**“Give Me Some Skin!”, A Case Study about Skin Tone**

**Allison Deutsch Andersen**

**Grade Level: K**

**School: Fall Creek Elementary**

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| **Name and Summary Description of Case Study** | | | |
| In this unit of study, “Give Me Some Skin!,” students will look closely at skin tone as a stepping stone to understanding themselves and one another, through the use of quality picture books, discussion, and art projects. | | | |
| **Broad** [**Topic**](https://drive.google.com/a/icsd.k12.ny.us/file/d/0B4B7r7p5BBTnbjZuUVJoVXNQZVE/view?usp=sharing) **or Concept** | | | |
| The key concept of this unit is to create an atmosphere of openness and comfort when discussing skin tone, color, and race. Students will actively practice being comfortable when discussing challenging and/or confusing topics, and helping others become comfortable too. The anchors for these discussions will be picture books and art projects. Over the course of this unit, students will use close observation skills to describe their own and others’ skin tones. Students recognize that skin colors come in infinite unique shades. Students will consider the harmful potential of racial stereotypes, and will come to understand that no skin color is superior to any other. | | | |
| [**Guiding Question(s**](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B-j99yrm1kqmVFEwTWFmaVplZXc?usp=sharing)**)**  (Is it relevant, meaningful, provocative and accessible to students? Does it stimulate ongoing rethinking of big ideas and prior lessons? Does it provide the opportunity for students to generate a variety of plausible and arguable responses?) | | | |
| * Who am I? How do I tell you about myself? * What color is my skin? * Does looking closely at our skin color help us to understand ourselves and one another? * Can I be unique, and also be the same as other people? * What are some ways we can make ourselves — and people around us — more comfortable when we’re talking about challenging or confusing topics? | | | |
| **Standards and Skills** | | | |
| **Content Standards** | Social Studies:  Comparison and Contextualization  Identify similarities and/or differences between him/her and others.  Civic Participation  Demonstrate respect for the rights of others.  Show respect in issues involving difference and conflict.  Science:  LS3.A: Inheritance of Traits (NYSED) Some young animals are similar to, but not exactly, like their parents. Some young plants are also similar to, but not exactly, like their parents. (P-LS3-1)  LS3.B: Variation of Traits Individuals of the same kind of plant or animal are recognizable as similar but can also vary in many ways. (PLS3-1) | | |
| **English Language Arts Learning Standards** | KR1: Develop and answer questions about a text. (RI&RL)  KR2: Retell stories or share key details from a text. (RI&RL)  KR9: Make connections between self, text, and the world. (RI&RL)  KSL1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse peers and adults in small and large groups and during play.  KSL1a: Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions, including listening to others, taking turns, and staying on topic.  KSL1b: Participate in conversations through multiple exchanges.  KSL1c: Consider individual differences when communicating with others.  KSL4: Describe familiar people, places, things, and events with detail.  KSL5: Create and/or utilize existing visual displays to support descriptions.  KSL6: Express thoughts, feelings, and ideas.  KL5c: Use words to identify and describe the world, making connections between words and their use (e.g., places at home that are colorful).  KL6: Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts. | | |
|  | **21st Century Skills/Habits of Mind**   * Thinking and communicating with clarity and precision * Gathering Data Through All Senses * Listening with understanding and empathy * Thinking flexibly   **Social Justice Standards (from Teaching Tolerance)**  K-2 Identity 3: I know that all my group identities are part of me—but that I am always ALL me.  K-2 Identity 4: I can feel good about myself without being mean or making other people feel bad.  K-2 Diversity 6: I like being around people who are like me and different from me, and I can be friendly to everyone.  K-2 Diversity 7: I can describe some ways that I am similar to and different from people who share my identities and those who have other identities.  K-2 Justice 11: I know my friends have many identities, but they are always still just themselves.  **Ithaca City School District Anti-Marginalization Focus Questions:**  Identity:   * Who am I? * How do I describe the way I look?   Oracy:   * How can I tell you who I am? | | |
