
CHAPTER ONE

Be a Dandelion

A Metaphor and Vision for Antiracist Teaching



In a world that often fails to hold fast to a vision of teaching and learning for liberation, I urge educators to be like dandelions. Abundant. Unmovable. Resilient. Refuse to allow anyone to dismiss this work as weeds. Like a dandelion seed, allow a gust of wind to carry you to fertile ground and take root, believing firmly that antiracist teaching is not about uniformity; it's about possibility. There are seeds of hope we can plant everyday through intentional antiracist reading instruction practices.

When I was a kid, like many children, I loved picking dandelions during the fifth stage of their life, when their tiny florets turned into a mass of fluffy, cloud-like seeds. The once-single yellow flower transformed and became delicate, airy works of art. All it took was a gust of wind or a gentle puff of breath from my mouth to send transparent seeds traveling through the air. New dandelion seedlings would land in the soil, and in time, new plants would appear with the same transformative power and potential.

While my love for dandelions was a marker of my childhood, in *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison (1970/1999), Pecola, the novel's protagonist, observes, "*Nobody loves the head of a dandelion. Maybe because they are so many, strong, and soon.*" Morrison uses dandelions symbolically to represent what we've been socialized into believing them to be. Imperfect. Unattractive. Useless. To some, dandelions represent weeds of resistance. I challenge you to see them instead as symbols of resilience.

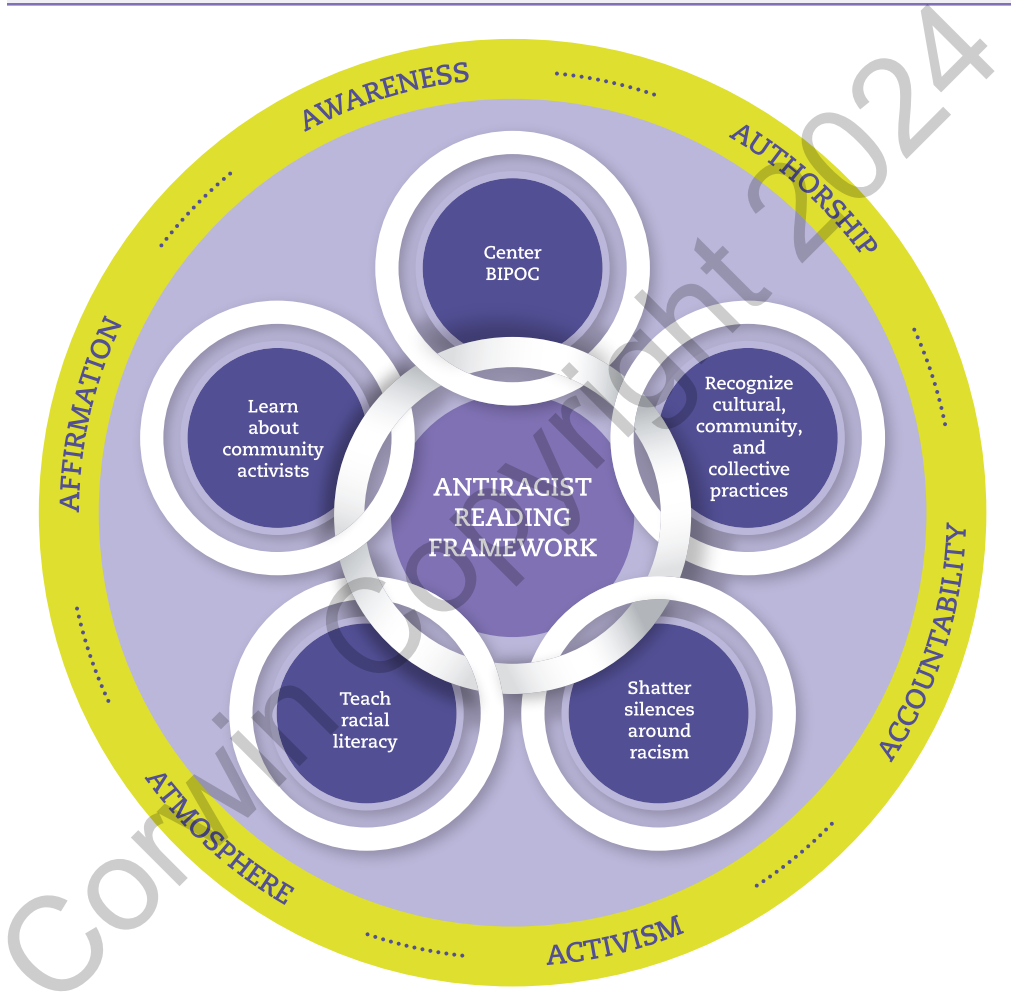
While ubiquitous in the natural environment, dandelions are often overlooked and disregarded. They are commonly considered an irritant to remove from the desired homogeneity of green backyard lawns, parks, and professional landscapes. But across cultures, time, and space, dandelions have benefited many. Several ancient cultures used dandelions for food, medicinal, and spiritual purposes. Today, they continue to be used in traditional medicine by some cultures, and experts note the dietary and health benefits that result from consuming dandelions. When we shift our perspective beyond the dominant construction, it is undeniable that dandelions are significant.

