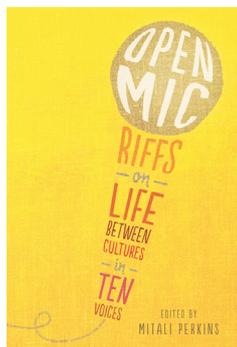




Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Open Mic: Riffs on Life Between Cultures in Ten Voices

Edited by Mitali Perkins
ISBN: 9780763658663
ARRP: \$24.95
NZRRP: \$27.99
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*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

Listen in as ten YA authors—some familiar, some new—use their own brand of humor to share their stories about growing up between cultures. Henry Choi Lee discovers that pretending to be a tai chi master or a sought-after wiz at math wins him friends for a while—until it comically backfires. A biracial girl is amused when her dad clears seats for his family on a crowded subway in under a minute flat, simply by sitting quietly in between two uptight white women. Edited by acclaimed author and speaker Mitali Perkins, this collection of fiction and nonfiction uses a mix of styles as diverse as their authors, from laugh-out-loud funny to wry, ironic, or poignant, in prose, poetry, and comic form.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Mitali Perkins is the author of numerous books for teens and younger readers, including *Monsoon Summer* and *Secret Keeper*. She was born in India and immigrated to the United States with her parents and two sisters when she was seven. Mitali Perkins lives with her husband just outside of Boston, Massachusetts.

How to use these notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

These notes are for:

- Secondary years 7+
- Ages 12+

Key Learning Areas:

- English

Example of:

- Short-stories
- Non-fiction
- Fiction
- Poetry

Themes/Ideas:

- Race
- Culture
- Humour

National Curriculum Focus:*

English content descriptions include:

Year 7		Year 8	
ACELA1528	ACELT1621	ACELA1541	ACELT1807
ACELA1529	ACELT1803	ACELA1543	ACELT1630
ACELA1531	ACELT1622	ACELT1626	ACELT1767
ACELT1619	ACELT1625	ACELT1806	ACELT1632
ACELT1620	ACELY1725	ACELT1627	ACELY1736

*Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian National Curriculum. However, this is not an exhaustive list of National Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text.



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Discussion Questions and Activities

What is the significance of the title, *Open Mic*? What does it imply about the stories collected in the book? What is the purpose of this book? Do you think it achieves that purpose?

From the front and back cover what information can you learn about the book? What do you think this book is about? What information do you think will be covered in this book? What type of book is this and where would you expect to find it in your library?

Who are the different authors that have contributed to this collection? Research these authors and create a study on each. What other books have they written? Where are they from?

Perform a survey of your class to find out what the cultural mix of the students is.

Have a class debate about using humour to discuss race. Read the following statements to the class and designate an area of the classroom to each. Students can then stand in the area that corresponds to the statement they agree with (or students with different ideas can create a new area). Let each student explain their reasons and try to persuade other students to agree with them. Students can change their mind and move around the room based on how persuasive an argument is.

- It is never acceptable to use humour when talking about race, the potential to offend is too great
- Some humour is acceptable when talking about race, but only when making fun of your own race
- It is acceptable to use humour when talking about race, but with caution
- It is acceptable to use humour when talking about race all the time, people are too serious about race

Write your own contribution to *Open Mic* based on a funny experience you have had dealing with your own cultural heritage or your experience with someone from a race different to your own.

Read Mitali Perkins' introduction where she mentions people telling her about chicken tikka masala and being

asked if she knows an Indian doctor. Invite students to share any common questions they get asked about their race that might be considered offensive. Have a class discussion on the various reasons why people might ask these questions.

What are your school's plans to prevent racism? Are they effective? In small groups, create several strategies to use in the school that can educate students on the effects of racism and will help prevent racist behaviour.

What is a stereotype? What are the dangers of stereotyping racial groups?

If you are in the cultural majority in your school, imagine you have to move to another country. Write a short story about starting school in a new country where you struggle with the language and are unfamiliar with the culture. Think about how this experience would make you feel.

Which story resonates with you the most? What about that story speaks to you? Why do you think Mitali Perkins chose to include such a diverse range of styles in this collection?

Australia is a nation built on many different cultures working together. Look at your local area and discuss how people from different races have worked together to turn it into what it is today.

Write an essay on whether you agree or disagree with changing a character's nationality when adapting a book or TV show to film, based on *Why I Won't Be Watching The Last Airbender Movie* by Gene Luen Yang (page 15). Include references to other adaptations that have changed the nationality of characters.

Create a 'diversity map'. Using a map of the world/globe, mark the different countries that students and/or their families are from.

Write a book review on *Open Mic*. What did you like/dislike about it and why? Who would you recommend this book to? Is it similar to any other books you have read?

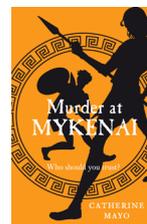
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