

THE BLACK FAMILIES' GUIDE FOR TALKING ABOUT

# RACISM

you matter so much



By: NAOMI O'BRIEN & LANESHA TABB

# Hi CAREGIVERS!

We are parents, too. We understand how upsetting, painful, and exhausting it can be to have to have these conversations with our children.

We understand the fear of what could happen if we don't prioritize these conversations with our children.

While it is unfair that we have to have these conversations, we all know that it is critical that we do.

We have to prepare our kids to live in a world that sees their Blackness as a threat... as less than. We also have the great responsibility of

**building them up and instilling in them the very true  
message that:**

**BLACK LIVES  
MATTER**

**Today. Tomorrow. And always.**

**We encourage you to read through this entire book before sharing it with your child. You know your child and their experiences best.**

**We understand that because of the experiences your children have or haven't had, you may feel the need to pick and choose which parts of this guide to share with them.**

**Our way may not work for your family.**

**We wrote this guide with our own Black children in mind. We included the things we have to say and want to say to our own kids. We want to educate them, but also affirm them.**



- During the racial bias exercise, it may be revealed that your child has already built up racial biases against Black people because of what society has shown them. Make sure to affirm them in these moments.

Try:

“THANK YOU FOR BEING HONEST. I NEED YOU TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE PERFECT JUST THE WAY YOU ARE. THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH BLACK SKIN. THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE WAY OTHER PEOPLE THINK ABOUT IT.

- Our kids are constantly bombarded with racist messages and shown that “only white is right” through TV shows, literature, and things taking place in society. You may be saddened or feel angry about some of your kid’s answers.
- They can unlearn anything they may have learned with your help, guidance, and commitment. We have to teach them to love the skin they are in and stand up against the racism they will experience.

Talk to your kids about your journey, if you haven't already. Remind them they are not alone. Remind them what a strong, smart, and resilient community Black people are.

Remind them of their ancestors and what they fought for.

Check in with their feelings. Remind them they matter.

You are their first teacher. They are looking to you for guidance. Guide them.

WE ARE IN THIS WITH YOU.

LOVE,

NAOMI & LANESHA



## TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE:

- ✓ Read through the pages and pick stopping points. You don't want to do too much in one day. You know your child best. Pace yourself. We must always look for ways to combat the anti-Black messages our children receive.
- ✓ Read through the pages and think about the variety of ways your child may internalize something. You know them best. Think of real-life examples of advocating and overcoming you can provide for your child. Especially if they include you.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to cry with or in front of your child. This is emotional work. Remind them that this work is needed to help them identify and call out racism when they see it or experience it. It is also needed to remind them that they matter, even when the world shows them otherwise.
- ✓ Revisit this resource over time! Their thoughts and responses will grow and evolve the older they become and the more "living" they do.
- ✓ Understand that you may need to stop and research things with your child. For example, if your children don't understand that our country has a history of racism and bigotry, look up historical examples.

## HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- ✓ What shows and books do you have in your home? Do your books and toys reflect your children? We know it can be hard to find representation, but it is important.
- ✓ How have you confronted racism in front of them and encouraged them to use their voices to speak up for themselves when it is safe to?
- ✓ Do you affirm their Blackness with them? Perhaps you can come up with a mantra your children say daily before school or after experiencing racism.
- ✓ Can you advocate for the lessons they are exposed to at school to include Black voices and people?



**You will read the white text aloud with your child(ren). Make sure there are no distractions and that both of you are in a place to be open and honest. If someone is mad, tired, or hungry, that may not be the best time to start a lesson. Move at your own pace!**



**Check in with yourself often. Reliving your own racial trauma, as well as helping your child navigate theirs, is exhausting and deeply emotional.**





**We are going to have some important talks about racism. During these talks we are going to be honest and open so we can grow and heal together.**



When we see this icon, we will stop and answer a question.



When we see this icon, we will come up with an action plan.



When we see this icon, we will stop and think to ourselves.



When we see this icon, we will stop and think of any questions we have.

**You will not get in trouble for your answers. These lessons and conversations will help prepare you for the world. Remember that you are amazing.**



**When we see this icon, we will stop and answer a question.**



**When we see this icon, we will come up with an action plan.**

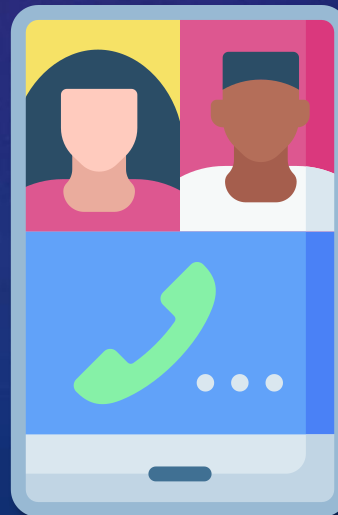


**When we see this icon, we will stop and think to ourselves.**



**When we see this icon, we will stop and think of any questions we have.**

**If you have a question that I don't know the answer to, don't worry! We can look it up. There are a lot of resources available for us to learn from.**





# Here are some words we'll need to know and understand before moving forward.

## **RACISM**

The unfair treatment, practices and harm caused to Black people and people of color based on our skin color.

\*Racism has MANY definitions that you can look up together. This is the one decided upon for the children engaging here.

## **BIAS**

The beliefs that we have that influence our actions, thoughts, and the way we understand things.

## **WHITE PRIVILEGE**

Something that all white people have. It doesn't make them bad. It doesn't mean they don't work hard, but they do have certain privileges in society because of their skin color. For example, some Black people don't feel safe around police officers, but most white people are able to.

## **ALLY\***

A person who works alongside Black people and people of color to help us fight for justice and fair treatment. A person who is anti-racist.

