
Place of publication: London
Publisher: Dorling Kindersley Limited
ISBN: 0-7513-2754-9

Annotation:

This book is about a young girl, called Molly, who loves to dance and often wears her Grandmother’s silver shoes. However, when she starts a dance class she can no longer wear her Grandmother’s shoes because they are too big and the dance teacher is worried she will hurt herself. All Molly wants is a pair of silver shoes of her own so that she can be a ‘proper dancer’.

This book is excellent in illustrating family diversity. Different families and their ethnic backgrounds are mentioned in the story and shown in the illustrations, but the main focus is on being different, accepted and included: this arises from the issue of the need for the dancing shoes.

The illustrations are excellent and delicately drawn, taking up almost the whole of each page. They are detailed and lifelike. In some places the sense of movement portrayed is very effective. The illustrations coincide with the text, mirroring what the text suggests. This would make it ideal for independent reading. The relatively large text and illustrations make this book suitable for whole class use.
Something Else

Author: Kathryn Cave
Illustrator: Chris Riddell
Date of publication: 1995
Place of publication: London
Publisher: Puffin Books
ISBN: 0-14-054907-2

Annotation:

*Something Else* tells the story of a creature called Something Else who is excluded from his neighbours’ activities because he behaves and looks different. Something Else desperately wants to be like the others, but somehow can never belong, until one day when Something appears on Something Else’s doorstep. Could it be that there are others who don’t quite fit in? And could it be that he has finally found a friend after all?

One strength of the book is the complexity it shows in the character Something Else. Instead of being a stereotypically good character, Something Else shows that he has his own prejudices. When Something tries to make friends with Something Else, he initially doesn’t want to know. Something Else excludes the creature, seemingly unknowingly, for the same reasons the others excluded him. In the end, Something Else recognises himself in the sad face of the creature, and has a change of heart.

The story ends on a lovely note when a human arrives. In comparison to the other characters in the book he really does look unusual. They move up and make room for him straight away: showing what has been learned about inclusion and acceptance through the story.

This story gently helps children understand how people can be different as well as showing them ways to accept others who are different to them. It is a charming story with beautiful illustrations. Cute, funny and extremely well-done, it communicates an important message in an engaging and attractive way.
So Much

Author: Trish Cooke
Illustrator: Helen Oxenbury
Date of publication: 1996
Place of publication: London
Publisher: Walker Books
ISBN: 0-7445-4396-7

Annotation:
This book is based around an Afro-Caribbean family that is getting ready for a surprise party. Everyone that rings the doorbell comes in and sees the baby and wants to kiss, play with or squeeze the baby so much. Gradually, the family gathers together until finally dad comes home and discovers a surprise party is being held for his birthday. When the baby goes to bed at the end of the story s/he realises that s/he is loved so much. A range of family relationships is represented.

The book has wonderful, bright and happy illustrations that make the reader smile as it is being read. The text uses phrases that may reflect the background of the family. This reflects the language pattern used by the family, but might reinforce stereotypes about the ways in which different people speak. This would be an interesting point for discussion.

The book is suitable for children in Key Stage 1 or for younger children. There is some good use of onomatopoeia. It is a lovely story to show how a baby is loved by a variety of members in the family and there is a very positive and warm feel to the narrative.
Story of Ferdinand, The

Author: Munro Leaf
Illustrator: Robert Lawson
Date: 1966 (first published 1937)
Place of publication: London
Publisher: London: Hamish Hamilton
ISBN: 0-241-90177-4

Annotation:

This book appears a little dated, and indeed, it was first published in 1937. It contains monochrome drawings which are quite simple and appealing. It considers the story of Ferdinand, a little bull who lives in Spain. Ferdinand is a bit of a loner and prefers to do his own thing, rather than play with the other bulls. His mother is worried that he will be lonely all by himself. When the men come looking for a bull to take part in a bull fight Ferdinand sits on a bee, and the sting causes him to run around, jump and snort. This reaction means that he is mistakenly chosen as being suitable to go to Madrid for a bull fight!

