

**Miss Lorraine and Her Fireball** (one-sheet)

By Maya Johnson

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Curriculum developed by Kate Kesner

**Synopsis:** A writer and college student, Maya Johnson, looks back at the time their uncle brought a woman home who did not meet Maya’s religious family’s expectations. Maya reflects on their family’s struggles and devotion to respectability, as well as Maya’s own secret desire to live as authentically as the woman their uncle brought home.



**Vocabulary**

- |                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. seedy        | 5. respectable |
| 2. half-baked   | 6. masquerade  |
| 3. fester       | 7. instigator  |
| 4. impartiality |                |

**Pre reading writing prompt**

How is “respectability” (the state of being proper, correct and socially acceptable) determined in your communities (school, family, extracurricular, cultural, religious, etc.)? Is respectability harder for some individuals to achieve than others? Do *you* think it’s important?

Optional Follow-Up Question: How have definitions of respectability changed over time? What is an example of a strong social norm that didn’t exist five or ten years ago? What are the benefits and disadvantages of this norm?

**Pre reading discussion (class wide or in pairs)**

Describe a time when you or someone close to you was looked down upon, excluded, or encouraged to change for not following social norms. What motivations do you think were behind their judgement by others?

**Post reading discussion questions (class wide or in pairs)**

Masks have often been considered metaphors for personas, or the ways we act or behave for social acceptance or to feel a sense of self-worth. Do you believe it’s important to act in similar ways around multiple groups of people, or is it okay to present in different ways? Why? What parts of ourselves are not exhibited around other people, and what parts of ourselves are *only* accessible through interaction with other people?

**Post reading writing reflection**

“Miss Lorraine and Her Fireball” quickly turns from a telling of Miss Lorraine’s behavior at a party to a reflection of the writer’s own thoughts about familial expectation, gender expectations, and how they are “supposed” to behave as a black person. In approximately 500 words, describe an incident, real or imagined, in which your family encounters an outsider. What is the setting? Your living room, a hockey stadium, a farm on the outskirts of town? What does the outsider want, and what does your family want? Do you have the same goal or different ones? This can be any genre of story.