Dandelions are the perfect metaphor for antiracist teaching. Like dandelions, the work of antiracism has been viewed negatively—as an invasive, unlikeable, useless, weed. It is true that antiracism does not fit the standard; it is disruptive of it. Symbolically, dandelions represent hope, power, light, optimism, and healing. For these reasons and more, I believe the dandelion is a humble and admirable symbol to use for an **Antiracist Reading Framework** that I introduce in this chapter and for all that becomes possible when we operate from an antiracist teaching stance.

As you read this book, you'll see key characteristics of antiracist teaching highlighted throughout. While there may be a specific focus on one or more in a section, page, or chapter, know that a characteristic is never actually alone. Like a dandelion, one part cannot survive without the other. We cannot ever truly talk about any one of these characteristics separated from the whole. While I work to spotlight their distinctions and the books and teaching that can support cultivation of each, it is critical to always keep in mind the interconnectedness of these characteristics. Therefore, you will see the **Antiracist Reading Framework** in each of the following chapters with each antiracist teaching characteristic named even as one or more is being highlighted. This serves as a reminder of how all of the characteristics work together to create

liberatory outcomes for young people. As I provide an **Antiracist Reading Framework** to ground our understandings in this chapter, in chapters to come, I also demonstrate antiracist teaching practices with books that open up worlds of possibilities for young people. (See Figure 1.1.)

FIGURE 1.1 Antiracist Reading Framework



A VISION OF ANTIRACIST TEACHING IN READING

During a read-aloud of *My Papi Has a Motorcycle* by Isabel Quintero, I observed a group of fifth graders dig into the kind of *Mind Work* they do whenever they read fiction. They discussed the characters of the text and named traits that described

them. They wondered where the story was taking place as they took in the setting. I interrupted them briefly. “In addition to this *Mind Work*, there’s *Heart Work* we always do as readers. But we’re not always thinking about this.” Several students looked at me quizzically. “Part of this *Heart Work* is thinking about our identities as we read. Parts of my identity are that I am Black. I am a Black woman. I am a Black woman and a teacher. I am a Black woman who is a teacher and a mother. I bring each of these identities to every text I read. As you read, try remaining alert to this *Heart Work*. Pay attention to how your identities influence your understanding of this text. *How do they help you to perceive more in a text, about characters and issues they face? And also, how might your identities limit your understanding? Notice parts of the text that make you think, might I be missing something?*”

Reflect

- How often do you reflect on your identities and share this reflection with students?
- How do you demonstrate ways your identities influence how you read and understand a text?
- How do you help young readers discover how their identities inform their interpretation of a text and to understand this as a powerful reading strategy?

I listened in carefully while students tried this work. They applied the scholarship of Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop (1990), discussing parts of the text that were mirrors for them (refer to the introduction for more on Dr. Bishop’s crucial work). Like speaking Spanish and English like the characters or, more broadly, having the ability to speak more than one language. Like enjoying spending time with their fathers, just like the main character, Daisy, does. Like being an immigrant like the character Papi or being part of a family of immigrants. Affirmations about identity were abundant. Students also shared parts of the text that were windows for them. Like not really realizing and recognizing the hard work of immigrants and the challenge of living in a country that isn’t always appreciative of the work and sacrifices immigrants make. Like not understanding the importance and joy of multilingualism.

