

Yaki's Mural

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Tier 2 terms

prefer, serious, different, difference, accents, changed, selected, main, culture, creative, creating, noticed, exclaimed, influenced, ancient, combined, characters, realized, curious, inspiration, sharing

Tier 3 terms

Guatemalan, Maya, palm tree, principal

Web Version: <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/texts/yakis-mural>



Yaki Sac Us is 9 years old, Guatemalan and Maya. But she prefers to go just by Yaki, and she wants all her new fourth-grade classmates in Plant City, Florida, to know this as soon as possible.

Yaki, a small, serious girl, sat at her desk and could hear her classmates whisper about her arrival. She felt like the odd kid out. Many of the kids were Guatemalan, but not many were Maya. They had different accents. They wore their hair in different ways.

Moving is hard! Yaki worried. *How will I make any friends here when I'm different?*

Her teacher, a smiley lady, stood by her desk. "Yaki, what do you think of Plant City?"

Yaki wasn't sure what to think. Her *abuelos* and *tios* had lived here as long as she could remember. She had seen their happy faces in postcards sent to her home in Guatemala City. She thought that the two places looked the same, with palm trees and lots of sunshine. But now everything felt different.

The days passed. Yaki enjoyed her teacher and liked her school, but still she felt a little different. Yaki felt alone in her class and unsure if her classmates thought her difference was a bad thing. It was lonely.

Then everything changed.

"Good morning, class," her teacher said. "I have amazing news! The principal has selected our class to be the main designers of the school's newest mural!"

Along with her classmates, Yaki gave a happy shout of glee. A mural! Yaki knew all about murals. When she lived in Guatemala City, she loved looking at Mayan murals in museums and at paintings on the walls near her old home. Looking at murals of any kind makes Yaki feel proud of her culture and of her family's history, and reminds her she comes from a long line of creative *abuelas* and *tias* and *hermanas* just like her.

She couldn't help herself from drawing mural ideas the whole rest of class. When the bell rang, a boy named Frankie walked by her desk and noticed the drawings.

"Wow, Yaki! I had no idea you could draw like that!" he exclaimed loudly. "This is such a cool art style!"

"Thanks," she said shyly.

Yaki's drawings were influenced by the ancient murals of the Maya long ago, combined with cartoon characters and other images she had noticed since moving to Plant City.

"May I show our teacher your drawings?" Frankie asked Yaki.

"Oh. Yes, OK," Yaki whispered.

Frankie took her by the hand and went to go show the teacher, who was also very happy to see Yaki's drawings.

"Yaki, I have an idea!" the teacher exclaimed. "You have such a great art style, and everyone would love to see it! Why don't you lead the class in creating ideas for what we will draw on our mural?"

Yaki was shocked. For the first time since starting the fourth grade, she really smiled.

After school, Frankie said, "C'mon, Yaki, let's walk to our bus together. I think we are on the same one, and you can come meet my twin sister!"

Yaki was excited to make new friends.

The weeks went by, and Yaki was hard at work making designs with her classmates. At the end of the school year, all the artwork was complete! Her class' mural was beautiful: a drawing of all the students with fruit and vegetables growing around them. Yaki even drew herself playing soccer with Frankie!

Helping her class make the mural project was so much fun, and Yaki realized that everyone was curious about her Mayan culture and where she got her inspiration. Yaki was so happy that sharing her ideas helped her to find friends.

TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS

1. Question

Re-read the second paragraph. Yaki says she felt like "the odd kid out." What do you think this means?

2. Question

When someone is shocked, they are very surprised. What surprised Yaki about her teacher asking her to lead the class in coming up with ideas for the mural?

3. Question

Describe how "everything changed" the day Yaki's teacher made the announcement about the mural.

4. Question

How do Yaki's feelings about her Mayan culture change from the beginning of the story to the end of the story? Use evidence from the story to support your ideas.

TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Question

Re-read the second paragraph. Yaki says she felt like "the odd kid out." What do you think this means?

Answer

Being the odd one out means that you feel different than those around you, and it leads you to feel left out in some way.

2. Question

When someone is shocked, they are very surprised. What surprised Yaki about her teacher asking her to lead the class in coming up with ideas for the mural?

Answer

Because she felt like the odd kid out, Yaki was surprised to hear that her teacher not only wanted her to be involved with the mural but to lead the work. She did not expect that.

3. Question

Describe how "everything changed" the day Yaki's teacher made the announcement about the mural.

Answer

Yaki went from feeling self-conscious about her cultural differences to feeling inspired by and proud of her culture.

4. Question

How do Yaki's feelings about her Mayan culture change from the beginning of the story to the end of the story? Use evidence from the story to support your ideas.

Answer

At the beginning of the story, Yaki feels different than her classmates, and she attributes these feelings to her being Mayan. Her classmates spoke differently than her and wore their hair differently, too. She worried that these cultural differences might stop her from making friends. These feelings led her to feel sad and unsure about her connection to being Mayan. When the announcement is made about the mural, she remembers her fondness for murals and is filled with a sense of pride for her culture and the long line of artists from which she is descended. Filled with these memories and this pride, she uses her culture as inspiration for the drawings that later lead to her leadership role in the creation of the mural.