



RED: A CRAYON'S STORY — THERE'S MORE TO ME THAN YOU CAN SEE

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: K – 2

LENGTH OF TIME: One session of 35 minutes for reading and discussion; One project session of 45 minutes

GOALS

- To provide students with an opportunity to share some of their identities with classmates and teachers.
- To explore the concept of identity with students and embrace differences within the classroom community.
- To explore the concept of gender identity with students.



OBJECTIVES

- Students will listen to and discuss the text and images in the book *Red: A Crayon's Story*.
- Students will explore their internal identity by creating a personal crayon with the writing prompt "There's More To Me Than You Can See."
- Students will begin to understand that we cannot know someone based on their appearance—we are all complex people with many identities.

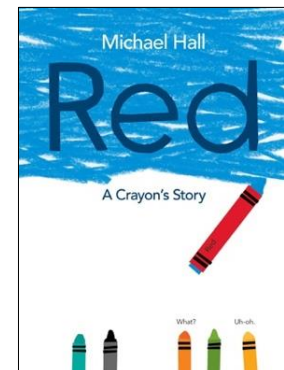
ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups. (Also SL.K.1 and 2.1)
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.2: Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood. (Also SL.K.2 and 2.2)
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.5: Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts and feelings. (Also SL.K.5 and 2.5)

EDUCATORS' NOTES

The book *Red: A Crayon's Story* by Michael Hall follows Red, a crayon with a bright red label, who is in fact blue. Red's teacher, mother, and classmates all try to help him be red. But Red is miserable. He just can't be red, no matter how hard he tries! Finally, a brand-new friend offers a new perspective, and Red discovers what readers have known all along. He's blue!

It is natural for young children to notice differences. This lesson offers an opportunity to build classroom community by giving students a



chance to share and learn about each other's differences and authentic selves. The message of this story is to find and be true to your inner self and inner strengths, despite obstacles.

Each student will create a crayon about themselves that explores their inner identities after a class reading of the book. We provide some helpful questions and talking points to use with your students when reading this text. This lesson provides a wonderful opportunity to discuss multiple identities with young children. We provide many examples around identity to discuss with your students. This lesson will also provide students an opportunity to understand that how we feel on the inside is personal and unique to each of us.

This lesson can be utilized to discuss the complexity of gender identity with your students. We offer a recommendation to read *I Am Jazz* along with *Red* to create text to text connections around Jazz's gender identity. We also give helpful talking points around non-binary gender identities. Non-binary students may feel that neither the word "boy" or "girl" fits for them, they may feel like they are both or neither. Some non-binary people use pronouns such as they, them and theirs.

This lesson also explores the concept of gender expression—one of the many forms of expression where we share who we are with items such as our clothes and hair. It is important to teach young children that we cannot assume someone's gender identity based upon their gender expression. For example, we should not assume that someone with short hair is a boy. This lesson provides some essential tools for students to get to know each other respectfully and without assumptions based on physical appearances.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- *Red: A Crayon's Story* by Michael Hall
- *There's More To Me Than You Can See* – Activity templates attached
- Colored cardstock or heavy weight paper for "crayon"
- White or colored paper for "crayon wrapper"
- Scissors, tape, pencils and crayons

SESSION ONE:

READ AND DISCUSS THE BOOK

Cover of the book.

- Show the cover of the book to your students and ask them what they see. (Make sure to ask students who have read the book before not to give away the ending.) Students will notice that the wrapper says red, but the crayon is blue.

He was red. But he wasn't very good at it.

- Ask your students what it means that he wasn't very good at it. What is happening? (He is trying to be something that he isn't.)

His teacher thought he needed more practice.

- Ask your students what the teacher wants Red to do. Do they think Red is going to be able to do this?

Why don't you two go draw a nice round orange, a really big one.

- Pause and ask students what they think is going to happen before you turn to the next page. (They make a big greenish one).

Everyone seemed to have something to say.

- Read the comments that other crayons are making about Red. Are the other crayons being allies to Red? (see definition) Are any of them helping Red with their words or actions? (No. Most of the comments made are not words that help. They are words that hurt or put-downs.)

All of the art supplies wanted to help.

- Ask your students if the art supplies are being allies to Red? (Yes, the art supplies are trying to help. They just aren't sure what to do.)

One day he met a new friend. Will you make a blue ocean for my boat?

- Pause on this page and ask your students if anything different is happening. (The new friend sees that Red is a blue crayon.)

I can't. I'm red. Will you try?

