Leila in Saffron
by Rukhsanna Guidroz; illustrated by Dinara Mirtalipova

When Leila visits her grandmother’s house for their weekly family dinner, she finds parts of herself and her heritage in the family, friends, and art around her.


Read Across America this month:
What you see in the mirror doesn’t always reflect who you are. In Leila in Saffron, Leila is on the lookout for things to like about herself and finds what she’s looking for while spending time with her family. Work with your art teacher or local artist to help students reflect on who they are and create self-portraits. Read aloud Leila in Saffron and then invite students to take a look at themselves in a mirror. Have them write down all of the things that they like about themselves—inside and out. Let students experiment with a variety of mediums and create their self-portrait in one that feels most comfortable to them. Encourage students to embellish their portraits with images and phrases that express self-identity and their identities as readers. Celebrate their work with:

• a gallery of student self-portraits at your school
• an art reception featuring students talking about their portraits
• a student read aloud of books they feel reflect their identity
Plan ahead for more Read Across America reading fun:
A Book Scavenger Hunt is a great way to generate excitement about books and reading! Challenge students to search for books that provide mirrors (stories that reflect their own culture and help build identity) and windows (stories that offer a view into someone else’s experience and the range of possibilities in the world). Take a trip to your school or public library for Read Across America and have students look for 5 titles that are mirrors and 5 that are windows. Provide specific criteria to help students focus their search, such as books about families, friends, sports, holidays, etc. Make sure that students actually read and rely on text rather than images to understand gender, languages, and cultural identities, etc., presented in the titles. Give students time to look through books to gather their own data then present one mirror title and one window title to the class. Compile these book finds into a recommended reading list for your community of diverse readers!

Find more titles and resources to explore identity at readacrossamerica.org