We read a bit more before I paused again. “I’d like to discuss a word that may be unfamiliar to you. That word is *gentrification*. Gentrification is the process of making a neighborhood more appealing to people moving in who have more money than those who were already living there. As a result, rent prices increase and people from the community who can’t afford to live there anymore are pushed out. This mostly affects Black and Brown people in neighborhoods who are pushed out when White people with more resources move in. Talk with your partner about how the word *gentrification* helps you to understand this part of the story. And also, tell your partner if you’ve seen any signs of *gentrification* in your neighborhood or in neighborhoods you are familiar with.” I listened intently while students continued to apply Dr. Bishop’s metaphor:

Well this is a mirror for me because I have seen signs of this in my neighborhood. There used to be a bodega. We all went there. And now there’s Starbucks. That bodega is gone now.

Whenever a Whole Foods shows up it seems like the whole community changes.

They’re building luxury apartment buildings in my neighborhood. Already several of my friends have moved away.

I never knew about gentrification at all.

This experience with fifth-grade students illustrates my vision of the role and work of educators in moving beyond teaching approaches that are just about representation to teaching approaches that are about liberation. The classroom becomes fertile ground for students to more closely examine their identities and the world around them. Truth-seeking and truth-telling become students’ common, collective practice of community, solidarity, love, justice, and freedom. This work requires educators to do more with racially and culturally diverse books beyond simply collecting them.

FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF ANTIRACIST TEACHING

While there is no one way to define antiracist curriculum or instruction, several characteristics emerge from the existing and growing body of scholarship on antiracism. I have identified five that can inform instruction and shape the educational experiences of students. Each of these characteristics works together as a whole to construct a vision of an antiracist reading classroom—the work of teachers and the work of students—that leads to liberation.

FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF ANTIRACIST TEACHING

- **Center BIPOC in texts.** Antiracist educators select texts by and about BIPOC that reflect the fullness of their lives without exclusively locating their histories, experiences, and backgrounds in oppression.
- **Recognize cultural, community, and collective practices.** Antiracist educators highlight powerful ways of knowing and being in the world that are rooted in the knowledge of racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse groups of people.
- **Shatter silences around racism.** Antiracist educators name racism, Whiteness, and White supremacy and help students recognize oppressive ideologies and how they function.
- **Teach racial literacy.** Antiracist educators provide opportunities for students to have critical and constructive conversations about race and racism where they develop their ability to apply language to examine racial and cultural identities; question ideas, assumptions, and the status quo; and work to resist racist ideas, practices, and policies.
- **Learn about community activists.** Antiracist educators provide opportunities for students to learn about, explore, and reference voices of color in their communities and activists in the world who are advancing the work of racial justice.

Although I discuss each of the characteristics individually and one at a time, it is important to note that they are not linear, but circuitous and interconnected. Looking at them individually can, I hope, provide a greater understanding of antiracist teaching as lived, liberatory practice.

CENTER BIPOC IN TEXTS

Antiracist educators work to affirm racially and culturally diverse people and communities lovingly and joyfully. One way to achieve this is through transparent, intentional text selection, understanding that otherwise, books and texts are powerful ways young people can be socialized into racist and inequitable ideas. In *Stamped (For Kids): Racism, Antiracism, and You* (Cherry-Paul et al., 2021), I ask young readers to look out for mainstream representations that too often provide limited, deficit, harmful perspectives of Black and Brown people. **Therefore, antiracist teaching seeks to powerfully reflect those who have been minoritized and marginalized in depth rather than in superficial breadth that can proliferate stereotypes.** Books and texts written by BIPOC creators who share the same racial and cultural identity as the people and characters they are writing about are more likely to present important, nuanced perspectives.

In response to noticings around identity and authorship, Corinne Duyvis started a grassroots effort using the social media hashtag #ownvoices to seek out texts where the author’s identities and lived experiences are reflected in the characters, settings, and themes of a story. In 2015, Duyvis tweeted the following in Figure 1.2.

FIGURE 1.2 Corinne Duyvis Tweet



Recently, there has been tension around the term *ownvoices*—which has blossomed beyond a hashtag into a movement. Because of the ways words and terms in the work of equity and antiracism are co-opted, misused, diluted, and commercialized, it is important to remain vigilant. It’s important to recognize how words that are about tweaking systems are more susceptible to being misconstrued and co-opted versus words that are about disrupting systems. Intentionality in their usage is critical when it comes to words and terms such as *ownvoices*, *diverse*, *BIPOC*, *POC*, and others. It is also crucial to call out those who misuse and capitalize on them.

