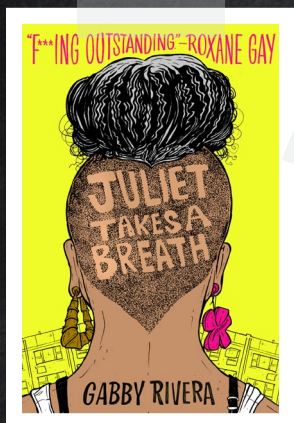
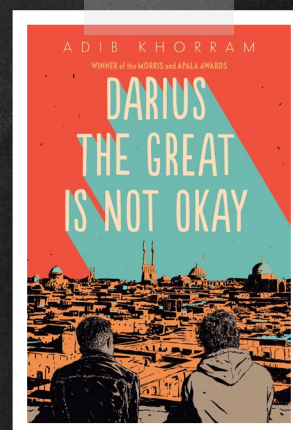


**#DISRUPTTEXTS**

# IN YOUR CLASSROOM WITH THESE 8 TEXTS!



In partnership with  
#DisruptTexts,  
learning guides for  
eight individual texts and how they align  
to the #DisruptTexts pillars!





DEAR EDUCATOR,

We are honored to partner up with #DisruptTexts to bring you this resource to help you bring equity to your classroom or library! These are, by no means, the only eight texts to use; but we hope they provide a scaffolding to bring change and choice for your students.

SINCERELY,

*Penguin Young Readers School + Library Marketing*



## WHAT IS #DISRUPTTEXTS?

Disrupt Texts is a crowdsourced, grass roots effort by teachers for teachers to challenge the traditional canon in order to create a more inclusive, representative, and equitable language arts curriculum that our students deserve. Co-founded by Tricia Ebarvia, Lorena Germán, Dr. Kimberly N. Parker, and Julia Torres, #DisruptTexts's mission to aid and develop teachers committed to antiracist/anti-bias teaching pedagogy and practices.

There are four core principles to #DisruptTexts:

1. Continuously interrogate our own biases and how they inform our thinking.

As teachers, we have been socialized in certain values, attitudes, and beliefs that inform the way we read, interpret, and teach texts, and the way we interact with our students. Ask: How are my own biases affecting the way I'm teaching this text and engaging with my students?

2. Center Black, Indigenous, and voices of color in literature.

Literature study in U.S. classrooms has largely focused on the experiences of white- (and male-) dominated society, as perpetuated through a traditional, Euro-centric canon. Ask: What voices—authors or characters—are marginalized or missing in our study? How are these perspectives authentic to the lived experiences of communities of color?



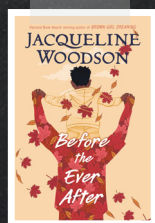
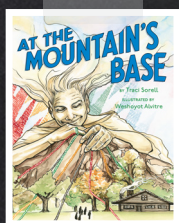
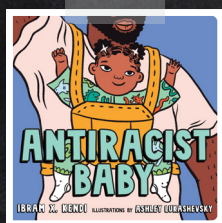
### 3. Apply a critical literacy lens to our teaching practices.

While text-dependent analysis and close reading are important skills for students to develop, teachers should also support students in asking questions about the way that such texts are constructed. Ask: How does this text support or challenge issues of representation, fairness, or justice? How does this text perpetuate or subvert dominant power dynamics and ideologies? And how can we ask students to wrestle with these tensions?

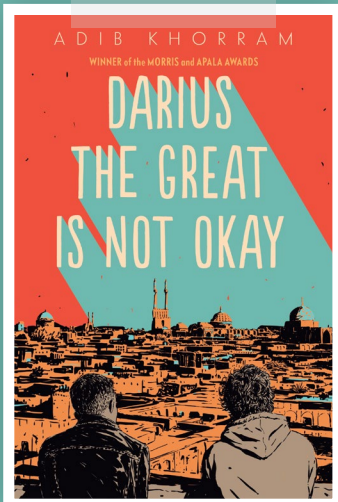
### 4. Work in community with other antiracist educators, especially Black, Indigenous, and other educators of color.

To disrupt and transform curriculum and instruction requires working with other educators who can challenge and work with us as antiracist educators. Ask: How can we collaborate to identify, revise, or create instructional resources (like this guide) that can center and do justice to the experiences of historically marginalized communities?

Each principle stands for actions that are culturally sustaining and antiracist. Through each principle, teachers aim to offer a curriculum that is restorative, inclusive, and therefore works toward healing identities and communities. As you read this guide, you'll see how each of these principles informs the approach recommended to teach *Darius the Great is Not Okay*.







