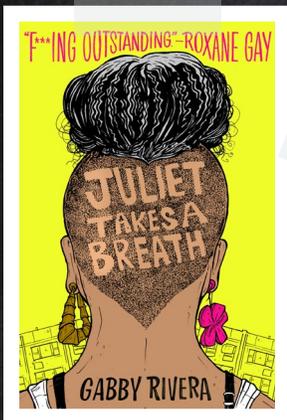
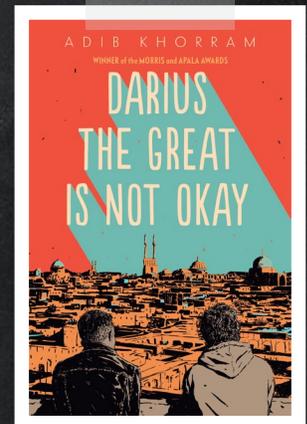
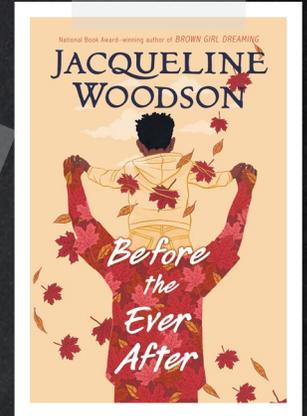


#DISRUPTTEXTS

# IN YOUR CLASSROOM WITH THESE 8 TEXTS!



In partnership with #DisruptTexts, learning guides for eight individual texts and how they align to the #DisruptTexts pillars!



**DEAR EDUCATOR,**

We are honored to partner up with #DisruptTexts to bring you this resource to help you bring equity to your classroom or library! These are, by no means, the only eight texts to use; but we hope they provide a scaffolding to bring change and choice for your students.

**SINCERELY,**

*Penguin Young Readers School + Library Marketing*



## WHAT IS #DISRUPTTEXTS?

Disrupt Texts is a crowdsourced, grass roots effort by teachers for teachers to challenge the traditional canon in order to create a more inclusive, representative, and equitable language arts curriculum that our students deserve. Co-founded by Tricia Ebarvia, Lorena Germán, Dr. Kimberly N. Parker, and Julia Torres, #DisruptTexts's mission to aid and develop teachers committed to antiracist/anti-bias teaching pedagogy and practices.

There are four core principles to #DisruptTexts:

**1. Continuously interrogate our own biases and how they inform our thinking.**

As teachers, we have been socialized in certain values, attitudes, and beliefs that inform the way we read, interpret, and teach texts, and the way we interact with our students. Ask: How are my own biases affecting the way I'm teaching this text and engaging with my students?

**2. Center Black, Indigenous, and voices of color in literature.**

Literature study in U.S. classrooms has largely focused on the experiences of white- (and male-) dominated society, as perpetuated through a traditional, Euro-centric canon. Ask: What voices—authors or characters—are marginalized or missing in our study? How are these perspectives authentic to the lived experiences of communities of color?

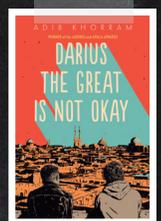
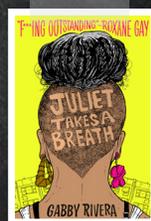
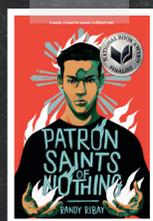
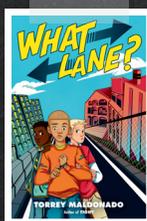
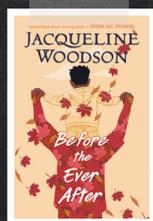
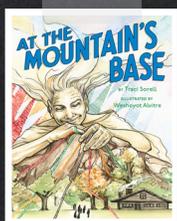
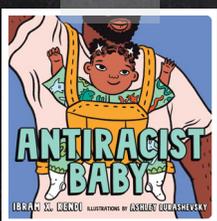
### 3. Apply a critical literacy lens to our teaching practices.

