

# This is My America

Written by Kim Johnson

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## OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Juxtaposition is a literary device which puts two different elements side by side for the purpose of comparing their differences. Kim Johnson has crafted several juxtaposition samples in her novel, *This is My America*. Understanding this literary device will allow students to provide a complex literary analysis of text, as well as gain a deeper understanding of characterization connections.

## LEARNING TARGETS

1. Students will be able to define *juxtaposition*.
2. Students will be able to provide evidence of two elements being juxtaposed.
3. Students will be able to connect the juxtaposition to the larger plot or theme of the novel.

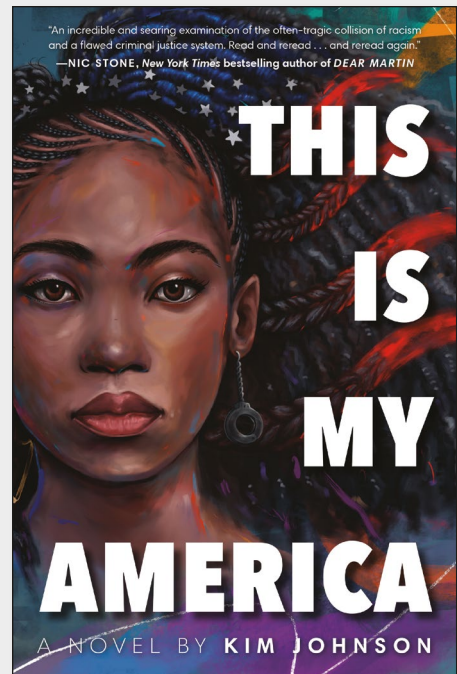
## MATERIALS NEEDED

- *This Is My America* by Kim Johnson
- *We Have A Situation* Analysis Chart

## ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

- Step 1:** Introduce the *We Have A Situation* analysis chart to students.
- Step 2:** Review the literary device juxtaposition.  
(Defined by [Literaryterms.net](http://Literaryterms.net))
- Step 3:** Discuss the example provided: *Reaction to photo at the Pike*.
- Step 4:** Have students select two of the provided examples to work on with a partner or independently.

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## SUMMARY

While teenaged Tracy writes letters asking a justice-seeking project to help her father—an innocent black man on death row—she takes on another case when her brother is accused of killing his white girlfriend.

## We Have A Situation

*This Is My America* author Kim Johnson has juxtaposed several situations for the reader to think through. Understanding the issues being juxtaposed will allow for a complex literary analysis as well as a deeper understanding of characterization and interaction. Using the, “We Have A Situation” chapter (pages 241-250), identify the evidence of juxtaposition, describe its impact on characterization and determine its connection to the theme of the story.

**Juxtaposition:** placement of two or more things side by side in order to compare their differences

EXAMPLE	CHARACTERIZATION	CONNECTION TO THEME
Photo from the party at the Pike.	<p>Dean doesn't seem to think anything is off. He does think it is strange that the boys in the photo are all from different cliques that don't usually hang out together.</p> <p>Tracy sees a photo of all white boys. After the party was segregated the night before and being asked to leave, she is suspicious. Why would all these white boys be hanging out together?</p>	<p><i>This Is My America</i> is highlighting issues between the blacks and whites in Tracy's town. The more information being gathered, the more convinced Tracy is becoming that her father and brother's circumstances are most certainly connected.</p> <p>This example shows the juxtaposition of Tracy struggling with her personal connection to Dean, and her understanding of him never being able to see through the lens of a black person.</p>

**Choose two other examples:**

- Class debate in history centered on 'Black Lives Matter.'
- Dean's response/reaction to someone potentially breaking in.
- Interaction with police officers searching the upstairs office.
- Tracy, Steve and Dean's reaction to the potential police search.