# DARIUS THE GREAT IS NOT OKAY

by Adib Khorram

## ABOUT THE BOOK

DARIUS DOESN'T THINK HE'LL EVER BE ENOUGH, IN AMERICA OR IN IRAN. HILARIOUS AND HEARTBREAKING, THIS UNFORGETTABLE DEBUT INTRODUCES A BRILLIANT NEW VOICE IN CONTEMPORARY YA.

WINNER OF THE WILLIAM C. MORRIS DEBUT AWARD

"Heartfelt, tender, and so utterly real.

I'd live in this book forever if I could."

—BECKY ALBERTALLI, award-winning author of *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*

Darius has never really fit in at home, and he's sure things are going to be the same in Iran. His clinical depression doesn't exactly help matters, and trying to explain his medication to his grandparents only makes things harder. Then Darius meets Sohrab, the boy next door, and everything changes. Soon, they're spending their days together, playing soccer, eating faludeh, and talking for hours on a secret rooftop overlooking the city's skyline. Sohrab calls him Darioush—the original Persian version of his name—and Darius has never felt more like himself than he does now that he's Darioush to Sohrab. Adib Khorram's brilliant debut is for anyone who's ever felt not good enough—then met a friend who makes them feel so much better than okay.

## Considerations for Teachers and Students

*Darius the Great Is Not Okay* is in essence a coming-of-age story with family at the center. Throughout the narrative, readers will encounter Persian customs, traditions, and foods, many of them for the first time, just as Darius does. The book also addresses religious minorities like [Zoroastrians](#) and [Bahá'í](#) co-existing within a predominantly Muslim theocratic state wherein laws, customs, traditions, and religion are all intertwined. Readers engaging with *Darius the Great Is Not Okay* should consider the internal and external pressures that Darius feels, both as a result of historical roles Persian males (and patriarchs within his family) have held, but also because of the inner



## Considerations for Teachers and Students (cont.)

thoughts racing through his mind that are part of living with depression. An added layer of importance is the fact that Darius's father is white. Khorram takes great care to make each relationship Darius has equally complex and equally important with regard to the development of his own psyche and sense of belonging—or isolation.

Though *Darius the Great Is Not Okay* is predominantly a coming-of-age tale, it is also a novel about the way society and families talk (or don't talk) about topics like terminal illness, mental health, and masculinity. Some of the story is set in the United States, but Darius is Iranian-American, a second-generation immigrant, and so many of his interactions with others, as well as the views he has of himself, are seasoned with cultural influences from his family in Iran.

Furthermore, unpacking bias and stigma about mental health, specifically depression and anxiety, is a necessary part of developing empathy for Darius. When readers understand where societal and personal bias about mental illness comes from, they can begin to unpack it and understand that though the narrative includes a protagonist living with mental health issues, the story does not revolve around it.

### CONSIDERATIONS AROUND RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

At the beginning of the novel, Darius says that, "As a people group, Persians are genetically predisposed to like tea. And even though I was only half Persian, I had inherited a full-strength tea-loving gene sequence from my mom." (2) DisruptTexts Pillar 1 is about interrogating your own bias. Before beginning to read *Darius the Great Is Not Okay*, educators will need to interrogate their own bias and determine pre-existing ideas about Iranian (Persian) or Southwest Asian people and cultures. What ideas do you and your students have about what anyone is genetically (or ethnically) predisposed to? Though Darius uses dry humor throughout the novel in order to lighten conversation around





## Considerations for Teachers and Students (cont.)

potentially heavy topics, in the US, there has historically been much discrimination and prejudice directed toward people and groups from Southwest Asia—and immigrants in general. Do you have any students who are immigrants, bi-or multi-ethnic in your class? If so, what steps will you take to safeguard their emotional safety during class conversations about immigration and people from this part of the world?

In the United States, there is a long history of marginalization and erasure of people of color. Additionally, there is a long history of governmental and municipal organizations deciding who gets to be white adjacent—more proximal to power and privilege according to their ability to approximate whiteness in appearance, speech, behavior etc. Furthermore, each person undergoes a process of racial identity formation that is dependent upon social constructions and one's experience with privilege and oppression based on one's identity. Identity formation includes what Allan Johnson refers to as "The Big 8": race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, religion/spirituality, nationality and socioeconomic status (Johnson, 2006). As you read, consider Darius's experiences before he goes to Iran, and contrast them with what he experiences while he is there, where nobody is Western European and other forms of discrimination come into play. Consider the role that Darius's bi-racial identity plays in his consciousness development with respect to how Persian he feels or how un-Persian he believes other people think he is.

