Vermont Humanities

Dr. Laura M. Jiménez

@booktoss

Boston University Wheelock College
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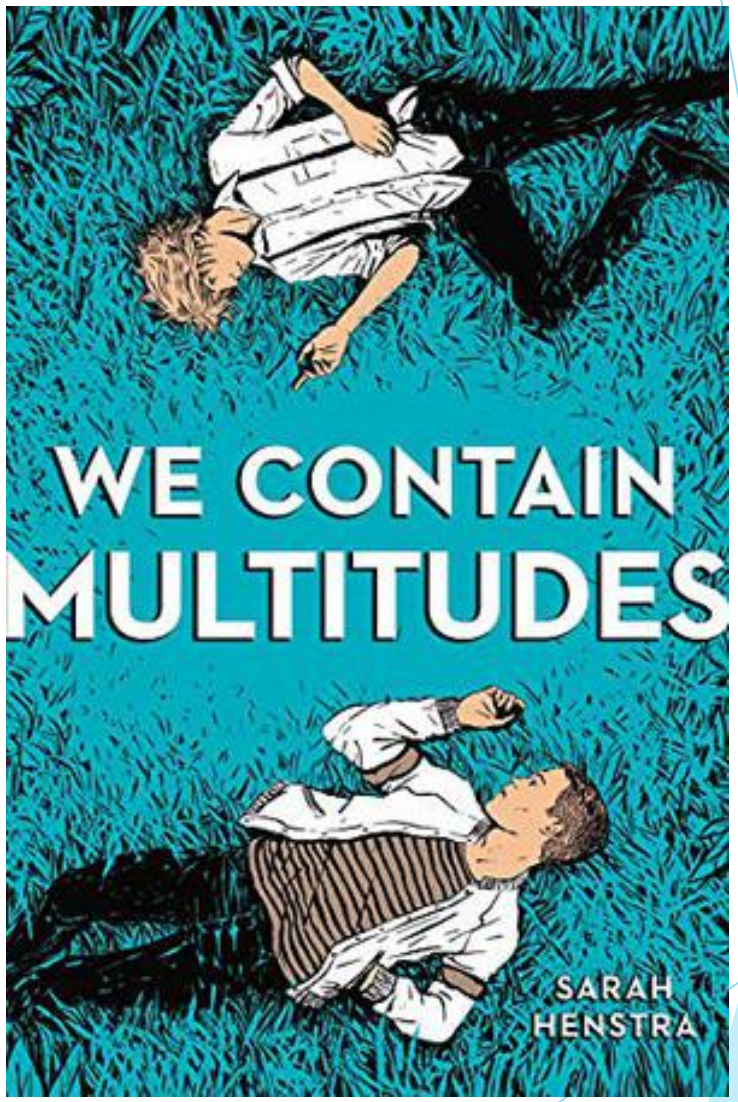

Agenda

- A bit about me
- The state of Children's and YA lit
- Discussion questions
- Discussing *We Contain Multitudes*

Some assumptions

- Racism, and all other forms of oppression are bad for all of us
- Unchallenged and unearned privileges are problematic issues for all of us
- Our intentions are not our actions
- We all have inter-group bias
- We are all racist, sexist, ableist and homophobic because we were all products of our society

Social Justice

The full and equitable participation of people from all social identity groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs.

Bell, L. A., & Adams, M. (2016). Theoretical foundations for social justice education. In *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (pp. 21-44). Routledge.

#OWNVOICES

Corinne Duyvis
@corinneduyvis

#ownvoices, to recommend kidlit about diverse characters written by authors from that same diverse group.

1:55 PM · Sep 6, 2015 · Twitter for Android

Diversity in Children's Books 2015

Percentages of books depicting characters from diverse backgrounds.
Based on the 2015 publishing statistics compiled by the **Cooperative Children's Book Center**, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison:
ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/pcstats.asp

0.9% American Indians/ First Nations

2.4% Latinx

3.3% Asian Pacifics/ Asian Pacific Americans

7.6% African/ African Americans

12.5%* Animals, Trucks, etc.

