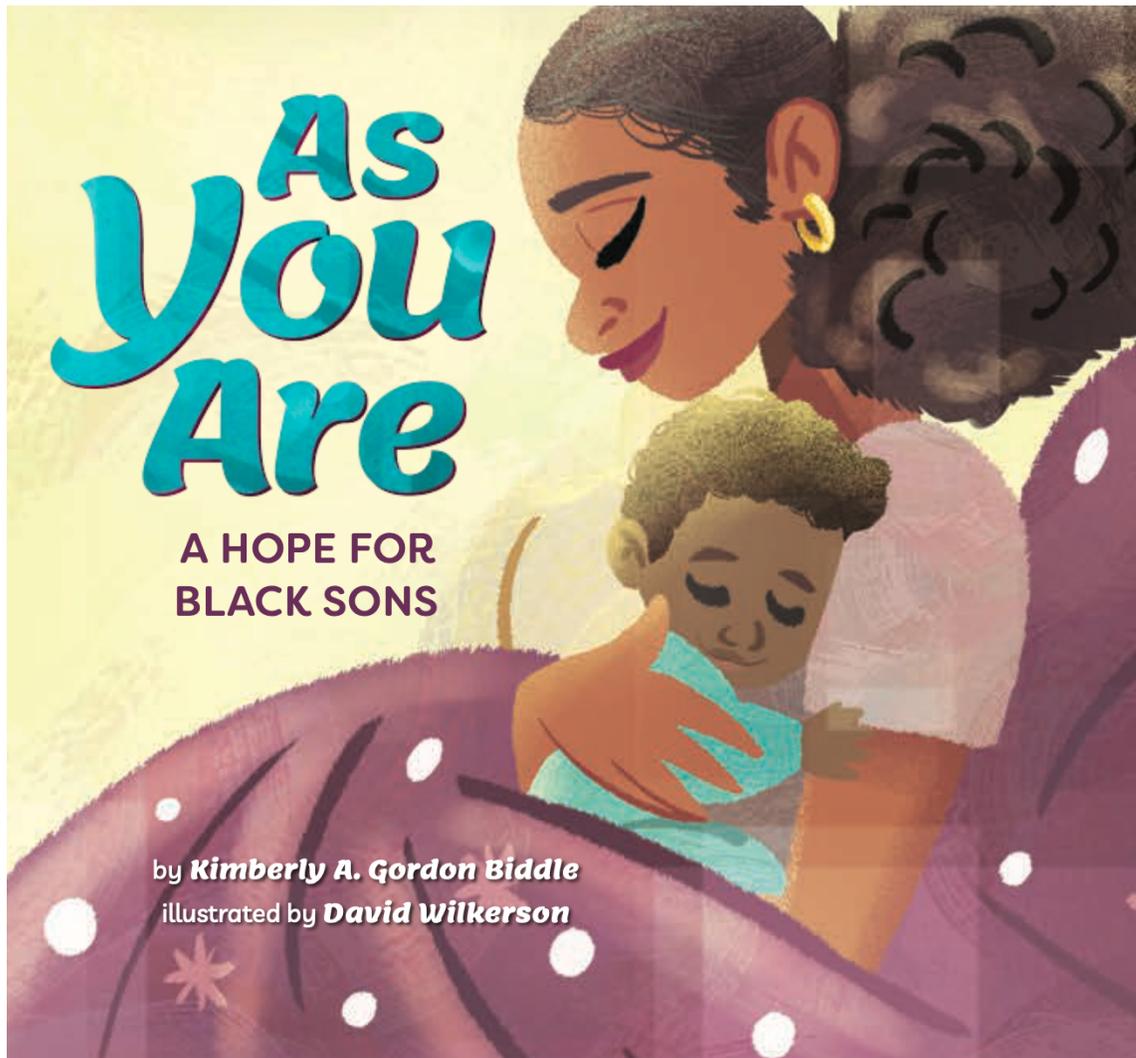


As You Are

A Hope for Black Sons

A teacher's guide created by Marcie Colleen
based upon the picture book
written by Kimberly A Gordon Biddle and illustrated by David Wilkerson



