



Elementary Book Lesson for Caregivers



Book Title

Something Happened In Our Town by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, and Ann Hazzard, illustrated by Jennifer Zivoin

Recommended Ages

4 - 12 years old

Book Summary to Share With Children

This book looks at how two families, one White and one Black, talk about and process a police shooting of a Black man in their community. The families have different perspectives, emotions, and responses because of their racial identities, but they all learn important lessons about treating people fairly and with kindness.

Reflection Questions for the Caregiver

- In reflecting on your childhood, when did you first become aware of examples of race and racism in your community or the larger world? How did you feel as your awareness and understanding of racism, particularly against Black/African Americans grew as you got older?
- What did you learn about how you could and/or should stand up to discrimination when you experience and/or witness it?
- Are you identifying how institutional “isms” advantage or disadvantage you and others? Are you reflecting on the biases, stereotypes, and prejudices you may hold about yourself and others?

Reader's Note

Read the Note to Parents and Caregivers in back of the book before you read this book to your child.

This book provides an opportunity to talk frankly with younger children about police violence against Black/African Americans. Discussing race in America and the impact of racism on communities of color is something that ALL families must do and something that many families of color must do in order to protect their children from racial bias and injustice. White families need to have these conversations, too. To stay silent teaches children that racism doesn't exist and that they, therefore, have no part to play in perpetuating racial oppression and injustice or eradicating it.

Connection to Social-Emotional Learning and Anti-Bias Education

SEL

Self-Awareness

Self-Management

Social Awareness

Relationship Skills

Responsible Decision-Making

ABE

Empathy and Understanding

Healthy Complex Identities

Respect Across Differences

Notice, Name, and Reject Bias

Responsiveness and Action



Discussion Questions

1. How did Emma's parents explain why the police shot the Black man?
2. How did Emma's sister, Liz, explain it? Why do you think the explanations were slightly different?
3. What did Emma learn about slavery and the way White people have treated Black people in the past and present?
4. What is an example of a pattern? According to Emma's mom, what is the pattern of how White and Black people are treated?
5. Emma's parents call the police officer's actions a mistake. Josh's parents call the actions wrong. Is there a difference between making a mistake and being wrong? If so, what is the difference in this instance? Why do you think the two families had slightly different explanations of what the police officer did?
6. Why does Josh's father say that the police officer won't go to jail for shooting the Black man?
7. What are some examples in the book of how Black people are treated unfairly compared to White people?
8. How do you think Josh's family feels about what happened to the Black man compared to how Emma's family feels? Why might there be different emotions?
9. What do you think Josh's dad means when he says that he can use his anger to make things better?
10. What lessons did Emma and Josh learn about how to treat people?

Journal Questions/Activities

- What lesson did you learn about how to treat people from this book? Write or draw a picture that shows what you learned in action.
- Stress and trauma can get stuck in our bodies. This is one way to decompress after discussing current events, reading this book, or after a personal conflict when emotions run hot and get big. The nervous system needs to release, and this is a great way to bring the body to a neutral place.
 - Invite your child to sit on the floor. They may sit on a pillow if they like.
 - While sitting with their feet flat on the floor and their knees tucked into their chest, ask them to wrap their arms around their knees and squeeze as hard as they can. They should imagine that their knees are lemons and begin to squeeze them tight, as if they were squeezing the juice out.
 - Encourage them to do this 5 times, breathing in and opening their arms out and away and then exhaling while wrapping their arms in and squeezing as tight as they can.
 - Narrate the inhale and exhale for them so they take in the air and exhale the air.
 - For the last 2 counts of 5, you can also encourage them to squish their face up as though they were sucking on lemons as they inhale and then as they exhale they can stick their tongue out and shout blah!
 - Adults modeling self care is always helpful; you can do this with them.