

Handout

“One of Us” Connection Questions

Part 1: Expert Group Discussion Questions

Directions: After reading the poem “One of Us,” you will be assigned one of three perspectives: the teacher, “that kid,” or the speaker. Discuss the questions for your perspective with your group. Support your ideas with lines from the poem and your own experiences. Don’t start Part 2 until instructed to do so.

The Teacher’s Perspective

1. What were your first impressions of the teacher? What makes you say that?
2. Review the first three lines of the poem:
“That kid is weird,” says
the teacher, flipping her shining hair.
“I don’t know where he’s at.”

How does the teacher view the student? What specific details in the poem support your ideas?

3. How do you think the teacher sees or does not see “that kid”? What do you think the teacher understands about “that kid” that the speaker of the poem and some of his classmates might not?
4. What is one question you would like to ask the teacher?

“That Kid’s” Perspective

1. What were your first impressions of “that kid”? What makes you say that?
2. Reread lines 4–6 of the poem:
Indeed, he is quiet
in the way of a giraffe:
ears tuned to something we can’t hear.

What do you think “that kid” can hear? Who is the “we” in these lines?

3. How do you think “that kid” sees or does not see himself? What do you think “that kid” understands about himself that the teacher, the speaker, and other students might not? What makes you say that?
4. What is one question you would like to ask “that kid”?

The Speaker's Perspective

1. What were your first impressions of the speaker? What makes you say that?

2. Reread the last two lines of the poem:

I am barely breathing.

One of us, I sing, one of us!

What do you think the speaker is thinking and feeling in this moment, and how do you know? What is the impact of the repetition and italics in the last line of the poem on you, the reader?

3. How do you think the speaker sees or does not see "that kid"? What do you think the speaker understands about "that kid" that the teacher and other students might not?

4. What is one question you would like to ask the speaker?

Part 2: Teaching Group Discussion Questions

Directions: Start by having each student in your group answer the first question for their assigned perspective. Then discuss the second and third questions together. Support your ideas with evidence from the poem, other texts you have studied in this unit, and your own experiences.

1. Which perspective from the poem did you focus on? What is one valuable idea from this point of view that you want to share with the group?

2. How does this poem help you think about whose opinions and beliefs have the greatest effect on the way you understand your own identity?

3. Who or what can make it challenging for young people to be who they really want to be in the world? How can young people navigate or rise above these challenges? How does this poem help you answer this question? How do your own life experiences?