

MY FAMILY YOUR FAMILY

Resources

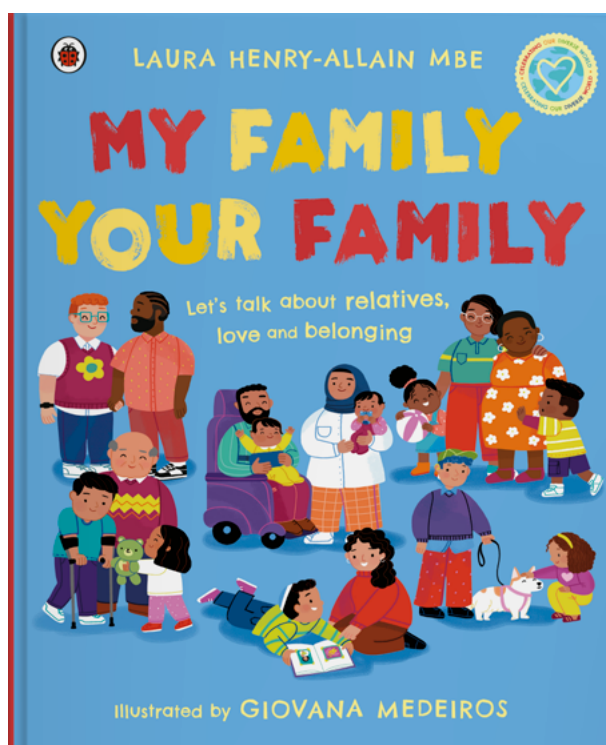
written by
Laura Henry-Allain MBE
illustrated by Giovana Medeiros



ladybird

My Family, Your Family is a powerful non-fiction book that focuses on what makes a family, explores how different families come together and celebrates the idea that every family is unique.

The following resources will support children with the themes in the book. The resources have been created for children from four years and up, however, grown-ups can use them with children of any age, stage or ability.



This book was written by storyteller, educator, producer and consultant Laura Henry-Allain MBE to support grown-ups, irrespective of their role in looking after children – be this in a home environment or as educators and teachers. My Family, Your Family, illustrated by the talented Giovana Medeiros, celebrates the importance for every child of seeing that there are diverse types of family that are different from their own, showing that all children and their families matter. My Family, Your Family includes, as examples, blended families, children who may have had a parent who has died, children who have parents who are the same sex, and children who are adopted or fostered. It is important to use the correct terminology, such as surrogacy, kinship and donor as these terms are the reality for some children and mirror their families. It is equally important to show positive representations of children who belong within Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, as well as festivals and celebrations – whether these are faith or non-faith based.

If you are an educator or teacher using this resource, please talk with the child's family as different terms are often used and they'll tell you the story and terms they've shared with their child.

Note from Laura

I have prepared a few resources to extend children's ongoing understanding of different types of family within society, and how they can feel empowered to have a strong sense of identity about their family and be proud of who they are.

As stated in 'A note for adults reading this book', My Family, Your Family is way to start a conversation about different types of family. This may mean some of the terms will be new to children. When we are discussing families, it may be important to provide an emotionally safe environment that honestly acknowledges how children are feeling. This is particularly important if we are aware that a child may have had a traumatic family experience or that the book, resources and conversations that we may have could be a trigger. A list is included of useful organisations that may be able to offer further support with some of the themes in this book.

A note for adults reading this book

Use this book to enhance the conversations you have with your children about their own family and other families.



Here are some things you may use alongside this book.

- Use photographs to aid memories when talking about family members. For example: “This is your stepmum.” or “This is your great-grandmother.” Support your child to share their understanding by talking, drawing, using special marks or writing about their family.
- Use memories to recall family events. “I remember when my mum married my stepmum.” “Do you remember the party we had to celebrate moving into our new home?”
- When talking about family heritage and where each parent and/or extended family may have come from, support your child’s understanding of geography by using maps and atlases.
- You know your child best, and you will know when you need to have sensitive conversations with them to explain their family and origins. It is important to use the correct terms with children.
- Share a range of books and play materials celebrating different families, and use these as a discussion point. Libraries and toy libraries can be especially useful resources.
- When sharing information about your child with others, you may wish to use a child-centred approach and include the following information: things that are important to your child, key family members, special names you may use for family members, and how the person can support your child.

