

An Educator's Guide for What Does It Mean to Be Safe?

By Rana DiOrio, Illustrated by Zhen Liu



A Discussion & Activity Guide for Grades Kindergarten, 1, 2 and 3

Prepared by We Love Children's Books

ABOUT THE BOOK

What does it mean to be safe? Does it mean beating a throw to home plate? Does it mean never taking risks? No! Being safe is about feeling secure, feeling protected and being responsive—no matter the environment or situation.

This book teaches readers simple ways to be safe—from being aware of limits to creating healthy boundaries. By not giving in to peer pressure and by standing up to bullies. And by being safe on the internet, or knowing the right time to get a caring adult's help. This book will spark meaningful dialogue and ensure every child knows what it means to be safe.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

Rana DiOrio has written her way through life as a student, a lawyer, an investment banker, a private equity investor, and now as an author and creator of children's media. Her personal pursuits include fitness training, practicing yoga, reading nonfiction and children's literature, dreaming big dreams, and helping others realize theirs. She is the author of an award-winning series of picture books that includes *What Does It Mean to Be Global*, *What Does It Mean to Be Green?*, *What Does It Mean to Be Present?* and *What Does It Mean To Be American?*

Zhen Liu is inspired by the little things in daily life and passionate about telling stories through images. Aside from illustration, Zhen loves nature, animals and people, good movies and traveling.

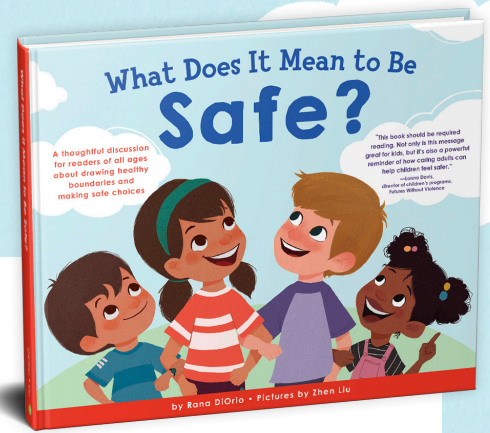
PRAISE FOR *WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE SAFE?*

"This book should be required reading. Not only is this message great for kids, but it's also a powerful reminder of how caring adults can help children feel safer."

—Lanna Davis, director of children's programs, Futures Without Violence

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PRE-READING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Come together as a class to discuss the title of this book, *What Does It Mean to Be Safe?* When do students feel safe? When do they not feel safe?

Picture books combine words and pictures to tell their story. What does the author do? What does the illustrator do? Which would students rather be, the author or the illustrator?

Vocabulary

As you read the book, have students raise their hands when they hear an unfamiliar word or phrase. Help students derive the meaning from context and the accompanying illustration, looking up the words in the dictionary in necessary. Why do students think the author chose this specific word? Can students think of other words with similar meanings? Have students practice using these words in a sentence to help them make real-life connections.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Illustrations and Examples

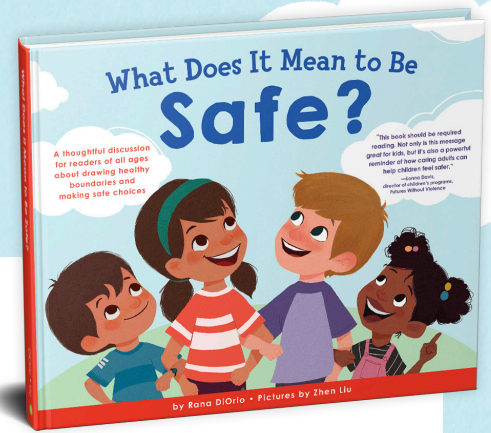
What Does It Mean to be Safe? takes an interesting approach to dealing with some very big and important ideas. The text and pictures work together, but each part tells the story in a different way. The text explains the idea to the reader, and the pictures show examples that students might encounter in their day-to-day life that illustrate this big idea. After you read the text, choose a volunteer to describe the “story” they think the illustration is telling. Whom do students sympathize with in the picture? Does seeing these reactions help the students to understand the big idea this page is trying to communicate?

Details in the Pictures

Break students into groups and assign each one a spread to explain to the rest of the class. Have the group study the picture, paying attention to the details and each character in the scene. Which children look like they feel safe? Does anyone look like they do not feel safe? Have students explain what they think the characters are feeling and why the characters feel that way. Have each group present their findings to the class.

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Follow the Green Shirt

The illustrations in this book are of a group of children who all go to the same school, and we see how their activities during the day reflect the big ideas of *What Does It Mean to Be Safe?* One student is a boy who wears a green shirt with dark stripes and short, brown pants. In the first illustration, he is wearing headphones. As a class, follow his continuing story through the book, finding him in each illustration and discussing what he is doing. What is he like at the beginning of the story? What happens to him as a result? Have students “put themselves in his shoes” to figure out what he is thinking and feeling in each picture. When does he feel safe and when does he not feel safe? How has he changed by the end of the book? What do students think he learns?

Recurring Characters

After the class has followed the boy in the green shirt through his story, break students into groups and assign each one a character from the book to follow. What happens to that child through the story, and what to they do? Does their character ever not feel safe in the course of the book? How can the students tell? How would students feel in the same situation? Does their character seem to change or grow? What makes students think that way?

The Rest of the Story

The illustrations in this book depict things right in the middle of the action. Have each student select an illustration and expand on the story it tells. What went on before and after the scene from the book? Have them create an original illustration to go with their writing or dictation.

Illustrated by ME!

At the back of *What Does It Mean to Be Safe?* there is a section to help students relate the lessons of this book to their own lives. Review these examples with the class. Have each student pick one to illustrate, or make up a new example of their own. Collect the final copies and create a classroom edition of the book with the new illustrations!

Role-Play

Break students into groups and assign each group an illustration. Have them role-play what is happening in their assigned scene, acting out the lessons from the book on how to be safe. What do the characters say? What do they do? How do the others in the scene react?

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After they have practiced, have the groups perform their skits for the class.

Why Do They Feel That Way?

Review the book to identify the people who don't feel safe in each illustration and discuss why they feel that way. Is it the situation—like being scared to jump into a swimming pool? Is someone intentionally making them feel like they are not safe—like the boy who is building a wall to keep others out? Is it just the character's reaction—like the boy who doesn't want to pet the dog? Have students put themselves in the characters' shoes and come up with things they could do to make themselves feel safe. How does the type of situation change the way students would make themselves safe?

Singing Out Loud

Locate the picture where the girl is singing on stage for an audience. The copy reads, "Does it mean never taking risks? No." Does she look like she feels safe? Examine the page for clues as to why she might feel that way. Would students feel safe performing on stage? Are there other situations in the book where someone feels safe where students might not? Why do different people feel safe in different circumstances?

How to Be Safe

Come together as a class and make a list of things that make students feel uncertain or afraid. Have a brainstorming session to come up with ideas on how to react to the situation and change it so they feel safe.

Homework for Trusted Adults

The back of the book contains eight suggestions for caring adults from the organization Futures Without Violence to help them connect with children and make children feel safe and loved. Go over these with the class and have students take notes, with help if necessary, about these ideas. Have students discuss these suggestions with a caring adult in their own life. Come together as a class and have volunteers talk about the conversations they had. What did the students talk about during their homework session? What did their caring adult say?