**\*Adult note:** The goal is actually not allyship. The goal is to become **co-conspirators**. We felt that the term ally would be easier for young children to grasp, but please read more about becoming a co-conspirator [here](#).

# RACISM

WHAT IS IT AND WHAT SHOULD WE DO WHEN  
WE SEE IT OR EXPERIENCE IT?



**Think about a time you  
have been treated  
differently because of how  
you **look**, **speak**, or where  
you are from. How did it  
**feel**?**

I WANT TO SHARE A STORY WITH YOU ABOUT  
RACISM OR DISCRIMINATION I HAVE EXPERIENCED.



We might feel uncomfortable, sad, or even mad talking about **racism**, but it is very important that we do. Black people all over the world, and even here where we live, are **mistreated** and hurt because of the color of our skin.



Have you ever been mistreated by anyone because of your skin color?

REMEMBER THIS:

No matter what the world  
tries to tell you, your skin is  
**beautiful.** You **matter.**

Black lives matter.

Today. Tomorrow. And **always.**

Sometimes it can be hard to tell when someone is being **racist**.

It might **look** like someone scooting away from you. It might **sound** like someone talking about your skin or your nose. It might **feel** like someone touching your hair.

(People should *never* touch you or your hair without permission.)



What questions do you have for me?



REMEMBER THIS:


**No one** has a right to make you feel less than for being Black. You are **enough**. You are **amazing**. There's **nothing** wrong with your skin, there's something wrong with the way they **think** about your skin.

Sadly, kids and grown-ups can be **racist**. Sometimes they are racist **on purpose**, and sometimes **they don't know** that they are being racist towards people who look like us. Whether they mean to or not, it is **wrong**.



Let's make a plan! What will we promise to do or say when someone is being racist to us?

REMEMBER THIS:

Your voice is **powerful**. You can use it to **advocate** for yourself. You can stand up for yourself if it is **safe** to, or you can come and tell **me** if something racist happens. 



How will you know if it's a safe time to advocate for yourself?



Sometimes you might see a racist person being racist towards **someone else**. It might be one of your **friends**, someone at the playground, or even a **stranger**. They may try to say it was a joke, but racism is never a joke.



Let's make a plan! What will we promise to do or say when someone is being racist to someone else?

REMEMBER THIS:

Even if racism isn't happening to  
**you**, seeing racism can still make  
you feel very **sad, upset, or**  
**mad. You are incredible.** You can  
always talk to me.

You may have been taught at school that **racism is over** and that Black people are treated fairly now. This is not always true. We have been fighting for years and are still fighting for **equality** today.



After almost 300 years of enslavement ended, something called segregation started. It lasted almost 100 years. It didn't end that long ago. Many practices still happen today as result. Do you know what problems Black people still face today?



REMEMBER THIS:

We come from a long line of  
**strong** and **resilient** ancestors.  
They used their **voices** and took  
**action** to fight for **freedom** and  
**equality**. We can too.



What questions do you have for me?

Some laws have made discrimination **illegal**, but some people have not changed their **hearts** and are still racist towards Black people. Some of us are being mistreated and hurt. We will not put up with that treatment. If it is **safe** to, we should always try to do something about it.



What questions do you have for me? What do we need to research?

REMEMBER THIS:

No matter what the world  
tries to tell you, your skin is  
**beautiful.** You **matter.**

Black lives matter.

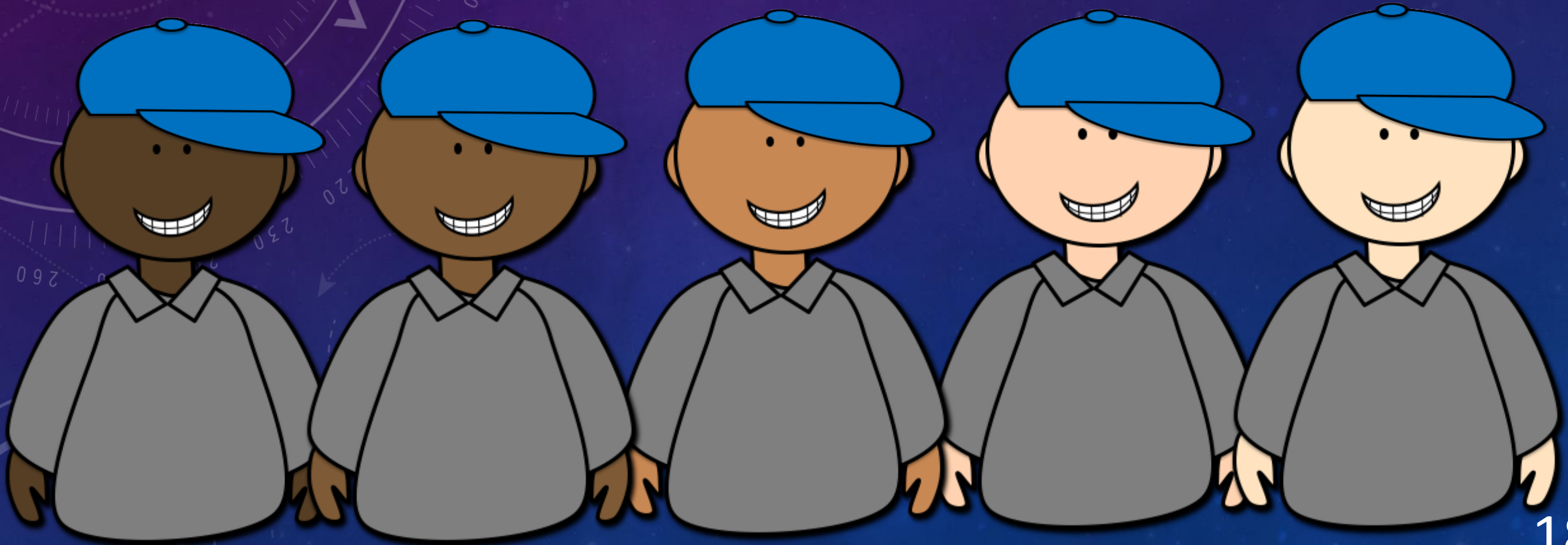
Today. Tomorrow. And **always.**



# (RACIAL) BIAS

HOW DO OUR BIASES HELP US  
MAKE DECISIONS?

