



DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS?

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVELS: 3 – 5

LENGTH OF TIME: 2 sessions of 35 – 40-minutes (plus homework or additional in-class writing time)

GOALS

- To explore student identities and to understand that everyone has multiple identities.
- To see that people's identities are similar in some ways and different in others.
- To understand the importance of seeing your identity as well as the identities of others in books and stories.



Objectives

- Students will be able to describe and identify multiple identities.
- Students will be able to analyze how people's identities are represented in books with visual and text clues.
- Students will be able to write a book review evaluating how characters' identities are similar to and different from their own.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text. (Also RL.3.1 and 5.1)
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own [ideas] clearly. (Also SL.3.1 and 5.1)
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.1: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information. (Also W.3.1 and 5.1)

EDUCATORS' NOTES

Students will begin with an inspiring video about Marley Dias, who founded the #1000BlackGirlBooks project when she was in 5th grade. After noticing that most of her assigned texts featured boys and dogs, she set out to collect at least 1,000 books featuring Black girls as the main character. Her project went viral, and she has collected and given away thousands of books.

In this lesson, students will look at characters in a selection of classroom books, noticing if characters represent their identities or not and reflecting on how that might make them feel. Students will also reflect on the importance of diverse literature in giving them an opportunity to learn about people who are different from them.



Marley Dias, at a young age, recognized the importance of finding mirrors (reflections of self) and windows (views into other people's identities and experiences) in books:

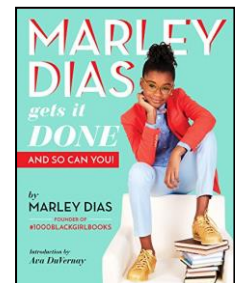
"I believe Black girl books are really important because when you are young you want to read lots of books, but you especially like to read books with people that look like you. While I have books at home about Black girls, the books at school were not diverse. Children do most of their reading in schools or because of schools. Teachers assign books that you must read. If those books are not diverse and do not show different people's experiences, then kids are going to believe that there is only one type of experience that matters. Also, if books are not diverse, then kids will not learn about the experiences of other members in their community." -- [Marley Dias](#)

Caldecott Award-winning author and illustrator [Christopher Myers](#) sees books as road maps to help children imagine their future. He says,

"Books are used as ways that kids can make road maps for their own lives, and if we don't give them proper road maps, where are they going to end up?"

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- An assortment of illustrated children's books featuring racially diverse characters from your classroom, school or local library (enough books so that each student or pair of students review one) For ideas go to: [Welcoming Schools Great Diverse Books for Your School](#)
- Handout: Book Review Graphic Organizer (attached)
- Handout: Reading Diversity Checklist (attached)
- Video: [NJ TV Interview 11-Year-Old Marley Dias Creates Change Through #1000BlackGirlBooks Campaign](#) (2:53 minutes)
- Computer, internet connection, projector and screen or TV
- Optional: sample book review
- Optional: Marley Dias Gets It Done: And So Can You! by Marley Dias



SESSION 1

WARM-UP DISCUSSION—LOOKING AT WHAT IDENTITY MEANS

- Talk with your students about their identities and what makes them who they are.
 - List words that help describe a person's identity, such as: gender, race, skin color, ethnicity, home language, religion, who you love (sexual orientation), where you are from, age and/or ability. Encourage students to suggest others.
 - Help students define any unfamiliar words.

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- Pick a well-known character from a book that the class has recently read or a historical or well-known figure.
 - Brainstorm words that represent identities for this person.
 - Emphasize to students that we cannot know how someone identifies unless they tell us. In books, we can look to the text for clues about someone's identity.
 - Talk about appearance-based stereotypes. Examples include:
 - We cannot assume someone identifies as a boy because they have short hair or based on the clothes they wear (gender expression).
 - We cannot assume where someone is from or what languages they may speak based on the color of their skin or the clothes they wear.

A LOOK AT THE #1000BLACKGIRLSBOOKS CAMPAIGN

- Show students the [NJTV News clip](#), then discuss these questions:
 - What is the goal of Marley's campaign?
 - Why did Marley start this campaign?
- Thinking back on the identity terms discussed earlier, what were some of the things Marley looked for in the books she read?
- Why is it important to read about how people's identities are similar and different from our own?

