

Questions for *Skin Again*, written by bell hooks, illustrated by Chris Raschka

**Preliminary:**

Read the story through first so you will know **how** to read the story. Then, using your best, strong reading voice:

- a. Enunciate your words carefully and distinctively.
- b. Keep the rate moderate – slow, since this story begs the listener to reflect on the meaning of the words.
- c. Look for places when you might quicken or slow the pace; raise or lower your voice; add seriousness or playfulness to the words.

**Questions:**

1. What pictures do you see on the cover? Looking at the cover, can you tell what this story might be about?
2. Look at the title page and the page following it. What do you notice that is different from most title pages? Why do you think the illustrator laid it out the way they did (in squares and rectangles)? Is there something about using square/rectangles to tell the story?
3. “The skin I’m in” is illustrated by what animal or creature, usually shown at the bottom of the page? (snake)
4. Why do you think a snake is used when talking about skin? What do you know about snakes and their skin? (Snakes shed their skins when they outgrow their bodies, showing their new skin.)
5. What vegetable is also used to illustrate something about skin? (onion) Why do you think an onion is used when discussing skin? Does the skin of an onion tell you anything about an onion?
6. What does the author mean by saying that the skin is just a covering? Why can the skin alone NOT tell a person’s story?
7. How do we get to know someone? How do you go “inside” a person?
8. How can you “open your heart way wide”? Where do you see pictures of a heart or something heart-like?
9. How many hearts can you find in this book?
10. What do you think the heart symbolizes or represents? (note: It’s interesting to note that the onion can look like a heart. How does the heart add to the message the author seems to be conveying and the relationship to skin?)

11. What kind of “stories,” present, past, future, do people have? How do you get to know those stories?
12. What does it mean when the author talks about “letting go of who you might *think* I am?”
13. Have you ever thought a person was one way, and the more you got to know him/her, you discovered that you were wrong?
14. How do we get to the place where we see people for who they really are?
15. How do we become “real together on the inside?”
16. Do you want people to know the “real” you? How can you get them to know the real you?
17. Do you believe our world can be a place where the color of our skin doesn’t matter? Why or why not?

**\*In one of the most famous speeches ever delivered, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said,**

*“I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.*

*I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.*

*I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. . . . I have a dream that one day little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.”*

Is such a brotherhood/sisterhood possible?