### Additional Resources:

Hawley, W. D., & Nieto, S. (2010). *Another inconvenient truth: Race and ethnicity.*

Educational Leadership, 68 (3), 66–71.

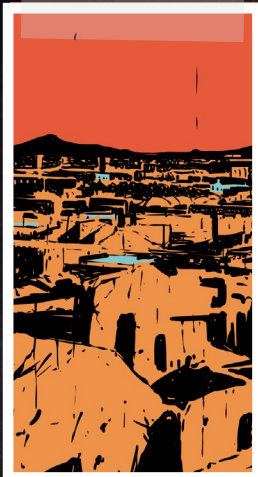
Johnson, A. G. (2006). *Privilege, oppression, and difference. In Power, privilege and difference,* 2nd Edition (pp. 12–40). Boston: McGraw-Hill.

### The Changing Face of America

#### CONSIDERATIONS AROUND MENTAL HEALTH AND MASCULINITY

Throughout the novel, Darius refers to his father as an "Übermensch," which Oxford Languages describes as, "the ideal superior man of the future who could rise above conventional Christian morality to create and impose his own values, originally described by Nietzsche in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883–85)." According to [Nietzsche](#), the "overman" can impose his will about the way the world should be onto others, thus making the world take the form he desires it to take. Darius's use of this term speaks to the pressure he feels to be like his white father, who appears to have it all together for





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## Considerations for Teachers and Students (cont.)

most of the novel, since he lives in a world of his own making which wholly embraces him. In comparison with his father, Darius feels powerless and insecure as a son with mixed heritage and ancestry.

Darius is at an age where he questions a lot about the world, but in *Darius the Great Is Not Okay* he questions his ethnicity, masculinity, and how each of these factors affects his relationships to others in his family more than anything. To understand him better, it is important to recognize that both the Islamic state where his extended family on his mother's side resides and the USA where he lives have historically been patriarchal societies. Darius experiences North American or Western European norms of masculinity and male interaction at home in the USA. He knows something about the way males act in the US feels wrong to him, but cannot quite identify why until he goes to Iran and sees different cultural norms, such as men kissing one another on each cheek as greetings or signs of affection. Darius's journey toward understanding what it means to live with depression and anxiety begins in *Darius the Great Is Not Okay* as he begins to understand that it is not only okay, but actually quite commonplace not to be (or feel) okay.

### Additional Resources:

[What We Mean When We Say, "Toxic Masculinity"](#)

[Mental Illnesses: Terms to Use. Terms to Avoid.](#)

## CONSIDERATIONS AROUND GENDER AND SEXUALITY

In *Darius the Great Is Not Okay*, Darius is in a stage where he questions his sexuality. Throughout the book, he explores and reflects on physical touch and intimacy between men and how culture impacts the ways that individuals express themselves. Darius reflects



## Considerations for Teachers and Students (cont.)

on Sohrab as not only the first friend he's ever had, but also the first person he feels emotionally safe with and with whom he can express himself. The emotional intimacy the two experience allows Darius to explore feelings of attraction and attachment. The novel hints that these feelings will eventually lead to Darius's self-acceptance as he matures into an adult. Through the many interactions the two have, readers are able to see the important role Sohrab plays in Darius's emotional development and maturity. Readers will also see that the emergence of LGBTQ+ identity doesn't happen the same way or at the same time for everyone. It is important for students to understand the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity.

### Additional Resources:

[How is sexual orientation different from gender identity?](#)

[Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Definitions - HRC](#)

## Key Concepts and Terms

The following are a few terms to aid discussion with students

- **Oppression:** prolonged, cruel or unjust treatment or control.
- [Depression](#)
- [Anxiety](#)
- **Patriarchy:** a system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it.
- **Theocracy:** a system of government in which religious authorities rule in the name of God or a god.

It is important to create structures in educational environments where students are accustomed to learning about and using these words because the ideas themselves (if not always the explicit vocabulary) do appear in the text. Other words, concepts, and ideas will occur throughout the text as well. Consider building a word wall of familiar and unfamiliar terms, such as "Übermensch" and "Darjeeling," and adding the list as you read to co-create definitions.



## Themes and Essential Questions

*Family* - How do families impact individual personalities? How are individual personalities shaped by the families they are born into? What is Darius's relationship to each person in his family? How is his relationship with his extended family strengthened when he travels to Iran to visit them?