| **Product or Performance**  (High quality, original artifact of learning that emerges from project;in service to an audience beyond the classroom) | | | |
| **Description:**   * Our class will use the skin tone paints we have mixed (of our own skin tones) in lesson #4 [below] to create a banner/mural that represents our community. For example, it could be a painting of a landmark in our neighborhood or a neighborhood map; the colors used will be our mixed-paint skin tones. * Our class will recite a poem that is selected to reflect our understandings about skin tone, and which promotes the philosophy of equality; utilizes rich and varied vocabulary for describing skin color; and heightens the listeners’ awareness of the beauty of our own and others’ skin color. | | **Specific content and skills to be assessed:** | |
| **Audience and how product will be made public:**   * Friday Morning Program: a weekly gathering of students, staff, and families | | **How product matters to this audience:**   * The audience will be welcomed into our comfort in addressing/discussing skin tone and color as we share our poem with them. Sharing our banner will be a visual representation of the concept that all skin tones are beautiful and work together in harmony to represent our community. * Our banner will then be displayed in the school, and the list of books used in the unit will be available to take home for those who would like to do further reading. | |
| **Resources** | | | |
| **Anchor Texts:** | ***All books are call # [E Author’s Last Name] unless noted.***   * Katz, Karen. *The Colors of Us.* Henry Holt & Co 1999. A young girl walks through her neighborhood with her mother, and they notice all the skin colors around them, comparing the shades to foods such as cinnamon and creamy peanut butter. The girl uses this walk to make sense of her own skin color, which is its own special shade of brown. * Kissinger, Katie. *All the Colors We Are.* Red Leaf Press 1994. [612.7 Kis] Beautiful photographs of children demonstrate the many colors of our skin. Offers up the science behind skin and skin color, explained simply and clearly. Discusses the impact of environment, heredity, and melatonin. Ideas for activities are interspersed. Text in English and Spanish. * Lester, Julius. *Let’s Talk About Race.* Amistad/Harper Collins 2005. [305.8 Les] Explores race as a part of our personal story, but not all of that story; and how race is often misused as a reason for thinking we are “better than” somebody else. Told in a very personal way; the author opens up about himself as a method for connecting with the reader. | | |
| **Additional Texts** | ***All books are call # [E Author’s Last Name] unless noted.***   * Adoff, Arnold. *black is brown is tan.* Amistad/HarperCollins 1973/2002. A poem/story about the daily life of a biracial family. Explores how “black” and “white” don’t really describe our skin colors. * Diggs, Taye. *Mixed Me!*. Feiwel and Friends/Macmillan 2015. Mike is an awesome kid with awesome energy and awesome hair. Told in the first person, about being part of a mixed-race family in a joyful and confident way. * hooks, bell. *Skin Again.* Hyperion Books 2004. Race matters, but not nearly as much as who we are on the inside; we have to open our hearts and connect. * Manushkin, Fran. *Happy in Our Skin.* Candlewick Press 2015. Simple text talks about skin in general terms (does not specifically mention color), and has illustrations of children and families in lots of skin colors, in both US-cultural and traditional-cultural clothing, and in different urban settings. * Tyler, Michael. *The Skin You Live In.* Chicago Children’s Museum 2005. A rhyming story about all the hues that skin comes in, and the way we all go together and are stronger together. Compares skin color to foods such as warm cocoa and spun sugar. Illustrations depict a multiracial family, a class of many colors with their teacher, and more. | | |
| **Experts:** | Ithaca College Park School of Communications/Photography Students? (To do Humanae portraits) | | |

