

A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit

Use this toolkit to plan book discussions, library programs, or classroom activities.

Meet award-winning Ohio author Sharon M. Draper, who was born in Cleveland and lives in Cincinnati.

Select from a range of discussion questions and extension activities to deepen the experience of reading *Blended*.

Discover additional books, websites, and other resources to explore topics and themes in depth.

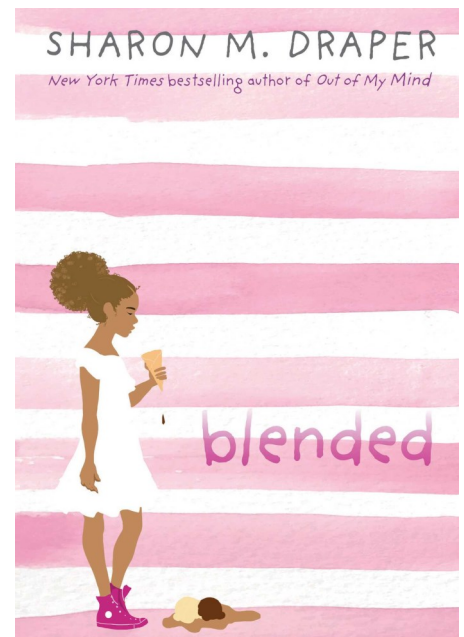
Blended

By Sharon M. Draper



About the Book

Eleven-year-old Isabella's parents are divorced, so she has to switch lives every week: One week she's Isabella with her dad, his girlfriend Anastasia, and her son Darren living in a fancy house where they are one of the only black families in the neighborhood. The next week she's Izzy with her mom and her boyfriend John Mark in a small, not-so-fancy house that she loves. Because of this, Isabella has always felt pulled between two worlds. She is beginning to realize that being split between Mom and Dad involves more than switching houses, switching nicknames, switching backpacks: it's also about switching identities. Her dad is black, her mom is white, and strangers are always commenting: "You're so exotic!" "You look so unusual." "But what are you really?" She knows what they're really saying: "You don't look like your parents." "You're different." "What race are you really?" And when her parents, who both get engaged at the same time, get in their biggest fight ever, Isabella doesn't just feel divided, she feels ripped in two. What does it mean to be half white or half black? To belong to half mom and half dad? And if you're only seen as half of this and half of that, how can you ever feel whole?



Book jacket image and book description courtesy of Simon & Schuster. Used with permission.

Book Details

Blended by Sharon M. Draper.
Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy Books, 2018. ISBN 9781442495005. 320 pages. Ages 8-12.
Leveled Reading: AR Points 7.0. ATOS Book Level 4.0. 610 Lexile.
www.simonandschuster.com/books/Blended/Sharon-M-Draper/9781442495005

Available as an ebook and digital audiobook through the Ohio Digital Library:
ohiodigitallibrary.com

Available as a downloadable talking book from the Ohio Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled:
olbpd.klas.com



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“I like when I need the black keys—the flats and the sharps. They make the music jump out and grab whoever gets to listen.

I also like songs in minor keys—they’re sad and deep and take me to a mountaintop someplace.”

About the Author

Sharon M. Draper is a three-time *New York Times* bestselling author and a recipient of the Margaret A. Edwards Award honoring her significant and lasting contribution to writing for teens. She has received the Coretta Scott King Award for both ***Copper Sun*** and ***Forged by Fire***, and was awarded the Charlotte Huck Award for ***Stella by Starlight***. Her novel ***Out of My Mind*** has won multiple awards and was a *New York Times* bestseller for over three years, and ***Blended*** has also been a *New York Times* bestseller. ***Copper Sun*** and ***Out of My Mind*** are previous Choose to Read Ohio selections.

Draper was born and raised in Cleveland. A teacher with Cincinnati Public Schools from 1970 to 1997, she was named Ohio's Outstanding High School Language Arts Educator, Ohio Teacher of the Year, and was chosen as a National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) Excellence in Teaching Award winner. Sharon M. Draper lives in Cincinnati with her husband.

Author Resources

Sharon M. Draper's official website

sharondraper.com

Author page on Simon & Schuster website

www.simonandschuster.com/authors/Sharon-M-Draper

The Book Pantry: Sharon Draper

simonandschusterpublishing.com/thebookpantry/sharon-draper.html

This feature from Simon & Schuster includes a Q&A with the author and links to reading group guides for several of her books.

In Conversation: Sharon M. Draper and Jason Reynolds

www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-authors/article/78408-in-conversation-sharon-m-draper-and-jason-reynolds.html

The authors discuss ***Blended*** and Jason Reynolds's book ***Lu***.

Sharon M. Draper introduces *Blended* in this Scholastic book trailer:

youtu.be/BkTSC-DI3AY

2015 Margaret A. Edwards Award Winner: Sharon M. Draper

www.ala.org/yalsa/2015-margaret-edwards-award

Find Sharon M. Draper on social media:

Facebook - www.facebook.com/sharonmdraperofficial

Instagram - sharonmdraper

Twitter - @sharonmdraper

For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries: Please visit

www.simonandschuster.net/Plan-an-Author-Appearance/New-Request

Talk About It!

Topics to share when discussing **Blended** with young readers.

Educators: Every CTRO book may be used to support Ohio's English Language Arts reading, writing, and speaking and listening standards. See examples below. Other Learning Standards, such as Social and Emotional Learning, may also apply. Discussion questions and educational activities for **Blended** align with Learning Standards for Grades 3-5.

