

# It Starts with ME!

IT  
STARTS  
WITH ME!

**ELEMENTARY GRADES  
CURRICULUM GUIDE**

Pledge to **BE LOVE!**

DR. BERNICE A. KING  
DR. KIMBERLY P. JOHNSON

Illustrated by Zoe Ranucci



IT  
STARTS  
WITH ME!

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The Beloved Community



BE  
LOVE

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# AUTHORS & ILLUSTRATOR

## It Starts With Me!



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We are tremendously thankful for the vision and commitment of The King Center’s CEO and co-author of the book, Dr. Bernice A. King, whose leadership was vital in bringing this curriculum to life. Deep appreciation to co-author Dr. Kimberly P. Johnson for lending her knowledge to this endeavor. And special recognition to Illustrator Zoe Ranucci for breathing visual vibrancy into this literary treasure.

The collaborative spirit and dedication of everyone involved has made the “It Starts with Me!” Curriculum a powerful tool for positive change.



## About the Curriculum

These materials are based on the children's book *It Starts With ME!* written by Drs. Bernice A. King and Kimberly P. Johnson, with illustrations by Zoe Ranucci. There are six lessons, each meeting the Common Core Standards for English and Social Studies in elementary education.

The curriculum's six lessons follow two frameworks designed for social and emotional learning and traditional curricular skills in English Language Arts. Educators or parents are encouraged to revisit the text for each lesson if necessary.

All materials, including worksheets, are included in this document. This curriculum introduces learners to the concept of "the Beloved Community." To help support learners in understanding this concept, visit The King Center's website to learn more about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of the Beloved Community: <https://thekingcenter.org/about-tkc/the-king-philosophy/>

This curriculum is designed for elementary grades with emphasis on classroom instructors in kindergarten through grade 2. The curriculum is also usable for parents, guardians, and caregivers.



The instructional model outlined in the frameworks below shows the lens through which educators should utilize the It Starts With ME! curriculum. In each lesson, educators will see elements of Social and Emotional Learning and Common Core curriculum skills for Kindergarten through Grade 2.



## Key Details





## LESSON PLANS



# LESSON 1

## GETTING TO KNOW: It Starts With Me!

### Common Core Standards:

- CCS-RL1, RL7

### Lesson Targets:

- Make predictions about the text based on the illustrations
- Identify the role of the author and illustrator of a text

### Success Criteria:

- With prompting and support (see question in lesson activities), students will identify the main character of the text.
- Students will make predictions about what the text is about based on the illustrations.



# LESSON 1 - ACTIVITIES

## GETTING TO KNOW: It Starts With Me!

### 1. Picture Walk

Using a document camera and/or a copy of the text, lead students through a picture walk of *It Starts With ME!* Important ideas to get to in the picture walk: main character and potential central message or lesson (no need to use the terms' central message or lesson if the terms have not been previously introduced).

Guiding questions:

- What do you see?
- Which character do you see on each page? Who do you think Amora is and why do you think Amora is important?
- Do the illustrations show good things happening, bad things happening, or both? How do you know?
- What might this book be about?
- What questions do you have based on the illustrations?

It is important that students begin to develop their own questions based on a preview of the text. Do not hesitate to record these questions and see if the questions are answered at the end of the reading. There are no wrong questions as long as they are rooted in what students see during the picture walk.

### 2. Authors and Illustrator Review

What is the job of an author or, in this case, authors of a book?

Authors write the texts or books that we read. It can be very beneficial to know who the author is before we start reading because sometimes an author's background can help us understand why he/she chose to write the book we are reading.

Review biographical information for Dr. Bernice A. King and Dr. Kimberly P. Johnson.

What is the job of an illustrator of a book?

The illustrator draws the pictures or illustrations that go with the story. Illustrations can help bring the story to life by allowing us to see what is happening in the story.

**\*\*Throughout the review of the biographical information repeat questions about the job of author and illustrator.**





# LESSON 1 - ACTIVITIES

## GETTING TO KNOW: It Starts With Me!

### 3. Reading of the text

Read the text aloud to students. This is an initial reading of the story.

Focus on the central message of what it means to be love.

Lessons that follow may require a second reading or a closer reading of particular sections of the text.

