

Learning Guide



Skin

Learn how skin protects, helps us feel, and keeps us healthy, why all skin colors matter, and how to treat everyone with kindness and fairness!



What's in this Learning Guide?

Get Set to Listen: Answer these questions to engage students before & after listening.

Vocabulary

Discussion Questions

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.3

Writing Prompts & Extension Projects

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-8.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-8.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-8.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-8.4; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-8.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-8.8

The Skin We're In

NGSS 3-LS4-2; C3 SS Standards: D2.His.2.3-5 & D2.Civ.2.3-5; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.3; CASEL: Social Awareness & Relationship Skills

Melanin Distribution Maps: Analysis

NGSS 3-LS4-2 & 3-LS4-3; C3 SS Standards: D2.Geo.2.3-5; D2.Geo.4.3-5: Spatial Patterns; D2.His.2.3-5; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.7

History of Skin Color and Racism: Reading Passage, Reflection Questions, & Activity

NMSS: NM.H.5.1, NM.H.5.2, NM.G.5.1, NM.C.5.2, NM.C.5.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.3

Pen Pal Letter Template

C3 SS Standards: D2.Civ.4.3-5; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.4

Being Anti-Racist: Standing Up for Fairness

C3 SS Standards: D2.Civ.1.3-5, D2.His.3.3-5, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1

Skin Coloring Activity

The Amazing Layers of All Skin

NGSS: 5-LS1-1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.7

Love the Skin You're In

NHES Standards 1, 3, 4, & 7; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2

Design a Skin-Care Superhero!

NHES Standards 1 & 4; VA:Cr2.1.4-5

Additional Resources & Book List



The Children's Hour
kids public radio

© 2025 The Children's Hour radio show podcast

<https://www.childrenshour.org/skin/>



Get set to listen.

1. Before listening!

Write down your response to the following question. Share with a partner or small group when you are finished.

K

What do you **know** about skin?

W

What do you **wonder** about skin?

2. After listening!

Write down your response to the following question. Share with a partner or small group when you are finished.

L

What did you **learn** about skin?



Vocabulary

Listening for Words

1. Make a four-column chart and label the columns “I don’t know,” “I’ve seen or heard, but don’t know the meaning,” “I think I know the meaning,” and “I know the meaning.”
2. Write the vocabulary word in the column that describes how well you know the meaning of the word.
3. Listen to [the episode](#). Note how the speaker uses the words.

Matching Words with Definitions

1. Print and cut apart the word and definition cards.
2. Spread out the word cards so you can see them all. One by one, attach a definition card to each word card.

Writing with New Words

After working with the words and definitions, write a one-page essay or story that uses at least three of the words.

systemic racism

The unfair treatment of some people that is built into systems of society throughout history. It affects people in areas of healthcare, housing, financial opportunities and more.

legacy

Something that is passed on from previous generations, such as ideas and beliefs.



Vocabulary

melanin

A substance in your body that produces hair, eye, and skin pigmentation (or coloring). The more melanin you produce, the darker your features are. The amount of melanin in your body depends on your genes and how much sun exposure your ancestors experienced based on where they lived.

epidermis

The top layer of skin. It has many functions, including protecting the rest of our body from germs and harsh elements, producing new skin cells, and determining skin color.

discrimination

The unfair treatment of people based on things such as their age, gender, skin color, etc. It has real and lasting negative effects on people's lives.

implicit bias

Prejudices in society that people are not aware they have.



Discussion Questions

1. Is it okay to notice that people look different from us? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think people have different colored skin?
3. What can we learn from people who are different from us?
4. How would you feel if someone didn't want to play with you because of your skin color or name?
5. What do you think "racism" means? Why is it wrong?
6. Why do you think people discriminate against people based on their skin color?
7. How do things that happened a long time ago affect how people are treated today? What can you do to stop people from believing unfair or mean things about others?
8. What does being a good friend to everyone look like?
9. How can we take care of our skin?



Group Discussion Strategies

Think Pair Share:

1. Individually, student writes down their answer to a question.
2. Students pair up and tell each other their answers.
3. Teacher calls for volunteers to share with the whole class their answer (and/or their partner's answer). Teacher notes key words/phrases on board.

Round Robin:

1. Teacher poses one question (written on top of a large page) to students, who are assembled into small groups of 3 or 4.
2. Students take turns brainstorming the answers. The recorder of the group writes down all answers.
3. The leader reads the group's ideas to the entire class. Teacher moderates.



Writing Prompts

Narrative Prompts

1. Think about a character who notices someone being treated differently because of their skin color. How does your character respond? What do they do to help others understand that skin color doesn't determine a person's value?

Extensions:

- Add a short scene explaining melanin or how skin color works.
- Draw a "Skin Diversity Map" of your school, showing the different skin tones of classmates or people in your community.

