

Why I wrote this book

In light of recent global events, we find ourselves in a racial reckoning. For many, this reckoning is welcomed and long overdue. For many, this leads to discomfort and disruption of long held beliefs and norms. I am glad this is happening. For decades, individuals, groups and communities have committed themselves to racial equity and persevered, only to have their voices, experiences and efforts ignored; or worse, they have had to endure personal and professional consequences. In this moment, we find ourselves positioned to engage meaningfully with each other, by creating space for peoples' diverse experiences, listening to their voices and stories, and engaging in dialogue about racial equity. "The Little Girl," is my attempt to contribute to the body of work that encompasses antiracism pedagogy. This book does not stand alone. It is meant to accompany and complement the many amazing learning materials that build authentic, deep learning and understanding around the intersectionality of cultural, linguistic and racial equity for all. My book is for the many teachers who courageously honour diversity, and strive for equity in their classrooms.

Why this book is important

There are many websites that speak to the importance of representation of diversity and explicitly address "equity" in school curricula. Please refer to [Mindshift](https://www.mindshift.com/), diversebooks.org and disrupttexts.org for more information. I feel affirmed that "The Little Girl," aligns with these values and principles in the following ways:

- centres the voice of a person of colour (#weneeddiversebooks)
 - is an authentic experience of the author (#ownvoice)
 - challenges educators to examine their own biases and how their world views affect the mental health and trajectory of their students who are from marginalized groups
 - exposes students to critical text and engages them in higher thinking processes
 - challenges educators to collaborate with educational and community partners to transform instructional practice that bring social justice to school settings (#disrupttexts)
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How to use this book and teacher's guide

I recommend using this book as a mentor text, as a starting point to facilitate rich discussion. As you read on, you might feel inspired to try one or more of the suggestions given. However, the best way to use this book is in response to your students in front of you. After careful observation, you will know when is the right time to expose this book to them. Ask yourself, "who may be empowered by this book" and "who may be traumatized or re-traumatized as well"? Be sure to have supports available before and after students experience this book.

I wrote this manuscript with an inquiry stance. I held back from giving away too many details in hopes that it may open up the space for discussion about multiple themes that may resonate with many children and adults. This text can be used to connect to the themes of names, bullying, mental health or change. Educators can also use the text as part of an inquiry about refugees, prejudice, systemic racism or implicit bias. You might feel there are other concepts that can be surfaced with this text. This is why this book can and has been used in many classrooms, pre-K to grade 12.

Feel free to spend time on the vibrant illustrations, allowing students to offer connections, inferences, questions about settings, timelines and characters. This book with its story and illustrations, the creator bios, and dedication can be used to promote awareness, reflection, critical thinking and also, even a call to action. I wish you many worthwhile experiences with "The Little Girl".

Book Synopsis

This book is about a young refugee girl who finds herself in a small town in British Columbia. Her family of three are sponsored by a United Church who provides them with temporary shelter, food and other basic necessities as they begin their resettlement in Canada. Mary and Tom are members of the Church who offer to share their home with the family.

Eventually, the girl faces the fact that she has to go to school. This story uncovers what it is like to begin a new school in a new country from the little girl's perspective. One of the tensions in the story is that the girl doesn't speak, the school staff questions if there is something wrong with her learning. Another tension in the story is that the girl's name is altered two times. The three characters in the story set a course for our thinking and inquiries around these events.

Background Context

Before the reading, teachers need to examine their own knowledge base, stereotypes, and biases working with students of Asian heritage. We often group 'people of colour' from the acronym, 'BIPOC' (Black, Indigenous, people of colour) into a lump grouping. Sometimes it is necessary to talk in generalities; however, each person is unique and different as is their historical membership in a particular ethnic, cultural and/or language group. Take time to have students connect to their unique heritage and identity, some may make general connections ("I am a person of colour" while others identify as "...my family came from the South of...") Teachers can be aware of the difference between the general and specific identities of Asian students and how this affects the way they might be perceived and how that can make them feel.

In the story, the little girl is silent for most of the book. There may be speculation that 'selective mutism' or 'the silent stage of language acquisition' may be the reason. Educators are advised to inquire more about Trauma-Informed practice and Language Acquisition development stages to better understand how the two can overlap. Labeling the little girl as one or the other is not helpful. Rather, it is important for educators to learn from the little girl's experience so that they may better respond to students' needs.

