



# THE MANY COLORS OF HARPREET SINGH

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

**GRADES: RECOMMENDED FOR KINDERGARTEN THROUGH 4TH GRADE**

*Questions and activities can be adapted as necessary for student age and ability.*

Before you use this discussion guide in the classroom, please read the Teacher Notes included and the afterword from Simran Jeet Singh at the end of the book for more information about the Sikh faith and the significance of the turban.



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# TEACHER NOTES

## KEY WORDS / THEMES

Kindness, compassion, empathy, inclusion, diversity (appreciation of), friendship, cultural diversity, othering, microaggression, exclusion, emotions, dealing with change, moving to a new home

## LANGUAGE GUIDE

This glossary / vocabulary list can be either shared as a handout or written on the board before reading the book. For younger children, the teacher could share the explanations of words when the context arises.

### Article of faith

An article of faith is something that must be worn by someone who follows that faith at all times. It cannot be taken off. It must be treated with respect and never touched without the wearer's permission. Someone who wears an article of faith must never be asked to remove it.

### Sikh / Sikhism

A Sikh is a follower of a religion called Sikhism, which is the fifth largest world religion with more than 25 million followers. The 'i' in the word 'Sikh' is a short 'i' sound similar to the 'i' in the word *brick*; it should not be pronounced 'seek'. Sikh core values include love, equality, selfless service, and social justice.

### Turban

As part of their faith, practicing Sikhs do not cut their hair. A turban is a Sikh article of faith and is tied on the head to cover the hair. It is integral to a Sikh's identity, similar to a uniform that is worn every day. The Sikh turban represents a commitment to living the Sikh values described above.

### Patka

A patka is a type of turban that is generally worn by younger children until they transition to a full-size turban. The word 'patka' is pronounced 'pat-ka' ('pat' is said like the word 'shut').

### Bhangra

Bhangra is a cultural dance from the Punjab region of South Asia. It does not have any religious significance. The word 'bhangra' is pronounced 'bhang-ra' ('bhang' is said like the word 'rung').

### Singh / Kaur

The name Singh is given to all male Sikhs and denotes a lion. The name Kaur is given to all female Sikhs and denotes female royalty. Both names signify sovereignty and responsibility.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

- \* When speaking about the patka, it is important to retain cultural sensitivity and to remember that for Sikhs, it is an article of faith. Please also note that there is no religious significance in the colors of patkas, and they are not typically associated with moods. The association of colors with moods is specific to Harpreet Singh's character in the book—he expresses his moods with colors in a variety of ways, rather than just with his patka (e.g., see page in the book where his parents are suggesting different-colored clothes for him to wear.)
- \* It is important never to refer to the patka as a 'hat' because it is an article of faith. It is not simply taken on or off like a hat. It is tied every day and holds deep religious significance. There is a line in the book which reinforces this when Harpreet states "Mine's not a hat, actually. It's called a patka."
- \* This discussion guide suggests various activities to unpack the themes in this book. Please note that it would not be appropriate to encourage children to design or wear their own patkas.



# BEFORE READING

*This pre-reading section includes discussion questions and an activity.*

## 1. PRE-ACTIVITY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- "What different emotions can you think of?"
- "How does your body feel when you are experiencing different emotions?"
- "What is something you do when you are feeling certain emotions?"
- "What colors are your favorite?"

## 2. ACTIVITY: UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS

*Required: basic art supplies (colored pencils / papers)*

Introduce the activity: "We are going to give you a series of words to respond to. You can share your personal interpretation of the prompt through acting out a pose, speaking, drawing/coloring, or singing."

Have each participant reflect and then respond to the following prompts. Ask students to choose which mode of response they would like to use for the activity before starting. Make sure that each participant has the necessary materials for their response and then encourage students to share their responses with the class if they are comfortable.

### Prompts:

- \* Happy
- \* Sad
- \* Shy
- \* Nervous
- \* Sunny
- \* Gloomy
- \* Celebratory
- \* Invisible
- \* Courageous/Brave



## 3. ADDITIONAL PRE-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

"What do the things I wear say about me?" (Children might refer to different items of clothing, articles of faith, colors, hairstyles, etc.)

"What is an article of faith?" (Please share the following information once students have given their answers. You can also refer to the Language Guide).

- \* An article of faith is something that must be worn by someone who follows that faith, at all times.
- \* It cannot be taken off.
- \* Someone who wears an article of faith must never be asked to remove it.
- \* It must be treated with respect and never touched without the wearer's permission.
- \* What other articles of faith can you think of? (e.g. *A kippah, a cross, a hijab*).

