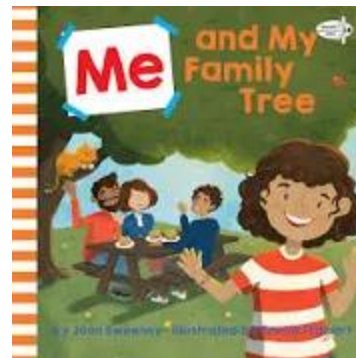
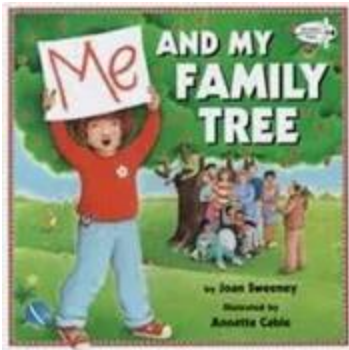


Second Reaction: An Engaging Story to Introduce Students to the Extended Family Dynamics through Vibrant Illustrations of a Family Tree.

Sweeney, J. (2018). *Me and My Family Tree*. Random House Children's Books.

Sweeney, J. (1999). *Me and My Family Tree*. Random House Children's Books.

Dr. Michelle Fry



I enjoyed reading Joan Sweeney's, *Me and My Family Tree*, especially with young children. The first reason I liked the book was that the images and colors are vibrant and welcoming to create an engaging first impression of the book. Learning about the intricacies of one's extended family can be a challenging task. The book introduces this topic through the use of relevant vocabulary accompanied by supporting illustrations giving the readers a visual of the placement of relatives within a family tree. The book has two publications, one from 2000 and the second from 2018, the only difference between the texts is the illustrations. The second publication promotes further cultural diversity among the characters allowing students of different ethnicities to relate to the book.

The second reason I liked the second publication is the cultural diversity from the start of the book. As an educator, it is beneficial to utilize complex texts to enhance student understanding of topics that may be hard to conceptualize. This text illustrates how the extended

family dynamic is created and has evolved from the traditional ideology of same-race marriage. It promotes critical discussion that deepens student understanding of cultural ideologies. As a teacher, this text provides insight into the topic of extended family and how students are part of a family tree while opening the discussion of culturally relevant topics such as interracial marriage, as seen on page one in the first publication and page 10 in the second publication. Although this topic is limited to traditional gender roles, the opportunity to further educate young readers on the formation of families is introduced.

This book could be used as an institutional tool to open a discussion with students on their understanding of interracial families. Students could be encouraged to share about their family dynamics in a supportive environment. While reading, educators could stop and have the students notice what is going on in the picture. For example, on page three of the 2018 publication, the main character is drawing her self-portrait using a brown crayon. The teacher could ask students what they notice to see if a student recognizes this detail and have a discussion. This discussion could open up the opportunity for students to share the many different skin colors they may see around their classroom, school, or community and how everyone is unique. This helps teach students self-awareness and acceptance in a culturally diverse society.

The final reason I liked the book was the simple language utilized with the introduction of important Tier II vocabulary. Teaching young students vocabulary can be a difficult task but when supported with images these words are better understood. In primary education, Family is a unit that is taught, this book can be used as an introduction to this topic. The book offers a blank family tree to entice students to learn about their relatives and can be an extension activity, creating a family tree.

In conclusion, I believe this book is a great introduction text on the topic of family. The book has academic vocabulary showcased in a way for young students to understand. The childlike drawings engage students to continue reading as the main character divulges the intricacies of her family tree. The new publication invites students of different ethnicities to connect with the narrative through the depiction of cultural diversity. Although there are some

limitations they are not significant and will not impede the overall meaning of the text, what is a family tree.

About the Author

Michelle Fry is a wife and mother of four children. Michelle started her educational career working in early childhood centers until she obtained her elementary education degree. She then went on to teach third grade in a western suburb of Chicago, Illinois. Michelle took a break from teaching in the classroom to teaching college courses part-time for the past 14 years. She went back into the classroom as an English Language teacher at the middle school level for six years. In 2022 Michelle joined Purdue University and has continued her educational journey through research, online course development, and teaching virtual for higher education institutions.