Informative/Explanatory Prompts

1. Write an article, brochure, or report explaining:
 - The layers of skin (epidermis, dermis, hypodermis)
 - How skin protects the body, senses touch, heals itself, and regulates temperature
 - Tips for keeping skin healthy (like sunscreen, hydration, and gentle care)

Extensions:

- Draw diagrams or label the layers of the skin (see "The Amazing Layers of All Skin" passage and diagram in this Learning Guide).
- Include a section about how skin color affects sun exposure and the need for SPF.
- Compare different skin care routines for different skin types (oily, dry, sensitive, combination).
- Include examples of how healthy skin helps us in everyday life.

Opinion/Persuasive Prompts

1. Write a persuasive piece about why people should celebrate all skin colors.

Extension: Suggest a school project or campaign that promotes skin inclusivity. (E.g. Make a "Skin Health & Diversity" bulletin board or digital poster for your school.)

2. Write an informational brochure giving reasons why and how people should take care of their skin.

Extension: Turn your writing into a poster, slideshow, or short video.

- Include illustrations of different skin tones and healthy skin habits.



The Skin We're In

The Skin We're In: Celebrating Our Shared Humanity

All Skin is Mostly the Same

Did you know that human skin is 98–99% the same for everyone? The only difference is **melanin**, the substance that gives our hair, eyes, and skin their color.

Why Skin Color is Different

Melanin is made by our bodies and shaped by our genes and the sun exposure our ancestors had. People who lived in sunny places developed more melanin, while people in areas with less sunlight developed less. This is why humans have different skin colors around the world.

Skin Differences Are Not Better or Worse

Under a microscope, all skin looks the same. Differences in skin color, freckles, or birthmarks don't make anyone better or worse—they just make people unique. Sadly, people have sometimes treated skin color as a reason to be unfair. That is **racism**, and it is wrong.

Celebrate Diversity

Everyone's skin is beautiful and should be respected and loved. Differences in skin color are something to celebrate—they make our world more colorful, interesting, and diverse.

Discussion Questions

1. What is **melanin**, and how does it affect skin color?
2. Why do people have different skin colors even though all skin is mostly the same?
3. What is **racism**, and why is it wrong to treat someone unfairly because of their skin?
4. How can we celebrate and respect everyone's skin color at school or at home?

Your skin doesn't decide your worth. Every skin color is amazing, and learning about it helps us treat everyone fairly and kindly.



Melanin Distribution Maps

Analyze the Maps

Compare the map of UV intensity with the map of melanin content in the skin of the populations that evolved in specific areas of the world.

- What do you notice about the melanin content of the skin of populations that lived in high UV exposure areas? Low UV exposure areas? _____

