



## Calvin: Time to Be Me!

**Suggested Grade Level:** K – 2

**Length of Time:** 30 Minutes

### Goals

- + To expand students' perceptions and understandings of gender.
- + To help students understand what it means to be transgender using developmentally appropriate language for younger students.
- + To increase student understanding of ally behavior.

### Objectives

- + Students will read and discuss a story about a transgender boy named Calvin inspired by the authors' journey as parents
- + Students will learn new vocabulary words related to gender.
- + Students will learn about differences and being an ally.

### Academic Standards

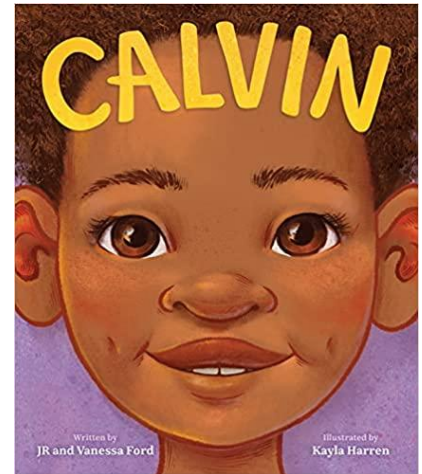
- + CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1: Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers. (Also RL.K.1,1.1,2.1, 4.1 and 5.1)
- + CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3: Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events. (Also RL.K.3,1.3, 2.3, 4.3 and 5.3)

### Educators' Notes

#### About the Book

Calvin has always been a boy, even if the world sees him as a girl. He knows who he is in his heart and in his mind, but he hasn't yet told his family. Finally, he can wait no longer: "I'm not a girl," he tells his family. "I'm a boy--a boy in my heart and in my brain."

As the first day of school approaches, he's nervous and the "what-ifs" gather up inside him. But as his friends and teachers rally around him and he tells them his name, all his "what-ifs" begin to melt away. Inspired by the authors' own transgender child.



## Before Reading *Calvin* to Your Students

- + Review the book and think about what questions your students may have. Practice how you want to respond. Being prepared will help you to be comfortable with a topic that you may be unfamiliar discussing.
  - » Review [Defining LGBTQ+ Words for Elementary School Students](#) to prepare to define words for students.
  - » [Be Prepared for Questions and Put-Downs Around Gender](#) will help guide your answers to common questions that can arise around gender stereotypes and norms.
  - » If a student asks you a question and you're unsure of the answer, it's OK to say that you don't know! You could say you'll figure it out and get back to them.
- + When having discussions about gender, it is often important to review classroom rules about respect, given that gender is a common way that children participate in identity-based bullying.
- + Ensure that every child in your classroom is allowed to express themselves however they want, regardless of their gender identity or expression—or any aspect of their identity that may be considered by other students to be “different.”
- + Remember student privacy. If you have students in your school or classroom who are transgender or non-binary, it can jeopardize a student's safety and well-being if they are outed to their peers or non-affirming adults.
- + Be mindful to not put transgender or non-binary students in the position of teaching other children about their identity. That is the job of the educator, not the student.

- + You may want to reference the [Gender Snowperson](#), a simple tool to break down the concepts of how you feel and know yourself to be (gender identity), who you love (sexual orientation), pronoun assigned at birth (sex assigned at birth) and gender expression. Many people do not realize that gender identity and sexual orientation are two very different concepts and that all of us have both a gender identity and sexual orientation. There are lots of different ways to be a boy, girl, both or neither.

## Materials

- + *Calvin* by JR and Vanessa Ford
- + White board or chart paper

## Prompts for Discussion

- + In the book, Calvin's father says that Calvin is transgender. Can you describe what the word transgender means for Calvin in this story?
- + Why do you think Calvin was so happy to be called by his real name, the one he shared with his lion?
- + What pronouns did Calvin want to be called? What other changes did Calvin make to be himself (gender expression--hair, clothes)?
- + Whenever Calvin had to do something scary his dad always said, “take a breath and count down from 5”. Are there things that you do or say to yourself, when you are feeling scared about something?
- + Do you know or have you ever heard about someone who is transgender?

## Activities

- + Make a T-chart called Welcoming Schools:
  - » On one side, write, “What did adults do at school to help Calvin feel welcomed?” Help your students look through the text for examples. Are there other things that adults could do?
  - » On the other side, write, “If Calvin was in our classroom, what could you do to help him feel safe and welcomed?”
- + Ask you students, “What makes you feel safe and welcomed at school?”

## Extension

- + Continue the discussion about gender identity with some of books from the Welcoming Schools booklist [Diverse Children's Books with Transgender, Non-Binary and Gender Expansive Children](#).
- + These lessons pair well with this book:
  - » [Red: A Crayon's Story –There's More To Me Than You Can See](#)
  - » [They, She, He easy as ABC: Understanding Names, Pronouns and Gender Expression](#)
- + These books are based on the real experiences of transgender, non-binary and gender expansive children.
  - » *Born Ready: The True Story of a Boy Named Penelope*, Jodie Patterson
  - » *I am Jazz*, Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings
  - » *Jacob's New Dress*, Sarah and Ian Hoffman
  - » *My Rainbow*, Trinity and DeShanna Neal
  - » *Sam is my Sister*, Ashley Rhodes-Courter

## Assessment and Evaluation

- + Ongoing teacher observation of gender-based teasing, and if it is recognized more often or becomes less frequent.
- + Ongoing teacher observation of whether or not students feel comfortable making choices outside the gender binary.

## Resources from Welcoming Schools

- + [LGBTQ+ and Gender Inclusive Professional Development Training](#)
- + [Diverse Children's Books with Transgender, Non-Binary and Gender Expansive Children](#)
- + [Lesson Plans to Help Students Understand Gender](#)
- + [Defining LGBTQ Words for Elementary School Students](#)
- + [Be Prepared for Questions and Put-Downs Around Gender](#)
- + [Transgender Children: Books to Help Adults Understand](#)

“Welcome back to school!  
We're glad you're here!”  
When the principal said my name,  
I felt safe and happy.



Illustration from Calvin by JR and Vanessa Ford  
with illustrations by Kayla Harren.