



# Happy to Be Nappy

*bell hooks , Chris Raschka (Illustrator)*

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bell hooks and Chris Raschka join together to create an exuberant, rhythmic, read-aloud celebration about the joy and beauty of "nappy" hair.

## Happy to Be Nappy Details

Date : Published September 10th 1999 by Jump At The Sun (first published January 1st 1999)

ISBN : 9780786804276

Author : bell hooks , Chris Raschka (Illustrator)

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Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Cultural, African American



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# From Reader Review Happy to Be Nappy for online ebook

## Phylicia Bohannon says

This story is about little girls with natural hair textures learning to like their hair that they are born with and the many things they can do with their hair. There aren't really any main characters in the story; the story just focuses on an audience of young African American girls. This book is a non-fiction book. Happy to Be Nappy surrounds empowering girls to know that they should be proud of their hair.

I personally would not use this text in the classroom because I don't think it is appropriate for an educational environment. The book is more so of a personal reflection aid for young girls, not really a learning tool for use in a classroom. But I do think those young girls that read this book will find it rather intriguing and helpful if they are having that conflict often arising with girls and their hair.

Bell Hooks is definitely a well-known advocate for the empowerment of young African American girls, so having her write this book is nothing short of expected. She does a wonderful job of providing the reader with an idea behind how hair can sometimes be viewed as a tool of beautification. This book relates to my topic because I originally wanted to write a book along the same lines, however after reading this view, I think I want to go in the other direction and create a children's book that is actually multicultural text material.

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## Elizabeth Rittenhouse says

Four Main categories of picking a diverse book:

- 1) Diversity and Range of Representation
  - a. There are many differences within a culture, race, age, gender,
- 2) Avoidance of Stereotyping
  - a. Microaggression-
- 3) Language Considerations
  - a. Portrayal of culture authentically
  - b. Research language patterns, videos, authentic relationships with people in that culture, if unsure don't read it!
- 4) The perspective of the Book

Things to think about on "what do we look for in a multicultural book"

- 5) accurate
- 6) see their traditions
- 7) modern books: life now
- 8) don't put down other cultures

No one is free from his or her own particular bias or background. However, it is essential to provide books about many cultures for all children and to choose variety not merely reflect the population served by the particular school.

When critiquing literature, the cultural layers we must add are diversity and range of representation. This layer focuses on age of the students, gender, and disability. The next layer is avoidance of stereotyping. The book must stay away from stereotyping cultures. Sometimes the stereotype is not always in the text, but in the pictures. When critiquing literature, you must make sure you stay away from all areas of stereotyping.

We must also consider the language in the book and the perspective of the book.

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### **Chanae Wills says**

*Happy to Be Nappy* is a narrative about girlie (I believe she is referring to black girls) hair. The author talks about the positive aspects of having nappy hair (ex. "Hair to comb, hair to brush, to twist and plait or just lie flat"). The author discusses why the different girls in the story are happy to be nappy. As a literacy teacher, I don't think that I would use this book in the classroom. I think that it is a great book that is geared toward young black girls, but I think that it sends the message that all black girls have nappy hair, which isn't true ("these short tight naps", "happy with hair all short and strong"). The author is from the same culture as the girls in the story, and this adds more authenticity to the story. The author did a great job of writing the story in a way that young children, especially girls, from this background could relate to the text. Black hair is different and it isn't like any other hair type, so the text can teach young black girls to embrace their hair (ex. "Happy to be nappy hair.").

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### **Tiah Keever says**

This is a great kid's book, and I gave it to my little sister when she had a lovely fro, so she would know, even though none of us had afros that it was totally fine to have different hair, to be happy within herself. Granted very young children already know this, but I figure its good to have a solid foundation. So, I'm hoping that as she ages-she's already 12, she'll keep that in mind. Its just a fun book anyhow, and I love Chris Raschka's illustrations.

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### **Wanett says**

bell hooks, *Happy to Be Nappy* aims to teach little brown girls to love the natural state of their hair with its use of beautiful descriptive language. Large, clear lettering coupled with Chris Raschka's simple illustrations of girls with varied hairstyles fill the pages. The simple styles of the drawings are perfect to feature the beauty of the swirling coiled hair that's the focus of the story. Each halo of hair is highlighted by a wash of watercolor transforming each one into a framed picture. The lyrical words, poetic in tone, bounce along the pages much like the girls they describe concluding that they are "Just all girl happy! Happy to be nappy hair!"

Stories that uplift and boost self-confidence and celebrate natural beauty are needed. For some children, hearing this book read aloud may be their first experience with hearing their hair spoken about positively. The use of the word nappy is controversial, though. For some, its negative history and connotations make it unsuitable for a children's story. Then there are those, like hooks an acclaimed African-American poet, feminist and activist, who feels there is power in taking back words with a troubled past.

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## **Ashlee Gibson says**

I LOVE MY HAIR!!! This book encourages African American girls to be comfortable and love the natural state of their hair. It took me along time to embrace my natural hair so I can only imagine how children feel may feel about rocking their natural locks.

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## **Unique says**

Ms. Bell Hooks did an excellent job connecting lots of feel good adjectives and senses to young girls of color, with their different textures of hair. This is a great read for diversity of young children. This book stages how girls are happy and proud to wear their in hair many unique styles. I would love to hear young girls and boys retell their experiences of their hair process. I was blessed to birth three boys. I have pictures with each of them crying with their first hair cut. As a young girl I inherited a thick grade of long curly hair, and hated to get it done. And always heard people say, how could I be tender-headed with this beautiful long hair. I can retell stories of how I would cry and my mom would too, while she combed my hair. Thereafter ten years, Mom finally gave in and took me to a beautician for a perm process, so my hair would manageable. As a grown woman, I sometimes still literally cry going through this process...lol. This book should positively enhance young girls identity. They can freely wear different hairstyles and step out in the world with high confidence.

