

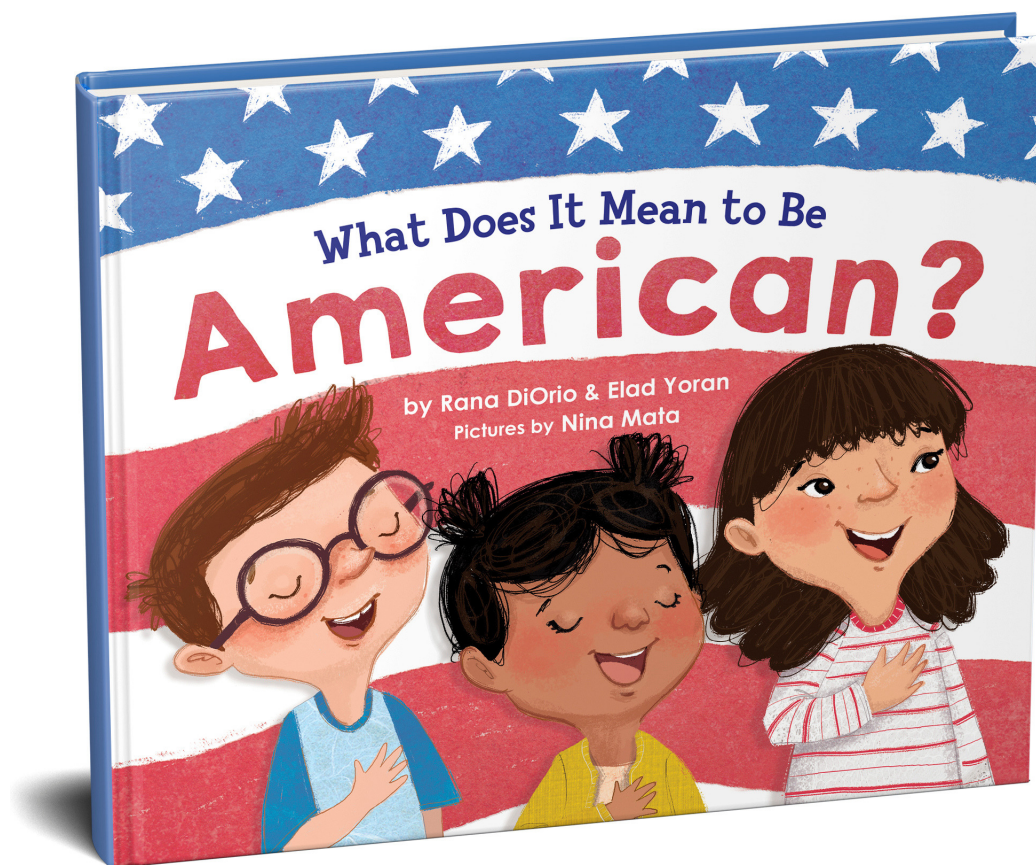
An Educator's Guide for  
*WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AMERICAN?*

**BY RANA DIORIO AND ELAD YORAN, ILLUSTRATED BY  
NINA MATA**

**A COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ALIGNED ACTIVITY  
GUIDE FOR GRADES KINDERGARTEN, 1 AND 2**

Note: The activities in this guide align with Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts for Grades Kindergarten, 1 & 2, but standards for other grades may also apply.

**Prepared by We Love Children's Books**



What Does It Mean to Be  
***American?***



## ABOUT THE BOOK

What does it mean to be American? Does it mean you like apple pie or fireworks? Not exactly.

While politics seem to divide our country into the two opposing teams of red and blue, one truth remains: we are all Americans. But what does that mean? This continuation of the popular *What Does It Mean to Be...?* series provides a nonpartisan point of view perfect for any and all Americans who are proud of who they are--and where they come from, regardless of their political views..