Map 1

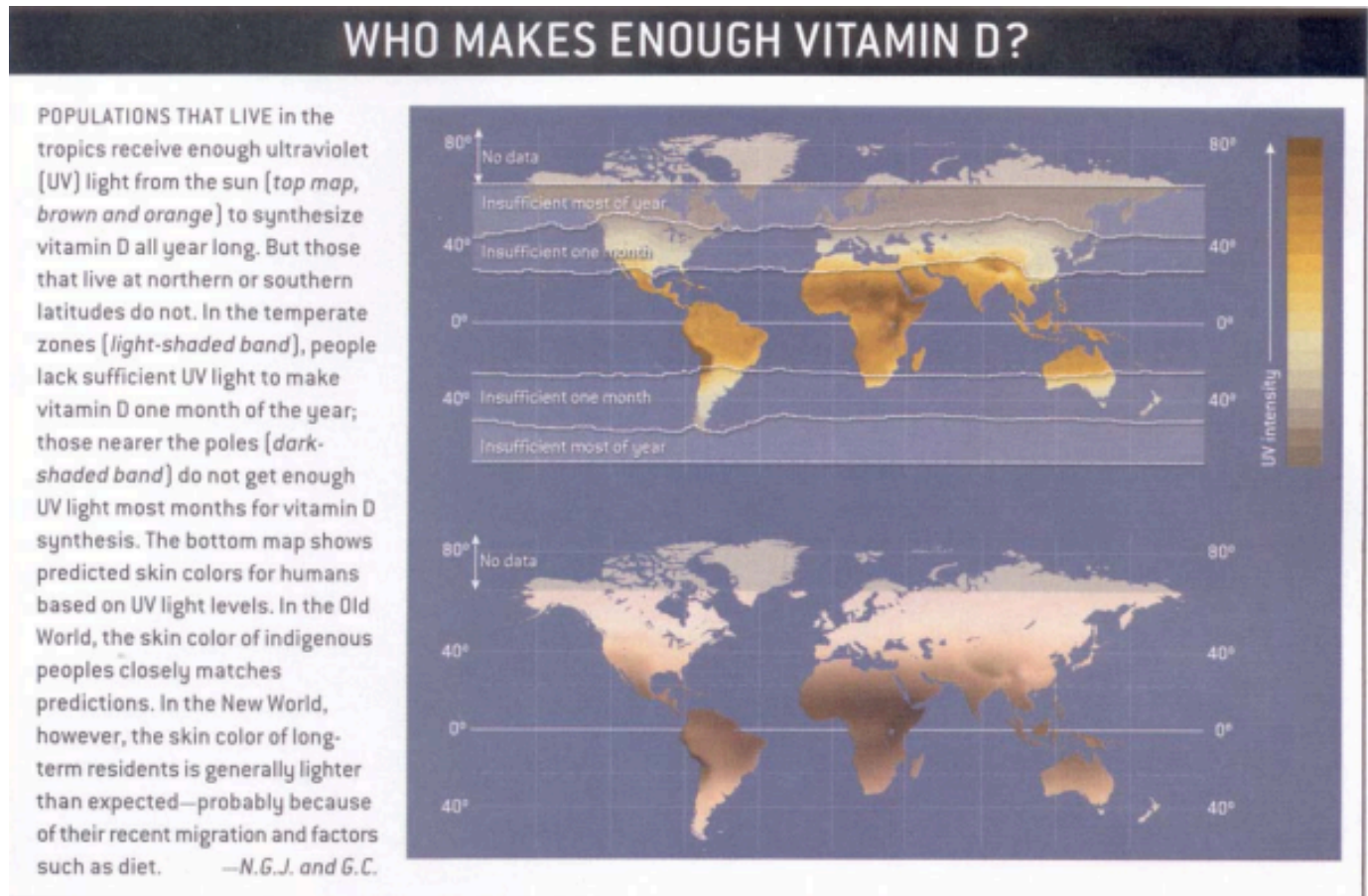


image [source](#)

Watch

[How We Get Our Skin Color](#), in which our guest, anthropologist Nina Jablonski shows how human skin cells produce the pigment melanin, and how the skin of different populations evolved to have more or less melanin content, depending on the UV intensity of their region.

[Bill Nye explains](#) the science of skin color in one minute.



Melanin Distribution Maps

Analyze the Maps Cont.

Now look at **Map 2**. Notice how the populations of people with different melanin contents have changed in modern times since people first evolved different skin tones.

- Why do you think this is? What historical events might help explain this? (*Hint: Consider the history of slavery in the United States.*) _____

- Do you think the map would have looked different 500 years ago, before the arrival of Europeans in the Americas? Why or why not? _____

