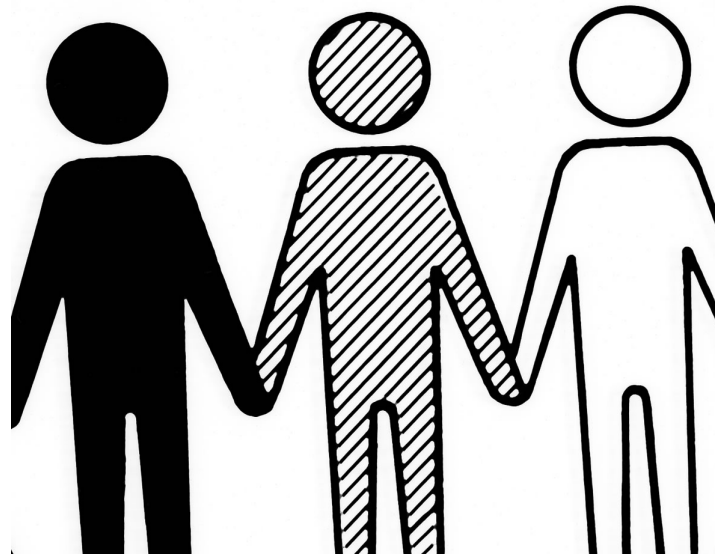


TACKLING RACISM



DOES RACE MATTER TODAY?

IMPORTANT NOTES TO TEACHERS:

Purpose: This unit is designed to get young children to think critically about race. It is created to teach them to use racially sensitive language and give them a space to explore the role race plays in their daily lives. In this way it aims to combat color muteness and colorblind racism.

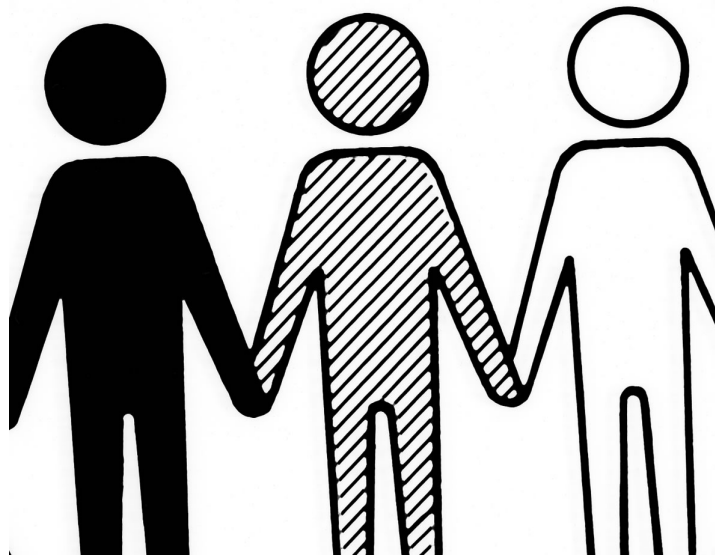
Most research shows that young learners are not given time in school to discuss race and racism. The crux of this unit is the discussions the children are encouraged to have.

Although this unit is only composed of 5 core lessons, each lesson can be extended. Additional lessons should be developed around the topics that arise from the student's discussions. For additional resources please see the materials provided by Teaching Tolerance: A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center (<http://www.tolerance.org>)

How to use this unit: This unit is broken up into several lessons. The cover page can be copied along with the post lesson reflection pages to create a booklet for the students to work in as the unit progresses.

TACKLING RACISM

DOES RACE MATTER TODAY?