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Kimberly A. Gordon Biddle, PhD
Author, *As You Are: A Hope for Black Sons*

Kimberly A. Gordon Biddle is a writer of picture books and novels, Emeritus Professor of Child and Adolescent Development, and a lifetime lover of books. She heads the SCBWI PAL group for California North Central and is also a member of Inked Voices, Black Creators Headquarters, and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. She has a BA in Psychology and Music from the University of Redlands and a PhD in Child and Adolescent Development from Stanford Graduate School of Education. She lives in Sacramento, California. Visit pinkpearlwriting.com and [@kbiddle.bsky.social](https://www.bsky.social/@kbiddle) on BlueSky Social.

David Wilkerson
Illustrator, *As You Are: A Hope for Black Sons*

David Wilkerson's love for art, storytelling, and community led him to study animation at the Savannah College of Art & Design and to earn an MA from the Academy of Art University. He's been shortlisted for Cover of the Year by *The Week* Junior Book Awards 2024 in the UK. He lives in Denver, Colorado. Visit [@godleehaze](https://www.instagram.com/godleehaze) on Instagram.

Marcie Colleen, Curriculum Writer This guide was created by Marcie Colleen, a former teacher with a BA in English Education from Oswego State and a MA in Educational Theater from NYU. In addition to creating curriculum guides for children's books, Marcie can often be found writing books of her own at home in San Diego, California. Visit her at www.thisismarciecolleen.com.

How to Use This Guide

This classroom guide for *As You Are: A Hope for Black Sons* is designed for students in preschool through third grade. It is assumed that teachers will adapt each activity to fit the needs and abilities of their own students.

It offers activities to help teachers integrate *As You Are: A Hope for Black Sons* into English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies curricula. Art and drama are used as a teaching tool throughout the guide.

All activities were created in conjunction with relevant content standards in ELA, math, science, social studies, art, and drama.

Title: As You Are: A Hope for Black Sons
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Brief synopsis:

A mother's love. A son's light. A message the world needs to hear.

Every Black mother sees her son as brilliant, worthy, and full of promise. But as he grows, she worries the world may not always see him the same way. *As You Are: A Hope for Black Sons* is a touching picture book for kids ages 4–8 that reminds every Black boy he is loved, powerful, and enough just as he is.

With lyrical words and stunning illustrations, this inspiring story celebrates identity, resilience, and belonging. It's a meaningful book for families, classrooms, and story times that encourages self-love, confidence, and pride in who you are.

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English Language Arts

Reading Comprehension

Before reading *As You Are*, help students identify the basic parts of a picture book: jacket, front cover, back cover, title page, spine, end papers, and jacket flap.

Describe the cover illustration.

- o What do you see?
- o Choose two words to describe the characters you see. Explain your answer using evidence from the illustration.

Mimic what the characters are doing.

- o How does it make you feel?
- o How do you think they are feeling? What do you think they are thinking?

Read the title of the book and look closely at the cover illustration.

- o What do you think “as you are” means?
- o What is “hope”?
- o Who might be speaking in this story?
- o Looking closely at the illustration and reading the title, what do you think this story might be about? What clues help you make that prediction?

Now read or listen to the book.

Help students summarize in their own words what the book was about.

- Who is speaking in this story?
- Who are they speaking to?
- What is the message?
- This book is a message of guidance and encouragement from a parent to a child. What are some of the bits of encouragement that the speaker gives?
- Can you remember three pieces of advice? Explain them in your own words.
- Why do you think the speaker says they can’t control what the world will do?

- How does love help someone feel strong?

Let's talk about the people who made *As You Are*.

- Who is the author?
- Who is the illustrator?
- What kind of work did each person do to make the book?

Now, let's look closely at the illustrations.

- Check out some of the following details that David Wilkerson includes. Can you find:
 - A box of Happy O's
 - A bright red book
 - A blue bike with training wheels
 - A soccer uniform with the number 3
 - A yellow fish
 - A green piano bench
 - An orange bike helmet
 - A purple backpack
 - An A+ paper
 - A chess board
 - A water bottle with a red cap
 - A green and white baseball hat

Writing Activities

Love Letter Writing

Throughout *As You Are*, a parent shares hopes, guidance, and unconditional love. This activity invites students to express similar encouragement in their own words, writing a short letter of affirmation and hope using sentence starters inspired by the book.

