



Maya Inside

Teacher Guide



In this sweet picture book, Maya retreats into a box when some kids tease her. Inside, it's safe and beautiful. But when she sees how much life she's missing out on outside her box, Maya realizes it's time to put the box aside and rejoin the world.



About the author:

Alison Hughes is an award-winning author of many books for children and young adults, including *The Silence Slips In*, winner of the R. Ross Annett Award for Children's Literature and *Hit the Ground Running*, a nominee for the Governor General's Literary Award. Her books have been nominated eleven times for children's choice awards across Canada, and her short stories have appeared in anthologies and have been finalists for the CBC Nonfiction Prize and the Writers' Union of Canada Short Fiction Competition. She works as a writing advisor and editor at the University of Alberta and writes to the accompaniment of snoring dogs. She lives in Edmonton with her family.



About the illustrator:

Brady Sato is a Japanese Canadian illustrator who specializes in digital illustration. They developed an appreciation for visual storytelling from watching TV shows and reading manga as a child in Japan. Brady studied visual narrative at The Art Department (TAD) in Austin, Texas, with Pixar artist Kelsey Mann. They are the creator of the popular webcomic *All That You Are* and their first picture book, *Kunoichi Bunny*, was named a 2022 New York Public Library's Best Book for Kids. Brady lives in Canmore, Alberta.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did Maya crawl inside the box?
2. Maya's box is a way to show how Maya withdraws from other people when her feelings are hurt. What do you do when your feelings are hurt?
3. What comforts you when your feelings are hurt?
4. Maya feels safe in her box. What are some ways we can make others feel safe in our classroom? (For example, by being kind.)
5. Maya feels free to be herself in her box. When do you feel the most free to be yourself? (For example, when you're with your friends.) How can we help others feel free to be themselves?
6. Maya likes being alone. Do you? Why or why not?
7. By the end of the story, Maya enjoys playing with the other kids. Why do you think she decided to leave her box? And do you prefer to play with other kids or by yourself?
8. It takes courage for Maya to step outside her box. When have you done something that was hard?
9. Two kids welcome Maya into their game and help her enjoy playing with others again. Have you ever welcomed anyone? Has someone welcomed you?
10. We all bring unique qualities into the world. What are some ways we can appreciate our own, and each other's, "wonderful weirdness" and "beautiful brilliance"? (For example, by not comparing ourselves to others.)



Activities:

1. Draw what the inside of your box might look like.
2. Decorate a cardboard box with cut-out pictures and drawings of things that make you happy.
3. Belly Breathing Exercise: Maya takes a deep breath before she steps out of the box. Sometimes deep breathing can help calm us down if we're upset or overwhelmed. Close your eyes and put your hand on your belly. Breathe in slowly through your nose and feel your belly expand. Breathe out slowly through your mouth and feel your belly flatten. Do five of these deep belly breaths.
4. Play the Box Game: Put a cardboard box in the middle of the room, or make a square with tape on the floor. One student sits "inside the box" and the other kids have to call out five nice things about that student. Everyone gets a turn.
5. Paper Airplanes: The class in the story makes paper airplanes. On a piece of paper, write a list of nice things about yourself (or about a classmate or friend). Fold the paper into a paper airplane and watch it soar!

