

EDUCATOR GUIDE



DEAR BLACK BOY

written by Martellus Bennett and reimagined by MR. TOMONOSHI!

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Ages 3 to 6 (Grades: PreK to 1)

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There is so much to explore in Martellus Bennett's *Dear Black Boy*. The author uses figurative language to illustrate the importance of working to achieve your goals. Students can use this story to remain goal-oriented throughout the school year as well as their lifetimes. The author's dream is freedom for all. The journey may look different for everyone, but hard work is the one thing we all have in common. Bennett uses a metaphorical race for which the prize is freedom to

underscore his hope for everyone, but especially Black boys. Freedom can be from the weight of other people's opinions, or the weight of oppression. The illustrations demonstrate the diversity of individuals on their life journeys. *Dear Black Boy* is fitting for every classroom community wishing to build camaraderie amongst classmates and a culture of setting and reaching goals. It is a beautifully illustrated picture book highly relevant for both younger and upper elementary students. Educators can adapt the following questions, activities, and standards to match their students' ages and abilities.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is a goal that you would like to "slam dunk"? What is something that could keep you from moving forward?
2. Consider your favorite extracurricular activity and/or something you are really good at. How could this activity or skill help you reach your end goal? If you are really good at basketball, painting, playing an instrument, or some other special skill., bravo! But what else makes you, you? Explain.
3. Take a look at the illustrations of boys climbing walls and mountains. How do these illustrations emphasize that difficult obstacles could keep someone from reaching their goals? What do you do when faced with obstacles? What steps help you keep moving toward your goal and not give up?
4. What does the author mean when he says, "Today we lace up our shoes and run towards freedom"? Is he writing about your actual shoes or something else? Define idiom and metaphor. Find examples in the book of each. Why might the author use this type of figurative language?
5. The author states that you should "run in the direction of your dreams." Everyone in the story is running in different directions but they are all striving to achieve their goals. Where will you run? What will your finish line look like?
6. Think back to a time when you felt discouraged and sad because your dream or goal didn't come true. What helped you to overcome this feeling?
7. Look at the framed pictures of the previous Black boys who ran and then won. In the future when you become successful, how might you help others find their way towards freedom or success in life?

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.7

Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.1.b

Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).

GOAL SETTING... BUT FIRST, A SELFIE!

Before reading *Dear Black Boy*, ask students to take a selfie at the classroom photobooth! For the photobooth, decorate a trifold board in your school colors to use as a backdrop for student selfies. Place it on a desk along with fun photo props. Leave post-it notes and markers for students to write or draw the three goals they can work towards today that will help them cross their finish lines in the future. Create a bulletin board display with the results of the selfie station as a visual reminder that achieving smaller, daily goals will lead the class to their finish lines. Throughout the year, encourage students to share, to listen to, to respect, and to support each other's goals.

Diversity 6 DI.3-5.6

I like knowing people who are like me and different from me, and I treat each person with respect.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.2

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

"DEAR ME..." A LETTER TO SELF

One of the main ideas of *Dear Black Boy* is perseverance. One strategy to help students stick with their goals is using positive self-talk. Ask students to write letters to themselves to create these positive daily affirmations. What two words would they use to describe themselves? For example, "Dear Brown Girl," "Dear Beautiful Child," "Dear Handsome One," or "Dear Hard Worker" . . . as long as they address themselves in a positive way, the sky's the limit.

Dear (two self-descriptors),

1. Write one statement that will encourage you when you're feeling blue.
2. Write one statement that will compliment you when you need to feel pretty or handsome.
3. Write one statement that sets a goal that you want to reach this semester.
4. Write one statement that says something kind and loving about you.
5. Write one statement that shows what kind of classroom citizen you want to be.

Sincerely,
(your name)

Laminate students' affirmations and return to them; encourage students to revisit and recite their affirmations daily to encourage a positive classroom culture and a mindset of perseverance.

Identity 3 ID.K-2.3

I know that all my group identities are part of me—but that I am always ALL me.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.4

With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.



How Does Your Garden Grow?

The author encourages young people to “plant seeds in the soil of your imagination”. Plan and create a community windowsill garden. Plant something that 1) you can eat, or 2) makes that world more beautiful (i.e., vegetables/flowers). Ask students to consider: What does it take to maintain the life of the seed? Using students’ responses and ideas, write the steps needed in order to reach the goal of a flowered seed. What goals will the class community need to attain in order to achieve a thriving garden? Ready, set . . . nurture that garden! Extension activity: Once your beautiful garden has grown, have students write illustrated poems comparing a plant’s growth to something in their own lives that has shown personal growth.

Action 20 AC.3-5.20

I will work with my friends and family to make our school and community fair for everyone, and we will work hard and cooperate in order to achieve our goals.

K-LS1-1 From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes

Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.



"MIRROR, MIRROR, WHAT DO YOU SEE?"

The boy in *Dear Black Boy* sees himself as a strong, confident man when he looks in the mirror. Envisioning or visualizing oneself achieving is a powerful tool to learn in life. Help students learn this technique early on in their goal-setting journey. Give students a graphic of a mirror. Students will draw themselves in their mirror achieving a future goal.

Diversity 7 DI.3-5.7

I have accurate, respectful words to describe how I am similar to and different from people who share my identities and those who have other identities.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.6

Speak in complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.



This educator guide was created by Room 228 LLC. We at Room 228 believe in goal-setting and reaching for one's goals. We also believe in taking time to nurture and engage in self-care.

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