

Identities & Themes

- Black/African American (Sudanese)
- Immigration/Migration (refugee)
- EL/Language barrier
- Grief/Loss
- Family structure: Single parent
- Community
- School success

Teacher Reflection Questions

1. When have you struggled to remember how to say someone's name? What did you do to learn it? Why is it important for educators to be vigilant in pronouncing names correctly?
2. How can you support your students who might experience similar feelings because of their names or other aspects of their identity that are out of the culturally dominant norm in your class/school?
3. Which students in your class are being confronted with big changes in their lives right now? How can you make sure your classroom is a place of support for them?

Background Information for Teacher

In this story, the main character is a refugee from Sudan. Share the Author's Note in the back of the book with students, as it gives important information about refugees and the Dinka tribe.

For more information on immigration and refugees, please see the **Immigration/Migration Primer**.

Discussion Note: The main character's name is Sangoel, pronounced Sun-goal. It is important to review character names and practice the pronunciation of Sangoel's name before reading the book. Learning to pronounce names from another culture is a form of respect and can teach children to honor the languages and cultures of those who are different from them.

Anti-Bias Education Tenets

- ☒ Empathy & Understanding
- ☒ Healthy Complex Identities
- ☒ Respect Across Differences
- ☐ Notice, Name, & Reject Bias
- ☐ Responsiveness & Action

Social-Emotional Learning Competencies

- ☒ Self-Awareness
- ☐ Self-Management
- ☒ Social Awareness
- ☐ Responsible Decision-Making
- ☒ Relationship Skills

Read this to the students before reading the book:

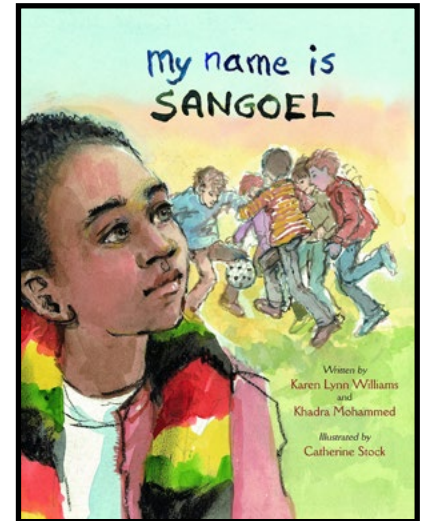
Sangoel is a refugee whose family had to leave their homeland of Sudan because war had made it unsafe for them. Sangoel is lonely, and he misses his home. Sangoel is proud of his name, a name handed down by his father who was killed in the war, but no one at his new school knows how to pronounce it correctly. He comes up with a creative way to help everyone at school pronounce his name, and finally starts to feel like he belongs.

Discussion Questions (essential questions bolded)

1. Why did Sangoel's family need to leave their home in Sudan?
2. What does it mean to be a refugee?
3. What new things did Sangoel have to adjust to when he first arrived in America?
4. What do you think the Wise One meant when he said, "*Education is your mother and your father*"? Do you agree?
5. What could Sangoel's teacher have done differently on his first day of school?
6. Why do you think Sangoel speaks so quietly when he tells people how to say his name after they've mispronounced it?
7. How did the words of the Wise One, "*You will always be Sangoel*," help Sangoel?
8. Why is it important to pronounce and spell someone's name correctly?
9. Has anyone ever mispronounced your name? How did/does it feel?
10. What might be a good thing to do if you read someone's name and don't know how to pronounce it? What should you do if you mispronounce someone's name, and they give you the correct pronunciation?
11. Show the pictures of the whole book without reading the text. Ask students to identify the feelings and emotions they see in Sangoel throughout the book. Then, ask them to make connections to themselves and share times when they felt similar emotions.

Journal Prompts & Extension Activities

1. Write about a time in your life when you faced a big change. How did you feel? What did you wish others understood?
2. Sangoel showed great resilience in the face of mean and teasing behavior from other students, and he found a creative way to get them to understand his name. Write about a time when you showed resilience in the face of something difficult.
3. **Pictographs:** Students can make pictographs of their names, like Sangoel and his classmates. If you decide to do this with your class, consider the names of your students. For some names, pictographs may be a difficult activity, and you'll want to make sure it doesn't further isolate anyone based on their name.
4. **Guest speaker:** Invite someone from a local refugee resettlement agency or other nonprofit that assists new refugees to speak to your class about the refugee experience and what it's like for refugees to come to the United States. Collect questions from your students beforehand for the speaker.



Literacy Connections

- Realistic fiction
- Identify details in the text
- Compare and contrast events
- Compare and contrast settings
- Compare and contrast characters
- Identify theme or main message
- Describe setting
- 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)
- Describe major plot events
- Sequence events
- Vocabulary in context