Additional Resources

1) Background information on Canada's involvement with Vietnamese refugees (a Heritage Moment video at the end) -

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/search?search=asian+Canadian>

2) A glimpse into the perspective of one English Language Learner - *award winning short film, "Immersion"* -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6YOHAjLKYI>

3) A video that examines micro aggressions, micro insults, and micro invalidations in the classroom -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZahtlxW2CIQ>

4) 23 diverse picture books that can complement this book - <https://www.weareteachers.com/books-about-names>

Mentor texts are powerful because they forward students' literacy competencies. There are many authors who have published strategies that you will find work well with this book. Please connect with your district's or school's teacher librarians and/or literacy consultants for literacy resources. The strategies in this guide are just a taste and are not meant to be used exclusively or as a stand alone activity.

5) *Reading Rockets: Strategies That Promote Comprehension* - <https://www.readingrockets.org/article/strategies-promote-comprehension>

Lesson Ideas: Before Reading

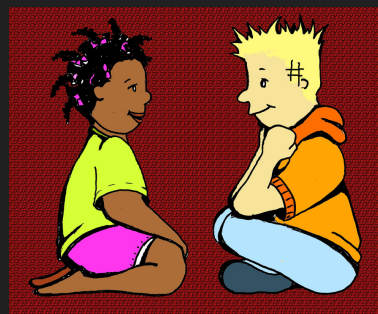
Before Reading Prompt #1

"This story is about a little girl's name.
Think about your own name."

What do you like about it?
Does your name have a meaning?
Do you have another name?
Does your name exist in another language?

Use an oral language strategy such as Turn and Talk

"I like my name because..."
"My name means..."

