

PARENT GUIDE

How to cultivate greater empathy through reading

Tips for Getting Started:

- First, talk to your child about what the Reading Without Walls challenge is all about and why it is important. Explain that reading is a great way to learn about other people and places and allows readers an opportunity to imagine what it might be like to walk in another person's shoes. Reading can help us become kinder, more compassionate, and empathetic people.
- When choosing a book, think about what your child has expressed an interest in learning more about. Perhaps there is a current topic floating around at school or that adults are discussing at home that he or she has questions about. This is a great entry point for finding something to read that could address this budding curiosity.
- As you read with your child, help them to engage with the literature to build their intellectual or cognitive empathy, the ability to imagine the thoughts or motivations of a character. To do this, pause during a story and talk to your child about what they think is happening in the story. What might the character do next given their predicament or how might the character resolve the conflict he or she is in? Ask them for their perspective on what a character thinks, desires, believes, or feels and then ask them to explain why they think this is the case. When identifying feelings in a character, ask your child if they have ever had similar feelings and to discuss their own circumstances. These questions encourage children to see aspects of the character in themselves and foster a sense of connection to the character.

By reading with children in this way, we are helping them to become not only better readers, but also more intellectually empathetic human beings.

Happy reading!