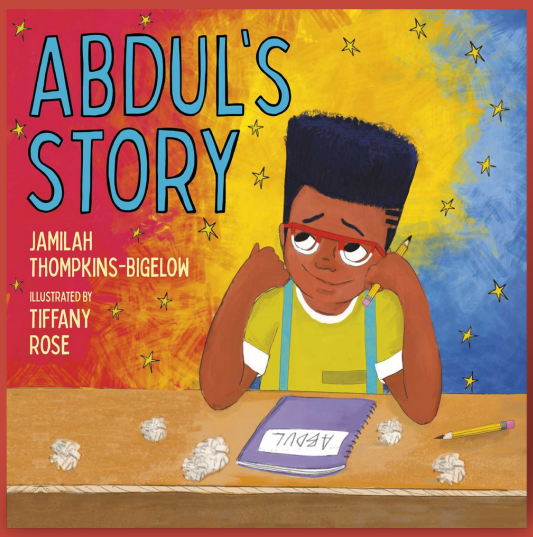
Abdul's Story

Discussion & Activities

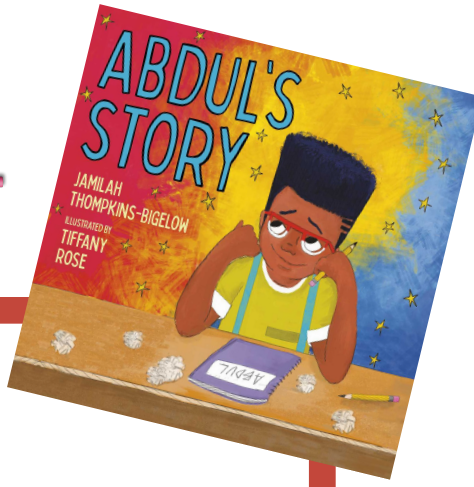


Before, During, and After Reading

Written by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow, based on her picture book, *Abdul's Story*, which was illustrated by Tiffany Rose and published by Salaam Reads/ Simon & Schuster

ABDUL'S STORY

DISCUSSION & ACTIVITIES



Before Reading

Text Features

Model scanning the book to identify the title, author, illustrator, dedication, and genre of the book.

Picture Predictions

Have students look carefully at the cover image and the two images from the book on the handout that follows. Make a list of things students notice. Then, make a list of their predictions.

Anticipation Guide

Have students agree or disagree to the statements in the anticipation guide that follows on individual worksheets or on a piece of chart paper.

Introductory Image: The Eraser

Point out the image of the eraser on the title page and share that the author says, "Erasers are a big problem for Abdul." Have students consider how erasers, which are usually helpful, could be harmful. Do not be alarmed if students don't know ahead of time. This question may be returned to at the end of the story. Encourage students to notice erasing during the reading. For example, students could be asked to make an erasing motion every time they hear the word "erase" during the reading.

Discussing Distinctive Vocabulary

This book includes vocabulary that is unique to Abdul's cultural and faith background as a Black American Muslim from Philadelphia, PA. Some unique words include: **Bean Pie**, **Water Ice**, **Thobe**, **Mosque**, **Bismillah**, **Breaking (Breakdancing)**. Explain to students that if they share Abdul's background they may understand some of these words, but if not, they will need to use context clues or hints to understand the meaning of these words. Encourage students to be comfortable with encountering words from other cultures. Model listening carefully to figure out the meanings and doing more research when you want to know more.

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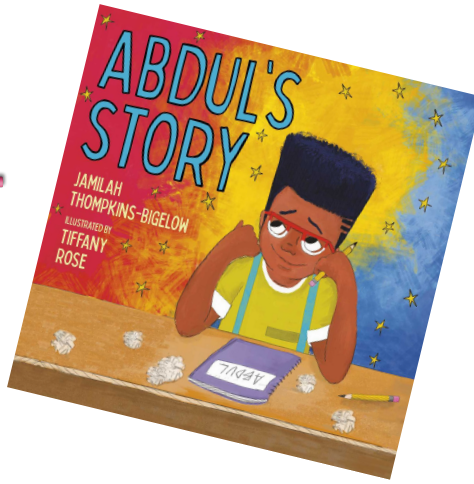
ABDUL'S STORY

PICTURE PREDICTIONS

ART BY TIFFANY ROSE, CLIPPED AND SLIGHTLY MODIFIED FOR CLASSROOM USE BY JAMILAH THOMPKINS-BIGELOW

ABDUL'S STORY

ANTICIPATION GUIDE



STATEMENTS	YES	NO	MAYBE
1) To be a good writer, you have to be good at spelling.			
2) Good writers always have good handwriting.			
3) If you don't know how to spell a word, you should still try to write it.			
4) I deserve to be a superhero in a book.			
5) Other kids deserve to be superheroes in books.			
6) Every kid can be an amazing writer.			

