

A Leader's Guide to

B

Is for  
Belonging

by Shannon Anderson

illustrated by John Joven



# Contents

Introduction.....	1
Before-During-After: Discussion Questions .....	1
Create Your Own Alphabet Book.....	2
Activities for Every Letter .....	4
Texts Used.....	9
Printable Forms.....	10
Define Belonging.....	10
DECIDE Acrostic Poem.....	11
Same and Different.....	12
Friendship Cinquain .....	13
About the Author and Illustrator .....	15



## Introduction

This leader's guide was created to give you ideas for discussions and extension activities to keep the conversation and the learning going after you read *B Is for Belonging*. Belonging is an important concept for kids to grasp, which is why there are so many different ideas here to try—including one for every letter of the alphabet! You can implement these one per day, one per week, as part of an emotional wellness unit, or however works best for your group.

## Before-During-After: Discussion Questions

The following questions can help you discuss the content of *B Is for Belonging* before, during, and after reading it. These are open-ended questions meant to stimulate conversations about the concepts introduced. You know your group best, so feel free to adjust or expand on these suggestions!

### Before Questions

- What do you think is the difference between belonging and fitting in?
- Where do you feel like you belong?
- Have you ever felt like you didn't fit in somewhere? What did that feel like, and what did you do?

### During Questions

- What do you think is happening in this scene?
- Do you think it is better to belong or fit in? Why?
- What is one way you can help someone feel included?
- Why is it important to accept people? How does it feel to be accepted for you who are?

### After Questions

- What is one new thing you learned about belonging from the book?
- What is one way you can be a good friend?
- How can you help other people know they belong?
- What about yourself are you most proud of?



## Create Your Own Alphabet Book

After reading *B Is for Belonging*, discuss the many ways each of us can help others feel they belong. Next, assign each child a letter of the alphabet and invite them to create a page for an alphabet book of belonging. (Depending on the size of your group, some children may need to have more than one letter, or some may need to collaborate.) Each child can choose a word, compose a description, and create an illustration for each letter. The letter doesn't have to stand for the same word that is in this book—children can pick their own words related to belonging if they like. Gather the pages into a book that can be added to the library in your space. Children can also take turns taking the book home to share with families and caregivers. Consider holding a belonging-themed book release party to celebrate children's work!

## Activities for Every Letter



### A Is for Accept

Discuss what it means to accept people for who they are. Put children into groups of four or five and challenge them to write down as many goals, strengths, interests, or other (non-physical) attributes that all members of the group have in common. Then have each group member share something about themselves that is unique and no other member of the group has in common with them. Finally, come back together as a whole group and share some of the common attributes each small group discovered. Discuss the following questions:

- Knowing that we all have wonderful things in common and also many things unique to ourselves, why is it so important to accept others?
- How do you think it feels when people don't accept us for who we are?
- What can we all do to show people that they are accepted and they belong?

### B Is for Belonging

What does belonging really mean? Using the [Define Belonging](#) form, invite children to write about what belonging looks like, feels like, and sounds like—and what it isn't.

### C Is for Care

Talk with your group about what it looks like and feels like to care about someone. How have people helped children feel cared for? Brainstorm ways we can show we care, and record them on an anchor chart. Here are some ideas:

- Smiling at others
- Listening and paying attention when someone is talking to you
- Giving a compliment
- Drawing a picture to give to someone
- Writing a note to someone
- Helping someone carry something
- Helping someone solve a problem
- Asking someone if they are okay
- Sharing with someone
- Standing up for someone





Put a clear bowl, jar, or vase somewhere visible in the room. Tell the group that when you notice someone doing an act of kindness, you will add a warm fuzzy to the container. (These could be small pom-poms from a craft store, cotton balls, or some other small fuzzy item.) They should do the same. When the container is full, they will get to celebrate by doing something special. This could be a special dress-up day, a dance party, or even the opportunity to plan a big act of kindness for someone in the school or community!

### D Is for Decide

Read *Someone New* by Anne Sibley O'Brien. Discuss how the children in the story decide to welcome someone new. Then use the [DECIDE Acrostic Poem form](#) to compose a poem. For each letter in the word *decide*, write a word or phrase about how you can choose to show kindness to others. Each child could write their own poem, or you could collaborate to write one poem as a group.