### 4. Mirror Activity

Give students the Mirror Handout and follow the steps:

- What do you think that Amora sees when she looks at herself in the mirror? What in the room lets you know that she sees some positive things in herself?
- When you look in the mirror, either describe or draw what you see.
- Describe or draw positive things you have in your life.



# LESSON 2

## RESPONSIBILITY & PLOT/CENTRAL IDEA

### Common Core Standards:

- CCS-RL2, RL3

### Lesson Targets:

- Identify the main character in the story
- Identify the problem in the story
- Identify the solution in the story
- Identify central idea in the story
- State an opinion about the story

### Success Criteria:

- Students will identify that Amora is the main character.
- Students will identify the problem in the story.
- Students will identify the solution that Amora gives.
- Students will identify the central idea.
- Students will state their own opinion about the text.



## LESSON 2 - ACTIVITIES

# RESPONSIBILITY & PLOT/CENTRAL IDEA

### 1. Story Map (RL2, RL3)

Review the literary terms on the story map with students (Main Character, Setting, Problem, Solution).

Have students complete everything but the central idea and opinion sections of the story map for *It Starts with ME!* Students can write or draw pictures.

**\*\*Setting with this one could be a little tricky.** Start by brainstorming all the places where events are taking place in the text. From that list, help students determine that the overall setting is Amora's community.

### 2. Identifying Central Idea

Explain to students that we use the different parts of the story to determine its central idea or theme. We have to pull all the pieces together to figure out what the author really wants us to know after reading the story.

Ask students to describe the characteristics of the beloved community.

Ask students, what does Amora tell us is important about a community? Do we want a community full of love or hate? Amora wants to make a difference and bring love to her community. How does she say she is going to do this? Where will she start? Think about the title of the story.

Review the central idea with students. I am responsible for helping to create a beloved community. Review the meaning of I am responsible. It means you have the power to help make it happen!

Give each student a sentence strip with the central idea. Students can cut out the central idea banner and glue it at the top of their story map.





## LESSON 2 - ACTIVITIES

### RESPONSIBILITY & PLOT/CENTRAL IDEA

#### 3. Forming an opinion about the text

Have students use the opinion section of the story map to state if they like or dislike the story and why? It is important that students begin to form their own opinions about texts to increase critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Allow students to share their feelings about the story.



## LESSON 3

# ACCEPTANCE & CHARACTER

### Common Core Standards:

- CCS-RL2, RL3, RL7, RL9

### Lesson Targets:

- Identify which character is telling the story
- Describe the main character in the story using details from the text and illustrations
- Describe other characters in the story primarily using illustrations
- Identify similarities and differences between the main character and other characters in the story
- Identify how individuals in a Beloved Community view differences

### Success Criteria:

- Students will state that Amora is telling the story.
- Students will describe Amora using details from the text and illustrations.
- Students will describe other characters in the text.
- Students will compare and contrast Amora and the other characters.



## LESSON 3 - ACTIVITIES

### ACCEPTANCE & CHARACTER

#### 1. Identifying the Narrator (RL6)

We know that Amora is the main character in the story, but is Amora also the one telling the story? To answer this question, we need to ask ourselves whose voice do we hear as we are reading? After students identify that Amora is telling the story, ask, “Does Amora tell the entire story? How do you know?”

#### 2. Describing Amora (RL3, RL7)

Ask students to think about Amora. What did we learn about her from the words in the story and from the illustrations? This includes what Amora looks like and acts like and what Amora thinks is important.

Project the sheet: “Who is our main character?”  
Record the information about Amora for the class to see.



## LESSON 3 - ACTIVITIES

### ACCEPTANCE & CHARACTER

#### 3. Describing Minor Characters (RL3, RL7)

Have students look at pages 28 and 29 of the text. These pages contain many of the minor characters who appear throughout the text. Have students describe who they see on the page. Are these people the same as or different from Amora? Lead students to descriptions that include: individuals with learning differences, individuals of different races, individuals of different genders, individuals who speak different languages (see the balloons), individuals of different sizes and shapes, individuals who look to be the same and different ages than Amora.

**\*\*Since you are comparing and contrasting various characters with Amora, doing a Venn diagram would be too complex.**

#### 4. Connection to the Beloved Community (RL2)

Throughout the story Amora describes what it means to be love. Ask students to describe the characteristics of the beloved community. If someone is trying to show that they love others and be part of a beloved community, how do you think they treat people who are different from themselves? How do they view differences? How do they make others feel about their differences? Refer back specifically to the characters on pages 28 and 29.