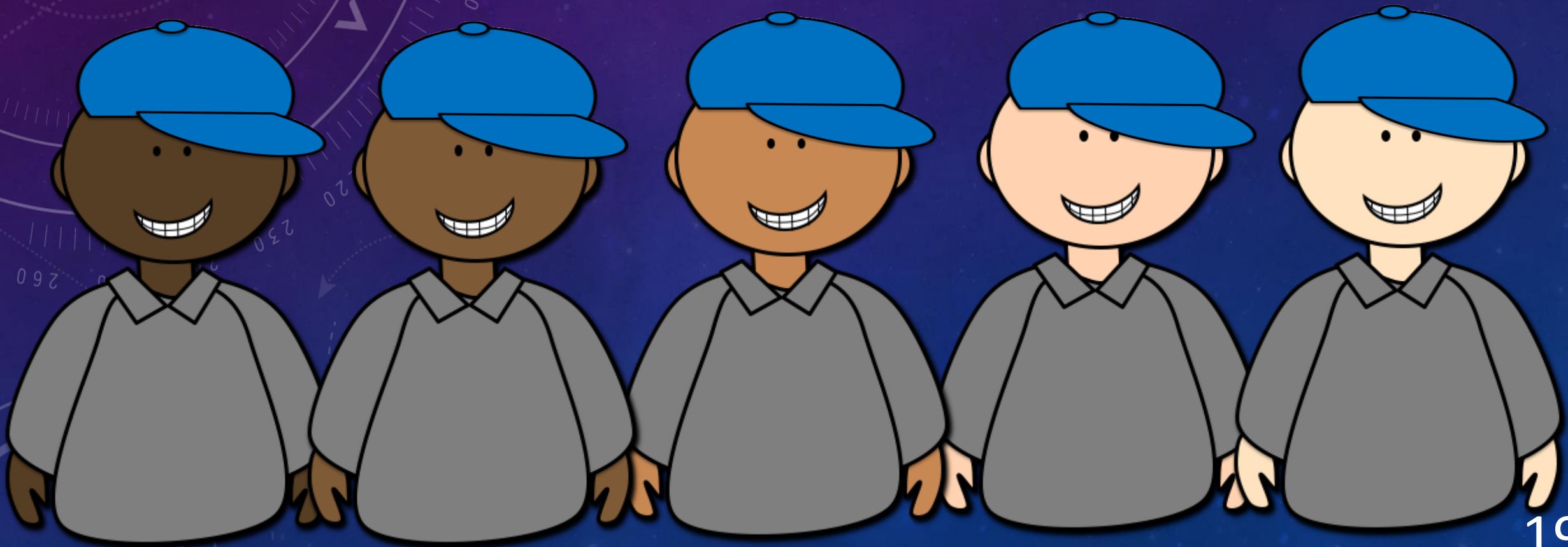
Look at the kids below. If you could only play with one of these kids, which kid would you want to **play** with? Why?





Look at the kids below.  
Which kid would you **not**  
want to play with? Why?

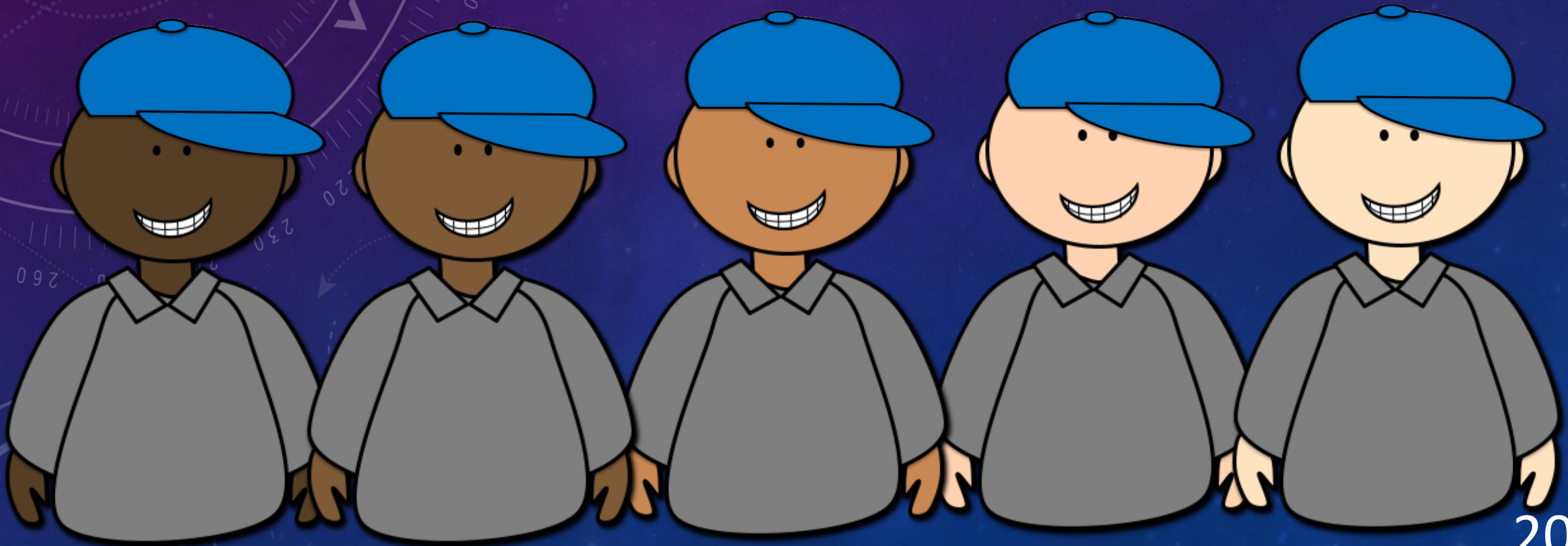
You can only pick one.