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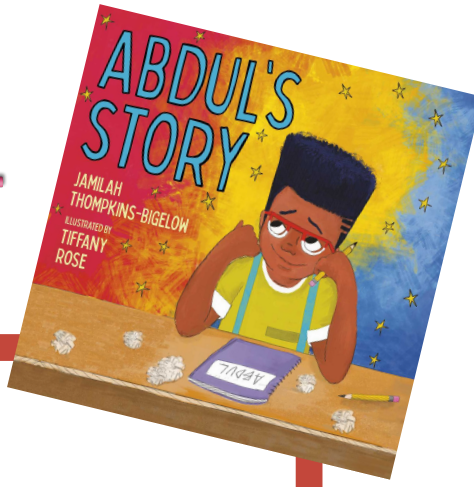

During Reading

Think-Aloud about Writing Concepts

Abdul's Story naturally contains opportunities to get students thinking about concepts related to the writing process. Educators may want to plan to stop and describe their thoughts about these examples. **Please note the book isn't paginated. Count from the start of the story, which opens with an illustration of Abdul telling a story to his classmates**. Topics:

- **Spelling/Phonics:** Use pages **5-6** to discuss the direction of b and other tricky letters that are mentioned; and discuss how we know when to include a silent e.
- **Mentor Texts:** Use page **10** and then **25** to broach the idea of mentor texts. On these pages, Mr. Muhammad asks students to emulate his work and Abdul does.
- **Writing Process:** Use Mr. Muhammad's notebook on page **16** to introduce **brainstorming**.You might also talk about the idea of storytelling from the beginning as a brainstorming strategy.
- **Writing Process:** Use pages **16-20** to discuss how **drafting** involves getting ideas down without worrying about mistakes.
- **Writing Process:** A quick reaction to Jayda and Kwame's comments on page **21** could be used to begin later conversations about **feedback** and what it means to have a **supportive writer workshop community** in your classroom.
- **Writing Process: Revision and Editing** are introduced on pages **21** and **29**. Think aloud about how some writers mistakenly think writing is a one-and-done activity, but good writers rewrite their writing pieces and try to improve them in every draft.

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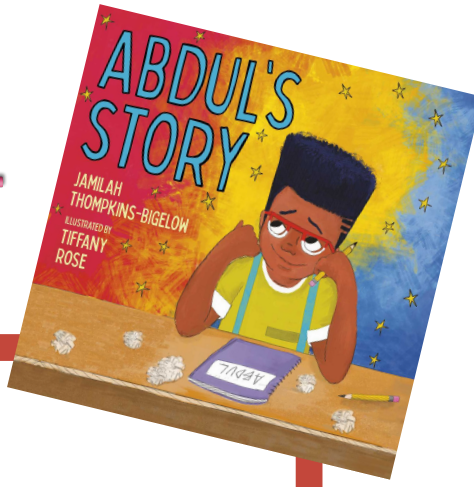

During Reading

Partner and Whole Group Discussion about Character

Make Inferences about Abdul: Possible questions as you read:

- What kind of neighborhood is Abdul from? What does he love about his neighborhood? pages **3-4, 25**
- What or who does Abdul find interesting? How would you describe him based on his interest? pages **3-4, 25**
- What about writing is difficult for Abdul? (Please note you may need to have a conversation about disabilities) pages **5-6.**
- What seems to motivate Abdul to write? pages **9, 12, 16, 20**
- If Jayda and Kwame said the same things to you would you respond the same way? What does Abdul's response show you about his personality? page **21**

Movement

- Students can pretend to erase whenever they hear the word "erase" during the read aloud. Have each student pretend to hold an imaginary eraser and move their hand in a diagonal eraser like motion.
- Have students pretend to snap a pencil like Abdul on pages **17-18**.
- Have students signal when they hear one of the new culturally distinctive words mentioned in the "Before Reading" section. For example, they could put their hands to their ears.

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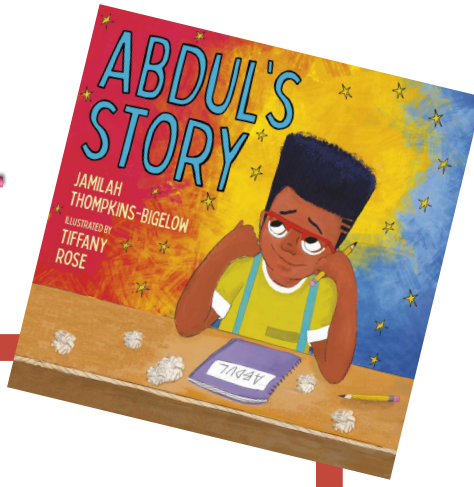

After Reading

Reading Comprehension

- **Full Circle:** Return to the "Before Reading" activities on page 1 that you did in the beginning. Was the class' picture predictions correct? Did they change their viewpoints on the anticipation guide? Do they better understand how the eraser can be a problem? Can they define the distinctive vocabulary in the book?