Bereavement/death of a parent:

We know that unfortunately there are some children who have experienced the death of a parent or family member. This is, of course, an extremely traumatic event for a child, and one where there is a lot of emotion for them to unpack. We need to be mindful that the grown-up who is legally responsible for the child will be aware of cultural and religious rituals that occur within their community. Therefore, the school or Early Years setting as an example would need to be guided and respect the parents wishes on this. There are several organisations that grown-ups can approach for advice and guidance on how to support a child with their grief and their own grief. A list of useful organisations is provided. These organisations also provide guidance on how to support children with the concept of death in an age, stage and ability-appropriate way.

Non-binary parents:

Not every child (or grown up) will be familiar with non-binary people and may need to have this explained to them. This is difficult as there are many ways to be non-binary, but the simplest way to explain it is that a non-binary person is not only a boy/man or a girl/woman. Maybe they are both, maybe they are neither, or maybe they are sometimes one and sometimes the other. Some non-binary parents may think of themselves as a dad or a mum, but others might not. What matters is that they are still that child's parent. It is very important to respect people for who they are and use the names they ask. For example, some non-binary people might ask to be referred to as 'they' or 'them', rather than 'he' and 'him' or 'she' and 'her'.

Thank you to Non Prat, Non-Binary Parent, for the support with this paragraph.

Sperm and egg donorship:

It is important that we use correct terms with children to support their learning. Some children are born from sperm or egg donorship. Children often ask how babies are made and we need to support their inquisitiveness; all babies are made from a seed (sperm) egg and a warm tummy (uterus or womb). Depending on children's comprehension and age you may wish to go further to include the biology of sperm and egg donorship.

Thank you to Kate Shelly, Founder and CEO of Tales ToolKit, for the support with this paragraph.

Step-parents:

I have used the term 'bonus' to describe positively when a grown-up becomes part of a family that has children. The grown-up may or may not have children of their own. Using the term bonus can be another way of introducing the terms 'half-sibling' or 'step-family'.

To ensure that activities include all children, I suggest that they can either write, draw or make a symbol to express their thoughts. It may be an idea to read the book with the children a few times before using the educational resources, so that the content makes sense to them.

Thank you, Laura

@LauraHAllain

Glossary

adoption: the legal process that a grown-up or couple uses to become the legal parent(s) of a child

birth parents: a child's biological parents

blended family: a family with a number of parents, which may include half-siblings and stepsiblings

carer: a grown-up or child who cares for another grown-up or child

children's home: a local-authority- or privately-owned house, where children of different families live together and are looked after by grown-ups

co-parenting: when parents both care for a child following a separation. The child lives between the different homes of their parents.

diblings: children who have the same donor parent and live in the same family

divorce: when two grown-ups who were married go through a legal separation and are no longer together

extended family: another name for a wider family unit, including relatives such as grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins

foster parent: a government-approved grown-up who looks after a child for a short or long period of time

half-sibling: someone who shares one parent with you

heritage: part of a person's culture, for example, the language, tradition and knowledge that is passed on

kinship family: a child who is cared for by a grandparent, an adult sibling or another relative, such as an aunt or uncle, is part of a kinship family

local authority: a group responsible for providing services and making decisions about what is to happen within a particular area of the country

orphan: a child whose parents have died

partner: a name for a grown-up in a relationship with another grown-up. They are each other's partners.

relative: someone in your family who is connected to you, usually by marriage or blood. They may or may not be a traditional family member.

sibling: someone who shares two parents with you

social worker: a professional person who helps lots of different people with their problems. They might help children, the elderly and disabled people. This type of help is referred to as social services.

stepsibling: someone who becomes your sibling when one of your parents and one of their parents become partners or marry

surrogacy: the process of having a baby for another person, couple or family

tummy mummy/parent: another name for a surrogate who gets pregnant for another person, couple or family

Questions

Who do you have in your family?

Can you think of some words to describe your family?

Who is the oldest and who is the youngest in your family?

What is the best thing about being in your family?

A Child-centred Approach

Developing a child-centred approach (with signed permission from whoever has legal responsibility for the child) can include creating a one-page template with a photograph of the child. Depending on their age, stage and ability, this may also feature the voice of the child. The educator, teacher or their parent/grown-up may complete this.

What do others admire about the child?

Give the child's peers, family members and other grown-ups the opportunity to write a word or two on what they admire about the child, e.g. funny, kind and caring, etc.