"What is a patka?" (Please share the following information once students have given their answers. You can also refer to the Language Guide).

- \* The main character in this book, Harpreet Singh, wears a patka.
- \* Harpreet is a Sikh, a follower of a religion called Sikhism.
- \* As part of their faith, Sikhs are taught not to cut their hair.
- \* Sikh children who keep their long hair tie it in a topknot and cover it with a special head covering called a patka.
- \* The patka is not a hat, it is an article of faith.
- \* The patka represents a commitment to living Sikh values such as love, equality, selfless service, and social justice.

## AFTER READING

*This section includes after-reading discussion questions and an activity to explore the themes and illustrations in the book.*

### 1. AFTER-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

#### *Dealing with change and having empathy*

- \* “Was there a time that you went through a big change? How did that make you feel?”
- \* “What were some things that helped you feel better when you went through this change?”

#### *Inclusion and encouraging acts of kindness and compassion*

- \* “How did Harpreet use an act of kindness to make a friend?”
- \* “How did Abby reaching out to Harpreet help him?”
- \* “What is something kind that someone has done for you?”
- \* “What is something kind you did for someone when they were feeling sad?”
- \* “What is something kind you did for someone this week?”
- \* “What are ways that you can make someone feel welcomed in a place that might be new to them?”
- \* “Has someone ever helped you when you needed something? How did this make you feel?”

Extension activity: See [The Kindness Rocks Project](#) and consider participating with your school.

### 2. ACTIVITY: IMPACTFUL ILLUSTRATIONS

#### **Part 1: Acts of Kindness**

You can show the class the illustrations referred to in the suggested answers in order to demonstrate the points.

“What are moments when Harpreet felt othered or excluded?”

- \* Sitting without a buddy on the bus for a field trip
- \* The microaggression of having his name misspelled on Valentine’s Day cards
- \* Sitting on his own on one side of the table while everyone stares at his food

“Are there times that you have felt othered or excluded?”

“What actions made Harpreet feel included or appreciated?”



- \* Abby noticing Harpreet feels shy and lonely when he is new to their school
- \* Abby extending her mitten to Harpreet
- \* Harpreet and Abby sharing food at the table
- \* Harpreet and Abby sitting next to each other on the bus and smiling

“What are some acts of friendliness that make you feel appreciated?”

“What can we learn about kindness from the illustrations in the book?”

- \* A simple act of kindness like extending our hand (or mitten!), or sitting next to someone on the bus, can go a long way in welcoming them.
- \* Talking and sharing with others is a great way to learn new things about them.
- \* Our emotions can change just as life changes: For example, Harpreet used to wear white when he felt sad, but by the end of the book he reframed his emotions—instead, wearing white reminded him of the snow and made him feel happy.

### Part 2: Smiley Faces

“Smiley faces are a visual theme in the book. What do you think they represent?”

1. Smiley face in the sand: This represents acceptance / being home (the smiley faces open and end the story), and illustrate Harpreet spreading cheer everywhere he goes.
2. Smiley face on Abby’s Valentine’s Day card: This is the first instance (and the only instance until the end of the book), when someone other than Harpreet is drawing a smiley face. What is Abby trying to convey with this smiley face, and how is it received by Harpreet?
3. Abby has a smiley face hat: At his gloomiest, Harpreet sees it as a frown. However, it is actually a smile, and he realizes who is missing that smile. Through that act of kindness of returning Abby’s hat, Harpreet ends up gaining a friend.
4. Smiley faces on the sidewalk with chalk: Together, Harpreet and Abby spread more smiles and more cheer.



## COMMUNITY PORTRAIT ACTIVITY

### *Valuing Diversity and Celebrating Community*

This activity involves assembling a mural. It encourages students to celebrate their own diversity and story, and also encourages acts of kindness and compassion. The final community portrait illustrates their interconnected support system.

