



# something good

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## TEACHING TIPS

Readers respond in multiple ways including: making connections to themselves, their communities, and their literacy experiences; pursuing their curiosity through discussion, inquiry, and self-expression; and changing their attitudes and behaviors. This guide provides suggestions and resources for supporting and extending students' authentic reading responses. Select activities and resources that best meet the needs and interests of your students.

### Read and Discuss

Read *Something Good* aloud and discuss the book with students. What ideas stood out? What questions do they have? Collect students' questions and thoughts on chart paper or an online platform like Flipgrid, and/or invite students to record their thinking in their notebooks. Students can add to these shared notes and use them for writing and discussion topics for the following activities. This guide includes several resources for reading and discussing *Something Good*.



### Personal Connections

Although readers are never shown what is written on the bathroom wall, we know that it is “something bad” and shocking to the school community. Invite students to think about moments in their lives when they experienced or witnessed harsh words or hate speech directed at themselves or others. How did they feel? How did others respond? What happened next? What would they change about this event if they could go back? Share one or two experiences of your own or examples of current events if appropriate. Value any students willing to share their experiences, but don't require it. Focus the discussion on strategies and resources that help students navigate incidents of bullying and hate speech—not students' stories of trauma. Create a class list of strategies for reporting or dealing with bullies and hate speech such as phrases kids can say and trusted adults they can go to for help. Model and set expectations for inclusivity and acceptance of all people and life experiences—recognizing that many young people can feel uncomfortable sharing opinions, preferences, or experiences that reveal differences or struggle. Encourage interest and respect for each other.

### Interdisciplinary Connections

In *Something Good*, Mr. Gilbert's class creates a mural of artwork and poems as a way of processing their feelings and building a positive space out of something ugly. Talk with students about how art can help people process and reveal strong emotions. Regularly share visual and performing art pieces such as dance videos, online museum tours, and art books. Students can respond to the art they view and hear through discussion or writing. What do they notice about this art piece? What emotions did the art make them feel? What was the artist trying to express in their opinion? What questions do you have about this artwork or its artist? Invite your art teacher or local artists to talk with students about art as a form of emotional expression. Collaborate with your school's art teacher and librarian to develop art integration activities, including reading books and articles about art and artists. Set aside frequent opportunities for students to share their art with each other and offer artistic choices for reading and writing assignments and response activities throughout the school year.



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Work with students to create a Something Good wall (in the library, your classroom, a hallway, or a virtual space) of quotes, song lyrics, phrases, artwork, and other mixed media. Choose media and materials that communicate encouragement and celebrate community. Invite students to create personal something good walls or lists in their notebooks or virtual spaces. What visuals and words inspire them? Why? Throughout the year, students can add to their class and individual walls and use their notebook inspirations for writing and art activities throughout the school year.

## Community Connections

Street art such as graffiti, stencils, and murals are community-based, authentic artistic expression. Although the graffiti scrawled on the bathroom wall in *Something Good* was negative, there are positive examples of street and wall art. Explore examples of street art online such as the wall murals of Melbourne, Australia or New York's subway graffiti. Investigate the street art in your community. Invite local street artists or muralists to Zoom with students and discuss their work. What inspires them about their community? What do they want the community to take away from their art? (Yes, street art is often created illegally and/or dangerously. Talk with students about these aspects of street art creation, too!)

When the children paint over the “something bad” they understand they cannot erase the hateful words completely: “We asked Mr. Gilbert if the bad-something was still there and he said yes, that somewhere deep underneath, it was still there. But we had changed it. We changed it when we covered that wall with our good-somethings” p. 37. Talk with students about ways that communities can support each other when hate speech (spoken or written) occurs. Even though we cannot erase what happened, how can we move forward together and grow? Invite your school counselor, administrator, or a community leader to talk with students about restorative justice or efforts communities can take when hate speech and hate crimes occur. Give space and time for students to draw or write about their ideas.

## Additional Resources

American Psychological Association: Addressing Race-Based Hate Speech and Microaggressive Behavior in Schools

Attarzadeh, Muhammad. (2018). What do Students Write on High School Bathroom Walls?

Connect Safely: Parent's and Educator's Guide to Hate Speech

Learning for Justice: Resources About Hate Speech

Melbourne City Council: Melbourne Street Art

These Teaching Tips were prepared by Donalyn Miller. Find her at [bookwhisperer.com](http://bookwhisperer.com), [theauthorvillage.com](http://theauthorvillage.com), on Twitter at [@donalynbooks](https://twitter.com/donalynbooks), and on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/donalynbooks](https://www.facebook.com/donalynbooks).