Once in Madrid, Ferdinand does not rise to the occasion. He prefers to sit in the middle of the ring and smell the flowers. The matadors have to take him back home where he is happy once again.

This is an interesting story about being different, which will attract children of different ages and particularly younger children. Although the illustrations are simple, they support the story effectively. The book might be a good discussion starter to consider issues around being different, being separate from the crowd or enjoying activities different from others.

The original publication date shows how issues of difference and diversity have been explored in children's literature over a number of years.
That’s My Mum

Author: Henriette Barkow

Illustrator: Derek Brazell

Translator: Surinder Singh Arrariwala

Date of publication: 2005

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Mantra

ISBN: 1-85269-602-8 (Panjabi and English)

Annotation:

That’s My Mum provides a positive look at some of the thoughts and concerns children might have if they have a parent who does not look like them. When Mia and Kai go out people confuse which is their mum. Based on a true story, this book explores the experience of being judged by the colour of your skin.

The book considers the idea of changing to fit others’ stereotypes and assumptions, but the characters finally decide that they do not need to change. They make badges to celebrate their experience of family life.

This book might be particularly useful as a part of Circle Time activities. It will provide a positive illustration of family life for children who have parents with different racial or ethnic backgrounds.
**Toby’s Doll’s House**

*Author: Ragnhild Scamell*

*Illustrator: Adrian Reynolds*

*Date of publication: 1998*

*Place of publication: London*

*Publisher: Levinson Books*

*ISBN: 1-86233-026-3*

**Annotation:**

For his birthday, Toby wants a doll’s house. Other members of his family think that they all know what Toby really wants – and they ignore his request. Although he is grateful for and happy with his presents, he makes his own doll’s house and incorporates his other presents within it.

This is an interesting and engaging story which can be read alone or shared with a class, perhaps as part of Circle Time. It looks at stereotypical boys’ toys and demonstrates the importance of individual choice.

Toby is very diplomatic and avoids hurting people’s feelings - by using the gifts they have bought for him. In doing so, he makes everyone happy.

The book is very well presented with colourful and interesting pictures which support the text effectively. It is notable that there is no mother figure in the story.
Truth About Families, The

Author: Andrea Shavick
Illustrator: Charlotte Hard
Date of publication: 2001
Place of publication: Oxford
Publisher: Oxford University Press
ISBN: 0-19-279039-0

Annotation:

This book explains the relationships that can form in families across the generations. Its main message is that you cannot choose your family – and that families can be hard work at times. However, it also shows how families can be very special and involve a wide range of relationships and relatives.

In general the models of family presented are traditional, with a mum and a dad. It may be possible that this representation could make a large part of a class feel neglected or under-represented. However, the diversity presented in this Family Diversities Reading Resource provides the opportunity to provide a wider range of family images.

This title claims to be a one-stop family resource, but fails to represent lots of different family types. It will be useful when used in conjunction with a wider range of texts, or as a discussion starter about the nature of family life in contemporary society. It provides a helpful illustration of traditional nuclear families and relationships across an extended family.

The illustrations are colourful and engaging. This book will be particularly useful in supporting discussions about My Family in Key Stage 1.
Two Eggs, Please

Author: Sarah Weeks

Illustrator: Betsy Lewin

Date of publication: 2003

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Athenium Books for Younger Readers


Annotation:

Two Eggs, Please shows a range of animal characters visiting an American Diner to order a meal. Each one orders two eggs: fried, poached, boiled, raw, in a sandwich and as part of a full breakfast. As each character places their order the others note how “different” it is from their own.

This is a colourful and beautifully illustrated book which will appeal to children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. It is ideal for exploring issues relating to similarity and difference.

When all the meals arrive at the same time carried expertly by Fox, the waitress, the announcement is “Two eggs coming up!” The animals realise that all the meals are different, but are also the same: they all include two eggs.

