FIVE QUESTIONS ABOUT RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCE

"Everyone celebrates Christmas!"

Kids make assumptions all the time. And those assumptions are perfect opportunities for conversations about the world around us.
Difference isn't right or wrong. It's just different.

1

Has anyone ever assumed something about you just because it was true for them? What did it feel like when they got it wrong?

PURPOSE Start with the student's own experience of difference rather than starting with religious differences. Help students see how it feels when someone makes a wrong assumption about them. Use examples like sports abilities, favorite games or TV shows, or food preferences. Choose situations where a child might have felt "on the outside." Talk about *assumptions*.

2

Does everyone celebrate Christmas? Do you know someone who doesn't?

PURPOSE Some students may have friends or family members who don't celebrate Christmas. Others may not. Explore some of the traditions students, their families, and friends celebrate. Here's a chance to recognize and appreciate differences with gentleness and respect.

3

What should we do when we realize we've made a wrong assumption?

PURPOSE Anyone can get it wrong sometimes. What matters is what we do next. You can even say, "I'm sorry. I didn't know about that. Do you want to tell me about your holiday?" Listen if they want to share. It's never wrong to be kind.

4

What's a good way to learn about holidays and traditions we don't celebrate? How does understanding our differences make us better neighbors?

PURPOSE Don't worry, you don't have to be an expert in all religions! You're modeling the dialogue you want your students to have. Show them how to be *respectfully curious* rather than judgmental. "What holidays do you celebrate?" "What do you do on your holiday?" Even, "That sounds like fun!" Encourage students to share their own traditions, too. Friendship is a two-way street!

5

How can we be a good friend to someone who celebrates different holidays?

PURPOSE Your students know how to enjoy birthday parties that aren't theirs. Well, we can enjoy learning about someone else's holiday without making it our own. Sometimes we can even join in if we're invited. Friendship doesn't require sameness!

Use these questions with or without the book.

"Please don't smush our holidays together!" — **Oliver Overstreet**

*Inspired by **Oy, Santa!** or **There's a Latke to Learn about Hanukkah**, a holiday story about respecting differences*

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