



Helping kids understand he, she, and they pronouns: An Interview with Jacob



Recently, Magination Press Family had the opportunity to interview Jacob, the subject of *Jacob's School Play: Starring He, She, and They*, a picture book by Sarah and Ian Hoffman. In his third book, Jacob, a gender nonconforming kindergartner, prepares for a school play. A classmate, Ari, uses "they/them" pronouns, and Jacob finds it confusing. Jacob's teacher helps him understand what it means to identify as nonbinary and why Ari uses "they."

In the interview, Jacob shares his feelings and experiences.

MP: I heard your school did a play. What was that like? Did you have fun?

Jacob: It was really fun. I like playing make-believe. The play was like the whole class playing make-believe together.

MP: What did you and Sophie do to help with the play? What roles did you have?

Jacob: Sophie and I were both farmers. I got to wear my overalls dress, which is good for hard work and getting dirty.

MP: Can you tell us about your classmate, Ari? What role did Ari have?

Jacob: Ari was the water. They played the rain, the pond, and the clouds. Did you know that all of those things are made of water? It's true!

MP: How did Ms. Reeves help you understand Ari better?

Jacob: She told me that from the outside, we can't tell who anybody is on the inside. I didn't know that. At first I didn't understand, but now it makes sense. And Ms. Reeves taught me about pronouns.

MP: Tell me about which pronouns Ari uses. You use "he" and Sophies uses "she," right?

Jacob: I'm a "he," and Sophie is a "she." Ms. Reeves taught me to say "they" and "them" when I talk about Ari. Like, "Ari is using the orange crayon to draw a monster. Give them the green crayon, so they can draw a dinosaur, too!"

MP: How did the play help you understand Ari better?

Jacob: Everybody was dressed in costumes, but you could still tell who everybody was. Like, Emily was a cow, but you could still tell that cow was Emily. An Emily-cow.

Ari was the water, so they were three different things. But the three things were all the same thing, and they were all Ari. The way the cloud floated across the stage, I could see it was Ari. Ari understood how to be all the things, and they didn't have to be just one thing or the other. I realized that's just like the way Ari is all the time.

MP: Is there anything else you'd like to share with us about pronouns, Ari, or your play?

Jacob: On a farm, you need all of the things, like dirt, and sun, and water, and plants, and animals. And all those things help each other. That's how a farm works.

The kids in my class are the same. We need all the different people. And we all need to help each other. That's how we can be happy, everyone just being themselves, whoever they are.

MP: Thank you for sharing your story with us in *Jacob's New Dress*, *Jacob's Room to Choose*, and *Jacob's School Play*. Do you have another book in mind?

Jacob: In school, we've been learning about holidays. I think other kids would like to learn about holidays, too. That would be a good thing to write a book about.

MP: Do you have any fun plans for the summer?

Jacob: I'm going to visit my grandparents. They live near lots of lakes, and we go swimming in them. And then they take me out for ice cream!

MP: Thanks for talking with us, Jacob! We hope you have a great summer vacation.

Jacob: I hope you have fun, too! Bye!

Watch Sarah and Ian's presentation about writing *Jacob's School Play* [here](#).

This Article's Author

Sarah and Ian Hoffman live in the San Francisco Bay Area with their two children. Visit their [website](#) for more about their books and parenting experiences.