Before writing, ask:

- What does it mean to hope something for someone?
- Why is it important to tell people encouraging things?
- How does it feel when someone says, "I believe in you"?

Create a class list of encouraging phrases.

Examples:

- You are kind.

- You are brave.
- You matter.
- I believe in you.
- Keep going.
- I am proud of you.

Encourage students to think about someone they care about or someone who might need encouragement. They may write to:

- A younger child
- A sibling
- A friend
- A parent or caregiver
- Their future self

Choose three of the following statement starters to include in their letters:

- "I hope you always..."
- "I want you to remember..."
- "You are..."
- "When things feel hard..."
- "I believe you can..."

An example:

Dear _____,

I hope you always believe in yourself.
 I want you to remember that you are kind and strong.
 When things feel hard, keep going.
 Love,

Have students share their letters in small groups or place them in a "Words of Hope" classroom display.

Writing Narrative and Dialogue

In *As You Are: A Hope for Black Sons*, the story is told entirely through narrative. There is no dialogue between characters. Instead, a mother speaks directly to her son, sharing her love, her worries, and her hopes for his future. The narrative voice carries the emotional heart of the book.

Rewrite *As You Are* using the following:

- Write a version of the story using only dialogue. If helpful, write speech bubbles for each of the characters in the illustrations. Continue through the entire story like this.
- Combine the two versions into a new version of *As You Are*, in which characters speak and a narrator carries the emotional heart of the story.

How do the new versions compare with the original version of *As You Are*? Which do you prefer? Why?

"As I Am" Self Portrait

The book ends with the powerful phrase:

"Greet the world as you are..."

This activity helps build identity awareness and self-worth. Students will reflect on who they are and what strengths they carry into the world.

Ask:

- What does it mean to greet someone?
- How do you greet the world each day?
What makes you *you*?

Discuss the difference between physical traits and character traits.

Examples of character traits:

- Creative
- Helpful
- Brave
- Thoughtful
- Curious
- Determined
- Friendly

Students will complete the sentence:

"I greet the world as I am..."

Then add:

- Three words describing themselves
- One sentence explaining one of those traits

Example:

I greet the world as I am—curious, kind, and strong.
I am curious because I like to ask questions and learn new things.

Students can then draw themselves doing something that shows one of their strengths.

Create a bulletin board titled: "We Greet the World As We Are." This reinforces identity affirmation and belonging.

Create an Advice Poem

Throughout *As You Are: A Hope for Black Sons*, the author uses repetition and strong, direct affirmations to build confidence and resilience. The message of the book is structured around three powerful ideas:

- Know who you are.
- Trust what you have within you.
- Remember what grounds and guides you.

Ask:

- What do you notice about this structure?
- Why does repetition make it powerful?
- How does it feel to hear such strong statements?

Create three columns together:

Identity Words (Know you are...)

- worthy
- brave
- important
- loved
- capable
- enough

Ability Words (Trust you have...)

- strength
- courage
- creativity
- kindness
- power
- voice

Memory Prompts (Remember...)

- who you are
- your family loves you
- you can ask for help
- to keep going
- to be yourself

Using this same structure and drawing from the columns created, students will create their own short advice poem.

Start with these sentence frames:

Know you are _____.
Trust you have _____.
Remember _____.

Encourage students to think about:

- What does someone need to know about themselves?
- What strengths do they carry inside?
- What should they remember when life feels hard?

Encourage students to write 3–6 lines.

Ask volunteers to read aloud.

Discuss:

- How does it feel to hear your classmates' advice?
- Which lines stood out to you?

Speaking and Listening Activities

Picture books are written to be read aloud. Here are some ways to bring *As You Are* to life in the classroom and have fun with speaking and listening skills.

Mime

- Ask students to silently act out a page from the book, exaggerating body motions and facial expressions. See if others can identify the page that goes along with the mimed action.

Affirmation Circle

As You Are centers on affirmation — speaking strength and worth into a child. This activity models the power of positive language within a classroom community. Students will practice giving and receiving affirmations, strengthening community bonds and positive self-concept.

