



BELOVED CLASSICS, INSPIRED CONVERSATIONS.  
AND BIG IDEAS... NOW DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR.

PRIME TIME

family

BOX

GROWN-UP  
GUIDE

CREATED BY

PRIME TIME  
FAMILY READING



# Welcome to the Prime Time Family

The Prime Time Family Box you have received contains an at-home version of Prime Time Family Reading, an award-winning program of the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities. Since its founding 30 years ago, Prime Time Family Reading has supported tens of thousands of families like yours in bonding together through joyful reading and discussion.

## The goals of Prime Time are to:

- Deliver quality humanities education experiences
- Increase public library use
- Increase family bonding and reading time
- Positively affect reading-related attitudes and behaviors
- Improve academic achievement

Families who have participated in Prime Time programs have consistently reported improvements in their child’s relationship to reading, as well as increased self-confidence, critical thinking, and even a strengthening of their bond to their families.

The Prime Time Family Box is designed to help you achieve the same goals and positive results on your own. Welcome to the Prime Time family!



# What’s in your Prime Time Family Box:

- a set of award-winning books focusing on humanities themes that connect us all.
- a Prime Time Grown-Up Guide (it’s in your hands!) to help you make the most of your kit with your child.
- extra goodies to extend the joy of reading and learning together as a family.

## What makes Prime Time unique

There’s a reason Prime Time has received so many awards and is so beloved by families. Prime Time combines quality children’s literature with collective learning strategies that engage every participant in rich conversations about the issues that matter most in our lives. At Prime Time programs, we go beyond the Who, What, When, and Where, and dig into the Why. Through the use of open-ended questions about big ideas, Prime Time fosters critical thinking and also, connection. At Prime Time, there are no wrong answers—only opportunities to deepen understanding through story-sharing and conversation. This collective and welcoming approach to reading and discussion launches a lifelong love of reading and learning.

## Making the most of your Prime Time Family Box

Prime Time Family Reading programs occur one night a week over six weeks. We encourage you to select your own “Prime Time night” once a week, and to stick with it. Establishing a regular reading routine will help embed reading as a beloved activity to return to again and again. Many families read together before bedtime. Other families read together before enjoying a shared meal. When you read together is less important than making your Prime Time Family Reading time meaningful. Your Grown-Up Guide provides both general tips and session-by-session ideas for how to do just that!



Story-Sharing vs.  
Story-Telling

We like to think of reading aloud with children as story-sharing rather than “story time.” When we “tell” stories, we may take on the role of a performer, which can then turn your child into a passive member of an audience. When we share stories, we are equal participants.

As you sit down to share the books in your Prime Time Family Box, try to involve your child. Ask them which story they would like to read first. Look together at the cover and illustrations. What do you think the story will be about? How do the illustrations make you feel? These are some ways to settle in for story-sharing. You do not need to use funny voices or props to story-share. If you don’t know how to pronounce a word or what it means, use the opportunity to model your desire to know more and look up the word together. All you need to successfully story-share is to be your authentic self, and to read with a tone and pace that honors the story the author wants to share with you!

Tips for Talking  
toward Big Ideas

After story-sharing, ask your child an open-ended question. Open-ended questions cannot be answered with “yes” or “no” and have no one right answer.

To dig deeper into the big ideas, ask “Why?”

Embrace silence. If your child doesn’t have a response right away, use the five-second rule (silently counting to five before moving on or trying again) in order to give them more time to think.

Listen for understanding. Sometimes when we talk with others, we listen while thinking up our own response. Demonstrate that you’re listening by re-stating what you heard. If you don’t understand your child’s response, try saying, “I don’t think I understand. Can you say that a different way?”

If you disagree with your child, feel free to say so, but do so in a way that doesn’t undermine your child’s point of view. Simply stating, “I disagree because…” helps your child understand that differences of opinion are normal, and that you can disagree without harming others. At Prime Time, everyone’s ideas are equally valuable.

If your talk takes an off-topic turn, go back to the book!

Bigger ideas often emerge when you make comparisons between books or connections to other texts or ideas. Try “Does this remind you of any other stories?” (or experiences or events).



