

Workshop West Playwrights' Theatre  
presents in association with  
Alberta Aboriginal Performing Arts



*Café Daughter*  
Written by Kenneth T. Williams

*Study Guide*  
*November 2015*

**Cafe Daughter 2015 Study Guide****edited and updated by**

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Edmonton, Alberta

with permission from

Yukon Education

**Cafe Daughter was *originally* commissioned by**

Gwaandak Theatre Society

Whitehorse, Yukon

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The *original* Study Guide was created with support from:

Yukon Education

Canada Council for the Arts

Arts Operating Funds

Arts Funds

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# Café Daughter 2015 Study Guide

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## The Play *Café Daughter*

*Café Daughter* is a one-woman memory play inspired by a true story, about a Chinese-Cree girl growing up in Saskatchewan. The play tells the story of Yvette Wong's childhood, from her viewpoint as an adult looking back on key moments in her life as a girl and teenager. It is a fictional story.

The play's first act begins in 1957. Nine-year-old Yvette helps out in her parents' café in the small imaginary town of Alistair. Yvette is a bright student who loves to read about ancient Egypt and dreams of going to university to become a doctor. Her mother believes in Yvette, but everyone else around her does not encourage her to follow her dreams. Yvette's mother Katherine is from a Cree community, attended a segregated Native residential school and moved away from her home community with conflicted emotions. She orders Yvette not to tell anyone she's part Cree. Yvette's father Charlie, who is from China, is much older.

As a child, Yvette naturally does not understand everything about her parents' lives. The family does not earn much money running the café. When Yvette's mother becomes sick, they can't afford to pay the doctor. Yvette is worried about her mother's illness, but at the same time excited about her role in the school play. By the end of the first act, Yvette's childhood has changed forever.

The second act explores her life a few years later, when Yvette is in high school in Saskatoon. She is a hard-working student who loves mathematics, but has few friends. She has kept her mother's secret about her full identity. Yvette faces important choices about what she wants to do with her life. As with many of us growing up, what Yvette wants is different from what her father expects her to do.

This is a one-person play, but the actor who plays Yvette brings many different characters to life, including her parents, teachers, relatives and a friend. This is a challenging role. The playwright has written this play to allow the audience to follow one actor playing all of these characters. Other modern Canadian examples of one-person plays include *Shape of a Girl* by Joan Macleod and *Agokwe* by Waawaate Fobister.

*Café Daughter* is a memory play. It exists and is told only from the point of view of Yvette later in her life. Our memories are not always reliable, but they are real to us and help define who we are. There are many reasons why someone might revisit childhood memories at a key moment in their life. You will have the chance to explore why Yvette Wong has felt the need to do this as part of her life journey.

## The Companies

### *Workshop West Playwrights' Theatre*

A professional, Edmonton-based theatre dedicated to the development, production, promotion, and presentation of new Canadian playwrights and their plays, and to the education of the public in playwriting skills.

In its 36-year history, Workshop West has been considered one of the most outstanding new play companies, not only in western Canada, but also across the country. We have produced over 100 plays and over 68 World Premieres of some of Canada's finest playwrights. Many of these writers have gone on to have national and international careers.

### *Alberta Aboriginal Arts*

A professional arts organization, producing and presenting professional multi-disciplinary work that brings artists and Aboriginal traditions together. We encourage and inspire collaborations in art and performance in both contemporary and traditional styles. We provide audiences of all backgrounds a chance to experience challenging artistic works from a unique Aboriginal perspective. Alberta



Aboriginal Arts was formed in 2009 and in 2012 we registered as a not for profit under the Alberta Societies Act as *Alberta Aboriginal Performing Arts Association*. Our flagship event is the annual Rubaboo Arts Festival. Workshop West Theatre produced the first RUBABOO in 2009. Alberta Aboriginal Arts took leadership and have since taken the 2 night event and expanded it to a two week format, now coming into its 7th annual festival in Jan 2016.