At the end of this discussion, summarize by using the word acceptance. Acceptance means making others feel that they belong and are loved.



## LESSON 4

# LOVE VS. HATE & KEY DETAILS

### Common Core Standards:

- CCS-RL2, RL3, RL4

### Lesson Targets:

- Use words and phrases in the text to define love and hate
- Describe how love makes a person feel and how hate makes a person feel.

### Success Criteria:

- Students will sort words and phrases from the book into two categories; those that describe love and those that describe hate.
- Students will use the information they sorted to explain how love makes someone feel and how hate makes someone feel.



## LESSON 4 - ACTIVITIES

### LOVE VS. HATE & KEY DETAILS

#### 1. Love vs. Hate Sort (RL3, RL4)

Give students the “Love vs. Hate & Key Details” worksheet. Have them cut out the describing words and paste them under what love or hate is. Words are taken directly from the text. Complete or review the sort with students.

Based on the lines from the text that are sorted, discuss how students think love makes people feel and how hate makes people feel.

#### 2. Connecting with Senses (RL4)

When reviewing the sort, draw particular attention to the two similes taken from the text. Authors often use words that appeal to our senses (sight, smell, touch, taste, sound) to help us better connect to a detail in the text. Ask students to identify to which sense each simile appeals.

Work together as a class to create some other similes for love and hate by comparing love to something that makes them feel good and comparing hate to something that makes them feel bad. Which sense is their simile appealing to? Start them with Love is like... and hate is like...

If you have some advanced learners, ask them later to create another simile on their own.





## LESSON 5

# KINDNESS/CARING & CHARACTER

### Common Core Standards:

- CCS-RL2, RL3, RL4

### Lesson Targets:

- Describe events taking place in the story
- Identify feelings of characters based on illustrations
- Connect events to how characters are feeling

### Success Criteria:

- Students will describe what is happening in the story given a particular illustration from the text.
- Students will identify how characters are feeling in those illustrations.
- Students will connect how the characters are feeling with the events taking place.



## LESSON 5 - ACTIVITIES

### KINDNESS/CARING & CHARACTER

#### 1. Modeling using the text

Turn to page 9 of the text. Ask students to describe what they think happened to the garden in the story. How is Amora feeling? How do we know? Have students begin to support their thinking using evidence from the illustrations.

Ask students to connect Amora's feelings with the event that took place.

When \_\_\_\_\_ happens, it can make someone feel \_\_\_\_\_.

Turn to page 13 of the text. Ask students to describe what is happening in the illustration. How are the children's feeling? How do we know?

Ask students to connect the children's feelings with the event that is taking place.

When \_\_\_\_\_, it can make people feel \_\_\_\_\_.



## LESSON 5 - ACTIVITIES

### KINDNESS/CARING & CHARACTER

#### 2. How are they feeling?

Have students work with a partner and talk about the pictures on the “How are They Feeling?” worksheet.

Students will look at the illustrations from the text, describe the events, and state the feelings.

Come back together as a class and complete the following statement for each image together.

Illustration #1: When \_\_\_\_\_, it can make others feel \_\_\_\_\_.

Illustration #2: When \_\_\_\_\_, it can make others feel \_\_\_\_\_.

Illustration #3: When \_\_\_\_\_, it can make someone feel \_\_\_\_\_.

Illustration #4: When \_\_\_\_\_, it can make someone feel \_\_\_\_\_.

Illustration #5: When \_\_\_\_\_, it can make everyone feel \_\_\_\_\_.

Ultimately complete these statements: When we are caring and kind, it can make others feel \_\_\_\_\_. When I am caring and kind, it makes me feel \_\_\_\_\_.



## LESSON 6

# BELONGING & CENTRAL IDEA

### Common Core Standards:

- CCS-RL1, RL7

### Lesson Targets:

- Describe how people treat one another in a beloved community.
- Determine how a beloved community can be created in the classroom.

### Success Criteria:

- Students will describe how people treat one another in a beloved community given the events in the story.
- Students will determine what they will do to create a beloved community in their own classroom.



## LESSON 6 - ACTIVITIES

### BELONGING & CENTRAL IDEA

#### 1. Creating our Beloved Community

Discuss, as a class, what Amora tells readers about what makes a beloved community. How do people treat one another? How do they view differences? How do they feel about one another?