*Ethnic and Cultural Identity* - What are some individual aspects of ethnic and cultural identity? How does Darius feel about his grasp of Iranian language, food, traditions, and customs? How does his perception of himself compare to the way other people in his family see him?

*Masculinity* - What are some traits considered by mainstream American society to be typically "masculine"? What are some considered to be "feminine"? Who is left out or erased by hard social definitions of behavior that conforms to a gender binary?

*Friendship* - How do friendships impact individuals? How does Darius's friendship with Sohrab affect him?

*Love* - How do individuals typically express love in families and friendships? What types of love appear in this story? What types of social stigmas exist in American society that prevent males from showing physical intimacy or public displays of affection? How is this different in Iran? How do the individuals in this story show love for one another?

*Courage* - What types of events cause individuals to have to show courage? What are some events that cause Darius to have to display courage? What are some moments when you think he could be courageous, but chooses not to? Why do you think he doesn't?

*Coming-of-age* - What types of events cause individuals to "grow up"? What are some events that happen in Darius's life that cause him to mature?

*Change vs. Tradition* - What are some elements of society that have changed over time? Ex. Internet information access, cell phones for communication. What traditions or "old" customs in Darius's family does he discover when he travels to Iran?

*Isolationism* - How does being (or feeling) alone or isolated impact individuals? What are some factors that make Darius feel isolated from those around him? How do these factors shape him?

## Discussion Questions

### PRE-READING:

- Do you know anyone identifying as Iranian or Persian? Do you know anyone who lives with mental health issues? Do you know anyone to whom both identifiers apply? What are some experiences you have had with Iranian people or culture?



## Discussion Questions (cont.)

If you don't have any, check out the following website: [Map: Iranian-American communities in the United States](#). What do you notice? What questions do you have?

- Have you ever traveled outside of your home country? If so, where did you go and how long were you there? Describe the experience of visiting another country for the first time.
- Do you speak any languages other than English? If so, how does this shape the way you see the world? Who do you use your non-English language with? Do you use translanguaging as a way to communicate and understand the world?

Educator resources:

[Translanguaging - Why to how Bilingual is better \(and here's why\)](#)

- Are you bi- or multi-cultural/ethnic? If not, do you know anyone who is? If so, how does this impact the way you view the world?

### DURING-READING:

- What does Darius mean when he says, "Persians are genetically predisposed to like tea?" What does he reveal at this point in the book about Iranian culture and his relationship to it? (2)
- How does Darius feel about his physical appearance? Why does he feel this way? (13)
- What Farsi does Darius know? How does this correlate to his feeling more (or less) Persian? (20) Can you or anyone in your learning community relate?
- How does Darius connect with his father? How does Laleh connect with her mother? How does Darius feel about these divisions and connections in his family? (21)
- After reading about how Persians celebrate Persian New Year (25) what themes and festivities stood out to you?
- Have you or anyone you know ever been asked where you are from? How does this make you feel? Why do you think people ask this question? (31)
- What is a "slingshot maneuver"? What causes Darius to experience them? (34)
- When Darius describes "The first time I was called a terrorist," what feelings, memories, or emotions does that bring up for you? (39)



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## Discussion Questions (cont.)

- What does Darius mean when he says, "Stephen Kellner was a Paragon of Teutonic Masculinity"? (42) What feelings does this reveal about how he sees himself?
- Why don't Darius and Babou know how to talk to one another? (47) \*Consider barriers beyond language. Do you have any communication barriers between yourself and older family members? If so, what are they and why do you think they exist?
- What is a "temporal displacement"? How does this apply in the case of Darius's journey from America to Iran? (62) Have you ever experienced this?
- When Darius first arrives in Iran, what feelings does he experience? (64) Have you ever traveled to another country? How did your direct experience compare to stereotypes or second-hand information you had about the place and people before traveling there?
- Describe Darius's reaction to the question, "What are you depressed about?" (68) Read over his conversation with the custom's officer, then read and discuss [9 Depression Myths](#)
- How does Darius's first impression of Yazd differ from the ideas he had in his mind about what the city would be like? (76)
- Why do you think people with families in other countries bring items purchased in the US when traveling back to their home countries to visit? (80) If you have family in another country, do you have this custom? What are the items your loved ones typically ask for?
- What does Darius mean when he says, "Farsi is a deeply context-sensitive language"? How is this similar to or different from English (or your home language(s)) (89)
- What does it mean to "taarof"? What can you infer about the custom and what it means from the way people interact with one another?
- What is a "Soulless Minion of Orthodoxy"? (106) Why do you think Darius uses this label to describe people?
- Why is Sohrab singled out among his peers? How do the others treat him based on this difference? (111)
- Why does Ali-Reza make fun of Darius? How do the other boys respond? How does Darius respond in the moment? Compare this with how he describes feeling inside. (115)



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## Discussion Questions (cont.)



