



Read Aloud Guide

Title: *Julián is a Mermaid*, by Jessica Love

Best for: TK-3rd

Summary: This book is about a young boy named Julián who decides he wants to dress up like a mermaid after seeing a group of people dressed up on the train. He uses his own creativity and items from around the house (a yellow curtain, fronds from a potted fern) to create a mermaid outfit for himself. But then he worries about what his Abuela will think - both about the mess he made, and also about his choice to dress like a mermaid.

Why we chose this book: We love this book because it celebrates a young boy's creativity and individuality, and his Abuela's acceptance and support. It also highlights the Coney Island Mermaid parade, an annual event held over the past 40 years. This book helps children to accept and embrace the many ways they choose to express who they are through clothing and hairstyles, rejecting stereotypical gender norms.

Notes: There is not a lot of text in the book, so you can spend time on each page looking and talking about the illustrations, and explaining how they tell a story even without words.

Central themes: Gender, self-expression, grandparent relationships, identity

Introducing the book: You can begin by showing the cover, reading the title and author, and then saying something like this:

"This book is about a boy named Julián and his grandmother, Abuela. One day he sees a group of people dressed up like mermaids on the train. He decides to dress up like them when he gets home. Julián and his grandmother speak English and Spanish, so you will hear both English and Spanish."

"Does anyone here speak English and Spanish? What about any other languages?"

After Reading: Debrief with students

"How did Julián's Abuela help him with his costume?"

"How do you think Julián felt when his Abuela gave him part of his costume?"

"Why do you think Julián wants to dress up like a mermaid? What are some things you would like to pretend to be?"