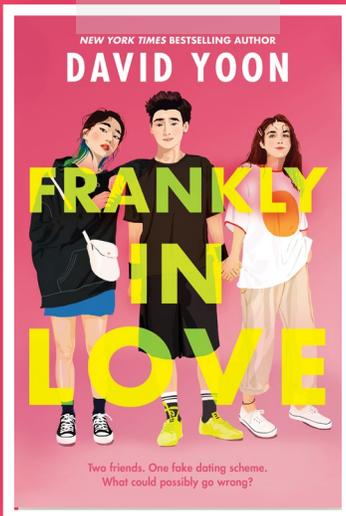
While text-dependent analysis and close reading are important skills for students to develop, teachers should also support students in asking questions about the way that such texts are constructed. Ask: How does this text support or challenge issues of representation, fairness, or justice? How does this text perpetuate or subvert dominant power dynamics and ideologies? And how can we ask students to wrestle with these tensions?

### 4. Work in community with other antiracist educators, especially Black, Indigenous, and other educators of color.

To disrupt and transform curriculum and instruction requires working with other educators who can challenge and work with us as antiracist educators. Ask: How can we collaborate to identify, revise, or create instructional resources (like this guide) that can center and do justice to the experiences of historically marginalized communities?

Each principle stands for actions that are culturally sustaining and antiracist. Through each principle, teachers aim to offer a curriculum that is restorative, inclusive, and therefore works toward healing identities and communities. As you read this guide, you'll see how each of these principles informs the approach recommended to teach *Frankly In Love*.





# FRANKLY IN LOVE

by David Yoon

## ABOUT THE BOOK

A WILLIAM C. MORRIS YA DEBUT AWARD FINALIST  
AN ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN LIBRARIANS  
ASSOCIATION HONOR BOOK

TWO FRIENDS. ONE FAKE DATING SCHEME.  
WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?

Frank Li has two names. There's Frank Li, his American name. Then there's Sung-Min Li, his Korean name. No one uses his Korean name, not even his parents. Frank barely speaks any Korean. He was born and raised in Southern California.

Even so, his parents still expect him to end up with a nice Korean girl—which is a problem, since Frank is finally dating the girl of his dreams: Brit Means. Brit, who is funny and nerdy just like him. Brit, who makes him laugh like no one else. Brit... who is white.

As Frank falls in love for the very first time, he's forced to confront the fact that while his parents sacrificed everything to raise him in the land of opportunity, their traditional expectations don't leave a lot of room for him to be a regular American teen. Desperate to be with Brit without his parents finding out, Frank turns to family friend Joy Song, who is in a similar bind. Together, they come up with a plan to help each other and keep their parents off their backs. Frank thinks he's found the solution to all his problems, but when life throws him a curveball, he's left wondering whether he ever really knew anything about love—or himself—at all.

In this moving debut novel, David Yoon takes on the question of *who am I?* with a result that is humorous, heartfelt, and ultimately unforgettable.

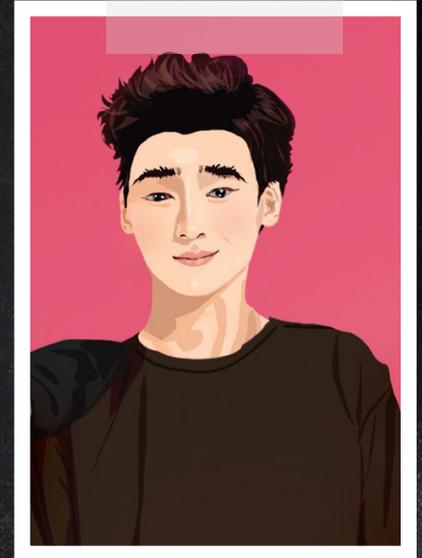
## Considerations for Teachers and Students

Consider using *Frankly In Love* to pair with or replace any coming-of-age text or any text about identity, relationships, and family that you might have in your curriculum. We believe that Yoon's novel offers students deep possibilities for exploring similar terrain and issues as traditionally canonical texts. For example, consider pairing Yoon's novel with or replacing texts such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Great Gatsby* and to study themes of Romanticism and Transcendentalism.

## Considerations for Teachers and Students (cont.)

Before starting *Frankly in Love*, we recommend working with students to consider how their identities and experiences may inform their reading experience. For some students, this book may be the first time they read a book focused on Asian-American experiences, particularly the dynamics of inter- and intraracial identity.

Teachers should also interrogate their own biases and stereotypes about Asians and Asian Americans before, throughout, and after their teaching of the text. Teaching Tolerance's [article "I Am Asian American"](#) and teacher [toolkit](#) are suitable starting places. Specifically, teachers should develop a working understanding of the Model Minority Myth, its history, and its implications. [Another article](#) from Teaching Tolerance, "What is the Model Minority Myth?" would be helpful here.