Some work that AAPA's presented:

- Six annual Rubaboo Arts Festivals (increasing from 2 days to 2 weeks, and multiple venues), The 7<sup>th</sup> Rubaboo will be Jan 25 to Feb 7, 2015.
- *Almighty Voice & His Wife* by Daniel David Moses with WWT.
- The Dora Award production *Agokwe – Gay Love on the Rez* by Waawaate Fobister. Supported the AB tour.
- Presented annual visual arts display tipi at The Works Art & Design Festival.
- Co presented Tanya Tagaq's *Nanook of the North* at WWT's Canoe Festival.
- Presented the Soar Program's *Blackness of White* and *CruX* the Citadel Theatre
- Supported Old Earth Production's *A Must a Be* AB Tour
- Truth & Reconciliation *Legacy Project* with 7 presentations in multiple venues<sup>1</sup>

Developed:

- development of a new play; *No Way Home* by Telly James (Blackfoot, Siksika)
- *Anowakii* by Sable Sweetgrass (Blackfoot, Blood Reserve) and
- *Dancing the World in Flux* by Troy Emery Twigg.
- Interned during creation residency of *Making Treaty 7* (One Yellow Rabbit, Michael Green) at the Banff Centre

Developed and Produced:

- *They Shoot Buffalo, Don't They?* presented at the Expanse Movement Festival. with Blackfoot choreographer Troy Emery Twigg a 3-stop national tour in Vancouver (Dancing On The Edge), Banff (Summer Arts Festival) and Halifax (Prismatic). Joined the CanDance Network.
- At the 1000 Faces Festival produced a new work *TradCirq* with Arik Pipestem and the National Stilt-Walkers Assn.
- FUSION at *Channeling Connections* Aboriginal art summit at the Shaw Conference
- Produced the Soar Arts Project and performance *CruX* at the Citadel's Shoctor



<sup>1</sup> Please see Legacy brochure for art descriptions and venue locations!

***Original Note from the Playwright: Kenneth T. Williams***

It's the dream of every storyteller to discover that tale that's never been heard before. *Café Daughter* is such a story. It's a fictionalized account of Dr. Lillian Dyck's life.

Dr. Lillian Dyck is a neurochemist and a senator. She received a National Aboriginal Achievement Award in 1999. She is also a distant cousin of mine. I worked for the Awards back then and researched her nomination. We talked for hours and hours as she told me her life story. Her father was from southern China and had immigrated to Canada. Chinese men were forbidden from bringing their families over with them because of the Chinese Exclusion Act. He bought a small café in Saskatchewan and then learned that he couldn't hire white women because of a provincial law designed to protect "white women's morality."



Lillian's mother was from my reserve. Seeking a better life for herself, she left the reserve and got a job working for Lillian's father. They married and had two children, Winston and Lillian. When Lillian's mother married her father she lost her Indian status because of provisions within the Indian Act.

I had known of the Chinese Exclusion Act and was quite familiar with the Indian Act, but I had never heard of this law that prevented white women from working for Chinese men. British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario had similar laws. I was fascinated because if it weren't for a combination of these laws, Lillian's parents wouldn't have met. This was history that was never taught. I knew I had an incredible story to tell.

***About Dr. and Senator Lillian Eva (Quan) Dyck***

Dr. and Senator Dyck was born Lillian Quan in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, in 1945. Her mother was Cree and her father came to Canada from China in 1912. Her family didn't have much money and moved between many small towns and cities on the Prairies. Lillian and her brother Winston were placed in the "slow room" at their Swift Current school. A teacher, John Dyer, took an interest in them, encouraging them to excel and embark on university journeys.



Senator Dyck attended the University of Saskatchewan, starting her studies in chemistry and ending up with a PhD in biological psychiatry. She explained that the study of the brain interested her. She is a neurochemist who became a professor and associate dean at University of Saskatchewan. Senator Dyck has done research on how antidepressant and antipsychotic medications affect people. She was part of a research team that developed and patented new drugs that could help treat people with Parkinson's disease, schizophrenia and Alzheimer's.

Senator Dyck has been honoured in the House of Commons for her service as a role model to young girls and women considering a career in the sciences. She was the 1999 National Aboriginal Achievement Award winner in Science. In 2005 she became a Canadian senator.

### Theatre 101

I want to be on the stage!

Maybe you want to be on the stage. Or maybe you want to be the one bossing the actors around. Or maybe you just love those funky lights. There's lots of ways to get involved in theatre. Contact a community or professional theatre in your region and let them know you would like to pitch in.

