

## Red: A Crayon's Story by Michael Hall

**Grade:** 5th grade

### OVERVIEW

Red has a bright red label but he is, in fact, blue. Many characters try to help him be red, but with every failed attempt, Red is more miserable. He just can't be red no matter how hard he tries. Finally, a brand-new friend offers a brand-new perspective, and Red discovers what readers have known all along. He's Blue! This story is about being true to your inner self and following your own path.

### OBJECTIVES

**By the end of the lesson, students will:**

- Describe how outside influences can shape/impact ideas regarding gender roles, identity, and expression.
- Promote ways to show respect for all people.
- Identify trusted adults to ask questions about gender identity and sexual orientation

### STANDARDS

- **Washington State Sexual Health Standard:** Describe how media, society, and culture can influence ideas regarding gender roles, identity and expression (H2.Se5.5a)
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.1** Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.2** Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.6** Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

### TIME

**One 50 minute lesson or two 25-30 minute lessons**

### RESOURCES / MATERIALS NEEDED

- Book: *RED: A Crayon's Story*
- Sheets of various colored paper, pens

### VOCABULARY

- **Acceptance:** The act or state of being supportive, kind or friendly to others. It is especially important to show acceptance to groups different than you.

- **Gender identity:** A person’s internal, deeply felt sense of being either man, woman, boy or girl or another gender.
- **Gender Role:** Cultural ways of how men and women are “supposed” to act.
- **Stereotype:** To believe unfairly that all people with a particular characteristic are the same. For example, only girls can like flowers.
- **Transgender:** When someone’s biological sex (or the body a person is born with) does not match that person’s gender identity (or their sense of being man, woman, boy or girl). For example, when someone is born a boy deeply feels like they are a girl inside.

## CLASSROOM PROCEDURE

### Introduction:

Introduce or review classroom rules in order to create a safe place for students to discuss the book. Consider using the ground rules listed below:

- Respect other people in the class
- One person speaks at a time
- Everyone has the “right to pass” if someone doesn’t want to talk
- Everyone will have a chance to speak

### Activity:

- Post vocabulary words up on the board. Ask students to review definitions. Ask them to think about these terms as you read the story, RED: A Crayon’s Story.
- Before Reading the story, take out a box of crayons and hold up one crayon. Ask students what color crayon you are holding. How do they know it is that color? What would they draw with that particular color? Do this with several different crayons.
- Begin reading the story, using the following discussion questions:

## Read aloud

1. Read the first page of the story (“He was red”) and ask students what they notice.  
*Why did everyone expect Red to draw red things? Does it surprise you that no one noticed what he was really like?*
2. Pause on the page where Red’s grandparents speak. Ask *why do you think the author portrayed the grandparents as small silver and gray crayons?*
3. Pause after reading the opinions under “Everyone seemed to have something to say.” *How do you think Red feels about what the other crayons are saying? What are some ways the crayons could show respect to Red? What are ways we can show respect to other people who may be different from what we expect or who may just be different from ourselves?*
4. Read the pages about art supplies. *How do you think the different art supplies can/should help Red?*

**After reading:** *What does Berry help the others understand? Why is this so important?*

Until he meets Berry, Red cannot be himself because everyone believes he is different than he actually is. Most people have made judgments about other people based on their appearance. Have you made judgments about people based on their appearances? Do people make assumptions about you?

Say to the class, "Thinking back on our vocabulary words, how might the story of Red represent the ideas regarding gender roles or gender identity?" (Possible answers include: He looked one way on the outside, but felt another way on the inside, or Red's gender expression did not match his gender identity.)

**Create a T-Chart with students.** As a class, fill in the columns: EXPECTATIONS/IMPACTS/FEELINGS (see example)

## Assessment

Have students create a crayon that represents how they see themselves and how others may see them. Cut a variety of colored pieces of paper into a large crayon shape. Cut additional pieces of colored paper into wide strips. Have students write, draw or depict the ways they see themselves on the crayon shape. Have students write, draw or depict the ways other people see them on the crayon cover. (See example in kit.) Students can present out or the crayons can be displayed in the classroom or hallway.

## Extension

Have students write a paragraph (or create a T-Chart) about how they see themselves versus how others see them.

Ask students to list two or three trusted adults with whom they can share their true/whole selves.

## Example classroom chart

EXPECTATIONS	IMPACTS	POSSIBLE FEELINGS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red has to be able to draw strawberries</li> <li>• Red needs to mix with other colors</li> </ul> <p><b>Now looking at it through the lens of gender ....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boys should be tough</li> <li>• Girls should look pretty</li> <li>• Kids have to look and act like either a boy or a girl</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't want to disappoint others</li> <li>• Works hard to do it, but is unsuccessful</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some boys get in fights to show how tough they think they are</li> <li>• Some girls spend time, money and energy wearing make up</li> <li>• Kids fake it, cover up how they feel, or get teased for being different</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embarrassed</li> <li>• Frustrated</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate</li> <li>• Ashamed</li> <li>• Humiliated</li> </ul>