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### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

[The National Association of Korean Americans](#) provides information to help readers locate Frank and his family within a broader history. It states: "Korean emigration to the United States can be divided into three major waves. The first, from 1903 to 1905, consisted of about 7,500 Koreans, mostly men, who went to work on Hawaii's sugar plantations as contract laborers. The second, beginning in 1950, consists of women who married American soldiers and children adopted into American families. Nearly 100,000 so-called "internationally married women" or "military brides" entered the United States between 1950 and 1989, while approximately 300,000 Korean adoptees entered the United States beginning in 1953. The third wave, beginning in 1967, consists of Koreans who came under the occupational and family reunification preferences of the 1965 Immigration Act. These waves of emigration followed growing U.S. involvement in Korea during the twentieth century." Take time to help students understand the connections between history and the novel's setting.

### CONSIDERATIONS AROUND RACIAL IDENTITY

The Asian population of the United States is diverse and rapidly growing. Frame conversations about ethnicity through first helping students understand how many different ethnicities encompass Asian and Pacific Islanders by using the website AAPI Data: Quick Stats (<http://aapidata.com/stats/national/>). Then, apply that knowledge to thinking about how Frank, his peers, and his parents, relate and name their own racial identities.

## Considerations for Teachers and Students (cont.)

- “When Mom-n-Dad say *American*, they mean *white*. When they refer to themselves—or me—they say *hanguksaram*, or *Korean*. I never call myself just Korean. I call myself *Korean-American*, always leading first with *Korean* or *Asian*, then the silent hyphen, then ending with *American*. Never just *American*” (133).

### CONSIDERATIONS AROUND INTER- AND INTRARACIAL PREJUDICE

- All people in racial, cultural, and ethnic groups are subject to the modern manifestations of social hierarchies that began with colonization. Intra-racial prejudice can be connected to colorism (such as in the case of darker- or lighter-skinned African Americans receiving privilege or oppression in accordance with white adjacency), or classism (such as in the case of the caste system in India).
- Interracial prejudice, by comparison, occurs between people whom society perceives to be of different races. Often, interracial prejudice is reinforced by systemic racism and prejudicial laws that perpetuate scenarios such as segregated schooling and redlining. Students may want to consider the ways in which anti-Black racism has divided communities of color (for example, the Asian or Latinx communities and Black communities). It’s important for students to understand that interracial prejudice ultimately reinforces a racial hierarchy that keeps white people at the top; communities which are divided have a harder time working together. That said, there is a long documented history of interracial solidarity (see Delano grape strike, for example).

#### Further Reading:

[The Significance of Skin Color in Asian and Asian-American Communities: Initial Reflections](#) by Trina Jones (featuring research by Michelle Huang and Cinthia Flores)

[Asian American Racial Justice Toolkit](#) by J Ishida and Soya Jung (with collaboration from Lucia Lin and Timmy Lu)

[Why We Must Talk About the Asian American Story, Too](#) by Brando Simeo Starkey

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## Themes and Essential Questions

Teaching Tolerance’s Social Justice Standards provides a useful framework to read and analyze texts, especially a text like *Frankly In Love*. The Teaching Tolerance Social Justice Standards focus on four domains: identity, diversity, justice, and action. Themes and essential questions can be developed around these domains to encourage students to respond to the text as individuals but then make connections to larger historical and contemporary systems through a social justice lens. Learn more about the standards and domains at [tolerance.org/frameworks/social-justice-standards](https://tolerance.org/frameworks/social-justice-standards).

## Themes and Essential Questions (cont.)

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Some examples of themes and essential questions that teachers can use to frame students' study of *Frankly In Love* are listed below.

*Identity:* Who am I? What experiences and identities make up who I am? How do my race and culture affect the way I see myself, how I relate to others, and how I navigate the world?

*Community:* What makes up a community? How can a community's shared values and beliefs both help and harm members of that community? In what ways are individuals and groups treated differently based on their identities?

*Family:* How do I define my family? What makes up my family? How does my family define who I am? What are the different ways that families can be defined? How do families differ and why? How do family dynamics impact interpersonal relationships? How do systems and structures, policies and practices, affect families in fair and unfair ways? What should be the relationship between government and families? What can we do to ensure that all individuals and groups, whatever their family background, can be guaranteed equal access, opportunities, and treatment?