Discuss:

- What is an affirmation?
- How do kind words affect others?
- Why might it be important to be specific?

Then have students sit in a circle. One student begins by turning to the person next to them and completing the sentence:

“I know you are _____.”

Encourage specific affirmations based on observable behaviors.

Examples:

- “I know you are kind because you help clean up.”
- “I know you are brave because you tried something new.”
- “I know you are thoughtful because you listen carefully.”

The affirmation continues around the circle until each student has both given and received one.

Drama

- Create a TV commercial to encourage people to read *As You Are*.

Language Activities

Powerful Verbs & Action Words

A verb is an action word.
It tells what someone does.

Examples:

- run
- jump
- smile
- talk

Some verbs show actions we can see.
Some verbs show actions happening inside a person.

Even though *As You Are* is a quiet and thoughtful book, it is full of action words. The author chooses strong verbs to show strength, love, and courage.

Examples from the book include:

- Protect
- Trust
- Persist
- Share
- Honor
- Encourage
- Remember
- Ask
- Greet
- Carry

Revisit selected lines and underline the verbs.

- What action is happening in this sentence?
- Can we see this action, or is it happening inside someone?

Help students understand the difference:

Physical verbs – actions we can see
(carry, greet, share)

Internal verbs – actions that happen inside
(trust, remember, honor)

Discuss:

- Which kind of verb is “persist”?
- Which kind of verb is “protect”?
- Can internal actions be just as strong as physical ones?

Have students choose one powerful verb and write a sentence about themselves.

Sentence starters:

- I persist when _____.
- I trust myself to _____.
- I share _____ with others.
- I greet the day by _____.

- I remember to _____.

Create a class display titled: "Our Powerful Verbs"

- Write a chosen verb on paper.
- Draw a picture showing that action.
- Add a sentence using the verb.

Display the illustrated verbs to reinforce language and identity throughout the year.

Repetition & Structure

Repetition is when an author repeats words, phrases, or sentence patterns. Writers use repetition to:

- Emphasize important ideas
- Create rhythm
- Make language memorable
- Build emotional impact

In *As You Are*, repetition reinforces reassurance and strength.

- Does repetition make the message softer or stronger or both? How so?
- Why is repetition helpful in a book about love and hope?

Students will create a short passage using repetition.

Provide sentence frames such as:

- I will always...
- You can always...
- Remember to...
- I believe in...
- There will be times when...

Students write 3–5 lines using the same beginning phrase.

Example:

I believe in your kindness.
I believe in your courage.
I believe in your dreams.

Or:

Remember to be brave.
Remember to ask for help.
Remember who you are.

Encourage students to read their repeated lines aloud to hear the rhythm and strength in their words.

After writing, ask:

- How did the repetition make your writing sound?
- Did it make your message clearer?
- Which repeated phrase felt most powerful to you?

Social-Emotional Learning

As You Are centers on identity, resilience, love, and empowerment. The following activities help students build self-awareness, confidence, and respectful communication skills.

Identity & Self-Worth

Throughout the book, the mother reminds her son: "Know you are good and worthy."

Worthy means deserving respect, honor, or good things .

Ask:

- Does someone have to win, be perfect, or be the best to be worthy?
- Can worth change? Why or why not?
- Who decides your worth?

Guide students toward understanding:

- Worth does not change because of what others say.
- Every person has value simply because they are human.

Write the words *self-worth* on chart paper.

Break the word apart:

- Self = you
- Worth = value

Work together to create a class definition.

Examples:

Self-worth means knowing you matter.
Self-worth means believing you are important.
Self-worth means understanding you have value.

Ask students to complete:

- One thing that makes me proud of who I am is _____.
- One way I show self-worth is _____.

Students may write, draw, or share verbally.

Create a Resilience Shield

Persistence is the determination to keep trying and not give up, even when tasks are difficult or take a long time.

- What does persistence look like?
- When is it hard to persist?
- How does your body feel when something is difficult?
- What helps you keep going?

Resilience is the ability to keep going even when something feels difficult.
Resilience does not mean never feeling sad or frustrated.
Resilience means trying again, asking for help, and believing you can grow.