### E Is for Empathy

Read *Lunch Every Day* by Kathryn Otoshi. Discuss who shows empathy in this book, how they show it, and why. Ask children when they have shown empathy to someone else, and when others have shown empathy to them. How did this feel? As a way to extend this activity, you could use the metaphor of walking in another person's shoes. You could show pictures of many different shoes belonging to many different people. Then talk with children about what it would be like to walk in each person's shoes. What do they think their life might be like?

### F Is for Feelings

Go on a feelings scavenger hunt! As a group, brainstorm a list of five to eight feelings. Then have children work independently or in teams to look in the book, around the space you're in, or outside for objects, pictures, or situations that they think represent each of the feelings. If desired, they can write about, draw, or take pictures of what they find. After coming back together as a group, have children share what they found. Discuss how our feelings are part of how we explore the world and learn.



### G Is for Gifts

Put on a Two-Minute Talent Show! Invite children to sign up to demonstrate a two-minute talent of some kind. These can be performed live on a given day or students can submit videos to be shared. Their talents might be playing an instrument, reciting a short poem, doing a dance, kicking a soccer ball, demonstrating a knitting stitch, or just about anything else they love to do and want to share with others. This activity is a fun and vivid way to demonstrate that kids have a wide variety of gifts and talents to share with the world. None of us could perform all of the talents displayed in the show!

## H Is for Human

As a group, talk about what it means to be human. If you like, read and discuss *I Am Human: A Book of Empathy* by Susan Verde. Then play a We Are Human game. Put children in groups of three to five and give each group a number cube. Have them take turns rolling the number cube and responding to the following prompts depending on what they roll:

**One:** Share a time when you struggled to learn something.

**Two:** Share a time when you helped someone else who was struggling.

**Three:** Share a time when you had a hard day.

**Four:** Share a time when you made a big mistake.

**Five:** Share a time when you were hurt or sick.

**Six:** Share a time when you asked someone for help.

## I Is for Invite

Put kids in pairs and have partners work together to fill out the [Same and Different Venn diagram](#). Talk about how when we invite others to share about themselves, we show that we care about them and that they belong. As a group, discuss what children discovered is the same and different about them and their partners. Did anything surprise them? What is something new they learned about their partners?

## J Is for Join

As a group, brainstorm and discuss clubs, sports, and other activities available to kids in your community or at your school. If any children are already members of some of these groups, invite them to share what they like about them. If you like, record your list of ideas and share it with kids as a handout—some kids and families may not be aware of all the options to join these activities and groups.

## K Is for Kindness

Invite kids to come up with their own Kindness Challenge, individually or in small groups. They can choose someone from their family, friends, school, or community to do something kind for. This might mean helping around home in a new way, making something for a friend, offering to tutor a classmate, volunteering for a local organization, or many other kind actions! If kids need help getting started, offer the following prompts:

- What person or group will you do an act of kindness for?
- What are you going to do to help them or bring them joy?
- What is your plan to make this happen?



After kids plan and carry out the Kindness Challenge, talk about how it went. Ask:

- What was the person’s reaction to your act of kindness?
- How did you feel after completing your kindness challenge?

### L Is for Love

We won’t always have the same opinions as other people—and that’s okay! Read the book *Duck! Rabbit!* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and Tom Lichtenheld. One perspective is that the pages show a duck, while another perspective reveals a rabbit. Talk with your group about how we can be welcoming and loving toward others by respectfully hearing their perspectives and ideas. To illuminate this concept, play the game *Would You Rather*. Have fun listening to the preferences of others while sharing yours too! Discuss how we all have our own opinions and that makes life more interesting.



### M Is for Mistakes

Mistakes help us grow because we learn ways something doesn’t work. Read the book *Y Is for Yet* by Shannon Anderson and talk with your group about times when they’ve had a “growth spurt.” You can also read some or all of *Yay! You Failed!* (also by Shannon Anderson) and discuss the Success Cycle. When have kids learned something from a mistake? How can kids build a sense of belonging by being gentle with other people’s mistakes as well as with their own?

### N Is for Needs

We all have different needs, and we all have different ways we prefer to have our needs met. To explore this idea, create a list of needs. You could make this list yourself, or brainstorm ideas with your group. These could include: water, food, sleep, fun, comfort, space, respect, growth, safety, fresh air, and so on.