## Key Concepts and Vocabulary

Because *Frankly in Love* explores issues related to identity, race, culture, and history, some understanding of key concepts related to these issues is essential for teachers and students. The following list contains some definitions and their application to the novel.

### Microaggression

According to Derald Wing Sue, microaggressions are the "everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership." When working with students, teachers may want to stop and pause at moments in the text like the one below:

## Key Concepts and Vocabulary (cont.)

*“Brit’s dad opens the menu, flips through it, puts it down. He turns to me. And here it comes: ‘Maybe it’d be easier if you just ordered for us, Frank?’ I smile, but inside I’m irked” (211).*

As a white man, Brit’s dad means well when he asks Frank to order for them at the Korean restaurant, but what he doesn’t recognize is how this bothers Frank. Brit’s dad assumes that because Frank is Korean that he will know what to order; although this seems logical, it is the burden of these assumptions, accumulated over time, that constitute microaggressions.

### Interracial prejudice

*“We’re entering strange, sensitive territory. Q and I have talked about race a million times, but mostly to make fun of it as an abstract, intellectual concept. We’ve never really gotten that personal about it, until now” (196).*

Frank and his best friend, Q, tiptoe around race throughout most of the novel until finally confronting their racial differences. Spend some time talking about the significance of their discussions about race and racism, stereotypes, and what each learns about the other from these interactions. Identify these moments in the text and have students work in small groups to unpack the racial dynamics—and history—playing out in these conversations. How does their friendship deepen as a result of these moments of honest conversation?

In addition to Frank and Q’s conversations, consider what Frank learns about race and racism from his own parents. One particular scene to unpack occurs early in the text, in the chapter entitled, “More Better.” On their ride home from one of the gatherings, Frank becomes angry at his parents’ casual racism, and it’s in this moment that Frank reveals that his parents’ racist attitudes are one reason he and Q never spend time together at Frank’s house. This is also the source of conflict and estrangement between Frank’s sister, Hannah, and Miles. Frank and Hannah’s relationship with their parents also presents an opportunity to have students think about the history of interracial prejudice among communities of color, especially between Asian and Black communities. Teachers and students can unpack the role that Asian Americans, through the Model Minority Myth, have often been used as a wedge to perpetuate anti-Black racism. Deanna Pan’s [article](#) in the *Boston Globe* might be useful here, as well as the [Code Switch episode, “One Korean American’s Reckoning.”](#)

## Key Concepts and Vocabulary (cont.)

### Intraracial Prejudice

Students who are not Asian American (and perhaps some who are) may not be aware of the prejudice that exists among and between various Asian communities in the United States. Readers see the first glimpse of this when Joy tells Frank about how she has had to keep her relationship with her Chinese-American boyfriend a secret from her parents. At the first gathering, Joy tells Frank she doesn't have "boy problems" but that she has "Chinese boy problems." Frank immediately understands, reflecting, "Koreans hating Chinese hating Koreans hating blablabla." This history of intraracial prejudice can break the stereotype that "all Asians are the same" by revealing the diversity of history and culture among different communities.

*Related:* Advanced students might consider the ways in which the author helps to fill in background information about this history of inter and intra racial prejudice in the book. The Code Switch podcast offers a useful [episode](#) about the use of the "explanatory comma" to provide background information about race and culture that predominantly white audiences may not have. Students might ask themselves: Is the use of these "explanatory commas" helpful or distracting? What does the use of these "explanatory commas" indicate about who the audience is for this book?

### Code switching

*"In Language class, Ms. Chit would call this code switching. It's like switching accents, but at a more micro level. The idea is that you don't speak the same way with your friends (California English Casual) that you do with a teacher (California English Formal), or a girl (California English Sing-song), or your immigrant parents (California English Exasperated). You change how you talk to best adapt to whoever you're talking to" (39).*

Code switching has been considered a way for English speakers to demonstrate fluency in "Standard English." However, recent changes facilitated by the National Council of Teachers of English's CCCC have articulated the need to connect language, especially Black language and Black identity. Interrogate why educators have demanded that students learn to code switch, and consider why "teachers [should] stop teaching Black students to code switch! Instead, we must teach Black students about Anti-Black linguistic racism and white linguistic supremacy!" Consider how code switching normalizes white mainstream English and what students asked to code switch lose regarding their identities.