As a Black educator whose parents were born in Georgia, whose father, aunts, and uncles grew up there and navigated segregation from childhood until young adulthood, I use the terms *BIPOC* and *ownvoices* in this book intentionally and with care. I recognize that tension around their usage is really about colonialism, imperialism, and centuries of White supremacy that have and continue to work to

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erase, silence, invalidate, and marginalize identities. With this profound understanding, I use *ownvoices* to call attention to the collective struggle among groups of people and communities who've been marginalized while also working to spotlight their distinct, rich identities. I use *ownvoices* to call attention to structural and systemic racism while working to avoid minimizing the lived experiences of individuals and group identities. I use *ownvoices* to call attention to the ways we must continue to work together to collectively get free.

RECOGNIZE CULTURAL, COMMUNITY, AND COLLECTIVE PRACTICES

Antiracist educators recognize the importance of truly knowing their students—their personal identities, such as favorite TV shows, movies, sports, and music, and also their social identities, which include their racial, cultural, and linguistic identities as well as knowing the communities in which they live. Antiracist educators see this work of knowing as continuous, and it helps them to develop instruction and curriculum that are closer fits between students' home and school cultures. Dr. Kimberly Parker (2022) asserts, “We see the world through our own racialized, gendered, complicated lenses” and the importance of educators reframing our thinking. To accomplish this, she recommends we lean into the scholarship around “funds of knowledge” to develop multi-dimensional understandings of the children in teachers' care (pp. 53–54). **Therefore, antiracist teaching is grounded in historical and contemporary experiences and issues of people and community.** Rather than revering individualism and competition, books and texts that are centered in curriculum support collectivism and communal practices and are those that value multiple ways of knowing across cultures.

SHATTER SILENCES AROUND RACISM

Educators name racism proactively and explicitly and help students develop a working definition of racism. This definition deepens across space, time, and context, making it possible for students to recognize social, economic, and political factors that create environmental conditions that oppress BIPOC and communities. Each summer, Tricia Ebarvia and I co-facilitate the Institute for Racial Equity in Literacy (IREL), a unique professional development experience that supports educators in the work of antiracism and equity in their classrooms, schools, and communities. This work demands critical reflection and action. We challenge educators to identify the ways in which racism has been embedded throughout history and in every societal institution, including schools.

And we ask educators to reflect on questions such as these: *How can we ensure that our educational practices are not just inclusive but equitable? How can we use our power and position as educators to transform systems, whether those systems be our individual classrooms, districts, or greater communities? How can we help students read, write, and speak up for justice?* **Therefore, antiracist teaching helps students recognize ways racism is entrenched in institutions and systems such as education, housing, health care, media, government, law enforcement, and more and ways we can work to dismantle oppressive systems.**



Learn more about the IREL here.

TEACH RACIAL LITERACY

Antiracist educators acquire racial literacy themselves and help their students become racially literate. This involves teaching that invites students to recognize race as a social construct, acknowledge racism as a contemporary problem and not just a past condition, and interrogate the ways Whiteness drives the values, structures, and systems in the United States and beyond. Dr. Detra Price-Dennis and Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz (2021) convey the urgency for educators to not just talk about race and racism “but to learn how to examine carefully how race is lived in our society” (p. 21). When educators acquire this skill, they are able to support the racial literacy development of their students so they are able to navigate and interrupt racist structures, systems, policies, and practices. Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz (2021) explains that “a desired outcome of racial literacy in an outwardly racist society like America is for members of the dominant racial category to adopt an antiracist stance and for persons of color to resist a victim stance.” **Therefore, antiracist teaching supports authentic, critical, and constructive conversations as students apply racial literacy skills to read and discuss texts and develop tools to disrupt racism in their lives.**

LEARN ABOUT COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS

Antiracist educators learn about folk locally as well as globally who are working to dismantle racism. They recognize that those who make this their life’s work aren’t always heralded in books for students to access. Also crucially important is the recognition of ways activists work in community with others. Dr. Parker (2022) defines community as “a group of people who come together around shared purposes” that

includes “members’ needs for connection, interdependence, and the belief that a community—and the work required to create and maintain it—are necessary and possible” (p. 50). The work of antiracist educators cannot flourish without cultivating community in our classrooms. Community, Dr. Parker asserts, “must be intentional if we want it to be liberatory” (p. 51). The nurturing of our classroom communities must also include connecting students to the people and organizations in the wider school community who work to make life more equitable in their neighborhoods and in the world. Such connection is one way students maintain hope for a more just world—a hope that is underpinned by intention, commitment, and action. **Therefore, antiracist teaching creates community and connects young people to activists that empower them to consider how they locate themselves in the longevity of work for liberation and ways they will cultivate new ideas that become seeds of change.**

