

Before You Begin

- The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to the idea of What it means to be Transgender & How one can be an Ally.
- **Before Reading:** Before reading this book to your students, share that the book is called ***Julián Is a Mermaid*** and that the imagined character, Julián, the child on the cover of the book, uses the pronouns he/him/his. Ask your students to look at the cover of the book and tell you what they see. Let your students know that you are going to be talking about gender expression—how we present our gender to the world through clothing, hair and mannerisms. Everyone has a gender expression, and we cannot assume someone's gender identity (how they feel) or what pronouns they might use (if they use pronouns; some people don't) from their gender expression. Remind students not to assume anyone's gender identity or pronouns based on how they look. It is important not to make assumptions about how Julián identifies because we do not know. This is an important teachable moment for both educators and students because we cannot know how someone identifies (transgender, non-binary, cisgender, etc.) unless they or the author specifically share that with us. We do know that we can encourage young children to be respectful and open to all the ways young people may express their genders and pursue their interests, with or without labels.

Content/Goal

Students will:

- ★ Explore the concepts of personal expression
- ★ Embrace differences in the classroom community.
- ★ Discuss and build understanding of gender expression.
- ★ Discuss and build understanding adults who affirm a child's expression and dreams.
- ★ Discuss and build understanding of allyship around gender and personal expression.
- ★ Build understanding that gender is a spectrum and that we cannot know how someone identifies unless they share that with us or unless the author lets us know how the character identifies.

★ **Social Justice Standards:**

- ★ **Identity 5: ID.K-2.5:** I see that the way my family and I do things is both the same as and different from how other people do things, and I am interested in both.

- ★ **Diversity 7: DI.K-2.7:** I can describe some ways that I am similar to and different from people who share my identities and those who have other identities.
- ★ **Justice 11: JU.K-2.11:** I know my friends have many identities, but they are always still just themselves.
- ★ **Justice 15: JU.K-15:** I know about people who helped stop unfairness and worked to make life better for many people.
- ★ **Action 17: AC.K-2.17:** I can and will do something when I see unfairness-this includes telling an adult.
- ★ **Action 20: AC.K-2.20:** I will join with classmates to make our classroom feel fair for everyone.

Materials

[Slide deck](#) (English)
 Slide Deck ([Spanish](#))
[Exit Ticket](#) (English)
[Exit Ticket](#) (Spanish)

[Julián the Mermaid by Jessica Love](#)

Vocabulary

Gender Identity: describes a person's internal sense of being a boy or a girl. Some people may not identify as a boy or a girl and may have a unique sense of their gender.

Gender Expression: describes a person's way of expressing a range of genders, including masculinity and femininity.

LGBTQ+: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer.

Transgender: having a gender identity that is different from the one you were assigned at birth.

Non-Binary: having a gender identity that is neither "boy" or "girl".

Ally: a person who supports LGBTQ+

Cisgender: your personal identity and gender is aligned with the sex assigned at birth.

Book Specific Vocabulary:

Julián (who-lee-ahn); Abuela (ah-bwel-ah) Grandmother; Vámanos (ba-mah-nos) Let's go; Mijo (me-ho) Affectionate term for a younger boy. A contraction of the words "mi" and "hijo"—literally "my son"; Latinx

Learning Plan At some point in the story, you may have students who share that they would not be allowed to dress as a mermaid or that they would not want to be a mermaid.

Here are some helpful tips from the Human Rights Campaign:

1. When this comes up, pause and ask your students, "Why do you think Julián wants to dress up like a mermaid?"

2. Have students name some things that they like to pretend to be.
3. Ask, "What if you were told that you couldn't or shouldn't pretend to be something? How would that make you feel?"
4. Let your students know there are lots of different ways children can dress. There are lots of ways to be a boy or a girl or both or neither. "We all get to like what we like."
5. This is a good time to message students that at [your school], everyone gets to wear what makes them feel happy and comfortable without being teased. We all get to BE WHO WE ARE without being teased or bullied by anyone else.
6. If you have students who say that they have family members who say that boys can't be mermaids (or don't wear dresses), let your students know that home and school can be different. One response can be, "Home and school can be different. Here at [your school], students can wear what makes them happy."

Discussion Questions: *Note: this book doesn't have a lot of text so pay close attention to the illustrations.*

Pages 3-8: Looking closely at the illustrations:

1. What happened to Julián on these pages? Do you think it's real, imaginary, or both?
2. Why is Julián holding a book on page 3? Do you think this book helped Julián become a mermaid? Can books help you imagine that you are someone or something else?

Pages 9-10:

1. What are the mermaids doing on this page?

Pages 15-18: Julián has a good idea. Take some time to look at the illustrations on both two-page spreads.

1. What is Julián's good idea?
2. How do you think Julián feels when he has finished dressing up?

Pages 19-20:

1. How do you think Julián's abuela feels about his idea?
2. How do you think Julián feels after seeing his abuela's expression?

Pages 23-24:

1. What did Julián's abuela give to him?
2. How do you think Julián's abuela feels about his idea now?
3. Earlier, did we correctly guess how she felt?
4. How do you think Julián feels now that his abuela has given him something for his costume?

Pages 25-26:

1. Where do you think Julián and his abuela are going?

Pages 31-32:

1. Where did Julián's abuela take him?

2. How does that make him feel?
3. Let your students know that the parade is based on an actual parade that happens every summer on Coney Island in New York City.

Closing Discussion Questions:

- Do you think Julián would be teased for being a mermaid at our school?
- What is the behavior called when someone is being unkind to another person? (Make sure the students label this behavior as bullying. This is important because behaviors can change—we do not want to cast students into a role as a bully. We want their behavior to change)

Reflection/Circle Question(s) + Taking Action

Ask students: What are some ways we can work together in our classroom so that everyone can wear clothes and have their hair the way that makes them happy and comfortable—so they can BE WHO THEY ARE?

- On an anchor chart (or slide) record students thoughts

Additional Resources:

Read aloud [When Aidan Became A Brother](#) by. Kyle Lukoff

- [Extension lesson plan](#).