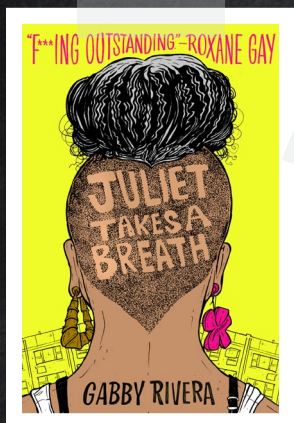
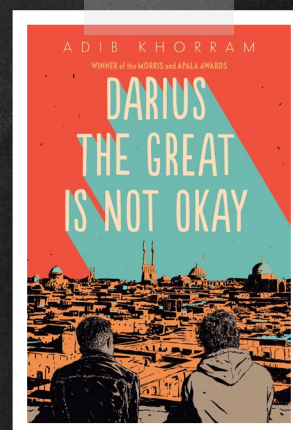


**#DISRUPTTEXTS**

# IN YOUR CLASSROOM WITH THESE 8 TEXTS!



In partnership with  
#DisruptTexts,  
learning guides for  
eight individual texts and how they align  
to the #DisruptTexts pillars!





DEAR EDUCATOR,

We are honored to partner up with #DisruptTexts to bring you this resource to help you bring equity to your classroom or library! These are, by no means, the only eight texts to use; but we hope they provide a scaffolding to bring change and choice for your students.

SINCERELY,

*Penguin Young Readers School + Library Marketing*



## WHAT IS #DISRUPTTEXTS?

Disrupt Texts is a crowdsourced, grass roots effort by teachers for teachers to challenge the traditional canon in order to create a more inclusive, representative, and equitable language arts curriculum that our students deserve. Co-founded by Tricia Ebarvia, Lorena Germán, Dr. Kimberly N. Parker, and Julia Torres, #DisruptTexts's mission to aid and develop teachers committed to antiracist/anti-bias teaching pedagogy and practices.

There are four core principles to #DisruptTexts:

1. Continuously interrogate our own biases and how they inform our thinking.

As teachers, we have been socialized in certain values, attitudes, and beliefs that inform the way we read, interpret, and teach texts, and the way we interact with our students. Ask: How are my own biases affecting the way I'm teaching this text and engaging with my students?

2. Center Black, Indigenous, and voices of color in literature.

Literature study in U.S. classrooms has largely focused on the experiences of white- (and male-) dominated society, as perpetuated through a traditional, Euro-centric canon. Ask: What voices—authors or characters—are marginalized or missing in our study? How are these perspectives authentic to the lived experiences of communities of color?



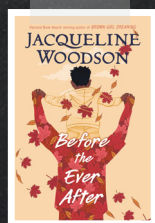
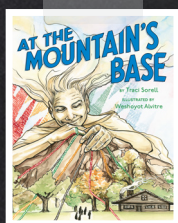
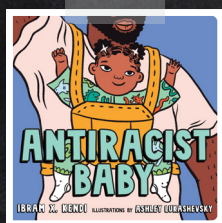
### 3. Apply a critical literacy lens to our teaching practices.

While text-dependent analysis and close reading are important skills for students to develop, teachers should also support students in asking questions about the way that such texts are constructed. Ask: How does this text support or challenge issues of representation, fairness, or justice? How does this text perpetuate or subvert dominant power dynamics and ideologies? And how can we ask students to wrestle with these tensions?

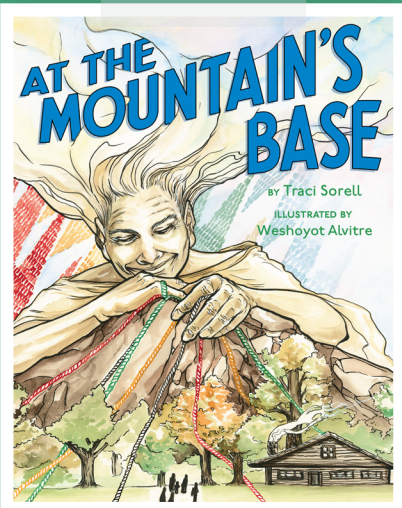
### 4. Work in community with other antiracist educators, especially Black, Indigenous, and other educators of color.

To disrupt and transform curriculum and instruction requires working with other educators who can challenge and work with us as antiracist educators. Ask: How can we collaborate to identify, revise, or create instructional resources (like this guide) that can center and do justice to the experiences of historically marginalized communities?

