



Book Title: *Something Happened In Our Town: A Child's Story about Racial Injustice*

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Age Range: 4-7

Grades: PreK-3rd

Identities/Lived Experiences/Themes in This Book

- Feelings
- Kindness
- Standing up for self/others
- Community
- Identity affirmation
- Identity safety
- Black/African American
- White/European American
- Bi/Multiracial identity or relationships
- Immigration/Migration
- Grief/Loss

Literacy Connections

- Realistic fiction
- Identify details in the text
- Compare and contrast events
- Compare and contrast characters
- Identify theme or main message
- Describe characters/Character development
- Character point of view
- Use illustrations/pictures/photos to gain information
- Make predictions
- Make inferences
- Make text connections (to self, text, the world)
- Vocabulary in context

Anti-Bias Education	Social-Emotional Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy and Understanding • Healthy Complex Identities • Respect Across Differences • Notice, Name, and Reject Bias • Responsiveness and Action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Awareness • Self-Management • Social Awareness • Relationship Skills • Responsible Decision-Making

Background Information for Adults

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 already 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 and youth that racism doesn't exist and that they, therefore, have no part to play in perpetuating racial oppression and injustice or in eradicating it. Engaging in these discussions with all children is necessary, so they can be empowered to make positive change for themselves and their communities.

Note: Be aware of your emotional reactions as you read this book, which may be activated at different times depending on your identities, lived experiences, or past traumas. Take time to pause, breathe, and reflect on what you are feeling, where in your body you are feeling it, and what is coming up for you as you are feeling it. Where might the sadness, anger, defensiveness, guilt, fear, grief, regret, overwhelm, etc., be activated in your body? How is the feeling that is activated from the story connected to your own life? What can you do to process the emotion in the short and long term? What support do you need, and how can you access that support?

Read the **Note to Parents and Caregivers** in the back of the book before you read this book to your child. See also the **Racial Identity & Racial Bias Primer in the back of this guide**.

Reflection Questions for Adults Reading This Book to Children

1. 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?
2. What did you learn about how you could and/or should stand up to discrimination when you experience and/or witness it?
3. In what ways are you identifying how institutional "isms" advantage or disadvantage you and others? How are you reflecting on the biases, stereotypes, and prejudices you may hold about yourself and others?

Book Summary to Read to Children Before Reading the Book

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.

Discussion Questions
(essential questions in **bold**)

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

8. What do you think Josh's dad means when he says that he can use his anger to make things better?

9. What lessons did Emma and Josh learn about how to treat people?

Journal Prompts and Extension Activities

1. **Write or Draw:** 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.
2. **Story Reflection & Feelings Chart:** This activity helps children identify and describe how characters feel at different points in a story and use text and illustrations to support understanding of characters' emotions.
 - a. Choose 3-4 scenes with strong emotions (e.g., when Emma hears the news, Josh talks with family, they meet the new student, they choose kindness).
 - b. Use a class chart or provide student handouts. Fill in a sample row together.
 - i. Sentence Starters:
 1. When ___ happened, ___ felt __ because __.
 2. I felt __ when I read that part because __.
 - c. Complete the chart individually or in groups. Use visuals/emojis as needed.
 - d. Discuss similarities/differences in character and student emotions. Reflect on care and justice.
 - e. **Extension:** Draw a picture of one moment and label how the character is feeling.

Example chart:

Character	What happened in the story?	How did the character feel?	Why did they feel that way?	How did YOU feel?
Emma	Heard the news about a police shooting	_____	_____	_____
Josh	Talked with his family about fairness	_____	_____	_____
New student	Joined the class	_____	_____	_____
You	Choose a moment from the story	_____	_____	_____

3. **Releasing Stress Activity:** Stress and trauma can get stuck in our bodies. The nervous system needs to release after reading a book such as this, which can activate a strong emotional response. This is an exercise to decompress and bring the body to a neutral place.
- a. Invite children to sit on the floor. They may sit on a pillow if it's available.
 - b. While sitting with their feet flat on the floor and their knees tucked into their chest, tell them to wrap their arms around their knees and squeeze as hard as they can. They can imagine that their knees are lemons and begin to squeeze them tightly, as if they are squeezing the juice out.
 - c. Narrate the inhale and exhale for them so they take in the air and exhale the air. As they breathe in, they open their arms out and away. As they exhale, they wrap their arms in and squeeze as tightly as they can.
 - d. Do this 5 times..
 - e. For the last 2 counts of 5, they can squish their faces up as though they are sucking on lemons as they inhale, and then as they exhale, they can stick their tongue out and shout, "Blaah!"
 - f. Adults modeling self-care is always helpful; you can do this with them.

**Find more lessons in the
AmazeWorks Racism and Discrimination
book set, available here:**

<https://amazeworks.org/product/book-set-navigating-conversations-on-race-racism-and-discrimination/>

