



# Let's Learn Together

*Racial Literacy*



## **Race shouldn't matter, but it does.**

Let's Learn together is a practical framework for how to talk about race with your kids. This booklet is yours to keep after you return your kit. Draw in it, read it with your family, pass it along to a friend. Make it yours.

Learn more about Let's Learn Together at [wilmettelibrary.info/learntogether](http://wilmettelibrary.info/learntogether).

# Welcome

Racial literacy is a set of skills needed to talk thoughtfully about race and to identify and respond to racism. The information and resources in this booklet invite you and your family to get curious about why race matters in our society and to build a vocabulary that allows you to address fairness, equity, and justice.

It is natural to feel hesitant about discussing complicated topics like race. A sense of vulnerability is appropriate when developing racial literacy skills. The process of interrupting racism and inequality requires us to excavate beliefs, ideas, and biases that are deeply embedded in our society.

For some, talking openly about race is unfamiliar, and many people feel uncomfortable or fearful about making mistakes. Developing a deeper awareness and understanding of racism involves critical reflection and humility.

For others, contending with race and racism is a fact of life. Members of the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) community deal with the repercussions of a racist social and political system in ways both big and small.

It is not the responsibility of BIPOC community members to instruct or empathize in this work. While Let's Learn Together programming aims to deepen community connections, we acknowledge that each family's context for racial literacy is personal and unique.

To begin this journey or to deepen your experience, Wilmette Public Library is here to provide resources and programs that support racial literacy at every level. Ask a librarian for book recommendations that are just right for your family. Join a Let's Learn Together Family Workshop or adult program to spark new ideas and build community. Our programs and collections are constantly evolving as we learn together.

# Our Family

Use words or pictures to describe your family.

The racial identities in our family are ...

Our family feels strongly about ...

Our ancestors lived in ...

Self-awareness is an important step in learning how we are all connected. We learn how we are unique, how we are the same, and how our experiences may differ according to social structures and institutional constructs.

## Conversation Starters

Big feelings are productive when exploring complex topics. Naming and exploring emotions as they arise can lead to a more meaningful and impactful understanding of the subject matter. Here are a few you may find helpful.

Confused  
Worried  
Excited  
Joyful

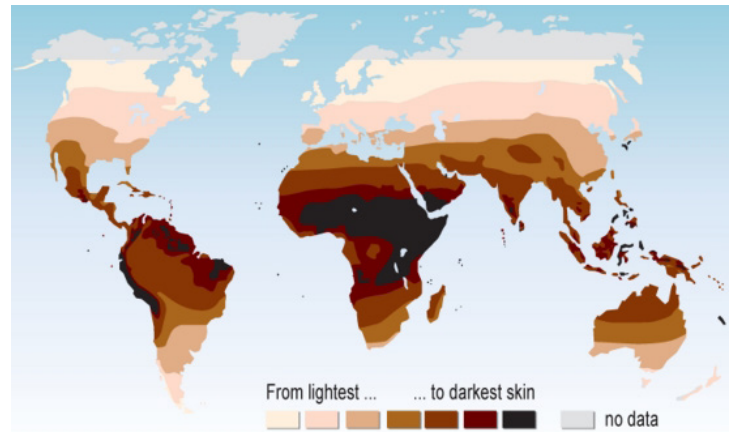
Shamed  
Frustrated  
Hopeful  
Grateful

Guilty  
Angry  
Nervous  
Curious

Surprised  
Empathetic  
Embarrassed  
Shy  
Courageous

We get our skin color from melanin – tiny grains of coloring in our skin that protect it from the sun. If you have more melanin, your skin will be darker. If you have less melanin, your skin will be lighter.

Modern humans originated in what is now Africa. As people migrated to other parts of the world, the melanin in their skin adjusted according to sun exposure.



## Where did your ancestors live?



**Freckles are spots that have a lot of melanin**

## Making Skin Tone Paint

Supplies:

- Washable paint in red, yellow, blue, black, white
- Brushes
- Paper or other surface for mixing colors

Start by mixing the primary colors together to create brown.

Then, add white or black to make the colors lighter or darker.

# Family Activities

Doing activities together can help process feelings as well as solidify the meaning of the discussion.

## Create a Family Playlist

Mix uplifting favorites with genres that are new to you. Get curious about the artists.

## Practice with Puppets

Some children – grownups, too – may find it's easier and feels safer to talk to or through a puppet.

## Home Diversity Reflection

**Take some time to notice the diversity in your home and in the media you consume.**

What race is centered in magazines, catalogs and toys? In the books you read and movies you watch, who is the hero? the villain? the sidekick?

