



THE PHYSICAL WORLD AROUND US - A CELEBRATION OF SKIN COLORS

SUMMARY:

The full collection of Racial Literacy Kindergarten lessons focuses on the physical world — including an introduction to colors — and celebrates our physical selves and identities, especially our skin colors. Because many Kindergarten teachers may already teach lessons that introduce vocabulary for colors, the introductory lesson may be considered optional, and does not have to be incorporated if a teacher believes existing curriculum adequately introduces the concept and terminology of color. We strongly encourage teachers, however, to read carefully through all lessons in an effort to understand overarching goals and to increase comfort with the scope and theme of topics, as lessons have been carefully sequenced. For instance, once the curriculum of colors moves into a discussion of skin tone, we no longer recommend using picture books that feature animals to generate dialogue. On a final note, some lessons are suggested to be conducted in collaboration with, or led by, art and science teachers. Please plan accordingly.

KINDERGARTEN LESSONS BY TOPIC:

- 1 Introduction to Colors
- 2 Comparing and Contrasting Colors
- 3 Everyone Counts
- 4 Recognizing Similarities, Celebrating Differences
- 5 Colors of Me
- 6 The Skin We Live In
- 7 What is Skin?
- 8 Our Colors

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LESSON 1

INTRODUCTION TO COLORS

Grade: Kindergarten | Suggested Time: 30-45 minutes
Unit: The Physical World Around Us – A Celebration of (Skin) Colors
Related Subject(s): Reading/Literary

Background

OBJECTIVES

- To discuss colors.
- To categorize colors (introduce terms and/or vocabulary for colors).

MATERIALS

- *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle.
- Art materials for students.

ESSENTIAL IDEA

- Our world is filled with colors. Recognizing and categorizing color is a foundational skill for early grades, and will be used as a platform for upcoming lessons that discuss skin color.

VOCABULARY

- Review or introduce terms for colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, pink, white, brown, black, gray, etc.

Lesson Procedure

BACKGROUND

Featuring an array of animals, *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* is a popular book that serves as a great introduction to the vocabulary of colors. The artwork is presented as a bold, vibrant collage.

OPENING

Before reading *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*, ask students if they have read or seen this book before. Ask students to notice the use of colors in the book, or to count how many colors are used. Consider encouraging students to note the use of patterns as well, specifically the repeating text.

READ ALOUD AND DISCUSSION

Read *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* to class. Make sure to show illustrations while reading, or after reading each page. Students may notice the pattern quickly, you may encourage them to join in as you read. After reading, discuss the use of colors and define specific ones. Which colors were used? Are there any colors that were not used? Write the words for each color on the board (or add to a word wall if there is one in the classroom). Consider posting the illustrations in the classroom, such as colored photocopies pasted on the board. With large, clear handwriting or pre-typed labels, assign a word for each color. As a class, review collaged illustrations. How did Eric Carle use colors? For example, did his use of color always make “sense” (i.e. white dog, purple cat). Consider introducing ideas like “realistic” or “fantastic” and “imaginative.” Notice how one color is actually made up of strands of many colors. In short, have fun with the class as you explore color.

ACTIVITY AND CLOSING

As a hands-on activity, students may “add more pages” to the book by creating an animal of their own. Do they want a realistic color for their animal? If so, what would that be? Do they want a “fantastic” color? Encourage students to think about their choices and share their ideas. You may want to provide students with reference materials for animals, such as photographs or drawings. Consider having students (perhaps with the help of an adult) write sentences to mimic the text of the book. For example, if one student chose to create a realistically drawn elephant and another chose to create an orange monkey, the sentence may read: “Gray elephant, gray elephant, what do you see? I see an orange monkey looking at me.” Have students share their illustrations and sentences with the class. Consider binding their work into a class book, or posting on a password-secure blog (with student voices reading their own page).



Extension Activities

SUGGESTIONS

Extension activities may include identifying colors around the classroom, such as pre-selected books from the classroom library, or venturing outside to a nearby park or playground. Students may also stain paper, or use colored art tissue paper to create collage work.

*Since skin color has likely not been discussed yet, it may make the most sense to provide students with opportunities to first discuss the colors of animals, trees, plants, etc., and when ready, discuss the colors of humans in a separate, mindful conversation grounded in reality not the imaginary.

LESSON 2

COMPARING AND CONTRASTING COLORS

Grade: Kindergarten | Suggested Time: 30-45 minutes
Unit: The Physical World Around Us – A Celebration of (Skin) Colors
Related Subject(s): Reading/Literary

Background

OBJECTIVES

- To discuss and celebrate colors.
- To recognize and categorize colors.
- To associate colors with aspects of culture and students' daily lives.