If you want to study theatre and learn more, a drama class or production at your school is a great place to start. Look for drama and theatre workshops offered after school or on weekends in your region too. If there's no theatre company or drama class in your area, why not start your own? Put on a play with your friends. Talk to your teachers. If you're about to graduate, there are many college and university programs across Canada for all aspects of theatre - writing, directing, acting, stage managing, and design.

## *Respect!*

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Putting on a play is hard work. It takes a lot of guts to get up on the stage. So make sure you show respect. You can help make the play more enjoyable for everyone by following a few simple rules:

- Only get up, move around, or talk before or after the play.
- Turn your cell phone and other electronics off.
- Clap loud at the end if you liked the play!

## *DISCUSSION*

*Who (or what) are you anyway?*

*Have you ever felt you don't know who you are?*

*Have you ever wanted to hide in the crowd? To be the same as everyone else?*

Then you know how Yvette feels.

Yvette struggles because everybody thinks of her as Chinese. Which she is. But she's also Cree. And she doesn't want anyone to know that part of herself. Yvette's story takes place in the 1950s and 60s. Back then, it wasn't easy being either Chinese or Cree, let alone a girl wanting to become a doctor. But it's not just that Yvette is a different colour. It's also hard to give her a label. She's not totally "Chinese", and she's not totally "Indian". She doesn't fit into a box.

## *TALK & THINK*

**Think and talk about these questions:**

- What kind of boxes do you get put in?
- What kind of boxes do you put other people in?
- Why do you think we judge people by the colour of their skin?  
Or by how they look? By whether they're male or female?
- In your community or your school, do you see people treated badly just because of who they are?

## Residential School

Imagine if Canada was suddenly taken over by aliens.

The aliens decided all the human kids had to go to their schools to learn how to be aliens. That way they could get good alien jobs, marry other aliens, and be happy aliens.

So they made a rule. All the human kids had to go to alien school, where they had to dress like aliens, eat alien food, and speak alien. Sometimes the aliens had to come and take the human kids away. Sometimes parents sent their kids to the alien school, because the aliens were here to stay, and the parents wanted their kids to have a better life.

In the alien schools, the kids couldn't see their parents. They couldn't talk to their brothers and sisters. The kids grew up speaking alien. A lot of them forgot how to speak English. When they went home for summers or after they graduated, it was like they didn't know their parents. Not only that, but some of the kids got abused by aliens.

How would you feel?

That's what happened to Aboriginal and Inuit kids in Canada for over 100 years. They were sent to residential schools across the country. Thousands of children attended. Often two or three generations of a family went. It's hard to find an Aboriginal family in Canada who wasn't affected in some way.

Some kids did have a good experience at residential school. But it was often because their families worked hard to give them a sense of their identity, and to stay connected to them.

There were many of these schools across Canada. Students who attended 139 of these schools have been eligible in the past few years to ask the Canadian government for compensation. This is because of the difficult and painful experiences they had there.

In Ontario, there were several residential schools. South of Toronto, these included the Mohawk Institute in Brantford and Mount Elgin. In northwestern Ontario, the schools included Cristal Lake, Fort William, Fort Frances, McIntosh, St. Mary's and Cecilia Jeffrey in Kenora, Pelican Lake in Sioux Lookout, and Poplar Hill further north.

British Columbia also had many residential schools. Some of the largest were Kamloops, St. George's in Lytton, Alberni in Port Alberni, and Lejac in Fraser Lake. Near Vancouver, there were residential schools in North Vancouver, Mission and Chilliwack.

## Alberta Residential Schools

The following list for Alberta is based on information from Catholic and Oblate sources and the websites of the Anglican and United Church of Canada.<sup>2</sup>