## Engage During Game Night

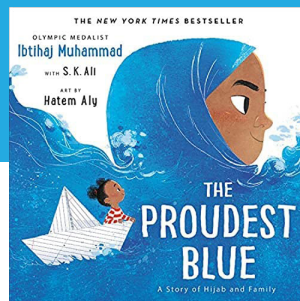
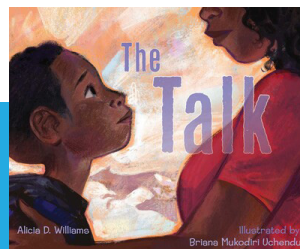
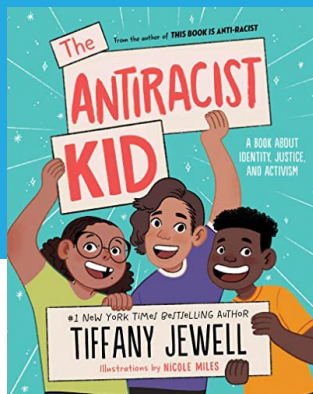
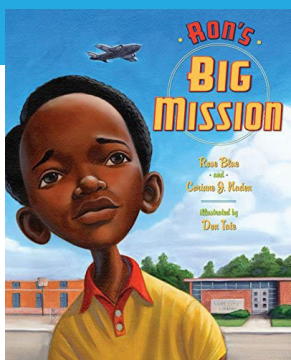
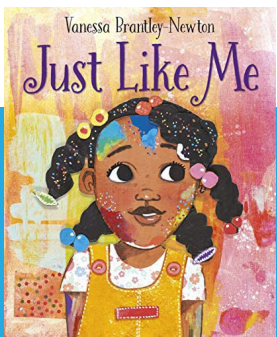
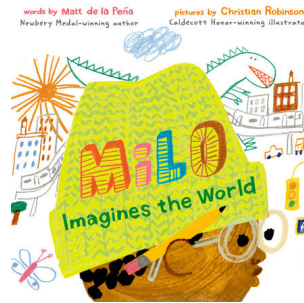
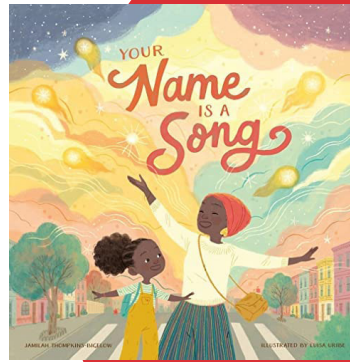
The game Guess Who? Is a fun and interactive way to practice describing skin tone and features.

- Does your Mystery Character have curly hair?
- Does your Mystery Character have fair skin?
- Does your Mystery Character have freckles?

Books can be gateways to meaningful conversation. Reading with your child provides an opportunity to build empathy and expand vocabulary.

When you're reading together, take time to ask questions about the story and illustrations. Listen to your child's observations and help make connections to their own experiences. Acknowledge unfairness, name actions like prejudice or racism, and encourage your child's natural sense of fairness.

Follow your child's lead and be patient - racial literacy is an ongoing practice that strengthens over time.



# Prompts to help you talk about race in books

Is her skin lighter or darker than yours? Does she like to play like you?

There are lots of different types of hair and they are all beautiful.

How do you think this character is feeling? What makes you think that?

That is an example of a stereotype.

These questions can help you start conversations about race with readers of all ages.

Who is telling this story?

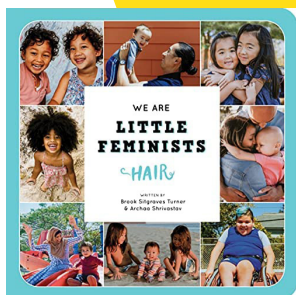
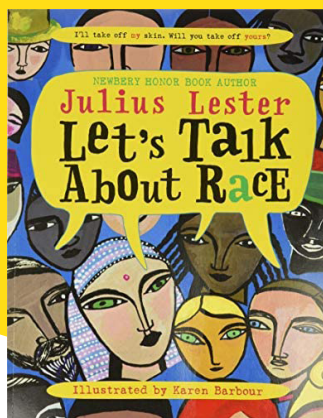
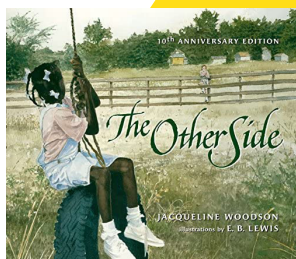
Tell me what you already know.

Who is included in this story?  
Who is left out?

When policies and practices are racist, it's called systemic racism. How does this story show systemic racism?

How are the characters in this book practicing antiracism?

This story makes me feel....



Find the books featured on these pages, as well as many others selected by our librarians, at [wilmettelibrary.info/learntogether](http://wilmettelibrary.info/learntogether)

# Productive Vocabulary for Meaningful Dialogue



**Antiracism:** The active practice of disrupting racism and working toward justice and equity. Antiracism requires consistent learning and unlearning.

**Discrimination:** Unfair treatment, usually based on prejudice against someone's race, religion, sex, or other identities.

**Diversity:** Variety in representation. This includes culture, race, ethnicity, gender, age, and other categories.

**Empathy:** The ability to imagine how it feels to be someone else.

**Implicit Bias:** Unintentional and unconscious attitudes or stereotypes toward people in a certain group based only on their membership in that group.

**Prejudice:** Judging or having opinions about a person or group of people before you know them.

**Privilege:** The unearned and often unrecognized benefits, rights and advantages granted to members of a dominant group (white people, people without disabilities, men, heterosexuals).

**Race:** A social and political construct that assigns humans to groups based on shared physical characteristics such as skin color. Race is not a biological category.

**Racism:** Prejudice against someone based on race, which is reinforced by systems of power.

**Stereotype:** A fixed set of ideas about a person or group that assumes all members of that group are the same. Stereotypes can be based on what we see in the media or on the opinions of someone we know or trust.

**Systemic racism:** When policies and practices are inherently racist and unjust.

**White domination:** Centering white people as the dominant culture and standard or baseline

**White supremacy:** The systems that give advantage to people with light skin

Let's Learn Together is a set of programs and tools designed to provide a framework for discussing challenging topics and social issues. Through literature, activities, and expert presenters, you are invited to get curious about subjects relevant to our society, and uncover and challenge attitudes and biases.



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