

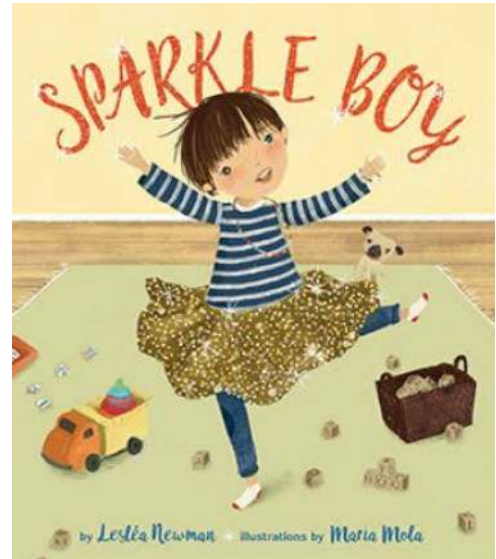


A discussion guide provided by MERGE for Equality

SPARKLE BOY

By Lesléa Newman

Illustrated by Maria Mola



Book Summary:

Casey loves to play with his blocks, puzzles, and dump truck, and he also loves things that shimmer, glitter and sparkle. Casey's older sister, Jessie, thinks this is weird. Shimmery, glittery, sparkly things are only for girls, right? Casey and Jessie head to the library for story time, Casey proudly wears his shimmery skirt and sparkly bracelet. His nails glitter in the light. Jessie insists that Casey looks silly. It's one thing to dress like this around the house, but going outside as a "sparkle boy" is another thing entirely. What will happen when the other kids see him? This sweet and refreshing story speaks to us all about acceptance, respect, and the simple freedom to be yourself. Shimmery, glittery, sparkly things are fun—for everyone!

Why Has MERGE selected this book?

Sparkle Boy reflects an appreciation for flexible gender norms, providing a counter example to rigid, unhealthy and harmful examples of masculinity.

Sparkle Boy boldly and delightfully aligns with the MERGE mission, of transforming masculinity to advance gender equality.

Before reading you may wish to develop background knowledge and anticipation by asking questions such as:

- What do you like to wear? Why?
- Do children pick out their own clothes?
- Why do you think some things children like or enjoy are considered for boys or for girls?
- Have you ever been told you can't do something because it's only for boys or only for girls?

Invite children to be active participants in making meaning of what they see and hear. This helps children thinking critically about the book. While you are reading the story, ask questions such as:

- What do you think the title means?
- Who do you think the book might be about? What makes you think that?
- Throughout the book ask, what do you see happening in the picture? Tell me how the picture says that.



After reading you can help the children communicate what they have learned by asking the following questions. Ask them how the words and pictures communicate their ideas to them. This assists them in thinking critically about what they are seeing and hearing.

- What type of toys, activities and clothing does Casey enjoy?
- How does Casey's family feel about Casey's dress up interests?
- What do the boys at the library think about Casey's dress up choices?
- How do you think the boys came to believe these ideas about what boys should and should not wear?
- What new idea does Jessie realize about gender norms at the end of the story?
- How might this story help your friends and family reconsider ideas about how people should behave based on whether they are seen as a boy or a girl?

About the author: Award-winning author, Lesléa Newman, has penned 70 books for readers of all ages, including *A Letter to Harvey Milk*; *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard*; *I Carry My Mother*; *The Boy Who Cried Fabulous*; *Ketzel, the Cat Who Composed*; and *Heather Has Two Mommies*. *Heather Has Two Mommies* was the first children's book to portray lesbian families in a positive way. Lesléa added to this pioneering work with several more children's books on lesbian and gay families: *Felicia's Favorite Story*, *Too Far Away to Touch*, *Saturday Is Pattyday*, *Mommy, Mama, and Me*, and *Daddy, Papa, and Me*.

About the illustrator: Maria is a freelance illustrator and artist. She is from Barcelona, Spain, but she currently lives in Chicago with her husband and their two little children. She is passionate about bringing her art to the children's picture book industry. Her clients include Lerner Publishing, Editions Anna Chanel, Pearson, and McGraw-Hill among others. Maria has worked in the educational field and for the trade market and she regularly collaborates with magazines too.

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