



THE GREAT BIG BOOK OF FAMILIES: DISCUSSION GUIDE

Suggested Grade Level: K – 2

Length of Time: 30-35 minutes

Goals

- To use literature to explore family diversity and increase the sense of inclusiveness in the classroom.

Objectives

- Students will be able to define what makes a family and describe a variety of families.
- Students will learn that families have similarities and differences.
- Students will be able to identify common characteristics within all families.

Academic Standards

- CCSS RL 1.1: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text. Also RL K.1 and RL 2.1.
- CCSS SL K.1, 1.1, 2.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten, grade 1 or grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
- CCSS SL 1.2: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media. Also SL K.2 and SL 2.2.

Educators' Notes

“When someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked in the mirror and saw nothing.” – *Adrienne Rich*

Written by Mary Hoffman, author of the well-known children’s book, *Amazing Grace*, *The Great Big Book of Families* showcases diverse families and their lives together. When students do not see their reality reflected in any of the materials used in school, it is like having no mirror or relevance. This book provides mirrors for many students while providing a window for others into many kinds of families expanding their understanding of the world. *The Great Big Book of Families* provides a rich tool to include and celebrate the broad scope of human experience with family across differences including race, ethnicity, economic class and family structure.

Required Book: *The Great Big Book of Families* by Mary Hoffman.

Activity

- Before reading the book, encourage students to pay attention to the different kinds of families that they see in the book.
 - Encourage students to describe the family, home and setting in the first 2 page illustration.

- On the next few pages ask students to notice to the all the families that are different from the first illustration. Discuss the different kinds of families illustrated.
- As you continue to read the book, pause and take a closer look at some of the two page spreads that feature different aspects of families and their lives. Some of the topics to feature include homes, jobs, clothes, feelings, and family trees. (See the *Tree of Caring* lesson for alternative activities for family trees.) Ask your students:
 - What do you see in the picture?
 - Do you see a family or home that looks like yours?
 - How are the families or the way they live different from your family?
 - How are they the same?
- After reading the book, ask students to review or name the different kinds of families they saw in the book.
- Lead a discussion about families, and then let students pair up and talk about;
 - What are some important things in all families?
 - What makes a family?
- Invite students to share comments from their discussions.

Extensions

- Ask students to draw pictures of their families. If they have grandparents or cousins that live with them, encourage students to be inclusive of the important people they live with or have in their lives. Of course, many children may also want to include their pets! Ask your students to dictate or write one or two lines about why family is important to them or what makes a family.
- Use the drawings to create a classroom Great Big Book of Families.
- Create a Great Big Book of Families hallway display with the student drawings and writing.
- Feature the display for a back to school night or for an evening event that highlights family diversity.

Assessment and Evaluation

- Are all students participating in the discussion?
- Do they understand what some significant components of a family are?
- Can students name two things that they think are important about caring families?

Additional Books

The Family Book, Todd Parr. (Pre-K – K)

All Families Are Special, Norma Simon. (2 – 3)

Dear Child, John Farrel (Pre-K – K)

Who's In My Family?: All About Our Families, Robie Harris. (Pre-K – 1)

Who's in a Family? Robert Skutch. (Pre-K – K)

Families, Susan Kuklin. (3 – 5)