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS AND ILLUSTRATOR

### **About the Authors and Illustrator**

Rana DiOrio has written her way through life as a student, a lawyer, an investment banker, a private equity investor, and now as an author and creator of children's media. Her personal pursuits include fitness training, practicing yoga, reading nonfiction and children's literature, dreaming big dreams, and helping others realize theirs. She is the author of an award-winning series of picture books that includes *What Does It Mean to Be Global?*, *What Does It Mean to Be Green?*, *What Does It Mean to Be Present?*, and *What Does It Mean To Be Safe?*

Elad Yoran is the first American-born child of immigrant parents. When he was growing up, his family moved several times and he lived in several places including New York, California, Ohio, and Israel before settling in the NYC suburbs. When he graduated from high school, Elad decided to serve in the U.S. Army as a way of giving back for all that this country has done for his family. He is married and together with his wife has four children whom they are raising to be both proud of their heritage and patriotic Americans.

Nina Mata grew up as a typical latchkey kid from Queens, New York. Her family emigrated from the Philippines when she was six years old. Because her parents worked and went to night school, Nina spent a lot (like a whole lot) of time drawing. Nina now creates work for trade and educational publishing as well as kids' apps. Her work represents the beauty and diversity of our world. She currently lives in New Jersey with her husband, four-year-old daughter, and Tabi the cat.

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## PRE-READING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

This book's title is a question: *What does it mean to be American?* Working as a class, create a simple definition of the word "American." Do students think that is what the authors mean?

America is full of different kinds of people. What do they have in common?

Prepare students for the upcoming story by doing a Picture Walk. Who are the main characters in the book? What can students tell about them based solely on the pictures? Are the same people featured in every illustration? What is going on in each picture? What sort of story do students think this will be? Compare these first impressions them with the real story once the class has read it.

## VOCABULARY

Before reading the book to the class, review the text to identify any unfamiliar words or concepts. Prepare students by discussing these words and their meanings. When they appear in the book show students how to use context and the illustrations to figure out what the words mean. Have students provide real life connections to these new words and concepts by using them in different ways.

RL K.4

L K.4, K.5, 1.4, 1.5, 2.4, 2.5

## POST-READING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

### AMERICAN AS...

At the beginning of the book, the little girl is thinking of apple pie and fireworks. Have students ever heard the expression, "As American as apple pie?" Does it make sense to them? What other things, attitudes and actions do students think are as "American as apple pie?"

SL K.1, 1.1, 2.1

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## WORDS AND PICTURES

Picture books are special. They combine the strengths of both words and pictures to tell their story. As a class, discuss the role of the author and the role of the illustrator in creating a book. Then re-read *What Does it Mean to Be American* paying attention to how the words and the pictures work together in this story. What information do students learn from the pictures? What information comes from the text? For example, the text "...leading by example to take action when people need help" is accompanied by a picture of the family serving food. What is happening in this picture? How does the illustration communicate what the words mean? What other things could have been used for the illustration? Could the picture make sense without the words? Would the words have as much impact without the picture? Review other parts of the book this same way and have students identify how the story is told. Be sure to have students cite specifics from the book (text and pictures) to support their responses.

RL K.1, K.3, K.6, K.7, 1.1, 1.3, 1.7, 2.1, 2.7  
SL K.1, 1.1, 2.1

## WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?

*What Does It Mean to Be American?* combines big ideas with the story of a girl and her family. The text describes what it means to be American, and the pictures provide examples of those ideas in action. While some of the pictures are used to show examples of what it means to "Be American," many of them also tell the story of a trip the family takes, culminating with a swearing-in of new citizens. It can be difficult for young readers to follow the exact order of events, especially the first time through the book. After you have finished the book, come together as a class and identify what is going on in each picture. Which ones are illustrating the big ideas of the book? Which are sequential parts of the narrative? How can the reader tell? How does the story begin? What is the middle? The end?

RL K.1, K.2, K.3, K.7, K.10, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.7, 2.1, 2.5, 2.7  
SL K.1, 1.1, 2.1

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## THINK-PAIR-SHARE -- ALL ABOUT THE BOOK

Break students into pairs and have them review the story together, trying to answer the following questions: Who are the main characters? How do they help the reader understand what it means to be American? Is there a “Big Idea” in this story? Come together and have pairs share their insights with the class.