Map 2: Human Skin Color by the 21st Century

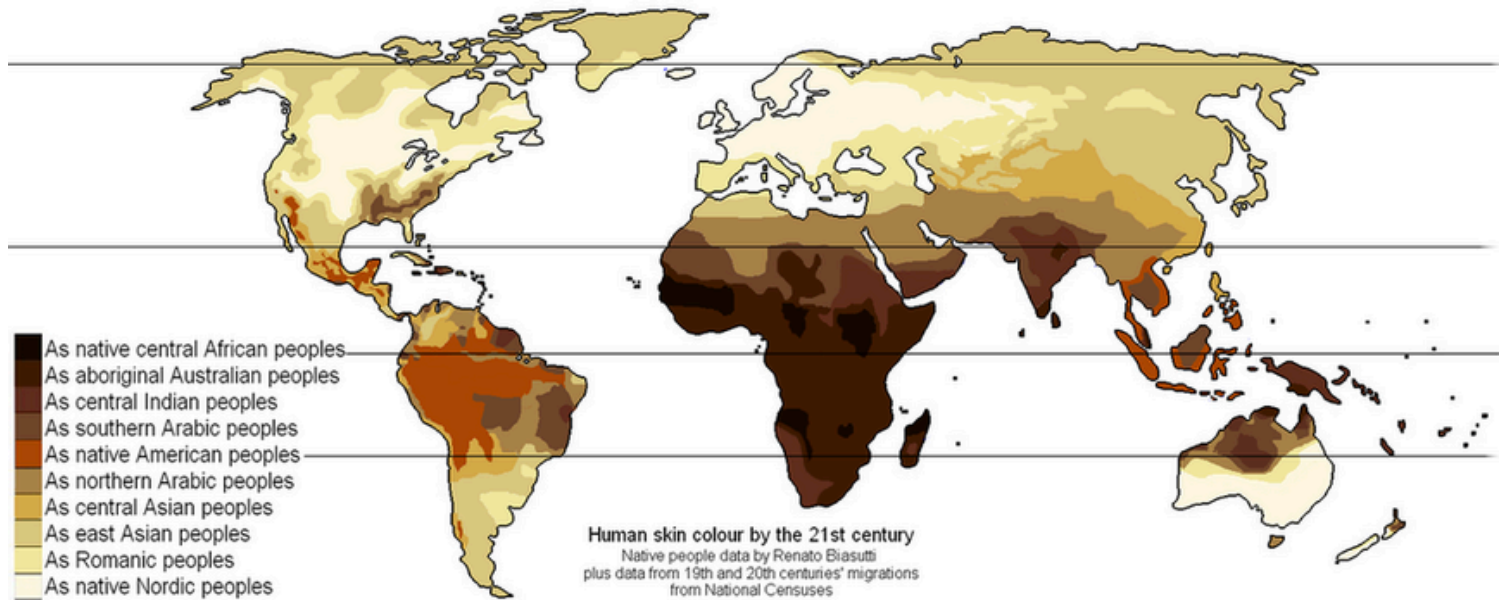


Image [source](#)

Activity

Draw a “Skin Diversity Map” of your neighborhood, city, or state, showing the different skin tones of classmates or people in your community.



History of Skin Color and Racism

When we think about skin, it's important to also think about **discrimination**.

Discrimination happens when people are treated unfairly because of things like their age, gender, or skin color. Discrimination based on skin color is called **racism**, and it can hurt people's lives in many real and lasting ways.

Even though most people in the world—people of Indigenous, African, Asian, and Latin American descent with brown, black, tan, red, and yellow skin—make up more than 85% of the global population, they have often been treated unfairly. Many of these unfair ideas come from colonization, when Europeans traveled to lands already lived in by Indigenous peoples. Europeans saw people with darker skin, different cultures, and different beliefs, and wrongly claimed they were inferior. These ideas were used to justify taking land, enslaving people, and hurting communities.

Because of this history, non-white people have often had fewer opportunities and faced more challenges. Although there have been major advances in giving equal rights thanks to those who supported the [Civil Rights Movement](#), even today, [racism continues to affect access to education, work, housing, and safety](#). You can help continue the work of the brave people who fought for equality.

The next generation has the power to make the world fairer and more equal. One important step is to celebrate and respect differences, including skin color, and to learn how racism is wrong. Understanding history helps us recognize unfairness and choose to treat everyone with respect.

Learn more about yourself and others by reflecting on your own skin and the differences around you. Think about how everyone's skin is beautiful and unique—and how we can all help make the world more just.

Reflect

1. What is **racism**, and how does it affect people? _____



History of Skin Color and Racism

2. How did Europeans treat Indigenous and African people unfairly? _____

3. Why is it important to celebrate and respect differences in skin color today? _____

4. How can you help make your school or community fairer? _____

Activity: Celebrate Skin Color

1. Draw your hand and color it to match your skin tone. (Use [multicultural colors](#)).
2. Next to it, draw hands of 3–4 friends, family members, or classmates with their skin tones.
3. Write one sentence about what makes each person special, inside or next to their hand.

Everyone's skin is unique and beautiful. Learning about history and respecting differences helps us fight racism and treat everyone with kindness.

Discuss

How have people with different skin colors been treated unfairly in history and today?
Brainstorm ways to celebrate diversity.



Pen Pal Letter Template

Make a new friend from another part of the world by signing up for a pen pal through [Kids for Peace](#)! Use the template below to brainstorm what you'll write in your first letter.

About Me

(name, age, interests, hobbies, where you learn, who are your friends)

About My Family

(whom you live with and what they are like, pets, family stories)

Where I Live

(name of city, state, country, what the geography and weather is like)

About My Culture

(foods you eat, holidays you celebrate, important places, what your values are)

Fun Facts About Me

(talents, funny stories, experiences, what makes you unique)

Questions you would like to ask your pen pal:



Being Anti-Racist: Standing Up for Fairness

What Is Anti-Racism?

- **Racism** is unfair treatment based on skin color.
- Some unfair ideas about skin color are passed down from previous generations. This is called **legacy** racism.
- **Structural racism** means unfair treatment is built into systems like schools, jobs, healthcare, neighborhoods, and laws.
- **Anti-racism** is when we actively work to oppose racism and make society fairer for everyone.

Why It Matters

- Racism affects people's lives in many ways, including education, jobs, housing, and healthcare.
- It benefits people who already have more power and privilege.
- Everyone can play a part in ending unfair treatment and creating a just world.

Ways You Can Be Anti-Racist

1. Think About Your Own Biases

- Everyone has ideas about others that may be unfair. Ask yourself: Are there beliefs I don't fully notice?

2. Learn About History and Its Effects

- Learn how slavery, segregation, and racist laws still affect opportunities today.
- Support changes that create fairer opportunities for everyone, like equal funding for schools.

3. Learn About Other Cultures

- Read books, watch documentaries, or attend cultural events to understand different people and communities.

