

# AAPI DISCUSSION GUIDE & ANTI-RACISM RESOURCES FOR THE PIPPA PARK BOOK SERIES BY ERIN YUN

## ★ SECTION 1: ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER EXPERIENCES

*The following section can be used to discuss Asian American Pacific Islander experiences and key terms involved in this discussion.*

1. Define the term BIPOC, pronounced “bye-pock.” BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and people of color. This term is specific to the United States and is intended to center the experiences of Black and Indigenous groups and demonstrate solidarity between communities of color.
2. Define the term Asia. Asia refers to the largest of the seven continents, which spans around 16 million square miles.<sup>1</sup> The United Nations estimates that the population of Asia is around 4.3 billion people and recognizes five regions of Asia (Central, Eastern, Southeastern, Southern, Western) and 48 countries within those regions.<sup>2</sup> Ask students if they can list 5–10 Asian countries.
3. Define the term AAPI and refer to the US Census Bureau’s definition of Asian and Pacific Islander.<sup>3</sup> Ask students what comes to mind when they think of the term AAPI and what figures and examples in the media stand out most to them (films, songs, movie stars, scientists, authors, athletes, etc.).
4. Define the term Model Minority Myth. Model Minority refers to a minority group or a member of a group stereotypically viewed as being more successful than other minorities.<sup>4</sup> The Model Minority Myth is the harmful perception of universal success among Asian Americans. This myth erases the differences among individuals,

ignores the diversity among Asian Americans, operates alongside the myth of Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners, and wrongly implies racism against Asian Americans does not exist.<sup>5</sup> It’s also harmful to the struggle for racial justice, as it can be used to downplay racism against other marginalized groups.

Some examples of the Model Minority Myth include assumptions that all Asian Americans:

- Excel at STEM-related and musical fields (for example, a student who is great at math and plays the violin).
- Work hard but are shy, quiet, and unable to hold leadership positions (for example, a student who does all the work in a group project but does not hold any decision-making power over the group).
- Experience a higher degree of socioeconomic success than the population average (for example, a student who is economically well-off, never breaks the rules, and has a stable and unproblematic family life).
- Are law-abiding citizens who have adhered to the rules of the American system, and if other groups work harder and overcome oppression, they too would succeed (for example, a student who is labeled the “class pet” or used by their teacher as an ideal who other students—often BIPOC students—should strive to emulate).



Book 1

Book 2

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**Pippa Park Raises Her Game: Book 1**  
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## ★ SECTION 2: PIPPA PARK'S PERSONAL LENS

*The books discuss the AAPI and Korean immigrant experience through the lens of Pippa Park. Ask students how Pippa's experience as an Asian American girl has informed her decision-making throughout the books.*

### Pippa Park Raises Her Game

1. When Pippa gets a basketball scholarship to attend Lakeview, she doesn't tell her new classmates that her family owns a Korean laundromat. Why do you think Pippa feels pressured to hide this part of herself? How does this affect her self-worth and her relationship with others?
2. Before Pippa starts at Lakeview, she reads *Tween Things*, which has a gorgeous blond girl pouting on the cover. What made her want to buy the magazine? How do you think the magazine cover made Pippa feel?
3. Why is it so important for Pippa to pay Helen back for the manicure even though Helen could afford to pay for Pippa? How does the value of money change depending on who has it?
4. Chuseok is mentioned many times throughout the story and is an important part of Pippa's culture (see Korean Language Glossary on pages 274–275). Chuseok is the Korean version of Thanksgiving, and Pippa's family asks her to invite her new friends over to celebrate. Why doesn't she?
5. What are some of the Korean dishes you noticed Pippa eating or talking about, and how do these dishes inform your perceptions and understanding of Pippa's cultural background?
6. What have you learned about the AAPI experience from reading Pippa's story? Why do you think diversity matters in books as well as other forms of media?

### Pippa Park Crush at First Sight

1. Why does Pippa feel pressured to fit in with the Royals? What are some ways in which being a Royal would make her more accepted at Lakeview?
2. When Marvel asks Pippa if she listens to K-pop, Pippa feels embarrassed that she can't name any new songs. How has being friends with Marvel changed Pippa's outlook on certain aspects of Korean culture?
3. Many times in the book, Pippa could have asked for help planning and paying for the party. What causes her to keep this from her friends?
4. In the first book, Pippa was embarrassed to eat Korean food in front of her friends. Can you think of any examples of how Pippa's perception might have changed in this book?
5. Pippa is gifted a golden scrunchie for Christmas. Do you think this means she's been accepted into the Royals? How does this affect her identity and view of herself?

## ★ SECTION 3: BULLYING AND MICROAGGRESSIONS

*The following section can be used to discuss a specific type of bullying that minorities, including Asian Americans, experience: microaggressions. Students can discuss what microaggressions are and how these instances are represented in the books with specific examples.*

### Pippa Park Raises Her Game

1. What is bullying? Bullying is defined as the abuse and mistreatment of someone vulnerable by someone stronger or more powerful.<sup>6</sup>
2. What is a microaggression? A microaggression is defined as a comment or action that subtly expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority).<sup>7</sup> This can be conscious or unconscious and intentional or unintentional.