Look at the kids below. Which kid is probably the **nicest** one? How can you tell?

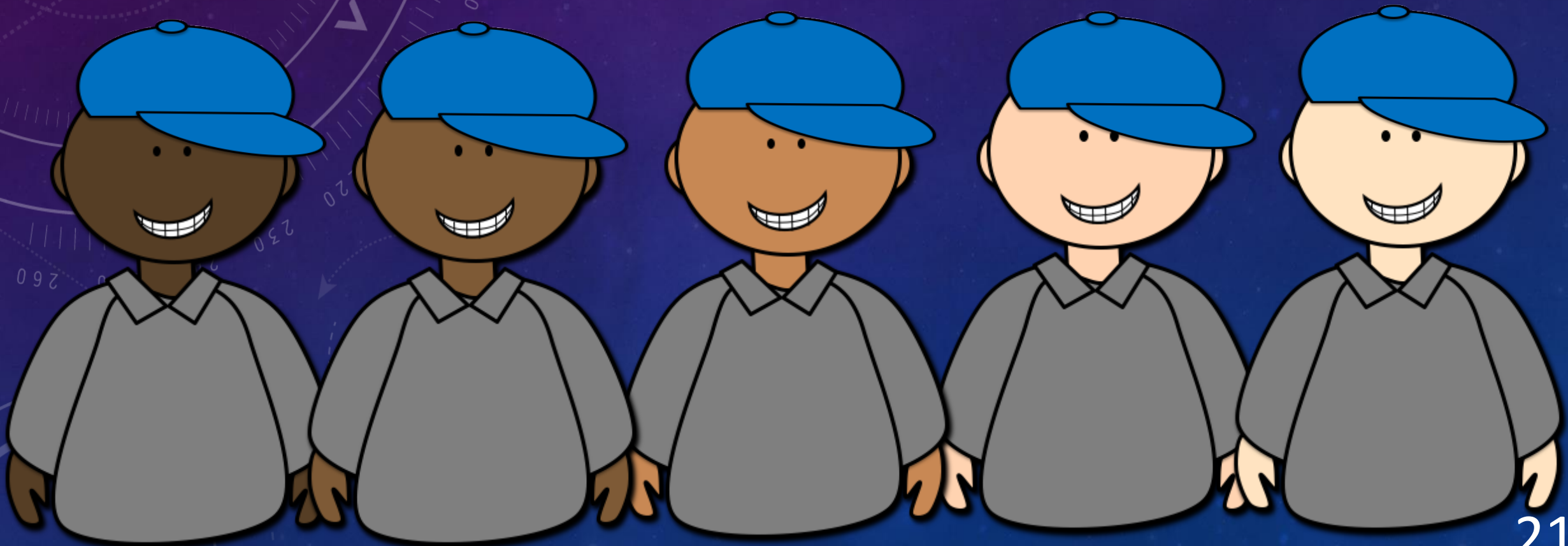
You can only pick one.





# Look at the kids below. Which kid is probably the **mean** one? How can you tell?

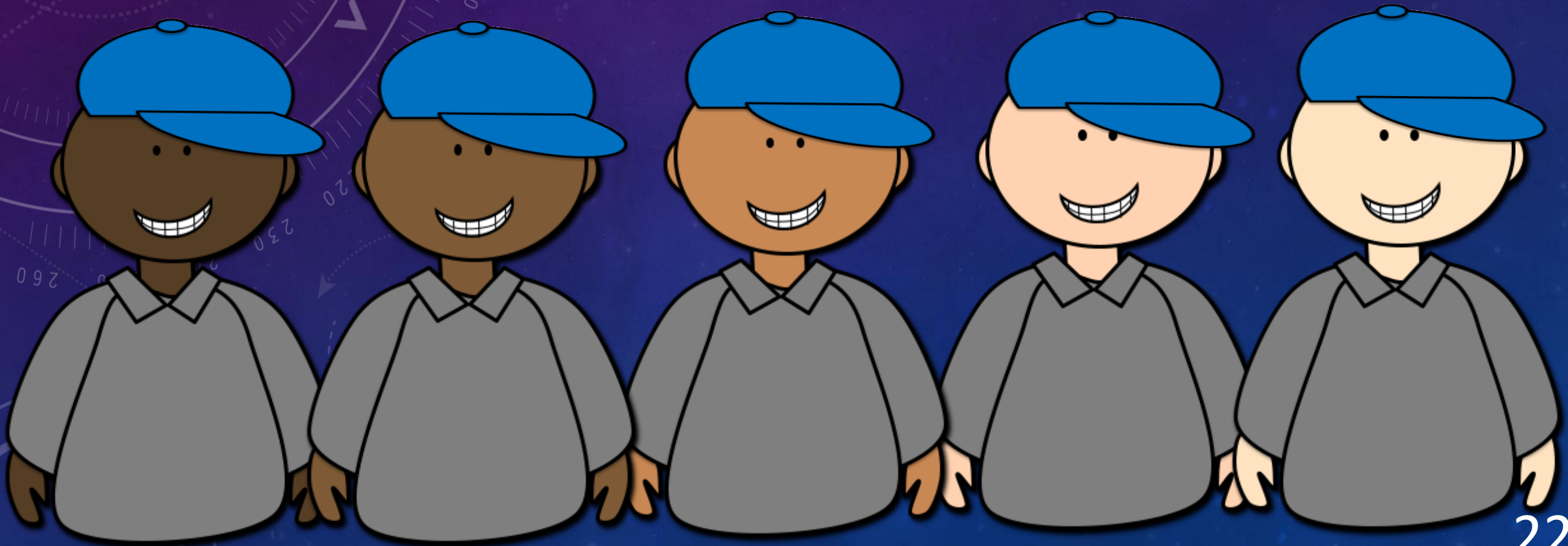
You can only pick one.





