

# **THE CUTEST FACE** Discussion Questions

These questions have been designed for students ranging from Kindergarten to the Grade 8 level, successively.

- 1** Do you remember your photo day? Did you smile? (*Comprehension Strategies*)
- 2** Which kids in the story do you think would be friends with each other? Why do you think that? (*Making Inferences/ Interpreting Texts*)
- 3** What differences and similarities do you notice about the children in the book? (*Analysing Texts*)
- 4** How is the class in the story similar to your class in real life? (*Comprehension Strategies*)
- 5** What do you wonder about any of the characters after hearing this story? (*Responding To and Evaluating Texts*)
- 6** In the story, Kiyah is a good artist, Reem wears henna on her hands, and Jean-Pierre can speak two languages. What's something unique about you? What do you notice that is unique about others in your class? (*Extending Understanding*)
- 7** Identify the problem and solution in the story. (*Demonstrating Understanding*)
- 8** Identify the main idea in the story. (*Demonstrating Understanding*)
- 9** What would you ask one of the characters if you met him/her in real life? (*Comprehension Strategies*)
- 10** Amrinder was welcomed by his new classmates when he changed schools. Imagine you had to go to a new school. What would you be feeling before you got there? How would you want others to treat you as a new student? (*Extending Understanding*)
- 11** All the kids have different abilities and come from different backgrounds. How could this class use their diversity to their advantage when working together? (*Making Inferences/ Interpreting Texts*)

**12** The author of *The Cutest Face* is also a teacher in real life. She wrote this story after being inspired by her multicultural, diverse students. Are there any characters that remind you of anyone you know, or even of yourself? How?  
(*Responding To and Evaluating Texts*)

**13** Sometimes people prejudice others based on the way they look. How does the writing on each page, describing something about each student, help you to have a deeper understanding of who they are? (*Analysing Texts*)

**14** Callum originally lived in the United Kingdom. Does anyone have a similar personal story of immigrating to Canada? Explain and share what that was like.  
(*Comprehension Strategies*)

**15** How is the message of diversity and inclusion communicated in the story?  
(*Analysing Texts*)

**16** In your own words, why is it important to celebrate our diversity?  
(*Making Inferences/ Interpreting Texts*)

**17** The story is written from a multicultural perspective. How would this perspective be altered if the characters in the story only represented one or two cultural groups?  
(*Point of View*)

**18** The teacher uses the word "cute" in a way that refers to more than just outer appearance. How is this shown in the text?  
(*Making Inferences/ Interpreting Texts*)

**19** How does the media (what we see on TV, in movies, on the internet, in advertisements) contribute to prejudice between people? ? (*Extending Understanding*)

**20** What other books, movies or TV shows have similar messages to *The Cutest Face*? Why do you think it's important that kids hear stories with messages about diversity?  
(*Responding To and Evaluating Texts*)

**21** Even though the teacher is the narrator of the story, the teacher is intentionally not shown on any of the pages. Explain why you think the author chose not to show what the teacher looks like.  
(*Making Inferences/ Interpreting Texts*)

These words and their definitions have been designed for students ranging from Kindergarten to the Grade 8 level, successively.

**Portrait** An artistic picture showing someone's face, head and shoulders  
"The Cutest Face *showcases original oil portraits by the author.*"

**Unique** The only one of its kind; unlike anything else; special  
"With so many unique students, how could a teacher like me pick one cute face over another?"

**Diversity** A range of different things; variety  
"The story shows a celebration of diversity and equity within their learning community."

**Equity** Being fair and impartial  
"The story shows a celebration of diversity and equity within their learning community."

**Multicultural** Being made up of several cultural groups  
"The author wrote this story after being inspired by her multicultural students."

**Culture** The attitudes and behaviour of a particular social group  
"Today classrooms across the country are made up of people from diverse cultures."

**Immigrate** To come to live in a foreign country  
"Does anyone have a similar personal story of having to immigrate to Canada?"

**Prejudge** To form a judgment without having adequate information  
"Sometimes people prejudge others based on the way they look."

**Prejudice** Preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or facts  
"How does the media contribute to prejudice between people?"

**Inclusion** A person or thing that is included in a larger group  
"How is the message of diversity and inclusion communicated in the story?"

**Microcosm** A miniature version of a community having the same characteristics or features of its much larger version  
"Today classrooms across the country are culturally diverse microcosms."

