

## 6 Outstanding Picture Books Starring Girls of Color



by Jennifer Bostwick Owens

Apr 29, 2018 at 11:00 a.m. ET



Image: Amazon, Getty Images/Design: Ashley Britton/SheKnows



There is wonderful variety in humanity — in languages, traditions, cultures and beauties. The upsides to living amid diversity are many; when we play and work with people of different backgrounds and perspectives, we do challenging mental work that enhances creativity. We become, in effect, smarter.

Regardless of our kids' own heritage or the diversity of our own neighborhood, we can positively introduce children to diverse stories through picture books. For children of color, who bear unequal stresses from racism, reading about characters who look like them can be inspiring and motivating. And for all children, reading about kids who don't look like them can foster social and emotional intelligence and expand their worldview.

Ahead, we've rounded up six picture books featuring modern, memorable girls of color, each of different heritage. Combining great illustration with classic themes like love, growth and possibility, these are excellent books to read to children of all backgrounds. Because if there's one thing this world needs, it's more powerful, smart little girls.

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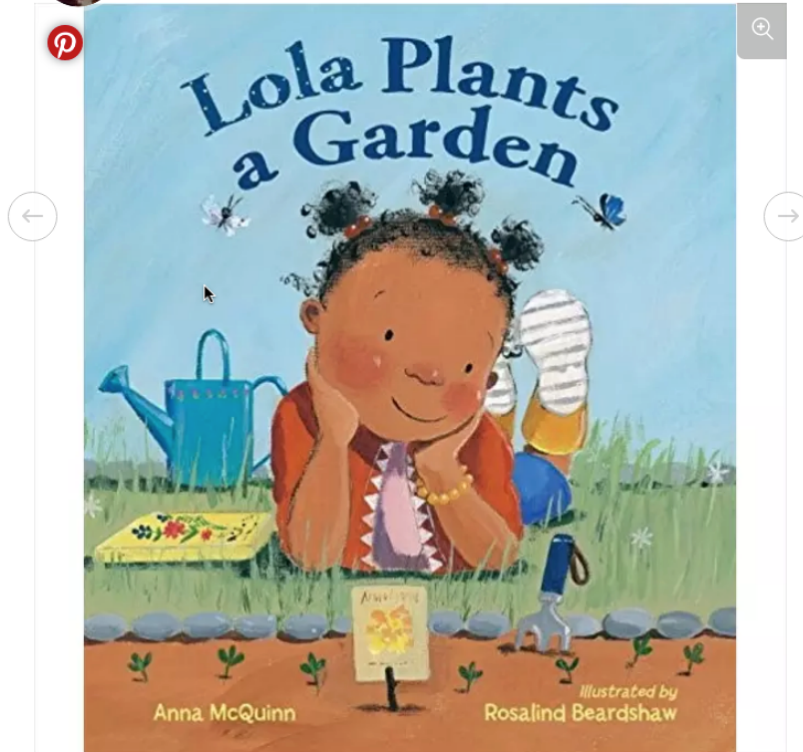


Image: Amazon

### 1/7 : 'Lola Plants a Garden'

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The adorable Lola books share the spirit of the TV show *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* in the way they slow down and help kids learn. In this title, with the help of her mother, Lola plants a garden complete with silver bells from her favorite nursery rhyme, "Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary." The author and illustrator duo from the U.K. portray Lola with brown skin, curls and lots of curiosity and involved parents who help her follow her interests. Lola's popularity is well deserved in the six countries where these books are published.

*Lola Plants a Garden* hardcover (ages 2 – 5), \$12.10 at [Amazon](#)

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Image: Amazon

2/7 : 'Big Red Lollipop'



Of the recommended books, *Big Red Lollipop* tells the most complex story. About a Pakistani family that relocates to Canada, the main character, Rubina, is invited to a birthday party, a tradition unfamiliar to her mother, Ami. Charming illustrations capture the dynamics between Ami, Rubina and her younger sisters. Ami wears traditional garb, while the girls wear Western clothes; all are beautifully drawn. At points frustrated, angry and obedient, Rubina grows more generous by the end. Readers of all ages will grow to care about these characters and their journey to acceptance.