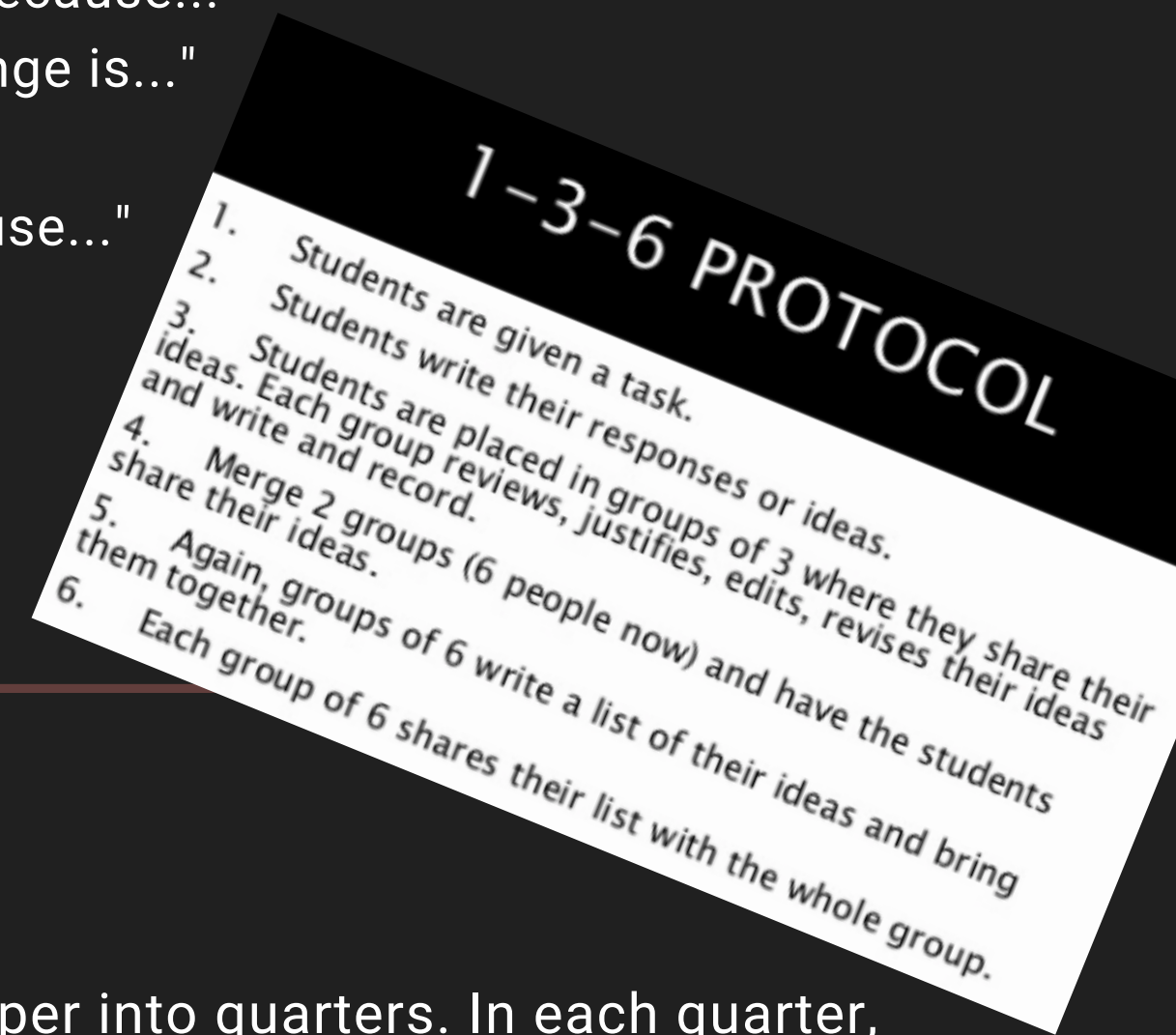


Before Reading Prompt #2

Use the 1-3-6 Protocol (Zwiers & Hamerla, 2018) to deepen understanding of the concept of change:

"This story is about change. What do you think the word change means? Think of a time when you had to go through a change. What was the change? How did you feel about the change?"

- 1- "A Change that happened to me was..."
- "That change was good/bad because..."
- 3- "We feel going through change is..."
- "Change can be..."
- 6- "Change is necessary because..."
- "Change can be traumatic or empowering when..."



Before Reading Prompt #3

Use the strategy Chunk Your Thinking: (Have students fold a piece of plain paper into quarters. In each quarter, students can draw or write to the following prompts.)

Box #1:

This story is about courage. What does the word courage mean to you?

Box #2:

Think of a time when you felt scared or nervous...

or

Think of a time when you didn't want to do something because it was really hard.

Draw or write down what that was.

Box #3:

How did you get through it? How did you complete the task? How did you overcome the scary feeling?

Box #4:

How did you feel afterward?

Before Reading: Preview Vocabulary and Concepts

Literal words found in the book: refugee, abundant, sanctuary.

Concepts to consider for pre-school and primary grades: name, identity, school life, new school, shyness, friendship

Abstract concepts to consider for intermediate to adult students: identity, name, culture, micro aggression, implicit bias, mental health, power dynamics, structural racism

Though some educators and parents have found this book worked well as a stand alone read aloud, its full potential is better realized as part of a deeper study around the above concepts.

Lesson Ideas: During Reading

Idea #1

Using the strategy, Picture Walk:

"What do you think this story is about?"

"Who might be the main character in this story, how do you know?"