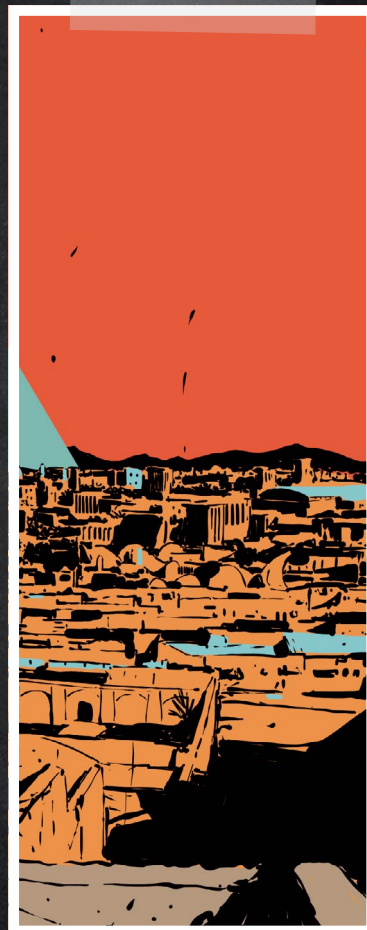
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- What does Darius mean when he says, "You can learn things without them being said out loud too"? What does he learn? What observations about your family or friendships have you made that have never been acknowledged out loud? (133)
- How does Darius feel when his family speaks Farsi around him? (134) How do you feel when people around you speak languages you don't understand? Have you ever traveled somewhere where you don't speak the language? How does this make you feel? What was your emotional response? What actions did you take? If not, how do you think you would feel and respond? (134)
- How might the serving of "tah dig" be considered a sign of affection or endearment? Do you have any similar customs or traditions? (137)
- How does Darius feel when his father starts watching Star Trek with Laleh? What do you think are some of the reasons for his emotional response? (145)
- What is Persepolis and why does Darius go to visit with his family? What cultural and/or spiritual significance does it have for them? Do you have any ancient ruins or landmarks with similar significance? (155)
- What does Babou mean when he says, "It's important to know where you come from." Why is it important for Darius to know his history? Why is it important to know your history? How might trips like the one Darius's family takes to Persepolis change a person's view of their place in society?(158)
- What does Darius mean when he says, "This was the most Persian I had ever been in my entire life, and it still wasn't enough." (183) What did he do in order to "become Persian"? What about his interactions with others made him feel it "wasn't enough"?
- Compare Darius's relationship to his Persian family with Stephen Kellner's on page 187. What types of emotions do his observations cause him to feel?
- What does Sohrab mean when he says, "Your place was empty before..." (190) Describe what this expression really means. Do you know of any similar expressions in a different language?
- Why is Sohrab being "the first friend [Darius] has ever had" both good and bad? (195) How does overhearing his parents talking about his friendship with Sohrab affect Darius?



## Discussion Questions (cont.)

- What does Darius mean when he describes being a “Fractional Persian”? Do you know anyone who has immigrated to the US and tried to fit in? Are you or anyone you know a first- or second-generation immigrant? What sorts of sacrifices do immigrants make in order to live in American society? What do they need from American society? (201)
- What does it mean to love the idea of someone rather than the reality? How does this relate to Darius’s relationships? (202)
- What is different about the Iranian calendar? (215) Do you know of any other countries that use different systems to measure time? Ex: Some countries measure hours in the day by a 24-hour clock instead of a 12-hour one.
- Explain how Darius shows both courage and vulnerability when he stands up to his father on page 224.
- What does Darius mean when he says, “I wondered if I was a tourist.” (229–230) Discuss the spiritual significance for him of visiting The Towers of Silence. Do you have any places you visit that are similar? Do you feel a sense of isolation or belonging when you visit? What do you suppose makes Darius feel like “a tourist in [his] own past”?
- What do you learn about Sohrab’s father on page 243? What do you know about prison systems in Iran, America, or other countries? How might the experience of growing up without a father affect Sohrab?
- What do Darius’s realizations on pages 244 and 267 reveal about Sohrab and Darius’s relationship? Do you have “safe” people in your life? If so, think about who they are and why you feel emotionally safe with them. If not, what characteristics would you need in order to feel emotionally safe with someone?
- If you could live in any other country in the world, where would it be? Why? How do you imagine your life would be different if you lived there? How might *you* be different?
- What revelation surprises Darius on pages 272 and 273? Think about your relationship as it is now with your parents or caregivers. Has it changed over time? If so, how? What are some defining moments you can remember about your relationship with your caregivers?