Each principle stands for actions that are culturally sustaining and antiracist. Through each principle, teachers aim to offer a curriculum that is restorative, inclusive, and therefore works toward healing identities and communities. As you read this guide, you'll see how each of these principles informs the approach recommended to teach *At the Mountain's Base*.







# AT THE MOUNTAIN'S BASE

by Traci Sorell and Wescheyot Alvitre

## ABOUT THE BOOK

A family, separated by duty and distance, waits for a loved one to return home in this lyrical picture book celebrating the bonds of a Cherokee family and the bravery of history-making women pilots.

At the mountain's base sits a cabin under an old hickory tree. And in that cabin lives a family — loving, weaving, cooking, and singing. The strength in their song sustains them through trials on the ground and in the sky, as they wait for their loved one, a pilot, to return from war.

With an author's note that pays homage to the true history of Native American U.S. service members like WWII pilot Ola Mildred "Millie" Rexroat, this is a story that reveals the roots that ground us, the dreams that help us soar, and the people and traditions that hold us up.

## Considerations for Teachers and Students

### CONSIDERATIONS AROUND RACIAL IDENTITY

This book by an Indigenous writer and illustrated by an Indigenous artist has a powerful message about family and sacrifice. In order to fully grasp the depth of what Sorell is trying to convey, it is important for educators to have an understanding of Indigenous history in the United States. While there are many Native Nations with different histories, there are many parallels. Most nations' land was stolen by the U.S. government. Most Nations' ancestors were brutally attacked and killed. Historically and systematically their voices have been erased from U.S. curricula and vilified when present. The power of Sorell writing this book from a point of view of grace, sacrifice, and honor is, therefore, an important perspective that must be cherished in classrooms and taught with care.



## Considerations for Teachers and Students (cont.)

Teachers should do a study of Indigenous identity, particularly, the Cherokee Nation. Additionally, they should be ready to discuss race and racism, as well as oppression in the case that questions arise or comments are shared by students. Making sure to tell the pain present in the story is important, but also teachers should focus on the strength of the characters, the power of their sacrifices, and the beauty of their unity in spite of their challenges. To present them as defeated and conquered (Tuck) is to represent them through a white gaze (Morrison). Therefore, celebrating the beauty featured in the story is the best way to celebrate the work Sorell has done and the voices she's presented us with.

The U.S. canons are exclusive. Not only do they exclude many voices, including women in general, they are intentionally exclusive of the voices of BIPOC. This reality is especially harmful in books that are themselves racist and present characters in problematic ways. We encourage that those books be replaced with better, more restorative, and truthful books. *At the Mountain's Base* represents a marginalized point of view widely excluded from the U.S. classrooms: Indigenous women. It is imperative that we teach this text on its own merit. There is a rich analysis that can be elicited from Sorell's words and deep conversations that teachers can explore during a study of this book. We encourage educators to consider placing this book as a core text in their curriculum.

Additionally, before starting *At the Mountain's Base* we recommend educators begin by reading for themselves the Author's Note in the back of the book. It will offer some context for comprehension and offer a purpose that will enable deep appreciation. Once read, we then recommend completing exercises with students that unearth some of their biases about pilots. Most students will share about male pilots and not even consider that women can be pilots. Once those conversations are had, it would be a great opening to read this book together.



Illustrations by Weshoyot Alvirre



## Key Concepts and Vocabulary

These are words all featured in the book or present in ideas. Depending on the grade and ability level of your students, you may want to consider one of the following approaches to exploring vocabulary with them.

1. Indigenous	5. Simmers	9. Demanding	13. Pleading
2. Matriarch	6. Savory	10. Battle	14. Beneath
3. Patriarch	7. Tending	11. Soars	15. Huddles
4. Weaving	8. Within	12. Defending	

## CONCEPTS

The first two words, “Indigenous” and “Matriarch,” are going to be very important to define and discuss with readers. The first word will explain and help students understand elements of the culture of the characters in the story. It also opens the door for conversations about Indigeneity to be present in the classroom. You may need to teach the phonics of the word, but most certainly teach the ideas of the word as well. Here are some questions to guide your preparation:

- What does the word “Indigenous” mean?
- What is the difference between citizens of Native Nations and other people born in the United States of America? (Answer: Citizens of Native Nations are dual citizens—of their tribe first and second of the United States since Native Nations preexisted the formation of the United States of America.)
- What are the names of Native Nations from the area where you live? There are over 570 Native Nations within the U.S. borders. How many can you name? Go to <https://native-land.ca/> for more!