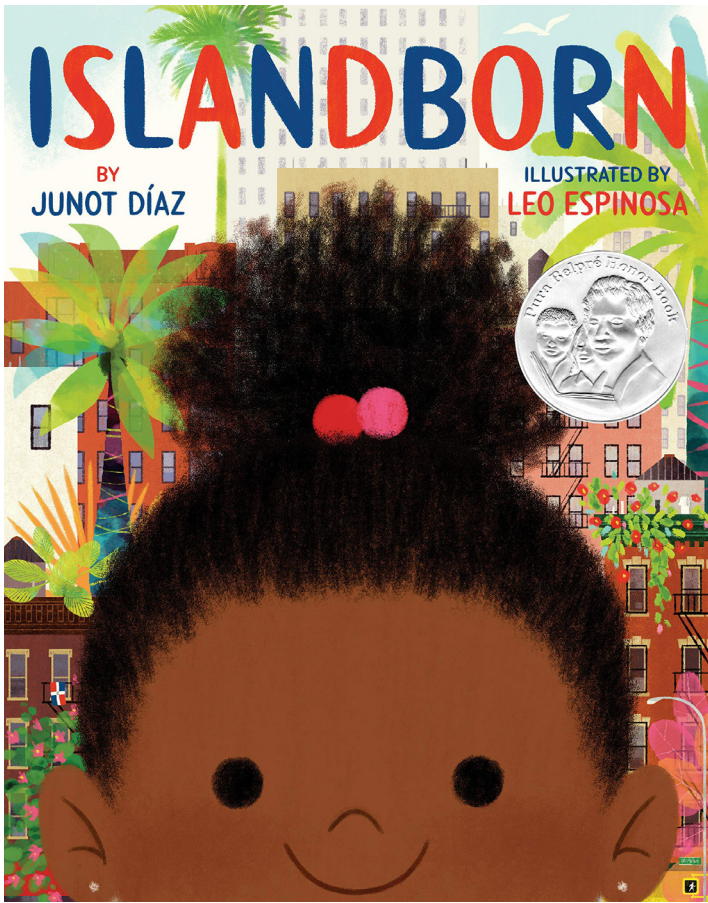
And now, on to your Prime Time  
Family Reading program:  
Prime Time Cares



# Session 1: Coping Through Story-Sharing

## How do stories help people cope with difficult times?

For your first Prime Time Family Reading session, you and your child will read one book together. But before you dive in to the first book, talk with your child about a time that a story or stories have helped you cope with a difficult time. Perhaps there is a story that has been shared in your family that has helped you feel connected to your loved ones. Share it! Do you have a favorite book that you have read over and over again? What do you love about that book? Demonstrating to your child that stories have lifted you up will help them see how stories can do the same for them.



### Island Born by Junot Díaz

In *Island Born*, Lola is asked to describe the place where she is from, but she isn't sure where that is. After asking family members to tell stories of her native home, she learns that sometimes stories are just as powerful as memories. This book offers you the opportunity to talk with your child about the stories and memories of your home. What stories do they tell about their home? What might they want to know more about?

## Questions to Build Big Ideas:

- 1 All the children draw pictures of the places from which they came. Ms. Obi, their teacher, calls them “windows.” Are pictures like windows? In what ways? How are they different from windows?
- 2 Lola can't remember anything about the island from which she came. Does that mean that the island is not important in her life? In what ways do you think it might be important?
- 3 All the people Lola asks tell her what they remember about the island. Are their memories significant? Can they make up for Lola not remembering what the island was like?
- 4 Mr. Mir tells Lola that there was a monster on the island and that was why everyone left it. Do you think he is telling the truth? Did everyone fight the monster, as they say?
- 5 Do all the stories Lola's friends and relatives tell her about the island provide her with an accurate description of it?
- 6 Can stories be better than memory in telling you about a place?
- 7 What makes a place home?



### Keep Building!

Draw a picture of the place you come from. It doesn't have to be an exotic location, but make sure your picture shows what's distinctive about your home.

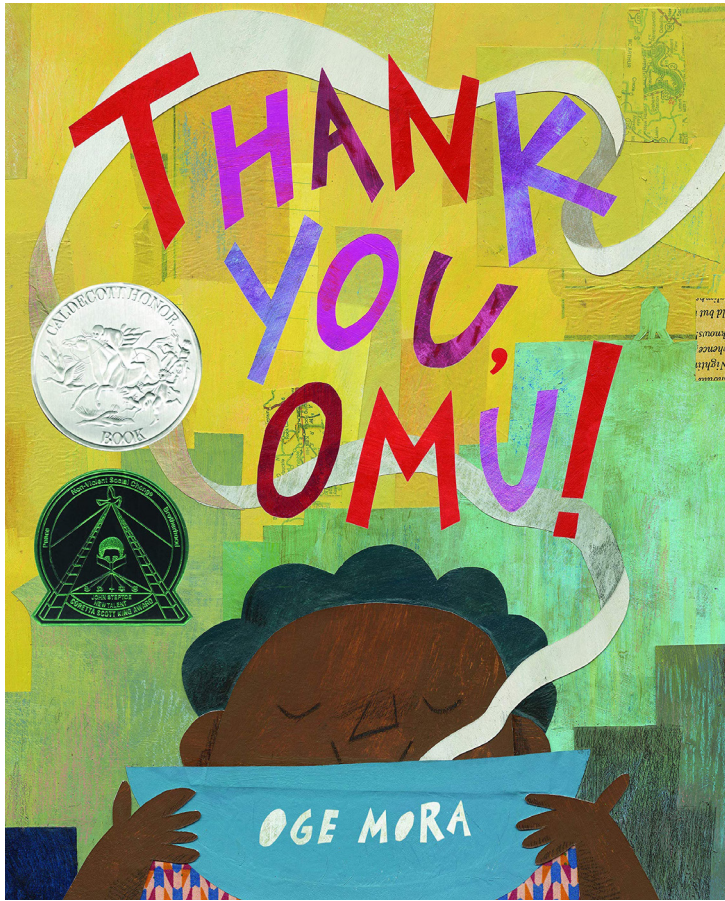
If you have a friend or classmate who comes from a foreign country, ask them about the place they come from. Can you forge a friendship with someone from a different place?