**Unit of Study Lesson Sequence: “Give Me Some Skin!”**

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| **Case Study Notes: something about the books??** | | | |
| **Lesson #,**  **Title** | **Supporting Questions** | **Lesson Description** | **Materials Needed** |
| #1  Introduction | Where does our skin color come from? | Read the book aloud as an introduction to skin color and the science behind it. There are suggested discussion points by the author that go with particular pages.  *Activity:* The author states on the first page that we often say “she is black” or “he is white”-- look at black and white pieces of construction paper. Are any of us actually black or white? What about red, brown, or yellow? Why do people use these colors to describe people’s skin? | * *All The Colors We Are* (see Anchor Texts) * Construction Paper (white, black, brown, red, yellow) |
| #2  What Color Am I? *Part 1* | Who decides how my skin color is described?  Are black, brown, and white the only words we need to talk about skin tones? | Prep & set up “Mixing Stations” at tables with various ingredients, spoons, and water.  Begin with a read aloud of either *The Colors of Us* or *The Skin You Live In*. Discuss with students the comparisons of skin color to food; ask if they think all the possible colors have been named. Do they think their own (or my) skin color has been named? Tell them that we are going to use some of the foods listed in the book to TRY to create our own special skin tones.  Introduce students to the mixing stations and the ingredients they will find. Explain/demonstrate adding a drop or two of water to liquify the ingredients a bit so they are easier to mix. Compare to mixing blue and yellow paint to get green.  Students get a clipboard with a piece of wax paper on it. These are their mixing palettes. Students go to stations and with adult assistance begin experimenting. Students can try rubbing the colors they make onto the backs of their hands to check for accuracy.  Once a student has a color s/he is satisfied with, it should be painted onto the white art paper and left to dry. For extra fun, students can try to give their “skin colors” a name that is based on the ingredients they used (or some other criteria). The color name can be written on the swatch. | * *The Colors of Us* (see Anchor Texts) * *The Skin You Live In* (see Additional Texts) * White art paper (construction or other heavy weight paper) roughly 8x8 * Wax paper * Clipboards * Small bowls, cups, trays, spoons for handling ingredients * Small cups of water & droppers to get ingredients to be a bit liquidy * Different Ingredients from descriptions of skin color, for example:   Cinnamon  Peanut Butter  Chocolate  Honey  Brown leaves  Cocoa  Coffee  Cream  Chili powder  Ginger  Curry  Etc. |
| #3  What Color Am I? *Part 2* | How many possible skin tones are there? Would we be able to count them? | Begin this session by reading aloud one of the Additional Texts.  You will be introducing students to the ongoing photography project, Humanae. People are photographed, head and shoulders; the skin color of their noses is matched to a Pantone color, which is then used as the background of the photograph. Here is a statement from the website that describes the project:  *“Humanae is a work in progress, who intends to deploy a chromatic range of the different human skin colors. Those who pose are volunteers who have known the project and decide to participate. There is no previous selection of participants and there are no classifications relating to nationality, gender, age, race, social class or religion. Nor is there an explicit intention to finish it on a specific date. It is open in all senses and it will include all those who want to be part of this colossal global mosaic. The only limit would be reached by completing all of the world’s population.”*  Project the Humanae website on the EnoBoard. *Link:*  [Angelica Dass/Humanae Project](https://www.angelicadass.com/humanae-project)  There is so much to see, observe, and enjoy on this website! Teachers should preview and explore the site ahead of time to decide what to share with your students. Go with your heart!  After viewing the site with students, they can attempt to locate their own skin colors in the Pantone Skin Color Guide. It’s possible that this can’t really be done in one day; leave the guide out for exploration over the coming days/weeks of the unit. I personally find that on different days or in different light I think my skin is a different color in the guide. I have yet to settle on one color, but the students may be more decisive.  For teachers who are ambitious and/or artistic, a possible next step is to have students begin a self-portrait project based on Humanae. There are examples of these on the web site. Or, contact Ithaca College Park School to see if a photography student would like to create portraits!  *A simpler art activity follows:*  As students select a skin color from the Pantone Guide, the teacher will make a color copy of the swatch. Using a small template of the outline of a person as a starting point (many versions can be found on line), cut the color swatch to fit the face of the template. Then have the child decorate the template to look like her/himself. These can be “chained” together at the hands and displayed. | * One of the Additional Texts (teacher’s choice) * Computer & EnoBoard or Projector/Screen * Pantone STG-201 Skin Tone Guide fan book   *(Note: an alternative to the Pantone Skin Color Guide is a collection of free paint chip samples in dozens of possible skin colors. This can be fun because the paint chips have wonderful names, unlike the numbered Pantone swatches.)* |
| #4  What Color Am I? *Part 3* | Can I use paint to mix my own skin tone? | Begin today’s session by reading aloud a selected book from the Additional Texts.  Today students are going to try to mix their skin color using paint. Having a swatch of the color they are trying to make (such as from the Pantone Guide) is helpful but not necessary. The Crayola multicultural paint set is a nice springboard to begin the mixing, but is not necessary since all shades of tan through brown can be mixed using primary colors and a basic brown base.  Students use the clipboards with wax paper on them as mixing palettes. Using **small** amounts of paint, they try to mix the right shade for their own skin using a popsicle stick as a stirrer.  Once this shade has been achieved, you can do any kind of art project with the colors of the class!  Some ideas:   * A poster of student handprints with their names written under the handprints. * A “rainbow” made up of the colors of the class. * Self portraits.   **NOTE: Save some of each student’s mixed skin tone paint for the final project!** | * One book from the Additional Texts (teacher’s choice) * Tempera Paints: white, black, red, yellow, brown * Tempera Paints (optional): Crayola Washable Paint in multicultural colors * Paint cups with popsicle sticks for scooping out small dabs of paint * Popsicle sticks for mixing * Wax paper * Clipboards * Color swatch from Pantone Color Guide that student has matched to her/his skin color (if available) * Misc. materials depending on chosen art project (see ideas below) |
| #5  One Skin Color is No Better Than Another | Why would some people say their race/skin color is better than someone else’s?  What could you say to someone who thinks their skin color is better than other skin colors? | Read *Let’s Talk About Race.*  Reading this book is an excellent springboard to a discussion about the ways that race is used to put people down and separate us. There are lots of places to stop and talk about ourselves and discuss the ways we are alike even though our looks are unique. The book is written in a friendly, conversational tone that lends itself to discussion.  *Note: A great companion book is Mixed Me! (Diggs)* | *Let’s Talk About Race* (see Anchor Texts) |
| #6  Let’s Memorize and Recite a Poem! | Can we memorize a poem and recite it in unison for the enjoyment of an audience? | Both the suggested books are story-poems. Either one can be learned in part (or as a whole) and then recited by the class as a performance. This could be done for families (either recorded & shared, or in person) or at a school assembly if that option is available at your school. A nice addition to the performance would be students learning to say the color names in sign language.  Another option is to plan a family gathering (for example, a family dish-to-pass breakfast) to present the poem. Any artwork that the class has created during this case study can be displayed. | * *Black is Brown is Tan* (see Additional Texts) * *Skin Again* (see Additional Texts) |
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