

We need champions for disability rights and inclusion! NEA members have a unique and powerful opportunity to advocate for meaningful change, challenge ableism and biases, and become allies with and for individuals with disabilities.

[Find out more about becoming a champion for disability rights and inclusion.](#)

Who can participate in the NEA Book Club?

The NEA Book Club is open to all members! This is a great opportunity for you to take what you learn and share key concepts with your community.

How does the NEA Book Club work?

We encourage you to participate in all three book discussions; however, we understand that this may not be possible for everyone. The books that were selected are meant to be read sequentially OR individually. We believe that participants will gain a great deal of knowledge related to disability and its intersections that can be taken back into learning environments and applied in each of our daily lives.

Where, when, and how will the NEA Book Club meet?

The NEA Book Club will meet virtually three times for each book over the course of the 2023–2024 school year. For those who cannot join the book club, we encourage you to read the books and use the accompanying reading guides to heighten your understanding.

[Learn more about the NEA Book Club for Disability Rights and Inclusion.](#)

A Book Study in Collaboration with Nikki Woodward and Emily A. Nusbaum



The Pretty One

By Keah Brown

Author Keah Brown offers a vulnerable and honest examination into her journey of acceptance and activism as a Black woman with a disability experiencing life through the intersectionality of gender, race, class, and disability. *The Pretty One* is a memoir that offers the author's perspective and invites the reader to join her. The book is organized through a series of essays that chronicles the author's life from her early childhood through her acceptance and acknowledgment as a young Black woman with a disability. Traditional chapter numbers are not used, and as such, the reading guide (and book discussions) will take you along her journey as follows: "Introduction" through

"Pop Culture and Me: A (Sometimes) Unrequited Love Story" (five chapters), "You Can't Cure Me, I Promise It's Fine" through "The Human iPod" (five chapters), and finally, "Cry, Baby, Cry" through "I Like Me Now, Too" (three chapters).

Reading Guide

The Pretty One

What NEA Leadership Competencies are addressed through this book?

You will gain a foundational understanding of advocacy, communication, leading our profession, organizing, and social-emotional learning. [Find out more about NEA Leadership Competencies.](#)

What are the main objectives?

Author Keah Brown states, “I adapt to the world because I have to in order to live I don’t do things in spite of anything—except for maybe the people who told me I’d be nothing and no one. I don’t mind being an inspiration if it is for a valid reason, such as admiring how many slices of pizza I ate, an essay or article I wrote, my clothing choices, or how quickly I can learn the lyrics to songs. As long as the inspiration doesn’t come with pity or self-congratulatory pats on the back, I am all for it!” (pp. 1–2).

As you read this book, consider the personal experiences that Keah has encountered. They are no different than those of the students, colleagues, and other individuals we encounter in our lives. The journey of an individual is personal, and one’s desire to find acceptance and be accepted for all they offer is a real struggle. Approach this book with that objective in mind.

Session 1: “Introduction” through “Pop Culture and Me: A (Sometimes) Unrequited Love Story,” pp. 1–89 (to be read prior to first book club meeting)

Main Objectives

As you are reading the identified chapters, approach the content with the following objectives in mind:

- » The continued need to challenge how people with disabilities are viewed in society; and
- » The awareness of the intersectionality of individuals who have been historically marginalized as a critical component to understanding the compounding discriminatory effects of overlapping identities and barriers to positive representation of persons with disabilities.

Pre-Reading Reflection Questions

1. How do you define accessibility?
2. What is intersectionality and how do you define it?

Post-Reading Reflection Questions

1. In what ways does accessibility pose limitations on persons with disability? How can you create and support inclusivity in your educational environment?
2. “Opportunity is another imperative part of the conversation about identifiers, because I have received many opportunities that other people with disabilities have not. There is privilege in opportunity. Privilege influences opportunity and vice versa.” (p. 57) How can you foster more opportunities for individuals with disabilities?

3. Privilege, identity, and representation have an unusual, interconnected relationship. In your learning environment, what are the ways that you have examined your privilege to create opportunities that elevate representation for learners who exist within intersecting communities?

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways can you promote leaning opportunities that center on the work to dismantle those impacts of privilege, power, and identity?
2. How can learning opportunities that center on privilege, power, and identity also challenge status quo/ deficit thinking about people with disabilities?

Next Steps

Read “You Can’t Cure Me, I Promise It’s Fine” through “The Human iPod” before the next meeting.

Session 2: “You Can’t Cure Me, I Promise It’s Fine” through “The Human iPod,” pp. 90–184

Main Objectives

As you are reading the identified chapters, approach the content with the following objectives in mind:

- » The personal journey to acceptance and self-love that each individual must experience through their self-discovery; and
- » Reshaping how we think about, discuss, and engage with individuals with disabilities.

Pre-Reading Reflection Questions

1. What does it mean to live within the various intersections of race, gender, and disability?
2. How do you engage and interact with people with disabilities (e.g., adults, students, colleagues, casual acquaintances)? Are you conscious of how you engage?

Post-Reading Reflection Questions

1. After reading these chapters, what are your biases about disability and related to people with disabilities that you’ve become more aware of?
2. What are the biases that you carry about people with disabilities and how do you check your thinking and behaviors when interacting with individuals?

Discussion Questions

1. What are the ways that able-bodied people can work to create inclusive environments, especially for those individuals who exist across intersecting identities, including disability?
2. What are the most significant takeaways for you from these chapters?

Next Steps

Read “Cry, Baby, Cry” through “I Like Me Now, Too” before the next meeting.

Session 3: “Cry, Baby, Cry” through “I Like Me Now, Too,” pp. 185–240

Main Objectives

As you are reading the identified chapters, approach the content with the following objectives in mind:

- » The continuous journey of being mindful of one’s views (i.e., ableist and bias behaviors) and actions. Are you showing up in ways that uplift or hinder your students and colleagues who exist within intersecting communities?; and
- » “...I believe that marginalized people in particular are expected to do so much quietly and without acknowledging the work that has gone into the thing we are being complimented on. I am not doing that; I have worked too hard and spent too much time trying to dim my light so others could shine. My emotions and I are over that, and we will be loud and proud. Celebrating smaller and bigger wins is imperative in being unapologetic...”

Pre-Reading Reflection Question

1. In what ways do you use language and/or engage and interact that might reflect devaluating or pity-like approaches with people with disabilities?
2. What are your biases about people with disabilities, especially those who come from communities whose stories have been historically overlooked?

Post-Reading Reflection Questions

1. What did you learn through these essays? What were places where you saw yourself, a student, or acquaintance? What have you learned about your journey as an educator?
2. What are barriers or opportunities that you create for students based on your beliefs about their abilities and potential? How might you begin to dismantle these beliefs and approaches?

Discussion Questions

1. How can we unlearn and disentangle ourselves from prejudice toward individuals with disabilities—especially persons with disabilities of multiple marginalized identities—and begin to move toward a more inclusive, accepting world?
2. Representation matters—how do you create spaces that support representation across historically marginalized communities? What can you do to uplift and support representation across the learning environments that you are in?

Next Steps

Recommend the book to others in your community and have conversations about what you learned. And, don’t forget to sign up and attend the next book talk, featuring *What Matters: Reflections on Disability, Community, and Love* by Janice Fialka.