# Session 2: Self and Community

## Can you be yourself without a community to support you?

We like to think of ourselves as individuals, people who are not dependent upon anyone else. At the same time, most of us value being part of different communities. Some of these communities are large, such as our country, while others are quite small, such as a religious organization or a town where we live. Some say that it is only through the impact of other people that we can truly have a sense of ourselves. The books for this second session will allow you and your child to explore the relationship between self and community.



## Thank You, Omu! by Oge Mora

The scent of a delicious meal draws neighbors and community members to her door. Not wanting to turn anyone away, generous Omu offers servings to everyone who asks, only to wind up without any for her dinner. In the end, her community rewards her with a generous serving of gratitude.

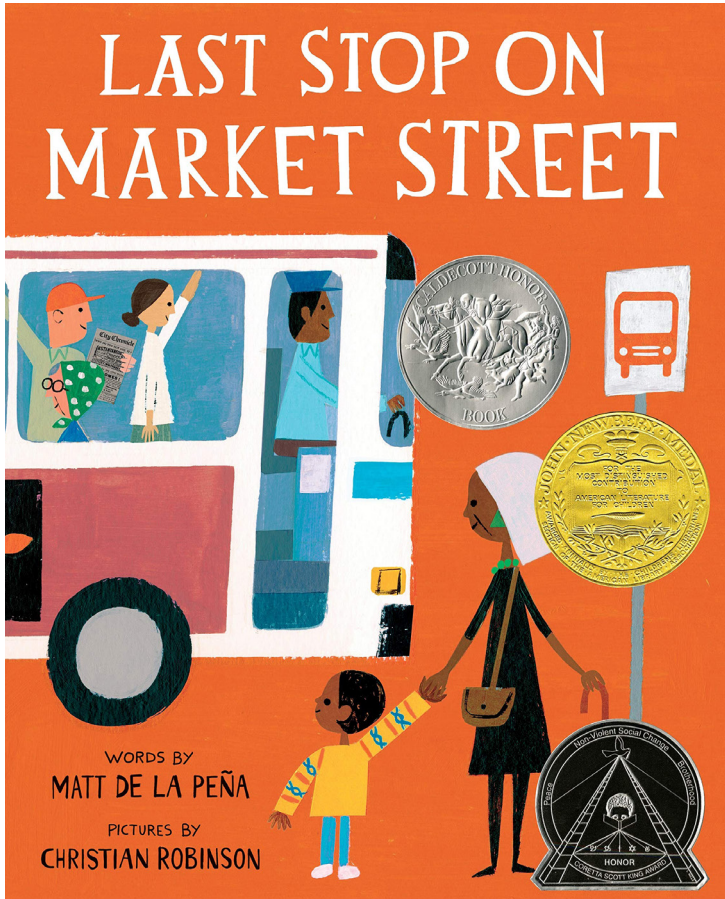
## Questions to Build Big Ideas:

- 1 Omu gives away all her stew, even what she was planning to have for her own dinner. Is it wrong to give away so much you don't have enough left for yourself?
- 2 Can generosity ever be a bad thing? When and why?
- 3 Do you think Omu's neighbors should have made sure she had enough stew for herself before they took some for themselves?
- 4 Omu can eat dinner because her neighbors bring her food. Does giving Omu something make up for taking all of her food?
- 5 Is giving better than receiving?

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## Last Stop on Market Street by Matt de la Peña

CJ unwillingly accompanies his grandmother on a bus ride, unhappy that he does not have all that his friends have. His grandmother points out positive things like the trees and the music made by a bus passenger playing the guitar. When CJ and his Nana arrive at their destination, we find out that they have journeyed to a soup kitchen where they will serve others who are less fortunate.

