

THIS IS A SCHOOL

words by
John Schu

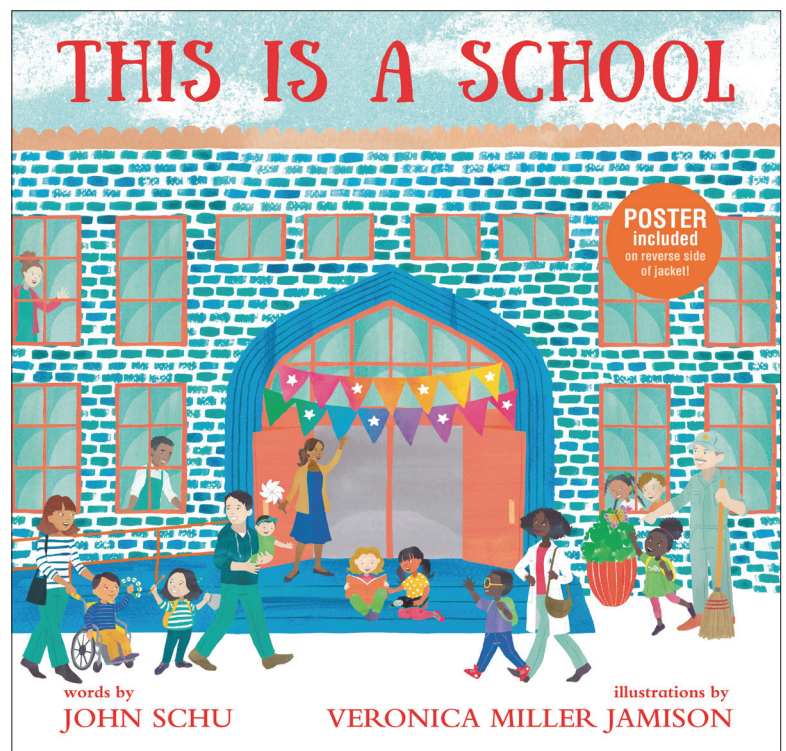
illustrations by
Veronica Miller Jamison

ABOUT THE BOOK

A school isn't just a building; it is all the people who work and learn together. It is a place for discovery and asking questions. A place for sharing, for helping, and for community. It is a place of hope and healing, even when that community can't be together in the same room. John Schu, a librarian and former Ambassador of School Libraries for Scholastic, crafts a loving letter to schools and the people who make up the communities within them in a picture book debut beautifully illustrated by Veronica Miller Jamison.

This is a moving celebration of school and all it may signify: work and play, creativity and trust, and a supportive community that extends beyond walls.

This guide is designed to help you and your students celebrate your school and honor the community you serve.



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ABOUT JOHN SCHU

John Schu is the creator of the popular blog *Mr. Schu Reads* (mrschureads.blogspot.com) and a part-time lecturer at Rutgers University. He was formerly a classroom teacher and school librarian. He has visited schools all over the world and has met with more than 130,000 students, teachers, and administrators as he advocates for the people and things he cares about most: kids, books, schools, and the libraries—and librarians—that connect them. John Schu lives in Naperville, Illinois. You can find him at www.JohnSchu.com and on social media @MrSchuReads.

ABOUT VERONICA MILLER JAMISON

Veronica Miller Jamison is an illustrator and surface pattern designer who was trained as a fashion designer. She has created art and patterns for Hallmark, *Essence* magazine, and Lilly Pulitzer and is the illustrator of *A Computer Called Katherine* by Suzanne Slade. Veronica Miller Jamison lives in Philadelphia.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions to engage your students with the book before, during, and after reading.

1. What makes a school special?
2. Looking at the cover, what do you notice about the school?
3. Which character(s) from the book would you like to get to know better? What is it about them that makes you curious?
4. How is this school similar to and different from your school?
5. What are your favorite things about your school?
6. If you could change one thing about your school, what would you change?
7. In one scene in the book, a child accidentally breaks a fishbowl. Tell us about a time when you made a choice that you regretted later. What did you learn from that situation?
8. "Some people see what we're good at, and that helps us to know it, too." What does this sentence from the book mean to you?
9. What things make you feel welcomed at school? How do you make others feel welcomed?
10. If you started attending a new school, what questions would you want answered before your first day?