### Roman Catholic:

- Assumption Indian Residential School
  - Assumption / Hay Lakes/Chateh (Notre Dame de l'Assumption - Our Lady of Assumption): 1951-1970
- Blood / St. Mary's Indian Residential School
  - Stand Off (Immaculate Conception Indian Boarding School): 1898 - 1926
  - Cardston (Blood / St. Mary's IRS): 1926 - 1975
- Blue Quills Indian Residential School: Lac la Biche
  - Notre Dame des Victories/Hospice St. Joseph: 1862\* - 1898 <sup>3</sup>:Saddle Lake
  - Hospice St. Joseph/Sacred Heart: 1898 - 1931: St. Paul
- Blue Quills: 1931 - 1970
- Crowfoot Indian Residential School:
  - Cluny (Blackfoot or Siksika Reserve): 1900 – 1968
  - Dunbow Industrial School: High River/St. Joseph: 1884 - 1922
  - Ermineskin Indian Residential School: Hobbema: 1894 – 1973
  - Holy Angels Indian Residential School: Ft. Chipewyan: 1874 – 1974 <sup>4</sup>
- Sacred Heart Indian Residential School:
  - Brocket (Peigan or Piikani Reserve): 1895 – 1961
- St. Augustine Mission Indian Boarding School
- Peace River: 18?? – 1907 (funding transferred to Sturgeon Lake)
- St. Bernard Indian Residential School: Grouard: 1890 - 1961
- St. Bruno Indian Residential School: Jousard: 1913 – 1969
- St. Francis-Xavier Indian Residential School: Sturgeon Lake / Calais: 1907 – 1961
- St. Henry Indian Residential School: Ft. Vermilion: 1900 – 1967
- St. Martin Indian Residential School: Desmarais (Wabasca): 1902 – 1973
- Youville Indian Boarding School: St. Albert: 1863 – 1949 <sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <http://oblatesinthewest.library.ualberta.ca/eng/impact/indianschools.html>

<sup>3</sup> school operated as a mission school before becoming an Indian Boarding School

<sup>4</sup> school operated as a mission school before becoming an Indian Boarding School

<sup>5</sup> school operated as a mission school before becoming an Indian Boarding School

**Anglican:**

- Old Sun Indian Residential School: Gleichen: 1883 – 1968
- St. Andrew Indian Residential School: Whitefish Lake/Atikameg: 1903 – 1950?
- St. Barnabas Indian Boarding School: Sarcee Reserve: 1892 – 1923?
- St. Cyprian Indian Residential School: Brocket: 1889 – 1961
- St. John Indian Residential School: Wabasca: 1890 – 1966?
- St. Paul Indian Residential School: Cardston: 1880 – 1972
- St. Peter Indian Residential School
- Lesser Slave Lake: 1892 – 1932

**United Church (Methodist):**

- McDougall Orphanage and Residential School (Morley Indian Residential School)
  - Morley: 1875 – 1927
- Red Deer Industrial School : Red Deer: 1891 – 1919
- Edmonton Industrial School : St. Albert: 1924 – 1960s

***TALK AND THINK*****Think and talk about these questions:**

- Why do you think the government wanted kids to go to residential school?
- In 2008, the Prime Minister of Canada apologized for the Residential Schools. Do you think he should have apologized? Why or why not? Do you think it makes a difference?

**Who is an Indian?**

In the play, native people are called Indians. Today, we don't use that word much. Some people find it offensive, and prefer "Aboriginal", "First Nations," "Native" or "Indigenous." But in the time period of the play, Indian was still the most common name for Aboriginal people.

Who is an Indian? Yvette Wong struggles to figure out this question.

There are many kinds of "Indians" in the play.

Yvette's Mom was born on a Cree Indian Reserve. She was called a "Status" Indian. "Status" meant that she was registered with the government under a law called the Indian Act. The Indian Act is a very old law that goes back to 1876, before Canada was its own country. It was a law that was supposed to gradually "civilize" Indian people into British culture and society. It still exists today.

Being a Status Indian meant, and still means, that the person gets some special benefits, like assistance with health care. It also meant restrictions. In the past, Status Indians could not vote in elections, go to university or serve in the armed forces unless they gave up "status."

When Yvette's Mom left the reserve and married Yvette's Dad, who wasn't an Indian, she lost her "status". She lost all her benefits, and her daughter couldn't become a Status Indian. Yvette's family who live on the reserve are still Status. Her grandfather still lives a traditional lifestyle. He hunts and practices traditional medicine. Yvette's friend Maggie calls herself a "half-breed". Like Yvette's parents, Maggie's mom is Aboriginal, but her Dad isn't. But unlike Yvette, Maggie calls herself an Indian, partly because that's what everyone else says.

Yvette's teachers and classmates also have strong stereotypes of Indians. Miss Scott, for example, tries to make Yvette talk like a "real" Indian.