4. Be a Friend to Everyone

- Include everyone in games and activities.
- Invite classmates from different backgrounds to play or work with you.

5. Watch and Listen to Diverse Media

- Enjoy movies, shows, music, and videos that represent people from many cultures and communities.

6. Speak Up Against Unfairness

- If you see someone being treated unfairly, stand up for them and tell a trusted adult.



Being Anti-Racist: Standing Up for Fairness

Reflect

1. What is racism, and why is it unfair?
2. How can history still affect opportunities today?
3. What is one way you can practice anti-racism at school or at home?

Activity: Anti-Racism Action Plan

1. Write down one thing you can do this week to be anti-racist. _____

2. Draw or list people, books, shows, or events that help you learn about different cultures. _____

3. Share your plan with a classmate, friend, or family member.

Being anti-racist means learning, listening, and acting to make sure everyone is treated fairly. Differences in skin color, culture, or background should be celebrated, not judged.

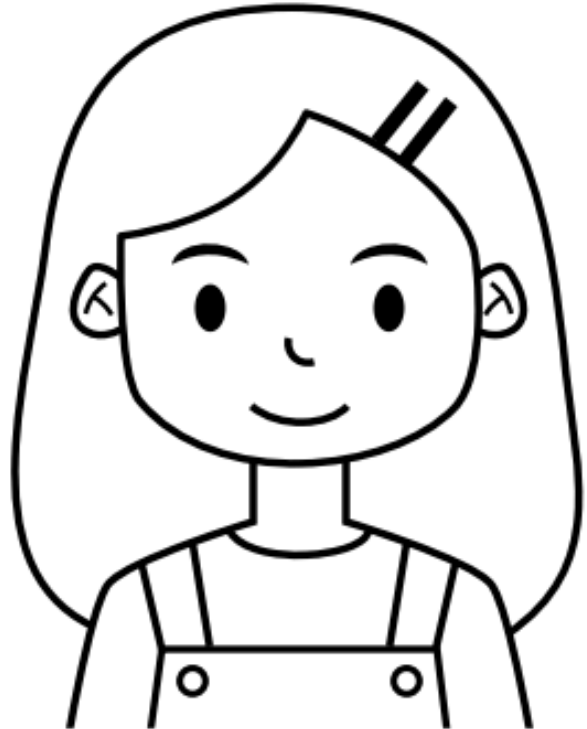
Activity: Be an Anti-Racist Advocate

An **advocate** is someone who openly supports a cause. Think about a time that you saw or experienced discrimination. Write a letter to someone who holds power over the decisions that affect you and your community about what happened and what you think could or should be done about it. You could write to a school principal or board of education member, a local elected official, or even the leader of your country. Here is a [resource](#) to help you.



Skin Coloring Activity

Color each person with a variety of skin and hair colors. Use [multicultural colors](#) to help. Draw yourself, friends, and family members, too!





The Amazing Layers of All Skin

Read the following passage, then draw your own diagram and answer the questions on the next page.

Skin is amazing! It is the largest organ in your body, and it works hard every day to keep you healthy. If you looked at human skin under a microscope, you would see something important: all skin works the same, no matter a person's skin color. The differences we see on the outside are caused by **melanin**, and those differences are beautiful variations—not signs of better or worse skin.

Your skin has three main layers that work together like a team:

- The **epidermis** is the top layer. It protects your body and is where new skin cells grow. This layer contains **melanocytes**, which make **melanin**. Melanin helps protect skin from the sun and gives skin its color.
- The **dermis** is the middle layer. It holds **blood vessels**, **sweat glands**, **oil glands**, and **hair follicles**. This layer helps you feel touch, keeps skin strong, and helps control sweating.
- The bottom layer is made of **fatty tissue**. It cushions your body, keeps you warm, and protects your muscles and bones.

All skin—light, dark, and everything in between—has the same layers doing the same important jobs. Together, skin layers help to:

- Protect our body
- Keep us cool and regulate temperature
- Absorb sunlight to make vitamin D
- Grow new skin cells every few weeks