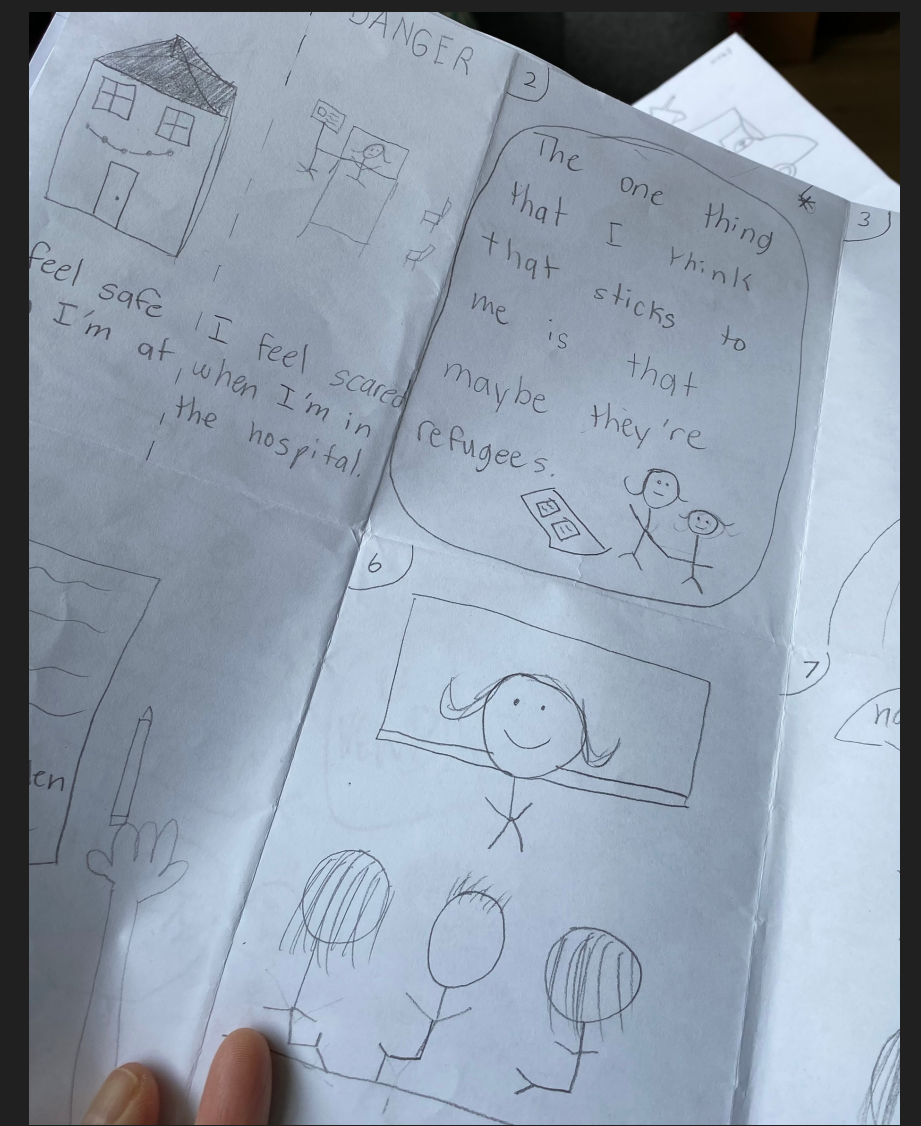
"Looking at the background outside, when do you think this story took place?"

Read the story, feel free to linger on the pages that might require more thought. Slowing down the pace of the read aloud can help students to process their empathy for the experiences of the little girl.

Idea #2

Using the strategy, Listen, Sketch and Draft:

- 1) Chunk the book into parts you want to emphasize. Have students fold a 11X17 paper into 6 or 8 parts.
 - 2) Read the first chunk, stop. Allow students time to draw what they just heard. Encourage students to include speech/thought bubbles for the characters but this is not necessary.
 - 3) Read the next chunk of the story, stop.
 - 4) Using an oral language strategy, have students talk about the text and build on what they've just drawn.
 - 5) After talking about it, have students draw/write in the next box.
- Repeat these steps until the story is finished. Students can use their boxes to help them summarize the story afterwards.



Student sample courtesy of M. Medenwalt, Richmond Teacher
Strategy from Faye Brownlie

Idea #3

Using the strategy, Head, Heart, Hands:

- 1) Have students fold a piece of paper into three parts. Have them draw the symbol for head, heart, hands in each part.
- 2) Tell students you will read this story slowly two times.
- 3) "While I am reading this story the first time, I need you to activate your head. When you hear a part of the story that makes you think such as you have a connection or question, you can draw or write that part under the 'head' symbol. You can add your thinking or your question(s) to your picture or summary.
- 4) Now I'll read the story again, this time, you can focus on the heart symbol. When you get to the part that makes you feel a certain way, you can draw or write it down. Also, you can record your feelings and why you feel this way too.
- 5) After reading, use an oral language strategy to unpack students' thinking and reactions to the story. Allow time for class discussion.
- 6) Now that we have shared some thoughts and reactions to this story, let's look at the hands symbol. The hands represent something you or we can do so that others like this girl can feel included and good about themselves/their school experience.
- 7) Allow students to draw or write their ideas under the hands symbol.
- 8) Allow time for all to share their ideas.

Lesson Ideas: After Reading

After Reading

The sky is the limit in terms of what educators can do after reading this text. From focusing on basic comprehension to critical thinking to creative social justice actions, students can be inspired in many different directions. Only you, their teacher, can know what would be the best next steps. Therefore, I have just included some basic prompts to consider. As you work with this text, please email me or tweet out your work to @hieu_fraser so others in our professional learning network can benefit from our amazing collective creativity!