## Questions to Build Big Ideas:

- 1 When CJ and Nana depart the bus at Market Street, CJ looks around at his surroundings and says, “How come it’s always so dirty over here?” to which Nana replies, “Sometimes when you’re surrounded by dirt, CJ, you’re a better witness for what’s beautiful.” What do you think Nana means by this? Do you agree with her? Why or why not?
- 2 At the end of the story, CJ and Nana work at a soup kitchen. Why do they do that? Is it something that all of us should do?
- 3 Sometimes, service to community is mandatory. For example, people accused of a crime are often required to perform community service. Some countries require that all citizens serve in the military. In what ways might requiring service to community be a good thing—or maybe a problematic one?
- 4 Why do you think CJ says he is glad they came even though earlier he was upset that he couldn’t play like the other kids? Why do you think he feels that way? Would you be glad, too? Why or why not?
- 5 CJ and his Nana do not seem to be wealthy, but they are helping people who are poorer than them. In what ways can we help people that do not cost any money?



## Keep Building!

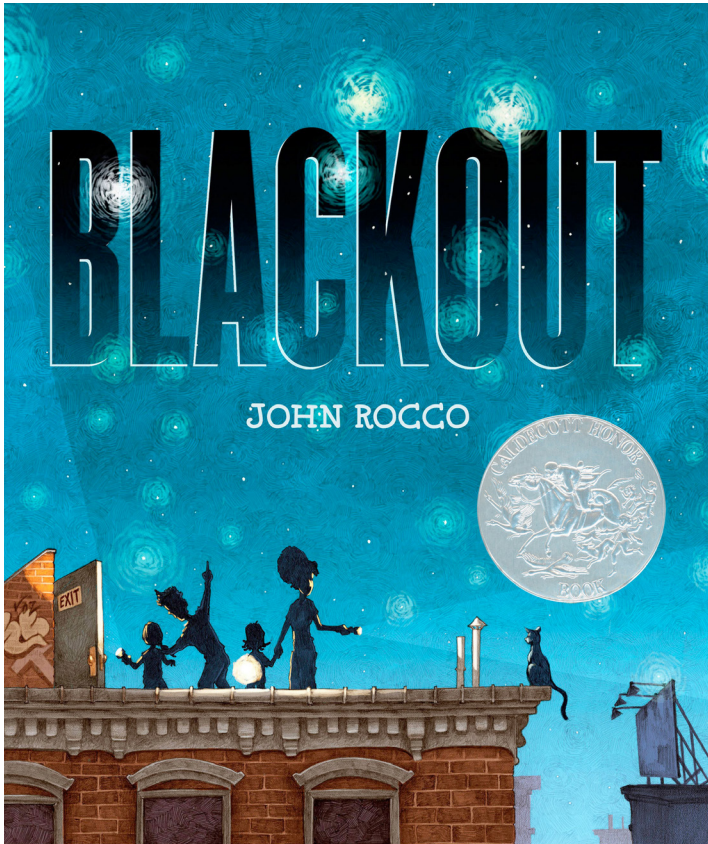
Make a plan to donate some toys or clothes to an organization that helps people who do not have very much and could use your help. Or join your family in volunteering for a local event or cause that serves other people. Afterward, discuss how your service to community made you feel.



# Session 3: Creativity and Improvisation

## Is art as important to our lives as food, clothing, and shelter?

Many of us learned that food, clothing, and shelter are the essentials for human life. But what about art? Is it less important than life’s so-called “basics”? Many people think not. After all, art—and this term stands for all creative activities such as painting, making music, dancing, etc.—is generally deemed very important by most people. This session asks you to consider why art is so important. After all, a poem cannot feed anyone. Or can it?



### Blackout by John Rocco

A blackout in the city leaves families without electricity, leading to both surprise and opportunity. This book asks us to consider what we lose—and gain—when the lights go out.

