BOOK BASICS

That's Not My Name!
By Anoosha Syed (Author and Illustrator)
Viking Books for Young Readers, 2022
Grades PreK-1

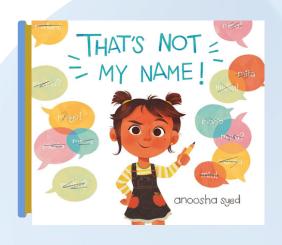


ABOUT THE BOOK

Mirha is so excited for her first day of school! She can't wait to learn, play, and make new friends. But when her classmates mispronounce her name, she goes home wondering if she should find a new one. Maybe then she'd be able to find a monogrammed keychain at the gas station or order a hot chocolate at the cafe more easily. Mama helps Mirha to see how special her name is, and she returns to school the next day determined to help her classmates say it correctly--even if it takes a hundred tries.

WHAT THE BOOK TEACHES: THE BIG IDEAS

- Names are a part of identity. Therefore, it is important to get people's names right.
- When others don't pronounce someone's name correctly or when they try to change someone's name, it can make that person feel sad, angry, unwelcome or excluded.
- Names are sometimes a significant part of someone's cultural identity, reflecting their ethnicity, culture, religion, race, family/ancestors or language.



WHAT ARE "MIRROR AND WINDOW" BOOKS?

Children's books are often referred to as "mirrors and windows." Coined by Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop in 1990, "mirrors" refer to books where children can see themselves in the characters and stories; those mirrors reflect various aspects of their identity. "Window" books help children look "outside," to learn about other people, identities and experiences of those who are different from them, helping children learn more about the world outside themselves. Reading for Peace understands the importance of mirrors and windows when selecting books to read with children.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- (Pre-reading) What is the title of the book? Who and what do you see on the cover? What do you think the book will be about?
- How does Mirha feel when the others don't say her name right or ask to call her a different name? How can you tell how Mirha feels?
- Has anything like this ever happened to you or someone you know? What happened and how did you feel?
- When Mirha talks with Mama about wanting to change her name, what does Mama say? Why is Mirha's name special and important?
- What does Mirha do after she realizes she is proud of and loves her name? What happens next?
- How does Mirha feel at the end? How do you know?
- · How did you feel when the book ended?
- Why do you think the author wrote this book?

WAYS TO EXTEND THE BOOK

- Discuss Names. Ask students: Why do you think the author wrote a book about names? Elicit/explain that names are important. Names are part of who we are-our identities. Ask: Why was Mirha upset that others were not pronouncing her name right or calling her by a different name? Elicit/share that because our names are important to us, we might feel sad, excluded, or mad if others don't try to get our names right. Ask: What can we do to be able to say others' names right? Share that we can make sure we know how to pronounce everyone's names and that we are going to do that. As a class, get students into a circle and have each student (one at a time) share their name and how to pronounce it. Then have everyone repeat back the student's name. If they get it right, the student should give a thumbs up or say "yes!" If not, the student should give a thumbs down or say "no" and have the group try again. Make sure that everyone gets the names right. Debrief the activity, asking students to share how they felt when their name is pronounced correctly. You can do this at the beginning of the school year and periodically if a refresher is needed or if a new student joins the class.
- My Name. Ask students: Do you know the story of your name? Do you know why you were given the name you have? (Note: If students don't know, allow them time to ask parents/caregivers that evening, if possible). Then invite students to (1) use their first or last name to create an acrostic poem (a poem where the first letter of each line spells out their name when read vertically), (2) create a collage or drawing about them and their name with their name artfully drawn in the center, or (3) write a few sentences or paragraph about their name (for students who are writing).
- Favorite Scene. Ask students: What was your favorite, most important, or most meaningful part of the
 book? Why was it important, meaningful or your favorite part? Brainstorm a list of scenes. Then ask
 students to either draw that scene and include dialogue or narration, if they can/want to. If they decide
 to act out a scene, they will need to create the skit with others who can play different roles. When doing
 short skits or role plays, be mindful not to cause harm or upset to students who may have experienced
 this kind of harm directly. To prevent this, talk with the students in advance about their skits and
 approve the scenes.

ABOUT READING FOR PEACE

Reading for Peace is a volunteer-led program that brings small-group storytime to elementary schools across the Denver metro area. Each week, volunteers read and discuss books with students that are thoughtfully chosen to support social-emotional learning and build connection. The experience is deeply meaningful for both children and volunteers alike. Learn more at https://conflictcenter.org/reading-for-peace-program

WHAT'S ON OUR SHELF? SIMILAR TITLES:

