# The Color of Us by Karen Katz

## Before Reading
Introduce the characters and the problem.

"The Colors of Us is a story about Lena, a little girl who takes a walk around her town and notices the different shades of her friends’ and neighbors’ skin."

## During Reading
Expand vocabulary by pointing to pictures, using gestures to dramatize, and describing:

"Eat me up," Cinnamon, Butterscotch, Pizza parlor, Jewel (bronze and amber), Shade, Spices, Ginger, Chili powder, Laundromat, Tawny tan, delicious, combination

Comment on main character’s thoughts and actions.

- "Brown is Brown.' I think right now Lena doesn't understand that there are different kinds of brown colors. Look at the picture. What do you see that helps you understand what Lena's mom means by, 'There are lots of different shades of brown?"
- Just like Lena said that her skin was the color of cinnamon and her mother's skin was the color of french toast. Lena is comparing her friends' and neighbors' skin colors to other things that are a shade of brown.
- Lena has used many food items that are a shade of brown to make comparisons to her friends' and neighbors' skin tones. Can you think of some other things that are brown that we could use to compare?

## After Reading
Invite explanations, wonder aloud, and ask follow-up questions.

- Why do you think Lena's mom wanted to take her on a walk at the beginning of the story?
- How do you think Lena's mom feels at the end of the story when Lena shows her all of her paintings?
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<td>Recall the characters and the problem.</td>
<td>Expand vocabulary using more verbal explanations: tawny tan, combination</td>
<td>Invite explanations, wonder aloud, and ask follow-up questions.</td>
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<td>“We read The Colors of Us a few days ago. You may remember that Lena’s Mom took her on a walk around the neighborhood. What happened at the beginning of the story that caused her to take Lena on a walk? What did Lena notice as they took their walk?</td>
<td>Comment on and ask follow-up questions about the other characters.</td>
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<td>• Lena’s mom says that she could “eat her up.” What does she mean by that? Can you think of another example of how you might use that phrase? • Lena’s mom tells her that if she mixes the paints in the right combination that she will “have the right brown for a picture of me (Lena).” What does Lena’s mom mean when she says ‘the right brown?’</td>
<td>• Lena and her mom see a lot of different places and people on their walk. Where do you think they live? Why do you think this? Is this the same or different from the type of place where you live?</td>
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<td>Encourage children to recall the problem and solution.</td>
<td>Expand vocabulary Shade, laundromat</td>
<td>Wonder aloud and ask follow-up questions</td>
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<td>“We read The Colors of Us a few days ago. You may remember that Lena’s Mom took her on a walk around the neighborhood. What happened at the beginning of the story that caused her to take Lena on a walk? What did Lena notice as they took their walk?</td>
<td>Guide children to reconstruct the story as you turn the pages.</td>
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<td>Read a few pages and allow the children to reconstruct parts of the story. Occasionally ask questions such as, “What is happening here?” or “What happens next?” that help children recall the events of the story. Encourage children to explain what characters are thinking and feeling.</td>
<td>• Why do you think Lena says, “The colors of us!” at the end of the story? • What if everyone had the same color skin?</td>
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VOCABULARY

“EAT HER UP”
something you might say when someone is very cute or adorable

JEWEL (BRONZE AND AMBER)
a special type of stone many times used to make jewelry

CHILI POWDER
a spice made from red chilies

CINNAMON
a type of spice

SHADE
how light or dark a color is

LAUNDROMAT
a place with coin-operated washers and dryers that people can use to wash and dry their clothing

BUTTERSCOTCH
a sweet treat made from butter and brown sugar

SPICES
something used to flavor food

TAWNY
an orange-brown color

PIZZA PARLOR
another name for a restaurant that serves pizza as its primary food

GINGER
a spice made from a root vegetable

DELICIOUS
tastes very good

COMBINATION
joining together of different parts

SUPPORTING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

• At the beginning of the story, Lena doesn't understand what her mom means when she says there are lots of different shades of brown. What do you do when you don't understand something?
• The pictures of Lena and her friends show them smiling and enjoying some relaxing time in the sunshine. Do you think Lena and her friends get along all the time? What do you do when you have a disagreement with a friend?
• Lena seems excited to show her mom the paintings that she made. How do you think Lena is feeling? When is a time you felt the same way as Lena?
### IDEAS FOR INCORPORATING INTO INTEREST AREAS/OTHER ACTIVITIES

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| -Painting with a variety of colors, including many different shades of skin tones | -Support children in developing more of an understanding of what a laundromat and/or pizza parlor is by adding props into the dramatic play center.  
  - Laundromat-clothing, laundry baskets, empty detergent container, empty dryer sheet box, pretend money to pay, make ‘washers and dryers’ out of large boxes  
  - Pizza Parlor-pizza boxes, paper pizza toppings, menus, pizza pans, pizza cutters, (make a pizza over out of a large box) | -Allow each child to draw a self-portrait with a variety of colors, including a wide variety of skin tone colors. Encourage children to say a sentence about their skin tone (like in the examples in the book). Write each child’s sentence on their self-portrait. |

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<td>-Encourage children to look through child friendly magazines, newspapers, and other pictures. Allow children to practice their scissor skills by cutting out pictures to create a collage of people who have a variety of skin tones.</td>
<td>-Talk with children about the different places that Lena visited on her walk. Encourage children to build their own town to incorporate some of these different places from the story (playground, park, pizza parlor, and laundromat).</td>
<td>-Incorporate some of the different food items into breakfast, lunch, and snack times to give children an opportunity to experience the different flavors (cinnamon, honey, butterscotch, cocoa, toffee). Make sure you are aware of any allergies that children have.</td>
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### SCIENCE | CIRCLE |
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<td>-Experiment with creating different shades of a color by adding different amounts of white to another color. Talk with children about what happens to the color as you add more or less white to it. (When you add a little white the color stays brighter; when you add a lot of white the color gets lighter-fades.)</td>
<td>-Go on a Skin Tone Color hunt. Encourage children to look through the books in the classroom library to find examples of books with people who have different skin tones.</td>
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