Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes tells the story of different babies who come into the world from different places, in different ways, and have different lives, yet all have one thing in common—ten fingers and ten toes. Focusing on the joys of the most simple and exciting part of a baby’s life and using a simple rhyme, the authors help readers realize that underneath all the differences that identify us, we are all still the same. Although individuals of any age would enjoy this book due to the colorful illustrations and true innocence of the story, the primary audience of the book would be that of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. These age groups are just at the beginning of discovering not only themselves but also others and how everyone is different yet the same.

This message of differences yet sameness can be shared with audiences of all ages. For example, infants and toddlers, the youngest audience, enjoy looking at themselves and are fascinated with other children their age and size as they develop their own sense of self. One of the greatest things for an infant is the discovery that they have hands to grab and use and that they have toes. Toddlers enjoy discovering that they “have a voice”
and are individuals separate from the other children. With the simple and colorful illustrations, infants will be attracted to look at the book, pointing at the children who “look like them” and have the same ten fingers and ten toes that they have discovered on their own bodies. Additionally, toddlers will enjoy the illustrations and then report that they too have the “ten fingers and ten toes” and they are “mine” to keep.

Preschool children, who continue to understand themselves in relation to others, love comparing themselves to other preschoolers and showing off how much they know. This age group will enjoy the story and use the illustrations to share their knowledge of their own body as well as others’ bodies. As the illustrations show the fingers and toes wriggling in the air, preschoolers will love to show that they too have fingers and toes that can wriggle in the air. Preschoolers will also be prompted by the story of the baby “ . . . who was born far away” (unpaged) and “who was born in a town” (unpaged) to describe their own story of where they were born, when they get sick, or that they too have a tent at home.

The simple story created around the illustrations also aids in attracting children of these young ages. Young children enjoy and have a craving for books to be read to them or to “read” the books themselves. With the language used, children can enjoy listening to the story and even possibly participate in “reading” the story when they see the fingers and toes throughout. The repetition of the phrase “ten fingers and ten toes” encourages young children to not only participate in reading but to also to begin to make the connection between letters, words, and print on a page. All these activities contribute to a young child’s early reading skills. Having a story about babies who are just like them only makes it easier to encourage the development of these skills.

Besides allowing young children to relate to the babies in the story and having a simple story to enjoy, one of the great assets of this book is that it could easily be utilized to help young children understand diversity and community. Visually, the illustrations show that babies come in all shapes, sizes, colors, and abilities. They are all different in what they look like on the outside, how healthy or sick they are, and where they came from, yet they all have ten fingers and ten toes. The community of babies that is developed through the story is unforgettable as at the end the babies are laughing and giggling as new babies come into the group and discover that they too have ten fingers and ten toes like the others.

About the Author

Candace Shaffer earned her master’s degree in Child Development and Family Studies from Purdue University. She currently resides in Lafayette, Indiana, and has worked in the Early Childhood field for over twelve years.