

Lesson 7: Celebrating the Skin You're In

"And like flowers in the fields, that make wonderful views, when we stand side-by-side in our wonderful hues. We all make a beauty so wonderfully true."

—Michael Tyler

Social Justice Standards: Identity 3, Diversity 6

Summary

Some people are raised not to talk about skin color, but like all phenotypic characteristics, skin color is something to be talked about and celebrated! In the following lesson, you'll find help in opening up a dialogue with your children or students about all the beautiful and varied shades that people come in as well as explore the physiological purpose of skin and scientific reasons that our hues differ from one another. Reading these books together is a great way to show your wonder and appreciation for the range of human beauty.

Booklist

- *Shades of People* by Shelley Rotner and Sheila M. Kelly
- *We're Different, We're the Same* by Bobbi Jane Kates, illustrated by Joe Mathieu
- *Happy in our Skin* by Fran Manushkin, illustrated by Lauren Tobia
- *All the Colors We Are/Todos Los Colores de Nuestra Piel* by Katie Kissinger, photography by Chris Bohnhoff
- *The Skin You Live In* by Michael Tyler, illustrated by David Lee Csicko
- *Shades of Black: A Celebration of Our Children* by Sandra L. Pinkney, photography by Myles C. Pinkney
- *Our Skin: A First Conversation About Race* by Megan Madison, Jessica Ralli, and Isabel Roxas
- *Bodies Are Cool* by Tyler Feder
- *Stella's Stellar Hair* by Yesenia Moises
- *Honeysmoke: A Story of Finding Your Color* by Monique Fields, illustrated by Yesenia Moises

Consider This

- Were you raised to not see color or have “colorblindness”? Has that changed?
- How comfortable do you feel talking about race?
- What would you like to know more about when it comes to race and differences in skin color?
- How was skin color integrated into the culture you grew up in? Think about the positive and negative narratives you heard and how they affected your thinking.

Talk Together

- How would you describe your skin?
- Is everyone’s skin in your family the same? How is it the same and different?
- Other than skin color, what other differences do you see in the people around you?
- What sounds more fun and interesting—being around people that all look the same, or being around people with a lot of differences?

Engage

- When the books call for it, have your child or students create their own skin color using paints, crayons, or play dough. Utilize multicultural crayons to color pictures that reflect the world and the scenes they see in the books.

Inclusive Toys:

- Colorations Color Like Me Dough (Skin color play dough)
- Crayola Colors of the World Crayons
- My Family Builders

Explore More

- “The Benefits of Teaching Children to See Race” by Natalie Seitz (PBS Kids for Parents)
- Embrace Race’s “Reading Race in Picture Books with Children”
- *Bringing Up Race: How to Raise a Kind Child in a Prejudiced World* by Uju Asika (Sourcebooks, 2021)
- “Celebrating Skin Tone: The Science and Poetry of Skin Color” by Katharine Johnson, illustrated by Sheila Hamanaka (Rethinking Schools)