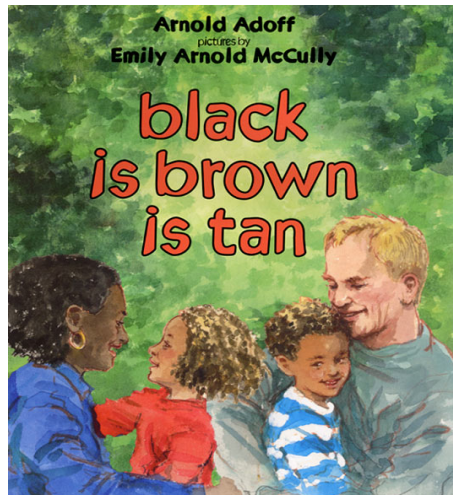


NAME: _____

LESSON ONE: THE SKIN WE'RE IN

Objectives: Students will be able to analyze their own skin color, and connect their physical characters to their parents. Children will begin to build a racial vocabulary. They will learn that people are labeled black and others white because these are the racial categorized society uses, not because of their literal skin tone.

Materials: Prior to lesson ask children to bring in pictures of their families.



Introduction:

The teacher should begin by showing the students a picture of his/her family. Explain to the class that today we are going to read a beautiful book, what is written like a poem, about a family. **NOTE:** Do not make any mention that this family is special or unique. The goal is to normalize the make up of the biracial family, nothing should be done or said to imply that it is an oddity.

Activity: Read the book *Black is Brown is Tan* by Arnold Adoff.

Discussion: After reading the book go back to the part where they refer to the dad as white, but not white like the snow. Ask the children if they know what the author meant by that. Explore the distinction with the children. Explain the use of the term white and black to describe groups of people who aren't actually white or black.

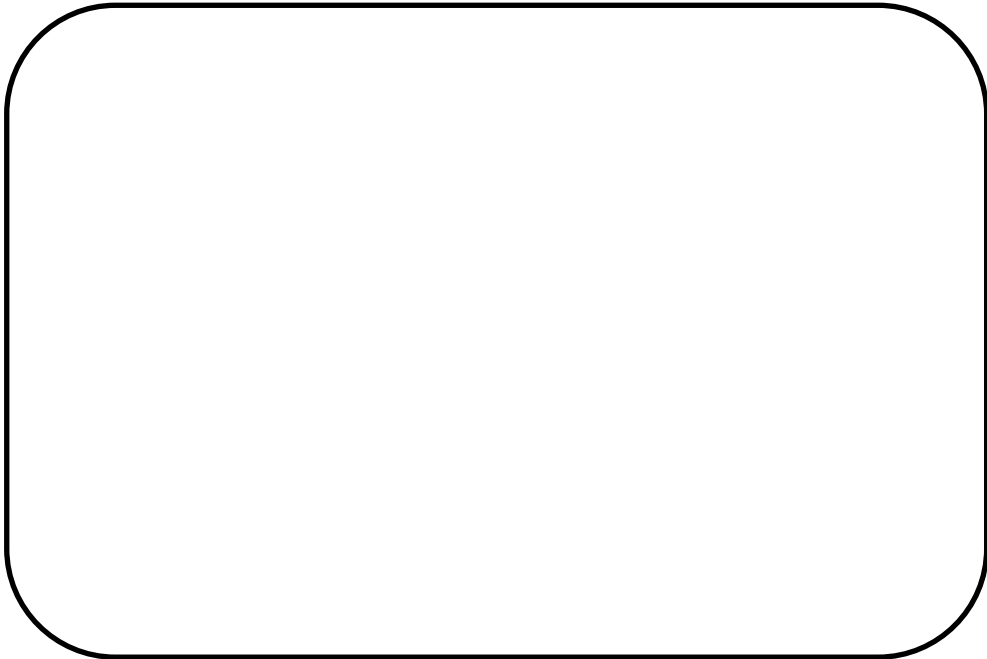
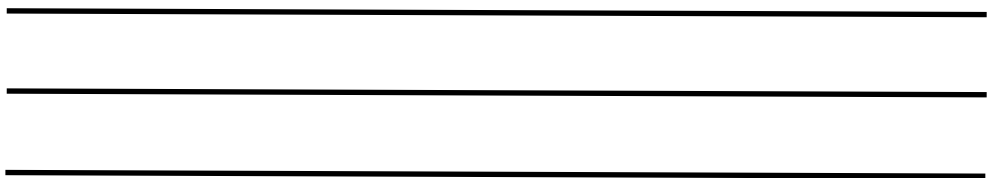
Conclusion: Have children sit with a partner and share their pictures of their family. Encourage the children who experiment with the racial terms black and white. Discuss other labels children might have heard, such as Latino/Latina, Filipino, ect. Have children fill out an exit ticket at the conclusion of this lesson to see what the children learned from this activity. (Two versions are provided, one for young children who mostly convey information through picture, and another with room for writing several sentences.)

