

# ALLYSHIP AS ACTION

## Teacher Guide



Being an ally is about learning and action. It's hard work, but everyone can be an ally. Introduce young readers to what it means to be an ally and realistic actions they can take to practice allyship in their own lives.

### Scenario 1

#### The Situation: Learning to Listen

Quinn has been doing the work to be a great ally. He's been reflecting on how various aspects of his identity as a white, cisgender male might offer him unearned privileges that others don't have, and he's excited about what he's learning about himself, others and the world around him. Quinn wants to share his reflections and learning, as many of us would.

In Quinn's English class one day, the group is talking about a book they're reading and how the female characters are treated versus the male characters. Here's how the conversation goes:

**TEACHER:** What do we think about the characterization of male and female characters in this book?

**QUINN:** The author is a guy, right? So I think he's writing his female characters through his privileged male perspective. That's why the female characters all seem so weak.

**RASHIDA:** I don't think the female characters are all weak.

**QUINN:** But they are! Look how much they have to care for the men in their lives. It's like all the women are just there to serve the men. I see that in my own family. When there are dinner parties at our house, all the women are in the kitchen cooking and then cleaning, while all the men are playing cards or whatever. I realize I've been letting my mom and sisters do all the work at these things.



#### About the Author

Tanya Boteju is a teacher and writer living on unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations (Vancouver, BC). She teaches English part-time to clever and sassy young people. The rest of her time, she writes and procrastinates from writing. As an educator committed to anti-oppressive teaching and learning, and as an imperfect ally herself, she hopes her books bend the universe even the tiniest bit toward justice.



ORCA BOOK PUBLISHERS  
*Reaching More Readers*  
orcabook.com • 1-800-210-5277



**CHARLOTTE:** That might be true in your family, but in the book, the female characters actually find empowerment with each other as they do the housework.

**RASHIDA:** Right. It's like they find community there. They—

**QUINN:** But at the end of the day, they're still being marginalized, right? Like, they're practically banished to the kitchen and stuff, so how can that be empowering? If they were really empowered, they'd be able to move about freely and do whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted. Right?

## Discussion Questions:

1. How do you feel about Quinn's participation in this conversation?

---

---

---

2. How might Quinn have shared his learning here without marginalizing other perspectives?

---

---

---

3. Can you think of a scenario where you may take up more space than you need to? In what spaces could you listen more and pause before speaking?

---

---

---

4. Have you ever felt like you weren't being given the space to be heard? How did you feel?

---

---

---



## What You Can Do:

- Practice pausing before speaking. Let people who may have experienced marginalization speak before you do.
- Diversify the media you read/watch/listen to. Include perspectives and identities that fall outside of your own.
- Avoid expecting people from marginalized identities to teach you unless they want to.