MATERIALS

- Choose one of the following books (or if time allows read both): *Red is a Dragon: A Book of Colors* by Roseanne Thong and Grace Lin; or *Green is a Chile Pepper: A Book of Colors* by Roseanne Thong.
- Art materials for students.

ESSENTIAL IDEA

- Just as our physical world is filled with color, we also create meaning from color. Color can be associated with parts of our daily lives, such as the foods we eat, what we wear, etc. Color is a part of culture and how we may identify. Color is something we can celebrate.

VOCABULARY

- Both books feature a glossary with recommended words or terms to review with students to increase familiarity with the story.

Lesson Procedure

BACKGROUND FOR *RED IS A DRAGON*

In this book, a young girl labels an array of colors in her everyday life. The main character is Chinese or Chinese American and illustrations feature a life that blends cultures. A glossary of terms is featured in the back of the book.

BACKGROUND FOR *GREEN IS A CHILE PEPPER*

The children of this book are inspired by the array of colors in their everyday lives. Illustrations incorporate concepts and ideas that feature elements of Latinx and/or Mexican American culture, including references to food and language. A glossary of terms is featured in the back of the book.

OPENING

Before reading either *Red is a Dragon* or *Green is a Chile Pepper*, ask students if they have read or seen this book before. Based on the cover and title of the book, ask students what they think the story will be about.

READ ALOUD AND DISCUSSION

Read book to class, make sure to show illustrations while reading, or after reading each page. After reading, ask students if the book mentions any activities and/or holidays that they also participate in or celebrate in their lives. Do they also eat any of the foods mentioned in the text? Encourage students to first find similarities. They may also note differences.

ACTIVITY AND CLOSING

Revisit the text. How were the sentences crafted? Notice that sentences begin with colors, such as “Red is a dragon, red is a drum. Red are the firecrackers — here they come!” or “Green is a chile pepper, spicy and hot, Green is cilantro inside our pot.” You may also note how some of the lines rhyme. As a class, list the items or ideas discussed in the book. What sort of things did the character mention from their life? Students may note food, dancing, holidays, activities, family members, etc. Working at tables, have students choose an important color from their own life to draw and craft sentences. If they can’t think of a color, encourage students to think of a thing or event, and pick a color they associate with it. For example, if someone loves their family’s desserts, they may write something like, “lemon is for making lemon meringue pies,” or “white is for cannoli filling,” or “orange is for sweet potato pie.” For their home, they may write something like, “red is for my apartment building.” If a student picks a holiday, they may write something like, “blue is for Hanukkah.” A goal is for students to begin to think of themselves and aspects of their own identify more when discussing color, as an upcoming lesson will have students explore the self and skin color.



Extension Activities

SUGGESTIONS

An array of activities may stem from this book, such as expanding the conversation of color by pointing out various shades of different colors; a discussion of the color wheel, including primary and secondary colors; learning how to mix colors using paints; comparing and contrasting the household and food items mentioned in the book to those in the students’ own lives. Both books may be used again when discussing the lives of children locally and globally, and may incorporate cooking and language activities. If *Green is a Chile Pepper* was read, students may enjoy practicing the names of colors in Spanish, which is included on each page when a new color is introduced. Also, consider listening to different music genres or watching the types of dance referenced throughout the story. As mentioned, both texts also lends themselves to cooking opportunities in the classroom, if available. For text-to-text connections, read and compare both books, *Red is a Dragon* and *Green is a Chile Pepper*, looking for both differences and similarities. Additionally, to incorporate a lesson about shapes, consider using *Round is a Tortilla: A Book of Shapes* by Roseanne Thong and John Parra and *Round is a Mooncake: A Book of Shapes* by Roseanne Thong and Grace Lin.

LESSON 3

EVERYONE COUNTS

Grade: Kindergarten | Suggested Time: 30-45 minutes
Unit: The Physical World Around Us – A Celebration of (Skin) Colors
Related Subject(s): Reading/Literary

Background

OBJECTIVES

- To discuss colors.
- To introduce the idea that colors, especially when used in art, can be associated with emotions and/or feelings.
- To understand that we can advocate for ourselves and for others.

MATERIALS

- *One* by Kathryn Otoshi.
- Writing and art materials for students.