Importance of this lesson: This lesson serves as an introduction to racial vocabulary. The children are exposed to terms they might not have really used before. It might be difficult at first for some teachers to be comfortable with terms like white and black. Reading more on race and racism might help, such as Beverly Tatum's *Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: and Other Conversations about Race*.

An illustration of a ticket stub with a scalloped edge, tilted at an angle. The words "EXIT" and "TICKET" are written on it in a bold, sans-serif font, one above the other.

**EXIT
TICKET**

**WHAT I LEARNED
FROM
LESSON ONE: THE
SKIN WE'RE IN**

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for students to write their responses to the lesson title.Three horizontal lines spaced evenly, providing additional space for students to write their answers.

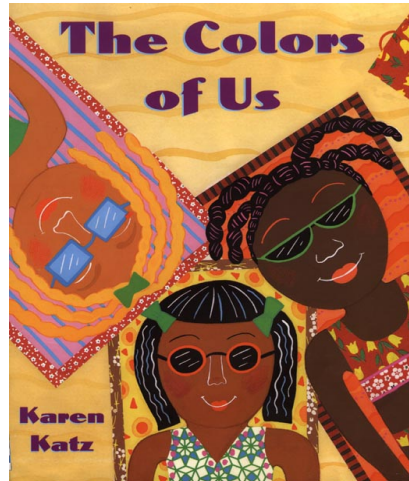
LESSON TWO: COLORS OF US

Objectives: Students will be able to discover adjectives that describe their skin color.

Approximate Lesson Length: 30 minutes

Material: *Colors of Us* by Karen Katz, large poster paper for adjective list

Introduction: Begin by re-reading the passage from *Black is Brown is Tan* that describes the mom's skin color. Explain to the class that today we are going to create a poster of adjectives we can use to describe our physical appearance. Start of the list with the adjectives used to describe the mother. (Chocolate brown)



Activity: Read the children the book *Colors of Us* by Karen Katz. Tell them to listen carefully to all the describing adjectives they hear.

