

Spork — Teaching Guide

About the Book

His mum is a spoon. His dad is a fork. And he's a bit of both. He's *Spork*!

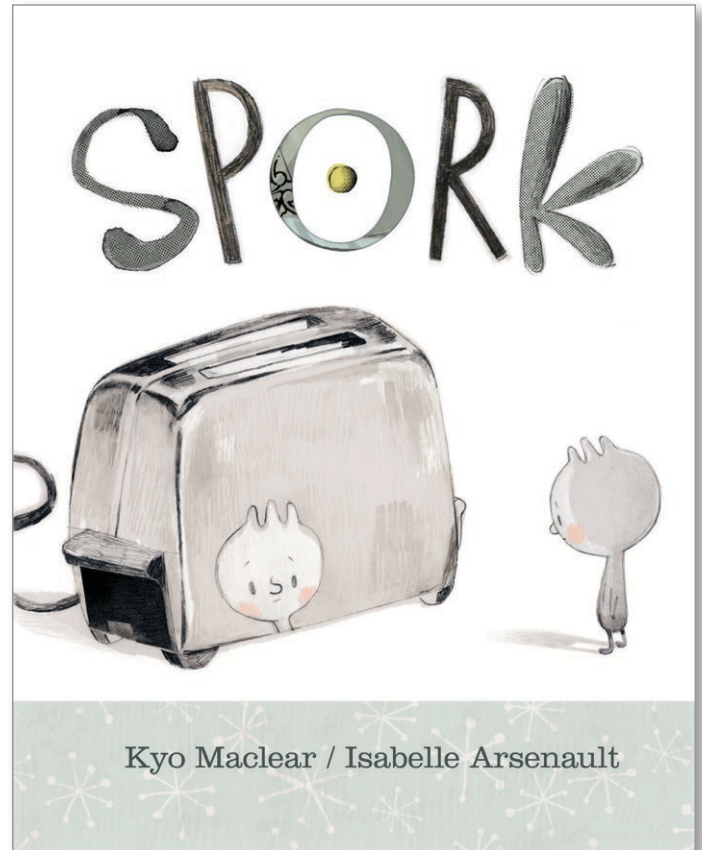
Spork sticks out in the regimented world of the cutlery drawer. The spoons think he's too pointy, while the forks find him too round. He never gets chosen to be at the table at mealtimes until one day a very messy ... thing arrives in the kitchen who has never heard of cutlery customs. Will Spork finally find his place at the table?

This “multi-cutlery” tale is a humorous and lively commentary on individuality and inclusion. Its high-spirited illustrations capture the experience and emotions of anyone who has ever wondered about their place in the world.

About the Author

KYO MACLEAR's father is British and her mother is Japanese. She was born in England, where she enjoyed a brief theatrical career in London's West End. Little did she know when she appeared in *The King and I* that her one line — “I believe in snow” — would be prophetic. At age four, in the midst of a very snowy winter, she and her parents moved to Toronto, Canada.

Later Kyo attended university, where she pursued a degree in Art History. She followed this degree with another degree in Cultural Studies. Alas, though she acquired several useful skills as a longtime student, neither degree led to particularly enriching employment. This is just as well because this time period provided Kyo an opportunity to fire up her imagination.