ESSENTIAL IDEA

- Just as we create meaning from color, we can also associate emotions and moods with color. Sometimes people use color to describe how they feel, such as saying “I feel blue,” or “red hot.” This idea is illustrated in the picture book, *One*, which also underscores the importance of being an upstander rather than a bystander, and that when we realize that each of us is capable of helping one another, then every “color” (and person) indeed counts.

VOCABULARY

- Common words and familiar sayings are utilized in this text. It may be helpful to review some of them ahead of time. The following is a list of words and/or phrases that may be worth reviewing with students, listed in order of appearance: quiet, floating, daring, splashing, puddles, sunny (as in personality), bright, regal, outgoing, except, hothead, pick on, comforted, bold, squared, corners, arrow, budge, stand up, brave, agreed, count (double meaning), cool (double meaning), blew a fuse, stopped in his tracks, and rocked and rolled.

Lesson Procedure

BACKGROUND

This picture book introduces the concepts of colors being associated with emotions, but perhaps most importantly, it illustrates what happens when someone bullies another and the importance of speaking up, as the character, *One*, does in this story. The text and illustrations reinforce an understanding of numbers, counting, colors, transformations, and how to accept differences, such as making sure “everyone counts.”

OPENING

Before reading *One*, ask students if they have read or seen this book before. Point out the splash of color. Based on the cover and title of the book, ask students what they think the story will be about.

READ ALOUD AND DISCUSSION

Read *One* to class. Make sure to highlight the characterization of Blue. At the beginning of the story, consider asking students to describe the character Blue. What kind of words could we use to describe Blue? After Red is introduced, ask for words to describe Red's behavior. As a suggestion, keep the conversation focused on Blue and Red's behavior, not their essence, as both Red and Blue change throughout the story. How would you describe Blue's behavior by the end of the story? How is Red's behavior by the end? How did they both change? What encouraged them to change?

ACTIVITY AND CLOSING

This book lends itself nicely to an exploration of color and color mixing. After reading, students may discuss and list the ways *One* helped change the community for the better, and explore the concept that everyone counts, focusing on tangible actions we can take to help or encourage each other. Discuss what made *One* different from the other characters. What also made *One* the same? How did *One* stand up for others? Can we learn from this? In other words, what should we do when we notice a peer mistreating someone else? Make a list of ways to "stand up" for others, or words upstanders can use to redirect teasing. Consider displaying the students' suggestions in the classroom. Students may create visuals to accompany the text of suggestions. Student work may be assembled as a classroom book, or scanned to create a brief iMovie, using students' voices to narrate the text.



Extension Activities

SUGGESTIONS

- Since this picture book utilizes a cast of characters that represent various colors, a lesson on primary colors and secondary colors may be helpful. Consider working with an art teacher, or having an art teacher lead a lesson that introduces primary colors, secondary colors, the color wheel, etc.
- For another extension opportunity, consider reading Kathryn Otoshi's second book, titled *Zero*. In this picture book, the character Zero wants to "count" like other numbers. By the end of the story, students receive the message that by working together everyone counts, and we can create something even "greater"!

LESSON 4

RECOGNIZING SIMILARITIES, CELEBRATING DIFFERENCES

Grade Kindergarten | Suggested Time: 45 minutes
Unit: The Physical World Around Us – A Celebration of (Skin) Colors
Related Subject(s): Reading/Literary

Background

OBJECTIVES

- To recognize similarities; to celebrate differences.
- To connect to and embrace others.
- To expand global and cultural awareness.

MATERIALS

- *Same, Same But Different* by Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw.
- Writing and art materials for students.

ESSENTIAL IDEA

- The world focuses so much on differences. While understanding opposites is a foundational aspect to curriculum of the early grades (i.e. hot and cold, up and down, white and black), taking time to underscore similarities is an essential practice for creating more inclusive perspectives and communities. Even more powerful, perhaps, is the practice of finding similarities of the self compared to others.

VOCABULARY

- Consider introducing words to increase familiarity when reading: similar, different, alphabet, cities, villages, etc.

Lesson Procedure

BACKGROUND

By featuring two boys who live in different parts of the world — it is indicated that Elliot lives in the United States, and Kailash in India — this book is a great vehicle for comparing the lives of two different people in two different places to reinforce the idea that we are in fact quite similar. The book also incorporates the concept of pen pals and friendship.

OPENING

Before reading *Same, Same But Different*, ask students to make a prediction based on the cover. Ask about the title, emphasize that “same” is repeated. Consider asking students if anyone has a family member that lives in another country. How are the countries different and how are they the same?

