

The Principled Academy: 8 Stories to Inspire This Summer

Isaac Durst
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8 Stories to Inspire This Summer



Illustration by Magnific

Hey there Friend,

Summer provides a wonderful opportunity for families to continue learning and growing together. Children can explore stories and activities that support important virtues and encourage meaningful conversations at home.

Families can discover resources that help strengthen everyday skills and relationships. Stories about Cooperation can support working together as a family, while activities focused on Service and Responsibility encourage children to contribute and take ownership. For families looking to practice appreciation, stories about Gratitude, including *"The Gratitude Jar,"* offer a fun way to encourage thankfulness and reflection. The website also includes family-friendly crafts, games, and songs to make learning engaging.

This summer, children can travel the world through stories about different cultures and experiences. Books such as *"First Comes Zebra"* from Kenya, *"Four Feet, Two Sandals"* from Afghanistan and Pakistan, and *"Ada's Violin"* from Paraguay introduce children to new places while highlighting themes of friendship, hope, and resilience. With stories from more than 50 countries, families can explore the world together from home.

Many books on the website also connect with academic learning, including literacy, history, science, social studies, civics, and math. *"Hidden Figures"* introduces

children to the remarkable contributions of four African American women mathematicians whose work supported the space program. ***“Free as a Bird: The Story of Malala”*** encourages children to value education, perseverance, and courage.

The stories children share with caring adults during these formative years can create lasting memories and inspire lifelong learning. The valuesandvirtues.org resource supports parents, grandparents, and caregivers with accessible books and activities that make character development part of everyday life. As always, we love hearing from our followers and subscribers.

Please feel free to explore our selection of stories below, and if you'd like more options, I invite you visit [our website](#).

Wishing you health, happiness, always,

Isaac Durst
Isaac Durst
Director

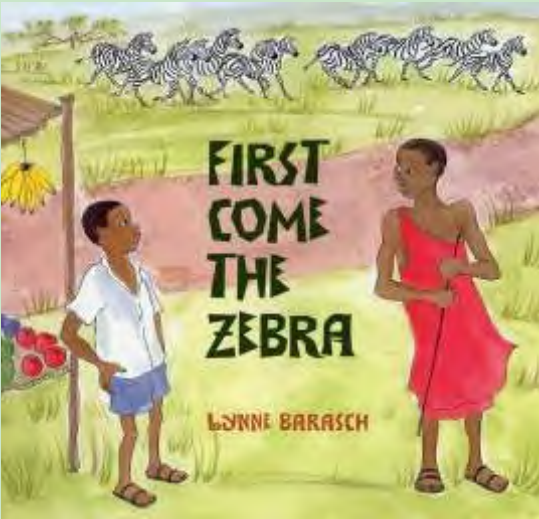
8 Stories to Inspire This Summer

First come the Zebra

Written and Illustrated by Lynne Barasch

Grade level: 3rd & 4th Grade
Genre: Fiction

When Abaani, a Maasai boy, meets Haki, a Kikuyu boy, the two are wary of each other due to longstanding conflicts between their communities. But when a sudden danger arises, they must act together, taking the first step toward understanding, forgiveness, and friendship. Set against the backdrop of Kenya’s great migration, First Come the Zebra is a hopeful story about overcoming differences and the power of young people to create change.

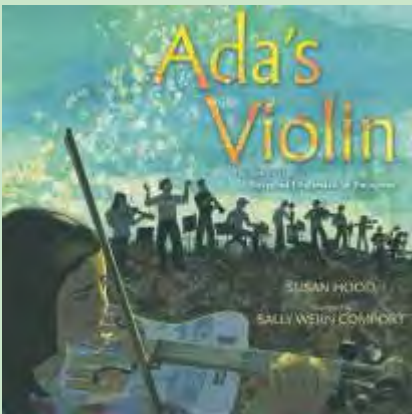


[See Story](#)



Four feet, Two sandals

by Karan Lynn Williams



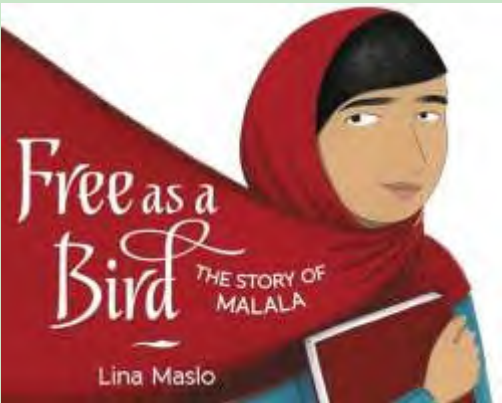
Ada's Violin

and Khadra Mohammed

Grade level: 5th & 6th Grade
Genre: Biography

When ten-year-old Lina finds a sandal at a refugee camp, she discovers another girl, Feroza, has the matching shoe. The girls decide to share the sandals, learning that friendship and kindness matter more than possessions. Inspired by a refugee child’s wish for stories like her own, this heartfelt book highlights the courage, hope, and resilience of refugees around the world.