73.3%** White

* About a quarter of the total children's books published in 2015 were picture books, and about half of those depict non-human characters, like animals & trucks.

** The remainder depict white characters.

Dr. Laura M. Jimenez

Illustration by David Huyck, in consultation with Sarah Park Dahlen & Molly Beth Griffin

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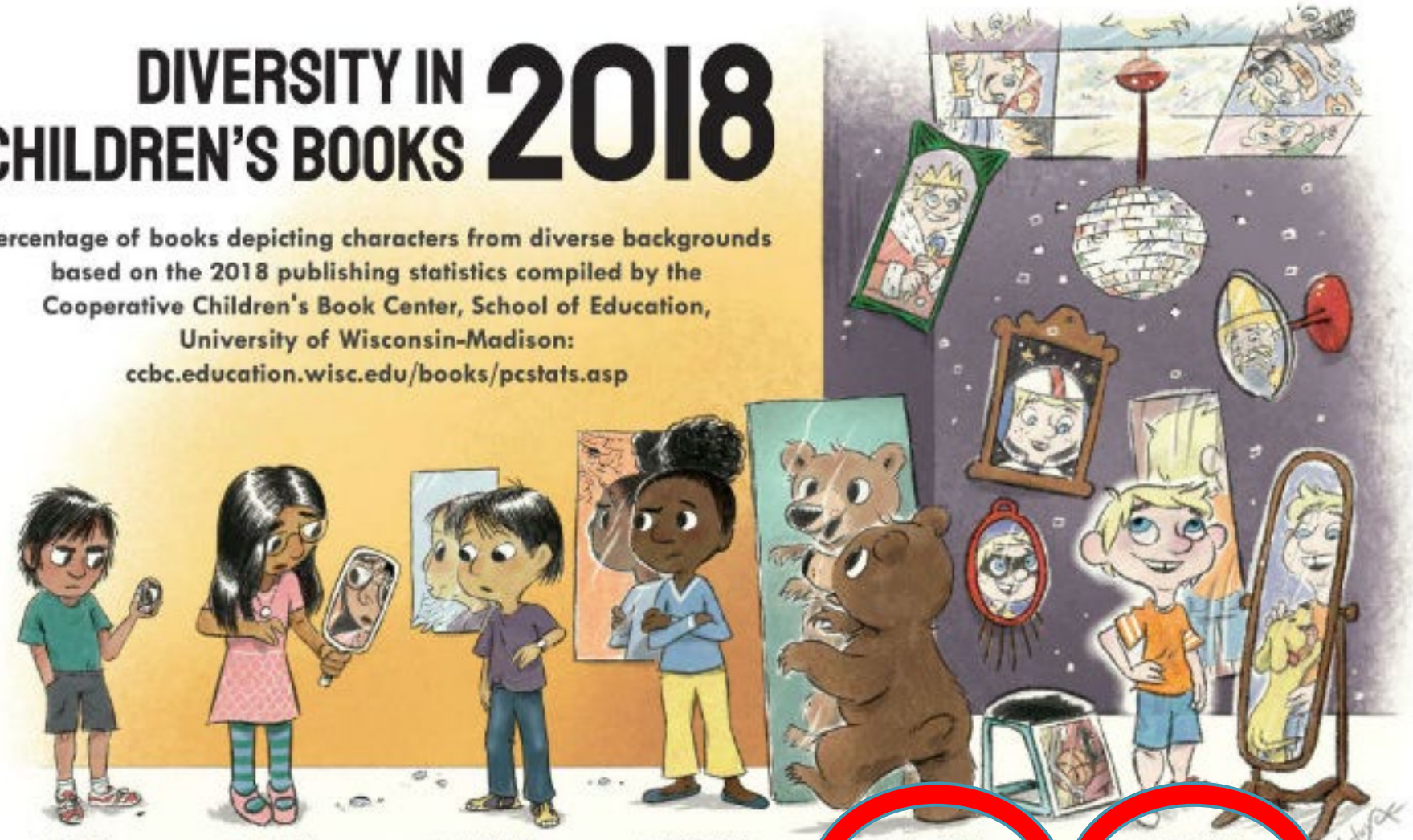
DIVERSITY IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2018

