

# what is moral and what is story?

## GREAT BOOKS THAT HELP YOU EXPLORE MORAL ISSUES WITH YOUR CHILDREN

Introducing moral issues in children's books has a long – and not always good – history.

Often, the moral is too obvious and the story bland. Presenting an engaging story is ignored at the expense of getting across the moral precept.

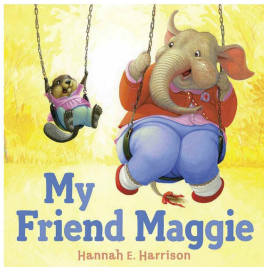
Fortunately, some books do both. We have rounded up a few books that manage to pack a powerful punch about a variety of moral issues without sacrificing appealing characters, interesting situations or surprising stories.

Consider using them as a way to have conversations with your children about the issues they bring up.

*Strictly No Elephants* written by Lisa Manthey and illustrated by Tereasa Yoo

A young boy and his pet, a tiny elephant, share walks and books. Like any pet owner, the boy must find ways to care for and protect his beloved animal friend. One day, the boy decides to take his elephant to Pet Club Day so he can meet other pet owners and not be so lonely.

He is thwarted by a sign. While the sign says "Strictly No Elephants," the boy discovers it's not just elephants that are not allowed in the Pet Club – neither are skunks, or giraffes, or pigs, or



hedgehogs.

The answer is to start their own club, open to all pet owners! The final pages, which show a gleeful assortment of children and their unusual pets (a penguin, a bat, even a hammerhead shark), reasserts the friendship message in a sweet way that

nevertheless takes a back seat to the story – Laura Raphael, MLIS, Children's Services Coordinator, Tulsa City-County Library

One written and illustrated by Kathryn Otoshi

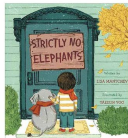
In this book, colors come to life. Blue, a quiet color, is constantly picked on by Red. Though

the other colors see the mistreatment, no one speaks up. But every time Red is mean, he grows bigger and bigger. Soon, Red is so big that all the colors are afraid of him. Red's bullying only stops when One comes along and teaches the colors to stand up for themselves.

Though the illustrations consist entirely of simple bright colors against a white background, it's amazing how much emotion the story manages to convey. The text focuses on emotional words, describing the colors' feelings so that readers can identify with them even though the colors have no facial expressions, while the colors themselves are portrayed as dynamic spots whose lines shrink and expand in response to those feelings.

And there are a lot of feelings to consider here, some of them quite complicated for such a brief story. Blue has done nothing to deserve Red's bullying. The other colors quake like Blue, yet none of them act to stop the abuse, showing how even when someone knows that something is wrong, sometimes it's hard to find the courage to speak up. It's also important to note that Red is not portrayed as a villain here. At the end, the other colors accept

*continued next page*



him back into their group when he is remorseful for his actions and it is Blue himself who urges their forgiveness.

One shows that one person can make a difference, that children have the power to speak up against bullying, to forgive and befriend, and that children who may not realize their actions are bullying or harmful have the power to change. – Tori Hamilton, MLIS, Children's Library Associate, Glenpool Library

*My Friend Maggie* written and illustrated by Hannah E. Harrison

When thinking about children's books that have a great message without being heavy-handed, *My Friend Maggie* by Hannah E. Harrison comes immediately to mind.

This is the story of Paula, a little beaver who shares with the reader all the fun things she and Maggie have done in the past. She points out delicately that Maggie is pretty clumsy, she's pretty terrible at hide-and-seek,

and that Maggie is a big girl. Oh yeah, Veronica, a popular (mean) girl, doesn't like Maggie.

This leads to the moral dilemma Paula faces. Should she stand up for her friend, Maggie, who has been her friend for a long time? Or should she play with the popular girls? What happens when the popular girls decide Paula's front teeth are too big?

You'll want to share this book not only with all the young children in your life, but anyone who is around children or loves children's literature.

This offers a great perspective on how bullying can affect others. It also very subtly demonstrates the power of friendship and loyalty, and how important those characteristics are not just in elementary school, but for all ages. – Melody Palmer, MLIS, Youth Librarian, South Broken Arrow Library



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opportunities to embrace the great outdoors. But, these's fun to be had and the grub is good in and around brick-and-mortar Dickson Street and the downtown square, both of which are part of the commercial historic district, adjacent to campus. In addition to restaurants like Hugo's, endorsed by many an Arkansian, and stores like Dickson Street Bookshop, voted the best book store in the state, be sure to look for larger-than-life murals and three-dimensional art pieces created by local and international artists, that, since 2017, have added a tasteful layer of eye candy throughout downtown. The art is an initiative of Green Candy Public Art, headed by Experience Fayetteville, the city's tourism department.

As if these reasons aren't enough to hang around Dickson and the square, make it a priority to be in downtown Fayetteville on Saturdays from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. to experience one of the country's best-rated farmers markets. The market is set up among lush gardens and offers extraordinary choices—locally produced baked items, fruits, flowers, vegetables, crafts, fine art and more. While browsing, live performers and musicians entertain the crowds. Before departing downtown, make a point to admire the giant

8,000-pound bronze sphere just off the square. Designed to be turned by hand like a prayer wheel, The World Peace Fountain proclaims the message, "May Peace Prevail on Earth" in over 100 languages.

#### A Taste of the Past

It is probably no surprise that Fayetteville was originally Native American Territory. It eventually became a settlement and was used by soldiers on both sides of the fight to abolish slavery. Dozens of sites are on the National Register of Historic Places. Be sure to stop in at the Headquarters House, a Greek Revival-style home built in 1853, used by the Union and the Confederate armies. Also visit the Trail of Tears Park on the university's grounds.

#### Directions, Information and Ideas

Fayetteville's Visitors and Convention's Bureau has a darling storefront along the square, so stop in upon arrival to get some expert advice on how best to uncover Fayetteville's best offerings. For advanced planning, visit [www.experiencefayetteville.com](http://www.experiencefayetteville.com) and [www.northwest-arkansas.org](http://www.northwest-arkansas.org) for oodles of information including maps, lodging suggestions and more. Also, see [www.arkansasstateparks.com](http://www.arkansasstateparks.com).

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