## Journal Prompts

Students will find many entry points throughout the story to connect with. Writing in response to critical moments of tension in the text can help students reflect and process their own emotions and questions as they read.

Ask students to revisit these passages from the novel: What stands out? What connections can you make to your own experiences or the experiences of others?

- “My ideal woman should probably be Korean-American. It’s not strictly necessary. I could care less. But it would make things easier” (9).
- “To think, he earned a bachelor’s degree in Seoul and wound up here. I wonder how many immigrants there are like him, working a blue-collar job while secretly owning a white-collar degree” (13).
- “Dad is *happy*. And I understand why. Mom is taking care of him. Joy is taking care of me. We are all here together. His son has chosen a proper girl. All four of us are keenly aware of the specter of death, and remain defiantly alive. Cozy, even” (179).
- “If that suspect had been black, he’d be too shot-dead to question,’ says Q” (185).
- “‘Girl normally should be smart and quiet and calm,’ says Mom. ‘But Joy so crazy’” (186).
- “We seem so happy and light and open to all the possibilities the world has to offer. How can it be, then, that Mom-n-Dad see Brit as white and nothing else? How can that possibly be, now that the world has just shown us we are all human, and mortal, and fragile?” (188).
- “We barely speak the same language. Literally. You have any idea at all how lucky you are your whole family is fluent in the same freaking language?” (191).
- “We’ve laughed before about the notion of a pure black. There are so many kinds of black. Nerd black, artistic black, old-skool black, super-black (see also: super-Koreans). Black can mean a million things” (195).

## Journal Prompts (cont.)

- “I just know I’ll never be able to do Korean right. You know what I mean?” (198).
- “Brit—wise, awakened, aware Brit—belongs to a white majority whether she wants to or not, and is entitled to all its privileges—also *whether she wants them or not*” (208).
- “...I start to get that classic Limbo feeling that I get whenever I’m surrounded by this much Korean-ness: that I am a failure at being Korean, and not doing so great at being American, so the only thing left to do is run away and hide in my own little private Planet Frank” (232).
- “Me and Joy grew up exposed to this world. We know all of its elements, even if we don’t always know their names in Korean. They’re not weird or exotic to us. They have the feeling of home. If not for the skyline of Los Angeles in the background, I can fool myself into thinking I’m in Korea. Even better: I can fool myself into thinking that *I am Korean*” (266).
- “Say me and Joy had been born in Korea. We’d be Korean. We’d belong to a tribe. But that doesn’t necessarily mean we’d belong to each other. Because there are tribes within tribes, all separated by gaps everywhere” (385).

## Discussion and Lesson Ideas

### AMERICAN DREAM

Teachers can situate a study of *Frankly in Love* within the concept of the “American Dream,” especially as related to ideas about success and prosperity. In what ways does Frank’s family strive to, and challenge, the idea of the “American Dream,” especially as related to race and racial identity? Draw comparisons between the [essay](#) “Asian Americans Are Still Caught in the Trap of the ‘Model Minority’ Stereotype. And It Creates Inequality for All” and Frank, his family, and their friends. Prompt students to draw inferences and connections around the following passages in the novel:

## Discussion and Lesson Ideas (cont.)

- “The poor customers give Mom-n-Dad food stamps, which become money, which becomes college tuition for me. I hope the next version of the American dream doesn’t involve gouging people for food stamps” (12).
- “My parents work too much to carve mermaids for the threshold. But they must be working toward that kind of stuff, right? Toward that time in life when the hustle eases up, the body relaxes, and the mind begins to contemplate the ideal door knocker” (97)
- “The roomful of Limbos suddenly becomes the most precious of life’s achievements: children who will never want for anything, who speak native English, who will go to the best schools in the world and never have to run an office furniture rental service (like Joy’s parents), a dry cleaner (Ella’s), a beauty supply (Andrew’s), a tourist gift shop (John’s), or a grocery store (mine)” (122).
- “I hope he had a fixed finish line that he one day crossed and stopped running because that’s just his kind of happiness. Here’s what I imagine rich people like Joy’s dad to be like: forever chasing a finish line that’s actually the horizon, never to be reached. Is that a kind of happiness too?” (289)

### FIRST- AND SECOND-GENERATION IMMIGRANT DIFFERENCES

One issue that comes up throughout the novel is the difference in immigrant experiences between Frank and his family. His parents are first-generation immigrants, the first generation to live in the United States. Frank and other members of the gathering families, however, are second-generation immigrants, born in the United States to first-generation immigrant parents.