This is a highly enjoyable and humorous book and is highly recommended.
Two Homes

Author: Claire Masurel

Illustrator: Kady MacDonald Denton

Date of publication: 2001

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Walker Books

ISBN: 0-7445-8925-8

Annotation:

Two Homes is a story about Alex, who has two parents who are separated. Alex tells how s/he feels at home with either parent, and that s/he accepts having two places to hang a coat, two bedrooms and two parents. Alex explains that s/he loves his/her mum and his/her dad equally, and that both of them love him/her equally.

One weakness is that the story seems quite idealistic. Although the intention is to encourage children to embrace the idea of having separated parents, the book does not explore any of the drawbacks or complexities of the situation. Children from separated families may not experience the balance of contact that Alex experiences: they may also experience mum or dad meeting a new partner and possibly of other children coming into the family.

This book is recommended but would need to be used sensitively with children. The overall message is positive: that because parents separate doesn’t mean a child is loved any less.
**Two Left Feet**

**Author:** Adam Stower

**Illustrator:** Adam Stower

**Date of publication:** 2004

**Place of publication:** London

**Publisher:** Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

**ISBN:** 0-7475-6896-0

**Annotation:**

This is a great text to highlight that everyone is different.

*Two Left Feet* is a story about a group of monster friends. Rufus is different to all of his friends. Although he loves to dance, he has two left feet and always falls over. His friends are always very supportive and pick him up when he falls – effectively demonstrating acceptance and care for others.

When a dance competition is announced, Rufus is left feeling lonely and sad because none of his friends pick him because he can’t dance as well as them. Rufus finds a partner - Maddie - who is also feeling sad because she can’t dance. However, when coupled together they dance perfectly and win the competition. Rufus later realizes that Maddie has two right feet, showing that differences are valuable and important to us all as a society.

This book has large, quirky and detailed illustrations, accompanied by text on each page. Because the characters are ‘monsters’ it might possibly appeal more to boys than girls, depending on personal taste. However, it would be an extremely good text for classroom use, especially to prompt discussion about feelings, acceptance and inclusion. The vocabulary is accessible with some polysyllabic words and so may be of more interest to an older child when read independently.

The fact that the characters are monsters also promotes discussion about stereotypes: does the book portray monsters as we might expect them to be?

This story can be enjoyed by both boys and girls and by children of all ages. Its comments on being different and being accepted/included mean that it is suitable to be used in whole class situations as well as being enjoyed by individual children.
Visitors Who Came to Stay, The

Author: Annalena McAfee
Illustrator: Anthony Browne
Date of publication: 2000
Place of publication: London
Publisher: Walker Books Ltd
ISBN: 0-7445-6773-4

Annotation:

This is a story about a girl, Katy, who lives with her dad and occasionally visits her mum at weekends.

This story highlights the close relationship between daughter and father, which is a particular strength of the book. However, when Katy is introduced to Mary and to Mary’s son, Sean, she begins to feel lonely and left out. Although Katy likes the ‘visitors’ she doesn’t like the fact that she has to share her dad. This adds a hint of realism to the story as it explores Katy’s anxiety about becoming part of a step-family.

When Mary and Sean leave, Katy begins to realise that something is missing. Only when her dad suggests that they should go and visit Mary and Sean does Katy realise that she has been missing them. This creates a really reassuring ending.

The illustrations support the text and take up the whole page, making it an ideal classroom text. The text is composed mainly of simple sentences, but also contains a variety of complex sentences and vocabulary which would probably make it most appropriate to use with children in upper Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
**Way Home**

**Author:** Libby Hathorn

**Illustrator:** Gregory Rogers

**Date of publication:** 1994

**Place of publication:** London

**Publisher:** Andersen Press

**ISBN:** 0-86264-541-7

**Annotation:**

Shane is homeless and roams the streets. He meets a cat and befriends it. The story is not told by Shane, but by a narrator in the third person and there is a sense of detachment from the main character possibly reflecting the way in which he is detached from people and his own family home. This could be a point for discussion on authorial style and effect, with older children.

Shane takes the cat “home” and reflects on other homes on the way. Although his homelessness is not apparent until the close of the book, there are many issues to consider as his thoughts are recorded during his journey. At times he faces potentially dangerous situations.