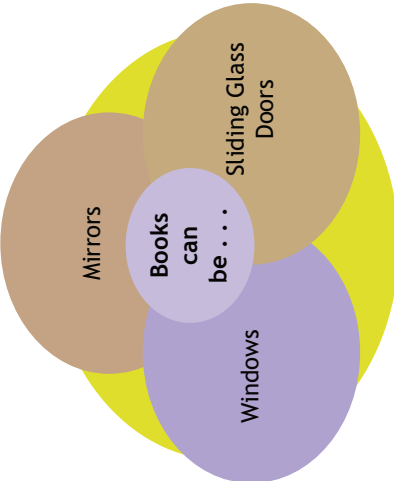
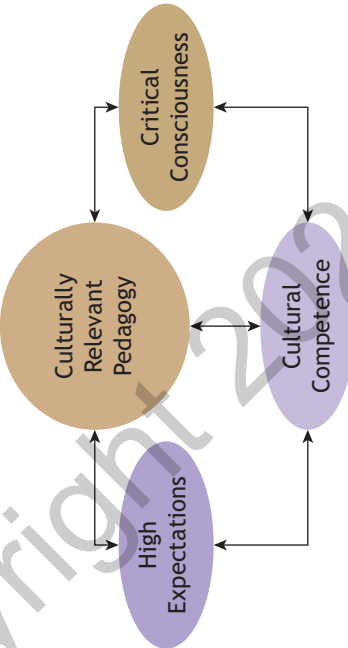
SIX CRITICAL LENSES TO SUPPORT ANTIRACIST READING INSTRUCTION

To help implement these antiracist teaching characteristics in reading, I provide six critical lenses that support the instructional approaches of educators and the insights of students as they read and discuss books. These lenses are demonstrated throughout the remaining chapters in this book, which will guide you through texts and practices that provide a foundation for an antiracist reading revolution in your classroom. While they do not have to be implemented in any particular order, there is one exception. I urge you to always begin this work with affirmation, that you begin in ways that lets students know they are loved. This is essential for the emotional and spiritual well-being of Black and Brown students who have often received messages in education that are the antithesis of this. Use each, any, and all of the critical lenses as you develop your antiracist teaching practice. The six critical lenses I offer extend from the research of Black women scholars who shape my knowledge and practice of antiracist teaching (Table 1.1).

To nurture an antiracist reading revolution, we can apply two overarching lenses from the scholarship of culturally relevant and critical pedagogies to inform the ways we teach reading: affirmation and awareness.



Antiracist educators work intentionally to affirm the racial and cultural identities of students. This work is not left for chance or for students to solely experience from reading a particular text. Instead, antiracist educators help students understand the ways characters and people are fully recognized and validated in a text and the importance of recognizing

TABLE 1.1 Scholarship of Black Women Who Shape Antiracist Teaching

SCHOLAR	SCHOLARSHIP	FRAMEWORK
<p>Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop <i>Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors</i> (1990)</p>	<p>“When there are enough books available that can act as both mirrors and windows for all our children, they will see that we can celebrate both our differences and similarities, because together they are what makes us all human.”</p>	
<p>Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings “Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy” (1995)</p>	<p>“Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate.”</p>	

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SCHOLAR	SCHOLARSHIP	FRAMEWORK
<p>Dr. Barbara Love <i>Developing a Liberatory Consciousness</i> (2010)</p>	<p>“With a liberatory consciousness, every person gets the chance to theorize about issues of equity and social justice, to analyze events related to equity and social justice, and to act in responsible ways to transform society.”</p>	
<p>Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz <i>Racial Literacy: A Policy Research Brief</i>, produced by the James R. Squire Office of the National Council of Teachers of English (2021)</p>	<p>“Research has revealed that conversations about race, when done effectively, provide education professionals with the confidence they need to alter their pedagogy in more culturally responsive and culturally sustaining ways. They become skillful at engaging their students in essential conversations that relate to their learning and social development.”</p>	

people in these ways in their lives. One aspect of culturally relevant pedagogy as theorized by Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings is educators working to affirm students' cultural identities. Dr. Ladson-Billings (2009) explains that for Black students in particular, affirmation has not been easy to access in schools:

