

Educator Guide

ABOUT THE CREATORS



Dominique Furukawa is a licensed clinical social worker and foster youth advocate based in Los Angeles, California. In 2016, she co-founded We Foster LA, an organization that provides emergency supplies for children in the Los Angeles foster care system to the families that love them. In her spare time, she enjoys gardening, going to the beach, and cooking with her husband and three beautiful children. As an author, Dominique hopes to create a sense of belonging for Black children.

Erika Lynne Jones is a children's book author and illustrator. She enjoys creating quirky characters and stories that affirm and celebrate cultures. Her creative mission is to show every child they are worthy of good and deserve positive representations of themselves in literature. She loves working in mixed media and collage because it reminds her of time spent with her mother, who helped make sure all of her school projects had that special artistic shine. She grew up in St. Louis and now lives in the Dallas area with her husband and three daughters. Erika is the illustrator of *The Loud Librarian* published by Atheneum Books for Young Readers (April 2023) and *Black Girls: A Celebration of You* published by Harper Collins (September 2023). Erika's author/illustrator debut, *Zara In the Middle* (Summer 2025) will be published with Harper Collins



REVIEWS AND PRAISE FOR *BLACK GIRLS*

A joyful love letter to every Black girl everywhere.

In an upbeat and rhythmic ode, Dominique Furukawa and Erika Lynne Jones celebrate Black girls in all their beauty and joy. *Black Girls* uplifts girls of every shade, size, and walk of life, reminding them that they are perfectly designed.

Whimsical, earnest, charming, full, bright, and beautiful, this picture book anthem deftly explores the diversity of Black girlhood.

*Black girls, Black girls, rising still.
Shouting loud and proud and free,
that being a Black girl, Black girl
is a wondrous thing to be.*

REVIEWS AND PRAISE FOR *BLACK GIRLS*

"An unapologetic exultation of Black girlhood." – Kirkus Reviews

"The ultimate "If you can dream it, be it," picture book for little Black girls everywhere." – School Library Journal

ABOUT THE GUIDE

This guide was created by Kari Allen, an educator with twenty years of education and classroom experience. All activities can and should be modified to best fit student needs. A sampling of Common Core standards are listed at the end of the guide. Visit Kari's website www.kariallenwrites.com for more information. All art from the guide was created by Erika Lynne Jones and has been used with her permission. Text excerpts are by Dominique Furukawa. This guide is for use in classrooms and for educational purposes only.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BEFORE READING

- Look at the front and back covers. What do you notice? What do you wonder?
- The cover illustration shows two girls on a swing. How do you feel when you swing?
- Flip to the back of the book. Read the dedications by Dominique and Erika. After finishing the book, reflect on these dedications before and after reading.
- Discuss the title. What do you think it means? What predictions can you make about the book based on the title and the cover?

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

- *1.RL.7 Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.*
- *2.RL.7 Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.*
- *1.RF.1 Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.*



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

DURING READING

- What kinds of things do you like to play? What do you like to do for fun? What activities bring you joy?
- What do you notice about all the different girls in the illustrations?
- What makes you the same as someone else? What makes you different?
- How do the author and illustrator celebrate Black girls?

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

- *1.SL.2 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.*
- *2.RI.6 Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe.*



EXPLORING THE TEXT AND CRAFT OF *BLACK GIRLS: A CELEBRATION OF YOU*

- The text starts out with the lines:

*Black girls, blond curls
skinny legs, twinkling eyes.
Black girls, long braids
pretty smiles, different sized.*



How would you describe yourself?

Why did the author start the book with these lines?

What do you notice about the rhythm and structure of the lines?

- How do the author and illustrator highlight different places with both the words and pictures? Look at the city spreads vs. the country spreads. How does the illustrator put the characters into a setting?

2.RL.1 Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

- The text and the pictures show the girls swimming, double dutching, riding bikes, playing soccer, skate boarding and playing basketball. How do you like to move your body? (See the printable to write and draw about this.)

2.SL.4 Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.