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3. Discuss the following examples of microaggressions Pippa experienced in the book:

- A student in Pippa's class says, "Aren't Asians supposed to be good at math?" What makes this comment a microaggression?
- Eliot ignores Pippa when he sees her at the diner. Pippa thinks it's because she has runny orange butterscotch on her lips after eating hot fudge. Do you think there are other reasons why Eliot pretends he doesn't know her?
- When Pippa eats kimchi during lunch at Lakeview, Olive comments on the smell. Why do you think Olive made that comment, and how does it affect Pippa throughout the rest of the book?
- Evelyn tells Pippa that Eliot is a "Haverford", and that "being a Haverford means something." Besides Eliot being a Haverford, what other reasons might Evelyn have for discouraging Pippa from dating Eliot? How does Pippa react?
- When Pippa tells the Royals that her mom is in the hospital, Starsie says, "I'm sure there are really good doctors in Seoul. My dentist is Korean—he's great." Why do you think Starsie mentioned that her dentist is Korean? What are Starsie's intentions, and how does this comment make Pippa feel?

4. Ask students about other examples of microaggressions that they noticed in the book as well as types of microaggressions and/or bullying that they might have experienced in their daily lives and the emotional reactions that they've had.

### **Pippa Park Crush at First Sight**

1. Throughout the book, Caroline makes various comments about Pippa hosting the Christmas party. Can you think of anything specific Caroline said that might have made Pippa feel insecure or ashamed?

Possible answers below:

- Page 8: Caroline tells Pippa that she keeps forgetting about her
  - Page 41: Caroline mentions how excited Pippa must be to attend a Royals party since the ones at Victoria Middle must be "quite a bit different"
  - Page 48: Caroline says Pippa's apartment might be cute, but it's not up to the cut
  - Page 147: Caroline assumes Pippa is not familiar with the catering suggestions because two of the restaurants have a Michelin star
  - Page 234: Caroline asks what the guests will think when they show up at "some random one-room apartment" that does not represent the Royal brand
2. Caroline offers to lend Pippa a dress for the party. She says it's three sizes too big and should be the perfect size for Pippa. What makes this comment a microaggression?
3. Why do you think Caroline pushes Pippa during basketball practice? What do you think Caroline meant when she said she was surprised at how fast Pippa dropped to the floor?
4. When Eliot tells his aunt that he is tutoring Pippa in math, Miss Haverford says service to the community is a Haverford value. What does she mean by "service to the community," and how do you think this comment made Pippa feel?
5. Compare the microaggressions in book two versus book one. How are the microaggressions Pippa faced in this book more hurtful and damaging than the microaggressions in book one?

*The discussion questions in this guide were written by Erin Siu. Erin Siu is a children's publishing editor who works on picture books, middle-grade and young adult books, and graphic novels. She's originally from California but now calls New York City home. She is a mentor for The People of Color in Publishing Mentorship Program and was an original grant recipient of We Need Diverse Books.*

#### NOTES:

1. <https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/en/node/15207>
2. [https://www.emiw.org/fileadmin/emiw/UserActivityDocs/Geograph.Representation/Geographic-Representation-Appendix\\_1.pdf](https://www.emiw.org/fileadmin/emiw/UserActivityDocs/Geograph.Representation/Geographic-Representation-Appendix_1.pdf)
3. <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html>
4. <https://www.dictionary.com/e/historical-current-events/model-minority/>
5. <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/what-is-the-model-minority-myth>
6. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bullying>
7. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/microaggression>

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS:

1. The Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA)

Talk Story: Sharing Stories, Sharing Culture Website - <https://www.apalaweb.org/talkstorytogether/resources/>

API/APIA Book Lists: Curated lists representing high-quality APIA children's and young adult books that have been carefully selected by the APALA Family Literacy Focus committee and the APALA Rubric to evaluate Asian American and Pacific Islander Youth Literature

2. Asian American K-12 Resources for Educators and Librarians compiled by Sarah Park Dahlen (2021)

<https://padlet.com/readingspark/AsianAmK12Resources>

3. Cooperative Children's Book Center Diversity Resources

<https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/literature-resources/diversity-resources-multicultural-literature/>

4. Kibooka: A website with kids books by Korean Americans (and Korean diaspora) <https://kibooka.com/>

5. Lecture on Asian American children's literature: Possibilities and pitfalls presented by Dr. Sarah Park Dahlen as part of the Augusta Baker Lecture Series, University of South Carolina (2021)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYKRox3Cqdl>

6. Social Justice Books: Guide for selecting anti-bias children's books from Louise Derman-Sparks (2013)

<https://socialjusticebooks.org/guide-for-selecting-anti-bias-childrens-books/>

7. Social Justice Books: Asian Americans: best multicultural and social justice books for children, young adults, and educators

<https://socialjusticebooks.org>

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