[See Story](#)



Free as a Bird
Written and Illustrated by Lina Maslo

Grade level: 5th & 6th Grade
Genre: Biography

Malala Yousafzai’s inspiring story follows a brave girl who, with the support of her father, stands up for every child’s right to education. Despite attempts to silence her, Malala raises her voice for equality and becomes a global advocate for change. Free as a Bird is a powerful story of courage, resilience, and the special bond between a father and daughter, showing young readers the power of using their voice to make a difference.

[See Story](#)

by Susan Hood
Illustrated by Sally Wern Comport

Grade level: 3rd & 4th Grade
Genre: Biography

Ada Ríos grew up in Cateura, Paraguay, a town built on a landfill, where owning an instrument seemed impossible. When music teacher Favio Chávez created instruments from recycled materials, Ada’s dream of playing the violin came true. The Recycled Orchestra went on to inspire people around the world with a message of hope and creativity.

[See Story](#)

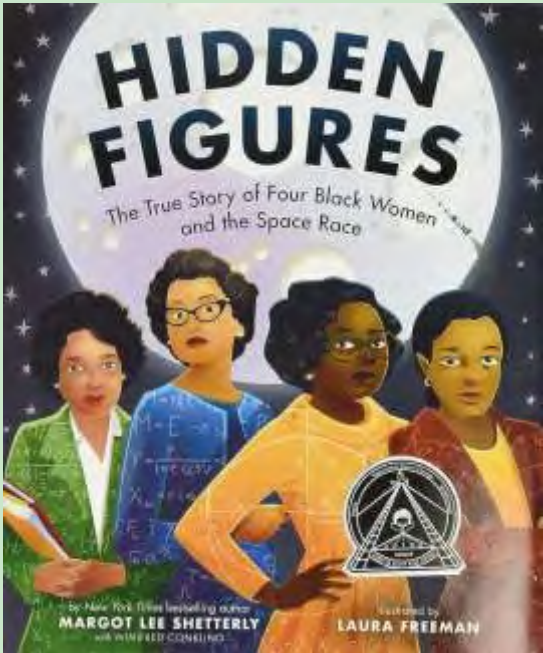


The Story of Simone Biles
Written and Illustrated by Rachelle Burk

Grade level: 5th & 6th Grade
Genre: Biography

Simone Biles has been called the greatest gymnast of all time, winning five Olympic and 25 World Champion medals by age 22. Before she wowed the world with her incredible gymnastics skills, Simone was an energetic young girl who dreamed of becoming a top gymnast. She trained for hours every day and made many sacrifices to pursue her goals.

[See Story](#)



Hidden Figures

by Margot Lee Shetterly
Illustrated by Laura Freeman

Grade level: 1st & 2nd Grade
Genre: Biography

Based on the bestselling book and Academy Award–nominated film, this inspiring picture book tells the true story of four Black women mathematicians at NASA—Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, Katherine Johnson, and Christine Darden. Known as “colored computers,” they overcame racial and gender barriers to help make historic space missions possible. Through determination, intelligence, and perseverance, they became pioneers who changed the world of STEM.

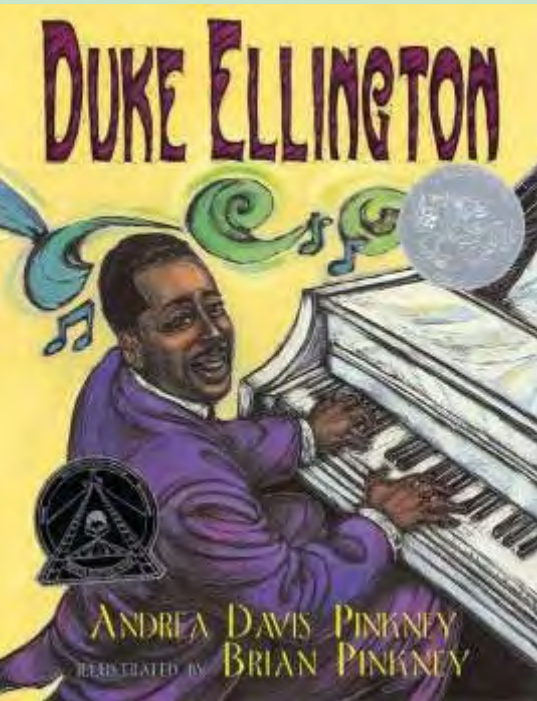
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Duke Ellington