EXPLORING THE TEXT AND CRAFT OF *BLACK GIRLS: A CELEBRATION OF YOU*

- Reflect on how you like to express yourself. Do you paint or sing or make costumes or do lighting design? What do you like to create?

2.SL.4 Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.

- The text of the book feels like a song or a poem. Read the book out loud. What moments in the text feel like a poem to you? What does Dominique Furukawa do as a writer to create this effect? Try what you noticed in your own writing. **Extension:** Where do you see repeated sounds and rhyme in the text? Find these moments and read them out loud.

1.RL.4 Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

2.RL.4 Describe how words and phrases (e.g., regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem, or song.

- What kinds of punctuation does the author use? How does the punctuation affect the text? Look especially at these lines:

*Shredding at the skate park,
dribble-dribble, pick-and-roll.
Sprinting down the soccer field,
kick-kick, Black girl
GOAL!*



EXPLORING THE TEXT AND CRAFT OF *BLACK GIRLS: A CELEBRATION OF YOU*

- Discuss the following lines and page spread:

*Black girls, a field of wildflowers--
ombré beiges, golds, and browns.*

*Each shade bursts forth,
magnificent!
Black beauty abounds.*

What do you picture? What do you think these lines mean?

Extension: Create an art piece that uses the above lines of texts as your inspiration.

- How do the author and illustrator show perspective through the illustrations and the words? Think about near vs. far, background vs. foreground, birds-eye-view. How many different ways are we seeing the girls?

3.RL.7 Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).

- Why does the book end with a wordless spread of all the girls from the book? What do you notice? How did it make you feel?

2.RL.5 Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.



Look at the last few page spreads. What famous history-making Black women and girls do you see? Why do you think the author and illustrator chose these particular people?

Bessie Coleman (1892-1926): Bessie was the first Black and Indigenous woman to earn her pilot's license in the United States.

Ruby Bridges (1954-): Ruby is a part of the Civil Rights Movement. She was the first Black child to integrate an elementary school. Ruby is also an author and an activist.

Mae Jemison (1956-): Mae was the first Black woman in space! She has written books, appeared on television and also is a doctor of medicine.



Shirley Chisholm (1924-2005): Shirley was the first Black woman elected to Congress. Not only that she was the first woman and Black person to run for president with one of the two major political parties.

Madam CJ Walker(1867-1919): Madam CJ Walker was a Black business woman who became one of the wealthiest women of her time. Madam CJ Walker created haircare and other beauty products.

Zalia Avant-garde (2007-): Zalia was 14 when she won the Scripps National Spelling Bee. She was the first Black American to do so. But that's not all! Zalia also has three Guinness World Records and is the author of several books.

Mikaila Ulmer (2004-): Mikaila is a Black social entrepreneur. She founded her lemonade company, Me & the Bees when she was a kid. She works to educate people about the importance of bees!

Amanda Gorman (1998-): Amanda is a poet and writer. She was the first person to be named National Youth Poet Laureate and read her poem at the inauguration of President Biden and Vice President Harris. Amanda has written several books and graduated from Harvard.

Misty Copeland (1982-): Misty Copeland is a ballerina and dancer. She was the first Black American woman principal dancer for the American Ballet Theatre. She is also an author and does charitable work.

Stacey Abrams (1973-): Stacey is a politician best known for advocating for voter's rights. Stacey is also an author of nonfiction books, mysteries and children's books.

Simone Biles (1997-): Simone is the greatest gymnast of all time. She was the first woman gymnast to win four gold medals in an Olympics. She is the world's most decorated gymnast. Simone is also a mental health advocate for athletes.



WRITING/DRAWING PROMPTS

- Explore your connections to the text. (See printables on pages 14-18.)
 - Draw/write about where you live.
 - Draw/write about who you live with.
 - Draw/write about how you express yourself artistically.

3.W.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.

1.SL.5 Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

3.W.4 With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- Pick one of the history-making people from the last few spreads. Make a list of questions you would like to ask them. (See printable on page 19.)

3.W.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

- Melanin is what makes our skin different colors. Everyone has melanin! The more melanin your skin has the darker your skin will be. Melanin protects our skin from UV rays and it is also responsible for the color of our hair and eyes. The amount of melanin you produce depends on genetics and where your ancestors come from. Research and learn more about this cool substance.

