

# Lesson Plan

## My Name is Blessing

By Eric Walters

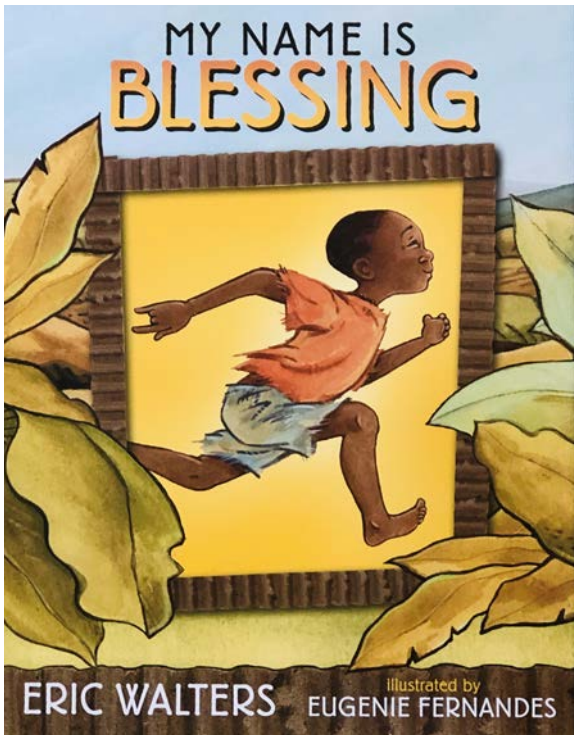
Illustrated by Eugene Fernandes

**Lesson:** Understanding some perceptions and implications of being a person with a physical disability in other cultures.

**Curriculum Connection:** Language Arts

**Grade Level:** Grades 3 - 5

**Time:** Approximately 50 minutes X 2 days



### Lesson Snapshot

The lesson will invite students to explore what having a physical disability in a rural African community can mean in terms of inclusion, quality of life, and access to education. It will allow students to consider the different standards for inclusion and accessibility due to poverty, geography, legislation and enforcement, and various cultural norms.

### About the Book

Muthini and eight cousins live with their grandmother. She gives them boundless love, but there is never enough money or food, and life is hard — love doesn't feed hungry stomachs, clothe growing bodies or school keen minds.

Muthini is too young, and, with his disability, needs too much, and his Nyanya is too old. A difficult choice must be made, thus grandmother and grandchild set off on a journey to see if there is a place at the orphanage for Muthini. Before being welcomed into the orphanage, Muthini's name, which means "suffering," is changed to Baraka, which means "blessing."

### Success Criteria

Use any co-created success criteria that would be relevant during your guided reading lessons. Or you can generate new criteria based on your Learning Goals for the lesson as guided by your Course Outlines or Long-Range Plans.

### Curriculum Expectations

See side-by-side Selected Reading Expectations Chart for each grade level.

### Materials

- 5 copies of *My Name Is Blessing*
- iPad or laptop
- Chart paper, markers, sticky notes, pencils
- Atlas or world map

## Lesson Details

### BEFORE READING

1. Share the Learning Goal for today's lesson and develop Success Criteria.
2. Ask students if they know the meaning of their name. Additional questions could include:
  - Do you think names are important? Why/Why not?
  - Does knowing the meaning of your name affect or change the way you feel about it?
  - Why were you given the name you have?
  - If you could change your name, would you? Why/why not? What would you change it to? Why?
3. Use an iPad, student laptop or world map to locate Africa. Within Africa, locate Kenya. Using either technology or chart paper, record what students know about Kenya **Before** on one side of a chart, leaving the **After** side blank for now.
4. Discuss what it means for someone to have a physical disability.
5. Select a few of the illustrations in the story to show guided reading group members. Questions to ask include:
  - Where does the story take place? How do you know?
  - Who do you think the main character/characters are in the story?
  - Do you notice anything special about the little boy?
6. Ask students if they think the story is true and explain their thinking. Then watch the book trailer located at Eric Walter's website: [ericwalters.net/novels/my-name-is-blessing/](http://ericwalters.net/novels/my-name-is-blessing/) or: [youtube.com/watch?v=jB2AuN8uqRE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jB2AuN8uqRE)
7. Brainstorm ideas why the book is called *My Name Is Blessing*. Talk about the meaning of the word "blessing."