Shane considers purchasing an expensive car – the dialogue enabled through his conversation with the cat. A “girl” (who looks as though she is working on the street) speaks with him. The book maintains its detachment from the boy called Shane, and yet he is a warm character that the reader will care about. Always he is heading home… and the reader will wonder where this will be.

Shane shows great care for the cat. However, having given it a variety of names along the way, in the end he refers to it as “Noname” – anonymous and alone like him; until he calls it “Mycat.” Again, this would make an interesting point for discussion.

The book raises a range of issues about relationships, homes and danger. It would be most appropriate for children in upper Key Stage 2 as a shared text or as an independent reader.

This book is illustrated to a high standard with pencil drawings which use light and texture to excellent effect. It is very appealing and atmospheric. Children in upper Key Stage 2 may enjoy its illustrations and text, and it might be useful in considering homes, empathy and families. Shane finds friendship with the cat, and this contrasts with the harsh urban environment in which he survives/lives. The book may be useful in raising awareness of social issues and particularly homelessness. Whilst a single person may not constitute a family, it was felt to be important to include images of single living in this resource.
We are Britain!

Author: Benjamin Zephaniah
Illustrator: Prodeepta Das
Date of publication: 2002
Place of publication: London
Publisher: Francis Lincoln
ISBN: 0-7112-1902-8

Annotation:

This is an excellent resource for looking at multicultural society. It attempts to get children to understand that Britain is a multicultural society and that this idea should be embraced. The foreword from the author is particularly inspiring – through its innate enthusiasm.

Zephaniah uses poetry to describe the lives of the thirteen children included in the book. The children are of various religious and ethnic backgrounds – all are British children who want to live in a multicultural society where every child is equal and where every child matters.

This book is ideal for use with children in Key Stage 2. The use of poetry, rapping and rhyming make it accessible to children in an engaging and contemporary way.

Cover illustration used with permission:
We Are Britain by Benjamin Zephaniah with photographs by Prodeepta Das, published by Frances Lincoln Limited copyright © 2002.
Welcome to the World Baby

Author: Na’ima bint Robert

Illustrator: Derek Brazell

Date of publication: 2005

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Manta Lingua


Annotation:

This book is available in 28 dual language editions. The one being reviewed was in French and English.

Tariq comes to school and announces that his new baby brother was born at the weekend. He is delighted. The children in his class are asked to think about how they welcome new babies into their families, and to bring something to do with the five senses to support a discussion.

The variety of ideas shared in the subsequent pages provides some good opportunities for discussion, and exemplifies a range of cultural approaches to celebrating a birth.

The book is well illustrated and appealing showing a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and some traditional dress. The text is appropriate to read with younger children, or for older children to share or to read alone. The teacher may need some prior knowledge, or to do some research, to identify which cultures/traditions are represented throughout the book and to identify the meaning behind some of the objects and rituals.

The book concludes with a five senses party – where all the children come together to celebrate the birth of Tariq’s brother.
What’s My Family Tree?

Authors: Mick Manning and Brita Granstrom

Date of publication: 2001

Place of publication: Sydney, Australia

Publisher: Franklin Watts

ISBN: 0-7496-5664-6

Annotation:

This book considers the fact that not all families are the same. The book uses speech bubbles from various children to answer questions about their families. Whilst not fully inclusive, a range of family models are included.

This book will be useful in Key Stage 1 and possibly lower Key Stage 2, especially in Circle Time. The illustrations are effective and appealing and show a variety of families from different backgrounds. Although there is reference to a family consisting of “dad and his friend” and one with “mum and her partner” the glossary at the back of the book defines parents as a mum and a dad. This might lead to a discussion about who a child calls “parent” as opposed to who is a biological parent.

The book would need to be used sensitively. It addresses the reader directly, using the second person. It tells that sometimes children cannot stay with their birth parents and also that sometimes a parent dies.

