

Julián Is a Mermaid

Written and illustrated by Jessica Love

This story is about a boy named Julián, his exploration of self-love, and a celebration of his individuality with the loving support of his abuela. The characters in this text speak in both English and Spanish, allowing our bilingual or multilingual students an opportunity to see themselves reflected in literature. This is a great book to challenge the social norms of gender expression or identity, and could launch a conversation about society-influenced biases in your learning community.

Strategy Instruction Possibilities

Comprehension

- **Set a Purpose for Reading:** This book could be used with multiple purposes in mind. The text presents a disruption of gender norms or biases, and highlights the unconditional love of an adult who affirms a child's self-expression. The language diversity allows readers to infer that the characters are of Latinx descent, and honors our bilingual and multilingual students with representation.
 - Hispanic Heritage Month is observed from September 15 to October 15. This month corresponds with Mexican Independence Day, which is celebrated on September 16 and recognizes the beginning of the war of independence in 1810 that ended Spanish rule.
 - October is LGBT History Month, a U.S. observance started in 1994 to recognize lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender history and the history of the gay-rights movement.
 - October is Global Diversity Awareness Month, a month to celebrate and increase awareness about the diversity of cultures and ethnicities and the positive effect diversity can have on society.
- **Analyze How Visual Elements Integrate and Contribute to the Meaning of Text:** This book is perfect for exploring visual elements because it has very little text. the illustrations are essential to telling the story.
 - First, read the text without showing the pictures.
 - Then, discuss the visuals that come to mind while reading or hearing the text.
 - Next, explore the illustrations while reading the text once again.
 - At the very beginning of the book, when they are in the pool: Where do you think they are?
 - Title page: What do you think is happening here? Where are they going?
 - What is Julián doing? What is an abuela? How do you know?
 - How do you think Julián is feeling?
 - What does Julián transform into? How do you know?
 - How do you think he is feeling in this new form?
 - When his abuela goes to take a bath, what do you think Julián is thinking?
 - What is Julián's good idea?
 - How does he feel as he morphs into a new being?

- What is Abuela’s reaction once she sees Julián?
 - How does he feel about her reaction at first? Does this change?
- Where does Abuela take Julián?
- Do you think Julián feels empowered? Why or why not?

Accuracy

- **Use Picture Clues:** The author/illustrator uses visual imagery to tell this story. The illustrations are very detailed, with vibrant colors and expression throughout the text.
 - Before reading: While doing a picture walk, ask students, “What do you notice? What do you wonder?”
 - During reading: Read the pictures, then read the words. Do they match?
 - After reading: Ask students to retell the story using only the illustrations.

Expand Vocabulary

- **Use Pictures, Illustrations, and Diagrams:** This text uses English and Spanish to tell the story. Assist students with using the pictures to confirm the meaning of what they are reading.
 - *abuela, mermaid, vámonos, mijo*
- **Voracious Reading:** It is important to read good-fit books and expand vocabulary. Ask students what new or interesting vocabulary they identified while reading.

Writing

- If you could be or do anything you wanted, what would it be and why?
 - What obstacles are preventing you from being or doing what you selected?
- Julián’s abuela shows unconditional love by supporting his dream. What does unconditional love mean to you?