MISS SCOTT: "My warriors yell! hide! shoot! hot bullet fly like dart of Annee-meekee." You see, just like that. Now you do it.

*(YVETTE COPIES MISS SCOTT ACTION FOR ACTION.)*

YVETTE: My warriors yell! hide! shoot! hot bullet fly like dart of Annee-meekee.

MISS SCOTT: Perfect! We'll make an Indian out of you yet.

### **TALK AND THINK**

**Think and talk about these questions:**

- What does "Indian" mean to you?
- Where do you think people get ideas about Native people?
- What effect do you think stereotypes have?
- How do you think notions of being Aboriginal may be changing as Aboriginal people work towards agreements on land claims and self-government?

## Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada<sup>6</sup>

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has a mandate to learn the truth about what happened in the residential schools and to inform all Canadians about what happened in the schools. The Commission will document the truth of what happened by relying on records held by those who operated and funded the schools, testimony from officials of the institutions that operated the schools, and experiences reported by survivors, their families, communities and anyone personally affected by the residential school experience and its subsequent impacts.

The Commission hopes to guide and inspire First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and Canadians in a process of truth and healing leading toward reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

The Commission views reconciliation as an ongoing individual and collective process that will require participation from all those affected by the residential school experience. This includes First Nations, Inuit, and Métis former students, their families, communities, religious groups, former Indian Residential School employees, government, and the people of Canada.

### What does the TRC do?

- Prepare a complete historical record on the policies and operations of schools.
- Complete a public report including recommendations to the parties of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.
- Establish a national research centre for a lasting resource about the IRS legacy.

### TRC Activities

#### Statement Gathering:

- Provide a holistic, culturally appropriate and safe setting for former students, their families and communities in which to share their experiences with the Commission.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=4>

- Anyone affected by the residential schools experience might share his or her story by providing a written or recorded statement, in a private one-on-one interview or through a public discussion.
- Participation is voluntary and participants can choose how they want to share.

**National Events:** Host seven national events in different regions across Canada.

**Community Events:** Support community events designed by communities to meet their unique needs.

**Research:** Coordinate document collection and undertake specific research to be incorporated into the TRC Report and the National Research Centre.

**Public Education:** Support outreach, media and communication efforts.

**Commemoration:** Support commemoration activities that honour residential schools survivors and pay tribute in a lasting manner, in partnership with INAC.

### Chinese History in Canada

Chinese people first came to Canada in the 1850s for the British Columbia Gold Rush. Then in the 1880s, Chinese workers were brought in to help build the CPR Railway. Over 15,000 arrived at that time. They came because they wanted a better life. The government let them in because they were cheap labour. They worked for much less than other people. As soon as the railway was completed, the Canadian government wanted to stop so many Chinese immigrants from coming. In 1885, all immigrants from China had to pay a “Head Tax” to get into the country. It was \$50 at first, but went up to \$500 by 1905. This was the same as two year's wages back then. Even after they paid the tax, these immigrants still couldn't become Canadians.

In 1923, the government passed the Chinese Immigration Act. This meant that no more Chinese could come to Canada. No more Chinese were allowed to come until 1947. The law split up families. Husbands and wives, parents and children did not see each other for many years. There were other laws, too, that told Chinese immigrants what they could and couldn't do. One was the law that said that white women couldn't work in Chinese- owned businesses. Chinese were the only group of immigrants singled out like this. People across Canada, especially in the West, were afraid Chinese would become a "Yellow Tide" that would take over the country.

## TALK AND THINK

### Think and talk about these questions:

- Do you think the government should stop certain people from coming to our country? Why or why not?
- If you were in the government, how would you decide who could come and live in our country?
- Lots of Chinese immigrants now come to Canada. In some parts of Canada, like Vancouver, you could hear Chinese languages more than English. What do you think about this?

## Pioneers and Won Ton Soup

Chinese immigrants before 1950 usually ended up working either as laborers, washing clothes, or starting their own restaurants. Almost every town in western Canada had (and still has) a Chinese café. These restaurants were run by a Chinese family. Mom and Dad would cook and run the business. The kids would help with cleaning up and serving food.

These restaurants often served a mix of Chinese and “Western” food. The Chinese food they served was unique. The food had been changed so that it was quicker, less spicy, and used ingredients that could be bought in local stores. These café owners were pioneers in small towns. They were often the only Asian people in the community. People in the small towns might never have seen a Chinese person before.