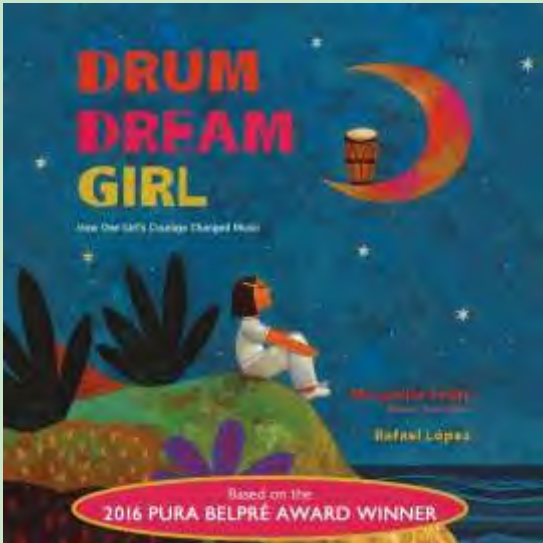
Written by Andrea Pinkney
Illustrated by Brian Pinkney

Grade level: 5th & 6th Grade
Genre: Biography

Born in 1899, Duke Ellington was the forerunner in the evolution of jazz. By the time he was nineteen he was playing at parties, pool halls, and cabarets; and then, in 1927, he entertained at the hottest place around, The Cotton Club in Harlem. But the defining moment of his career came when Duke and his orchestra gave a groundbreaking performance at Carnegie Hall, when they first performed his suite *Black, Brown, and Beige*, a tribute to the history of African American people. To this day, Duke, the “King of the Keys,” is beloved by jazz fans old and new.



[See Story](#)



Drum Dream Girl

Written and Illustrated by Margarita Engle

Grade level: 3rd & 4th Grade

Genre: Biography

Girls cannot be drummers. Long ago on an island filled with music, no one questioned that rule - until the drum dream girl. In her city of drumbeats, she dreamed of pounding tall congas and tapping small bongós. She had to keep quiet. She had to practice in secret. But when at last her dream-bright music was heard, everyone sang and danced and decided that both girls and boys should be free to drum and dream.

[See Story](#)



Thanks for reading and Happy Summer

ValuesandVirtues.org is a project of **The Principled Academy**
ValuesandVirtues.org, a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Tax ID: 23-7291698.

The Principled Academy | 2305 Washington Ave. | San Leandro, CA 94577 US

Helping students desire the good

Explore the world of character education with just a few clicks.

Our Virtues

WHAT WE DO

Values & Virtues is a resource of impactful stories, questions, and thoughtful activities for educators, coaches, and parents.



12

VIRTUES



400 +

STORIES



100 +

ACTIVITIES

Make a free account to access all stories and activities

What We Offer

Explore our twelve highlighted virtues for grade levels from Pre-Kindergarten (ages 4-5) to Sixth grade (ages 10-11). Each virtue includes at least four captivating read-aloud stories, most available as engaging video content.

Every story is paired with guiding questions,



featuring:

- A definition of the virtue
- A summary of the book
- Learning objectives
- Guiding questions to enhance comprehension and application of the virtue



Our Values & Virtues

Find easy-to-use, supportive resources that nurture your child's emotional, behavioral, and social well-being, helping them thrive in every aspect of their growth.

All Virtues

Gratitude

Appreciating every blessing, big or small.

33 Stories →

Hope

Believing in a brighter tomorrow.

34 Stories →

Integrity

Doing what is right.

31 Stories →



WHY CHARACTER EDUCATION?

How Families, Educators, and Communities Raise Good Children

We want children to develop their intellect to identify moral issues in complex situations.

Further, we want them to understand how to manage their emotions. We need to provide opportunities for children to engage in meaningful acts of service that benefit others.

Research shows that, on the foundation of moral excellence, children achieve academic success and perform significantly better than their peers at each grade level.

Every part of the learning environment offers opportunities to model and practice virtuous behavior. Simple daily acts, like a warm morning greeting or a kind smile, set the tone for fostering character.

Children can learn to build positive relationships by collaborating on science projects or engaging in group activities. Educators and caregivers can model the care and respect they hope to inspire in children.

Because parents, guardians, and caregivers make the greatest impact on children's lives, schools and learning programs must work closely with them to support the development of character. In addition, schools should collaborate with community organizations where children can experience and contribute to genuine acts of service.

The school and broader learning community should serve as a model for society.

What greater need does our nation have than intelligent, ethical, and caring individuals who are dedicated to the common good?

Character education lays the foundation for strong families, public civility, constructive dialogue, and the ideals of justice and compassion. These values can be nurtured every day within classrooms and communities.

How to use this site

- 01 Navigate to the “Our Values And Virtues” page
- 02 Select one of the Virtues
- 03 Select a Grade Level
- 04 Choose any Story you want, then Click on “Read Story”
- 05 Listen to or Read the Story
- 06 Click on “Guiding Questions” if you would like to access our Discussion Questions
- 07 Click on “Begin Activities” to find the Activities that correspond to each Story or Virtue

Latest Stories

Explore All Virtues



Revolutionary Friends

Respect 5th & 6th Grade

Guiding Questions

Story



Ruth and the Green Book

Respect 5th & 6th Grade

Guiding Questions

Story



THEY CALLED HER MOLLY PITCHER

Respect 5th & 6th Grade

Guiding Questions

Story

Values & Virtues

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