READ ALOUD AND DISCUSSION

Read *Same, Same But Different* to class. Make sure to show illustrations while reading, or after reading each page. After reading the book, discussion topics may range. While students will likely not possess formal geography awareness, classroom discussions may still speak about writing letters and using the post office

to send letters (or email via a computer) across the world. Ask students how the two boys conceptualized their own worlds. Why did they use different alphabets? Why might Elliot have pets while Kailash has many animals? Compare cities to villages, smaller families to larger families. What languages do they think the boys speak? Note the differences in their appearance. Encourage students to reflect on the importance of diversity. For instance, what would the world be like without differences? Also note the ways in which they are also the same. Why do they think the boys kept saying, “same, same.” Reflect on the importance of finding something in common with someone else.

ACTIVITY AND CLOSING

Highlighting the ways the boys found similarities would be a good launching point for students to craft illustrations and/or words to depict their own lives. They may focus on similar topics of the book, such as their family, home, where they live, etc. Consider having students write a brief letter or postcard (perhaps with adult support), or draw a picture with an accompanying sentence, to give to someone in their class (teacher may choose partners, or students can write to a pen pal if classes have already established such a practice). Students should include a detail about their daily life. If a more graphic or art-oriented activity is desired, students may create a “map” of their world, or have their illustration capture an aspect of their life, such as school, home, etc. This may be a good opportunity to embed more vocabulary, such as rural, urban, and suburban. Students may compare their letter or map illustration to their partner’s work, recognizing ways their lives are similar, and celebrating ways they are different.



Extension Activities

SUGGESTIONS

- To advance students’ awareness of global geography, consider introducing a globe or map of the world. Where do they think Elliot was from? (Which city in the U.S.? New York?) Where do they think Kailash was from? (A village in India?) Point out the continents and countries in the world, including where the students are from. Show how their letters would physically cross oceans. As the books suggests, even with physical differences, so much of our inner world is the same.
- For additional extension lessons, consider reading more picture books, encouraging students to find similarities with the characters:
 - *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats, which features a young black boy who enjoys a simple, fun day in the snow. With its gorgeous use of color and sense of joy, this book revitalized the publishing industry when it arrived in 1963. According to *Horn Book Magazine*, *The Snowy Day* was “the very first full-color picture book to feature a small black hero.” Additional picture books by Keats feature this trailblazing character, Peter.
 - *Harold and the Purple Crayon* by Crockett Johnson, which features a young white boy who draws from imagination. This could be used to explore dramatic line work, the power of focusing on one color, and imaginative play.
 - The *Lola* book series, written by Anna McQuinn and illustrated by Rosalind Beardshaw, which features a young black girl engaging in daily events. There is a sweet tone to the books, especially when Lola becomes an older sister. Consider the following titles: *Lola Goes to School*, *Lola at the Library*, *Lola Loves Stories*, *Lola Reads to Leo*, *Lola Plants a Garden*, *Lola Gets a Cat*, etc. Since there is such a large collection, consider using them in book groups. Similar to the main lesson, students may read these books to find similarities between their own life and the life of Lola.

LESSON 5

COLORS OF ME

Grade Kindergarten | Suggested Time: 45+ minutes
Unit: The Physical World Around Us – A Celebration of (Skin) Colors
Related Subject(s): Reading/Literary

Background

OBJECTIVES

- To discuss and appreciate colors.
- To ask questions about colors.
- To observe colors in our world.
- To consider the value of colors and the diversity of colors.
- To begin reflecting on their own skin color.

MATERIALS

- *Colors of Me* by Brynne Barnes and Annika M. Nelson.
- Writing and art materials for students.

ESSENTIAL IDEA

- Sometimes, as educators, we believe we have to hold all of the answers, yet our students also have ideas and feelings. For this lesson, we focus on the ideas and questions that our students are already bringing to the classroom. The role of the teacher will be to elicit these ideas thoughtfully. Using the poetic picture book *Colors of Me* to launch the discussion, students will share a dialogue about color — from the colors of nature to the idea of seeing colors. Ultimately, students will reflect on the idea that diverse colors contribute to our greater world. At the same time, we can also be more than a “color.”

VOCABULARY

- Using a poetic voice, this picture book asks big questions. Consider familiarizing students with the larger concept of “wonder.”

Lesson Procedure

BACKGROUND

Through collage illustrations, this book explores the way a young child sees and questions colors in the world, from the colors found in nature to the color of his own skin. By the end, the child realizes the important role of color and learns to accept all of the colors, including his own — a tasteful portrayal of self-acceptance for brown skin.