Percentage of books depicting characters from diverse backgrounds based on the 2018 publishing statistics compiled by the Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison: ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/pcstats.asp



23 BOOKS **1%** American Indians/ First Nations

170 BOOKS **5%** Latinx

218 BOOKS **7%** Asian Pacific Islander/Asian Pacific American

301 BOOKS **10%** African/ African American

864 BOOKS **27%** Animals/Other

1,559 BOOKS **50%** White

The CCBC ... edes 3,134 books p... rd. This graphic would not have been possible without the statistics compiled by the CCBC, and the review and feedback we received from Edith Campbell, Molly Beth Griffin, K. T. Horning, Debbie Reese, Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, and Madeline Tyner. Many thanks.

Illustration by David Huyck, in consultation with Sarah Park Dahlen

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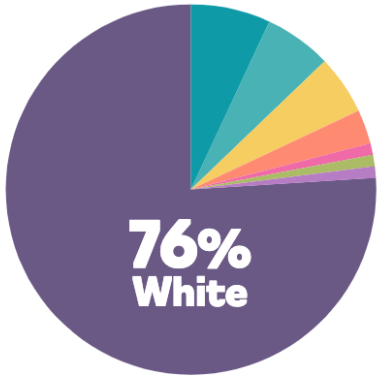
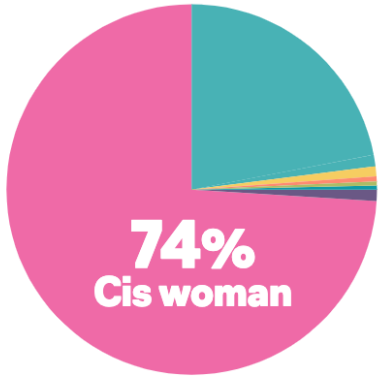
Industry Overall

RACE



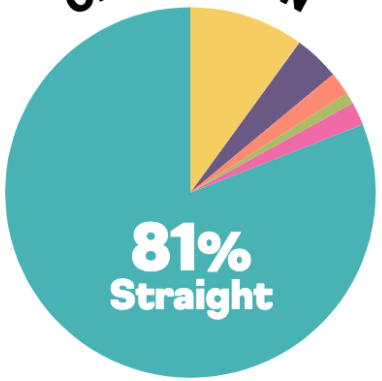
- **76%** White/Caucasian
- **7%** Asian/Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander/ South Asian/ South East Indian
- **6%** Latinx/Latino/Mexican
- **5%** Black/Afro American/ Afro Caribbean
- **3%** Biracial/Multiracial
- **<1%** American Indian/Alaskan Native/ First Nations/Native American
- **<1%** Middle Eastern
- **1%** Other

GENDER



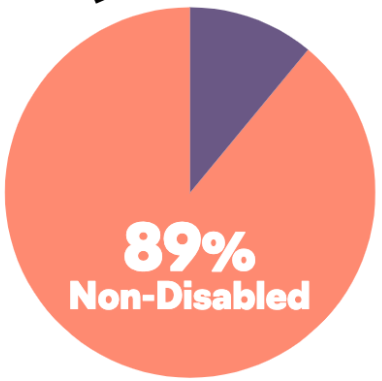
- **74%** Cis woman
- **23%** Cis man
- **1%** Genderfluid/Non-binary/ Genderqueer
- **<1%** Trans man
- **<1%** Trans woman
- **<1%** Intersex
- **1%** Other

ORIENTATION



- **81%** Straight/Heterosexual
- **10%** Bisexual/Pansexual
- **4%** Gay
- **2%** Lesbian
- **1%** Asexual
- **2%** Other

