

## Multicultural Book Review

Sister Anne's Hands is about a seven-year-old girl named Anna, who is changed by her second grade teacher, Sister Anne. Anna describes what it was like to have an African-American as her teacher during the 1960's. Sister Anne taught her many valuable lessons. Most importantly, she taught her to embrace and accept everyone, no matter what color of skin they had. Even though Anna is a grown woman, she will always remember Sister Anne and her hands.

### **Phase I:** Descriptive Phase

Some questions to ask your students are:

1. Who is this book about?
2. When did this story happen?
3. Why was Sister Anne different?
4. What did she teach her students?

This book is about Anna's perspective of her second grade teacher, Sister Anne. Her memories of second grade and the impact Sister Anne had on her life take place at a Catholic School during the 1960's. This was also a time of significant historical events and people such as Martin Luther King. African-American people during that time were not widely accepted like they are today. Some of the students made fun of Sister Anne by writing a derogatory poem about her. Sister Anne used this incident as an opportunity to teach her students about the history of African Americans and how they had been treated.

**Phase II: Personal Interpretive Phase**

Some questions to ask your students are:

1. How did you feel about the poem the students wrote about Sister Anne?  
Did you feel sad?
2. Have you ever felt like Sister Anne?
3. Has anyone ever made fun of you? How did that make you feel?
4. Have you ever made fun of someone because they were different? How did that person feel?
5. Do people still act like that today? If so, how?

**Phase III: Critical Analysis Phase**

Some questions to ask your students are:

1. What if the students had acted differently toward Sister Anne?
2. If there had been African-American students in the class, how would they have reacted to the poem?
3. Do you think Sister Anne could have acted differently? How?

**Phase IV: Creative Action Phase**

Here are some ways your students could take action and some ideas for classroom projects:

1. Write letters to a local newspaper about embracing diversity.
2. Highlight the issue of accepting people of various cultures in a class newsletter to make others more aware.
3. Write a biography about an African-American who has made a

significant contribution to society.

4. Make a poster that advertises diversity.
5. Make a collage of the various lessons Sister Anne taught her class.
6. Write a poem that the students should have written to Sister Anne.
7. Write a news article on events that were happening during the 1960's.
8. Write and recite an original poem about the book.
9. Identify all of the similes and metaphors. Draw pictures to go with them.
10. Draw a picture of Sister Anne.
11. Make a collage of hands similar to the one Anna made.
12. Make a class quilt of hands. Have each student create and decorate his or her own square.
13. Paint your favorite scene of the book.
14. Plant a garden like the students in the book did.
15. Make up a song to addition and subtraction problems.
16. Create your own math problems using buttons, pencils, and teeth.
17. Research on the Internet about Phyllis Wheatley, Matthew Henson, and Sojourner Truth and report back to the class what you find.
18. Do research about *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Act out a typical clip from this famous television show.
19. Write a letter to Sister Anne that you think Anna would write her now.
20. Write and act out a conversation that might occur now between Anna and Sister Anne.

This book would be appropriate for second or third graders. It coincides with the content standards because it includes people who make a difference; people from different cultures, now and long ago; and our nation's history: meeting people through biography. I would use this book for thematic units such as hands, African-Americans, or Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The illustrations in this book are wonderful. They enrich the book with color and depict each scene beautifully. I would definitely recommend this book because it meets the standards, it can be integrated throughout the curriculum, and it conveys a powerful message. It is perfect for discussing a sensitive topic.