Connection and Empathy

"What is a connection you made as you were listening?"

"The little girl was silent. Have you ever been silent? Why were you silent? How did it feel? Do you feel being silent is a positive or negative thing? Why?"

"The little girl's family had to adjust to a new environment, have you ever found yourself in a new environment? What might a new student to our class/school feel?"

Understanding

"This is a story about a refugee experience, what do you know about other refugee experiences?" How are their refugee experiences similar or different to this girl's experience?"

"What did you learn from this girl's refugee experience?"

"What part(s) of the story made you think 'yes!/oh, no!/OMG/hmm'? Why?"

Predicting

"What do you think happened before this story started?"

"If you could write the next page to the story, what would happen next?"

"Choose a character in the story, what might that character do after the girl told them her name?"

Inferring

"Who do you think were the people in the car? Where are they going? Who are Mary and Tom?"

"What does the Mother mean when she told the girl to 'be good'? Why do you think that being 'good' was so important to the Mother?"

Judging

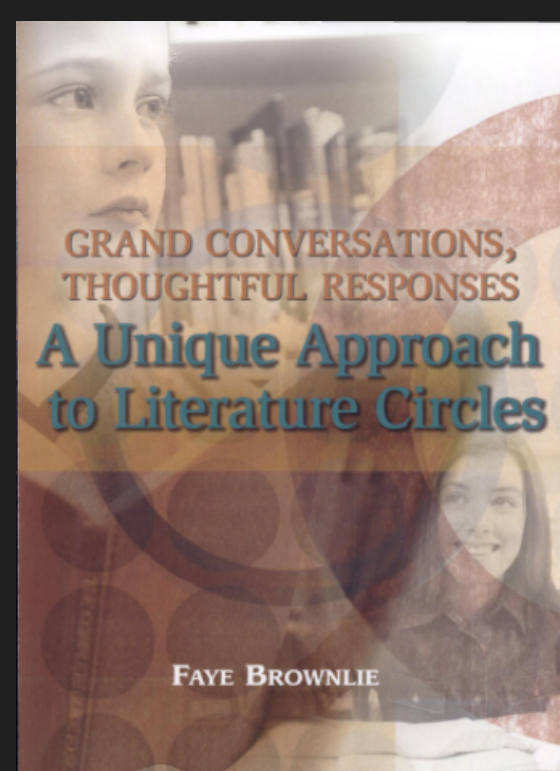
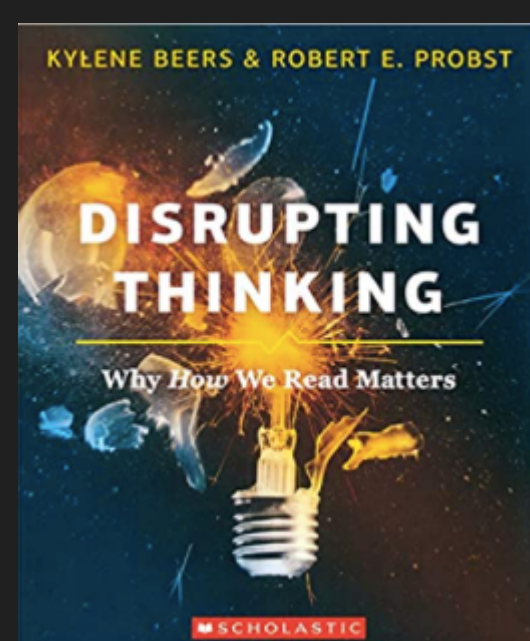
"Do you think the teacher was a "good" person, why or why not?"

Who has "power" in this book? How do you know? Who doesn't have "power" in this book? How do you know?

What do you think about the relationships in this book? Do you believe that relationships can be equal?

After Reading Activity Ideas

The following resources include comprehension activities that complement the above provocations and concepts covered in this guide.