OPENING

Before reading *Colors of Me*, ask students if they have read or seen this book before. Based on the cover and title of the book, ask students what they think the story will be about.

READ ALOUD AND DISCUSSION

Tell the class that this book is more of a poem, or a list of thoughts and ideas, than it is a story. Ask students to pay attention to the kind of questions that are being asked. Some are more straightforward, such as “What colors should I be?” Or, “What crayons to choose?” Some questions move beyond the surface, such as “If flowers had no color, would they smell as sweet?” And, “Do butterflies know the colors of their wings or only that they can fly?” After reading, discuss the ideas presented in the book. The author is asking interesting questions about color. What do you think of color, or what questions do you have when you think of different colors? To guide the conversation, consider asking: What do you think causes some things in nature to have different colors? Have students imagine a manufactured item, like a ball. What color did they imagine that ball to be? Why? What is their favorite color? Why? Take your time and discover what the students are thinking. Move the conversation to include our skin colors. Refer back to the title of the book, *Colors of Me*. Notice that the word “colors” is plural. What are “colors of me”? Encourage the class to think about how we, like other living things in nature, also come in different colors. Are we really just one color? If we have lighter skin or darker skin, is it really “white” or “black.” Can we be different shades? Can our skin be a “mix” of colors? Wrap up the conversation by reminding students that the diversity of our colors is part of what makes us beautiful. (A subsequent lesson will further discuss skin colors. In this conversation, please ensure comments are self-affirming and communally responsible.)

ACTIVITY AND CLOSING

After reading, students can look for and observe colors in nature, taking a sketchbook to record drawings. Students may go for a walk to a nearby park or field and take pictures, or if allowed, collect fallen leaves. If limited to the space of the classroom, students may receive a lesson on how to mix paint colors or assemble a collage to reflect bands of color. Ask students how they feel when they mix colors, and whether or not their picture is better with an array of colors or just one blob of color. Remind them that a similar sense of joy happens when we have diverse colors in our lives, including people of different skin colors and cultures. Emphasize the idea that, just as mixing colors to make a collage can give us happy feelings, we can also experience a similar joy when we interact with people of many different colors and cultures. Difference is good. Difference makes our community stronger.



Extension Activities

SUGGESTIONS

For an extension opportunity, consider having a science teacher lead a lesson on the spectrum of colors and how the eye sees color. The lesson may explore colorblindness (the scientific idea, not the sociological idea). Additionally, students may learn that different animals see or do not see particular colors. For another direction, consider focusing on why some items in nature are a particular color, such as how chlorophyll makes many plants green. (The next lesson will explore why our skin colors are different.)

LESSON 6

THE SKIN WE LIVE IN

Grade Kindergarten | Suggested Time: 45+ minutes
Unit: The Physical World Around Us – A Celebration of (Skin) Colors
Related Subject(s): Reading/Literary; Art

Background

OBJECTIVES

- To discuss and celebrate our skin colors.
- To recognize similarities; to celebrate differences.
- To connect to self and to others.
- To value and embrace diversity.
- To be able to mix colors using paints.

MATERIALS

- *The Skin You Live In* by Michael Tyler.
- Pantone Color Charts, such as a Pantone Orange Color Chart. To get a better idea of Pantone Color Guides, visit their color finder site, and click on the “hue” orange. Consider printing the range of “oranges” for students to use as reference during the activity portion of lesson. Available here: <https://www.pantone.com/color-finder#/pick?pantoneBook=pantoneSolidCoatedV3M2>
- Writing and art materials for students.

ESSENTIAL IDEA

- A central message of the lesson and the text is that we are more similar than we are different. Our skin colors are part of us, not all of us. Yet, there is a beauty to our differences and “we” are worth celebrating.
- It is recommended that follow-up activities of this lesson be co-taught with an art teacher, or someone familiar with color theory, or at least how to mix tints and shades of colors. To create skin colors, we suggest starting with a “true” color wheel orange. Add black, or a color close to black, to make orange a darker shade. Add white, or a color close to white, to make orange a lighter tint. To change the hue, consider adding yellow and/or red to the mix. (Practice making skin colors ahead of teaching this lesson.) This method illustrates that skin color is actually inherently similar in its “roots.” Some skin simply has either more or less melanin, or pigment. Thus, we can simultaneously underscore similarities and celebrate differences.

VOCABULARY

- Consider introducing and/or reviewing words to increase familiarity when mixing colors: primary colors, secondary colors, color wheel, tint, and shade.