*Make copies of the Community Portrait Worksheet for your class as necessary.*

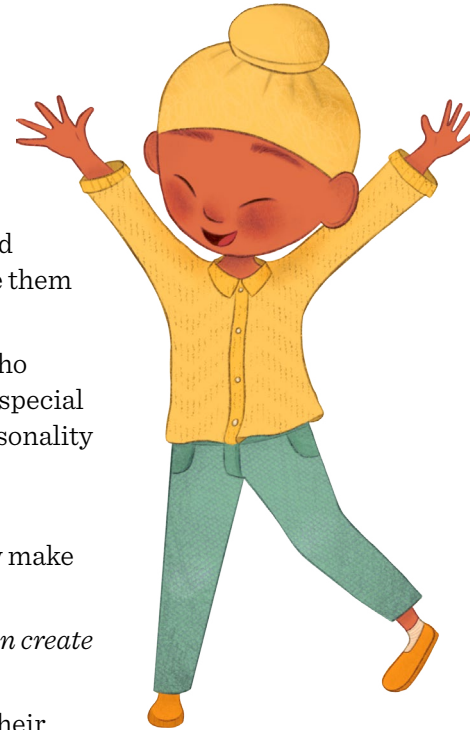
#### **Required:**

- \* Crayons / markers / colored pencils, including ones that reflect different skin tones
- \* Copies of sun rays (from worksheet) and orange pens / crayons
- \* Copies of outlines of people (from worksheet)
- \* Copies of clouds to write short paragraphs inside (from worksheet)
- \* Cutout of Harpreet and Abby with their quote “Together, we can create a kinder world” (from worksheet)
- \* A yellow construction paper circle for the sun
- \* Blu tack / adhesive for wall



### Instructions:

1. Distribute outlines of people, clouds, and sunrays to each student. Make sure they have enough for their own creative vision. You can pre-cut these parts, or ask them to cut them out themselves.
2. Relay these instructions to students:
  - \* “Harpreet likes to spread cheer everywhere he goes. How can we be kind and try to be a good friend? Please think of one to three ideas and write them in orange on your sunrays.”
  - \* “Next, let’s think of people who are kind to you, who support you, and who bring you joy. These can be your family, your friends, or anyone who is special to you. Please draw a portrait of them trying to really capture their personality on your outlines.”
  - \* “Lastly, please write a short paragraph in your cloud about yourself and the people around you who support you and bring you joy. How do they make you feel, and how do they support you?”
3. Cut out the printout of Harpreet and Abby with their quote “*Together, we can create a kinder world,*” which can be placed in the center of the mural.
4. Encourage the class to set up the mural with you when they are done with their individual parts.
  - \* In the center, place Harpreet and Abby with their quote “Together, we can create a kinder world.”
  - \* Have students place their portraits surrounding Harpreet and Abby in a crowd.
  - \* Place the yellow circle on the top of the mural (in one of the corners), and place the sunrays that the students have created around it.
  - \* Place the clouds in the sky wherever the students want them.
  - \* Optional: Encourage the students to add some swirls in or around the clouds like the ones seen on the inside cover of the book. They should feel that these clouds convey themselves and their loved ones just like the swirls seen on the inside cover.
5. Use **#CommunityKindnessMural** on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram to see examples of assembled murals and to share the one from your classroom!



## APPENDICES / SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCE LIST

- \* **Sikhism: An Educator’s Guide**  
<https://www.sikhcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Sikhism-educator-guide.pdf>
- \* **Patka Handout**  
<https://www.sikhcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/How-To-Tie-A-Patka.pdf>
- \* **Little Sikhs *Who am I? What’s on my head?* Video (1:34)**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tf8aK3e7RtQ&feature=share>
- \* **C3 Elementary Inquiry Social Studies C3 Elementary Inquiry on Cultural Diversity**  
Explore the compelling question “*What do things I wear say about me?*” even further.  
<http://www.c3teachers.org/inquiries/cultural-diversity-2/>
- \* **Anti-Bullying Resources**  
<https://www.stopbullying.gov/>
- \* Teachers can signpost mental health resources available within the school or locally to children.



