MINA'S SPRING OF COLORS: Teachers' Guide

GENERAL THEMES AND CONNECTIONS:

1) The Indian spring festival of Holi

* Customs of Holi
* Significance of colours
* Sharing traditions (inter-cultural) and how this enriches us

2) Relationships with grandparents and how they change as the grandchildren grow older

* being embarrassed by grandparents accents or appearance or behaviour

3) Racism and tolerance

* mocking different accents
* the feelings of someone who is the target
* the possible reasons someone might make fun of an accent
* exploration of the word racism

4) Anger

* how we can fuel it
* what purpose it might serve in avoiding looking at ourselves
* how guilt can result in misdirected anger
* revenge

5) Forgiveness

* the different ways in which forgiveness can be shown and expressed
* the difficulties of letting go
* holding onto grudges

6) Self-knowledge

* The need to know oneself and to be aware of one's real motives
* what we might gain by hiding things from ourselves

7) Peer and power relationships in school

* the pressures to conform, and not to be seen as different
* Popularity in school, how it shifts
* Friendship and loyalty
* How power structures in groups can change
* bullying

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

1) Topics of Discussion:

* Discuss how what you say may not be what you really feel. What are some of the reasons for this? Where in the novel does this happen?
* Why do you think Mina is so angry with Ashley? What is the obvious reason, and what do you think might be the hidden reason? Does Mina really know what she is feeling? Does she admit it to herself?
* Discuss some of the reasons Mina decides not to invite Ashley to her party.
* Discuss peer pressure and how it applies to this story.
* What are the events that lead Mina to say that she won't invite any of Ashley's friends to the party either?
* Discuss grandparents and your relationships with them. What do you like about them and what do you find difficult about them? What are your feelings about this person?
* Discuss anger and positive ways of letting go.
* Discuss Nanaji's continual reminder to Mina: "Be aware." Why does Mina get annoyed at hearing this? Do you think it's important to "be aware"? If so, why?
* Discuss the concept of forgiveness. What do you really have to do to forgive?

2) Writing Exercises:

* Pretend you are a school newspaper reporter writing an article about Holi and about Mina's Holi party. Present this to the class.
* Creative writing: Write a journal entry that Jessie, or Craig, or Ashley might write after the events at the Open House. (Of course, this must be written in the first person point of view. Try and capture the voice of the different characters. What would they say? Would they all be truthful? Remember to show their feelings and motives.)
* Crawl inside the characters' heads and hearts and do a ÒfeelingsÓ chart. What do you think Mina feels when she overhears Ashley making fun of her grandfather? What does Ashley feel when she is confronted by the other kids? What do you think the other characters are feeling?
* Write a description of one of your grandparents or any other older person in your life.
* Imagine! Create an invitation to a party that you would to have, with all the things that you would most like to do.

3) Art Activities:

* Create a poster inviting kids to a Holi party. Include information about the festival, as well as practical advice about the kinds of clothes to wear etc.
* To capture the feeling of Holi, splatter large sheets of art paper with bright poster paints. Decorate the classroom with these -- a bit of cheer to get through the winter!
* Make Holi T-shirts by splashing white T-shirts with bursts of colour (using appropriate T-shirt dyes).
* Make papièr maché puppets of the main characters and act out scenes from the book.
* Mixing colours: draw a colour wheel and using poster paints, experiment with mixing colours. What colours do you end up with when you mix the primary ones with each other?

4) Drama activities:

* *NOTE: this is only for the brave at heart and the intrepid!*
  Using food colouring and foods (such as beets and carrots) for dyes, make up batches of coloured water and have a Holi party! Be sure to exercise certain cautions: use only safe edible ingredients for the coloured water; wear old clothes; avoid furniture and structures that can be damaged.
* Have a Holi party! If you haven't the facilities (or heart!) to try it with water, have a party with confetti, glitter and canned spraying streamers.

5) Extra Study and Research activities:

* Research dyes. What kinds of plants can you use to create natural dyes? List the plants and the methods used to dye fabrics and paper.

Multiple Choice Quiz (answers are asterisked)

Question 1

At the beginning of the book, who is the new person living with Mina's family?

A. Mina's uncle
B. Mina's mother's aunt
C. Mina's grandfather ***
D. Mina's best friend

Question 2

What is Mina's best friend's name?

A. Heidi
B. Jessie ***
C. Ashley
D. Craig

Question 3

What is the name of the spring festival that Mina and her family celebrate each year with a party?

A. Holi ***
B. Divali
C. Easter
D. Kwanza

Question 4

What is the main activity of this spring festival?

A. Dyeing eggs
B. Throwing coloured powders and water at each other ***
C. Fasting for a day
D. Lighting many candles

Question 5

At the school open house, who does Mina overhear making fun of a member of her family?

A. Jessie
B. Ashley ***
C. Mr. Henley
D. Craig

Question 6

When Mina's mother finds out about what happened at the Open House, what does she insist on doing?

A. grounding Mina
B. complaining to the teacher
C. calling Craig's parents to complain
D. inviting Ashley to the Spring Bash ***

Question 7

What is the "special surprise" that Mina and Jessie plan for Ashley at the party?

1. Throwing rotten eggs at her
2. Tripping her
3. Ignoring her
4. Throwing a mixture that will stain her hair ***

Question 8

What do Mina and Jessie buy at the grocery store to make the "special surprise"?

A. Cooking oil
B. Drink crystals ***
C. eggs
D. smelly cheese

Question 9

On the day of the party, where does Mina hide the “special surprise” for Ashley?

A. under the picnic table
B. in the bathroom
C. in the hollow at the base of a spruce tree ***
D. in Mina’s mother’s knitting bag

Question 10

What is the real purpose of the spring festival celebrated by Mina and her family?

A. to get revenge
B. to forgive and cleanse old grudges ***
C. to make new friends
D. to be thankful for spring

Word Puzzle

Find the words listed below in the puzzle.

T	E	Z	C	O	L	Z	V	N	T	H	J	K	K	I
L	G	C	M	O	Y	A	S	H	E	F	E	V	A	X
I	N	R	H	O	L	I	V	E	Y	S	S	B	P	H
U	E	O	C	R	A	O	V	I	F	M	S	W	S	Y
G	V	T	B	S	E	I	R	A	T	M	I	S	N	T
N	E	S	H	O	G	G	N	S	X	S	E	N	J	U
R	R	L	B	R	P	I	N	Y	Z	B	E	D	C	T
P	E	H	O	M	M	E	X	A	Z	U	H	F	P	V
Y	L	F	W	I	Q	S	P	R	I	N	G	J	J	I
E	R	E	H	T	A	F	D	N	A	R	G	Q	M	P
Y	T	R	A	P	Y	W	K	C	P	M	Z	J	H	K
N	B	I	W	I	G	H	R	D	M	A	M	Z	J	G
M	J	J	I	L	T	M	E	R	X	P	E	R	W	A
D	G	B	D	H	S	F	B	M	O	W	Y	P	D	Q
J	E	V	E	C	K	K	A	Y	Z	O	Z	A	W	R

ANGER
MINA
PARTY
REVENGE
SPRING
COLORS
JESSIE
FORGIVE
GRANDFATHER
GUILT
HOLI
FESTIVAL
ASHLEY

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