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## Discussion Questions (cont.)

- Contrast what happens on page 279 with the scene when Sohrab tells Darius “his place was empty.” Have you ever had a falling out with someone you care about? What happened? Were you able to make things right? If not, why not? If so, what types of actions did you take to repair the situation?
- What do you think causes Darius’s changed opinion of himself and Yazd on page 280? Draw connections between what you have learned about characteristics of depression and their manifestation in this moment. How does the situation contribute to his mental state?
- What does Darius’s father admit on page 285? How does this change their relationship? What causes the “harmonic resonance” between them? What is a common social stigma around men crying or showing open displays of vulnerability?
- Sometimes it is said that “Hurt people hurt people.” Connect this saying to Sohrab’s revelations on page 294.
- Identify some similarities and differences between Darius and Sohrab from pages 296–297 or any other parts of the novel. How do these traits draw them together?
- What connection did Cyprian Cusumano, Soulless Minion of Orthodoxy (maybe) make between Darius from Portland and Darioush the Great? What changes do you notice in Darius at the novel’s conclusion?

### POST READING:

- Now that you’ve read a coming-of-age story, also known as “Bildungsroman,” which scenes stand out to you as key moments that change Darius’s perspective of himself and others?
- What events in the novel contribute to Darius feeling more or less authentically Persian? Try to isolate specific scenes or conversations.
- The Lord of the Rings is an adventure story and one of heroism. What connections does Darius make between The Lord of the Rings and the world he lives in? Why do you think he superimposes science fiction or fantasy over events, places, and encounters in the real world?
- Compare Darius’s personality at the beginning of the novel with who he becomes by the end. What did he gain by going to Iran? What did he let go of?
- How does Darius’s relationship with Sohrab evolve throughout the course of the novel? How does their relationship change each of them? What does Darius learn about himself (and Sohrab) as they grow closer, experience separation, then reunite again?



## Discussion Questions (cont.)

- Throughout the course of the novel, Darius is in a phase where he is questioning his sexual orientation, but hasn't quite developed enough experience or confidence to make that public. What kinds of experiences does Darius have with physical intimacy, gender identity, and gender expression? What does he learn about himself through these experiences?

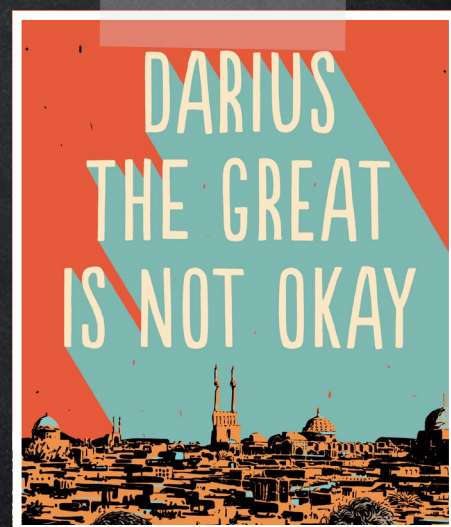
### Journal Prompts

- How does Darius feel about stereotypically masculine traits? What are some of his reflections for how these apply (or do not apply) to him? What are some of the unspoken rules dictating how males (or females) should act and interact? How might these rules restrict or oppress some and erase others? *Ex. If only females are allowed to cry in public, what does that mean for males who show public displays of emotion?*
- What is Darius's relationship to each of his family members? How does it change when the family travels to Iran? What is your relationship to your siblings (or extended family members)? Has it changed over time? If so, how and why?
- Do you have events that have happened that trigger an intense emotional response and/or change the way you view the world for a time as Darius experiences on pages 280-281? If so, what do you do in those moments? Who do you turn to for support?
- What, in your opinion, is the basis for so much stigma and prejudice around the treatment of mental health issues like depression, and anxiety? Do you or anyone you know live with mental health issues? If so, how do they affect interactions with others? How do they impact self-perception?
- How does Darius change as a result of his relationship with Sohrab? What characteristics do the two have in common? How are they different? How does knowing and getting to connect with people from different places shape individuals?
- How does Darius get to know himself more as a result of traveling to Iran? What experiences have you had that have caused you to get to know different parts of yourself *Ex. Traveling away from home for summer camp, or to a different country to visit relatives.*
- How does the new information Darius learns about his father near the end of the novel change his perspective?