**THE SIKH COALITION**  
the voice of a people

This discussion guide was created in collaboration with the **Sikh Coalition**, the nation’s largest Sikh civil rights organization, which leads efforts to promote accurate Sikh awareness and prevent bullying in our nation’s public schools.  
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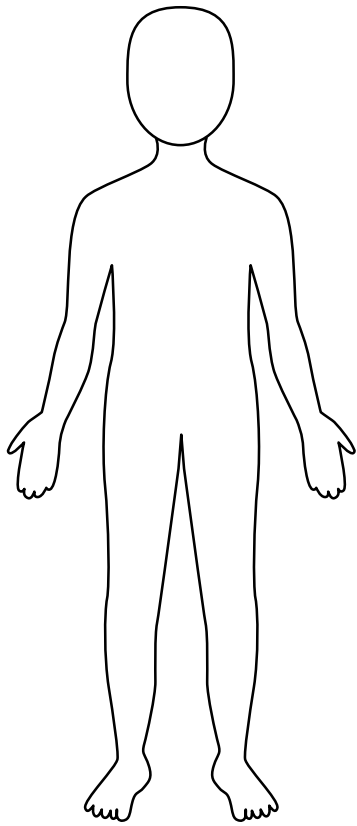
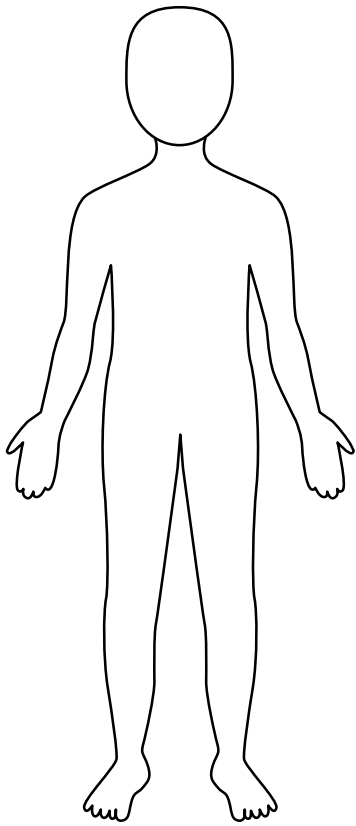
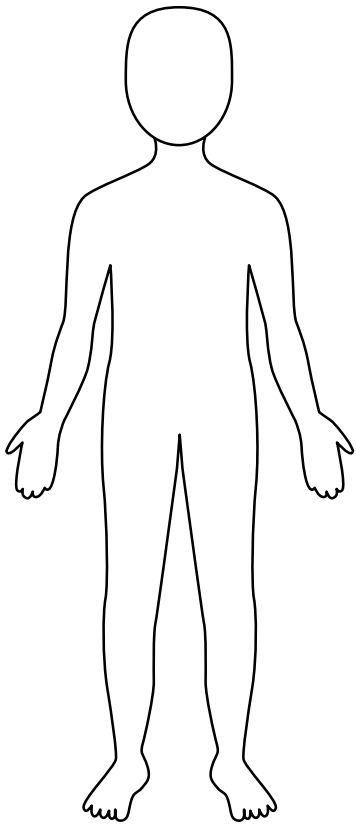
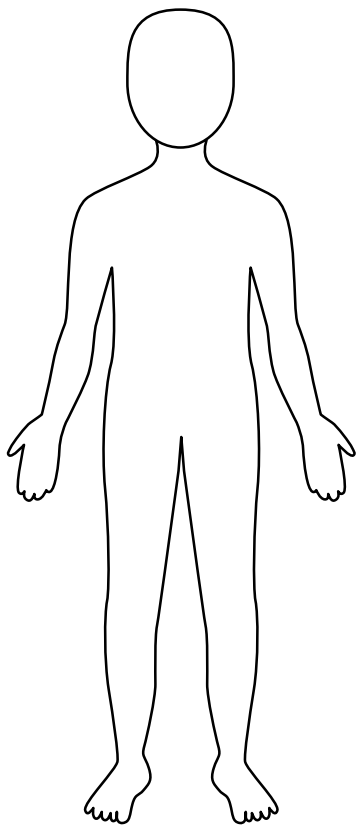
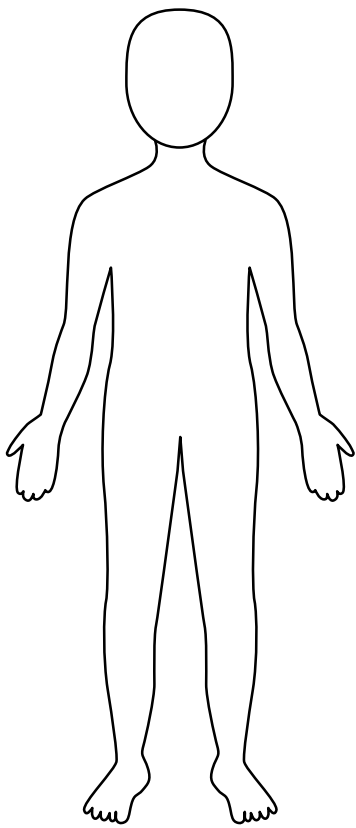
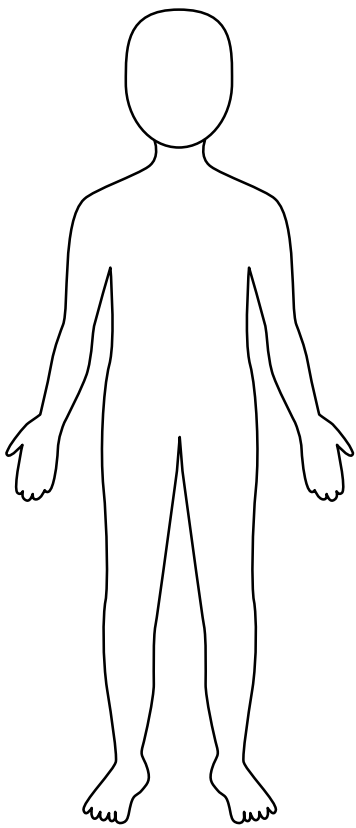
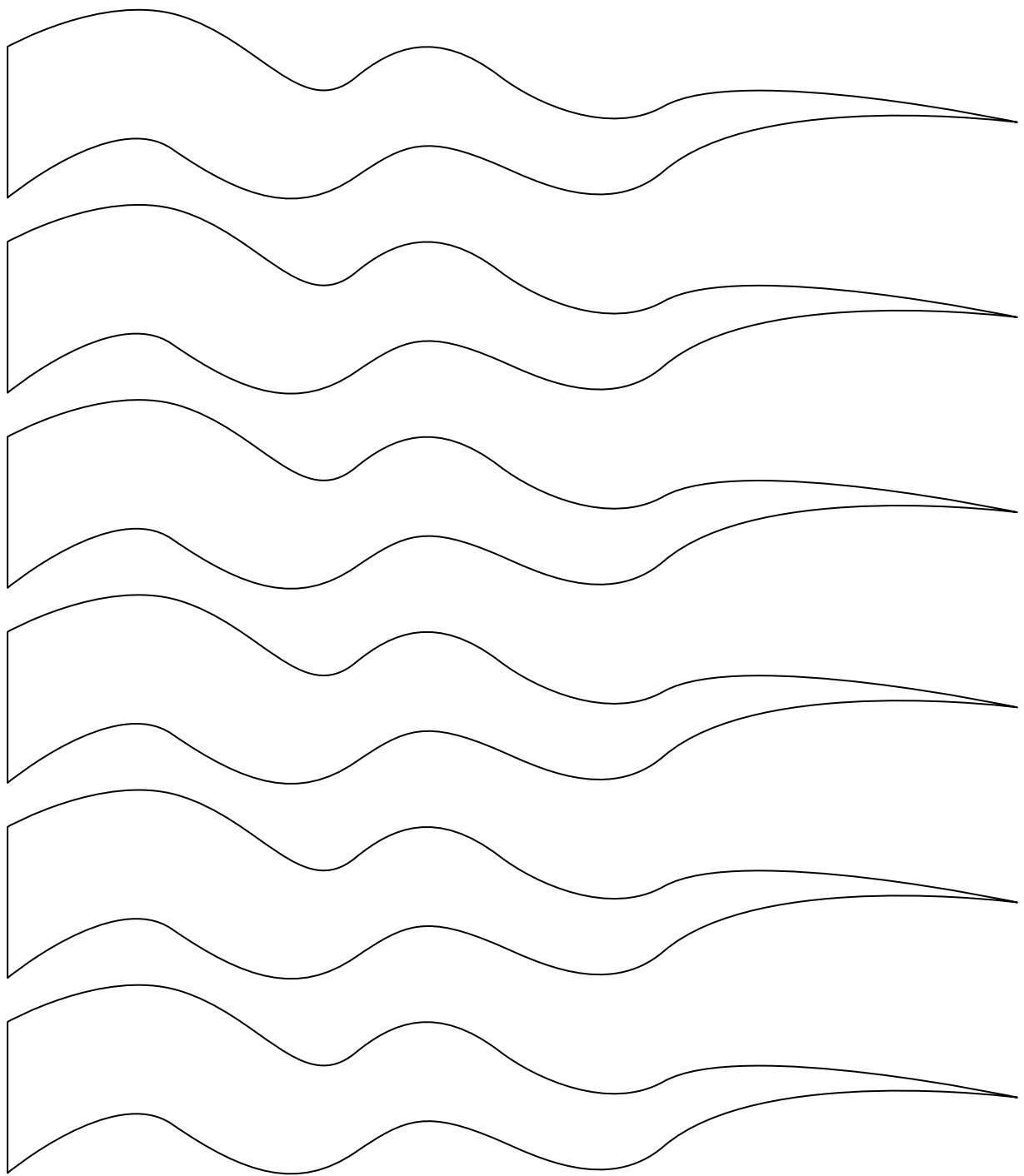
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# COMMUNITY PORTRAIT WORKSHEET (1)



COMMUNITY PORTRAIT WORKSHEET (2)

Blank cloud-shaped writing area with horizontal lines.

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Blank cloud-shaped writing area with horizontal lines.

Blank cloud-shaped writing area with horizontal lines.

Together, we can create a kinder world.

