

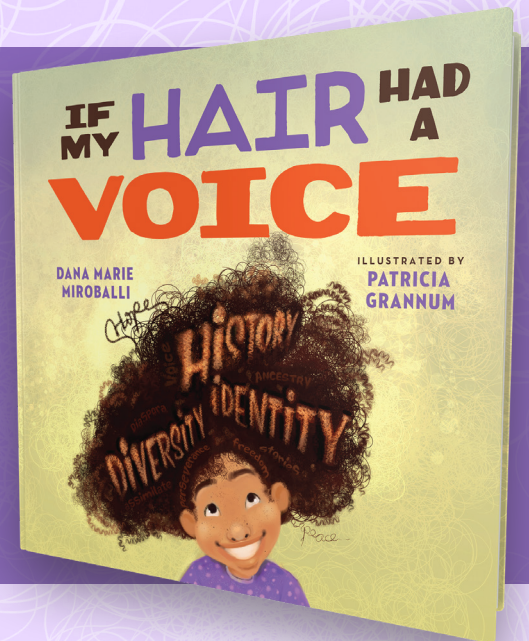
# IF MY HAIR HAD A VOICE

## EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Created by educator **Ryan Bani Tahmaseb**

### NOTE TO EDUCATORS

This educator guide for *If My Hair Had a Voice* is for students in grades 1 and up. Since all students and classrooms have different needs and abilities, teachers should adapt the activities as necessary.



To connect with author **Dana Marie Miroballi**, visit [danamiroballi.com](http://danamiroballi.com).



To connect with illustrator **Patricia Grannum**, visit [artbypatriciagrannum.com](http://artbypatriciagrannum.com).

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When you look at the cover of *If My Hair Had a Voice*, what words do you see? What do these words suggest to us about the story? How might they be related to each other?
2. Why do you think Granny encourages Kimya to imagine her hair having a “voice?”
3. Granny encourages Kimya to embrace her hair as an important part of her identity. Share a moment from your life when someone encouraged you to embrace a part of yourself that you felt uncomfortable about.
4. What do you find most surprising or interesting about the long history of Black hair that Kimya learns about in this book?
5. The name of the narrator of this book, Kimya, is a Swahili name that means “silent.” How might this be relevant to the story?
6. What’s something you discovered in the book’s lovely illustrations that the words didn’t tell you about?
7. These are the last two sentences of Kimya’s story: “My granny never saw afro-textured hairstyles in magazines or movies. Now they’re on the runway, red carpet, and Capitol Hill. And when I see them, I see me.” What does Kimya mean when she says “when I see them, I see me”?
8. How is *If My Hair Had a Voice* a celebration of hair and culture? What else does this book celebrate?



# PERSPECTIVE POEM

## Materials Needed:

- Writing materials such as pencils and/or pens
- Age-appropriate rhyming and free-verse poems and/or poetry anthologies as mentor texts
- *Optional:* Projector or screen for displaying mentor texts during instruction
- *Optional:* Snacks and drinks for students to enjoy during the poetry reading event

Encourage students to select **one important moment from the book** and compose a poem, either in rhyme or free-verse, that captures the emotions and perspectives of either Kimya or Granny. The poem should help their classmates understand **why Kimya or Granny feels the way they do** in that moment.

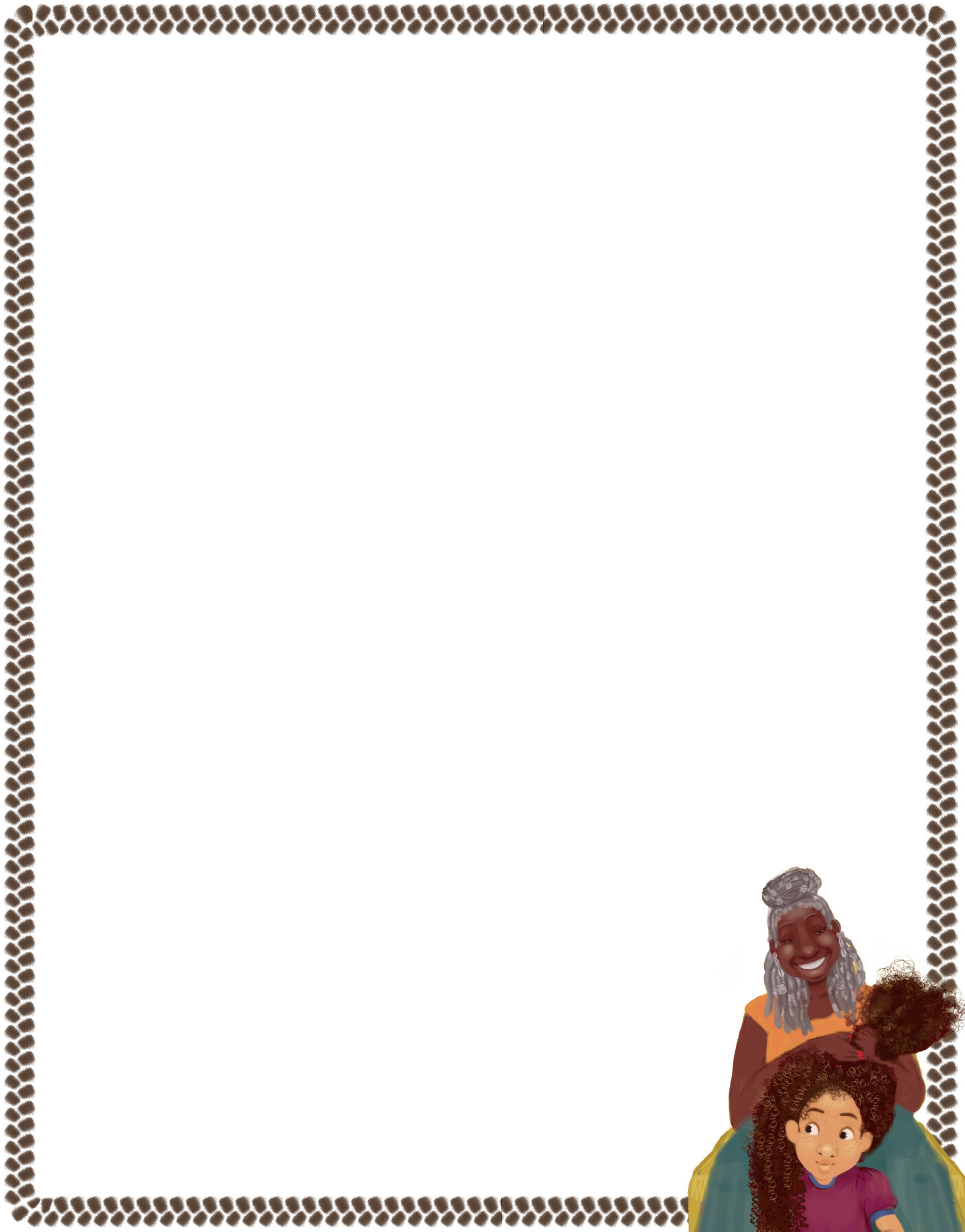
Invite students to be creative with their words, and consider providing them with a brief refresher on some key elements of poetry. This could include discussing how poets use descriptive language to evoke vivid images and manipulate sounds to establish rhythm. Students can explore how literary devices like similes, metaphors, and onomatopoeia enrich their poems.