## Lesson Ideas

1. Iranian authors are often marginalized within young people's literature. Read the interview with Adib Khorram at the end of the novel to identify some of the goals he wanted to accomplish through writing the novel. Identify and analyze events in the plot or relationships between the character by looking for clues about what you consider to be universal and which parts of the story are uniquely Persian.
2. As you read, keep track of the items Darius identifies as "Persian traits." Identify whether he identifies with these traits or not by marking each with a (+), (+/-) or (-) then draw a mind-map using [MindMeister](#) with Darius's encounters with Persian culture using quoted evidence to justify your understanding of his connection to his cultural and ethnic identity.
3. There are many allusions to [Star Trek: The Next Generation](#) throughout the book. Watch an episode of the show to familiarize yourself with the characters, then visit the Star Trek Timelines wiki. What is the basic premise of the show? Compare this to Darius's feelings about traveling to Iran before, during, and after his family's time there. What does travel have the potential to do for individuals? Consider how traveling connects to each of the following themes: courage, isolationism, ethnic and cultural identity. Make a word web connecting scenes from the book to these themes and *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (if you can). *Ex. In Darius the Great Is Not Okay, Darius shows courage when he plays soccer with Sohrab and the other Persian boys he doesn't know. In Star Trek: The Next Generation, every episode requires some kind of courage when the crew encounters and interacts with alien civilizations—some of which are hostile.*
4. Read Marjane Satrapi's [Persepolis](#), then create a visual timeline of events leading up to, during, and after the Iranian revolution. How did life change for Iranians during this time period? What historical information can you learn from this novel? Make connections between *Persepolis* and *Darius the Great Is Not Okay* by adding to your visual timeline.
5. When reading with criticality, readers and educators consider context, and the way the book is a reflection of the environment in which it was created as well as which voices are centered and which are left out. Identify passages when Darius reflects on masculinity, his relationship to it, and his place in the world. Compare and contrast Persian ideas of socially acceptable behavior for males with what you know of those in your own culture.





## Lesson Ideas (cont.)

6. Readers who read with a critical eye can look for ways Darius learns to dismantle oppressive thought patterns he places on himself, and those he interprets based on interactions with others. Two Iranian religious minorities mentioned throughout the book are Zoroastrians and Bahá'í. Research religious minorities in order to better understand their positionality with respect to *self-expression, oppression, power, and privilege*. What are Darius's family customs with regard to these themes? What are his reflections on Sohrab's family? How are the two families different? How are they the same?
  7. The novel also delves into multi-generational families and the complex way that tradition intersects with modernity. What traditions does Darius's family have? How are they different from or similar to your family traditions? Create a shared presentation about family traditions with all class members contributing. Consider food, music, dance, holidays, clothing, language and anything else memorable. If you can, include "insider information" only those belonging to the culture or ethnicity might know. *Tip: Focus on the chapter "Persian Casual" and what actually happens, Darius's observations about what "Persian Casual" actually means.*
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## Extension Activities

1. Darius's name has a Persian origin (Darioush) and connects him with a historical figure (Darius the Great). Research Darioush the Great the historical figure and record the information you find about him. Then research the origins of your own name and share the story. According to the sources you find, are there any personality traits attributed to your name? Do you feel they apply to you?
2. What do you know about suicide prevention? Using your resources, research local and/or national organizations for suicide prevention such as the [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#) then create an ad campaign to educate those in your community about what you've learned. This could look like a FlipGrid with personal responses to frequently asked questions, or a YouTube video of you and your peers debunking myths about those who die by suicide or live with depression. Cite your sources and refer to the article: [Mental Illnesses: Terms to Use. Terms to Avoid.](#)
3. Sohrab reveals that his father is in prison in Iran. Using your school's databases, research at least three different political and social figures who have been imprisoned in Iran. What do they have in common? What is different about them? How long were their prison sentences? What were they imprisoned for? How does the Iranian criminal justice system compare to or differ from the criminal justice system in the US (or the country where you reside)?



