



## Volunteer Information Sheets

**Outcome Area:** To facilitate discussion about diversity among youth and adults. To also help youth and adults to value their own cultures as well as other people's cultures and to reflect on the lives and perspectives of people who are different from themselves

**Curriculum Area:** Valuing and Respecting Diversity

**Description of Activity:** Participants will read and discuss the poem *The Black Balloon* to engage them in a conversation about differences.

**Age Level:** upper elementary – adult

**Time Involved:** 30 minutes

**Supplies:** poem *The Black Balloon* (enclosed)

**Instructions:** Read the Poem entitled: *The Black Balloon* and then discuss with the questions listed below as a guide.

### Discussion:

Young people often look to trusted adults to provide them guidance and clarity in life. This poem depicts a situation in which a young boy wondered if the color of the balloon affected its ability to float away. This can be used to discuss how physical characteristics may or may not affect a person's potential in life. As you facilitate discussion be sure to talk about stereotyping and how it too may affect a person.

### Questions:

1. How different were the balloons in the story? What did they all have in common?
2. Why do you think this man was filling balloons and then letting them float high into the sky?
3. What do you think made the boy ask about the black balloon?
4. Do the colors of people's skins determine who they are inside? What do the colors of people's skins say about them?
5. Does the color of your skin or a disability dictate your potential in life? Will it help or hinder you from accomplishing your dreams and goals?
6. Why do people make predetermined judgments about others? What should you do when people around you make judgments about another person? How can you handle the situation?
7. Do you believe that our world judges people by their outside differences or the beauty within?
8. What lessons did the boy learn from this encounter?
9. What questions might the boy have following this encounter?

**Source:** From "Diversity Discussion Starters" – Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, Agricultural Research & Cooperative Extension

**Prepared by:** Jackie Cervantes-Guzman

## **The Black Balloon**

*Author unknown*

The little black boy watched a man,  
Blow up balloons one day  
When each balloon was filled, the man  
Let each one float away.

The little boy watched patiently,  
And waved each one good-bye  
As all the pretty bright balloons  
Went drifting toward the sky.

He asked the man if black balloons  
Would go up like the rest.  
The man said, "Son, I'll blow one up,  
And put it to the test."

And when the black balloon was filled,  
They watched it rise and glide.  
"It's not the color, son," he said,  
"But what you've got inside."

