

## A Multicultural Picnic: Little Polyglot Adventures (Book 3)

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*Learning is fun in the picture book A Multicultural Picnic, which celebrates family, friendship, and heritage.*

In Victor Dias de Oliveria Santos's sensitive picture book, *A Multicultural Picnic*, children respond to bullying, uncover a secret, and make a new friend.

Dylan—with his parents; his sister, Isabella; his three grandparents, who are from Ukraine and Brazil; and his pet chicken, Kiki—goes on a picnic in the park. Dylan's best friend, Emma, is there with her parents; her family is from South Africa. Everyone is excited to taste special dishes from the different countries represented. The group has fun speaking in English, Portuguese, Ukrainian, and Zulu.

But no one sees the boys who are hiding nearby and mocking them. When the children run off to play, the boys bully them with disparaging ethnic and racial comments. Led by Emma, the children take a stand against the bullies. When one of the boys becomes the target of bullying himself, the friends rush to help him. Then Kiki goes missing, and the group's tech-savvy new friend comes up with a clever way to find her.

Dylan is thoughtful, proud of his heritage, and a bit quirky, while Isabella is exuberant, a bit of a tease, and enjoys keeping up with her older friends. Emma, meanwhile, is a loyal friend who's fierce as she stands up to the bullies. All three enjoy exploring their cultural differences. In contrast, the bullies are portrayed as cowards: they hide in the bushes to mock the multicultural group, and they are fast to leave when Emma defends Dylan. The message that insecurity and fear make people bullies, while kindness has transformative powers, is embedded in their interactions.

The story is potent in demonstrating the barrier-breaking powers of kindness and respect. Its colorful, detailed, and expressive illustrations highlight what makes each character unique, so that those familiar with the backgrounds portrayed will recognize and appreciate how the illustrations capture subtle cultural differences. The characters' emotions, including joy, disdain, anger, and fear, are well portrayed. Non-English terms and expressions are defined in clear terms, while a link and QR code are provided so that their pronunciations can be heard.

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KRISTINE MORRIS (March 3, 2021)

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