RL K.1, K.2, K.3, K.7, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.7, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 2.7

SL K.1, 1.1, 2.1

## WHERE ARE WE?

You can see many details in the illustrations in this story that let you know where the action is taking place. Sometimes it is very specific--on a ferry headed for the Statue of Liberty, for example. Sometimes it is more general--like at Thanksgiving dinner. As a class, examine the pictures closely and figure out where the scene is set. What details let students know that?

RL K.1, K.2, K.3, K.7, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.7, 2.1, 2.2, 2.7

SL K.1, 1.1, 2.1

## HEY! I DO THAT TOO!

Examine the illustrations in the book. As a class, describe what is happening in each picture. Have students done this same activity with their own families? What do students think the authors and illustrator are trying to say about being American by showing this activity?

RL K.1, K.2, K.3, K.7, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.7, 2.1, 2.2, 2.7

SL K.1, 1.1, 2.1

## WORD HUNT

Have each student pick the beginning sound from their first or last name and go through the book, identifying all the words that begin with that same sound. Working with an adult when necessary, have each student make a list of the words that begin with that sound. If a word is new, help them to figure out its meaning from context clues. Have them select a favorite word from their list, use it in a sentence and draw a picture illustrating it.

RF K.3, 1.3, 2.3

SL K.5, 1.5, 2.5

L K.4, 1.4, 2.4

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## WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AMERICAN - YOUR CLASS EDITION

Discuss what this book says it "means" to be American. In this book, each reason is illustrated in different ways. Create a classroom version by having students make their own illustrations to replace the ones in the book. Working with an adult if necessary, have students pick a reason from the book and copy the text onto a sheet of paper. Then have them illustrate that line with an original drawing that shows this reason in action. Pair students up and have them discuss their pages with each other. Have students add details and revise their work based on their classmates' suggestions. Help students scan and print out copies of the final pieces to create a customized edition of the book.

W K.3, K.5, K.6, 1.5, 1.6, 2.5, 2.6

SL K.5, 1.5, 2.5

## ONCE UPON A TIME

Tell students to choose one of the scenes in this book as the subject for a creative writing project. What is going on in the picture? What are the people saying or doing? What happens just after the moment illustrated in the book? Have students write or dictate their story and illustrate it with original drawings. Ask for volunteers to share their stories with the class.

W K.3, K.5, 1.3, 1.5, 2.3, 2.5

SL K.5, 1.5, 2.5

## WHAT IS THIS PICTURE

The illustration accompanying the text, "... being proud of all we have accomplished and humble about all we still need to learn" shows some very interesting images. There are pictures of moments from history, and other images from today. As a class, examine this illustration. What images are associated with each other? How can students tell? How do the backgrounds help show the connections? One at a time, review the picture pairs. What progress is being shown between each pair? Is there another page that uses this same approach?

RL K.1, K.2, K.3, K.7, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.7, 2.1, 2.7

SL K.1, 1.1, 2.1

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## FOR REFERENCE

### Common Core State Standards Used

## KINDERGARTEN

### READING STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE KINDERGARTEN (RL)

#### Key Ideas and Details

K.1. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

K.3. With prompting and support, identify characters, settings and major events in a story.

#### Craft and Structure

K.4. Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

K.6. With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story

#### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

K.7. With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).

### READING STANDARDS: FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS KINDERGARTEN (RF)

#### Phonics and Word Recognition

K.3. Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

a. Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to-one letter-sound correspondences by producing the primary sound or many of the most frequent sounds for each consonant.

b. Associate the long and short sounds with common spellings (graphemes) for the five major vowels.

c. Read common high-frequency words by sight (e.g., the, of, to, you, she, my, is, are, do, does).

d. Distinguish between similarly spelled words by identifying the sounds of the letters that differ

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## WRITING STANDARDS KINDERGARTEN (W)

### Text Types and Purposes

K.3. Use a combination of drawing, dictating and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred and provide a reaction to what happened.