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

This Is Our School Book

Create a book about your school, with each member of your class given the task of creating a page. Have each student (or pair of students or small group of students) sign up to share something that makes their school special (for example, the cafeteria, gym, library, office, or playground) and use the template to create their page.

When the book is complete, add it to your classroom library, school library, or the lobby of your school.

You could also use the template to create a book for new students in your class. Being new to a school, classroom, or grade can be hard. Work together with your class to create a book that explains how things in your school and classroom work to help put a new student's mind at ease. Each section of the book might explain things like:

- Morning procedures
- Library
- Recess
- Lunch
- Reading, writing, math, social studies, science, and other subjects
- End-of-the-day dismissal



Compare and Contrast

Using the template, have students compare their school with the one in *This Is a School*. If students are able, have them use the information from their Venn diagram to write a compare-and-contrast paragraph.



Thank-You Letter

It takes a lot of people to make a school run smoothly. Have each student write a thank-you letter to someone in the school they appreciate. Place their letters in decorated envelopes and have them delivered to their recipients.

Dream School

Brainstorm with your students what their dream school, classroom, library, playground, or other school space would look like. Have each student draw their dream space and describe what makes it so wonderful.

Classroom Puzzle

A school or classroom needs many individuals to make it successful. Using corrugated cardboard, cut out pieces that fit together into a large jigsaw puzzle. Give each child a puzzle piece to decorate with objects, words, and pictures that show their own uniqueness. Then have your students construct the puzzle and display it in the hallway or on a bulletin board to show how each person is special and brings different qualities to your classroom community. This would be a great start-of-the-year project for an entire school or grade.



What Would You Change?

Ask your students what they love about your school and what things they would change. Have them write a persuasive letter to a school leader suggesting one thing that they would like to change, and why that change would make the school a better place. What is something about your school that you would like to change?

