

LESSON 1: *ALL THE COLORS WE ARE*

The story of How We Get Our Skin Color

TODOS LOS COLORES DE NUESTRA PIEL

La historia de por qué tenemos diferentes colores de piel

Note to teacher: There are several activities that you can do with your students that are included with the book. Look them over before you read the book to your students, as you may want to prepare one for an after reading activity.

THEME: Appreciate diversity

BOOK: *All the Colors We Are – The Story of How We Get Our Skin Color*
Todos los colores de nuestra piel – La historia de por qué tenemos diferentes colores de piel

Written by Katie Kissinger and photography by Chris Bohnhoff

MATERIALS:

- ***Laminated Poster 1 or on Smart Board:** Include title, author, & illustrator (photographer) of book along with Vocabulary words:
shade – the darkness or lightness of a color
melanin – tiny grains of coloring in our skin that we cannot see
ancestors – relatives from a long, long time ago
tone – another word that can mean shade
- **Map of the world**
- **Chart paper**
- **Paint chips showing different shades**
- **Poem – “Don’t Judge the Color of My Skin”** By: Naomi Johnson
- **Alternative poem: “We Are All Different”**
- **Vis-à-Vis marker** (If using laminated poster for vocabulary words or poem)
- **Highlighter tape** (optional to highlight vocabulary words)
- **Melanin Geography Activity sheet**
- **Optional:** There are templates for bookmarks that have poems that mention skin. They can be printed it out, discussed and given to students

POSSIBLE LITERACY FOCUS: in Poem: Vocabulary words and phrases:

substance: the important part of something; meaning

possess: to own or have

compose: create, produce

the root of my spiritual fruit: the result or rewards (fruit) that comes from one’s background or culture beginnings (the root)

obtain: get; (like gain)

defuse: to reduce the level of something

gain: to get, win or reach

balance views: when a person looks at both sides of a point or subject and thinks about them equally to make a decision that person has balance views

soul: the ability of a person to feel kindness and caring for others, to appreciate art and beauty

integrity: the quality of being honest and fair

humble: showing that you do not think of yourself as better than other people

BEFORE READING OF STORY/DISCUSSION:

SHOW BOOK COVER: Cover the English title of the book with hand. *Can you tell what this book is about from the photographs on the front cover?* Discuss children's ideas. *Before I read the title of the book, I want to show you these paint chips and talk about the meaning of the word, "shade" when we talk about color.* Show a paint chip that has shades of red, blue, or yellow. Then show a paint chip that shows shades of brown and discuss the lightness and darkness of the shades. Before reading title, read author and photographer's names. First read the title of the book in Spanish. *Do any of you understand what I just read? I just read in the Spanish language. This book is a bilingual book, as it is written in two languages - English and Spanish. Some people can speak more than one language or are learning other languages beside their first language. How many of you can speak another language beside English? I will read the book in English, as everybody in this class speaks English, or is learning English in this class. I will try a few paragraphs in Spanish, so you can hear what it sounds like.* If teacher has experience in learning another language, please share a little of it with students. Read English title and author and illustrator's names. *As I read the book, I like you to think about the author's purpose in writing the book.*

READ STORY

AFTER READING:

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK /DISCUSS: As you are asking questions and discussing answers, write the children responses to the questions about the information they learned from the book on some chart paper. *Why do you think the author wrote this book? Did she want us to learn a lesson, entertain us, or give us information? Were you entertained by this book? Did we get information from this book? Did you learn new information? On the first page, it said even though we often say a person's skin is black or white, that is not really true. We are all shades of one color. **What color is that?** (Shades of brown). **How do we get our own special color of skin?** (From our parents and from our relatives who lived long ago – ancestors, and from something called melanin) Yes, remember that word melanin. **What is melanin?** (Tiny grains of coloring in our skin from the sun) **Is the shade of skin light or dark brown when the melanin is not very busy?** (Light) **What is the***

shade of brown when the body's melanin is very busy? (Dark) What is melanin's most important job? (To protect our skin from sunburn) What shade of brown would a person probably have if his ancestors lived in a place where it was cool and had little sunshine? (Light brown) And if the ancestors came from a very warm and sunny place? (Dark brown) It seems like the author wanted to give us scientific information on why we have different "colors" of skin. She is not making judgements of any shades of skin. She does not say that one is better than the other. She gives us the scientific information on why we all have a variety of skin shades.

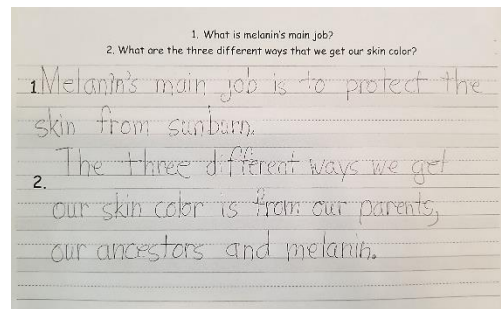
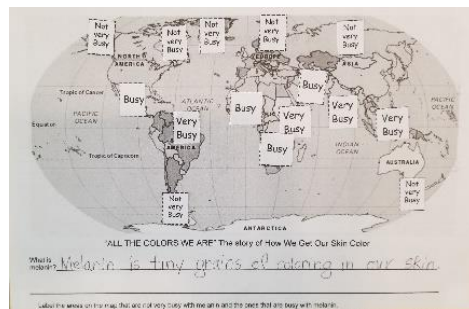
AFTER DISCUSSION: You may choose to do the poem or Melanin Geography Activity.

The poem can be done the next day. Refer back to the book.