Connect this discussion to belonging. When people are part of a beloved community, they feel like they belong. Feeling like you belong means being at a place where you want to be and where you feel that others want you to be. It also means being treated with respect and dignity, and feeling valued.

Brainstorm some specific things that students can do to create a beloved community in their own classroom.

#### 2. My Personal Pledge

Have students complete the Personal Pledge worksheet. Explain to students that a pledge is a promise. When you pledge to do something, you are promising that you are going to do it. Each student will draw his/her own picture in the mirror and write 3 - 5 things around or on the mirror that he/she will commit to doing to make the classroom a beloved community. These can come from your brainstorm list. Have students share their mirrors.

The mirror looks like the image found on page 7 of the text. Students can put their names in between the hearts just like Amora.



## LESSON 6 - ACTIVITIES BELONGING & CENTRAL IDEA

### 3. Be Love Pledge

Turn to page 3 of the book. Read the pledge to students and then have them all stand and repeat the pledge after you line by line.





## ELL & IEP SUPPORTS





# It Starts with ME!



Pledge to **BE LOVE!**

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DR. KIMBERLY P. JOHNSON

Illustrated by Zoe Ranucci



# ELL & IEP SUPPORTS

## Pre-Teaching Vocabulary

Introduce and explain key vocabulary words from the book before reading. Use visuals, real objects, or gestures to help students understand the meaning of these words.

## Pause & Predict

At certain points in the story, pause and ask students to predict what might happen next based on the illustrations or the story's context. This encourages active participation and critical thinking.

## Summarize & Retell

After reading a section or the entire book, ask students to summarize and retell the story in their own words. This helps reinforce comprehension and language skills.

## Check for Understanding

Check for comprehension by asking questions during and after reading. Provide explanations or rephrase parts of the story if needed.

## Echo Reading

Have students read aloud short phrases or sentences after you to practice pronunciation and fluency.

## Cultural Connections

Discuss aspects of the story that may relate to the students' cultures or experiences, encouraging them to make connections with the text.



- **Be Love:** To treat others with care, kindness, and understanding. It means showing love and being a good friend to everyone.
- **Beloved Community:** A special group of people who care about each other, help one another, respect one another, and make the world a better place together.
- **Community:** A group of people living and working together in the same area. They support and care for each other like a big family.
- **Peace:** A feeling of calm and happiness when everyone is getting along, and there is no fighting or hurting.
- **Pledge:** A promise or commitment that you make to do something good or follow certain rules.
- **Focus:** Paying attention and giving all your energy to what you are doing right now.
- **Kindness:** Being nice and helpful to others, showing that you care about their feelings and well-being.
- **Garden:** A special place where plants and flowers grow. People take care of gardens to make them beautiful and colorful.
- **Joy:** A feeling of extreme happiness and excitement that makes you smile and laugh.
- **Hate:** To strongly dislike someone or something, feeling angry or upset about it.
- **Burden:** A heavy feeling caused by worries or problems that can make you feel sad or tired.
- **Horrifying:** Something very scary or shocking that can give you bad dreams or make you feel frightened.
- **Infinite:** Something that seems to have no end, like the sky or the ocean. It goes on forever and ever.
- **Sincere:** When you say or do something from your heart and really mean it.
- **Forgive:** To decide not to be angry or upset with someone who has done something wrong. It means giving them another chance and not holding a grudge.

## ELL & IEP SUPPORTS

### SAMPLE: CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

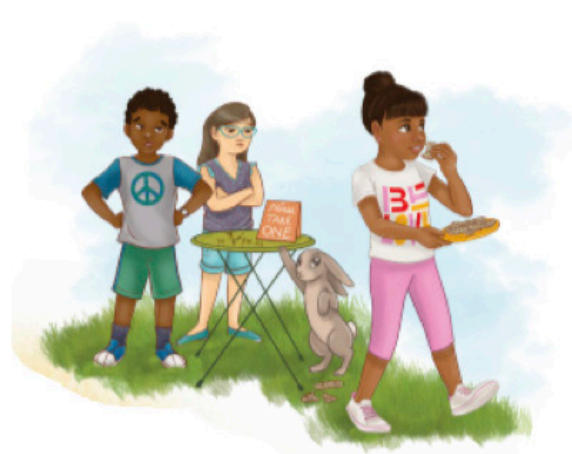
Discuss with students connections between the characters in the book and their own lives. Use the images below and ask the following:

Consider role plays with the characters and the story. Imagine what it looks like to be sad, frustrated, happy, excited. Can you act out what it would be like to get frustrated? What is something that would make you frustrated?"