3.W.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.



ACTIVITES CONTINUED

- On the copyright page, illustrator Erika Lynne Jones says she used "acrylic paint, colored pencil, cut paper, lots of love, and glue sticks" to make the art. Gather some of the materials listed and see what you kind of art you can make. Try making a piece of art in the style of the art in *Black Girls*. **How did you feel while making your art?**
- This book is a celebration. What brings you joy? Make a list of things that make you happy. (See printable on page 20.)
- Several of the girls are shown inventing and discovering things. Think of a problem that needs solving and design an invention to solve that problem. (See printable on page 21.)

GROUP ACTIVITES



- Using the verb cards on page 22, act out each verb. It could also become a guessing game, what verb is someone trying to act out?

Verb List: Double Dutching, shredding, sprinting, create, tapping, turning, twisting, twirling, sing, bike riding.

- The history making women in the book do incredible things! First designate certain areas of the room with an accomplishment or job. For example, ballerina is in the left corner of the room, astronaut is the right corner of the room. Then play a game where students go the corner of the room they most feel a connection to then spend a few minutes discussing why they picked what they did. Play again with different choices.

List of jobs/accomplishments: astronaut, pilots, politician, poet, ballerina, entrepreneur, inventor, gymnast, author, activist, record breaker.

VOCABULARY WORDS found in *Black Girls*

- *shredding*
- *dribbling*
- *prose*
- *balmy*
- *tract*
- *ombré*
- *abounds*
- *clatter*
- *wonderous*



Use the words to explore syllables, word endings, spelling patterns, vowel patterns and etymology. Words can be tried out in conversation or writing pieces.

2.L.5 Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

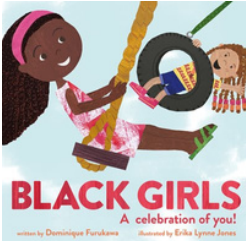
a. Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., describe foods that are spicy or juicy).

2.L.6 Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using adjectives and adverbs to describe (e.g., When other kids are happy that makes me happy).

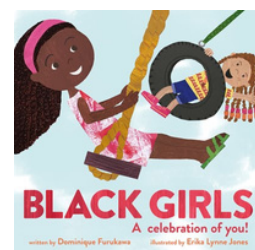
PICTURE BOOKS that connect to *Black Girls* and could be used to create a text set. These books can be used to connect with *Black Girls* or deepen the conversations around the text.

- *M is for Melanin: A Celebration of the Black Child*, written and illustrated by Tiffany Rose
- *I Am Every Good Thing* by Derrick Barnes and Gordon C. James
- *All Because You Matter* written by Tami Charles, illustrated by Bryan Collier
- *Firebird* by Misty Copeland and Christopher Myers
- *Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History* written and illustrated by Vashti Harrison

These are people who love me...



This is how I like to express myself...



Look at the history making woman in Black Girls. Pick one to make a list of questions for.

My questions for _____

1. _____

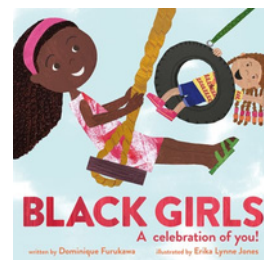
2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____



Make a list of things that bring you joy.

_____ 's Joy List

1. _____

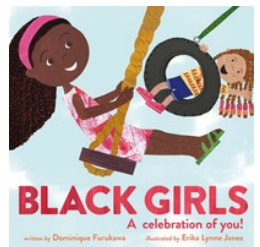
2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

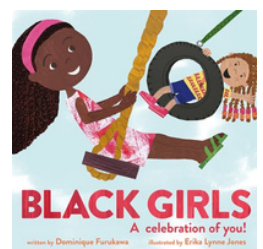


Several of the girls are shown inventing and discovering things. Think of a problem that needs solving and design an invention to solve that problem.



My Problem:

My Invention:



double Dutching

shredding

sprinting

create

tapping

twisting

twirling

bike riding