## Questions to Build Big Ideas:

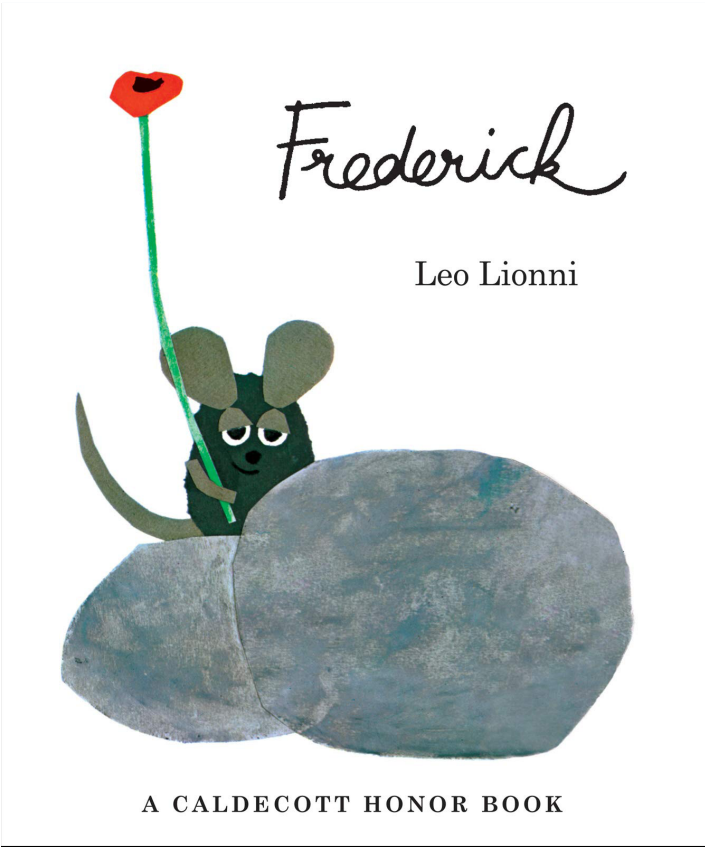
- 1 If you were in a blackout, what would you do? Are there any activities you would try to get your friend and/or family to do with you?
- 2 Does people’s behavior during the blackout reveal something about their normal lives?
- 3 Should people just return to their normal lives after a blackout? Why or why not?
- 4 We all have different routines that we follow in our daily lives. Do these routines help us live better lives? Always? Never? Sometimes?
- 5 How can we make our lives less routine, more improvisational and creative? Would this be a good thing or not?

 Keep Reading 

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### Frederick by Leo Lionni

Winter is coming, and all the mice are gathering food... except for Frederick. But when the days grow short and the snow begins to fall, it’s Frederick’s stories that warm the hearts and spirits of his fellow field mice. The value of art and the worth Frederick brings to his community are the key questions explored in this book.

## Questions to Build Big Ideas:

- 1 Frederick’s family is getting ready for the winter the way many animals do. Why do you think Frederick does something different?
- 2 Are Frederick’s stories as important as the food the rest of the family gathered? How would the story be different if Frederick had gathered food instead?
- 3 What do you think the mice will do to get through the rest of the winter?
- 4 Do you know someone with talents like Frederick’s? What can they do?
- 5 Which of the mice in the story would you rather be—one of the family or Frederick—and why?



### Keep Reading

Think of a challenging experience you have had and create art about it (a poem, song, painting, or even a play!) If you feel comfortable doing so, share your art and talk about creating it!

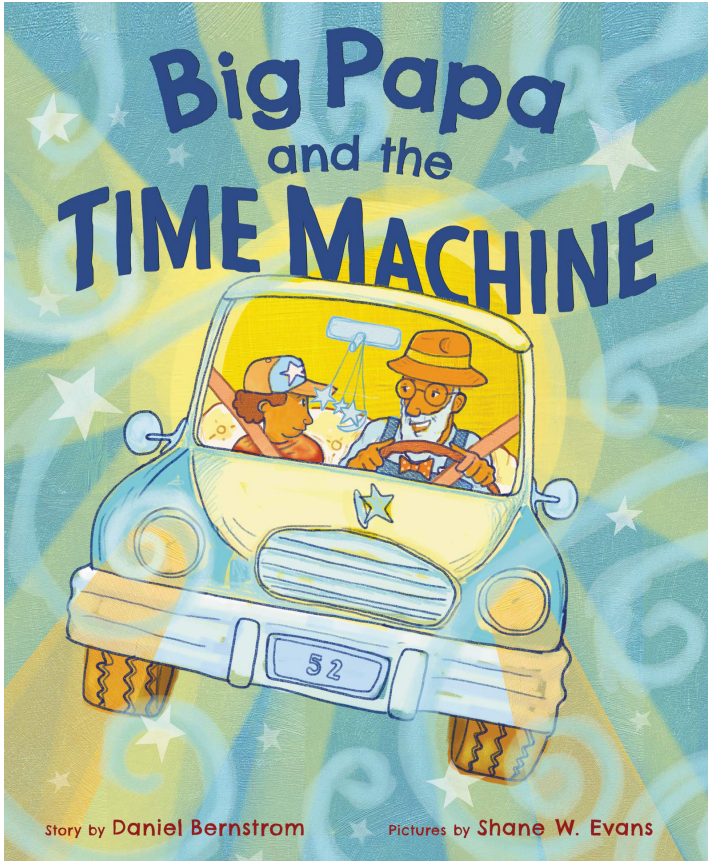
Talk together about a routine you would like to shake up. Commit to changing that routine for a few days. Then, discuss how the change felt and whether you’d like to go back to the “old routine.”