Lesson Procedure

BACKGROUND

Through language that mimics a nursery rhyme and color-blocked illustrations, this book conveys essential social messages such as acceptance, friendship, self-esteem, and valuing diversity. Children in the book are depicted doing everyday, fun activities, such as swimming in the ocean and catching butterflies. This allows for follow-up activities and conversations to address skin color through positive associations. Before reading this book, students should have experience with the color wheel and mixing colors, such as knowing how to make

the secondary colors of green, orange, and purple. Notice that brown is not on the color wheel. Brown is often considered a shade of orange. In this lesson, students will take the color orange, and mix it with another color (white or black) to make new tints and shades. Thus, familiarity with the color wheel is key. As already mentioned, it is recommended that this lesson is led by, or co-taught with, an art teacher.

OPENING

Before reading *The Skin You Live In*, ask students if they have read or seen this book before. Based on the cover and title of the book, ask students what they think the story will be about. Ask students about skin. What is its purpose? You may tell them an introductory idea, such as skin is a layer of protection for our bodies. (The next lesson will cover the function of skin in more depth, so you may expand then.) Imagine if we didn't have our skin! What would we look like? As we've discussed, there are so many colors in the world, and our skin also comes in different tones. Those colors are something to celebrate. Our skin is beautiful!

READ ALOUD AND DISCUSSION

Read *The Skin You Live In* to the class. Make sure to show illustrations while reading, or after reading each page. After reading, discuss the different activities the kids in the book did so students can connect to what they've seen. Do you do any of the same activities? What colors or words would you use to describe your skin? Revisit pages if needed. Consider highlighting certain ideas, such as how families can come in different shades, as depicted on the page that says, "It's baby born new skin and you're family too skin, and glows when it shows that it knows we love you skin!" Point out how the books says there is not "good" skin or "bad" skin. Or "tall" skin and "short" skin. It's just "you" skin. And all skin is beautiful.

ACTIVITY AND CLOSING

- Tell the class that, in order to celebrate all the shades of colors, we are going to practice making various skin colors. To explore the beauty of diverse, nuanced colors, you may begin by viewing Pantone colors that are in the family of skin colors, such as the Pantone Orange Color Chart. (A quick search of this term will bring up an array of skin colors. Consider showing this, or printing/ordering samples, for the class. Also, if a Pantone Color is not available, consider obtaining/ordering samples of orange paint chips from a paint company. Ensure the range of "oranges" are close to skin tones.) If using this chart, or swatches of orange, ask the class to describe the colors they see? How many colors are there? What color do they see the most?
- After students thumb through example colors (and read the names of colors, if available), provide them with paints to mix colors, but first, model how to mix. There are many ways to think about skin colors, and we advise asking questions of students to get them to explore how skin colors can be derived from a central color such as orange, or the "true" color wheel orange. Ask students to think about what colors they would add to an orange base to make various lighter and darker shades. Make a continuum of colors in front of the students -- ranges of lighter orange and darker orange. To change the hue, consider adding yellow and/or red to the mix, but adding only white and black may suffice. As they mix, have students pause to paint samples of different colors on a single page, including "lighter" ones and "darker" ones.
- The activity should encourage students to make an array of skin colors, not just one skin color and not just their own skin color. This lesson is centered on valuing the diversity of colors our skin comes in. Thus, if a student finishes "early," or before the time is up, encourage them to explore more, such as by creating more colors (for colors that are "like" them and "different" from them.)



Extension Activities

SUGGESTIONS

We highly recommend referencing the photographic work of Angelica Dass. For her ongoing project, “Humanae”, she has already photographed thousands of people. After photographing each person, Dass chooses a Pantone background based on a portion of their skin pigment (most people are not evenly one color). Through her work, we can visually see the beautiful range of colors we all come in. There is also a slideshow, created by CNN, which highlights her work, titled “Everyone is Just a Different Shade of Pantone: Which is Yours?” Click on the center of the screen to view the slide show.

- To view her site, visit: <https://www.angelicadass.com/humanae-project>
- To view the slide show, visit: <https://www.cnn.com/style/gallery/angelica-dass-pantone-skin-tone/index.html>

LESSON 7

WHAT IS SKIN?

Grade Kindergarten | Suggested Time: 45+ minutes
Unit: The Physical World Around Us – A Celebration of (Skin) Colors
Related Subject(s): Reading/Literary; Science

Background

OBJECTIVES

- To discuss and understand the functions of skin.
- To introduce students to the idea of melanin, or why we have different skin colors.