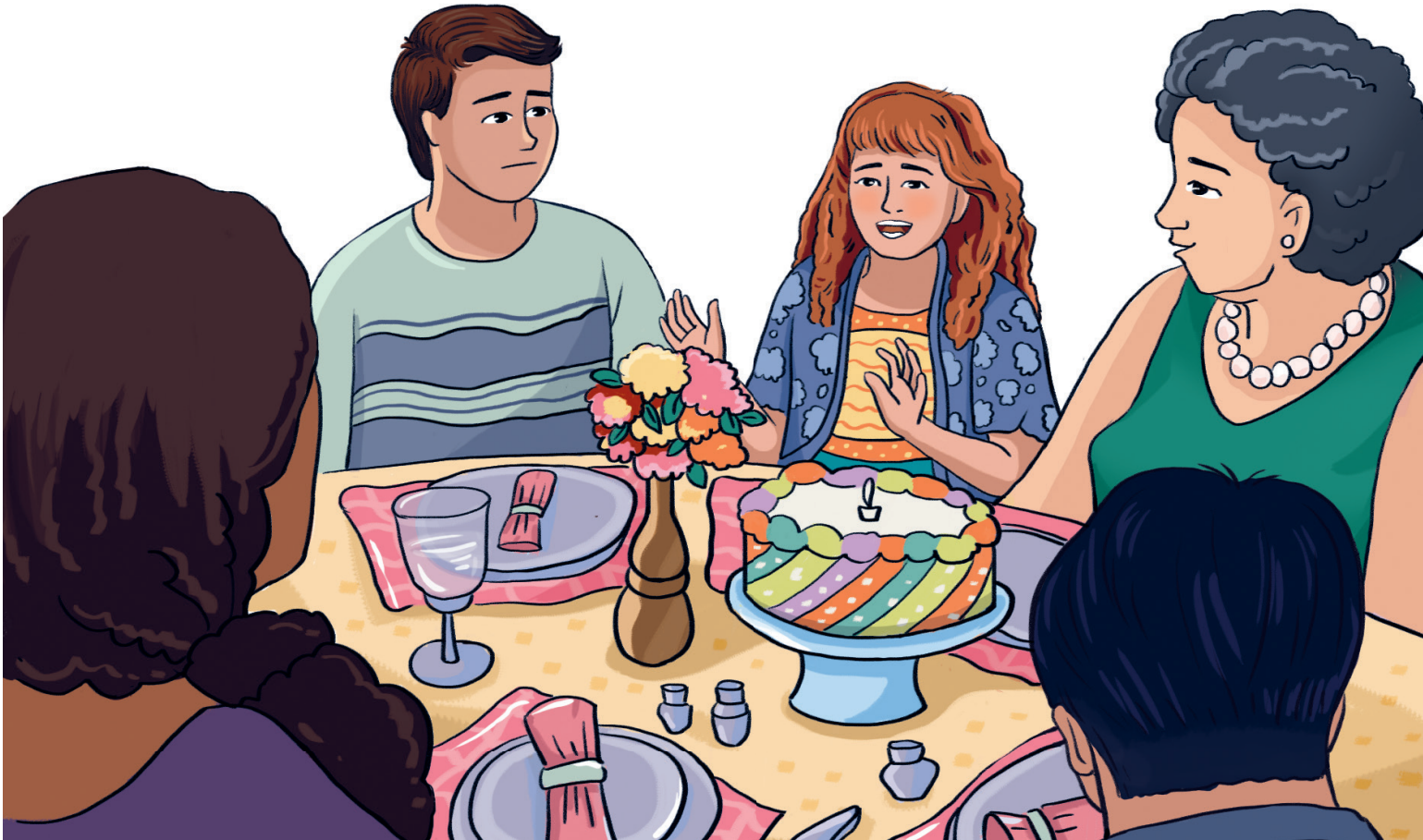


Scenario 2

The Situation: Tricky Conversations and Daring Actions

Twelve-year-old Hannah is at the dinner table with her family, including several relatives. The occasion is celebratory—it’s Nana’s birthday! Everyone is having a wonderful time, enjoying the food, conversation and company. But at one point a relative that Hannah really loves—an aunt—expresses some views about transgender people that Hannah finds troubling. This aunt doesn’t believe that gender identities should be talked about in schools.

In her classes and through her school’s Gender and Sexuality Alliance—a club that celebrates different identities—Hannah has learned about some of the issues her aunt is raising. Her aunt’s comments make her feel uncomfortable. Hannah herself is cisgender, but she knows people at school who are transgender or nonbinary, some of whom are friends. But she’s one of the youngest people at the table and she really respects her aunt. No one else seems to have a problem with her aunt’s comments, and Hannah doesn’t feel like she knows enough to say anything.



Discussion Questions:

- 1. What could Hannah possibly say or do in this situation?

---

---

---

---

2. Should Hannah have to explain things like gender and sexuality in childhood development to her aunt, or share statistics about the impact of inclusion and acceptance in schools?

---

---

---

3. What happens if her aunt pushes back a little? What if her aunt starts to talk about childhood development or parents' rights or other things Hannah doesn't feel she knows a lot about? How could Hannah respond then?

---

---

---

4. Can you think of any instances where you've heard people talking about marginalized communities in a way that could be harmful? What did you do or say? Or what could you have done or said?

---

---

---

## What You Can Do:

- Speak up for people (if you feel safe and able) who might be harmed by hurtful views, even if you feel uneasy.
- Stick to what you know and share what is true for you.
- Act in allyship even when no one is going to know.