Next, have children sit in a circle. On a chart or whiteboard, create two columns under the headings “Everyone” and “Some.” Name one of the needs and choose three volunteers to vote on whether they have that need. If they all say yes, put a checkmark on the “Everyone” side. Otherwise, put a checkmark on the “Some” side. If all three agree on a need, ask each how they most like to have that need met. For example, if the need is “fun,” they may all have different ideas about what is fun. In that case, put an X on the “Some” side. If the need is water, they may all say they meet that need by drinking water. In that case, you’d put an X on the “Everyone” side. Keep going and invite children to comment on how some things are agreed on and others vary. Does anything surprise them?



Finally, discuss how children can know someone's needs and how they like to have them met. Often, the best way to meet a need is to ask someone how they would like to be helped. For example, if someone is sad, children could ask if they would like a hug, rather than just hugging them. They may prefer to talk about what is making them sad, or to be left alone to think and process.

### O Is for Opportunity

Read *The Belonging Tree* by Maryann Cocca-Leffler. Discuss what happens when some of the squirrels in the story don't want to take the opportunity to get to know their new neighbors. What could they have done differently? Invite children to share times when they learned something by taking the opportunity to meet someone new.



### P Is for Potential

Read *This Could Be You: Be Brave! Be True! Believe! Be You!* by Cindy Williams Schrauben. Talk with children about how they have the potential to do so many things. Then invite them to draw or write about something they would like to be or do. This could be connected to a hobby, something they want to learn, somewhere they want to travel, a future career, or wherever else their dreams and imaginations may take them! Encourage children to share their creations if they like, and/or post them in your space.

### Q Is for Quest

Read *Only One You* by Linda Kranz. Talk about the advice the parents in the story give their child. How does this advice help the child get ready to grow, learn, and discover? What advice would children give someone else as they begin their quest into the world? If they need help getting started, you could suggest prompts such as:

- Be sure to . . .
- Try *not* to . . .
- If you make a mistake . . .
- Look for . . .
- Always remember . . .
- If you need help . . .
- When you're having a hard time . . .

If you like, kids can write or draw their quest advice. Invite them to share with the group!





## R Is for Relationships

Read some or all of *Make a Friend, Be a Friend* by Eric Braun. Talk about ways to be a good friend to others, and discuss how friendship is a very special form of relationship. Then—whether as a whole group, in partners, or individually—have children use the [Friendship Cinquain form](#) to write a five-line poem about friendship. (The form also features an example.) Invite them to share their creations!

## S Is for Stand Up

Read *Heroes Don't Have to Fly* by Shannon Anderson. Discuss how the birds use their words in different ways to build up or tear down the other birds. Talk about how everyone's words have power, and we can use words to stand up for others and help them feel safe. Then invite children to draw their own bird characters. Have them give their birds some speech bubbles containing encouraging and supportive words or phrases. Create a gallery of Stand-Up Birds. If you like, you can also show children some or all of this video showing how to draw the Scooter character from *Heroes Don't Have to Fly*: [youtube.com/watch?v=9AJvkPWvz4c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AJvkPWvz4c).



## T Is for Thoughtful

Do a Thoughtful Thursday challenge. Every Thursday for a month, each person in the group comes up with one thoughtful thing they can do for someone (whether that person is in the group or not). Record all these ideas in a notebook or on an anchor chart. At the end of the month, discuss what needs were met and how it felt to help someone or make them smile. If you're up for it, do it for the rest of the year! You won't regret it.

## U Is for Understand

Read *A Porcupine Named Fluffy* by Helen Lester. Discuss how Fluffy and Hippo become friends. What is it they understand about each other that bonds them? Ask children to think of a friend they have a special bond with. What makes that bond so strong? How does understanding each other build stronger friendships?



## V Is for Voice

Read *Say Something!* by Peter H. Reynolds. Then invite each child to think of something they are passionate about and write an ode to that thing. This can be big or small. Maybe they enjoy painting or singing. Maybe they want more butterflies in the world, or want to help make our ocean cleaner. Maybe they get joy from running or playing soccer or skateboarding. Maybe they LOVE tacos, or spaghetti, or sweet potato pie. If children feel comfortable, they could volunteer to perform their odes aloud as spoken word poetry and speak them with their whole hearts!