### Production and Distribution of Writing

K.5. With guidance and support from adults, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed.

K.6. With guidance and support from adults, explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

## SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARDS KINDERGARTEN (SL)

### Comprehension and Collaboration

K.1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion).

b. Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges

### Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

K.5. Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail.

## LANGUAGE STANDARDS KINDERGARTEN (L)

### Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

K.4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on kindergarten reading and content.

a. Identify new meanings for familiar words and apply them accurately (e.g., knowing duck is a bird and learning the verb to duck).

b. Use the most frequently occurring inflections and affixes (e.g., -ed, -s, re-, un-, pre-, -ful, -less) as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word.

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## GRADE 1

### READING STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE GRADE 1 (RL)

#### Key Ideas and Details

1.1. Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

1.2. Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

1.3. Describe characters, settings and major events in a story, using key details.

#### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

1.7. Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting or events.

### READING STANDARDS: FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS GRADE 1 (RF)

#### Phonics and Word Recognition

1.3. Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

a. Know the spelling-sound correspondences for common consonant digraphs.

b. Decode regularly spelled one-syllable words.

c. Know final -e and common vowel team conventions for representing long vowel sounds.

d. Use knowledge that every syllable must have a vowel sound to determine the number of syllables in a printed word.

e. Decode two-syllable words following basic patterns by breaking the words into syllables.

f. Read words with inflectional endings.

g. Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words.


### WRITING STANDARDS GRADE 1 (W)

#### Text Types and Purposes

1.3. Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order and provide some sense of closure

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### Production and Distribution of Writing

1.5. With guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed.

1.6. With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

## SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARDS GRADE 1 (SL)

### Comprehension and Collaboration

1.1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).

b. Build on others' talk in conversations by responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges.

c. Ask questions to clear up any confusion about the topics and texts under discussion.

### Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

1.5. Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts and feelings.

## LANGUAGE STANDARDS GRADE 1 (L)

### Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

1.4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 1 reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.

a. Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

b. Use frequently occurring affixes as a clue to the meaning of a word.

c. Identify frequently occurring root words (e.g., look) and their inflectional forms (e.g., looks, looked, looking).

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## GRADE 2

### READING STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE GRADE 2 (RL)

#### Key Ideas and Details

2.1. Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

2.2. Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson or moral.

#### Craft and Structure

2.5. Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

#### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

2.7. Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting or plot.

### READING STANDARDS: FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS GRADE 2 (RF)

#### Phonics and Word Recognition

2.3. Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

a. Distinguish long and short vowels when reading regularly spelled one-syllable words.

b. Know spelling-sound correspondences for additional common vowel teams.

c. Decode regularly spelled two-syllable words with long vowels.

d. Decode words with common prefixes and suffixes.

e. Identify words with inconsistent but common spelling-sound correspondences.


f. Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words.

### WRITING STANDARDS GRADE 2 (W)

#### Text Types and Purposes

2.3. Write narratives in which they recount a well elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order and provide a sense of closure.

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## Production and Distribution of Writing

2.5. With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.

2.6. With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

## SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARDS GRADE 2 (SL)

### Comprehension and Collaboration

2.1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).

b. Build on others' talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others.

c. Ask for clarification and further explanation as needed about the topics and texts under discussion.

### Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

2.5. Create audio recordings of stories or poems; add drawings or other visual displays to stories or recounts of experiences when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts and feelings.

## LANGUAGE STANDARDS GRADE 2 (L)

### Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

2.4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 2 reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.

a. Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

b. Determine the meaning of the new word formed when a known prefix is added to a known word (e.g., happy/unhappy, tell/retell).

c. Use a known root word as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word with the same root (e.g., addition, additional).

d. Use knowledge of the meaning of individual words to predict the meaning of compound words (e.g., birdhouse, lighthouse, housefly; bookshelf, notebook, bookmark).

e. Use glossaries and beginning dictionaries, both print and digital, to determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases.

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