Look at the kids below.  
Which kid is probably a **good**  
student? How do you know?

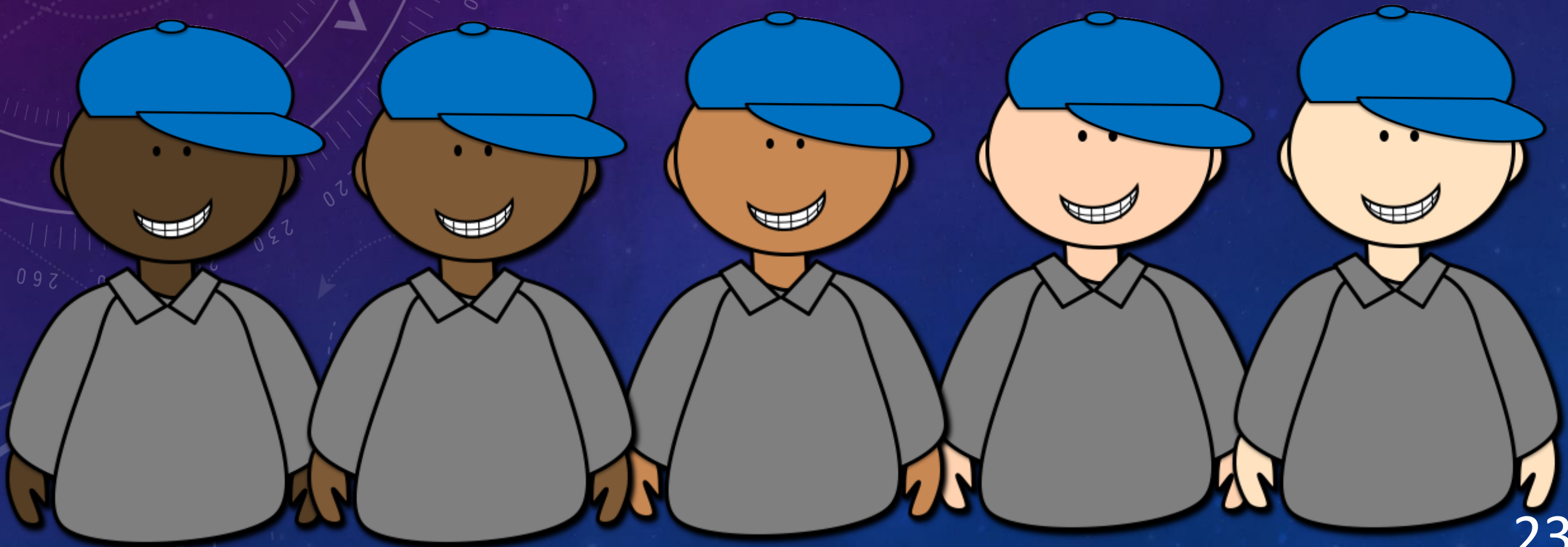
You can only pick one.



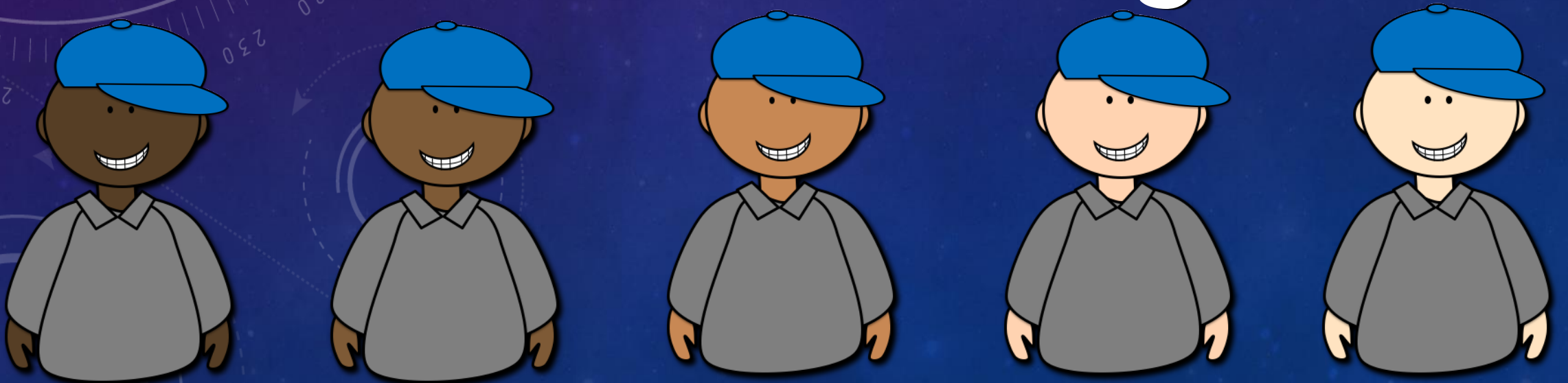


Look at the kids below. Which  
kid is probably a **bad**  
student? How do you know?

