

**Discussion Questions for bell hooks, *Happy To Be Nappy***  
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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, *Happy To Be Nappy*, Disney-Hyperion, Re-Released Board Book, 2017.

### **Opening Questions**

1. What is hair? And who has hair?
2. What kinds of hair are there in the world? Texture? Color? Shape?
3. What do you love about your own hair?
4. What does beautiful hair look like? Can all hair be beautiful? Who defines beautiful hair? Where do we receive images of hair?
5. How does reading this text inform your impressions of hair? Black hair? Beautiful hair?
6. What different kinds of hair are in your family? Does your hair have traditions around hair?
7. Do you have a memory around someone doing your hair or styling your hair?
8. Do you know anyone who has changed their hair and changed their life?
9. How has your hair changed from a baby to now?
10. What's a hairstyle you would love to have, but haven't tried? Has something held you back? What if you went and got that style? What would happen?

### **Specific Questions During Reading the Text**

1. Does your hair have a smell, texture? What are some words you would use to describe your hair?
2. How do you wear your hair? Do you like it pulled tight? Smooth? Do you let your hair go?
3. What makes you happy about your hair? Does it ever make you feel sad?
4. Have you ever had a hair party to celebrate your hair?

**Learning objective:** To understand recognize or identify how black hair as beautiful which hooks argues. To see all hair as beautiful.

### **ACTIVITIES:**

#### **Before Reading**

1. Draw what you think beautiful hair looks like? Why?

#### **During Reading**

2. How did you learn about hair?

#### **After Reading: Making Connections**

3. What is your style? How did you learn about style?

### **Thinking Beyond The Text: Recommendations For Teachers**

Imagine your classroom as an innovative visual space for display. Find images of hair and beauty that are global, that are from art, that are abstract, that "de-naturalize" our assumptions about hair and

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good hair. For example, find images of hair on humans and animals, especially hair that is funny and/or surreal.

Draw on fairytales and archetypal stories that involve hair. For example, consider Rapunzel. What happens when she cuts her hair (modern Disney adaptation of Tangled has a dramatic hair cutting scene). Consider Freaky Friday, where mother and daughter change bodies (and therefore hair).

Use Teaching Tolerance lessons: Who Has Hair? <http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/who-has-hair>

Create a Hair Book:

[http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/tt\\_who\\_has\\_hair\\_book\\_handout.pdf](http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/tt_who_has_hair_book_handout.pdf)

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

Watch and read about varieties of hair. Consider watching Chris Rock's hair documentary, Good Hair. (2010) <https://www.amazon.com/Good-Hair-Chris-Rock/dp/B002TOJOY8>.

Black women respond to Chris Rock's film: <http://thegrio.com/2009/10/08/what-exactly-is-good-hair-1/>

Critiques of natural black hair: <http://thegrio.com/2016/05/08/black-girl-told-natural-hair-inappropriate/>

### **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.'"

[http://www.slate.com/articles/life/tomorrows\\_test/2016/06/how\\_white\\_teachers\\_can\\_become\\_culturally\\_competent.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/life/tomorrows_test/2016/06/how_white_teachers_can_become_culturally_competent.html)