SESSION 2

REVIEWING CHILDREN'S BOOKS FOR DIVERSITY OF THE CHARACTERS' IDENTITIES

- Ask students to form small groups (or group students to ensure a diversity of reading abilities).
 - Give each group two or three (ensure a range of difficulty).
 - Ask the group to read and review them.
- Have each student record their observations in their "Book Review Graphic Organizer."
 - Tell them to indicate on the organizer whether they would recommend the book to someone else.
- After each small group of students has read their stories and completed their graphic organizers, bring the full class together to share their findings. Based on the prior discussion of identity characteristics, ask your students:
- How are you similar to or different from the characters in the stories you have just read?
- How does it make you feel to see children who look like you or who you can relate to based on one or more of their identities?
- Why is it important to see and learn about people who are different from you or only share some of your identities?

A CLOSER LOOK AT ONE BOOK

- Ask students to choose one of the books they read when they completed the “Book Review Graphic Organizer.”
- Review the “Reading Diversity Checklist” with the students.
- Have the students use the “Reading Diversity Checklist” to look more closely at the book they have chosen.

BOOK REVIEW

- For homework or during an additional in-class writing period, ask students to write a book review and indicate if and why they would or would not recommend a selected book. Students can use the “Book Review Graphic Organizer” and one or two questions from the “Reading Diversity Checklist” to explain their recommendations.

EXTENSIONS

- Consider making the book reviews available to students in other classes.
- If students find gaps in your classroom library, have them research and recommend books that they would like to see included. Some websites to look at for ideas include: Welcoming Schools Great Diverse Books for Your School or 1000 Black Girl Books Resource Guide, and Read Brightly Diversity List.
- Show additional short videos about Marley Dias: Meet Marley Dias, The Force Behind #1000BlackGirlBooks (1:51) and Marley Dias Continues to Find the Color in Kid’s Literature (4:27).
- Read sections of the new book by Marley Dias, *Marley Dias Gets It Done: And So Can You!*

ASSESSMENT

- Review your students’ “Reading Diversity Checklists.” Are the students able to describe and name multiple identities? Are they showing awareness and vocabulary to discuss whether books mirror their identity and/or give them windows into other experiences?
- Listen to your students talk about the literature in your classroom or library. Are they able to discuss and analyze whether the literature is providing windows and/or mirrors?
- Are they able to find stereotypes in books and have critical conversations about that?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM WELCOMING SCHOOLS

- [Welcoming Schools Great Diverse Books for Your School](#)
- [Lesson Plans to Prevent Bias-Based Bullying in School](#)
- [Preventing Bias-Based Bullying – School Resources](#)
- [Professional Development Training](#)

Credit: Adapted from Teaching Tolerance [Discovering My Identity Lesson](#)

BOOK REVIEW GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

Name _____

After reading one of the picture books, fill in the organizer.

Book Title _____

Author _____

Summary of the Book

Are most of the characters similar to or different from me? Some characters can be both similar and different.

Similar (mirrors) Different (windows)

How are they the same and/or different?

Would you recommend this book?

Yes No

Explain _____

READING DIVERSITY CHECKLIST

Name _____

Choose one book and answer the following questions.

Book Title _____

Author _____

Among the main characters in the book: Are there people of different ages?	Yes	No
Are there people of color?	Yes	No
Are there white people?	Yes	No
Are there both girls/women and boys/men?	Yes	No
Do the people and situations in the book seem real to you?	Yes	No
Does the illustrator draw people in ways that look respectful to their identities?	Yes	No
Are people in the book described as good or bad because of their race, gender, age or class? Are there stereotypes? Give an example: _____	Yes	No
Do the illustrations in this book show people with diverse gender expressions?	Yes	No
Does the book talk about being included or excluded? Example: _____	Yes	No
Do you see ally behavior or people standing up for each other in the book? Who are they standing up for? _____	Yes	No
Does the book talk about people being treated fairly or unfairly?	Yes	No
Would you recommend this book to your friends?	Yes	No
Why would you recommend or not recommend this book?		