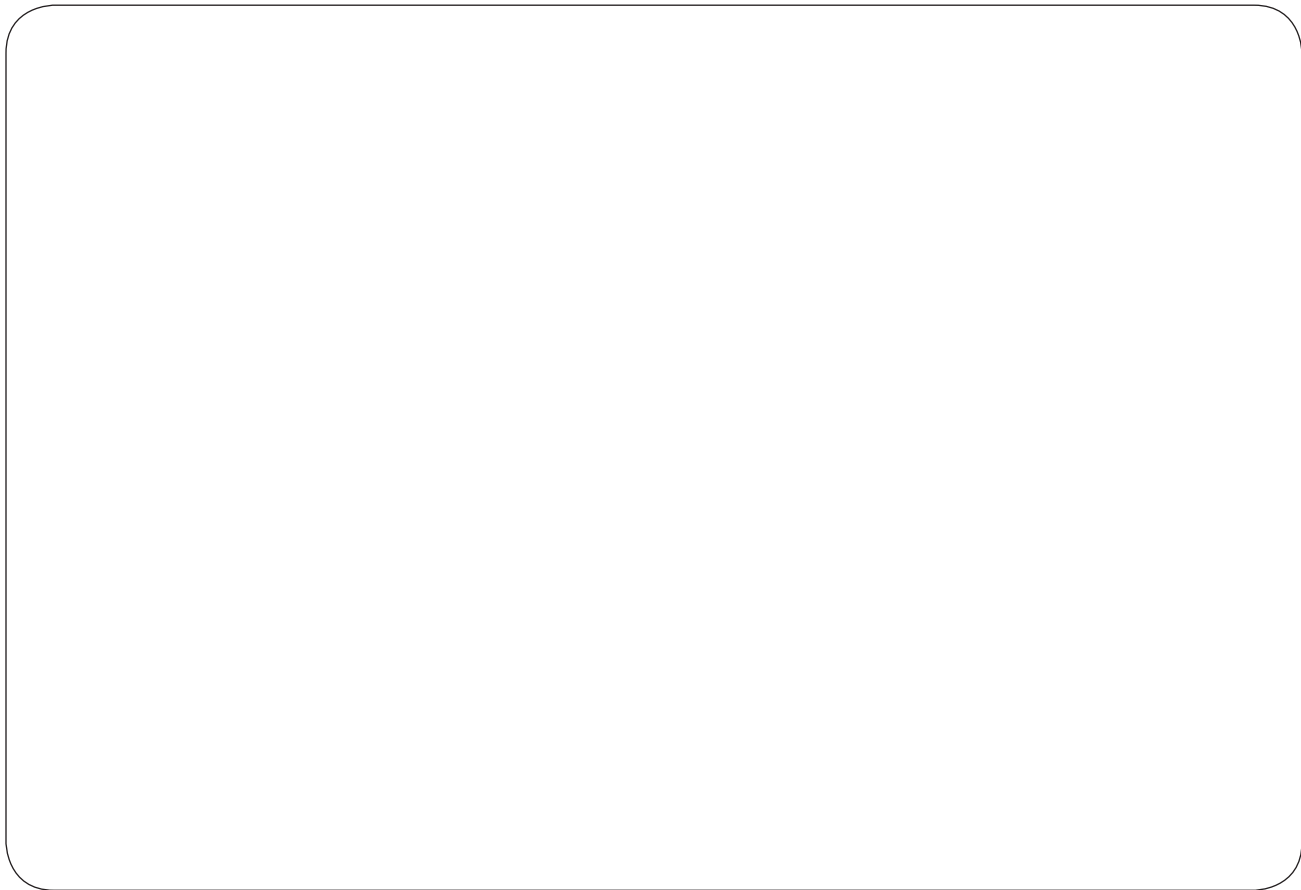
Transformation

The staff and students in the book work hard to make their school beautiful. Can you and your students find examples of this? Try looking for all the pinwheel references in the book. Discuss whether these efforts seem significant and if so, how. Then, using instructions you can find online that work best for your students, make pinwheels to decorate your classroom or school. Or determine other ways the school in *This Is a School* is beautified, and try one of those projects in your school.



This guide was prepared by Colby Sharp, elementary teacher, cofounder of *Nerdy Book Club*, and cohost of *The Yam*.