- **Retell on Five Fingers:** Use the handout that follows to help students summarize the story on a hand-shaped graphic organizer.

Discussion Questions

- What is the setting of this story? Who are the characters?
- What words would you use to describe Abdul? Why?
- How are Abdul and Mr. Muhammad the same? How are they different? Where did the book show you this?
- What was the big problem in this book? How was the problem solved?
- What did Abdul learn at the end of the book?
- What did you learn about being a writer from *Abdul's Story*?
- How is Abdul like you? How is he different?
- Would you recommend this book to a friend? Why or why not?

Track and Analyze Themes

- **Making Mistakes:** Explore how the book accepts and even celebrates making mistakes as part of the creative process.

- **Appreciating Differences:** Explore learning differences and diversity and what it means to welcome everyone.

- **Importance of Our Stories:** Explore the purposes of writing and what stories of our backgrounds bring to the classroom.

- **We Can Be Heroes:** Explore what being a superhero means to Abdul in his own story.

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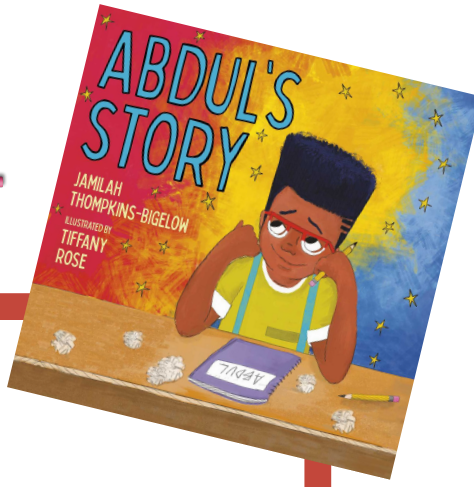

After Reading

Identify & Discuss Language Concepts

- **Figurative Language: Personification** on page **5**: "Silent letters were downright sneaky. How could Abdul know there was an *e* if it never made a sound?" Page **12**: "But *b* played tricks again."
- **Figurative Language: Hyperbole** on page **9**: "Mr. Muhammad had lines straighter than straight..."
- **Figurative Language: Metaphor** on page **10**: "...skin the color of night" on page **25**: "...skin the orange-brown of sunrise"
- **Sensory Language:** These pages have multiple examples: **6, 10, and 25**
- **Vocabulary Study:** donation, hawking, crease, scuff, squint, wondrous

Extension Activities

- **Give Advice:** In small groups or as a class, students write a letter of advice to an imaginary student who is ashamed of how they write.
- **Launch Your Writing Community:** Taking what students have learned about the importance of everyone's stories, the process of making mistakes and revising, and how to create a more welcoming community, engage students in creating guidelines for a positive writers workshop. Help students to clearly define all steps of the writing process. **Return to the "Think Aloud about Writing Concepts" on page 4 for material.**
- **Make New Superheroes:** Have students compose drawings and stories of themselves as superheroes. If possible, have them include the people in their neighborhoods in their stories.
- **Review the Book:** Write reviews. Here's a great template!
- **Write to the Author:** Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow loves to hear from her readers. Mail letters to **P.O. Box 12318, Philadelphia, PA 19119**. Email: **AuthorJamilah@gmail.com**

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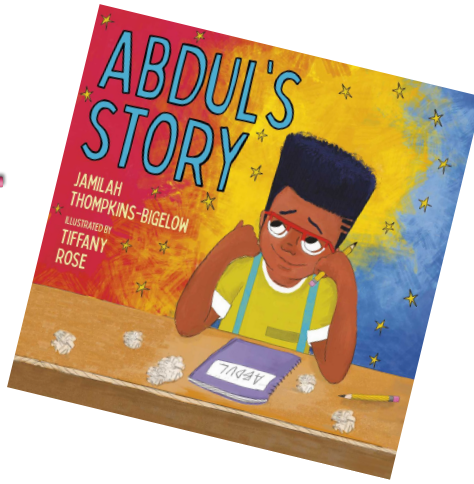
ABDUL'S STORY

STORY HAND



In the beginning...

Setting

In the middle...

Important Characters

I learned...

At the end...

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