Growing up i read so many books. my mother is an educator and my home was filled them. On holidays and family gatherings we would trade around our favorite books, adding out name to the list in the cover that marked who had read which books. i participated in the Pizza Hut book challenge, the movie theater reading challenge, and the library’s summer challenge. i read every book on the summer reading list, even if we only had to pick two because i wanted to have the best choice of projects, the ability to talk about the books with other people no matter which books they had chosen, and because i loved to read.

In books i lived many lives. i was a wizard that walked the halls of ancient castles with Hermione, Ron, and Harry learning to stand up for what’s right and for my friends. i learned math, gentleness, and love from Miss Honey. i learned that a good name goes a long way but it is better to earn that good name than be given one like Tikki Tikki Tembo. i learned that nothing was impossible in my imagination while i learned to think with a Rink-Rinker-Fink. i learned the importance of story, tradition, and culture while walking with Native people and of flowers i didn’t know actually existed until in moved here to Texas.

i lived many lives that helped me to navigate this world and to try and be a person with morals, integrity, respect, and bit of adventure. But i didn’t begin to live authentically in my skin in *this* world until my 20s. i had never met myself in any of the many books i had read. i could be a sneech on a beach, a flower painting the hills of this beautiful land, a bright young wizard, but i couldn’t be myself. i was well read young adult with good morals and i hated living in my body.

Now there are so many age-appropriate books where children can continue to learn strong values of friendship, love, adventure, honesty, and authenticity. The opportunity to take a small adventure in a story in which our children might see themselves should not be denied but celebrated. Our children can see themselves as a crayon of a color truly they are, as a child that celebrates exactly who they are in this world, or as a green rabbit duck celebrated for both the ability to fly and to hop. Our children deserve to learn to navigate this world in the stories they read. The pride badge offers one way for children to encounter themselves and imagine a world that is ready for them regardless of who they grow into, while us adults try to make that story a reality. Give them the chance to find themselves in this story of life.