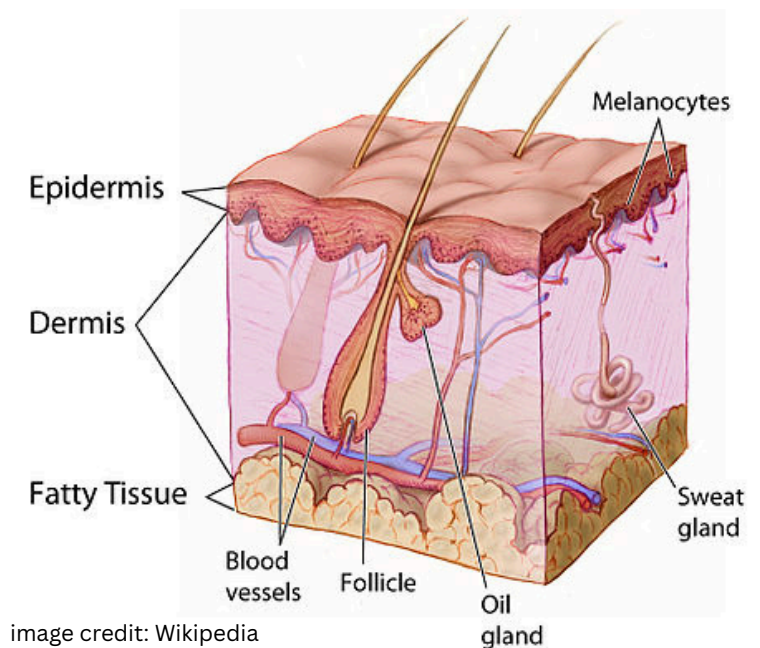


image credit: Wikipedia

Differences in skin color don't make anyone better or worse—every person's skin is equally amazing and powerful!



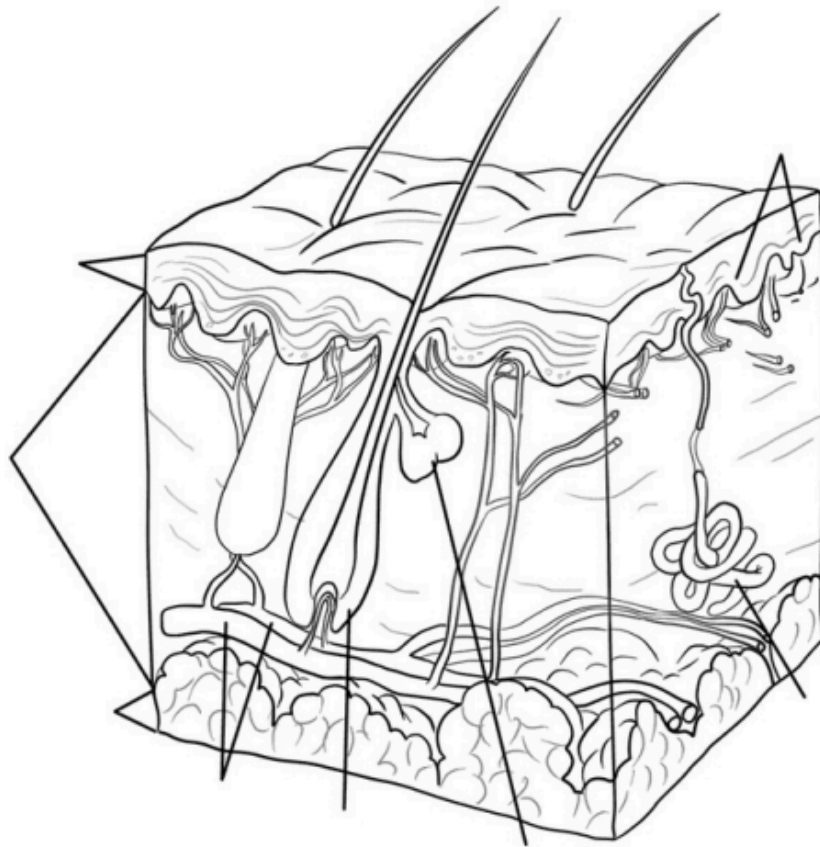
The Amazing Layers of All Skin

Make a Diagram

- Use the passage “The Amazing Layers of All Skin” to help you draw and label a skin diagram, or use the blank diagram below.
- Color the skin in your diagram to match your skin tone.
- Write one sentence about what makes your skin amazing.
- Around your diagram, draw hands or faces of friends with different skin tones and write one thing you admire about each person’s skin.

Word Bank

epidermis
melanocytes
dermis
blood vessels
oil glands
hair follicle
sweat gland
fatty tissue



Questions

1. What does the epidermis do?
2. What is produced in the dermis?
3. Describe how different parts of the skin work together and are connected.
4. What makes your skin amazing?



Love the Skin You're In

Why Skin Health Matters

- Skin is our body's largest organ and protects us every day.
- Proteins like collagen and elastic tissue help keep skin strong, but they can break down from too much sun or as we age.
- Everyone's skin, no matter the color, deserves care and protection.

Sun Safety for All Skin Colors

- Melanin in your skin helps protect from the sun, but people may live in places with more or less sunlight than their skin is used to.
- Everyone should wear sunscreen to prevent sunburn, skin cancer, and wrinkles.
- It's never too early or too late to start protecting your skin!

Caring for Your Skin

- Wash your face gently every day to prevent pimples.
- For severe acne, a dermatologist can help with special treatments.
- Skin can have freckles, birthmarks, albinism, wrinkles, or sun spots, and that's completely normal.

