

Why would parents want to include this in their child's reading repertoire?

I'm Happy I'm Me . . . a Girl! is the kind of children's book you feel good about pulling off the shelf to read to your little person. Its watercolor illustrations by Deborah Taylor hold a tangible depth and texture that make you want to reach out and touch the page. The colors and lines are warm, they envelop you. *I'm Happy I'm Me . . . A Girl!* also is inclusive, presenting images of girls of various races, making sure your girl knows each person is unique and equal. The rhymes written by Donna Styer are simple and powerful, each beginning with a positive reinforcement of "I can." The book makes clear that girls can do whatever they want. It welds a smart and honest back-and-forth of physically exertive actions to still actions that girls can do – the book tells your girl that she can be imaginative and whimsical while also practical and technical. "I can . . . play in the rain . . . or drive a huge train." In reading the book, I appreciate how Donna creates an interplay between imagination and reality. There are actions your girl learns she can do in reality or in her mind – "I can . . . travel to the moon . . . and be back by noon." The play between real and imaginary is natural and rhythmical.

There are many forces in our society that subconsciously tell our girls they cannot do certain things. It's really important for us to intentionally put resources, ideas, and stories in their paths that reinforce their abilities. *I'm Happy I'm Me . . . a Girl!* will remind your girl that there are no predetermined boundaries – there are only the ones she disintegrates and possibilities she creates.

Why is the book important for young boys to read?

My nephew is seven years old. On a recent Friday night, when deciding what movie to watch, I asked him if he wanted to watch *Pollyanna*. He said he didn't want to, even though he didn't know anything about it, and when I pressed further, he admitted it was because the movie was about a girl. His parents do not hold space in the home for gender discrimination at all, so it was clear to me he had soaked up a subliminal message – boys don't like to engage with stories about girls.

Donna Styer's book *I'm Happy I'm Me . . . A Girl* accentuates the message that a girl can do anything – and, in so doing, makes it clear that there are no behaviors or activities that a girl can or cannot do, should or should not do. This is an extremely important message for young boys to hear. From the earliest age, children's minds pick up both the overt and subconscious messages around them. While our culture is slowly changing to become one that holds space and respect for women, it has a long way to go in getting everyone's minds to see men and women as *completely equal and completely powerful*. You can begin sowing these seeds from the very start with your little boy. By including *I'm Happy I'm Me . . . A Girl* in his story repertoire, you will be teaching him that a girl can participate in any activity she chooses, that *he* can participate in any activity he chooses, that he and she are alike, that there are no better story lines based on whether a character is a girl or a boy. You are able to teach your son that gender does not determine what you can do.