Librarians, parents, and others: These activities are also for library programs, family activities, and other projects. Learning Standards define what students should know and be able to do at each grade. For more information, see the Ohio Department of Education website, education.ohio.gov. From the Topics dropdown menu, click on "Learning in Ohio."

- The first chapter opens with seven words that evoke the senses. Talk about the words, including the made-up word, *boomble*. What do you hear or see when reading each of the words? Why do you think the author started the book this way?
- Of her mother, Isabella says, "Mom is sensitive, so I have to be careful." What are some examples of her mother's sensitive nature? What does Isabella keep to herself so that she doesn't make her mother feel bad? What are the consequences of trying to protect her mother instead of expressing her own needs and preferences? Have you ever been in a situation like this? What advice would you have for Isabella?
- Recount the incident with the noose in Imani's locker. Think about what happened in the classroom earlier that was related to the noose. How does Imani react on both occasions, and why? What does the school do about the incident? What does the incident show about at least one of Imani's fellow students? How does Isabella feel about what happened? What might you do to make Imani feel safer and respected at school and in the community?
- Isabella's father explains to her that in stores, "Black folks are followed more often than others" by security people. How does Isabella feel about this? Relate it to the incident when Isabella and Imani go into an upscale store at the mall and the security guard asks them to leave. How do they react? Why don't they tell Imani's mother about it? Are you surprised to see kids your age treated this way? Why do you think people stereotype others?

Go Further!

Ideas for extending the experience of reading **Blended**.

Mr. K. introduces the class to Langston Hughes's poetry. After reading some of his poems, Isabella says, "Poetry is kinda like my music—it paints a picture in my head, only with words." Have students research poetry, finding different styles, formats, and poets. Ask them to identify a poet they like and select one poem by that poet. Using this poem as a model, have students write their own. Then have a class discussion about their experiences writing their poems and whether they felt the same way as Isabella. Consider having volunteers read their personal poems or their favorite poet's poems aloud and discuss the differences between reading a poem silently and hearing a poem spoken.

The scene in which Darren and Isabella are pulled over and a police officer shoots her gun is unfortunately similar to incidents across the US in recent years. Have students work in pairs to identify and research cases of police shootings of unarmed black children or teenagers, using resources available to students through INFOhio and to all Ohio residents through Ohio Web Library. Each pair should prepare a presentation for the class about the facts of their case, the effects on family and community, and the consequences, if any, for the police involved. Finish with a class discussion about groups speaking out on this issue and any steps that are being done on local or state levels to address and try to prevent future incidents.

Discussion questions and extension activities courtesy of Simon & Schuster; from the Reading Group Guide to *Blended*: www.simonandschuster.net/books/Blended/Sharon-M-Draper/9781442495005#reading-group-guide. Used with permission.

Explore More!

*Additional ideas and resources to use with **Blended**.*

11 Tips for Teens and Adults Coping with Their Parents' Divorce

www.huffpost.com/entry/11-tips-for-teens-and-adults-coping-with-their-parents-divorce_n_57c9d989e4b0e60d31df25b5

Parental divorce is difficult at any age, but strategies for teens and adult children are different from those for younger children. Suggestions for teens to consider include: find a confidante (not your parents) to talk to, don't be afraid to ask for what you need, and consider counseling.

Dealing with Divorce (for Teens)

safeteens.org/relationships/dealing-with-divorce

This resource from SafeTeens.org describes a range of emotions young people may feel when their parents divorce, and provides suggestions for coping well with divorce and the changes the experience brings.

Black Lives Matter at School

www.blacklivesmatteratschool.com/

A website built by educators, students, parents, families, and community members fighting for racial justice in school. A companion book, **What We Believe** by Lalena Garcia (Lee and Low Books, 2020), includes activities and materials that can be used in the classroom or library: www.leeandlow.com/books/what-we-believe.

The Positive Influence of Playing Music on Youth

www.nammfoundation.org/articles/2014-06-09/positive-influence-playing-music-youth

This article from the NAMM Foundation includes a compilation of numerous educational, social, and cognitive benefits of music performance as well as reflections from teens about the importance of music instruction programs to them.

Caring for Self and Community: How Do You Practice Self-Care?

engage.youth.gov/blog/caring-self-and-community-how-do-you-practice-self-care

Youth Engaged 4 Change reached out to young people via social media to learn how they take care of themselves and their communities. This article collects some responses and links to additional mental health resources.

Check It Out!

*Recommended for readers of **Blended**.*

Other books for middle grades by Sharon M. Draper:

Out of My Heart. Simon & Schuster, 2021.

Out of My Mind. Simon & Schuster, 2010.

Stella by Starlight. Simon & Schuster, 2015.

If you enjoyed **Blended**, try:

A Good Kind of Trouble by Lisa Moore Ramee. Balzer + Bray, 2019.

Clean Getaway by Nic Stone. Crown Books for Young Readers, 2020.

From the Desk of Zoe Washington by Janae Marks. HarperCollins, 2020.

Lu (Track series, book 4) by Jason Reynolds. Simon & Schuster, 2018.

Other Words for Home by Jasmine Warga. HarperCollins, 2019. A 2021 & 2022

Choose to Read Ohio selection.

Choose to Read Ohio, a project of the State Library of Ohio, the Ohioana Library Association, and the Ohio Center for the Book, encourages public libraries, schools, families, and others to build a community of readers and an appreciation of Ohio authors, illustrators, and literature. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits:
library.ohio.gov/ctro.

This toolkit revised
September 2022.