The book has a very positive feel to it. The end is lovely, stating that our own family tree is just one within a whole forest. This reiterates and affirms the idea that everyone is different and that families are all diverse, distinct and unique in different ways.
When Joel Comes Home

Author: Susi Gregg Fowler

Illustrator: Jim Fowler

Date of publication: 1993

Place of publication: New York

Publisher: Greenwillow Books

ISBN: 0-688-11064-9

Annotation:

This book is narrated by the main character who is awaiting the arrival of her mum and dad’s best friend’s newly adopted child. This gives a first person account of a day that is full of excitement and emotion. The text contains a lot of speech and the dialogue between the characters effectively portrays how they feel about the day a family is made.

One of the book’s strengths is that it effectively touches on adoption and suggests that it is love that creates a family. The sense of excitement and happiness in the book is heart-warming, especially when the narrator is the first to hold the new baby.

Being an American text, Americanisms such as ‘mom’ frequently occur, however, the vocabulary is mostly monosyllabic making it highly accessible for young readers. Its watercolour illustrations not only add meaning to the text but they depict the emotion and love surrounding the new family. This would be a lovely text to share with a class and could support discussion about families and emotions.
**Where’s my Teddy?**

**Author:** Margaret Hockey

**Date of publication:** Undated

**Place of publication:** Sine loco

**Publisher:** Durham and Darlington Education Service for Travelling Children

**ISBN:** 0-9538322-1-X

**Annotation:**

This is a lovely small spiral-bound book of photographs showing a family of a mum and two daughters.

One child has lost her teddy and the family explores inside and outside their home to discover where it has gone. It is not in the van, behind the shed, in the den or in front of the washing machine. Having looked everywhere, Teddy is found outside their trailer.

This book will appeal to children in the Foundation Stage or lower Key Stage 1. It shows a traveller family in their home surroundings. The photographs are interesting and informative.

Children will be able to relate to this simple story, considering the times when they have lost special toys and how they have searched for them.
**Who’s in a Family?**

Author: Robert Skutch

Illustrator: Laura Nienhaus

Date of publication: 1995

Place of publication: Berkeley, California

Publisher: Tricycle Press


Annotation:

This book looks at the variation in families. It emphasises that the people in your family are the ones who love you the most. It also compares human families with those of animals. However, it doesn’t consider that some families may be dysfunctional or that sometimes people who are related biologically are not in contact with one another.

The illustrations are lovely, especially at the end when lots of pictures of different kinds of families are shown.

The idea of looking at all types of families doing various activities is super. The comparison of human and animal families might raise some interesting points for discussion.

At the end of the book is a place for children to add pictures of their own family. Whilst this may not be of practical use if the book is in a school library it does seek to involve and engage children.
Will there be a Lap for Me?

Author: Dorothy Corey
Illustrator: Nancy Poydar
Date of publication: 1992
Place of publication: Morton Grove, Illinois
Publisher: Albert Whitman and Company
ISBN: 0-807-59110-6

Annotation:

Kyle is a young child, from an African-American family, who misses his special place on mum’s lap as her pregnancy advances and the new baby is born. He finds that no other laps are as good.

Kyle is sad because the baby needs to feed so often and this means that he has less time enjoying his mother’s undivided attention. A full page illustration shows mother nursing the new baby with Kyle beside her on the sofa. In the end mum makes room for him on her lap and creates special time for him in her day.

This is a colourful and attractive book that is suitable for young children and those in Key Stage 1. It would be particularly useful when supporting a child who is preparing for, or who has recently had, a new baby in the family. The child’s experience would be a good support for discussion and the positive ending will bring reassurance.
William’s Doll

Author: Charlotte Zolotow

Illustrator: William Pene du Bois

Date of publication: 1972

Place of publication: Sine Loco

Publisher: Harper Trophy

ISBN: 0-06-443067-7

Annotation:

William’s Doll takes a look at gender stereotypes and the pressures these can place on children. William is a boy struggling with the stigma attached to his wanting a doll, and the negative reaction he receives from his family and neighbours.