MATERIALS

- Sesame Street video and song, “Beautiful Skin.” Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oq9ydJK-6Fn8>
- Materials needed for suggested centers. Refer to lesson notes.

ESSENTIAL IDEA

- In order to celebrate skin, students should understand what skin is. There are three primary functions of skin. As people with skin, we also have the job of taking care of and being kind to our skin. However, if our skin has the same function, why does it come in different colors? Students will learn that a pigment called melanin makes our skin look different. It helped us evolve, and as a result, makes each of us unique! Because this lesson discusses how skin is an organ, it may be led by, or co-taught with, a science teacher.

VOCABULARY

- Advanced scientific concepts. Throughout the lesson, the following ideas and/or terms will be used: the function or job of skin, melanin (pigment, or coloring, in our skin), ancestors (people we are related to, who came long before us).

Lesson Procedure

OPENING

We recommend that this lesson is led by, or co-taught with, a science teacher. Additionally, it may be helpful to have parent volunteers join this lesson, as it suggests busy stations or centers. Tell the class that we’re going to talk a lot about skin and the job skin does for our bodies. To begin, ask the students about skin. Where is your skin? It covers your entire body. What does skin do? Like your brain and heart, your skin is an organ. In fact, skin is the largest organ of the human body. Review the function, or “job,” of our skin. Consider writing the three jobs on the board, or display them somewhere in the classroom.

Our skin has three major jobs:

1. **Protection:** Skin serves as a barrier for the inside of our bodies. It is thicker and thinner in some parts. It keeps bad stuff from entering our bodies, like germs and dirt that can cause infections and make us sick.
2. **Temperature Control:** Skin helps regulate, or control, our body temperature. For example, sweat helps us cool off when our bodies get hot.
3. **Sense of Touch:** Skin gives us a sense of touch, it allows us to feel. Some parts of our skin are more sensitive than others, such as our hands, feet, and lips.

After reviewing the job of our skin, talk about the importance of taking care of it. It's essential that we are kind to our skin. Who has seen someone take care of their skin? How do people care for it? Consider listing students' ideas, as well as your own, for the ways we can take care of our skin (i.e. washing, moisturizing, using sunblock, etc.).

Finally, talk about how our skin comes in different colors or shades and textures. What makes it a different color is a pigment called melanin. When people have more melanin, their skin is darker. When people have less melanin, their skin is lighter. Depending on where our ancestors came from, we may have more or less melanin. A long time ago, before we lived in permanent homes, skin with more melanin helped people live with a lot of sun. And skin with less melanin helped people live with less sun. Now, we live all over the world. So, no matter where we live, our skin can be different colors.

Now that we know the job of skin, the importance of taking care of skin, and why skin comes in different colors, we are going to explore our own skin. (Segue into centers.)

ACTIVITY (CENTERS)

Split class in half to experience two stations. Station One: Hand Washing. In this center, students will wash their hands, talking about the importance of washing and how to properly wash. Station Two: Sensory Station. In this center, students will touch various objects. For instance, to play with texture, have students move a feather along their fingertips and palms, comparing it to the back of their hand or forearm. Compare it to rougher objects, like dried beans, cardboard, or smoother objects like stones, or "mixed textured" objects like seashells. If a third station is desired, consider having students briefly touch something cold, like ice cubes. Compare it to something warmer, such as warmed water (not too hot!), etc.

DISCUSSION AS WHOLE CLASS

After students have experienced the centers, bring them back for a class discussion. Ask students to raise their hand if they felt the feather on their skin. Raise their hand if they felt the ice cube or warmed water. Ask more questions about the centers. Ideally, all students will raise their hand. The idea is to underscore how, no matter the visual difference, or different levels of melanin, our skin performs the same function for our bodies. Everyone's skin works hard. Everyone's skin should be appreciated and loved. Our skin does its job of protecting us, and it's our job to take care of it -- love it and be kind to it. End by showing the awesome Sesame Street video. It is sure to make everyone smile.



Extension Activities

SUGGESTIONS

Inspired by the song lyrics of the Sesame Street video, consider having students each write, and perhaps draw, one thing they love about their skin thinking about: How their skin protects them; How their skin lets them feel soft or textured things; And the color of their skin. For a quick discussion, students may gather in a circle, each taking a turn to share their skin affirmations.

LESSON 8

OUR COLORS

Grade: Kindergarten | Suggested Time: 45 minutes
Unit: The Physical World Around Us – A Celebration of (Skin) Colors
Related Subject(s): Reading/Literary; Art

Background

OBJECTIVES

- To celebrate our colors.
- To explore the nuance of color, including our own skin color.