## W Is for Worthy

Every person is worthy of acceptance. Play a Roll & Share game in which children will share positive affirmations in small groups. Kids will take turns rolling the number cube and then sharing the self-affirmation that corresponds to the number they roll. This helps children see positive traits about themselves and share them with others.

**One:** I am a good friend. Here is one example:

**Two:** I am a good family member. Here is one example:

**Three:** I help others. Here is one example:

**Four:** I learn from mistakes. Here is one example:

**Five:** I take care of myself. Here is one example:

**Six:** I make cool things. Here is one example:

## X Is for eXtrordinary

Belonging is a big deal—even an *extraordinary* one. That means lots of people have said interesting things about it. As a whole group or in small groups, invite children to search for quotes about belonging. Let them know the quotes don't have to include the word itself—they might talk about acceptance, the feeling of being welcomed, the importance of caring for other people, or other ideas related to the concepts in the book. Then discuss the quotes and what they mean.

## Y Is for You

Read *The Story of Ferdinand* by Munro Leaf. Talk about some of the ways Ferdinand is different from the other bulls. Invite children to consider how they are unique—just like everyone! How can they love and accept themselves for just who they are?

## Z Is for Zillion

There are SO many ways we can proudly accept ourselves and others! Invite children to make handprints on paper using various colors of acrylic paint. When the paint dries, have children cut around their handprints and write positive things about themselves on them with a permanent marker. (Kids may make two or more hands each.) They could write words such as *strong, creative, funny, tall, short, organized, silly, smiley, helpful*, and so on. You can display these on a bulletin board in the shape of a big heart to show we are all a special part of the world. Your heading could be something like “WE ALL BELONG HERE!”



## Texts Used

*The Belonging Tree* by Maryann Cocca-Leffler

*Duck! Rabbit!* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and Tom Lichtenheld

*Heroes Don't Have to Fly* by Shannon Anderson

*I Am Human: A Book of Empathy* by Susan Verde

*Lunch Every Day* by Kathryn Otoshi

*Make a Friend, Be a Friend* by Eric Braun

*Only One You* by Linda Kranz

*A Porcupine Named Fluffy* by Helen Lester

*Say Something!* by Peter H. Reynolds

*Someone New* by Anne Sibley O'Brien

*The Story of Ferdinand* by Munro Leaf

*This Could Be You: Be Brave! Be True! Believe! Be You!* by Cindy Williams Schrauben

*Yay! You Failed!* by Shannon Anderson

*Y Is for Yet* by Shannon Anderson



# Define Belonging



# DECIDE

## Acrostic Poem

For each letter in *decide*, write a word or phrase that says how you can choose to show kindness to others. For example, “**D**ecorate for someone’s birthday.” Or “**E**ach person is welcome.”