**A** Has anyone ever destroyed something valuable to you? How did you feel?



**B** Has anyone ever been mean to you? How did you feel?



**C** Has anyone ever excluded you from a game? How did you feel?





# WORKSHEETS





## Lesson: Getting to Know It Starts With ME!



**DR. BERNICE A. KING**  
Author

Dr. King is a global thought leader, strategist, solutionist, orator, peace advocate, and CEO of The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change



**DR. KIMBERLY P. JOHNSON**  
Author

Dr. Johnson is an educator, keynote presenter, and social justice advocate. She is the author of 25 children's books.

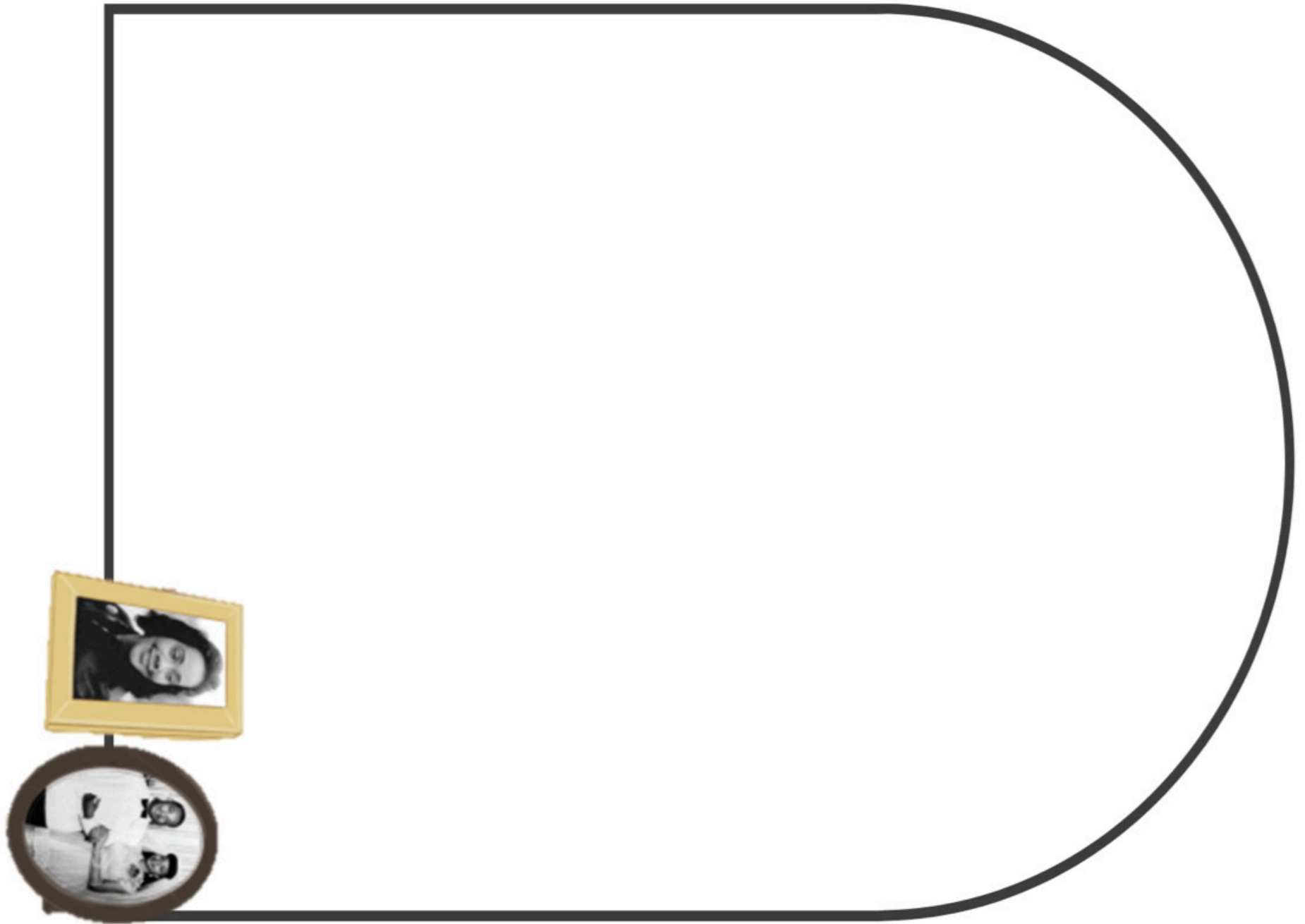


**ZOE RANUCCI**  
Illustrator

Ranucci is a illustrator, graphic designer, peace advocate, and loving pet owner.