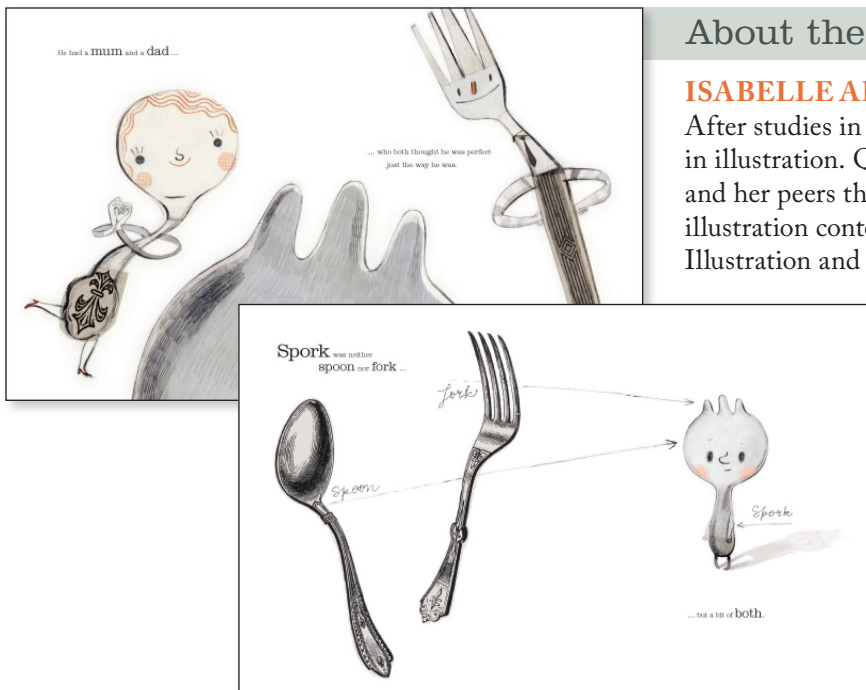


Kyo Maclear / Isabelle Arsenault

ISBN 978-1-55337-736-8

About the Illustrator

ISABELLE ARSENAULT was born in 1978 in Sept-Îles, Quebec. After studies in Fine Arts and Graphic Design, she specialized in illustration. Quickly, she gained recognition from the industry and her peers through several awards from major international illustration contests such as Communication Arts, American Illustration and Applied Arts. In 2005, she won the prestigious Governor General's Literary Award for the illustration of her first children's book, *Le Coeur de Monsieur Gauguin*. Her passion for children's imaginations allows her to produce images that appeal to young readers as well as older ones. Through children's illustration she gives life to her own childhood dreams and in doing so, she hopes to inspire upcoming generations. Isabelle Arsenault now lives in Montreal, Quebec.



Kids Can Press

We acknowledge the assistance of the Ontario Creates Book Fund, an initiative of Ontario Creates.

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About This Resource

This resource is anchored in **critical consciousness literacy**¹.

What is critical consciousness literacy anyway?

Many educators may be familiar with critical literacy. **Critical literacy** embraces the belief that every text, whether a picture book or an essay, needs to be a platform to better read and understand the world. Only when young people are afforded the opportunity to read the world do they have the capacity to create a better one.

Where does culturally relevant pedagogy fit in?

A key principle of **Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy**² is that students see themselves in the learning and know that who they are is valued. When children engage in any form of literacy where they feel connected and their educational needs are being met, learning will take place. As well, a curriculum that provides opportunities to envision diverse ways of being and lived realities gives students opportunities to learn about other experiences and builds both understanding and respect.

This brings us to **Critical Consciousness Literacy**, which asks us to focus on the child by embracing both culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy and critical literacy. Students' development of a "critical consciousness" in their acquiring of critical literacy skills is crucial in that it is this "consciousness" that results in an awareness of the culture and the dynamics of societal power. Understanding oneself in relation to societal power means exploring concepts such as social identities, stereotyping, bias, discrimination, privilege and marginalization. This then prepares students to become agents of social change, giving them the wherewithal to challenge the status quo and to be proactive toward social justice issues. Therefore, a **pre-activity** was designed to support the building of connection between the text and the reader. This pre-activity, which contains a component for the teacher and a separate one for the students, is foundational to this guide.

CRITICAL LITERACY means ...

- Recognizing that texts contain certain perspectives and biases
- Recognizing that point of view influences how a text is interpreted and understood
- Determining whose voices are present or absent
- Evaluating multiple perspectives for bias, reliability, fairness and validity
- Analyzing how language is used
- Taking a stance and engaging in a response in the interest of equity, fairness and social justice
- Using technology to see divergent perspectives, interact with authentic audiences, and express ideas

— *Adolescent Literacy Guide* (2016), p. 26

Overview

| | Grade | Theme | High-Yield Strategies |
|---------------------|-------|-----------------------------|--|
| Pre-Activity | All | Making It Stick | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparing and contrasting • Cooperative learning • Higher-order thinking • Reinforcing effort and providing recognition • Nonlinguistic Representations |
| Activity 1 | K–3 | Knowing Ourselves: Identity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparing and contrasting • Identifying similarities and differences • Nonlinguistic representations • Reinforcing effort and providing recognition |
| Activity 2 | 3–8 | Challenging Discrimination | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparing and contrasting • Identifying similarities and differences • Higher-order thinking • Generating and testing hypothesis • Nonlinguistic representations • Reinforcing effort and providing recognition |