The book also offers a great opportunity to discuss and understand the idea of a matriarch. As the word above, it impacts their understanding of cultures and societies. Your goal is not to invite them to choose a patriarchy or a matriarchy, but simply to help them know that these two social structures exist. Here are some questions to guide your preparation:

- What is a matriarchy?
- What is a patriarchy?
- Where in the book do we see that this home may be an example of a matriarchal family?



Illustrations by Westhoyot Alvitre



# VOCABULARY

## PRE-READING:

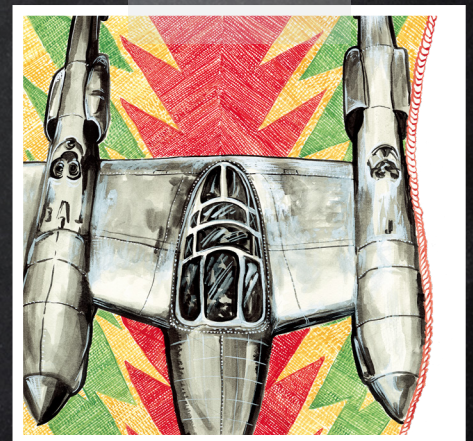
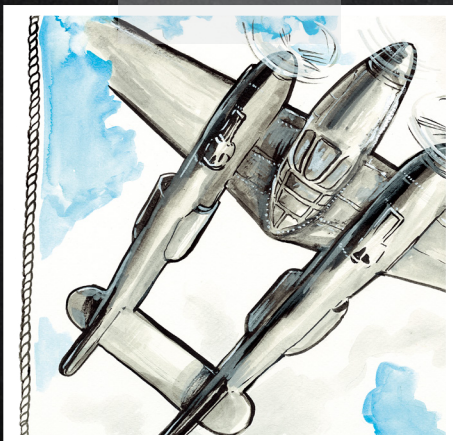
Spend time discussing and explaining the selected words before you begin. You can do so by having students work in pairs and guess meanings, then through discussion with you, determine a definition. They can share their learning with peers and together, you add them to your word wall. Make sure to point them out when you encounter them as you read.

## DURING READING:

As you read the pages, you pause and have students take notes or jot down the words they don't know. Make sure you also point them to the words from the list above if some are unknown to them. This strategy helps them notice words as they're reading and you can offer them lessons in using context clues to make meaning.

## POST READING:

After completing the book, you can gather with students and, in partners, they can go back into the book and either select words they want to learn more about, or you can assign words from the list above. Students can then use the book as well as research in a dictionary to learn what the words mean. Together they can present their learning to the class and add the words to the word wall, if you have one.





## Themes

Although the book is short, there is much that can be elicited from Sorell's work. The following are possible themes to consider when teaching this book.

*Family makes a home.*

- Explore how a home is a home because of the people that live there. Sometimes that consists of blood relatives and other times it's a collection of people who call themselves family. Talk about how the family in this book is bound together.
- Consider why this story focuses on intergenerational relationships between a grandmother and her grandchildren?

*Women pilots are important in society.*

- Spend time studying the Author's Note with students after they've read the story. Learn about Ola Mildred "Millie" Rexroat through research and subsequent discussion. Invite students to share what they've learned and even create crafts about the pilots.

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## Discussion Questions

Building thoughtful discussions around the subject presented by the book is important. Below are discussion questions you can ask students based on big ideas explored in the story.

*Family:* You can use this text to explore all types of families and the ways they interact. You can ask students the questions below.

- What makes families unique?
- How do some families differ from others?
- How does your family differ from the one in the book? How is it similar?

*War:* While this is a heavy and challenging topic, honesty with students goes a long way. They will want to know why the woman pilot is flying the plane and questions about war may come up, especially when you read the Author's Note. Therefore, some questions you can use to guide that conversation are below.

- Why do citizens of the Cherokee Nation and other Native Nations serve at higher rates than other people for their percentage of the United States population?
- What do you notice about the pilot's clothing? Why do you think safety is important?
- Why do countries go to war? What do you think about war?



## Discussion Questions (cont.)

- What are some important historical wars you have heard of? How did the war end?