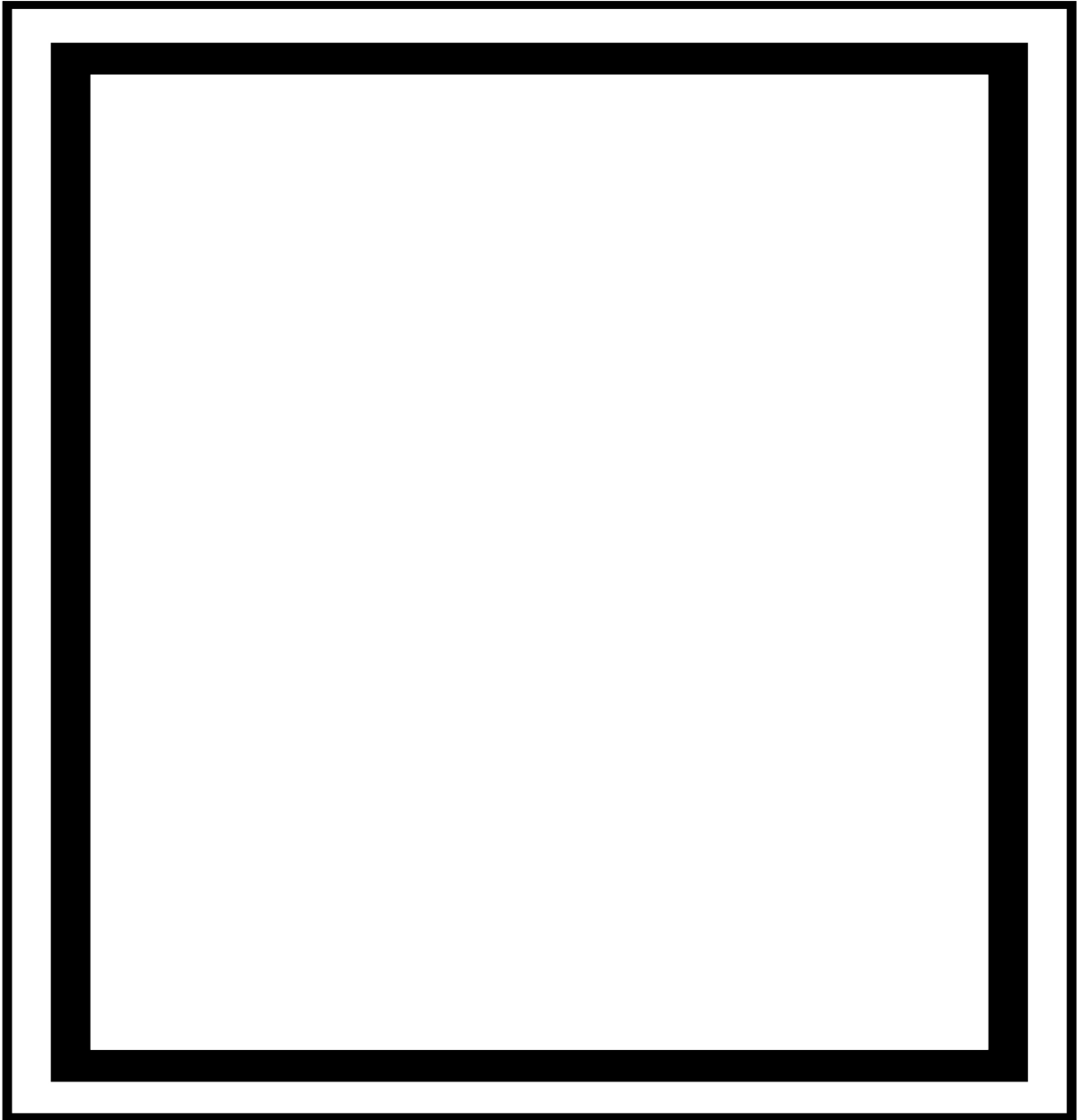
Discussion: First, have the children turn to their neighbor and tell that neighbor their favorite adjectives from the story. (If the students are able to write they can jot their adjectives down on a post-it. The post-its can be applied directly to the adjective list) Then have the children share out some of their adjectives from the story to add to the class list. See if any students can come up with additional adjectives.

Conclusion: Have the children write down their adjective on the recording sheet. If time and resources allow the student can make a self portrait mixing just the right colors like they did in the story.

Assessment: Children's ability to list adjectives is the assessment for this lesson.

Importance of this lesson: One of the reasons this lesson is important because it gets children way from the binary thinking of race as black and white. Children get to consider all variations in skin tone, and celebrate everyone's diversity. Exploring the beauty of every skin tone, the way the author does through descriptive language, allows the children to consider what they view as beautiful.

A SELF PORTRAIT OF



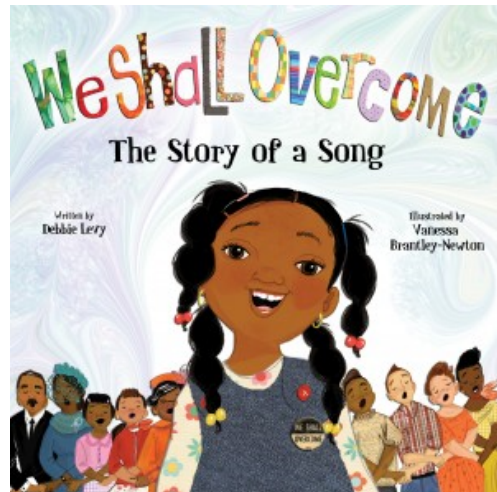
WITH _____ SKIN

LESSON THREE: WHAT IS RACISM?