¹ "Critical Consciousness Literacy" is a term anchored in the work of Paulo Freire (2004) combined with the critical consciousness tenet in the work of Ladson-Billings (2002) in *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*. (Gaymes-San Vicente, A. & A. Te, TDSB Presentation, Spring 2017)

² "A nuanced approach to challenging the power and privilege that remain within our school walls can be seen in the fusion of *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy* (Ladson-Billings) and *Culturally Responsive Teaching* (Geneva Gay). These two distinct bodies of research (building on the work of Paulo Freire and his dialogic teaching, discussed more fully below) have recently been fused together by curriculum activists at the Centre for Urban Schooling at OISE/University of Toronto, into what has become known as Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogy (CRRP)." (Clanfield et. al., 2014, p. 268)

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| | Grade | Theme | High-Yield Strategies |
|------------|-------|----------------------------|--|
| Activity 3 | 5–8 | STEM: Invention Convention | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comparing and contrasting• Identifying similarities and differences• Cooperative learning• Higher-order thinking• Generating and testing hypothesis• Nonlinguistic representations• Reinforcing effort and providing recognition |

Pre-Activity — Making It Stick

TEACHER REFLECTION

Children learn best when learning is relevant and meaningful for them. Using critical literacy as well as a culturally relevant and responsive approach, this activity is designed to support students by creating meaning and connections to the picture book. Therefore, this essential pre-activity begins with an opportunity for teacher reflection prior to engaging in the pre-activity with the students.

“Teaching for critical literacy empowers students to be active thinkers, to look at the world from multiple perspectives and to develop questioning habits that encourage them to think and act on their decisions.”

— *Adolescent Literacy Guide* (2016), p. 26

“Developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive program planning is therefore essential in facilitating literacy learning experiences ... learning opportunities that we design need to be grounded ... in intentional consideration of who our learners are and what experiences will enable them to learn, adapt and achieve literacy success.”

— *Paying Attention to Literacy*, p. 3

LEARNING GOAL

Teachers will learn to recognize who is automatically included and positively valued through the use of *Spork*. For any reader, connection to the book can take place through social identities. Social identities include, but are not limited to: race, indigeneity, sexual orientation, social class, gender identity and language. Those who feel connected to the book are more likely to be engaged. Therefore, this knowledge is essential, as it allows you to consider how to create inclusion for those who are not automatically included.

1. Consider your favorite picture book or novel — something that you really enjoyed reading.
2. On the “Making It Stick” chart, **Appendix A**, complete Section A.
3. Read *Spork* with the following question in mind: How do you feel personally connected to *Spork* through the text, pictures, messages or characters?
4. On the “Making It Stick” chart, Appendix A, complete Section B.
5. Review the elements of the book (content, pictures, character gender/race etc.) that gave you automatic inclusion, or not. Recognize that students who automatically and positively connect to the book (through any social identity) have an advantage as their connection can allow them to more readily engage in and demonstrate comprehension through subsequent activities. Their connection can allow them to engage in subsequent activities more readily. It becomes imperative for you to create a connection for those students who do not automatically connect. This connection can be the difference between engagement and disengagement as well as equal access to the learning.
6. Review the first two columns of the “Guiding Questions for Critical Literacy and Culturally Responsive Teaching” chart, **Appendix B**.
7. Review a list of students who you intend to use this book with. Consider which students might struggle to connect to the book.
8. On the “Making It Stick” chart, Appendix A, complete Section C.

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Pre-Activity

1. Show students the cover of *Spork*.
2. Slowly leaf through the pages so that students can see the pictures.
3. Post the following connection prompts on chart paper:
 - This reminds me of ...
 - The picture looks like ...
 - The title makes me think of ...
 - Other
4. Depending on the grade, ask students to articulate orally, through writing or through visual art how they connect with the front cover or the pictures in the book.
5. Make an intentional effort to check in with the students recorded in Section C of the “Making It Stick” chart who may struggle to connect with the book.
6. Identify, post and review key or unfamiliar words from *Spork*.