### DURING READING

1. The 'Watch For New Vocabulary' section in the Student Workbook is a place for students to record new terms before or during reading. Students can record unfamiliar words on sticky notes or write them directly into the space provided. Assign routine 'Word Work' activities your students are familiar with using the new terms from the text as you cycle through your literacy centres or reading program schedule. Possible new vocabulary from the text: Nyanya (grandmother), grace, acceptance, fate, suffering, taunts, cruel, glanced, anxious, trudged, gestured, embarrassed, outstretched, rural, tribal, orphan, disease, famine.
2. Using your selected reading strategy(s) or explicit reading instruction for each group, read through the book with students, making anecdotal notes on a document for tracking and assessment purposes. The Student Workbook has **Decoding, Comprehension** or **Expanding Meaning** charts. During your lesson, have students record what strategies they are using to help them become more strategic and effective readers.

### AFTER READING

1. Assign students to write a summary using the pages of the 'Summary Section' in the Student Workbook. (See examples provided for both fiction and non-fiction, or use anchor charts your students are currently using for this skill.) Sticker "Badges" can be given after students complete their summary. Your classroom kit provided a sheet of sticker badges/student (each book has a specific badge.)
2. Baraka was born with no fingers on his left hand and only two on his right. Discuss the following:
  - What kinds of challenges would this pose for him?
  - How did other people react to this?
  - Make a list of ten things you have done in the past hour. Now consider how your ability to complete these tasks would change if you had the same disability as Baraka.
3. Baraka's given name, Muthini, means suffering. Discuss the following:
  - Why was he given this name?
  - How do you think this made him feel?
  - Why do you think Gabriel insisted that Muthini change his name to Baraka?
4. Baraka is a brave boy. Reread the story aloud and, as you read with the students, locate examples that demonstrate bravery. This activity could be done as a whole class after all students have completed their guided reading sessions.
5. Ask students how they would describe Mumo's character. Using a Rally-Pair-Share (one paper and one pencil is passed between partners), instruct students to write down as many words as they can think of to describe Mumo. Have each pair choose three words from their list that they both agree are the most appropriate and present their three words to the class explaining their choices.
6. Mumo's name means grace—"something she always showed through quiet and calm acceptance of what fate had given her." Ask students, what does this mean? Share the dictionary definition of "grace." Ask students the following:
  - What would the antonym of grace be?
  - Do you know anybody personally whom you feel has grace?
  - Draw a picture of this person and, in a few sentences, explain why you feel this person has grace. If you can't think of anybody personally, you can write about Mumo.
7. "I am too old to do what I want to do. So now I must do what I have to do." Ask why Mumo felt she had a responsibility to take Muthini to an orphanage. Challenge students to find three examples in the story that demonstrate how much Mumo cared for Muthini.

## FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Have students draft a response to ReadAble’s Twitter campaign #CanYouImagine for each book. You can choose to collect student responses and make posts yourself, or if students have access to your class Twitter account, can make the post according to your classroom policy. Feel free to take pictures of your students engaging with each title.
2. Students could research the meaning of their name or interview the people responsible for naming them.
3. Visit Eric Walter’s website and watch the 11:40 video called “Baraka and Blessing” located at:

[ericwalters.net/novels/my-name-is-blessing/](http://ericwalters.net/novels/my-name-is-blessing/)

**Trauma-Informed Caution: Please preview this video prior to assigning any screening of the video for students.**

4. Consider Muthini and Mumo’s Journey of Hope as assign the following writing task:

Mumo said to Muthini, “You and I must go on an even longer walk. I only hope you can forgive me.” Ask students to imagine they are Muthini and their grandmother has shared her plan to take you to the orphanage.

- Write a description of what you would see, hear and feel as the two of you walk to the orphanage. Younger children can draw a picture and talk about what they would see, hear and feel.
- Ask students if they think Mumo felt more hopeful about Baraka’s future when he was accepted into the orphanage. Why/ why not?

5. Mumo tells Baraka, “Even if they tease you about having fewer fingers, don’t tease them back about what you have that they do not. Please use your spirit and your head and your heart.” Ask students to write in their journals or notebooks:

- What lesson Baraka’s Nyanya is trying to teach him. How does this apply to your school community?

6. After reading Baraka’s World, located at the end of the book, revisit the ideas recorded in the **Before** column of what was known about Kenya prior to reading Baraka’s story. Now have students write facts for the **After** side with what they now know about the region of Kenya where Baraka lived.

7. Ask students if they have any more questions about Kenya, Baraka’s story or the author. Make a list of what they would like to research further. Brainstorm a list of resources that will help them find the answers to these questions.

8. Research the attitudes and any stigma related to disabilities in Kenya and present the information to the class.

## THE READABLEFEST WEBSITE LINKS TO “OTHER STORIES”



**Baraka and Blessing;  
Video**



**My Name is Blessing:  
Book Trailer**