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## **Johna Brown says**

This story is about little girls hair. This story shows little girls how to accept and embrace their hair texture. The words and the illustrations are very creative. As a teacher, I would read this story to my students as a whole group. I would read it at the beginning of the school year to help students warm up to the new environment and embrace their own identities. Of course all of my students will be different and I want my students to be able to embrace themselves. Young girls are fascinated with hair so story would be perfect. I would share with them that each of us are special in our own way. I want my students to accept their friends/classmates the way that they are. After I've read the story to the class, it will be out in the classroom library for the students to read themselves. I want all of my students to feel welcomed when entering my classroom. My goal is to make each of them feel like they belong there. Students may not be able to relate to this specific family type described in the story but it will give them an idea of how different each persons culture is.

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## **Trish says**

This is just a kids' book...a happy nappy kids book...that expresses joy for black hair. This is the way I think about black hair. bell hooks wrote the words here and she was unambiguous: This can be a joy. Happy to be nappy.

The paintings within are really great: blobs of color and streaks of hair that represent styles. "These short tight naps, or plaited strands all...let girls go running free. Happy with hair all short and strong...Happy with

locks that twist and curl...Just all girl happy!"

Yup. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie gets it.

But what do I know?

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## **Eienblog says**

Un superbe album pour apprendre à aimer ses cheveux crépus !  
I LOVE IT !

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## **Dani - Perspective of a Writer says**

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A group of little girls with natural hair textures learn about the many things they can do with the hair they were born with.

My nephew just had to read this book with the little African-American girl on the cover! I actually quite love the art in this book. Since he also has long hair like the girls I think he really related to the book despite the girls wearing dresses. He loved the rhyming text and the bright poppy colors. He chose the color blocked spread to draw with the single girl with the long rope of hair.

To me the draw were the illustrations. They were quite compelling and empowering even for me and I don't have textured hair! I loved seeing the moms with their daughters showing them all the possibilities! My nephew enjoys his time with his mom as she also helps him learn to take care of his natural hair. I think that is the best thing about the book - showing the relationship of parent to child and how parents are there to help us learn to love and accept ourselves.

I do wish there had been a little more story to go along with the text and illustrations. This isn't a book you can read over and over - it is more for a girl to pour over and be uplifted.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Happy to have read it!

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You can find this review and many others on my book blog @ *Perspective of a Writer*. See my picture book reviews in a special feature called Boo's Picture Gallery...

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## **Jamia says**

I LOVE this book. When I bought a copy I heard bellhooks speak and it was one of the most empowering experiences I have ever had. I have an autographed copy I hope to give my happy to be nappy children someday. Empowering and beautiful book. Simple. and beautiful.

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## **Rochetta G says**

This is a great book about nappy or course hair. This book is appropriate for children 3 and older. It is an inspirational book that invites children to embrace their differences. It has a rhythmic flow of which I even sung the book to my daughter. (She didn't like that much.) The author uses juicy descriptive words such as soft, cotton, and smooth. All of these words, I feel, contrast the words people normally use to describe nappy hair. So that was enlightening. I like the illustrator uses bold warm colors. They used different shades of browns through the book. I also like the use of thin brown line throughout the book to outline the bodies of the children. The children's faces are completed shaped in and it almost looks like a water color painting. I love the usage of oblong and abstract shapes to define each child's hair texture. The shaping of the faces and abstract hair shapes draws the reader's attention to the main focus of the book - the hair. I give this book 5 stars because I feel it takes a difficult subject and makes it natural and fun for children. It allows them to embrace their differences and promote high self-esteem. It's a must read for young girls!

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## **CH - Marvin Childress says**

Author: Bell Hooks; Illustrator: Chris Raschka; Age: 4-8 (as a read aloud, or reading alone.) Happy to Be Nappy is a matter-of-fact book which simply describes different styles of African-American hair...primarily for girls. It takes something that is perceived as negative in the black community (nappy hair,) and it validates it.

I would recommend reading this to children and having a discussion about the negative meaning behind "nappy hair." The black community has suffered from this for years, and saying, "nappy hair," is such a slap in the face that it can eat away at, particularly girls, ones self-image/esteem. I think it would be hard for other ethnic groups, as teachers, to introduce this book; some/most families would probably take offense, but it is definitely a topic that should be addressed.

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## **Rekesha says**

Let me start off by saying I wish I had this book when I was a little girl. I probably would have loved my natural hair more. I feel into the trap that girls should have long straight hair to be considered cute. However if a girl had short and "nappy" hair she wasn't as cute. I'm still trying to figure out who set the standards for hair. I believe hair is an accessory. You can change it whenever you like or keep it just the way it is. I love that the books illustrations are amazing. From words to the colors and drawings. The different hairstyles show how versatile "nappy" hair is. The drawings illustrates the wide range of colors a black girl can have. My favorite page in the whole book is when all the little girls are sitting down and their moms are doing their hair. This is literally how my childhood was spent on Sunday nights for school Monday morning. Although the the text of this book is written in cursive, I would still want every little girl to still look at the pictures until someone can read it for them and or be able to read it themselves. This book will show young black girls that having natural hair is beautiful and that there is nothing wrong with having "nappy" hair.

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