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

A great learning opportunity for everyone might be to explore what the front cover would look like if each child were to design it. Using an age-appropriate art medium (paint, clay, plasticine, etc.), have students redesign the cover to create something that they feel includes them.

Activity 1: Knowing Ourselves: Identity

MATERIALS

- *Spork*
- Board or chart paper
- Tape
- Sticky notes or paper
- Copies of Appendix C

OVERVIEW

The playful tale of *Spork* is a fun and light expression of difference. *Spork*, who is neither a spoon nor a fork, feels excluded, feels like “less than” the other cutlery, and wishes he were something that he is not. He even attempts to impersonate a spoon and a fork but is unsuccessful and remains unhappy. This is a reality for many children from a very young age. Difference — whether it is created through clothing, shoes, hair, names, complexion, race, gender identity or other aspects — affords some children social capital, and therefore power, which they have gained by default. Even though the forks and the spoons did not choose to be forks and spoons, what they offered was seen as more valuable. This lesson is specifically designed for kindergarten to grade three children because the power invoked by difference and the feelings of exclusion are present in these grades and because both impact academic achievement. If children can begin to understand who they are and to value that person, and if, in tandem, educators create spaces where children feel equally valued, children will perform better academically and socially.

LEARNING GOAL

Using *Spork* as a springboard, children will begin to consider various pieces of their identity. Students will articulate their identities and express an affirmation for each piece of their identity on the wings of a dragonfly (see Appendix C).

Note to Educator: The dragonfly was selected as a symbol for two reasons. First, when we value our multiple identities, it gives us the ability to soar. Second, in many places around the world dragonflies represent transformation, self-realization and positive change.

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ACTIVITY

1. Complete the student pre-activity, “Making it Stick.”
Note to Educator: If it is not possible to complete the pre-activity, review Appendix B and proceed to step 2. If you have engaged in the pre-activity, skip to step 4.
2. If you have not completed the pre-activity, show the cover of *Spork*. Ask students what they think the story will be about. This will allow students to share thoughts, make connections and activate prior knowledge.
3. Identify, post and review key or unfamiliar words from *Spork*.
4. In small groups, or as a whole class, give students the opportunity to make a prediction about the story. Ask students, “Based on the title or the pictures, what do you think the story is about and why?”
5. Place the words “included” and “excluded” on the board or on chart paper. Ask students what those words might mean. Establish a definition of each word with an example that makes sense for your students.
6. Explain to the students that you are going to read them a book about someone who feels excluded.
7. Show students the pictures on the first page and ask them, “What makes Spork different?”
8. Ask students, “What are the differences between you and your friends?”
9. Ask students the following: In the story, you will find that Spork is different and that it makes him feel bad. Has being different ever made you feel bad? Raise your hand if so. **Note to Educator:** This topic might make it really challenging for a child to raise their hand. Therefore, you may want to share a story about when you were made to feel bad because of difference before asking the question.
10. Read *Spork*.

Example

Included: When I am part of the group.
e.g., I can play skipping with everyone else.

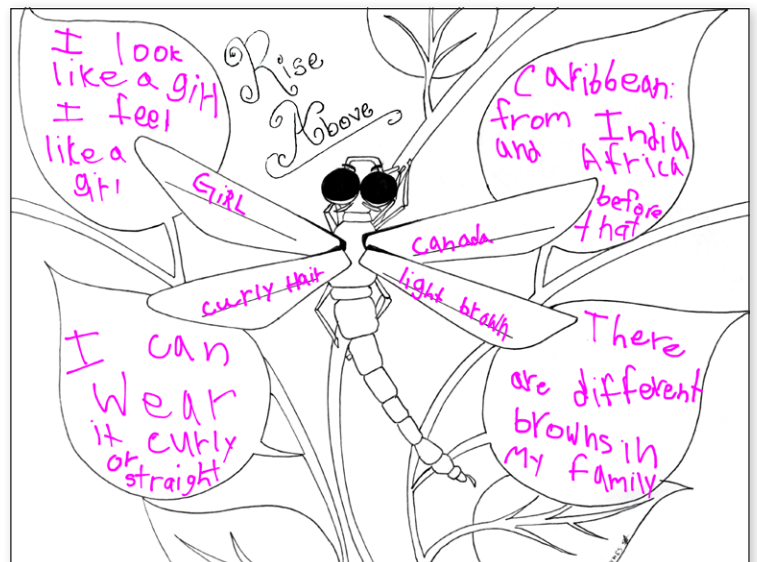
Excluded: When I don't feel welcome.
e.g., When someone in class does not want me to play at the block centre.