Objectives: Students will be able to consider race relations in history and in the present day. They will be able to use the

Lesson Length: Approximately 30-45 minutes

Introduction: Read the book *We Shall Overcome* by Debbie Levy which provides a brief overview of race relations in American history. This is a good opportunity to check for prior knowledge on the legacy of racism in America. (ie: slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, Civil Rights movement)



Activity: Define racism for the students. This complicated topic is hard to nail down to one short simple child friendly definition, but I feel comfortable using “racism is when someone is treated differently or unfairly just because of their race or culture.”

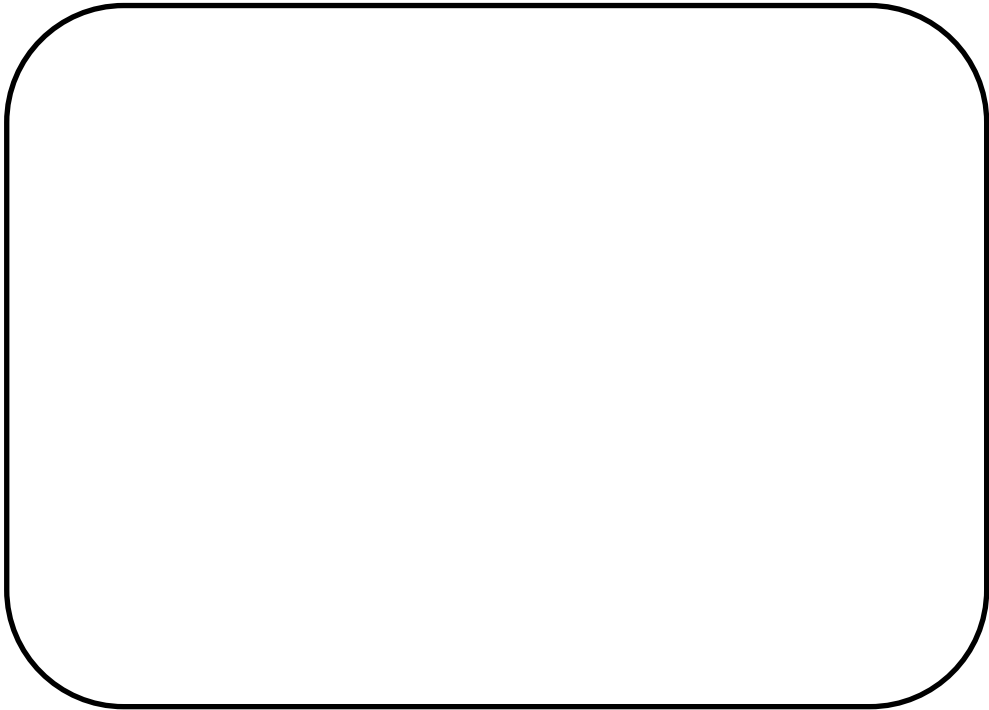
The end of the book suggests there is still more work to do to end racial injustice. This is the opening for the inquiry into whether or not race matters today. The teacher should facilitate the students in a student discussion, where the teacher says as little as possible and allows the students to share their own experiences.

Helpful Hint: If the children feel uncomfortable speaking for themselves the teacher might spark the conversation by asking if race matters to the children’s parents. This is a “back door” way to access what the children have experienced without being as threatening as asking them for their own opinions.

Purpose of this lesson: This lesson launches the inquiry into whether or not race matters to these children. This lesson, and the following lesson are designed to launch a deeper inquiry continues throughout the year, in literature, in current events, and in the student’s personal lives.

