

HOLIDAY HOUSE

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

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A History of Me
by **Adrea Theodore**
illustrated by **Erin K. Robinson**

ABOUT THE BOOK

Who do you see when you look in the mirror? One mother's account of her experience as the only Black child in school serves as an empowering message to her own daughter and children of color everywhere.

Life can be hard for the only brown girl in a classroom full of white students. When the teacher talks about slavery, she can feel all of her classmates staring at her.

When they talk about civil rights, she is the one that other kids whisper about on the playground. In those moments, she wants to slip away or seep into the ground; and she wonders, is that all you see when you look at me?

What really matters is what she sees when she looks at herself. She is a reflection of the courage, strength, intelligence, and creativity that's been passed down from generation to generation through her ancestors.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Define history. The title indicates the story is about one's history. How is a person's history shaped by their family history? Discuss how everyone's family history is different.
- Study the title page. Where do you think the girl is going? How does the direction she is walking lead to the next page and the beginning of the book? Read the first line of the book. How does this establish the conflict or problem within the girl?
- Turn to the next double-page spread. How does the illustrator show the "history" the class is discussing? There are slaves far away and one slave woman standing in the cotton field with her hands on her hips. Who do you think this woman is? Debate whether she is the girl's great-great-grandmother shown on the next page.



- Discuss how the history of each generation of the girl's family is different. What is the mother's "history"? Explain how the girl's mother uses "family history" to teach her daughter to be grateful that she can go to school and learn.
- A boy on a bike says a mean thing to the girl. Discuss why the girl doesn't go after the boy and tell him what she is thinking. How might expressing her thoughts teach him a lesson? What should the girl do when the girls on the playground giggle and point to her?
- The mother wants her daughter to have courage, strength, intelligence, and creativity. How did their ancestors possess these qualities? Why aren't these qualities discussed when classes study Black history? How did Martin Luther King, Jr. and others fighting for civil rights have these qualities?
- Take a close look at the last illustration in the book. How many generations are represented? Why do you think the mother and her daughter are faced forward with eyes wide open and their ancestors are looking off to the side? Explain how this illustration represents hope.
- Explain what the mother means when she tells her daughter to "fly high into the sky."
- Poetry is a language that asks readers to use their imagination and emotions to find meaning. How is the line "I was the only brown person in class" repeated to create rhythm? What other lines are repeated throughout the story? Themes describe what the book is about. What is the central theme of this poem? How does the repetition of language place emphasis on the theme of the story?

Guide created by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

ABOUT THE CREATORS



Adrea Theodore is a mother, a pediatrician, and, with the publication of *A History of Me*, an author of books for children. Growing up on Long Island, she was the kind of girl who almost always had a book in her hand, a library card in her pocket, and a stack of books in the corner waiting to be read—or returned for more books. She currently lives in Durham, NC, where she works with children at a local child advocacy center.



Erin K. Robinson is the illustrator of *Brave. Black. First: 50+ African American Women Who Changed the World* by Cheryl Hudson, and *A History of Me* by Adrea Theodore. Her work has been featured in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, among other publications, and has been nominated for an Emmy in the News and Documentary category. Trained at the Parsons School of Design and the Corcoran School of Art, Erin splits her time between Brooklyn, NY, and Washington, DC.