*Big Red Lollipop* hardcover (ages 4 and up), \$14.13 at [Amazon](#)

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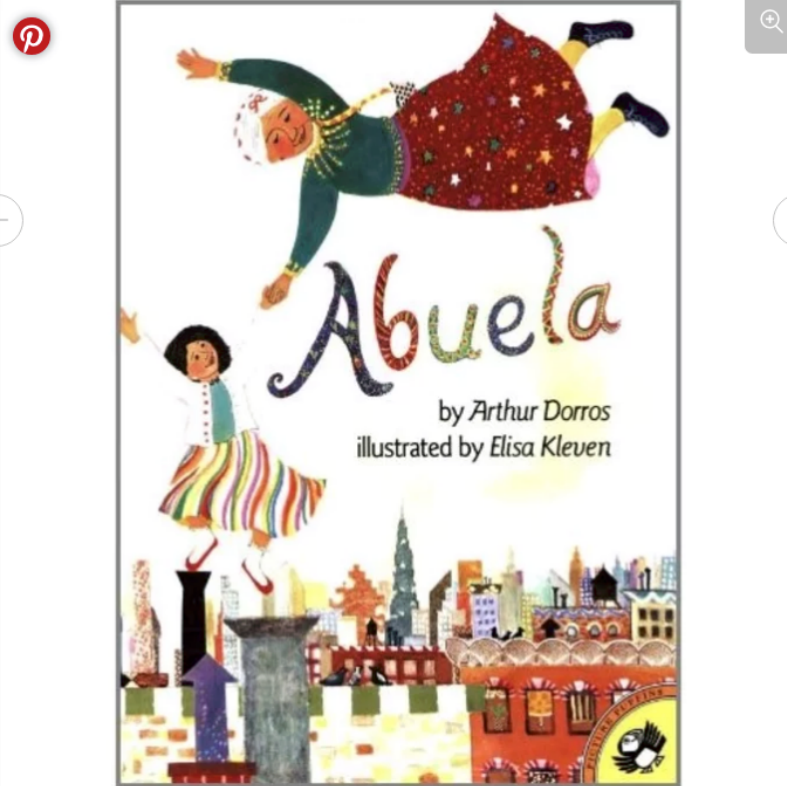


Image: Amazon

3/7 : 'Abuela'

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*Abuela* is a lasting classic with artwork that makes it magical. Centered on themes of imagination and cultural heritage, it tells the story of young Rosalba's daydream of soaring over New York City with her grandmother. Kids will enjoy studying the folk-art illustrations (like the one showing the characters floating above the city), which are drawn in a tapestry of patterns, colors and details. Although Rosalba speaks English, she helps little readers feel comfortable trying out the Spanish phrases used by her abuela. The crux of this book is the love between grandmother and granddaughter. What's sweeter than that?

*Abuela* paperback (ages 3 – 7), \$7.61 at [Amazon](#)

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Image: Amazon

4/7 : 'The Hello, Goodbye Window'



A Caldecott Medal winner, this cheerful book features a toddler who spends days at her grandparents' house. Remarkable for her engaging playfulness and humor, the child is able to fully reciprocate Nanna and Poppy's love. The illustrations brim with life in a free, joyful style, almost like a (very talented) child's finger paintings. One sweet picture shows the child napping in a quiet room with the text, "...nothing happens until I get up," adorably capturing the toddler attitude. The toddler character is biracial, with a white American grandfather and Black British grandmother.

The Hello, Goodbye Window *hardcover* (ages 1 – 6), \$14.81 at [Amazon](#)



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Image: Amazon

5/7 : 'Red Knit Cap Girl to the Rescue'



With a caring, inventive heroine and stunning, light-imbued illustrations of skies and sea, this is a gem of a book. Red Knit Cap Girl finds a stranded polar bear cub and devises a means to help him, using a newspaper to make a hang-glider and a sailboat. Author and artist Naoko Stoop, of Japanese descent, draws simple characters and sets them amid gorgeous washes of paint on plywood. Yellows, pinks, peaches and blues capture the expanse and majesty of the natural world, with the wood grain adding texture to each landscape.

Red Knit Cap Girl to the Rescue *hardcover (ages 4 – 6), \$14.29 at [Amazon](#)*

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Image: Amazon

6/7 : 'I Am Josephine (and I Am a Living Thing)'



*I Am Josephine* goes further than the Lola books in teaching about a science concept — that of classification. An enthusiastic beginner scientist, Josephine leads readers in classifying a wide range of living things. Fun drawings in a tropical palette show plants and animals (including humans) in categories that broaden as the story moves along, and illustrations of people from different cultures enhance the book's theme of diversity. Together with Josephine, readers count groundhogs, mosquitoes and trees — and learn that they are all living things, just like us.

*I Am Josephine* *hardcover* (ages 4 – 8), \$11.86 at [Amazon](#)

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