# Session 4: Bravery

## Can you be brave and scared at the same time?

There are times when we are called upon to be brave. Trying new things for the first time, confronting a conflict, and stepping out of our comfort zones all require us to muster up some courage. But what makes something, or someone, truly brave?



### Big Papa and the Time Machine by Daniel Bernstrom

When his grandson says he is scared to go to school, Big Papa takes his grandson on a journey through time—back to all the times he was afraid—giving his grandson a lesson in what it takes to develop bravery. This story provides both an opportunity for you to share the challenges you have had, and an important history lesson.

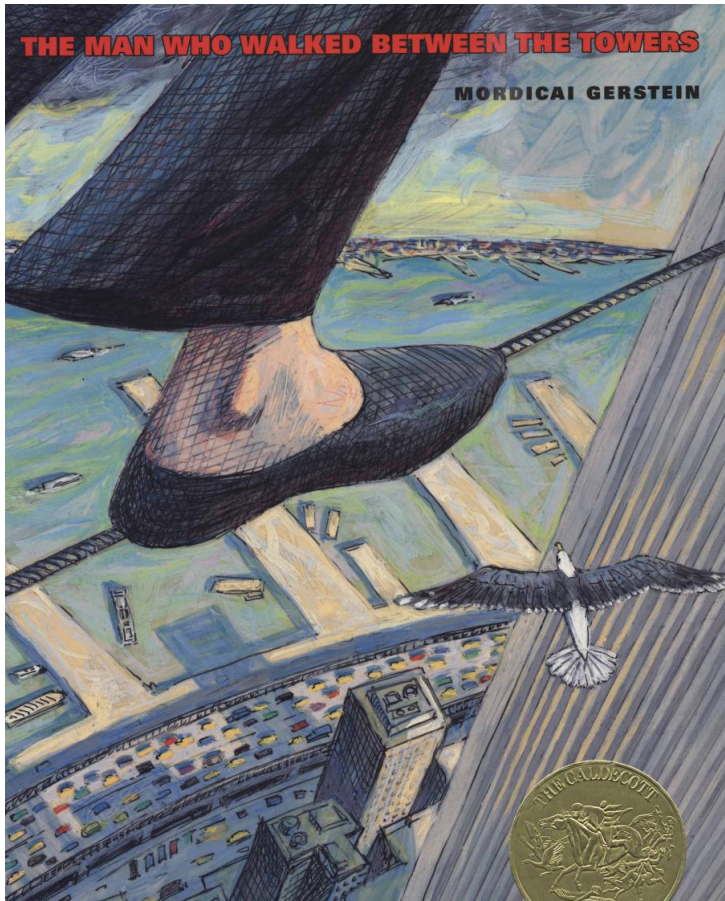
## Questions to Build Big Ideas:

- 1 The narrator doesn't want to go to school because he is scared. Is going to school something you should be scared to do? Why or why not?
- 2 Can you be scared of something that is not dangerous?
- 3 Big Papa uses his time machine to take the boy to different times in his life when he was scared. Choose one of those times. What was Big Papa doing? Why was he scared? How was he brave?
- 4 Big Papa says that being scared doesn't go away. Do you think adults can be scared? What are the types of things that scare them? How are they brave?
- 5 Do you have to be scared in order to be brave? How do people overcome their fear?

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## The Man Who Walked Between the Towers

by Mordicai Gerstein

In 1974, Philippe Petit spent over an hour walking between the two World Trade Towers in New York City—1,340 feet above the ground. Onlookers were in awe. How could someone be so brave? Or was what Philippe Petit did something else, altogether?

## Questions to Build Big Ideas:

- 1 Would you be scared if you did what Philippe Petit did; that is, walk between the two towers on a steel cable 1,340 feet above the ground? Why or why not?
- 2 Philippe said that he was not afraid, but alone, happy, and free. Have you ever done something scary but not been afraid?
- 3 If Philippe had walked between the towers because someone dared him to do it, would he have still been brave? Why or why not?
- 4 Clearly, walking on a cable between the two towers was dangerous. Why do you think Philippe was not afraid?
- 5 Does Philippe’s lack of fear mean that he is brave? If he was scared, does that mean he would not have been brave?