The Ontario Human Rights Code prohibits actions that discriminate against people based on the following grounds:

- Age
- Ancestry, color, race
- Citizenship
- Ethnic origin
- Place of origin
- Creed
- Disability
- Family status
- Marital status (including single status)
- Gender identity, gender expression
- Receipt of public assistance (in housing only)
- Record of offences (in employment only)
- Sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding)

ACTION

1. Ask students again to identify things that are different when they compare themselves to their friends in the class. Write the differences on a sheet of paper. **Note to Educator:** You may need to question further e.g., if a child says “hair,” you may need to ask students, “How is hair different?” and record. If a child says “color” you may need to also ask, “What are some different colors in our class?” and record.
2. As children identify differences, post the categories.
Note to Educator: It is important that you listen for and add to the differences students identify, as well as add terminology to support their thinking where appropriate. For example, students might say “skin color” and you may add “race.” Once the list is compiled, it is important to share with students that all parts of our identities are important and we should be proud of them.
3. Using Appendix C, model your own identities and contextual information for students.
4. Give students a chance to determine parts of their identities and place these qualities and characteristics in the wings. **Note to Educator:** See the sample to the right. It may take some time for students to determine what makes sense to put in the wings and what makes sense for the leaves. You may also want students to speak with parents/guardians before they finalize their dragonfly.



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CONSOLIDATION

1. Bring students back together to remind them that identities are important and powerful.
2. Reread page 9, and ask students, “Was there ever a time you tried or wanted to change something about yourself to fit in?” **Note to Educator:** It is important to reinforce that if someone made someone else feel bad for something that was a part of their identity, that person was wrong and not the identity. You may also want to keep notes in case students share experiences that need to be further discussed in a private setting.
3. Give students an opportunity to share their dragonfly in smalls groups or to the whole class using affirming language. For example: “I am Makayla and I am proud to be a girl originally from the Caribbean, and from India and Africa before that. I have beautiful brown skin and I love my curly hair. I am also proud to be a girl! These are all amazing parts of me.”



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

1. Record student affirmations on video.
2. Post the affirmations in the classroom so the children can read them daily.

Activity 2: Challenging Discrimination

MATERIALS

- *Spork*
- Large sheet of paper for each student

OVERVIEW

In Activity 1, *Spork* is used as a basis for thinking about difference and exploring the concept of discrimination. Therefore, before engaging in Activity 2, students should complete the process of thinking about and embracing their own identities through Activity 1. In Activity 2, children will continue to think about inclusion and exclusion in response to their own social identities.

LEARNING GOAL

Students will learn about inclusion and exclusion in relation to discrimination. Then they will be asked to think about which identities create the most exclusion and what schools could do to create more inclusion in these areas.

ACTION

1. After completing Activity 1, post students' dragonflies in the classroom and remind them that all parts of their identities make them who they are. Learning how to value these identities can contribute to their ability to rise above and be successful. **Note to Educator:** You may want to review some of Spork's identities (e.g., half spoon and half fork, feeling like a misfit, etc.).
2. Reread *Spork* and ask students to listen for times when Spork was included, as well as for times when he was excluded because of how he looked or who he was.

discrimination: Unfair or prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups on the basis of grounds set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code (e.g., race, sexual orientation, disability) or on the basis of other factors. Discrimination, whether intentional or unintentional, has the effect of preventing or limiting access to opportunities, benefits, or advantages that are available to other members of society. Discrimination may be evident in organizational and institutional structures, policies, procedures, and programs, as well as in the attitudes and behaviors of individuals.

— Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 85

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3. Give students a large sheet of paper that is divided into four sections. Ask students to draw two different pictures or write two different words in sections A and B. In section A, ask students to draw or write a picture or word that represents a time when Spork was included. In section B, ask students to draw or write a picture or word that represents a time when Spork was excluded. **Note to Educator:** Depending on time, the age group and your focus in visual arts, you may want to highlight specific curricular expectations from the visual arts curriculum for this section.
4. Once students have completed sections A and B, display the papers so that students can take a look at each other's interpretation of moments when Spork was included and excluded.
5. As a whole group, or in smaller groups, ask students to compare the pictures or words with other classmates to look for commonalities.
6. Record some of the commonalities that the students discover.
7. Reread page 17 from *Spork*.
8. Ask students to look at their dragonflies and to select one characteristic or quality that triggered exclusion for them. The students should also select an identity that may have triggered inclusion for them — a time when they may have felt like Spork.
9. In section C, ask students to draw a picture of a moment in their lives when they felt excluded and in section D, a picture of a moment in their lives when they felt included.
10. On a separate sheet of paper, have children articulate what would have to be true for that exclusion to not happen. **Note to Educator:** This may be a difficult concept for the children; you may want to model a few examples, such as those in the chart below:

| | |
|---|---|
| A | B |
| C | D |



At dinnertime, he watched from the drawer while the spoons played pea hockey and skillfully balanced boiled eggs. He sat off to the side while the forks raked fancy patterns in the mashed potatoes and twirled noodles around in complicated circles like rhythmic gymnasts. And at the end of this and every other meal, Spork looked on while the others enjoyed a super-bubbly bath in the sink.



| Act of Exclusion | What would have to be true for the exclusion to not take place? |
|---|--|
| Not part of the group of kids who are skipping because I don't have a rope. | The school to provide ropes. |
| Not part of playing soccer at recess because they are all boys. | Other girls playing soccer. |
| Not part of "their" group at recess because they are not my best friends. | Creating a buddy bench so that everyone can find friends. |
| Not seeing pictures of me in the classroom. | Ensuring that everyone is represented in the classroom pictures and books. |

CONSOLIDATION

1. Give students an opportunity to think about and articulate how they can make their school and classroom more inclusive of their identities.
2. Have students record and share their ideas.
3. As a class, select an action to implement that would create inclusion.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- Using the students' ideas, create a poster that demonstrates why inclusion is important.
- Using the students' ideas, write a speech on creating an more inclusive environment in your school.

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Activity 3: STEM: Invention Convention

MATERIALS

- *Spork*
- Found materials from home
- Old and broken simple machines that families no longer need and can donate (e.g., can opener)

OVERVIEW

A spork is a new creation, a product of being half fork and half spoon. Students will use a design process to create their own inventions individually or in groups. Their inventions should combine two existing inventions — like a spork does. Their inventions will offer a solution to a problem that exists in the world. Finally, students will test their inventions.

LEARNING GOAL

Using the SPICE model, students will create and test new inventions that solve a real-world problem. **Note to Educator:** Please see Appendix D for a full explanation of the SPICE model, as well as a sample activity that uses SPICE.

ACTIVITY

1. Complete the student pre-activity, “Making it Stick.” **Note to Educator:** If it is not possible to complete the pre-activity, review Appendix B and proceed to step 2. If you have engaged in the pre-activity, skip to step 3.
2. If you have not completed the pre-activity, show the cover of *Spork*. Ask students what they think the story will be about. This will allow students to share thoughts, make connections and activate prior knowledge.
3. Identify, post and review key or unfamiliar words from *Spork*.
4. In small groups, or as a whole class, give students the opportunity to make a prediction about the story. Ask students, “Based on the title or the pictures what do you think the story is about and why?”
5. Read *Spork*.
6. Explain to students that together they will be inventors solving a real-world problem.
7. Re-read page 15. **Note to Educator:** Depending on the grade, you may want to review simple machines with students and focus their inventions on simple machines.

ACTION

1. As a class, establish some real-world situations and problems that are important to students. **Note to Educator:** It is important to spend some time either presenting a few problems that you know are relevant to the children or giving them time to brainstorm.
2. Once you have established a situation, review the SPICE format (see Appendix D) with the students.
3. Allow students to move through the S-P-I sections of SPICE.
4. Build it!