The typical experience in the schools is a denigration of African and African American culture. Indeed, there is a denial of its very existence. The language that students bring with them is seen to be deficient—a corruption of English. The familial organizations are considered pathological. And the historical, cultural, and scientific contributions of African Americans are ignored or rendered trivial. (p. 151)

There should be no surprise, then, when Black students do not trust schools and find them to be “spirit-murdering” (Love, 2019) spaces rather than humanizing, liberatory spaces. For educators who wonder about the importance of culturally relevant and sustaining teaching in predominantly White contexts, Drs. Django Paris and H. Samy Alim (2017)

address the inclination of White teachers to avoid this work with White students. They convey that “developing a multicultural, multilingual perspective or competence means that all students (including white, middle-class students) broaden their cultural repertoires so that they can operate more easily in a world that is globally interconnected” (p. 145). Further, whenever working to make structures, systems, and institutions more racially just, it is those who have experienced the most racial injustice that must be centered.

The work of affirmation in reading instruction provides opportunities for BIPOC students to appreciate their own culture and “make connections between their community, national, and global identities” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 38). Such teaching demands that educators have an in-depth knowledge of their students—their racial and cultural identities, the values instilled in them by their families and communities, their joys, hopes, and dreams. Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz (2021) names this kind of commitment Critical Love, “a profound commitment to the communities we work in.”

Antiracist educators also work to help students develop an awareness of racism and an understanding of how racism functions systemically. As a result, students are better

Whenever working to make structures, systems, and institutions more racially just, it is those who have experienced the most racial injustice that must be centered.

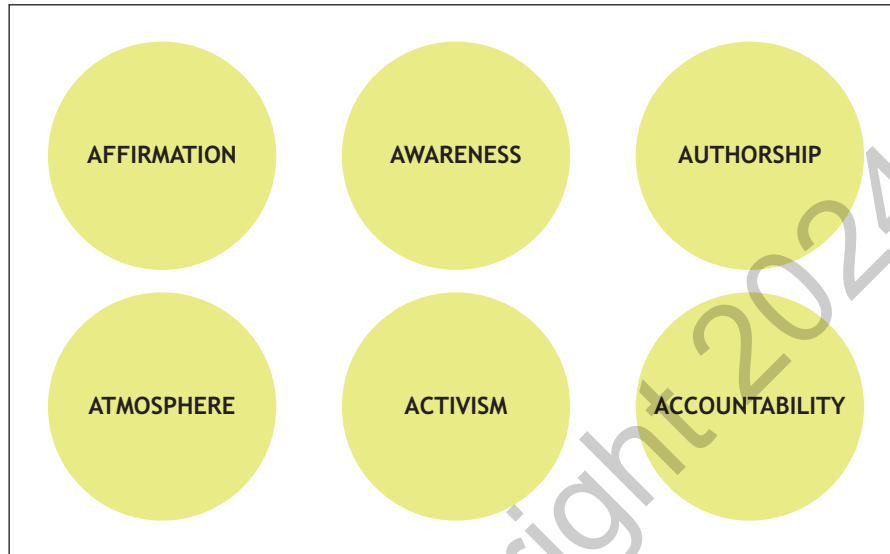
able to make antiracist decisions in their own lives that are a disruption of the status quo, and they can determine how they want to move through the world in ways that promote equity and justice. Educators tend to shy away from this work because of their own discomfort confronting issues of inequities. And they tend to avoid instruction about race and racism, believing that children are too young or too tender for such conversations. However, research disrupts the myth that children are too young to discuss issues related to race and the importance of educators developing the skills needed to facilitate these discussions (Sullivan et al., 2020).

The work of awareness in reading instruction involves raising students' sociopolitical consciousness. Students acquire language and tools to discuss and disrupt injustice (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sealey-Ruiz, 2021). Such teaching makes it possible for students to live their lives from what Dr. Barbara Love (2010) calls “a waking position” in an oppressive society with “awareness and intentionality, rather than on the basis of the socialization to which they have been subjected” (pp. 599, 600).