Many children of immigrant parents experience stress related to differences in expectations and mindsets of what it means to be “an American.” Provide students with readings such as [Nicole Clark’s essay, “The Hidden Stress of Growing Up a Child of Immigrants”](#) and ask them to consider how the issues manifest in the novel. Some passages from the novel that can prompt students here include:

- “How long do our parents hold power over us? I wonder. Is it only as long as we let them?” (330).
- “Here’s a conversational opening, and all I want to do is cut it off: *yeah, been there, done that, nuff said*. I can see Dad’s face fall a millimeter. My eyes get hot, like they always do when I realize I’m being stupid” (65).

## Discussion and Lesson Ideas (cont.)

- “I am panicking because I realize I’ve been desperate to know Dad my whole life. I learned a long time ago that such a hope was impossible with an impenetrable statue ruin like him. So I gave up. Moreover, I pretended I *didn’t* care if I never knew him. I pretended I was okay living as a Limbo, belonging nowhere, a son without even the most basic connection to the man who fathered him” (308).

The theme of generational conflict was also explored in Amy Tan’s classic novel, *The Joy Luck Club*. Teachers might ask students to read a story from that novel, such as “Rules of the Game” or “Two Kinds,” to compare with *Frankly in Love*. Tan’s novel was written more than thirty years ago: How much remains the same and how much seems different in how generational conflicts are portrayed in these two pieces of literature?



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### TEEN ROMANCE AS GENRE

“I just want to be carefree, like in those teen movies where all the kids (meaning all the white kids) get to play their guessing games and act out their love dramas and lie tête-à-tête on moonlit lawns to gaze up at the stars. To wonder about all those higher things: the universe, fate, other philosophica. Not mucky-muck bullshit like the racism of their parents” (197).

Is *Frankly in Love* a true teen romance novel? Does it reinforce Asian stereotypes or subvert them? YALSA describes some characteristics of YA romance as: “Beginning with the meeting of the future couple . . . a relationship that’s tested or stressed by some series of events . . . and] eventually, the conflict is resolved and the characters are able to fully acknowledge their love, though this does not always result in a happily ever after.” [The Code Switch article](#) “What’s So Cringeworthy about Long Duk Dong in ‘Sixteen Candles?’” invites a starting place for helping think about *Frankly In Love* as either subverting or reinforcing both the YA genre and stereotypes.

## Discussion and Lesson Ideas (cont.)

### FITTING IN/ASSIMILATION

During one of the gatherings, Frank reflects on his identity and those of his fellow Korean American friends, “I call us the Limbos. Every month I dread going to these awkward reunions with the Limbos, to wait out time between worlds” (17). Ask students to unpack what Frank means by “time between worlds”: what “worlds” is he referring to?

In an [interview with NPR](#), author Randy Ribay speaks of “hyphenated identities” and the concept that no person is ever just one thing. Frank wants to fit in: romantically, with his friends, and with his larger world. While it is true that all adolescents want to feel a sense of belonging, students with “hyphenated identities”—racially and culturally—may experience specific challenges that white students might not. Consider how you might make space for students to process these experiences (for example, through the journal prompts above).

As Frank says to himself, “I feel like I don’t belong anywhere and every day it’s like I live on this weird little planet of my own in exile . . . I’m not Korean enough. I’m not white enough to be fully American” (208). How do Frank’s wishes help to think about the duality of his identity as a Korean American? Teachers might use the [Code Switch episode, “What About Your Friends?”](#) to help students identify the struggles that come with navigating social relationships with dual and multiple identities.

### Extension Activity

While *Frankly in Love* focuses on the relationships between Frank and his friends and family, one possible extension would be to ask students to take a closer look at Anti-Black racism in Asian communities. Students can begin by looking at the [Time magazine article, “The Asian American Response to Black Lives Matter Is Part of a Long, Complicated History”](#). Students can also research Rodney King and unpack how the history of Black and Asian community relations might inform the events in the novel (consider, for example, Frank’s parents). Likewise, introduce students to examples of coalition and solidarity movements between the two communities, such as the friendship and activism of Yuri Kochiyama and Grace Lee Boggs alongside Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.