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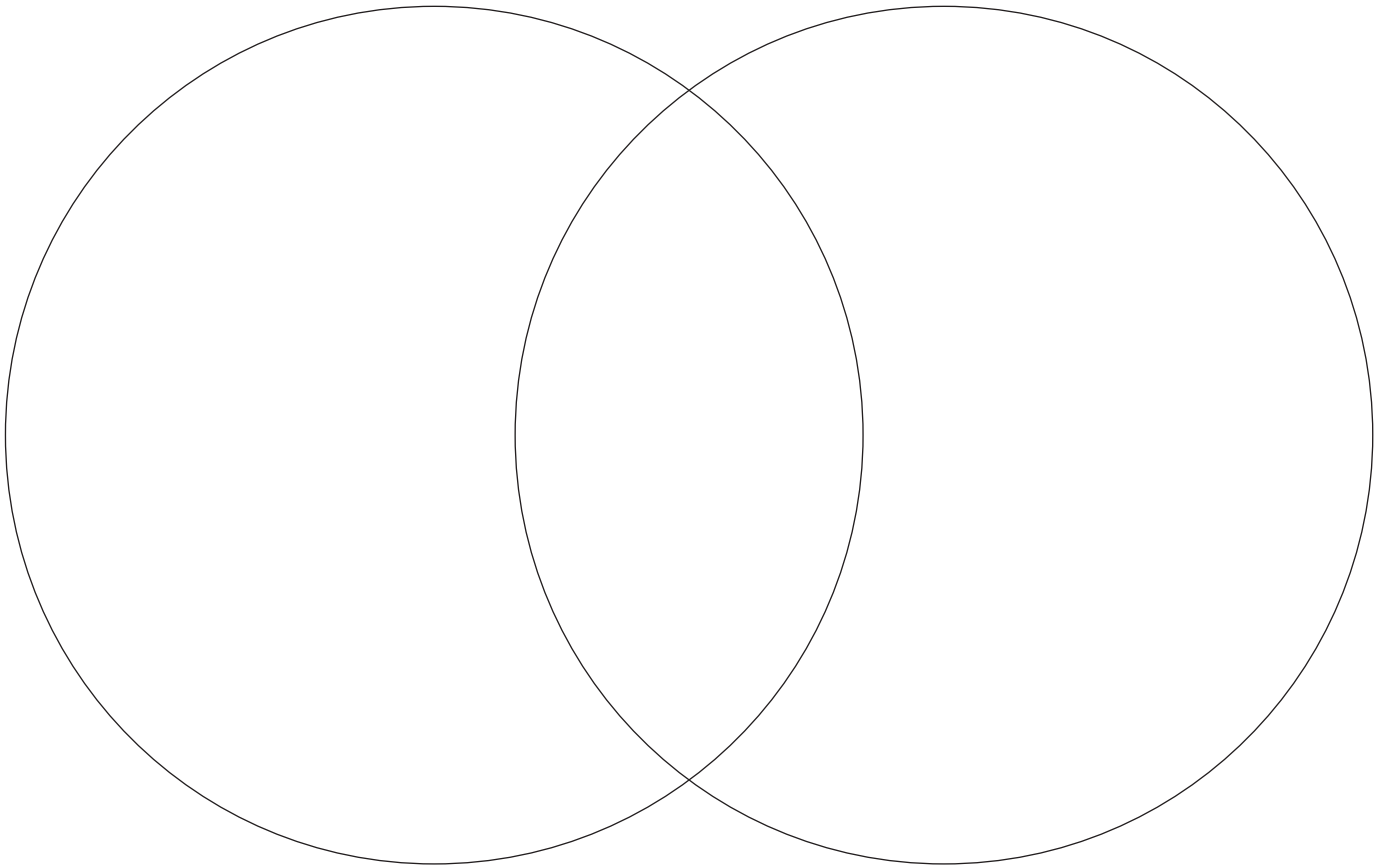
STORY: _____

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THIS IS A SCHOOL

MY SCHOOL





THANK YOU!

DEAR _____,

SINCERELY, _____



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

I'm super excited to share *This Is a School* with you. It's dedicated to all the amazing students I've taught and experienced stories with during the fifteen years I was an elementary school teacher and teacher-librarian. They, as well as the more than 130,000 students and teachers I've discussed and celebrated books with in schools around the world, were on my mind as I wrote this ode to the power of play, creativity, hope, helping, healing, sharing, learning, trust, and connection within a school community. Veronica Miller Jamison's joyful and warm illustrations bring these concepts to life in the most beautiful and exquisite way.

One of my favorite rituals during the first month of school is selecting read-alouds that go directly from the heart to the classroom. Stories that help facilitate important and meaningful conversations. Stories that imbue joy into the school day. I wrote *This Is a School* with the first month of school in mind. I hope it helps learning communities discuss the journey they're about to take together. I hope students, teachers, librarians, principals, art teachers, music teachers, coaches, custodians, and families—everyone who interacts with children—are inspired to refer back to Veronica's illustrations and the text throughout the school year.

Thank you for everything you do to put books and stories into hands and hearts. I hope we can discuss all things school and books in person or virtually one day soon! Happy, happy reading!

John Schu

ILLUSTRATOR'S NOTE

This Is a School is such a love letter to school communities, and I wanted to create artwork that captured the excitement, joy, and camaraderie of a nurturing school environment. I started with a primary color palette to create a bright and warm setting, inspired by my own early years in school. Then I created a community of characters with many different backgrounds, talents, and abilities. The school building itself is inspired by the elementary school I attended! Each child in the book has their own journey to discovery, while being supported and encouraged by their friends and teachers. The artwork was created with acrylic and watercolor paint on paper, which was then digitally collaged into the final illustrations. I really wanted to create a world showing children as they explore, discover, and connect, and to celebrate them for their uniqueness. Most of all, I wanted to share the joy of being a part of a wonderful school community.

Veronica Miller Jamison



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