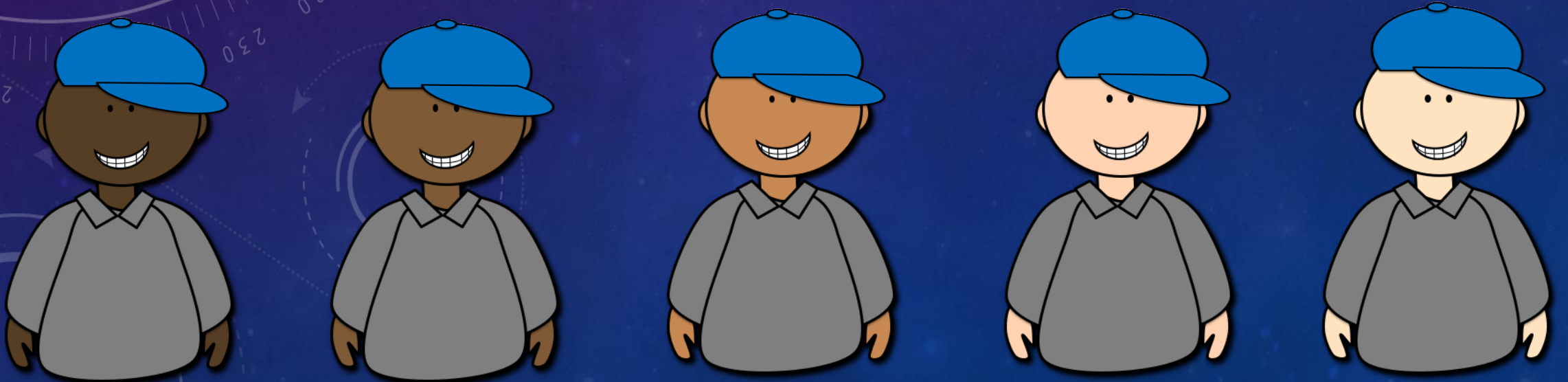
You can only pick one.



You don't know these kids, but you had **very strong** opinions about them! Our opinions, or thoughts, about people come from our biases, or what we like more than something else.



You may have had those opinions because the kid you chose had a skin color you like. Or you may have thought the skin color wasn't as good. Something called **bias** helped you decide those things.





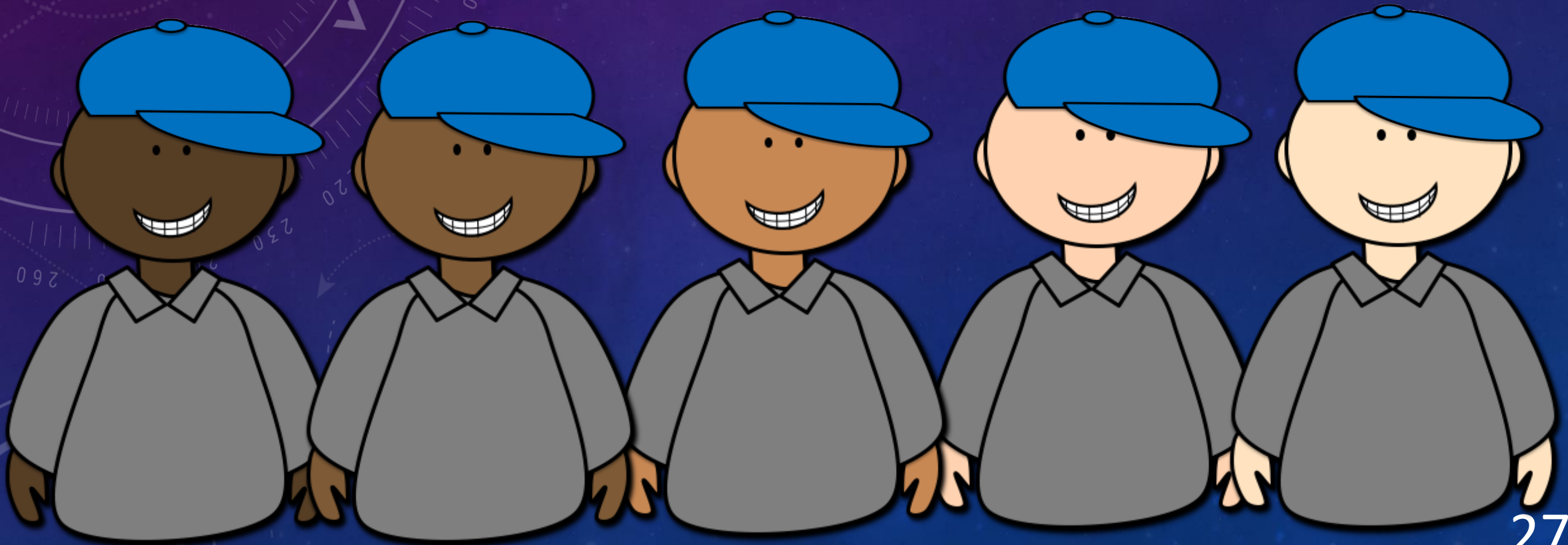
When we have to make quick **decisions**, our biases come into play. We don't always realize it, but when we are making friends, or deciding whether someone is good or bad, our biases **help us** make those choices.



How can our biases influence our choices? Is this a good thing or a bad thing? Why?



Can you **truly** tell who is good or bad just based on how they look?

