

**Discussion Questions for bell hooks, *Be BOY BUZZ***  
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Overall approach: These two beautiful board books can help students understand stereotypes about race, race and hair, race and gender, and gender. The books are both specific and universal.

bell hooks, *Be BOY BUZZ*, Disney-Hyperion, Re-Released Board Book, 2017.

### Opening Questions

1. Define the word boy. What is a boy?
2. How might this book help us interpret and/or challenge how we may perceive the habits and behaviors of boys and specifically black boys?
3. Does reading this text change your impression of black boys?
4. Are there other books that you have read that shows boys/black boys becoming anything? Why don't you think there are many books that depict black boys in this way?
5. Do you believe that boys can be anything? For example, gentle, compassionate, and creative?

### Specific Questions During Reading the Text

1. Can boys be beautiful? Why does bell hooks use this word (making inferences)?
2. In what ways do you tell your story? Who validates your voice? Who minimizes your voice? This boy talks "way too loud" at moments, how do you activate your voice? Who defines what is loud?
3. When you hear that this boy is "sitting all quiet and still?" What does it mean to be still? What is that experience like for you? When do you get to be still and quiet?
4. Do we ever let boys down? Have you been let down?

**Learning objective:** To recognize that black boys can be anything in a world that often criminalizes or pathologizes them. To describe the various contexts that boys can... that boys everywhere can read, reflect, be gentle and not just one thing

### ACTIVITIES:

#### Before Reading

1. Draw and describe some boys you know. What are they doing? How do they act? What is important to them?

#### During Reading

2. Create a Venn Diagram with beauty on one side and beast on another. What do you learn? What do you see? Compare and contrast. Can someone be both things?

#### After Reading: Making Connections

3. What does it mean to be "in love" with who you are, regardless of your gender? Could you make yourself a valentine? How do you affirm your assets?

### Thinking Beyond The Text: Recommendations For Teachers

Teacher Challenge: Do white teachers lower their expectations for behavior with black boys? How do teachers maintain expectations across race and gender lines? Read below:

Delpit, L. D. (2006). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. The New Press.

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Kuby, C. R. (2013). *Critical Literacy in the Early Childhood Classroom: Unpacking Histories, Unlearning Privilege*. Teachers College Press.

**Activity:** Take a large poster sheet and put GIRL and BOY on each side with a line down the middle and have children make a list of Girls can....and Boys can....then when they finish the list. Go down the list and challenge their assumptions that boys can't cry, boys aren't moms, boys can't wear pink; or girls can't fix cars, girls can't be superheros, only girls can have long hair and play with dolls

Look at Teaching Tolerance: "Gender Doesn't Limit You!"

<http://www.tolerance.org/gender-doesnt-limit-you>

Consider Carol Dweck's work when having students affirm themselves. How do we urge them to have a growth mindset around affirmation?

See Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology Of Success*. New York: Random House.

### **Owning Your Own Teacher Development**

With both of these hooks texts, consider how they are simultaneously particular and universal. They are specifically by, for, and about black children. They also open a window to the universal experience of hair, gender, and race. As we know, white children also have a racial identity. It's critical in these conversations to never put children of color on the spot to answer for all children and people of their race. It's critical to remind children that we all experience race though we experience it very differently, and for some with deep inequity. Being able to move between the particular and universal is a sophisticated facilitation skill that can be developed with conscious effort and time. Normalizing conversations about identity--race, gender--is a first step toward having those conversations be out in the open.

### **Further Teacher Resources:**

See National Association for Multicultural Education <https://nameorg.org/>

Kuby, C. R. (2013). *Critical Literacy in the Early Childhood Classroom: Unpacking Histories, Unlearning Privilege*. Teachers College Press.

"How to Change White Teachers' Lenses: America's Students Are Now Majority-Minority, but its teachers are not. That's Why They Need To Be 'Culturally Competent.'"

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