

James Berry raises important questions about the ways we respond to differences in a poem entitled "What Do We Do with a Variation?"

- 1      What do we do with a difference?  
        Do we stand and discuss its oddity  
        or do we ignore it?
- 2      Do we shut our eyes to it  
        or poke it with a stick?  
        Do we clobber it to death?
- 3      Do we move around it in rage  
        and enlist the rage of others?  
        Do we will it to go away?
- 4      Do we look at it in awe  
        Or purely in wonderment?  
        Do we work for it to disappear?
- 5      Do we pass it stealthily  
        or change route away from it?  
        Do we will it to become like ourselves?
- 6      What do we do with a difference?  
        Do we communicate to it,  
        let application acknowledge it  
        for barriers to fall down?

Connections – Answer the questions below.

1. What is the message of Berry's poem?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Imagine a poem that described how we are alike. What might the message of such a poem be?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How do people learn which differences matter and which do not?

4. In his essay, “Little Things Are Big,” Jesus Colón describes how real and perceived differences shaped a decision he made on a late-night subway ride in New York City in the 1950s.

a. What do you think the title of Colón’s essay means?

b. How does the title relate to the question Berry asks in his poem (“What do we do with a variation?”)?

c. How would you answer Berry’s question?

5. How does the message in the poem relate to history or current events? Explain using at least two examples.

6. Extra credit: In a poster, illustrate the message of Berry’s poem. Use bold images and colors to make your idea pop. It should be on a poster board and be at least 17” x 20” big. You may earn a potential of 30 points for the project. You can sketch your idea below.