**Lesson Plan:** Making Inferences & Learning with Technology

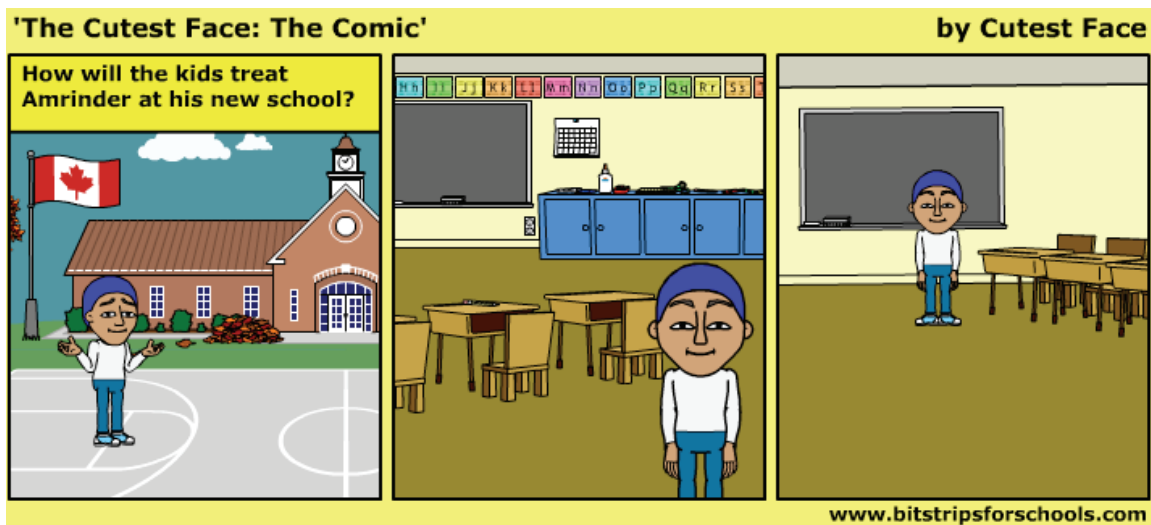
**Grades:** 3 – 8

**Curriculum Links:** Reading, writing, oral/visual, visual art, character education, diversity, equity, inclusion, citizenship

**Instructions:**

Using the Ministry licensed software, *Bitstrips for Schools* ([www.bitstripsforschools.com](http://www.bitstripsforschools.com)), teachers will have access to the comic template shown below, featuring a character from *The Cutest Face*. It can be found under the 'Shared Activities' menu, titled "**The Cutest Face-Extension.**"

In this activity, students are to envision this character off the page and inside the realm of their own imaginations. They are prompted to use principles of citizenship to present a positive story of Amrinder's first day at a new school. The software is easily edited and provides access to original or pre-made avatars, props and speech bubbles so that students can click their way to creating a scene extension stemming from the story.



As educators in the 2010's, we widely recognize the need for our classrooms and curriculum to reflect the diversity of Canadian society. *The Cutest Face* aims to meet the goals outlined in the ETFO document, *Respecting Cultures and Honouring Differences* (2002) of modeling socially acceptable responses to a wide variety of situations in school, modeling skills to build positive relationships and citizenship, and emphasizing the variety of characteristics, skills, competencies, qualities and talents of others. It was written in keeping with province-wide initiatives and current educational research on children's literature, equity studies, and sociology.

Please read below for a synopsis of this research, from key Canadian scholars in the field.

"Literacy is about more than reading or writing – it is about how we communicate in society. It is about social practices and relationships, about knowledge, language and culture."

**- UNESCO, *Statement for the United Nations Literacy Decade, 2003–2012***

"We know that when students see themselves reflected in their studies, they are more likely to stay engaged and find school relevant."

**- Ontario's *Equity & Inclusive Education Strategy (2009, p. 15)***

"Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone."

**- George Sefa Dei (2006)**

"[Ontario's] equity and inclusive education strategy call for . . . each school to create and support a positive school climate that fosters and promotes equity, inclusive education, and diversity. The strategy recognizes our province's growing diversity as a strength."

**- Ontario's *Equity & Inclusive Education Strategy (2009, p. 11)***

"Language is a fundamental element of identity and culture. As students read and reflect on a rich variety of literary, informational, and media texts, they develop a deeper understanding of themselves and others and of the world around them. If they see themselves and others in the texts they read and the oral and media works they engage in, they are able to feel that the works are genuinely for and about them and they come to appreciate the nature and value of a diverse, multicultural society."

**- Ontario *Curriculum Grades 1-8 Language (2006)***

"Equity and inclusive education is a foundation of excellence... (and) promotes a sense of belonging."

**- Ontario's Equity & Inclusive Education Strategy (2009, p. 11)**

"[We must] support positive learning environments so that all students can feel engaged in and empowered by what they are learning, supported by the teachers and staff from whom they are learning, and welcomed in the environment in which they are learning."

**- Ontario's Equity & Inclusive Education Strategy (2009, p. 12)**

"We need to embark upon a radical inquiry of social difference that explores how it shapes our ways of seeing, acting and knowing the world. In the current transnational/global contexts, we must use the power of human imagination to propose alternatives that are informed by how people come to know, understand and experience themselves as members of a community and as citizens of a nation/state."

**- George Sefa Dei (2005)**

"There is an increasing body of research showing that students who feel connected to school – to teachers, to other students, and to the school itself – do better academically."

**- Ontario's Equity & Inclusive Education Strategy (2009, p. 12)**

"Reading activities should expose students to materials that reflect the diversity of Canadian and world cultures."

**- Ontario Curriculum Grades 1-8 Language (2006)**

"Antidiscrimination education encourages students to think critically about themselves and others in the world around them in order to promote fairness, healthy relationships, and active, responsible citizenship... It promotes a school climate that encourages all students to work to high standards, affirms the worth of all students, and helps students strengthen their sense of identity and develop a positive self-image."

**- Ontario Curriculum Grades 1-8 Language (2006)**

"Learning resources that reflect the broad range of students' interests, backgrounds, cultures, and experiences are an important aspect of an inclusive language program. In such a program ... teachers routinely use materials that reflect the diversity of Canadian and world cultures."

**- Ontario Curriculum Grades 1-8 Language (2006)**

"In the context of antidiscrimination, critical literacy involves asking questions and challenging the status quo, and leads students to look at issues of power and justice in society. The language program empowers students by enabling them to express themselves and to speak out about issues that strongly affect them."

**- Ontario Curriculum Grades 1-8 Language (2006)**