*Love:* Paired with Matt de la Peña's *LOVE*, this text can be used to explore the way we express love. Invite students to think about how love is expressed in the book, but also in their own lives.

- How does the grandmother express her love for the granddaughter she misses?
- How do the rest of the women, and the young girl, express their love for the grandma?
- How does the pilot use her service to the country as an expression of love?



Illustrations by Wesloyot Alvitre

## Lesson Ideas

Finding lessons to teach from short picture books can be challenging, but Sorell has written a rich text that opens the door for much thinking and discussing. The following are ideas present in the book that could drive lessons for interdisciplinary learning and/or critical study.

### PILOTS & PLANES

Use this book to engage in an interdisciplinary study of flying, planes, and pilots. Spend time learning about planes and aerodynamics in a fun way. You can even make paper airplanes. Also, consider learning about how to be a pilot as well as safety precautions pilots must take in order to fly planes.

### MOUNTAINS

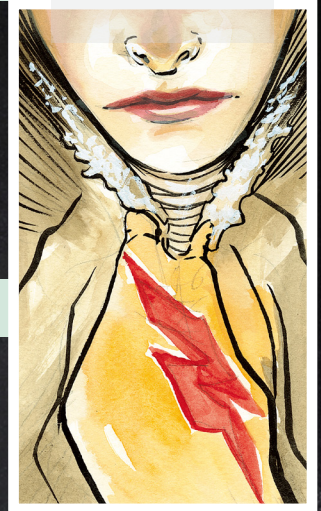
Use this book to do a geography study of mountains across the United States. What do the different mountain locations look like? Do some digital research and find pictures of homes, like cabins, in mountainous areas. Invite students to draw mountains and/or mountain settings.



## Lesson Ideas (cont.)

### HOMES

Invite students into a conversation about different types of homes. They can draw the home they live in and explore different types of structures from all around the world. They can also discuss how geography and setting determine the type of home they live in. Consider [this lesson](#) already available online.



### WEAVING

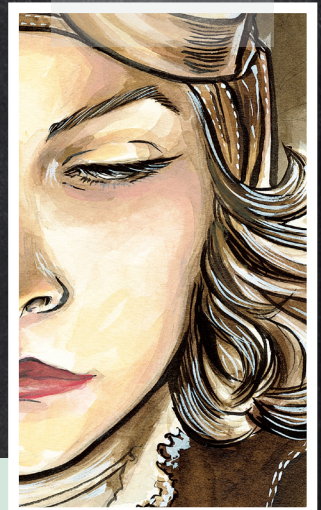
After getting some yarn and learning about some basic weaving techniques, offer students the chance to weave. Use a simple weaving technique to have open conversations about any topic of their choice. Talk about hobbies students have and allow them to see how using their hands can be a source of calm that can lead to focus. Help them understand how the grandma uses weaving to feel peace, stay calm, and focus on the arrival of her pilot daughter.

#### **Resources for Cherokee finger weaving:**

[OSIYO TV \(Cherokee Nation news program\) feature on Karen Berry, Cherokee Nation finger weaver](#)

[Western Carolina University video of Karen George, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians](#)

[Danielle Culp, Cherokee Nation finger weaver](#)



### CHEROKEE NATION

Traci Sorell is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation. Lead students in a research project about Cherokee people, learning about their history and location. Help them identify their land on a map and invite them to trace their lived area as well. Consider teaching students some Cherokee traditions, values, and stories, either through supplementary books/texts or by finding videos online.

#### **Resources:**

[Cherokee Nation \(government website\)](#)

[Cherokee Phoenix newspaper \(independent newspaper\):](#)

[OSIYO TV, Voices of the Cherokee People](#)

[Cherokee Nation \(cultural tourism website\)](#)