DISABILITY

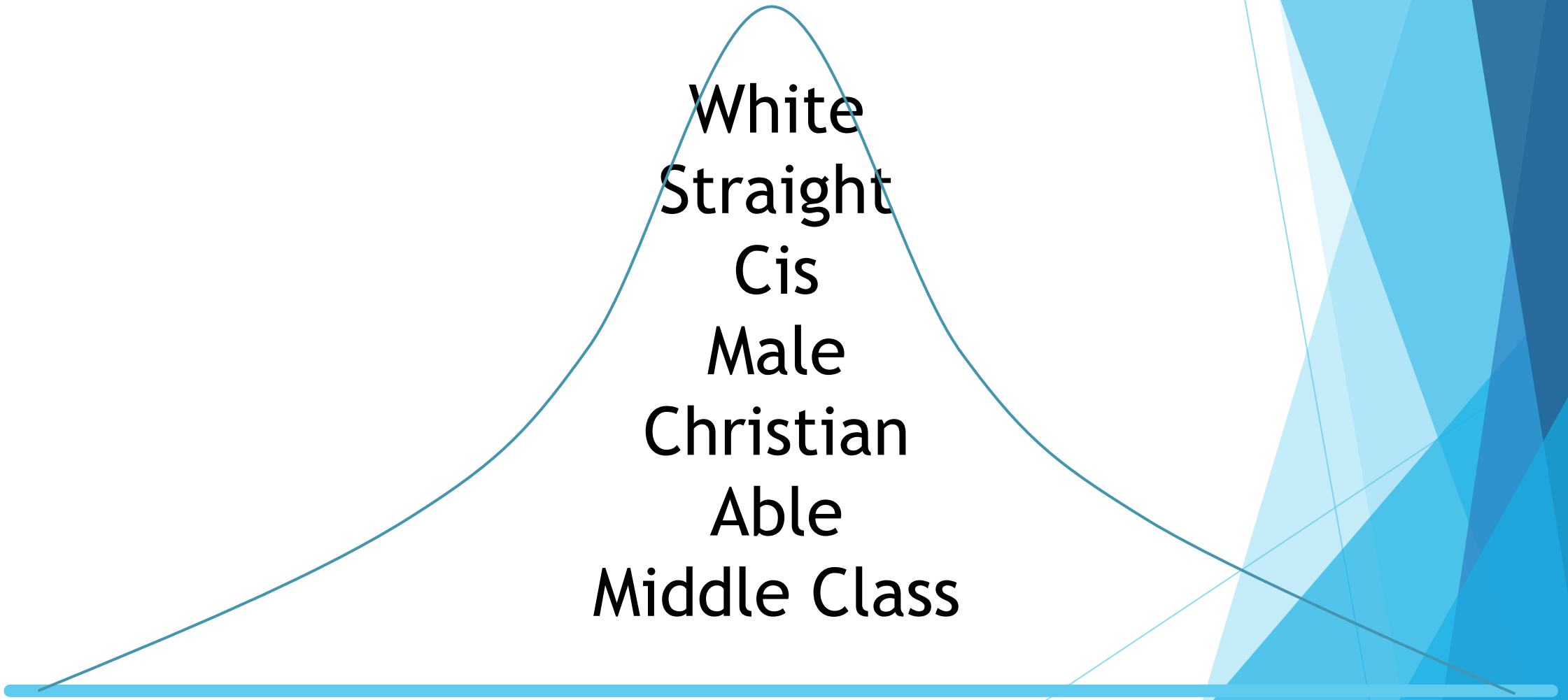


- **89%** No
- **11%** Yes

LEE & LOW BOOKS
ABOUT EVERYONE • FOR EVERYONE

Diversity in Publishing 2019
Diversity Baseline Survey 2.0
by Lee & Low Books
blog.leeandlow.com

Assumed Normative Standard for U.S.