Antiracist educators work alongside students to develop a “liberatory consciousness” and racial literacy. Love (2010) says, “A liberatory consciousness enables humans to maintain awareness of the dynamics of oppression characterizing society *without giving in to despair and hopelessness about that condition*, to maintain awareness of the role played by each individual in the maintenance of that system *without blaming them for the roles they play*, and at the same time practice intentionality about changing the systems of oppression” (p. 599). Racial literacy development, Sealey-Ruiz (2021) shares, is critical for educators, particularly those teaching in racially diverse contexts. Critical Love, she theorizes, is the foundation of racial literacy development and involves educators working to recognize and reckon with their own biases and racist assumptions, in order to fully and authentically love Black and Brown children as they are.

With Affirmation and Awareness as cornerstone concepts, the six critical lenses I provide build upon this scholarship to support antiracist teaching and learning in reading. Educators can use these lenses to examine curriculum and plan instruction that centers BIPOC students—their lives, their experiences, their communities—and strives toward liberation. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of always beginning with affirmation. When Black and Brown students can only see themselves reflected in the curriculum through the lens of oppression, this is not humanizing. This is not liberation. So it is critical that the work of affirmation is where your work starts in order for BIPOC students to see the fullness of who they are. The remaining lenses do not have to be implemented in any particular order, though I urge you to use each, any, and all of the critical lenses as you develop your antiracist teaching practice.

FIGURE 1.3 Six Critical Lenses



AFFIRMATION

Always begin with affirmation. Simply put, affirmation makes readers feel that they matter, not only in classrooms, but in the world. Identity-inspiring texts make it possible for readers to see themselves reflected in powerful ways. Educators can foster affirmation in students' reading lives by considering: Do the books in their classrooms make children feel seen, valued, cherished, loved, and that they matter? And in what ways do the books accomplish this? It's important to know and understand this, so we can teach into this. Educators can facilitate in ways that help students to recognize this in the books they read and discuss with peers.

AWARENESS

We're living in a time where truth is weaponized. And the truth is not a weapon. The truth is love. The truth is liberation. Educators can help raise students' awareness by considering: In what ways are the books in their classrooms truth-tellers about racism? About White supremacy? About what it means to engage in collective struggle? To labor for freedom together? About what it means to be antiracist? Educators can coach

in ways that help students to understand the meaning of solidarity and what it means to work as a collective in the greatest sense.

AUTHORSHIP

Who writes the story matters. The research around children's publishing led by educators and scholars such as Dr. Sarah Park Dahlen, Edith Campbell, Dr. Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, and Dr. Debbie Reese demonstrates the misrepresentations and distortions that are prevalent in books written by White authors who do not know the Black and Brown people and communities they are writing about. At best, many books can demonstrate a lack of nuance and care. These data reveal the ways Black and Brown people are systematically erased from their own narratives. It's critical that students learn to question when identities do not mirror the characters or people being written about, what work has been done to do so with accuracy and care? Antiracist educators recognize deeply that who authors a text (fiction and nonfiction) significantly matters and utilize reading instruction as opportunities for students to understand this as well.

ATMOSPHERE

Atmosphere relates to the setting and context of the books educators share with students. As a result of doing an audit of my classroom library, I realized that the overwhelming majority of books on my shelves that were about BIPOC characters were historical fiction. This is not to say that historical fiction isn't valuable. It absolutely is! However, if Black and Brown children could only ever see themselves in the past, how could they imagine their place in the world right now or in the future? When thinking about atmosphere, educators consider questions such as: How are Black and Brown people positioned in the books students have access to? What is the context? Are the circumstances around the issue of oppression? Students need access to all kinds of books including contemporary books that speak to their lives right now.

ACTIVISM

A commitment to antiracism is a commitment to action. For some students, their understanding of activism is about the big, bold actions they see from individuals and groups that may be well known through the media. Antiracist educators can

help students understand that the actions students take in their daily lives may seem small, but are mighty. Actions such as building relationships with peers from various racial and cultural identities, taking an inclusive approach in their reading lives, and learning about issues that impact the lives of those who have been marginalized help to expand students' perspectives. Educators invite students to consider what they are learning about people and society in the texts they read. What are they being invited to challenge and change? And how might they do this within and beyond the four walls of the classroom and school?

ACCOUNTABILITY

The work of antiracism relies on evaluating how our words align with our actions. Educators and students consider the implications of what they've learned through reading and work to apply these learnings in ways that benefit the collective. Together, they consider how they will hold themselves accountable for sustaining their new understanding about justice to care for each other and their communities.