One strength of the book is that is careful to show how William also enjoys (and is good at) traditional ‘boy’ pastimes. Through his father’s attempts to encourage William’s masculinity and ‘boyishness’ we see that he is good at basketball and enjoys his train set. This point is an important one to present to children, to demonstrate that although William might be different in one way, he is still very much like them in other ways, and is certainly no ‘less’ of a boy. William can be similar and different at the same time.

The conclusion to the story shows William’s grandma buying him a doll and explaining to his dad why she has done so. Her explanation (that William needs it so that when he is a dad he will know how to take care of his baby) is a nice touch that also serves to highlight the irrationality of gender stereotypes. This ending makes an assumption about William’s future life, and could reinforce a different expectation or stereotype. However, it provides an interesting discussion starter for the consideration of gender stereotyping.

The book is particularly appropriate for children in Key Stage 2. It is notable that no mother figure appears in the story.
You Will Always Be My Dad

Authors: Anne De Bode and Rien Broere

Illustrator: Ann de Bode

English text: Sue Swallow

Date of publication: 1999

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Evans Brothers Limited


Annotation:

This book concentrates on a child’s negative feelings towards her parents’ separation and her undecided feelings towards her mum’s new partner. Furthermore, the regular insertion of dialogue between the characters - Laura and Tim in particular - highlights their different perceptions of divorce and therefore introduces different viewpoints for the reader to consider. One child is upset and another quite pleased about their parents’ separation.

The book may be felt to present an idealised picture of divorce, particularly through the way in which dad is perfectly happy with mum’s new boyfriend. The story explores all of Laura’s emotions about the separation of her parents, the idea of mum having a new partner, meeting the new partner (which challenges her initial ideas) and telling her dad about it. Although there is mention of Laura’s brother, Thomas, he does not feature in the story.

This book is composed mainly of monosyllabic vocabulary and has plenty of simple sentences allowing the ideas to be portrayed succinctly. It would most probably appeal to a younger audience. The balance of text and pictures on each page would also make it suitable for classroom use or for group reading.
You’re Too Big!

Author: Simon Puttock
Illustrator: Emily Bolam
Date of publication: 2003
Place of publication: London
Publisher: Picture Corgi
ISBN: 0-552-54828-6

Annotation:

You’re Too Big! is a sensitive and reassuring story for younger children about valuing differences.

Elephant is looking forward to his first day at nursery school, despite his nervousness, but soon realises that he is too big and clumsy to join in games with the other animals, who chastise him for being “TOO BIG”.

Elephant soon feels very “small and sad inside” but perseveres in his efforts to join in the games and make friends. It is this sort of characterisation that makes Elephant a very endearing character, whilst his experience of difference is presented in a way many children will be able to empathise with.

Towards the end of the story Mrs Gnu, the teacher, says it is time for a song. Here is something that Elephant can do beautifully and the other animals are impressed. Even Mouse, who up until now has been Elephant’s biggest critic, has a kind word to say. The story ends when Elephant’s mum arrives to take him home and everyone realises that he is just the right size after all.

This is a charming story for young children about how we all have our own strengths and things to offer. This could have been shown even more by developing the character of the other animals to show their talents and skills. This would have been particularly appropriate for Mouse.
Milly, Molly and Different Dads
Gill Pitfar
Illustrated by Gris Morrell
Notes on Other Books

The following list includes a small selection of the texts that the reviewers decided not to include in this *Family Diversities Reading Resource*. Readers may wish to evaluate some for themselves.


Babette Cole’s *Mummy Never Told Me* includes a scene of mummy and daddy running around the bedroom naked. Whatever the other merits of this book, this aspect was felt to be inappropriate by the reviewers and they could not imagine having it on the shelf in a primary school classroom.


*A Family Alphabet Book* was less inclusive than many of the texts in the collection, only showing gay and lesbian parents. In this sense it did not reflect the families readers might expect to see in a fully inclusive alphabet book. Some of the illustrations were stereotypical. Whilst we affirmed the sentiment, this book did not live up to expectations.