CONSOLIDATION

1. Ask students to review their situation and problem to determine if they have created a device that will solve the problem.
2. Give students an opportunity to share their thoughts and, more specifically, what they learned with other classmates.
3. Have students discuss what they would do differently if they were able to redesign their inventions. **Note to Educator:** This is a key component of the lesson. This is where students will challenge their own thinking and come up with different ideas. This is what an engineer does!



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

1. Set up an “invention convention” where student can share their inventions.
2. Create a panel to whom children can market their inventions.
3. Give students an opportunity to create a 2.0 version of their inventions.

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Appendix A: Making It Stick

Section A

PROMPT Consider your favorite picture book or novel — something that you really enjoyed reading.

Why was this one of your favorite picture books or novels? Think about the images, the text, the connections you were able to make.

Section B

PROMPT How do you feel personally connected to *Spork* through the text, pictures, messages or characters?

Consider some the following social identities:

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Race | Sexual orientation | Social class | Indigeneity |
| Gender identity | Language | Religion | Others |
| Ethnicity | Culture | Abilities | |

How many of these identities created a sense of inclusion for you?

Section C

PROMPT Are there students who might struggle to connect to the book?

Record the names of students who will be included by 4–6 social identities and record their names.

Record the names of students who will be excluded because they are connected to less than four social identities.

Consider how you might include them.

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Appendix B: Guiding Questions for Critical Literacy and Culturally Responsive Teaching

| | Questions to consider PRIOR to using the book | Questions to consider PRIOR to leading an activity |
|--|---|--|
| What is being reinforced? <i>Thinking about bias and stereotypes</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your biases? (We all have biases about race, class, gender identity, ability, sexual orientation, etc.) • How might your personal beliefs and bias influence your understanding of this text? • What stereotypes, as well as conscious and unconscious biases, are present in the book? • What other resources can you integrate? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you challenge conscious and unconscious biases in the book? • How can you challenge stereotypes in the book? What other resources can you integrate? • What stereotypes might students have in relation to this text? |
| What is the connection? <i>Thinking about inclusion</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will connect most with the main characters in this book? • Who will connect most with the social identities of the main characters in the book? • Who will connect most with the story and main ideas in the book? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you support all students to make a personal and meaningful connection to the book? |
| Who benefits most? <i>Thinking about power and privilege</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are male, female or transgender voices most present? • What race or culture is most present? • Are different abilities valued? • Whose voices are missing? • Who has the power and privilege? • What is the historical context of the book? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you include the missing voices? • How can you address issues of power and privilege in the book? • How can you contextualize the book to engage more diverse lived experiences and values? • How might you address conflicting viewpoints and values? How might you validate underrepresented voices? |
| How do we make a difference? <i>Thinking about personal impact</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What stereotypes or biases does this book challenge? • For what issues of social justice can this book serve as a springboard? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might you raise awareness of social justice issues that students are unfamiliar with or invested in? |

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Appendix C



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Appendix D: Journeys to Solve Problems and Develop Opportunities



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Example of Using SPICE

THE TALLEST TOWER SPEAKS

Situation: Your group has the opportunity to send a message to the Prime Minister of Canada; a message that could change the future for your school, community or family. It is election time, so this is one of the best times for the people to speak out. What message does the government need to hear? What would make your community better?

What are some categories for your message? (For example: parks, school, poverty, etc. ...)

Think about a message that is meaningful to you. A message that could have a positive impact on others ...

Problem/Possibilities: Uh oh ... only one message will be seen by the government. The message will be on the top of the tallest tower and will be able to stand up to the wind for 3 days. Therefore, the group that builds the tallest, strongest and most stable freestanding tower is the message that the government will see.

Investigation/Ideas: Consider the materials as well as the structures/shapes that are most effective.

Materials:

- 35 straws
- 3 m of masking tape
- 1 piece of paper for the sign (the whole page must be used).

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Sketch before building:

Choose/Create/Construction:

- Create a new sketch that captures the strongest features from each sketch represented in your group.
- Develop a plan ... how will you build it?

Evaluation:

Does your tower meet the criteria?

... is it strong?

... is it stable?

... is it tall?

... is a clear message attached to the top?

Are there any improvements that can be made?

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RESOURCES USED IN *SPORK* TEACHING GUIDE

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NOTES: