

The skin im in

Profession, Teacher



The Skin I'm In was an easy read written by Sharon G. Flake about a seventh grader named Maleeka Madison. This bright Seventh grader attended McClenton Middle School where she dealt with all the issues that come with trying to fit in and be accepted by your peers. These issues along with the death of Maleeka's dad a couple years ago started to become very overwhelming and caused her to conduct herself in ways that made no sense at all. Although so many people didn't understand what exactly was going on with her, there was one teacher, Miss Saunders who knew and had experienced the things she was feeling all too well. One of the biggest issues dealt with in this book was bullying by peers. Maleeka was talked about because she was tall, because she had very chocolate skin, because she was smart, because her clothes were homemade; everything was a problem according to the other students. Before her father passed the issues weren't as big of a problem because he instilled in her to be proud of the person she was, but once gone she started looking at herself differently. Maleeka would succumb to the threats, bribery, and mean words of a girl named Char just so that she would have clothes that she felt others would think were socially acceptable. Although in Maleeka's mind and in her journal entries she knew giving in to the bullying was stupid, she didn't seem to have a voice enough to express what she was feeling deep down. This aspect of the book taught me that it is almost inevitable to avoid instances such as these in your classroom, but as a teacher I have to figure out ways to stay "WithIt" and keep each student on track. As teachers our number one job is to educate and if there is anything at all we can do to reduce bullying and keep students on the right path so that we can do just that, then we should. In this book

Miss Saunders the new teacher could relate to Maleeka. She was born with a face that had a big mark on it and was teased as a child because of it. It took time, but Miss Saunders had to learn to love herself inside and out and ignore others thoughts and opinions of her. Even as an adult she was talked about, the other teachers in the school didn't like her because she came from the corporate world and didn't have a degree in education. Miss Saunders prompted Maleeka to continue a journal assignment that ended up being a great outlet for her. Although many times Maleeka didn't want to hear the things Miss Saunders continually tried to get across to her it's safe to say that those things worked out to her benefit by the end of the story. It was clear that Maleeka's biggest fan was her dad and the fact that he was no longer around negatively affected her. As teachers we may not be able to fill voids like that, but we can root, cheer them on, and share our experiences in hopes that they become and stay motivated to learn. Another person who repeatedly teased Maleeka in this story was a boy named John John. As it was revealed later on in the book he talked about Maleeka because he was jealous of her and jealous of the boy Caleb of whom she had a very close relationship with. John John wanted Maleeka for himself and didn't know how to deal with the fact that he didn't interest her. Although it took her a minute Maleeka ended up saving John Johns life when three guys jumped him on the street. In the end John John respected her for it, but only because Maleeka finally gained some courage to do what she saw fit. If Maleeka would have had courage and a voice in some other situations, she might have been able to lessen the bullying and teasing. I really enjoyed this book and it spoke volumes to me as an aspiring teacher, but also as an

overweight kid who used to get teased in school. That part of middle and high school are parts I try to forget, but as an aspiring teacher it might be good to share parts of my experiences with my students. This book reinforced the phrase "Withitness"; being in tune with what's going on in your classroom, your school, and your community. Miss Saunders may not have had a degree in education, but she had a degree in life and was able to personally connect with the students. I stated earlier that our number one job as educators is to educate, but if we are not in tune with our students and the types of issues that they have to deal with at that age then we may ultimately fail. I am taking away from this book that along with educating my students I should also take steps to ensure that they are functioning in an environment that allows them to do so, in and outside of the classroom.