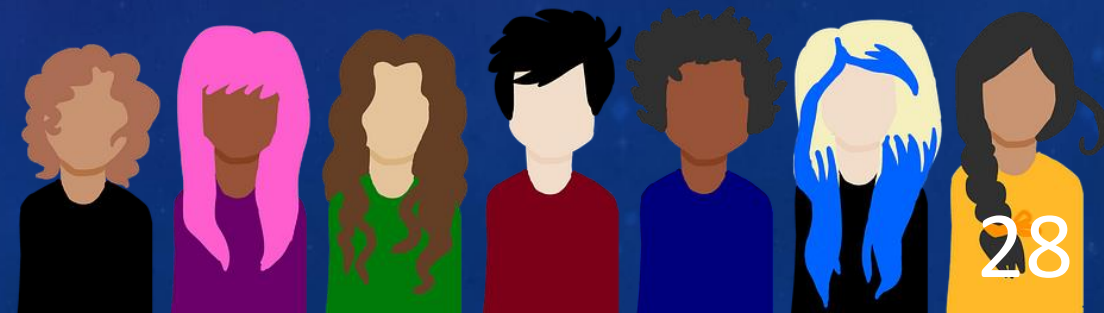




We all have **biases**. We just do. When we realize we have biases we can work on controlling them and not letting them help us make choices. Some people make racist choices because of their biases. It is wrong to decide someone is bad just because of their skin color. It is wrong to decide someone is good just because of their skin color.

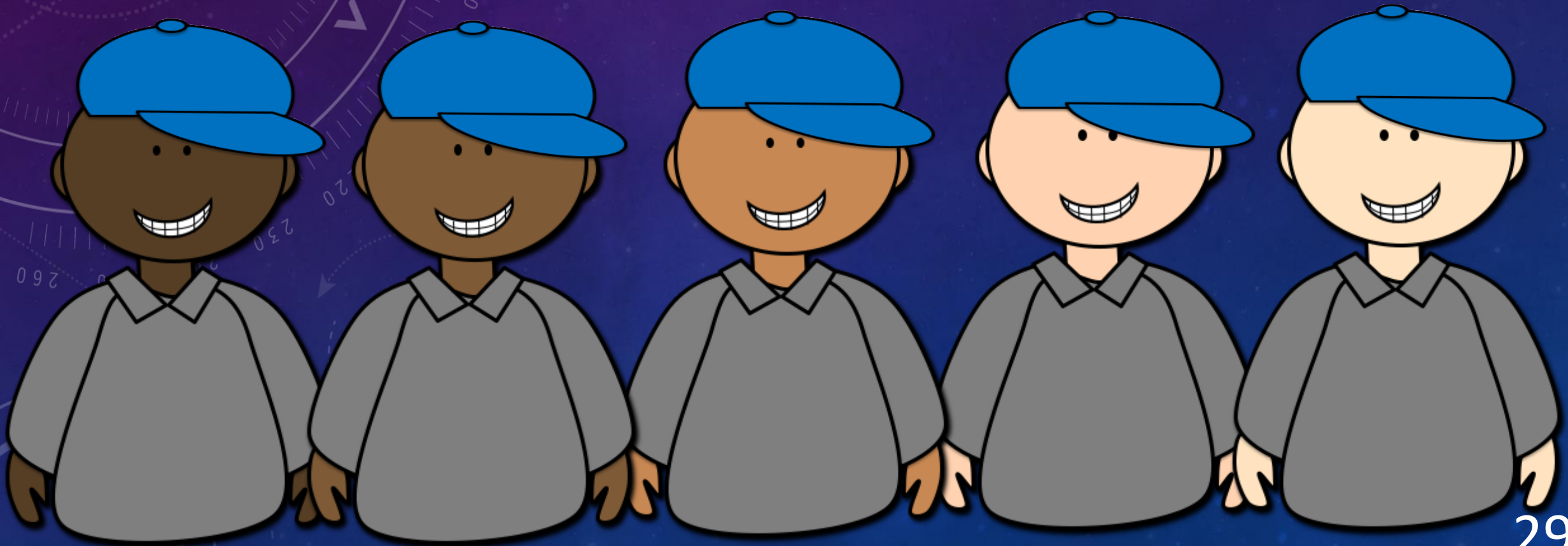


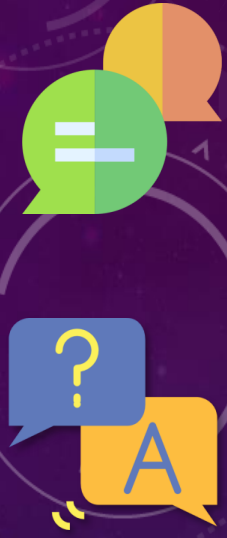
What is the only way to figure out if someone really is a good or bad person?





