



# MAKING CONNECTIONS...

## Julian is a Mermaid By Jessica Love

As caretakers of young people, making connections and continuing the conversation is helpful to developing critical thinking skills and extending compassion. This includes helping us broaden our understanding of how issues of immigration, race, incarceration, gender, and more are linked to sexual violence. This connection is crucial when thinking about how to keep our communities safer and work towards a future free from harm.

"Julian Is A Mermaid" splashes the readers with beautiful illustrations as they experience Julian's passion for being a mermaid. After telling his abuela that he is a mermaid, he gathers household items to create a mermaid look. Abuela notices Julian's fun and beautiful transformation and takes him to see more of the "mermaids."

Encouraging young people to explore their gender expression helps with critical thinking skills and empathy building. Furthermore, not gendering items for children can help them use their imagination and promote creativity. Julian was able to create a gorgeous mermaid costume and was able to express himself with the support of his abuela. Abuela was a safe person for Julian. When young people are able to trust the adults in their life around gender exploration and other questions, we are able to keep them safer. Enforcing strict gender roles onto children can be a cause of anxiety and stress. It is also a risk factor that increases the likelihood of sexual violence occurring as stated by the Centers for Disease Control.

As adults, it is also important to examine our own experience with gender and how it has impacted your life. These sorts of reflections can be something you share with your young person. Sharing your own experience and questions can be insightful. Young people often times have their own thoughts and reflections to share.



**RESILIENCE**  
EMPOWERING  
SURVIVORS  
ENDING SEXUAL  
VIOLENCE



## CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION...

1 Why do you think Julian loves mermaids?  
Do you think boys can love mermaids?

What are things you love to do or dress as?  
Are they seen as boy things or girl things?

3 Is there a time where maybe someone said  
that playing video games or sports is a boy  
thing or playing with dolls is a girl thing?  
How did that make you feel?

Whether you're a boy, girl, neither of these  
things or both of these things is called  
gender. Where do you think we get our  
gender from? Who decides our gender (you  
decide your own gender)

5 Who are some adults in your life that you  
feel comfortable talking to about gender?  
What makes them feel safe?