What is important to the child?

Give the child the opportunity to state what is important to them, e.g. To make sure that I keep the photo of my mum, who died last year, in my book bag at all times.

How best to support the child?

Ask the child what they need, e.g. To sit near me if I get upset, especially if I think about my mum. I show this by going quiet and not wanting to take part in activities.

The child-centred template can be shared, where needed, with whoever lives with the child, staff who look after the child and other relevant professionals so that they are aware of the needs of every child.

Carry out an audit of resources and materials. Do they represent all families within your school and the global community? How can we represent children and parents in a professional and sensitive way? Even if you do not have diverse families within your school environment, it is important for all children to know and understand that there are other families who do not look like them.



Conversation Starters

Here are some open-ended questions that you may wish to ask children as conversation openers about families. Be mindful that this should be done in a natural way, for example when you are doing activities together. Knowing a child's background and historical information is important as you may wish to frame your questions in a more sensitive way. In addition, you may wish to explore further with the questions that are in the **My Family, Your Family** book.

1. Tell me about some of the people in your family.
2. What are some words to describe your family?
3. Who is the oldest and who is the youngest in your family?
4. Do all your family live close to you?
5. When do you see the people in your family who don't live near you?
6. Who do you enjoy spending time with in your family?
7. What do you do when you're together?
8. Tell me about some of the things you do as a family when you have fun.
9. What makes you all laugh in your family?
10. What makes you all sad in your family?
11. How do you help out?
12. What sort of things do you celebrate in your family?
13. How do you celebrate?
14. What's the best thing about your family?
15. What do you think is important to your family?



My Family Song

Written by: Laura Henry-Allain MBE

Sung to the tune of The Wheels on the Bus

My family is special to me!

My family is special to me, special to me, special to me

My family is special to me

All year long!

We go to the park as a family, family, family

We go to the park as a family

All year long!

We eat together as a family, family, family

We eat together as a family

All year long!

We dance together as a family, family, family

We dance together as a family

All year long!

We read together as a family, family, family

We read together as a family

All year long!

We sing together...

We walk together...

We cuddle each other...

We laugh together...

Add your own text and ask children what they do with their families.

Activity one

Write, draw or use a symbol to describe who is in your family.



A large, empty rectangular box with a blue border, intended for students to write or draw their response.

Activity two

Write, draw or use a symbol to describe your home.



A large, empty rectangular box with a blue border, intended for the student to write, draw, or use a symbol to describe their home.

Activity three

Write, draw or use a symbol to describe the special things you do together as a family.



A large, empty rectangular box with a blue border, intended for students to write or draw their responses.

Appendix

Book list

Books for children:

Families: A lift-the-flap board book about families

Author Pat-a-Cake, illustrator Louise Forshaw

Is that your Mama?

Author Patrice Lawrence, illustrator Diane Ewen

My Big Fantastic Family: A Story About Parents Separating

Authors Adam Guillan, Charlotte Guillan and Ali Pye

My Life on Fire

Author Cath Howe, audiobook narrator Nneka Okoye

Nikhil and Jay: Off to India

Author Chitra Soundar, illustrator Soofiya

Selection of books from Donor Conception Network

Books for children | Donor Conception Network (dcnetwork.org)

The Family Tree

Author Kate Ferdinand, illustrator Emma Randall

The Lost Homework (Travellers Tales)

Author Richard O'Neill, illustrator Kirsti Beautyman

The Suitcase Kid

Author Jacqueline Wilson

We are Family

Author Lucy Reynolds, illustrator Jenna Herman

Books for grown-ups:

A Very Modern Family: Stories and guidance to nurture your relationships

Authors Carrie Grant and David Grant

Dad

From Music, Football, Fatherhood, curated by Elliott Rae

How to build a family

Author Kate Ferdinand

The Patchwork Family: Toddlers, Teenagers and Everything in Between

Author Rachaele Hambelton

Podcasts:

Family Love Stories

Useful websites:

www.adoptionuk.org

www.blackmumsupfront.com

www.childbereavementuk.org

[Donor Conception Network | Supporting families through donor conception \(dcnetwork.org\)](http://www.dcnetwork.org)

www.dopeblack.org

www.gingerbread.org.uk

www.kinship.org.uk

www.musicfootballfatherhood.com

www.newfamilysocial.org.uk

www.rainbow-project.org

www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

www.winstonswish.org