This graphic is taken from
The Literacy Toolkit,
Thames Valley SB, ONT

RESPOND PERSONALLY TO THE TEXT	AFTER READING STRATEGIES	RESPOND CRITICALLY TO THE TEXT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">model effective responses (e.g., interactive board)use the "3R" framework for response (Retell, Relate, Reflect)demonstrate how to keep response journals, share entries and revisit responses to revise/extend their thinkinguse drama, storytelling, art and music to demonstrate their understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">have students write/present a review (e.g., book, video) of the textinterview characters and write a newspaper reportdevelop cause/effect charts for fiction (events, cause)invite students to debate the issue that has been the focus of their reading (especially useful for social studies, science, geography)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">have students learn to differentiate between fact and opinionanalyze how the author created particular effects/moods (e.g., suspense, surprise, terror, appeal to certain emotions)teach students to analyze the language of fiction and non-fiction texts (e.g., imagery in advertising)in non-fiction texts, assist students in learning how to detect biasmake a list of questions that an article does not answer (e.g., What other animals migrate? What are those migratory patterns?)identify and explain words, phrases, sentences or stylistic devices that the author uses to convince the reader to believe their opinion
<ul style="list-style-type: none">record important information using graphic organizers (e.g., KWL, concept maps, Venn diagrams)review the information recorded on the graphic organizers to assess the extent to which opinions are supported by facts, statistics, and other types of evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teach students the importance of re-reading the text to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">seek more informationclarify specific detailslocate items, ideas missed on first readingclarify difficult vocabularyreview the interesting details (favourite part)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">teach students how to use headings, charts, or point form notes to record important/critical informationshow students how to develop paragraphs from their notes (linking reading and writing)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">have students change the point of view of the selection (fiction)make the case for an opposite perspective on the issue (non-fiction)record entries in diaries/journals from perspective of different characters in the textprepare to argue both sides of an issue and present one side after they have collected information and prepared the issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">model how to develop storylines (fiction) and flowcharts/semantic maps (non-fiction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">allow students to retell the important details of the text (e.g., using pictures, answering key questions, or writing an account)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE POINT OF VIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">RE-READ THE TEXT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">DEMONSTRATE NOTE-MAKING SKILLS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">DRAW CONCLUSIONS AND MAKE JUDGEMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">RETELL THE DETAILS OF THE TEXT

The Little Girl

Book Reflection: Prompts for Private and Collaborative Thinking

Start with Critical Self-Reflection

One of my main reasons for writing this book was I truly felt that educators in my community wanted to do better but often didn't understand what racism looked like, sounded like and felt like. The story of the little girl is one example of how a person can be nice and caring but still behave in a racist way. Intention alone does little to dismantle inequities and stop the pain that our students/families/colleagues carry throughout their lives. We must and we can do better. Knowledge is power. Knowledge, combined with intention, can make one a strong collaborator to dismantle racial inequities in the classroom, school and ultimately in the greater community. But no one book, text, video, or teacher's guide can do that, the work starts within, first by being culturally humble and then by being critically self-reflective. The following prompts are meant to assist you in your journey of critical self-reflection.

Reflection Prompts

1) Let's take a look at the Mother. What do you think her relationship to the teacher is? They are two adults but do you think the relationship is equal? How do you know? Think of a relationship that you have had with a parent/colleague/employee who is either Indigenous or a person of colour, how was the relationship equal or not equal? Why? These questions are not meant for anyone to try to "fix" the problem of power dynamics; but rather, acknowledge and empathize with the BIPOC person. What would be one thing you can do better to empathize with a BIPOC parent/colleague/employee?

2) The little girl strives to be "good". What kind of oppression is happening here? Whose standard of good is the girl trying to live up to? How does this affect the girl's sense of identity? Imagine that the girl pursues an image of "being good" in the future. How does "being good" contribute to the "myth of the model minority" and in turn deteriorate her ability to form her identity based on her own heritage, language and culture? Think about the different behaviours of kids and adults in your classroom and organization. What do you consider to be good and bad behaviours? Where do those ideas come from and how do those beliefs affect relationships and actions with others, especially those who are Black, Indigenous and people of colour?

3) The teacher is described as "the tall lady with golden hair and green eyes. Why did the little girl not call her teacher by her name? What do you think was going through the teacher's mind as she encountered and interacted with the little girl each day? How does the teacher's image of the little girl affect the way the relationship proceeded? What are some ways that you have described students/parents/colleagues like this in the past? How does the language that we use help us to uncover our own unconscious bias?

Additional Resources

There are many books that have guided journals to help unpack the work of antiracism. These are such a few.