ANTIRACIST READING FRAMEWORK

Together, the characteristics and critical lenses work as an **Antiracist Reading Framework** that cultivates and sustains reading instruction and reading practices of students. This framework provides the structure for the following chapters that are organized around each of the five characteristics of antiracist teaching. I model ways to apply the **Antiracist Reading Framework** to a carefully curated collection of mostly picture books about racially and culturally diverse characters and people from various backgrounds. (Because I model with mostly picture books, I have included in the Appendix a list of middle-grade and young adult (YA) books that are examples of wonderful longer fiction and nonfiction books to include in classroom libraries and to center in curriculum and instruction.)

You may be wondering why picture books? First, picture books are for all ages. I repeat: Picture books are for readers of all ages. What I have observed and continue to notice is this—the higher the grade, the fewer (if any) picture books students seem to have access to. Picture books are enjoyable to read; they are exceptional models of craft, structure, and art; and they help readers develop empathy. Further, picture books are excellent to teach with because they can be read in one sitting. Of course, volume and stamina matter in order for students to blossom as strong readers. This involves them reading longer texts. I hope that modeling with picture books can provide insights for

applying the **Antiracist Reading Framework** when teaching with novels and longer nonfiction and informational books that students may be reading independently, in book clubs, or as part of a whole class shared reading experience.

In my work with thousands of educators and caregivers, I am often asked if I can provide a book list—the titles and authors of texts I recommend for the kind of vision I discuss and teach about. Earlier in my career, I obliged. In thinking more about this, I've come to recognize that providing these lists can be problematic. First, lists may give the impression that only the titles on it are *the* books to teach with and include in libraries. There are wonderful new books that are released each year that deserve to be read, loved, and made accessible to children. Second, providing a list can be dangerous. They can reinforce the *collection approach* I discussed in the introduction when these titles are purchased and educators assume that simply having them in the classroom is enough. So it is my goal that the **Antiracist Reading Framework** supports the application of antiracist teaching and also serves as a guide for book selection by educators, caregivers, and students.

You may have the urge to purchase the books referenced for your classroom or to ask a school leader to do so. Lean into that temptation! Even though this book selection is not intended to serve as a finite list, the authors and illustrators highlighted deserve your patronage. These books deserve to be centered in curriculum, read, discussed, and loved by children. However, I discourage the belief that antiracist teaching isn't possible without the specific books featured. Remember, antiracist teaching is not a checklist, and these are not the only books to teach with and make available to students. Book lists can lead to fixed collections instead of living libraries that have the potential to fortify students in myriad ways. With the **Antiracist Reading Framework**, I aim to provide you with a set of transferable skills that make it possible for you to do this work with various books—the ones featured across these pages and beyond.

The pages that follow are not curriculum or lesson plans, although ideas may be developed into this. What follows is insight that I hope helps to sharpen our lenses when selecting, reading, and teaching with books; guidance that supports seeing and doing more with books; and tools that activate our minds and galvanize us to actions that move us closer to an antiracist future. If you are planning to use any of the books I model with, please read them first, prior to using them in instruction. This creates an opportunity for you to both bring your insights and perspectives as well as interrogate the ways you may be responding to a text with biases and assumptions that can cause harm.

The prompts I provide as students read and discuss books are not the *only* prompts that can be used. Consider your learners and the fullness of who they are and what they bring to your classroom as you consider what might spark rich, vibrant conversations. Every text is informed by our own identities, backgrounds, and experiences.

The pathways included are based on discussions I've had with children and their responses that can help you to imagine the possibilities that can occur in your classroom, and they are insights into ways you might further support thinking and discussions. Many of the books I model with could be placed in more than one chapter, as they address more than one characteristic of antiracist teaching. Antiracist teaching is not a binary; it is layered, interconnected, and iterative. The presence of the **Antiracist Reading Framework** serves as a reminder of this. The purpose of the organization of this book is to deepen your understanding about antiracist teaching. I hope you'll consider the implications and applications of this work as you develop an antiracist reading stance.

In a world that often fails to hold fast to a vision of teaching and learning for liberation, I urge educators to be like dandelions. Abundant. Unmovable. Resilient. Refuse to allow anyone to dismiss this work as weeds. Like a dandelion seed, allow a gust of wind to carry you to fertile ground and take root, believing firmly that antiracist teaching is not about uniformity; it's about possibility. There are seeds of hope we can plant everyday through intentional antiracist reading instruction practices.