## Supplementary Texts

- Traci Chee, *We Are Not Free*
- Misa Sugiura, *This Time Will Be Different*
- Keshni Kashyap, *Tina's Mouth: An Existential Comic Diary*
- Sung Woo, *Everything Asian*
- Cathy Park Hong, *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*
- Nicola Yoon, *The Sun Is Also a Star*
- Mitali Perkins, *You Bring the Distant Near*
- Erica Lee, *The Making of Asian America*
- *All American*, Netflix series
- *On My Block*, Netflix series
- Roy Choi series *Broken Bread*

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#DisruptTexts is not simply about replacing older texts for new ones; rather, it is a more nuanced and holistic approach aimed at offering a restorative and antiracist curriculum. #DisruptTexts requires that we as educators interrogate our own biases, center the voices of BIPOC in literature, help students develop a critical lens, and work in community with other antiracist and BIPOC educators. Together we will bring about change in society.

**JULIA E. TORRES** is a veteran language arts teacher librarian in Denver, Colorado. Julia facilitates teacher development workshops rooted in the areas of antiracist education, equity and access in literacy and librarianship, and education as a practice of liberation. Julia works with students and teachers locally and around the country with the goal of empowering them to use literacy to fuel resistance and positive social transformation. Julia also serves on several local and national boards and committees promoting educational equity and progressivism. She is the current NCTE Secondary Representative-at-large, a Book Love Foundation board member and Educator Collaborative Book Ambassador.

**LORENA GERMÁN** is a Dominican American educator based in Austin, Texas. A two-time nationally awarded educator, she works with middle and high school students, using an anti bias and antiracist approach to teaching. She's Co-Founder of [Multicultural Classroom](#), through which she supports teachers and schools, and is Chair of NCTE's Committee Against Racism & Bias in the Teaching of English, in addition to being a writer (Heinemann 2021), speaker, and professional development provider.

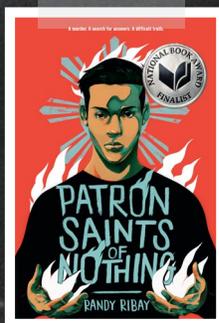
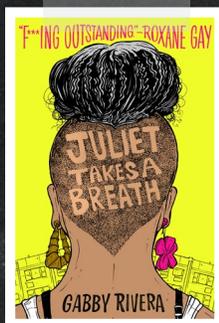
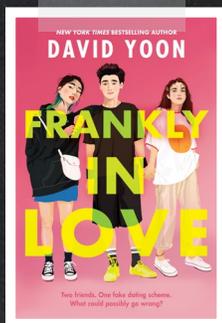
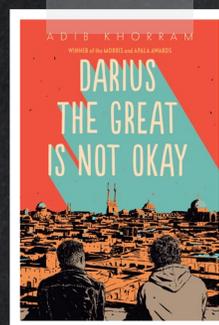
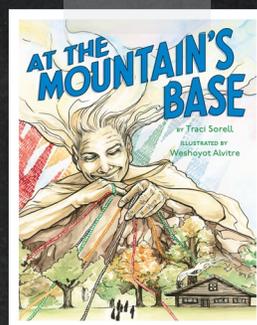
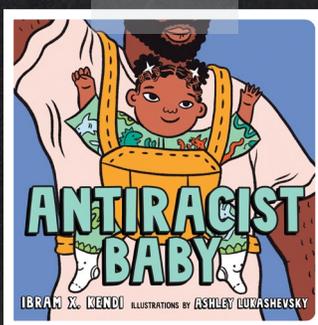
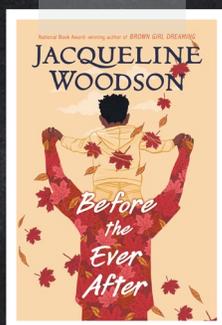
#DisruptTexts is not simply about replacing older texts for new ones; rather, it is a more nuanced and holistic approach aimed at offering a restorative and antiracist curriculum. #DisruptTexts requires that we as educators interrogate our own biases, center the voices of BIPOC in literature, help students develop a critical lens, and work in community with other antiracist and BIPOC educators. Together we will bring about change in society.

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# #DISRUPTTEXTS

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