POEM – “Don’t Judge the Color of My Skin” by Naomi Johnson

Note to teacher: If you find this poem to be too difficult for your students, you may want to choose the alternative poem. Hand out a copy of poem to all children. Project it large on Smart Board, if possible, or have it printed on poster board or chart paper. Go over poem and discuss vocabulary words and meaning of poem. See: Possible Literacy Focus. Also refer to the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. words (Printed on one of the bookmarks): I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but the content of their character” Have children add this poem to their poem book, if applicable. The alternative poem does not have as many difficult concepts or vocabulary words.

After discussion and writing of responses to discussion questions on chart paper, have the children do the activity. The activity is printed back-to-back. Or you can just use one side. You can do it as a whole classroom activity, group activity or each child can do it at their own desk. Show Page 25 again to students and remind them of where the equator is and how places on or near the equator are very warm and very sunny, but not necessarily the hottest places on earth. There is less sun and warmth in places that are closer to the north and south pole.



“Don't Judge the Color of My Skin“

By: Naomi Johnson

Don't judge me for the color of my skin.
But from the substance I have within.
My intellect I possess.
And the strength I compose.
The root of my spiritual fruit.
And the knowledge I obtain.
The wisdom I gain.
And the words I use.
My balance views.
The confusion I defuse.
My peaceful depth of soul.
That I keep under control.
The integrity I display.
And my humble ways.
My image I project.
With self-respect.
The complete work I do.
And how I see things through.
For there are several elements still I hold.
Even the hidden qualities I yet unfold.
So don't judge the color of my skin from what you see.
You do not know me.

We Are All Different

We have different color skin,
And different color eyes,
And the bodies we're in
Are all a different size.

Some are short.

Some are tall.

Some are curvy.

Some are lean.

Your body's right for you,
And my body's right for me.
We're good at different things.

Where I struggle,

You may shine.

What you can do so quickly,
Might take me some time.

Where one person is strong,
Someone else might be weak.

I'm glad we have these differences
That make each of us unique.

Theresa Gaugan

We are not our
hair.
We are not our
skin.
We are our soul
That lives
within
We are stars
Wrapped in
skin.
The light we
seek has always
been within.

Words are
from Poet
-Rumi-

I have a dream
that my four
little children will
one day
live in a nation
where they will
not be judged by
the color of their
skin, but the
content of their
character.

-Martin Luther King Jr.

Colors

My skin is kind of
Sort of brownish
Pinkish yellowish
white.

My eyes are greyish
blueish green,
But I' m told they
look orange in the
night.

My hair is reddish
blondish brown,
But it' s silver
whenit' s wet.

And all the colors I
am inside
Have not been
invented yet.

-Shel Silverstein-

This article was added from the Teach Peace Now website”, It has good information about how we talk about skin color.

<https://teachpeacenow.com/skin-color-names/>

What Color is Your Skin? Choosing Color Names

Anti-Racism Activities, Literacy & Writing, Peace Education Activities Poetry activity, skin color, skin color names

HAVE YOU EVER TRIED TO DESCRIBE THE COLOR OF YOUR SKIN?

For fiction writers, especially those writing multicultural books and those for children, coming up with color names to describe skin is an ongoing challenge. Coming up with color names for skin often crops up with children’s lessons on racism and in literature classes, too. A teacher, for example, may want to describe a character in a story or a group may be involved in an activity talking about discrimination by skin color.

Today we are going to turn to writers for some suggestions on how to talk about and describe skin colors without being offensive.

Let’s start with two ways of naming skin colors that are inadvisable.

FOOD COLOR NAMES

For some reason, brown skin is often described using food items and spices. Calling skin the color of food and edibles has two unintentional and offensive consequences. First of all it fetishes certain skin colors and adds sensuality that better belongs in a romance than in a learning activity or serious discussion of race. It can also seem a little creepy, especially as food terms are most often applied to people of color. Writer Mod Collette says:

*“**NEVER** use the words ‘chocolate’ or ‘coffee’ or any other food related word to describe someone’s skin color, especially someone of color. I wrote a whole paper about how referring to darker skin tones as specifically chocolate was about aggression and appropriation and has links to colonialism. Think about it, what is the best way to show dominance? By eating someone – like in the animal kingdom. It’s a disgusting practice, so please watch yourself while writing biographies and replying to people, or even in your short stories/novels.”*

GIVING COLOR NAMES ONLY TO NON-WHITE COLOR SKIN

The second thing to avoid in talking about skin color is naming only non-white skin by special color names. This often happens in novels where only the skin color of people of color are described – the assumption being that being white is the default color.

WHAT COLOR NAMES CAN WE USE?

But just because you can't use some terms, doesn't mean you shouldn't talk about skin color. It is essential that you do. Check out [All the Colors We Are](#) and [Talking About Skin Color](#) to learn why.

Here are suggestions for ways to name skin colors. You can find more ideas at [Writing With Color](#).

Use the basics: black, brown, tan, beige, white, pink

Try these artist paint color names: umber, sepia, ochre, russet, sienna, terra cotta, gold, tawny, taupe, khaki, fawn

Add a color modifier: dark, deep, rich cool, medium, fair, light, pale

For more creative terms, you can find natural materials and natural changes to compare skin tones to such as autumn leaves, sand, night, sunsets, dusk.

RELATED READING ON SKIN COLOR

Children's Picture Books About the Color of Skin

[All the Colors We Are](#) – in Volume 3 ABC Kind

[Let's Talk About Race](#)

[The Skin You Live In](#)

[Skin Again](#)

[Shades of People](#) – in Volume 1 -ABC Kind