Provide students with an outline of a shield (or have them draw one).

Just like a shield protects a knight, our strengths and supports protect us when life feels challenging. We may not carry a real shield, but we carry something even more powerful — our inner strengths, the people who help us, and the words we remember when things feel tough.

Inside their shield, students write:

- One strength they have
(e.g., patience, kindness, determination)
- One helper in their life
(parent, teacher, friend, coach)
- One reminder phrase
(e.g., "I can do hard things.")

“Keep going.”
“I am capable.”)

Encourage both words and illustrations.

Boundaries & Respect

The Reader’s Note emphasizes the importance of teaching children how to set boundaries and speak up when something feels wrong. This activity helps students practice respectful, clear communication.

A boundary is something we say or do to protect ourselves and show others how we want to be treated.

Teach simple phrases:

- “I don’t like that.”
- “That hurts.”
- “Please stop.”
- “I need space.”

Discuss:

- Why is it important to use calm, clear words?
- Why is it important to listen when someone sets a boundary?

In a safe and supportive way, present simple, age-appropriate scenarios such as:

- Someone takes your pencil without asking.
- Someone calls you a name you don’t like.
- Someone stands too close in line.

Students practice using boundary phrases.

After each role-play, ask:

- Was the message clear?
- How did it feel to say the boundary?
- How did it feel to hear it?

Reinforce that speaking up is a sign of strength.

- How does knowing your worth help you set boundaries?
- Why is respect important in friendships and communities?

Science

Inherited vs. Learned Traits

In families, we may notice similarities between parents and children. Some traits are passed down through genetics. Other traits are learned through experience and environment.

Inherited traits are physical characteristics we are born with.

Examples:

- Eye color
- Hair texture
- Skin tone
- Height

Learned traits are behaviors, skills, and habits we develop.

Examples:

- Manners
- Hobbies
- Language
- Kindness
- Problem-solving

Ask:

- Can you choose your eye color?
- Can you choose to practice kindness?
- Can you learn to play an instrument?
- Can you choose your skin tone?

Students create a simple two-column chart about themselves called “What Makes Me, Me”

Column 1: Inherited Traits

Column 2: Learned Traits

Encourage students to list 2–3 examples in each column. Younger students may draw instead of write.

Even though we cannot control everything about how we look or how others behave, we can grow and strengthen our learned traits — like kindness, persistence, and courage.

Discuss:

- What makes you unique?
- What makes you similar to others?
- How do our differences and similarities make our community stronger?

Social Studies

Reciprocity & Community

In *As You Are*, the author writes:

“Ask for love and share it.”

“Ask for respect and give it.”

These lines teach an important idea: relationships work both ways.

Reciprocity means we treat others the way we hope to be treated. It is not about keeping score — it is about building strong, fair relationships.

Begin with a conversation.

Ask:

- What does it mean to “ask for love”?
- What does it mean to “share love”?
- What does respect look like?
- Can we expect respect if we do not give it?

On chart paper, draw two columns:

If I want... | I give...

As a class, brainstorm examples.

If I want kindness → I give kindness.

If I want respect → I give respect.

If I want help → I give help.

If I want honesty → I give honesty.

If I want friendship → I give friendship.

Encourage students to notice that both sides require action.

- Why is fairness important in a classroom?

- How does mutual respect make a community stronger?
- What happens when reciprocity is missing?

Ask students to complete one sentence:

If I want _____, I will give _____.

Students may write or share verbally.

Community Map

In the book, the mother reminds her son that:

“There are those who will share your journey.”

“There are those who will honor and value you.”

This reminds us that we are part of a community.

Define Community:

- What is a community?
- Is community only where you live?
- Who belongs to your community?

Guide students to understand that community includes the people who support and care for us.

Students draw themselves in the center of a page. Around themselves, they draw or label:

- Family
- Friends
- Teachers
- Helpers (coaches, neighbors, librarians, doctors, etc.)

Encourage students to think about:

- Who supports you?
- Who encourages you?
- Who do you support?
- How do you show support to others?
- What do you give to your community?
- What does your community give to you?

Display student maps with the title: “We Support Each Other.”