

The Day You Begin

The Day You Begin is a beautiful picture book that celebrates the differences of people in the world. The classroom may be one of the first places that children experience these differences and the celebration of them. The message in this book is clear: Your unique story may feel uncomfortable at first, but eventually it will be the very thing that helps you find your place. A great choice for the first day of school!



- ✓ **Diversity**
- ✓ **Imagery**
- ✓ **Self-Esteem**

Dive in & Discuss

1. Have you ever walked into a room full of people who seemed different than you? How did you feel? What made you feel that way? Discuss your feelings and how they changed as time passed.
2. What is something that makes you unique? Is it a positive or negative trait? How can you turn this trait into your new beginning?
3. What is diversity? Create a kid-friendly definition and post it in the classroom. Why is it important to have conversations about diversity? How might people with differences in ability, culture, race, gender or wealth/money feel when they are in a group that seems different from them?

Explore & Extend

Who's in the Room?

This would be a great first day of school activity or one to use any time your class is entering a new situation and meeting new people. After reading *The Day You Begin*, lead the class in a discussion about what information is important to know when you meet someone new. What things do you learn about each of the characters in the book as they reveal themselves to one another? What would you ask someone when you meet them for the first time? Generate a list of questions that the class feels will help them get to know their classmates. Encourage them to think of a few questions that will help them dig a little deeper when they interview their peers during the activity. Partner students and ask them to interview each other. Have them list all of the answers that they have in common as well as their differences. A Venn diagram is a great graphic organizer to use with this activity. At the conclusion of the interviews ask students to introduce their partner to the class. They can choose the most interesting parts of their conversation to share. Finally, ask the class if there is a character from the book that they relate to and, if they are comfortable sharing, to explain why.

To extend the above discussion, explain that your class is a safe place for everyone to share and celebrate their own unique qualities. Sharing should be done in a way that is loud and proud! Have students express themselves through art. Take out the art supplies and encourage students to create a display that shares their awesomeness! Have students think about what makes each of them unique. The possibilities are endless! Invite students to decorate the classroom with these displays of themselves or make a class book. The title can be *The Day Our Class Began!* What a great way to create a positive classroom culture that celebrates diversity!

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5 Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

Think Like an Illustrator

The Day You Begin is an illustrator's dream. A story with such strong feeling and emotion can be illustrated with a great deal of imagery. That's just what Rafael López, the illustrator of the book, did! Ask your students to imagine that they have been tasked with the job of illustrating this beautiful story. Read the book one time aloud to your students without showing them the illustrations. What lines from the book would make them pick up their pencil and start sketching? What are the words that Woodson chooses that might make the illustrations easily fall onto the page? How does she use imagery to create a picture in the reader's mind? When students have completed their illustrations, read the book a second time and show them López's drawings this time around. How do their own drawings compare and contrast with López's? Ask students to share why they created the images they did and why they think López chose the artwork he created. Help your students walk in the shoes of an illustrator for a day!

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.



[link to youtube read aloud of The Day You Begin](#)