Celebrate Diversity in Skin

- All skin is amazing—light, dark, or in-between.
- Differences in skin color or texture do not make anyone better or worse.
- Loving your skin means caring for it and respecting everyone else's skin, too.

All skin is incredible. Differences make our world diverse and beautiful. Protect your skin, love your skin, and respect everyone else's skin too!





Love the Skin You're In


Activity: My Skin, My Story

- Draw your face or hands and color them to match your skin tone.
- Add marks like freckles, birthmarks, or other features that make your skin unique.
- Around your drawing, write one sentence about what makes your skin amazing.
- Share your drawing with a classmate and celebrate each other's differences.

Activity: Teach others to keep skin healthy

Choose a skin condition to research and make a poster to teach others about how to prevent and treat it. Use the "Common Skin Conditions" table below to get started. Hang up the poster at a school, local library, or community bulletin board.

COMMON SKIN CONDITIONS

| Condition | Cause | Treatment |
|---|---|---|
|  Dry Skin | Weather conditions, moisture not being absorbed | Moisturize skin, drink plenty of water, use lotions and cremes, use humidifier |
|  Acne | Oil and dirt clogs skin pores | Use a gentle face wash daily, medicated soaps and medicines available for severe cases |
|  Sunburn | Too much exposure without protection | Use sun protection including sunscreen, hats, long sleeves, sunglasses, lip balm with sunscreen, umbrella |
|  Rash | Allergic reactions, eczema, extreme heat or cold, nervousness | Have the cause diagnosed by a medical professional to know proper treatment |
|  Wrinkles | Over time, skin loses its elasticity, sun exposure, life and diet choices | Use sun protection, anti wrinkle products, eat healthy, avoid smoking |



Design a Skin-Care Superhero!

Draw your own skin-care superhero who teaches people to love their skin and respect others' skin colors.



Upload your design to our Instagram [@tchradio](#), TikTok [@thechildrenshourradio](#), and [Facebook page](#), and check out others' designs!



Mail your design to:
The Children's Hour
PO Box 70236
Albuquerque, NM 87197



Record a Voice Message
This might be used on The Children's Hour!



Post your design on our Instagram, TikTok and Facebook! Check out others' designs!



Additional Resources

Check out this [list](#) of lessons, articles, and additional resources on teaching about white supremacy and systemic racism.

Read these [tips](#) on how to discuss racism with children from PBS Education.

Check out resources and handouts on how to address structural racism with children from [Embrace Race](#).

Understanding structural racism [lesson](#) activity.

Informative [handouts](#) about pediatric skin conditions.

[Tips](#) on how to keep your skin safe for kids.

Science lesson: [Integumentary System: All About Our Skin](#).

See these [book lists](#) for other books that support teaching children about racism.

Videos

[Systemic Racism Explained](#)

This short animated video from act.tv explains it clearly and gives a few suggestions for what you can do to help end systemic racism.

[How Your Skin Works](#)

This animated video explains the different parts and functions of your skin in a fun and engaging way for young learners.

[How We Get Our Skin Color](#)

Narrated by our guest, anthropologist Nina Jablonski, this engaging animation shows how human skin cells produce the pigment melanin, which gives skin its color. Related activities are also available.

[The Biology of Skin Color](#)

This 20-minute short film by our guest, anthropologist Nina Jablonski, explains the evolution of skin color. Related activities are also available.

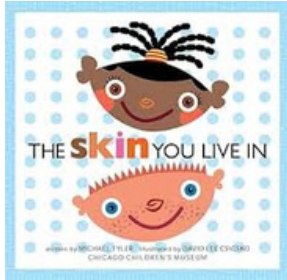
Bill Nye [explains](#) the science of skin color in one minute.

[Racism In Schools: How Can You Fight It?](#)

This episode of “Above the Noise” explores how racism affects schools across the country and highlights students in Texas and California who are working to challenge racism and make their schools more inclusive.



Book List

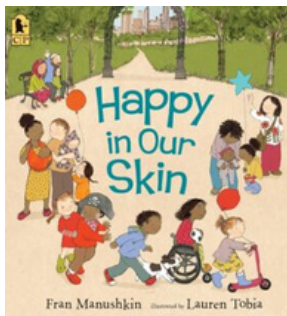


The Skin You Live In

by Michael Tyler, illustrated by David Lee Csicsko

This simple, lively picture book uses rhyme and colorful illustrations to celebrate friendship, acceptance, and diversity for young readers.

ages 2-5



Happy in Our Skin

by Fran Manushkin, illustrated by Lauren Tobia

With playful rhymes and joyful, inclusive illustrations, this lively picture book introduces skin by exploring its diversity, biological function, and uniqueness through fingerprints.

