

Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress

Purpose:

- Build understanding that the things some people like are different from the things others like.
- Build empathy and support for students who can be targeted, misunderstood and/or excluded.

Context and Considerations:

K-5 Classrooms, with Administrator awareness / approval

Please keep in mind the responsibility to protect the most vulnerable students, who may belong to one or more target identity groups. Re-familiarize yourself with the [Learning for Justice Speak Up At School protocol](#) (Interrupt, Question, Educate, Echo). At the same time, it is important to not slip into proselytizing or shaming students who have received very different messages about gender expression. Keep in mind the purposes stated above.

Plot Summary:

Morris Micklewhite likes school because he can paint and sing and do puzzles. Also at school Morris likes to play in the dress-up center where he likes to wear a tangerine-colored dress. His classmates make fun of him and exclude him from games because of the dress. All week, Morris' classmates tell him dresses are not for boys and don't let Morris play with them. At home, Morris has a dream that inspires him and he recreates the dream as a painting where he is riding an elephant in space, while wearing the tangerine dress. Morris brings the painting with him to school and his classmates are drawn to play with Morris because of his beautiful painting. In the end, Morris regains confidence in himself and his classmates learn to accept him as he is.

Discussion Framing:

Today we're going to listen to a book read aloud together. I want us to remember some of our classroom / community agreements (e.g. respect each other, stay curious about each other, help each other listen).

Video Link:

[Video Read Aloud Link](#)

Discussion Questions:

- What is Morris Micklewhite feeling at the beginning of the book?
- How did his relationship with other kids in his class change over time?
- What are some of the different feelings Morris has throughout the story?
- What makes Morris feel better when he feels sad?
- Everyone is different and has different perspectives; what is something you can do to make someone feel welcome that is different from you?

Wrap Up (if needed):

“It is important to let people feel happy doing the things they like. Morris should be allowed to wear his dress without being made fun of. Nobody should try to take it off him. When Morris is teased because of wearing the dress he feels really upset. Morris feels happiest when he is being himself and this is when he wears the dress. Some girls like to wear dresses and some girls don’t and that’s OK. Some boys like to wear dresses and some boys don’t and that’s OK. We are all different, but being a good friend is something that we can all do.”