## Keep Building!

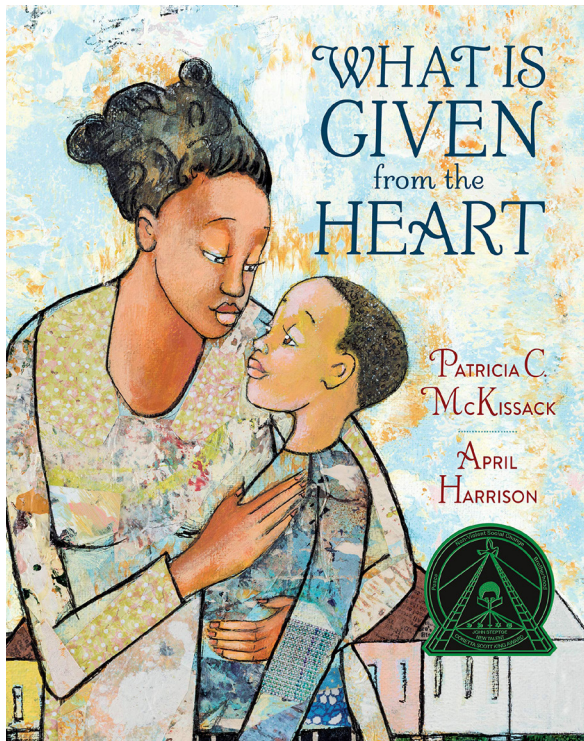
With a friend or family member, discuss a time when you did something brave that others did not recognize as brave. How did you feel when you did it? Were you scared?



# Session 5: Generosity and Altruism

**Can people really do things to help others or do they only do what makes them feel good?**

Many people think that human beings are inherently selfish, out only to increase their own well-being. From such a point of view, generosity and altruism become problematic. After all, contributing to a fund to relieve poverty—an act of generosity and even altruism—does not benefit oneself but those to whom the funds distribute goods. Yet, hardly anyone does not feel the pull of being generous, of doing things to help those “less fortunate.” Why is this so? How does being generous help the person doing the giving? And doesn’t altruism—which entails helping others at some cost to oneself—require someone to act against their own interests? This session’s books will allow you to discuss what it means to give and receive.



## What is Given from the Heart by Patricia C. McKissack

James Otis and his mother do not have money to buy gifts for the Temples, a family who, like them, is in need. Nevertheless, they come up with a gift—a gift from the heart, and James receives an unexpected gift in the process.

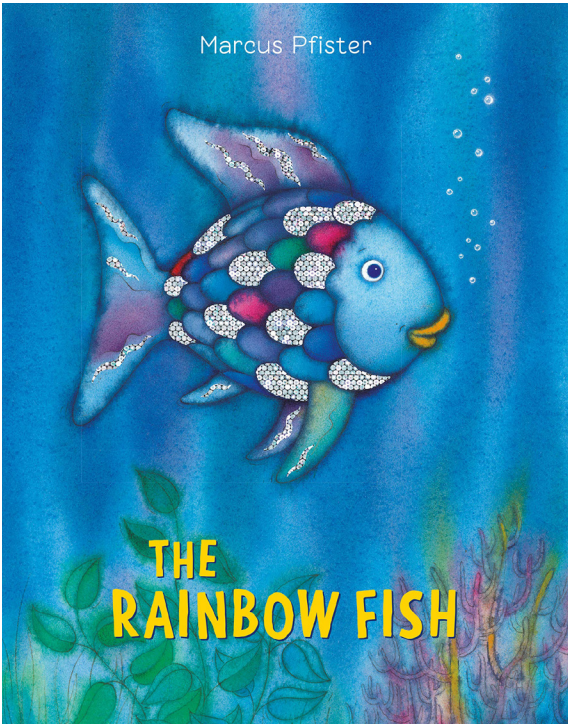
### Questions to Build Big Ideas:

- 1 James Otis and his mother are very poor. Do you think they should give to people even less fortunate than they are?
- 2 Do James Otis and his mother give gifts to the Temples because they expect a reward? If they did, would that change how you think about their giving?
- 3 Do you think that everyone has an obligation to give to those less well-off than they are? Why or why not?
- 4 Have you ever given something to someone because they didn’t have as much as you? How did it make you feel?
- 5 Is a gift better if you make it yourself rather than buying it from a store? What if what you made doesn’t look professionally done?
- 6 Is it better to give than to receive? Why or why not?

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## The Rainbow Fish by Marcus Pfister

The Rainbow Fish may be the most beautiful fish in the sea, but until he starts giving away his shiny scales, he isn’t happy. This book sends a sweet message about sharing. Dig deeper and discuss if sharing is sometimes a not-so-good thing.