ages 2-7

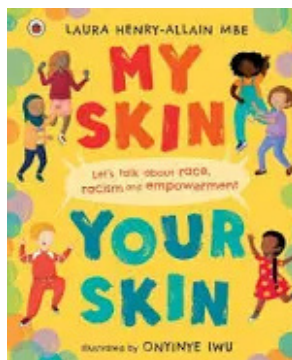


All the Colors We Are/Todos los Colores de Nuestra Piel

by Katie Kissinger, pictures by Chris Bohnhoff

This bilingual picture book celebrates skin color diversity with a kid-friendly, science-based explanation of melanin, ancestry, and the sun, helping children build positive identities and challenge stereotypes. It includes activity ideas.

ages 3-6 years



My Skin, Your Skin

by Laura Henry-Allain, illustrated by Onyinye Iwu

Written by Early Years expert, this book was written to support adults in helping children explore race, build self-love, and embrace their worth regardless of skin color.

ages 4-8



My Amazing Skin Can Heal

by Kids Read Daily Book Club

An exciting adventure for young kids to explore their body's largest organ, discovering boo-boos, bandages, and the amazing ways skin heals itself!

ages 4-8



Book List

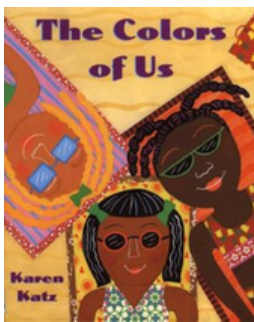


Sulwe

by Lupita Nyong'o, illustrated by Vashti Harrison

In this modern folktale, a young girl learns to love her dark skin and see her own beauty.

ages 4-8

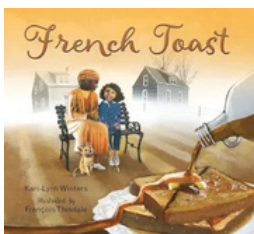


The Colors of Us

by Karen Katz

This picture book explores the diversity of skin tones with food comparisons. This book is great for young readers and pairs well with drawing self-portraits with multicultural crayons!

ages 4-8

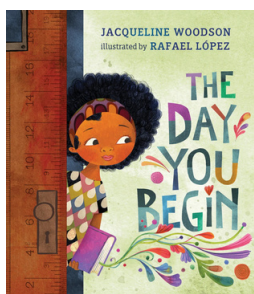


French Toast

by Kari-Lynn Winters, illustrated by François Thisdale

While explaining skin color to her blind grandmother, mixed-race Phoebe learns to embrace her own skin tone and take pride in her nickname.

ages 4-8

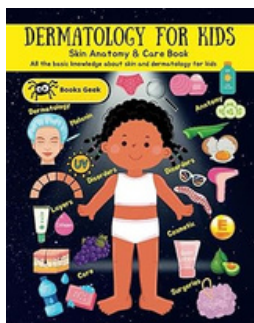


The Day You Begin

by Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by Rafael López

This lyrical picture book reminds us that everyone feels like an outsider sometimes—and that sharing our stories helps us connect and belong.

ages 5-11



Dermatology for Kids

by Booksgeek

This engaging, activity-filled book teaches children about skin, its functions, health, and care, including skin color, sun safety, skincare routines, and common conditions.

ages 6-12



Book List

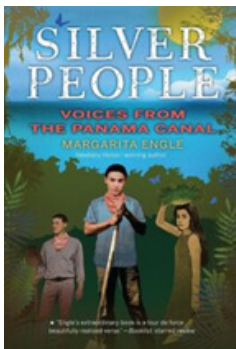


This Book Is Anti-Racist: 20 Lessons on How to Wake Up, Take Action, and Do the Work

by Tiffany Jewell, illustrated by Aurelia Durand

Explore identity--including skin color, the roots of racism, and how you can use your voice to challenge it and work toward equity.

ages 8-11

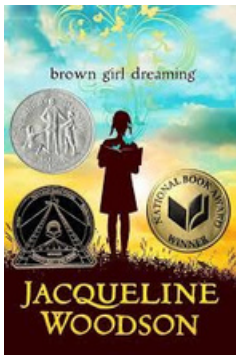


Silver People

by Margarita Engle

This middle-grade book highlights how workers of color were paid less than white workers during Panama's canal construction, exploring the injustices tied to skin color and racial hierarchy.

ages 9-14



Brown Girl Dreaming

by Jacqueline Woodson

This memoir in verse about Woodson's childhood in the 1960s-70s explores identity, racism, and family. The book follows her experiences with segregation, her family's struggles, and her growing awareness of the Black Power movement, culminating in her realization that she is a storyteller.

ages 9-14

More Book Lists

[Embrace Race book list](#)

[PBS Kids book lists](#)

[Harvard University Anti-Racism Resources](#)

[We Need Diverse Books](#)

A national non-profit dedicated to creating a world where every reader can see themselves in books.