## Extension Activities (cont.)

4. Perhaps an important question to begin with, and one that Darius himself addresses early in the novel is, "What knowledge or misconceptions do people from the US hold about Iranians and people from Southwest Asia (also known as 'The Middle East')"? It is imperative for educators to read and familiarize themselves with the history of the region, present political and social conditions, as well as the complicated relationship the US has with countries in this region. Use [Culture Grams](#) or any other database you have access to to research information about countries bordering Iran, and Iran itself. Identify key information about the region, such as language, governmental structure, religion, and common cultural features, such as holidays, foods and clothing. Look for these as they appear throughout the novel and create a dialectical journal to describe your reactions to quotes you find.

### Additional Resources:

[Common Misconceptions and Stereotypes about the Middle East](#)

[Podcast: Ethnically Ambiguous](#)

[Being Iranian In LA.: More Than Just A Stereotype \[Becoming Iranian-American, Pt. 2\] | AJ+](#)

[Fears of increased 'Iranophobia' grip Iranian-American community](#)

[Iran and Persia - Are They the Same?](#)

5. There are many misconceptions about mental health, mostly because studying mental health and identifying treatments is relatively new. Read [The History & Evolution of Mental Health & Treatment](#). Break it up into sections and create an annotated image that represents your section using [Thinglink](#) to share what you find.
6. One of Darius's family customs and traditions is drinking tea. Take a look at "Darius's Guide to Tea" in the back of the book. Research the history of tea and the different trade routes used to move tea (and the cultural traditions that center it) around the world. What do you notice? What do you wonder? What teas are you the most familiar with? Choose a tea that is unfamiliar to you, research its history and the process used to make it, any properties or flavor notes, and holistic medicinal properties it might have. Drink some and share the experience with those in your family or learning community.

### Additional Resource

[A History of Tea](#)



#DisruptTexts is not simply about replacing older texts for new ones; rather, it is a more nuanced and holistic approach aimed at offering a restorative and antiracist curriculum. #DisruptTexts requires that we as educators interrogate our own biases, center the voices of BIPOC in literature, help students develop a critical lens, and work in community with other antiracist and BIPOC educators. Together we will bring about change in society.

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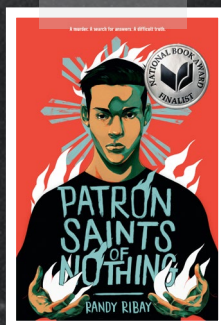
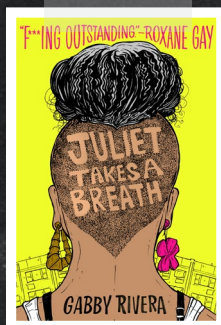
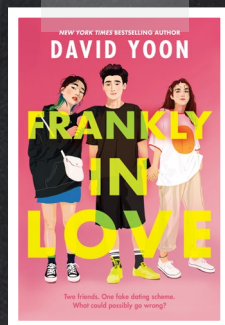
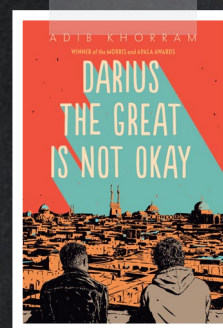
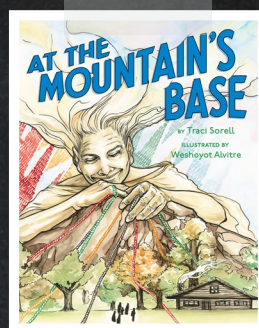
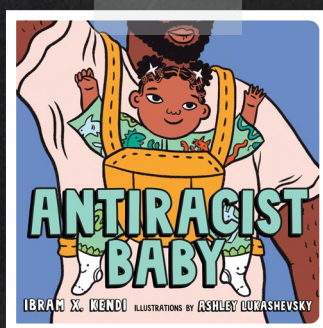
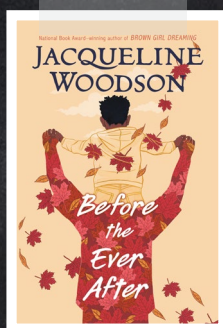
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**TRICIA EBARVIA** is a high school English teacher with almost twenty years of experience, a co-Director at the PA Writing & Literature Project, a Heinemann Fellow, and co-Founder of #DisruptTexts and #31DaysIBPOC. In order for students to become responsible, engaged participants in their communities, Tricia believes that educators must teach from an anti-bias, critical literacy stance and is the author of a forthcoming book on anti-bias literacy practices. Tricia can be found on social media @triciaebarvia and at [triciaebarvia.org](https://triciaebarvia.org).



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