D

E

C

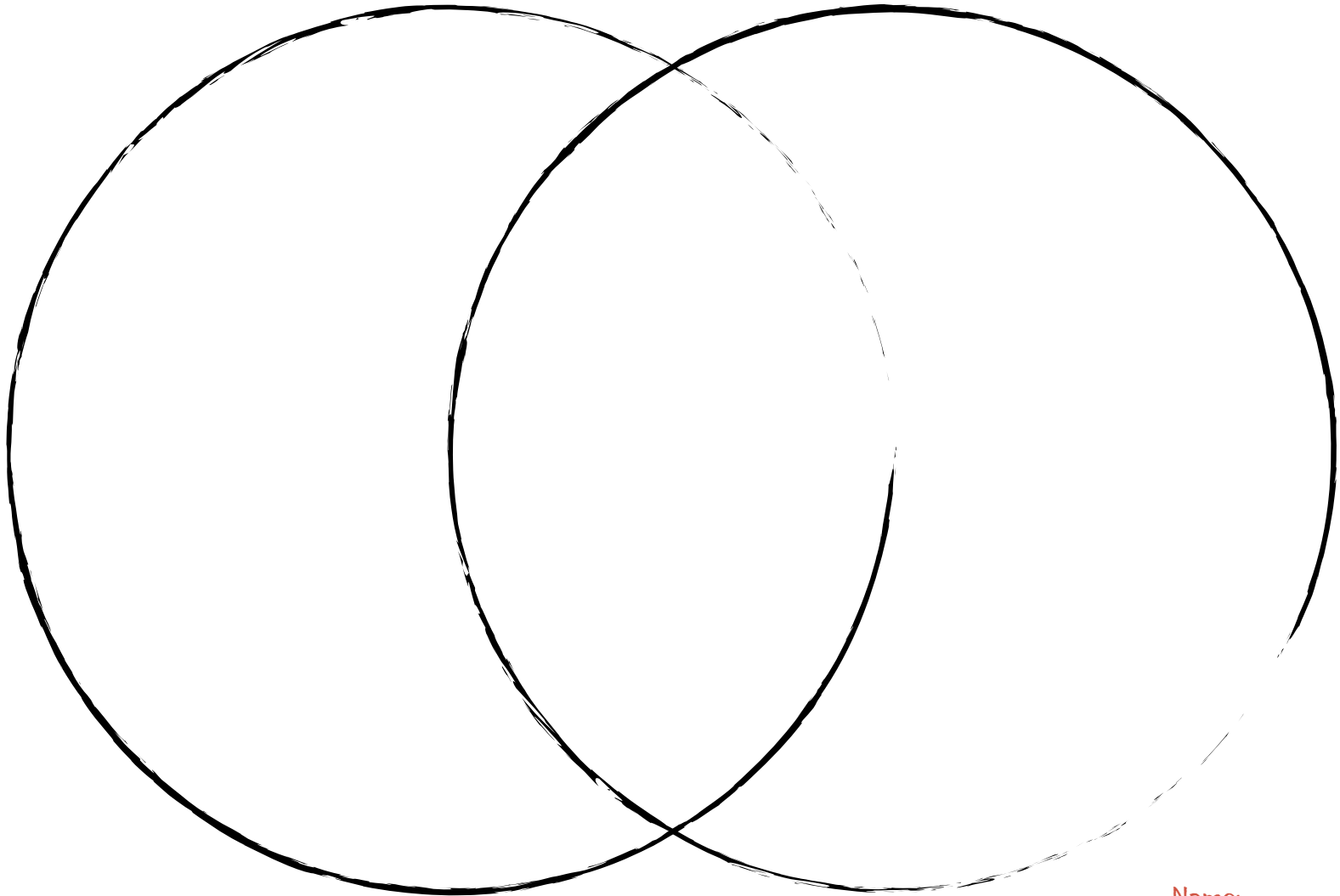
I

D

E

# Same and Different

When we invite other people to share their interests, thoughts, and feelings, we help them know they belong—and we can learn new things from them. Talk with your partner about some of the things you each enjoy. What is your favorite recess activity? Favorite movie? Favorite sport? Book? Hobby? Subject at school? When your answers are different, write your answer in the circle by your name. For any choice where you and your partner have the same answer, write it in the area where the two circles intersect.



Name:

Name:



# Friendship Cinquain

A cinquain is a type of five-line poem. Who is a friend who is important to you? How are you good friends to each other? Write a poem about your friendship using this cinquain form. If you need help getting started, have a look at the example poem.

---

noun

---

adjective

---

adjective

---

-ing verb

---

-ing verb

---

-ing verb

---

four-word phrase

---

synonym for the first word

## Friendship Cinquain example

FRIEND

---

noun

SPECIAL

---

adjective

IMPORTANT

---

adjective

CARING

---

-ing verb

SHARING

---

-ing verb

LISTENING

---

-ing verb

ALWAYS THERE FOR YOU

---

four-word phrase

BUDDY

---

synonym for the first word

## About the Author and Illustrator



**Shannon Anderson** is an award-winning children's book author, TEDx speaker, and national presenter. She loves to do author visits in classrooms to teach the power of reading, writing, and learning with a growth mindset. Shannon taught for 25 years from first grade through college level, where she wore the hats of literacy coach, gifted coordinator, and adjunct professor. She lives in Indiana. You can learn more about Shannon and her books at [shannonisteaching.com](http://shannonisteaching.com).



**John Joven** is an illustrator and a painter from Colombia. He lives there with his wife, Ana, and two children, Avril and Ian. He is fortunate enough to work in his home studio, where he can share his passion for drawing and painting with his children while working on projects. He started drawing at an early age, and when he was six years old his parents enrolled him in his first painting, sculpture, and character design class. When not illustrating, he enjoys spending time with his family, playing soccer with friends, watching movies, reading, writing, and traveling. He has had the opportunity to bring to life characters, scenes, and diverse worlds in magazines and newspapers; funny ideas in children's books; and animation projects around the globe.