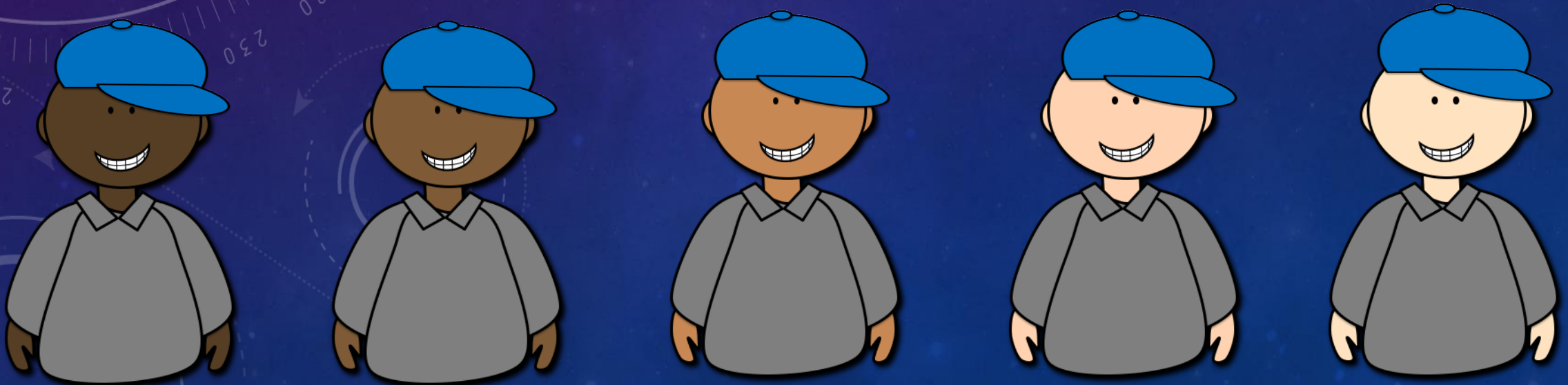
So, which one of these  
kids would make the best  
friend? Or be the **worst**  
student?





So, which one of these kids  
would make the best friend?  
Or be the worst **student**?

WE DON'T KNOW BECAUSE WE DON'T KNOW THEM, RIGHT?  
WE HAVE TO STOP MAKING CHOICES BASED ON SKIN COLOR.



Our **skin color** is beautiful. Our **ethnicity** is beautiful. Our **culture** is beautiful. Our **race** is beautiful. Don't forget that.

Do not let a lack of positive **representation** of Black people make you think Black people, or Black people with darker skin are bad. That's called **colorism**. It's a big issue, too!



Why is representation important?  
Do you think you see a lot of positive  
representation of Black people?

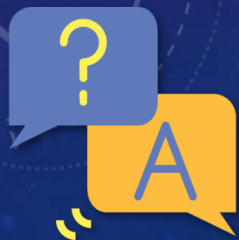




# WHITE PRIVILEGE & ALLIES

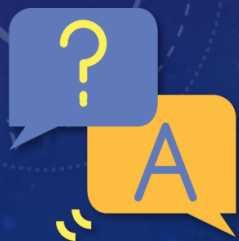
WHAT IS WHITE PRIVILEGE AND  
WHAT ARE ALLIES?

Let's talk about **white privilege**. Remember, having white privilege doesn't make white people bad. It means that they have certain privileges in society because of their skin color. It means that their culture is seen as "**normal**" and people that don't look like them are often seen as "**different**".



What is white  
privilege?

Unfortunately, because of white privilege, you might see your white friends **not** getting in trouble for the **same** things that you do. They may be called on more in class, have more **representation** in your lessons, in the books you read, and even on T.V. shows.



Tell me two questions  
you have right now.



While we are more than capable of using our voices to stand up to racism, it is important for us to have **allies** with **white privilege** that use it to call out racism every time it happens. Racism is not our fault. The racism that we have to deal with can be hurtful. It can be tiring, upsetting, and frustrating. But this fight is not ours alone. Allies of all races should be fighting against racism **with** us!



Why is it important to have friends that are allies?

White people do not and should not *need* to know you as a friend to be an **ally**. They should be allies because it is the right thing to do. You don't have to know someone personally to **care** about them. We should care about each other because we are humans.



Who can be an ally?  
Let's discuss.




What if you had a friend that **made fun** of your skin color? What if you had a friend that **did not** stick up for you when other people were being **racist** towards you?



Does this sound like the kind of friend that is also an ally? Why or why not?



REMEMBER THIS:

A **true friend** and **ally** will stick up for you because they care about you. They know how much Black lives matter and they know you **matter**, too! 

It's important to pick **friends** that make you **feel good** about yourself. When a friend needs help from you, you should help them. When you need help from a friend, **especially** if something **racist** is happening, they should help you.



Let's make a list. Let's write down all of the qualities we want our friends to have and talk about why.

The background features a gradient from deep purple at the top to dark blue at the bottom. Overlaid on this are faint, light-colored circular patterns, some of which are dotted lines. Numbers like 40, 150, 170, 230, 240, 250, and 260 are scattered around, often next to small arrows, suggesting a technical or scientific theme.

# HEY!! YOU MATTER

YOUR BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL!



You deserve to feel **safe**,  
**loved** and like you **matter**.  
Your **skin color** is beautiful.  
You are amazing. No  
matter what anyone says,  
you are wonderful just the  
way you are.



What is your favorite thing about  
being Black? I'll tell you mine, too.

Something pretty **amazing** about Black people is that they can come in so many beautiful shades of **melanin**. Melanin is a pigment in our skin. The more melanin you have, the darker your skin will be. All Black skin tones are **equally beautiful**.



What gives us our skin color? Tell me one thing you love about your melanin.

When you see other Black people that have more or less **melanin** than you, you shouldn't let that **separate** you or keep you from being friends. We are a **community**. We should all work together to fight racism.



Does more or less melanin mean some Black people are better or worse?



Some people may try to tell you **how** to be Black. There is **no one way** to be Black. You are Black enough just the way you are. You are free to be **yourself**. No one can take that away from you. **Always** be true to who you are.



Tell me 10 things that you love about yourself. I'll tell you mine, too.

Having to deal with racism  
is **hard**, but **remember**,  
there is nothing wrong with  
**you**. There is something  
wrong with **them**.



Let's make a plan! Dealing with racism can feel hurtful and upsetting. What will we say to ourselves after something racist happens to us or in the world?

REMEMBER THIS:

No matter what the world  
tries to tell you, your skin is  
**beautiful.** You **matter.**

Black lives matter.

Today. Tomorrow. And **always.**