### Questions to Build Big Ideas:

- 1 The Rainbow Fish is the most beautiful fish in the sea because of his shiny scales. Why isn’t he happy?
- 2 The Rainbow Fish doesn’t want to give the small fish one of his scales because he takes pride in the scales. Is it wrong not to give things to others when they ask for them?
- 3 Do you think the Rainbow Fish was selfish?
- 4 What makes the Rainbow Fish change his mind about giving away his scales? Do you think that being happy is more important than being beautiful?
- 5 There is a saying that beauty is only skin deep. What does that mean? Do you agree?
- 6 Once the Rainbow Fish has given away all but one of his scales, he no longer looks special, different from all the other fish. How can he be happy if he no longer looks special?
- 7 Is it important to stand out from everyone else in some way? Why or why not?



### Keep Building!

Do you know anyone who has less than you have? Can you make something to give them that would make them happy?  
(Hint: It can be a simple drawing.)



# Session 6: Resilience

## What can we do when life doesn’t go as planned?

There is an old saying: When life throws you lemons, make lemonade. The idea is that, even when things don’t go the way you would like, you can still get things to turn out as you would like. That’s the idea behind the notion of resilience. A person who is resilient isn’t defeated by negative events that come their way but rather seeks to turn things around to an outcome that is in their favor. They refuse to let circumstances – lemons – defeat them; instead, they take them and turn them into a positive outcome – lemonade. Resilience is an important character trait for people to have, for it allows them to face the difficulties that every human being has to face without being defeated.



### Saturday by Oge Mora

Ava and her mother love their Saturdays together. They make big plans and spend the day together. But on this particular Saturday, nothing seems to go as planned, leading them to reevaluate what’s really important about Saturday. Through this book, talk with your child about how they can cope when things don’t go as planned.

## Questions to Build Big Ideas:

- 1 Ava and her mother plan to do a lot on Saturday. What do they plan and how do their plans not work out?
- 2 Ava’s mother says she has ruined the day because all the things they planned on doing did not work out. Have you ever felt like that?
- 3 Ava tells her mother that Saturday is special because she gets to spend it with her. Can being with someone make that time special? How?
- 4 How do Ava and her mother turn their ruined Saturday into a wonderful day? Is it always possible to salvage a bad day?
- 5 How else could Ava have behaved? Could she have made things worse?
- 6 Ava acts in a resilient manner. Why is it important to be resilient?

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## After the Fall by Dan Santat

This story picks up where the popular Mother Goose rhyme ends, with Humpty Dumpty getting up after the fall. Because the book is based on the Mother Goose rhyme, you might start by reading it to your child:

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;  
All the king’s horses and all the  
king’s men  
Couldn’t put Humpty together  
again*

## Questions to Build Big Ideas:

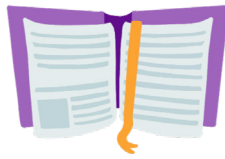
- 1 In the book, the king’s men manage to put Humpty Dumpty back together. But what’s different about him?
- 2 Do you think that Humpty Dumpty’s fear of heights means he is not brave?
- 3 Can fear keep you from enjoying things you like? Can you give an example?
- 4 Does the fact that accidents happen mean you should be afraid?
- 5 It’s hard for Humpty Dumpty to make a paper airplane. How does he manage to do it?
- 6 Is it a good thing to persist in the face of difficulties? Are there times when that doesn’t make sense?
- 7 What does it take to persist? Is it just stubbornness?
- 8 Does Humpty Dumpty’s climbing to the top of the wall despite his fear make him brave? Must a brave person conquer their fears?
- 9 Is Humpty Dumpty still scared of heights at the end of the book? Does that make him brave?



## Keep Building!

Talk together about times when you have had a frustrating day and how you responded to it. Do you think you were as resilient as Ava and Humpty Dumpty? If so, what makes your actions resilient? If not, can you think of a more resilient way you could have acted? Would that have made things better?





## Celebrate and Continue Sharing

When you complete all six of your story-sharing and discussion sessions, take some time together to reflect, and to celebrate! Talk together about which books you liked best or least and why. Share one thing you learned that you didn't know when you began reading and talking together and ask your child to do the same. Use this "wrap up" to express your pride in your child, and don't be afraid to say that you are proud of yourself! Make a plan to borrow books from your local library... a plan to keep reading and learning, together.

## Keep Building with Us!

To learn more about how you can support your child's reading, critical thinking, and learning, visit **[www.primetimefamily.org](http://www.primetimefamily.org)**. We would love to see you at a Prime Time program, and to hear from you!

**Thank you for being part of our Prime Time Family!**

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NATIONAL  
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FOR THE  
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