*The Sissy Duckling* caused a good deal of discussion and the reviewers could not come to terms with reclaiming the term “sissy” as positive: there seemed to be many more affirming words to be claimed by people who feel that they are “different.” The book seemed to be out of its time. *Oliver Button is a Sissy* was rejected for similar reasons, although Oliver’s classmates turn from rating him as a “sissy” to being a “star” because of his dancing skills. Being published in 1979 it was also felt to be dated. This book is by Tomie dePaola (London: Voyager Books) ISBN 0-15-668140-4.


This book was not chosen because of the quality of the illustrations. It was felt that there were other books in the collection which addressed a variety of models of family life without needing to include this text.


*King and King and Family* follows up a book that is included in the list (*King and King*). However, the kings arrive back from the jungle with a child in a suitcase and subsequently adopt it. The question of where the child came from and how it came into the family caused a great deal of discussion and discomfort amongst the reviewers.

My Mother’s Sari is a lovely book, but was not included in the list because of the lack of a parent figure in the text and the rather unusual occurrence of the girl wiping her nose on mum’s sari. Which child, in any family, would do this to a parent’s clothing?


The Daddy Machine provided an interesting read. Questions were raised about why children with two mums might want lots of dads (although they might be intrigued by the idea) but the fact that two dads remained at the end of the story, and appeared to become a couple living in the next house, caused much discussion. Do children with lesbian parents need to have dads who are perceived as being gay? This book seemed to raise more issues than it resolved. For a more effective book see If I had a Hundred Mummies.


Spacegirl Pukes portrays a girl supported by her two mothers. The fact that she has two mums is incidental to the story and could provide a natural and supportive storyline for some children. However, the quality of the illustrations and the repeated and graphic occurrence of Spacegirl, her mums, the cat and the ground crew being sick were identified as weaknesses by the reviewers and the children who examined this book.


Daddy’s Room Mate shows a gay male couple and a child. The illustrations are stereotypical and may do more to reinforce stereotypes than to challenge or diminish them. It might have the potential to be used with older children to discuss stereotyping. However, it was not felt appropriate to be included in this collection.

Many other books were not chosen. The two key criteria – to have quality illustrations and effective storylines – were applied throughout the project. This resource will continue to develop and to be edited as time passes.
Additions and Notes

The reviewers are aware that other texts are available to address family and diversity issues. This page provides a place to make additions and notes.
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<td>Todd, Parr</td>
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<td>One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dads, Blue</td>
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<td>Wagner, Jenny</td>
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<td>Weeks, Sarah</td>
<td>Two Eggs, Please</td>
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<td>Zola, Meguido</td>
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<td>Zolotow, Charlotte</td>
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Reflections

A brief review was conducted in the final stages of this project to gauge its impact on participants. Whilst this is an interim review, it provides headline messages to support further practice and research. It is important to note that the core group was self-selecting, which significantly affected the motivation and interest of those involved.

Members of the group identified highlights of the project as being the opportunity to work with others interested in diversity issues and the collaborative nature of the project, which provided an innovative opportunity for students, support and academic staff to work together. The contribution of practitioners with different perspectives, specialisms and experiences was identified as a further strength. The sense of collegiality and trust within the group was felt to be significant as was the willingness of the students to give far more of their time than was ever anticipated.

Not surprisingly, participants felt that their knowledge of the resources available to support children from diverse family backgrounds had grown significantly. The lack of quality books available to illustrate some models of family life was noted, and provides an area for further development.

Some participants felt that they had a greater awareness of the experiences faced by children in their classrooms and that this would help them to explore issues of respect and self-esteem with children. They felt better prepared to encourage children to consider the benefits of living in a diverse society where difference is seen as positive and is valued.

All respondents to this review felt that the experience would impact on their professional practice: through increased confidence in addressing issues; by having a greater knowledge of the resources available to support children; and from identifying the positive impact both of collaboration between staff and students and between staff in different departments in the University College.

Many issues will benefit from further consideration and development. However, we hope that this Reading Resource provides stimulus materials to support children in libraries, classrooms and child-care settings and to promote further discussion by practitioners and parents/carers.
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