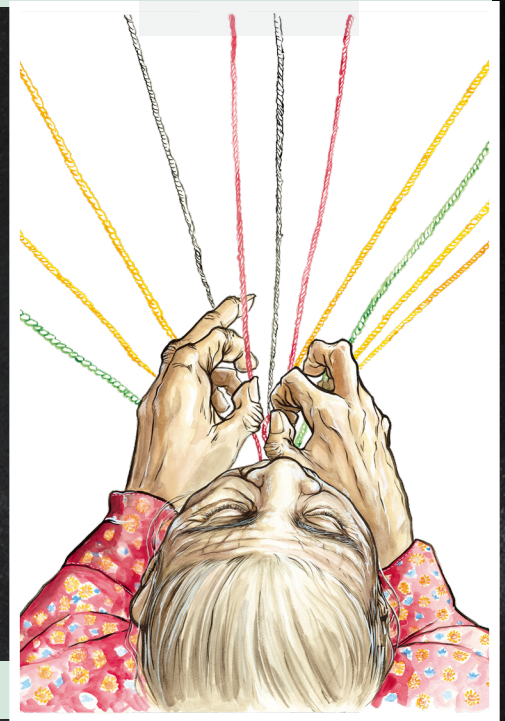


## Lesson Ideas (cont.)

### CABINS & OVENS

Revisit the page where the book displays the oven in the cabin. While the book is set in World War II (1940s), there are Cherokee and other Indigenous people that still live in cabins and cook on wood stoves today, although not as many as back then. Help students learn about cabins and ovens. Help them understand how they function and keep rooms warm. You can also expand your study to include chimneys and fireplaces.

Picture books are often considered to be appropriate only for early childhood students. While this Teaching Guide focuses on lessons for the early childhood classroom, there are many ways to use this picture book with older students.



Illustrations by Meshoyot Alvitre

### POETRY

*At the Mountain's Base* is a circular poem because the story ends where it begins. Tell a story through your own circular poem. Type up this text, create a mindmap and craft your own poem story next to this one.

### UPPER ELEMENTARY

This group includes second through fifth grades, and one way to use this book with that age group is to treat it as a core text that you build a unit around with supplementary texts. For example, your unit might be around women pilots or women who defied stereotypes. After reading and discussing the book using ideas and lessons described above, students can work on learning about Ola Mildred Rexroat, Amelia Earhart, and Bessie Coleman, as well as other important history makers. All three of those women were pilots (Hazel Ying Lee and Maggie Gee (both Chinese American) as well as Verneda Rodriguez and Frances Dias (Latinx) were also POC WASP pilots. No Black women pilots were allowed to join, although they did try out. Millie was the only Native pilot). The goal in such a unit would be to study lesser-known people in history, focus on people who defied stereotypes, and welcome marginalized voices into the classroom. One way to work in community is to welcome a BIPOC and/or antiracist art teacher. They can offer your students an understanding of Indigenous artwork as featured by the weaving in the book. Another idea might be to welcome a BIPOC and/or antiracist pilot who can speak to the dangers experienced by pilots and help students understand the risk the pilot character was making.



## Lesson Ideas (cont.)

### MIDDLE SCHOOL

This group includes sixth through eighth grades, one way to use this book is to invite students into a deep study of gender-based social expectations. You can launch your study by helping them have conversations about what they think society expects of girls/women. They can then talk about the way the pilot in the book might defy those expectations by doing what she believes is right for herself and her country. The rest of the unit can include studying stories of individuals in history that modeled these behaviors. Additionally, students can also learn about how patriarchy is not the only way to organize a society as evidenced by the Cherokee Nation and many other Native Nations including those around them, such as the Muscogee, Seminole, Choctaw, and Chickasaw. A child's clan came through their mother, thus defining their responsibilities to others around them. Women owned the homes and agricultural lands, too. The Cherokee Nation took care to educate both boys and girls, and in these ways, too, they offer students a vision of other ways of thinking about society. This is how we decolonize our lessons and learnings and offer young people a new, more inclusive lens that expands their national and world views. Learners can demonstrate their new understandings by writing their own children's book, narrative essay, or oral presentation where they talk about the skills explored in the unit.

### HIGH SCHOOL

This group includes ninth through twelfth grades, and similarly to the other groups, the book can be a tool for learning about Indigenous women or voices and you can start with this book that might function as an accessible entry point for all students. After reading the book, the group dialogue might include discussion about why Indigenous voices might be widely excluded from U.S. classrooms. You could incorporate research and statistics to show what voices/books are included and how Indigenous ones are not. You can reach out to a social studies or history teacher and welcome them to your study to help students understand from a historical perspective. You can also include excerpts from *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States for Young People* adapted by Jean Mendoza and Debbie Reese to demonstrate some of the history experienced by different Indigenous nations, particularly the ones the author and illustrators are citizens of. This book can be a powerful entry point into helping them understand the sacrifices Indigenous people have been making in the US since its inception as well as welcoming an often marginalized perspective.