Additionally, provide students with age-appropriate rhyming and free-verse poems and/or poetry anthologies as mentor texts. These examples can serve as valuable references, inspiring students and providing them with models to emulate as they craft their own.

Once everyone has finished, gather copies of the poems together to create a class anthology. Each student can receive a copy of the anthology to enjoy and share with friends and family.

To celebrate further, consider hosting a poetry reading event. Students can take turns reciting their poems to one another, accompanied by snacks and refreshments. Extend the invitation to other members of the school community. You could even incorporate a reading of *If My Hair Had a Voice* before students share their own poems, providing context for the themes and emotions explored in the students' poems.





# COMIC STRIP

## Materials Needed:

- Comic Strip Template (provided)
- Pencils, erasers, markers, and colored pencils
- Rulers, for students who want to make precise lines
- Sticky notes or notecards

Ask students to reflect on the words featured on the cover (e.g., diversity, history, stories), each of which could be considered primary themes of the book. Explain that they will get to be creative by making a comic strip showing what happens right before or right after the story in *If My Hair Had a Voice*. They should pick one of those words from the cover and make sure their comic strip shows something related to that theme.



Encourage students to think about how the characters act, where the story happens, and what happens in the story—and how all of this could be connected to the theme they chose. Consider providing students with an opportunity to discuss their ideas with a partner or in small groups.

Next, students should have ample time to sketch. As they sketch, they should also draft text for word and/or thought bubbles, considering the dialogue, narration, or character thoughts that will also speak to their chosen theme. And once students are ready, they can use the template to create their 5-panel comic strip.

When everyone has completed their work, you can facilitate a gallery walk for students to admire each other's creations and include notecards or sticky notes for them to leave specific compliments for their peers.

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# IDENTITY RESEARCH PROJECT

## Materials Needed:

- Computers or tablets with internet connectivity
- A variety of resources such as age-appropriate books and academic databases
- Presentation tools such as trifold poster boards, Google Slides, Canva, etc.

Begin by discussing how in the book, Kimya initiates a research project exploring the relationship between her hair and her culture. Encourage your students to: a) delve into hairstyles beyond those featured in the “Guide to Afro-Textured Hairstyles” located at the back of the book, or b) select an aspect of their own identities to investigate.

Guide your students in identifying appropriate resources such as books, websites, and age-appropriate academic databases to gather reliable information for their research. Emphasize the importance of critical evaluation of sources. Collaborating with a school librarian, if available, could enhance the project by providing additional support and resources.

Allocate adequate time for students to conduct their research, consult with you and/or the librarian, and create their presentations. Ultimately, students will craft a presentation similar to Kimya’s, outlining what they learned from their research.

Upon completion, encourage students to share their independent research projects either in small groups or with the entire class, and celebrate the sharing of all of this newfound knowledge!



## Guide Creator:

**Ryan Bani Tahmaseb** is an academic coach, curriculum developer, and author. His debut picture book, *Rostam’s Picture-Day Pusteen*, is set to be published by Charlesbridge in the summer of 2024, and his first professional book for educators, *The 21st Century School Library*, was published by John Catt Educational in 2021. His writing has also appeared in publications such as *Education Week*, *Edutopia*, and the *Carolina Quarterly*. He lives in Southern Maine with his wife and two young children.