# Lesson: Getting to Know It Starts With ME!



# Lesson: Getting to Know It Starts With ME!

## IT STARTS WITH ME!

### Story Map

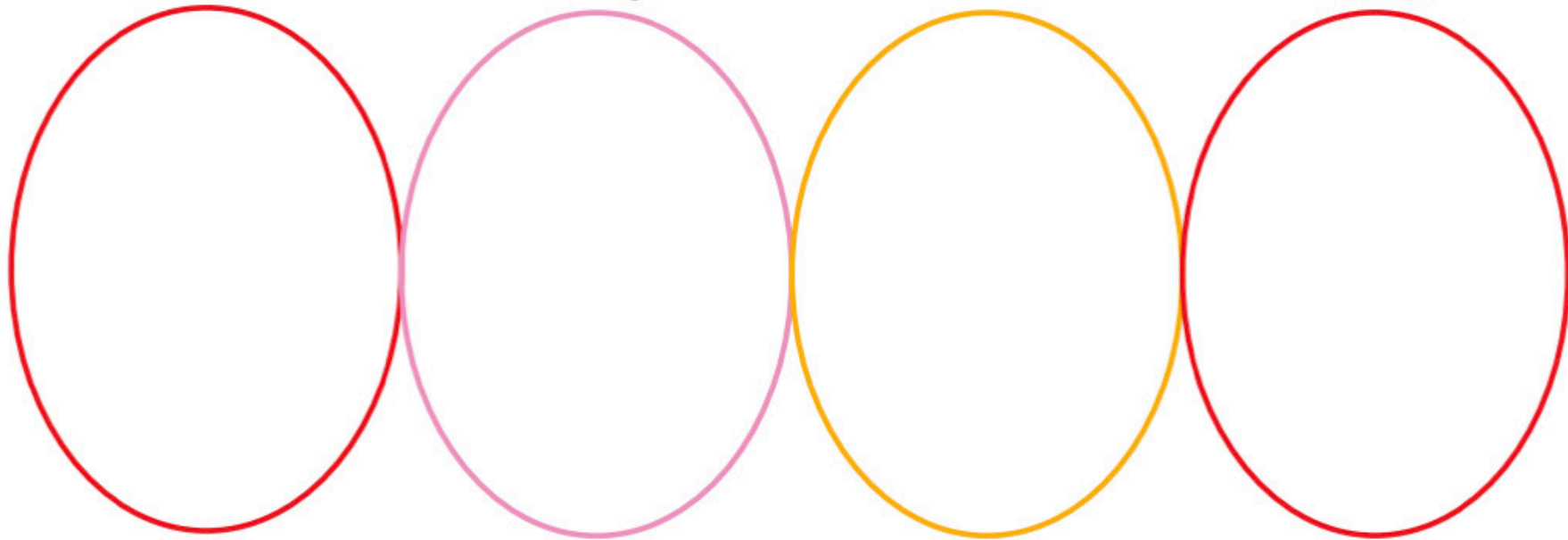


Main Character

Setting

Problem

Solution



I \_\_\_\_\_ the book because

\_\_\_\_\_.

# Lesson: Responsibility & Plot/Central Ideas

I am responsible for helping to create a beloved community.

I am responsible for helping to create a beloved community.

I am responsible for helping to create a beloved community.

I am responsible for helping to create a beloved community.

I am responsible for helping to create a beloved community.

# Lesson: Caring/Kindness & Character

#1



#2



#3



#4



#5





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## Lesson: Love vs. Hate & Key Detail



Hate



is like a warm spot

always forgives

is like a monster

brings pain

Can hurt and destroy

is our families

brings joy

helps heal

is horrifying and scary



## Lesson: Acceptance and Character

Who is our main character?



# Lesson: Belonging & Central Ideas



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