- Pause on this page and ask your students to give a word for what the friend is doing for Red. (Answers: encouraging, supporting, helping, believing in, being an ally.) Ask students to share if they have ever had a special person who sees them for who they are and encourages them.

You're welcome, it was easy.

- Pause on this page and ask your students why it is easy for Red to draw the water? What is different? (The friend sees that Red is really blue and encourages him to try. Red *is* blue, so being himself is easy. Things have been hard because he was being asked to be red, and he is not red.)

AFTER READING THE BOOK

- Ask your students if they can think of examples or share an identity or a part of themselves that others may not know about just by looking at them.
- Examples might include:
 - Someone who is transgender or trans.
 - *I Am Jazz* is a great book to read and compare to *Red: A Crayon's Story*. Jazz and Red have similar feelings.
 - Someone who looks at me might not know that my family is Jewish, Muslim or Hindu.
 - Someone who looks at me might not know that my mom has a different color skin than me.
 - Someone who looks at me might not know that I have two Dads.
 - Someone who looks at me may think I like basketball because I'm tall, but really I like dancing.
 - Someone may assume I like trucks because I'm a boy, but I really like drawing.

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- Someone who looks at me may think my parents are black because I am, but they are white. I am adopted.
 - Someone who looks at me may think I am a girl, but I am non-binary and my pronouns are they/them.
 - Someone who hears me read may think I cannot read very well because they have only asked me to read in English, but I can read in Spanish really well.
 - Someone may not think I can read very well because they have only heard me read out loud, but I can read to myself really well.
 - Someone may think I'm not good at sports if they've only seen me play baseball because it's hard for me to hit the ball, but I'm great at soccer because I love to run.
 - Someone may not think I am good at basketball because I am in a wheel chair, but I am really good at shooting hoops.

SESSION TWO:

THERE'S MORE TO ME THAN YOU CAN SEE CRAYON PROJECT

1. Pick a crayon template that best suits your students' needs.

- One has prompts written in each box: I like..., I don't like..., I feel...
- The other has blank boxes so that you can determine the prompts or to allow for more open ended responses by students.

2. Print one crayon for each student. (Two options)

- Print crayons on various colors of cardstock/construction paper and have students pick the crayon color that they want.
- Print crayons on white paper and have the students color their crayon the color they want.

3. Print one crayon wrapper for each student. (Two options)

- Print the crayon wrapper on various colors of cardstock/construction paper and have students pick the color they want.
- Print the crayon wrapper on white paper and have the students color their wrapper the color they want.
- Note: Printing paper is easier to fold than construction paper or cardstock.

4. Ask your students to answer the prompts on the crayon.

- For the template with blank boxes, you could ask your students to share an identity or a part of themselves that others may not know about just by looking at them.

5. How to assemble the crayon and the wrapper.

- Cut around the crayon.
- For the wrapper, cut on the solid line on the outside of the crayon wrapper.
- Cut the wrapper in half on the dashed line in the middle of the word "crayon."
- Fold on the dotted lines on both sides.
- Wrap the wrapper around the crayon, one part on each side.
- Tape or glue the back tabs of the wrapper to the crayon. The front flaps will then be able to open and close.

SHARING ARTWORK

- Give students an opportunity to share their work with each other and talk about things that are different and special about them.

EXTENSION

- Put all of the students' artwork up in your classroom with the title "There's More To Me Than You Can See."

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- Offer an opportunity for students to share their writing with each other in pairs. Direct students to share one thing they like about their own project with a classmate. Next, ask students to give an appreciation to their partner about their picture.
- Assessment for this lesson will be mostly informal. You should observe your students' reactions during class and small-group discussions. By paying attention to their conversations and individual responses, you can assess their comprehension of diversity and their ability to apply this when exploring their own differences.
- Informally observe students as they work in their groups. Are they respectful? Do they listen to each other?

ADDITIONAL BOOKS

I Am Jazz. Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings.

A House for Everyone. Jo Hirst.

Introducing Teddy: A gentle story about gender and friendship. Jessica Walton.

Backwards Day. S. Bear Bergman.

DIVERSE AND UP-TO-DATE RESOURCES FROM WELCOMING SCHOOLS

[Lessons Plans to Help Students Understand Gender](#)

[Books that Look at Gender and Support Transgender and Non-Binary Youth](#)

[Resources for Gender-Inclusive Schools and Supporting Transgender and Non-Binary Students](#)

[Defining LGBTQ Words for Elementary School Students](#)

[Professional Development Training](#)

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I don't like....

I feel....

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CRAYON