White People Are NOT the Problem

Whiteness is the problem

- Whiteness is the belief that unearned privilege is the normed measure against which everything else is compared.
- Systems of oppression rely on a normed reference – White, straight, able, middle-class, male …

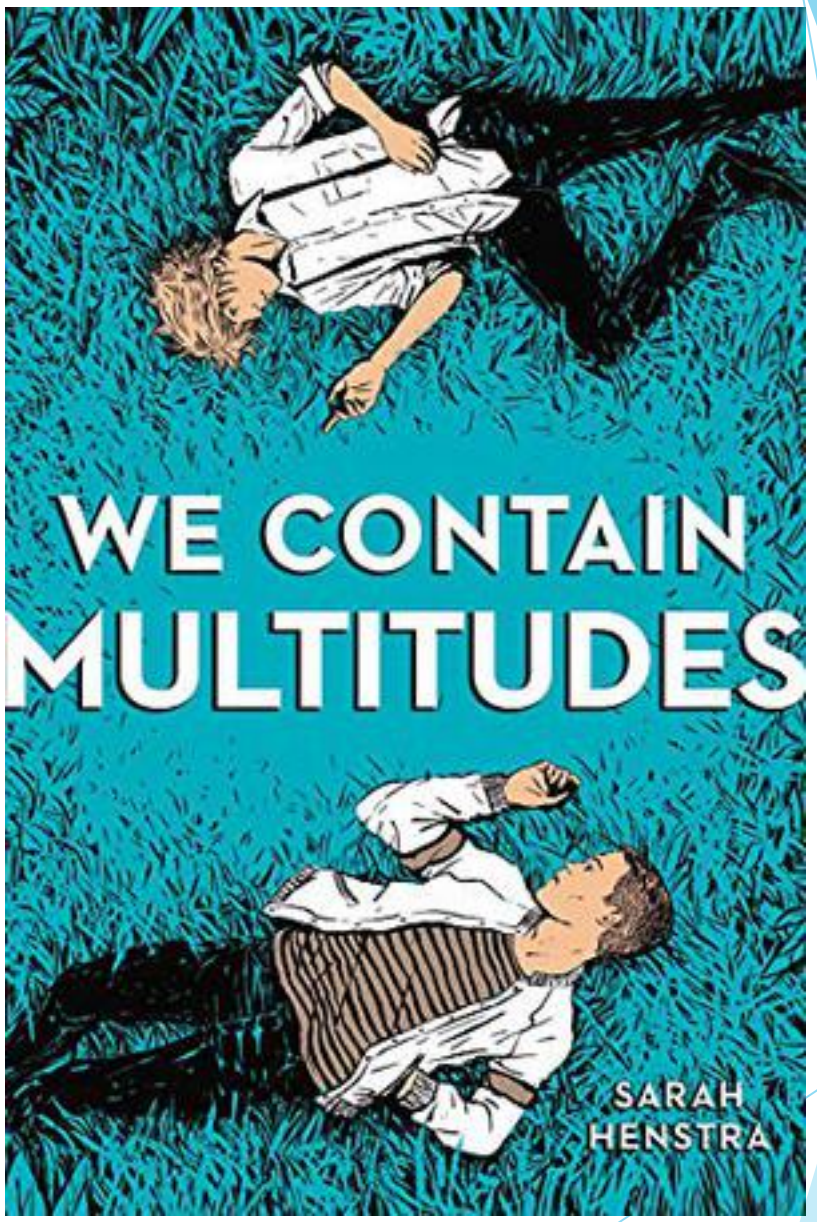
If no one is to blame …

- Waiting for readers to be “ready” protects their privilege
- Cross cultural reading and interpretation is hard, stressful, and takes time
- Protecting Privilege *Perpetuates Privilege*

Discussion Questions

- Reading check
- Understanding check
- Interpretation …

- Epistolary Novels
  - The Color Purple
  - Speak
  - Perks of being a Wallflower
  - World War Z
  - Code Name Verity
  - Dear Rachel Maddow
  - Gabi, Girl in Pieces
  - Everything, Everything



Discussion Questions to Get Talking

- What makes epistolary work?
- What about this book works?
- What doesn't work?
- What challenged you?
- If you were going to cast the movie who would play … ?