**EXIT
TICKET**

**THINGS I'M THINKING
ABOUT AFTER LESSON
THREE:
WHAT IS RACISM?**



**EXIT
TICKET**

**THINGS I'M THINKING
ABOUT AFTER
LESSON THREE:
WHAT IS RACISM?**

THINGS I WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS MORE IN THE FUTURE:

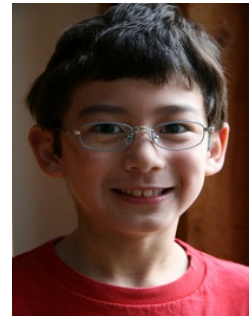
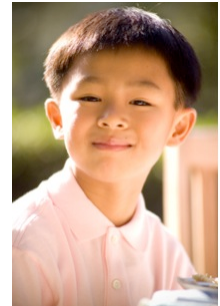
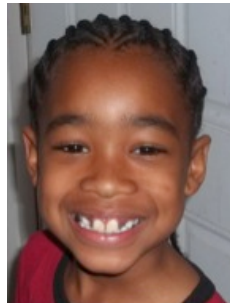
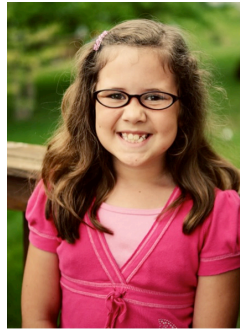
LESSON FOUR: WHO WOULD YOU PLAY WITH?

Activity: Show the students the images of multicultural students on the following page. Say to the class, "Pretend you are on a playground. None of your usual classmates or friends are there, just these children. Who would you play with? Write down your top two choices."

Discussion: After all of the students have written down their selections have the students turn and talk to a neighbor about their choices. Then do a quick group calculation of their choices. The teacher should lead the class in a discussion about who was selected the most and who was left alone to play. Make the class discuss why they found those results. Did the students pick children who were most like them? Why? The teacher should be sure to point out the values and disadvantages of having only similar peers.

Conclusion: The teacher should conclude the conversation with this exit question: What are the most important qualities in person to play with? The teacher should ask if any one changed their mind after talking to their classmates and thinking about it. The teacher should explain that its never a bad thing to change your mind.

Importance of this lesson: This lesson presents how race, ethnicity, and physical appearance manifests itself on a daily basis. It provides children with an opportunity to self reflect on their own personal biases.



NAME: _____ **RESPONSE SHEET**

WHO WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY WITH?

FRIEND ONE: _____

FRIEND TWO: _____



NAME: _____ **RESPONSE SHEET**

WHO WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY WITH?

FRIEND ONE: _____

FRIEND TWO: _____



NAME: _____ **RESPONSE SHEET**

WHO WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY WITH?

FRIEND ONE: _____

FRIEND TWO: _____



**LESSON FOUR:
WHAT WILL I
TAKE AWAY
FROM THIS
ACTIVITY?**

LESSON FIVE: WHAT TO DO WHEN MAKING FRIENDS IS HARD? PART ONE

Activity: Read *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson. (Read aloud available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgKteFSLPtE>)

Discussion: The illustrations from the book suggest the this story happened in the past. Share this information with the students, taken from the New York Public Library Live Chat (<http://www.nypl.org/author-chat-jacqueline-woodson>) Woodson wrote this story based on her experiences with present day segregation in Brooklyn, New York.

Get the children to discuss if they think this type of thing might happen today. Ask if it has happened to them.

If none of the students make the connection, remind the students of the pick a friend activity they recently completed.

Importance of this lesson: This lesson uses literature to extend the pick a friend activity and gets children to examine the ways racial segregation and racism impacts their lives.



LESSON FIVE:

WHAT TO DO WHEN MAKING FRIENDS IS HARD?

PART TWO

Activity: Read *Courtney's Birthday Party* by Loretta Long.

Discussion:

Ask the children to think about recent celebrations they had at their home. Do they include a variety of races, or mostly one. Ask the children if they ever had a friend their parents disapproved of.

Conclusion: Have the children role play things that they would have said to the mothers in this story to get them to realize that what they were doing was racist and hurtful.

Importance of this lesson: Although his book was written nearly 2 decades ago (1998), this book features a form of racism that is still a reality for many children today.

