

# Book review: Girl, Woman, Other

Anti-racist religious education



RE TODAY AND NATRE WORKING WITH THE FREE CHURCHES GROUP  
AND METHODIST SCHOOLS





# Girl, Woman, Other by Bernadine Evaristo

Review by: Leah Davenport

## What is this book about?

It tells the stories of 12 black women of different ages and backgrounds and how they navigate the worlds they inhabit. All the stories are interconnected.

## What did you love about it?

- The complexity of the characters
- The variety of experiences and points of view it presents

## How did this book have an impact on you as a teacher of RE? Does it imply new ways of doing your job?

It caused me to think about the narratives of POC that are explored in lessons. In my own context we consider POC stories generally in two ways, at part of inspirational people i.e. MLK, Gandhi, etc and as part of a unit on prejudice and discrimination.

I now want to include more POC stories that are not just 'hero' or 'victim' but reflect the true complexity of navigating the world as a POC. I believe this has the capacity to establish greater empathy from students. I also believe that by doing this, it will enable more nuanced conversations around the ways in which class and sexism intersect racism. This would lead to a more holistic understanding of these societal issues, the impact they have and the conditions which perpetuate them.

## I would recommend this book to other teachers of RE because...

It gave me a deeper understanding of intersectionality and caused me to question reductive although well intentioned presentations of POC in my lessons.

## Could the book be used for teacher development and / or for and with pupils themselves? How?

It is useful for understanding intersectionality and for enabling more complex conversations around POC i.e. the hero or victim narrative. I think this is important as, to be fully anti-racist representations of POC need to be complex. There is the temptation to portray POC as heroes or victims so as not to feed racist thought. However, I believe we need to be braver. To be fully anti-racist, we need to equip students with the skills to be able to navigate more complex representations without the information calling the fundamental personhood of POC into question.

I believe this book inspires that approach and some of the stories could be used with older (KS4/5) students as examples to work develop it.



**Can you give an example of a key quote from the book (keep to about 50 words), and why you chose it?**

*"Privilege is about context and circumstance"*

This quote encapsulates a core message of the book for me. The women in the book are varied in their social standing, education, occupation, family situation. Each of them has more power than the others in one instance but less in another. Considering the levels of privilege POC experience creates a richer picture and prevents reductive portrayals of heroes and victims. Furthermore, this quote is also a reminder of the arbitrariness of white supremacy and indeed many of the factors which uphold the status quo with regards to class and gender discrimination as well.