## Journal Prompts

Students will find moments in the story that catch their attention and/or they can relate to. Welcoming some time for them to reflect as they're reading, or after they've read, is a good metacognitive skill for them to develop. They can think about how the story is impacting them, or it can be a time to make direct connections between themselves and a character. Invite them to journal and process what they're reading.

Ask students to answer the following prompts in their notebooks:

- What does your family at home look like? What people does it include? How is it similar to the family in the book? How is it different?
- As you read, did you notice the emotions of the characters? If so, how do you think they feel and why? How would you feel if you were in their shoes?
- The pilot in this book is probably a hero to her family. Who is your hero? Why are they a hero to you? What makes them special? If you could write a letter to your hero, what would you say?
- The grandmother in the book spends her time weaving. Do you have a family tradition that your grandmother or someone else in your family does? Describe the hobby or tradition and talk about why you think it's important to them.
- There are many people who have dreams, like the woman in the book who was a pilot. What is your dream? What would you like to do when you grow up?
- Do you have a hobby or craft you like to do? If not, what do you like to do with your free time? If so, what is the hobby and can you include a drawing of yourself doing that hobby?
- Image a cabin at the base of a mountain. Tell a story of what's happening in that cabin. Include details about who lives there and why.
- Look at the cover of the book. What do you think it means? Why do you think the illustrator put that image on the cover? How does it relate to the images inside the book?



## Extension Activities

*At the Mountain's Base* presents teachers with an interesting opportunity to incorporate interdisciplinary activities. These can be fun and engaging ways to go beyond the text and dig a bit further into the ideas it presents.

In this book, the grandmother weaves. You can use that interest to explore the presence of weaving in various Indigenous cultures and even spend time learning about weaving and textile industries in early American history. Bring in yarn or other crafts and invite students to get crafty as a way to bring the book's details to life.

Use this book to learn about famous and lesser-known women pilots. This text presents a great opportunity to explore this subject and teach children about important and lesser-known women in history. Lead young students in research about women who have been pilots both in the army and in private companies. Invite them to write about them, make videos, or draw about them.

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#DisruptTexts is not simply about replacing older texts for new ones; rather, it is a more nuanced and holistic approach aimed at offering a restorative and antiracist curriculum. #DisruptTexts requires that we as educators interrogate our own biases, center the voices of BIPOC in literature, help students develop a critical lens, and work in community with other antiracist and BIPOC educators. Together we will bring about change in society.

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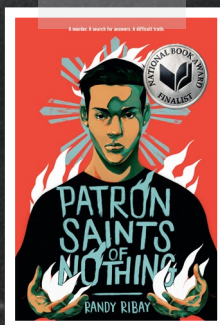
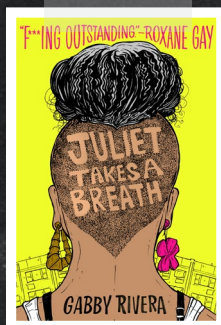
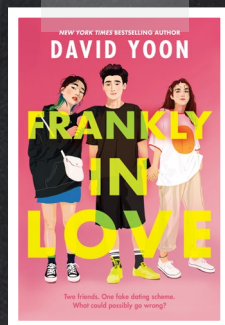
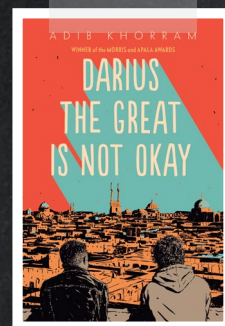
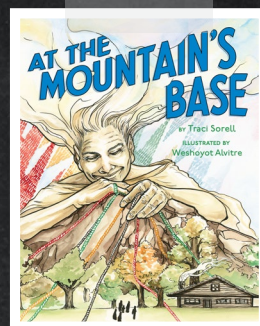
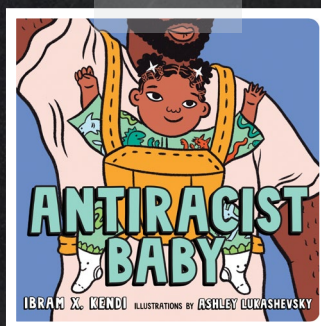
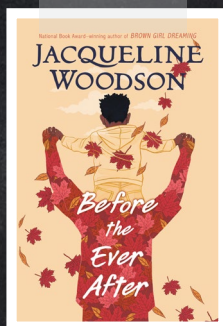
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