(IMAGE: The headstone in the Mayo Cemetery for Jin Ah Poy, who came to Mayo, Yukon, alone in 1953. He ran a barbershop in the Silver Inn Hotel. He also sold Canadian-style meals to bachelors, but could be persuaded to cook Chinese banquets. Eventually his wife and son joined him in Mayo. CREDIT: YA, Yukon Asian History Display, 2006/146 #14)

## TALK AND THINK

Think and talk about these questions:

- When have you been to a Chinese restaurant? What's your favorite Chinese-Canadian dish?
- Have you ever wondered where the people who own the restaurant came from?
- What would it be like to be the only Chinese person in a town?

## ACTIVITIES

### 1. How do you make a play?

#### a. Before the Show

A play isn't just people talking on a stage. Plays use sound, lights, sets, and props, too. The "Set" is all the physical things on the stage, like a table or a backdrop. Usually the set doesn't move. "Props" are things a character uses during the show.

With your class, talk about plays you've seen before, and how the set, props, lights, and sound were used. How did they affect the play? Write down what you remember.

#### b. During the Show

Split your class into 4 groups. Each will look at one aspect of the play:

##### Group 1. Music and Sound

What kind of music is it? Give one example of how music and sound was used.

Do you like it? How does music and sound affect the play?

##### Group 2. Lights

What kinds of lights are used? Give one example. Do you like it? How do they affect the play?

##### Group 3. Set

What is the set? How is it used? Give one example when the character interacts with the set. Are there any props? What are they? Do you like it and why?

**Group 4. Actor**

*Café Daughter* is acted by one woman. How does she change from character to character? How does she use her body and her voice? Do you like it and why?

**c. After the Show**

Get together with your group and compare notes. Then present to the whole class.

Based on what you and the other students say, write a review for the play. What did you think of the music, sound, lights, set, and acting? What did you think about the message of the play? How many stars would you give it?

**2. What's the Story?****a. Write a timeline of the events of the play, as you remember it.**

What happens first? Then what happens? What are the most important events for Yvette? Why?

**b. Write down all the different locations in the play.**

When does the play change locations?

What happens in each place?

What do the places mean to Yvette?

**c. Characters: list all the characters in the play.**

Write down 3 words to describe them.

How much power do they have in the play?

**d. What's this play about?**

Make a mind map to explore the ideas and themes of the play. A mind map is a way to draw and connect ideas on paper. Start by writing down the question, "What's the play about?" in the middle of your paper. Then write down different ideas branching out from the question, like branches from a tree.

For example, you might decide the play is Identity. Write that word down, and then add other “word-branches” connected to Identity for Yvette, such as math, books, Cree, Chinese, Canadian, girl, doctor, daughter.

### 3. Who are you?

#### a. I am Poem

Write down ten sentences that start with “I am \_\_\_\_\_”. You could write down your nationality (“I am Canadian”), your ancestry (“I am Southern Tutchone”). Write down things that describe you (“I am good at tennis”). Try to get creative. Use metaphors or similes. (“I am an eagle who loves to soar”)

#### b. Name Story

Write your name story and share it with your class and family.

Where does your name come from?

Your first name? Your middle name? Your last name?

What does your name mean?

Who gave you your name?

What does it mean to you? Do you like it?

Do you have nicknames?

Why is it important to know your name story?

### 4. Being Different

#### a. Sorting People

Get your class to stand up. Then sort them into different groups, according to different ways they look.

- hair colour
- left-handed or right-handed
- glasses/contact lenses or no glasses/contact lenses

- different kinds of allergies
- whether your tongue curls
- skin colour – compare the colour of your upper arm

**Talk about these questions:**

Does your group stay the same?

Does it matter what group you're in?

Is skin colour any different than other kinds of ways of grouping people?

What do you think "race" means?

When we say, "Chinese people are like this" – is it true?

Why do you think we make those kinds of judgments?

**b. Race in Movies and Television**

Watch a movie or TV show at home or in your class.

What kinds of races or ethnic groups are being represented?

Are there any non-white characters? Are they the stars, or minor roles?

Are they positive or negative? Are they stereotypes?

How about women? Gay characters? How are they portrayed?

**NOTES:**

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