MATERIALS

- “Colors,” a poem by Shel Silverstein.
- Writing and art materials for students.

ESSENTIAL IDEA

- At this point in the unit, students have learned about color, such as how to mix colors and celebrate the diversity of colors in our larger world. They have discussed what skin is and how to care for and be kind to it, and have explored the concept of skin colors. Today, the lesson will focus on celebrating our own skin colors. Many messages in society indicate that skin color is not something to talk about, and rarely is it celebrated. This lesson will not only normalize skin color, but hopefully encourage and/or inspire self-affirming beliefs around our physicality and racial identity. In short, all of us are unique, and our skin colors are one aspect of our unique identity and beauty.

VOCABULARY

- The idea of color and different skin colors are explored in this lesson. It may be helpful to revisit vocabulary from previous lessons, especially melanin (pigment, or coloring, in our skin).

Lesson Procedure

BACKGROUND

For this activity, introduce students to the “Colors” poem, by Shel Silverstein, which describes the nuanced quality of skin colors (as brownish, pinkish, yellowish), while also celebrating our individual personalities or inner worlds, and how our physical identity does not necessarily define all of who we are.

OPENING

Before reading “Colors,” a poem by Shel Silverstein, ask students if they have read or heard of Shel Silverstein before. (Students may already be familiar with his work, such as *The Giving Tree*.) Ask students if they know what makes something a poem. Have they read this poem before? Based on the title, “Colors,” what do they think the poem will be about?

READ ALOUD AND DISCUSSION

Read “Colors” to the class. Consider displaying the poem on a larger screen or the board, for students to read along. Ask the class what they think the poem is about. What is Shel Silverstein trying to say about colors? Consider rereading the poem. Revisit the particular line, “My skin is kind of sort of brownish. Pinkish yellowish

white.” If they had to create (name and design) a color to match their skin, what color would it be? What would they call it? For a more abstract conversation, as the poem alludes to, what color would they be on the inside as well?

ACTIVITY AND CLOSING

- Remind students about the activity and the Pantone colors from Lesson 6, and how they created an array of skin colors. Today, they are going to create a color to match their own beautiful skin tone! As mentioned in Lesson 6, there are various ways to mimic skin colors. We suggest starting with a “true” color wheel orange. Add black, or a color close to black, to make orange a darker shade. Add white, or a color close to white, to make orange a lighter tint. To change the hue, consider adding yellow and/or red to the mix. (Practice making skin colors ahead of teaching this lesson.) For more reference material, review the Pantone Color Guides to see how varied colors can be!
- Once students create a color that they feel best represents their skin tone, consider having them use the paint to create a self-portrait. Instead of a self-portrait, they may also use their paint to create their own “Pantone skin color squares,” by painting a piece of large white paper. Once the paper is painted and has dried, students can write their names and the name they’ve given to the color, in the style of the Pantone Guides. (While students are encouraged to create the names of their own Pantone skin shade, help ensure that the terms they create are inherently positive.)
- Consider sharing artwork as a class. Gather in a circle, ask students to make self-affirming statements about the color they chose. To model, the teacher may share a statement such as, “I made a beautiful, deep shade of brown, like a strong tree, to capture my skin color.” Or, “My skin color is a lighter tint, like a daisy petal.” Be careful when making comparisons, and try not to overuse comparisons of skin color to food, so as not to exoticize people, especially people of color (i.e. chocolate skin, or vanilla ice cream.) If a student uses it, that’s fine, there is no need to “correct” them. In short, as a teacher, please do not limit examples to just food. Additionally, if a teacher feels confident to do so, tie statements to forms of racial identity, such as adapting the previous statement to, “Because I identify as a ____ (i.e. Black or African American, White or European American, Latina/o or Latinx, Asian, and/or Native American person), I made a beautiful shade of ____ to capture my skin color.” Since students are young and are likely still forming their sense of racial identity, we do not suggest that labels are given to them or formally taught at this point. If students are comfortable, allow them to voluntarily identify their race, ethnicity, and/or culture, but do not force the issue on every student at this time.



Extension Activities

SUGGESTIONS

For a second activity, consider using the student’s created paint to color a second piece of paper. When the paint is dry, they can trace the shape of their hands onto it, and cut out the hand shape. The “skin toned” hands can be linked together and displayed in the classroom to illustrate solidarity in the beautifully diverse community.