

BJE Bebe Feuerstein Simon Early Childhood Institute

“All Kids Read: How to Choose and Present Books to Children of All Abilities...and Create Reading Love for Life!”

Jamie Kiffel-Alcheh, author

Using PJ Library books as examples wherever possible, this workshop explains:

- *How to choose accessible books—what is an accessible book, and how can you find one?*

-An accessible book is one that has a “way in” for more readers.

Important note: With disabled audiences, always assume competence. This means assuming that a reader can understand, even if it isn’t obvious that they can.

So, what is a more accessible book?

It could mean the typeface is easier to read.

- ***Apples* by Melvin and Gilda Berger**
- ***Buen Shabat, Shabbat Shalom* by Sarah Aroeste**

It could mean better contrast between text and page.

- ***Row, Row, Row Your Boat* by Maddie Frost**

It could mean more space on the page.

- ***Listen! Israel’s All Around* by Jamie Kiffel-Alcheh**
- ***Can You Hear a Coo, Coo?* by Jamie Kiffel-Alcheh**

The book as a whole might be larger and easier to see.

- ***Nature Spy* by Shelley Rotner**

Even the materials can make a book more accessible.

- Board books—it’s easier to turn the pages, and sometimes, the fonts are larger. **For example, PJ Library board books are oversized editions.**
- Laminated books resist spills or drool (less worry, less embarrassment).
- **Indestructible books** won’t rip. (Some kids can’t control level of force used, or have uncontrolled movements.) Within this series, the rhymes and songs can be better choices for older readers.
- ***Row, Row, Row Your Boat* by Maddie Frost**

How to tell if a board, laminated or “baby” book could be suitable for an older child:

- Ask yourself—Is it a very simple or more complex story? Is there an involved story arc?
- Are there many words on each page? Difficult-to-decode words? These are not baby books, only picture books produced as board books. This can be useful for older readers with motor delays.

Check out Every Cherry Publishing. While not Jewish-themed, this publisher offers “simplified” and “symbolized” classics for accessibility.

Color matters. Some children need more stimulation, and bright, bold, contrasting images can be ideal for them. Others need lower stimuli, and soft, earth tones are better choices.

- ***Can You Hear a Coo, Coo?* by Jamie Kiffel-Alcheh**
—Notice the earth tones.
- ***Listen! Israel's All Around* by Jamie Kiffel-Alcheh**
—Notice the bright colors.

Singing can help, too!

- ***Man Gave Names to all the Animals* by Bob Dylan & Jim Arnosky**
 - It comes with music / Reader can sing it
 - There are unfinished lines that invite rhyme, and the rhythm of a rhyme is often easier for the brain to process than straight text
 - Images are photorealistic

Should your child use electronics with their books, such as apps or DVDs? (It depends on the child! Some need more external stimulation, while others need less.)

Musical books that aren't too young—they exist!

- ***Best-Loved Jewish Songs***

Books with photos, because our brains first understand literal representations before we understand cartoons or illustrations.

- **National Geographic Kids' *Celebrate Passover***

The *Holidays Around the World* series offers a smart, high-low approach where readers of different levels can both engage.

- ***Bread, Bread, Bread* by Ann Morris & Ken Heyman** (it has lots of photos of Israel in it) *Take photos

- ***Nature Spy*** by Shelley Rotner
- ***Apples*** by Melvin and Gilda Berger —It features spare text and photos with a more readable font.

Leveled readers aren't always written to be leveled readers; they're sometimes high-interest stories that happen to be told in a simple way. These are great opportunities to share stories that are appropriate for all ages. I often remind kids that all children's books are written by adults. So there is no age limit on them.

Simply-told stories with high interest:

- ***Sam & Charlie*** series by Leslie Kimmelman
 - These are heavily illustrated, with relatively few words per page.
- **Arnold Lobel classics (especially *Uncle Elephant*)**
- **James Edward Marshall books (especially *Fox and His Friends*)**

Look for words that can (mostly) be decoded by sounding them out.

How to choose books with inclusive themes—stories that include disabilities, but aren't about disabilities. This is a way for kids to see characters who are more like them.

- ***The Balancing Girl*** by Berniece Rabe
- ***Nathan Blows Out the Hanukkah Candles*** by Tami Lehman-Wilzig
 - see the illustrations in ***Kol HaKavod!*** and ***Matzoh Craze!*** by Jamie Kiffel-Alcheh

How to read aloud and present a book more accessibly!

- Where you hold the book matters.
- What's in the room with you matters.
- You can teach basic reading and even word attack skills.
- The tone of your voice and the speed at which you read matters.

Once again, assume competence. All kids can enjoy books when they're given access!