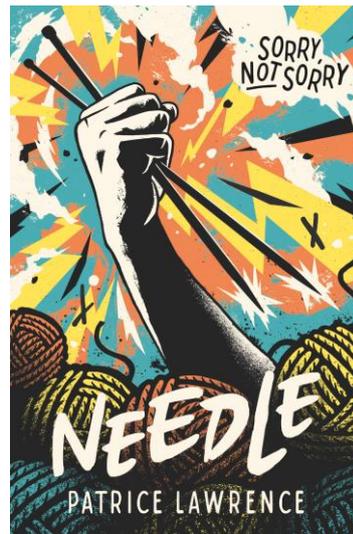
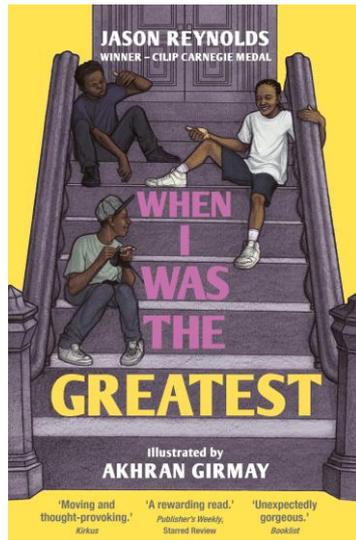


## Challenging Discrimination with Patrice Lawrence and Jason Reynolds

Explore BIG issues, teenage hardships, the justice system (and knitting!)  
with *When I Was the Greatest* and *Needle*.



### Level:

S2–S6 / KS4–KS5

### Explore themes of:

√ Prejudice and Discrimination √ Social Justice √ Choices √ Teenage Hardships

### Subject Checklist:

√ Health and Wellbeing √ Expressive Arts √ English Language √ Social Studies

*Note to teachers: These books contain some material that may not be suitable for some students. We recommend that teachers read the books carefully before using it in the classroom or recommending it to students and/or seek parental guidance.*

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### At a Glance

*Before watching Patrice and Jason's event or reading the extracts!*

1. What is interesting about these covers? What imagery is used? How is it similar or different on each cover?
2. Can you define the terms 'discrimination' and 'prejudice'? How are they connected? How many different forms of discrimination can you name?
3. What is social justice? Can you describe a social justice issue that has come up recently in your own neighbourhood or in the news?

### Book Cover Activity: Teenage Lives

Look over the book covers. What insights do we gain about the main characters' lives from both covers? Then, come up with some ideas about how you would illustrate your own life as a teenager today. First, make some notes. Use the suggestions below to help:

- *Illustrations that capture day-to-day life in your local area, home or school*
- *Family and friendships or relationships that you value*
- *Experiences of discrimination that you or others have faced*
- *Significant moments and experiences in your life*
- *Things you are passionate about*

Finally, have a go at creating a book cover that illustrates your own life as a teenager today.

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### Read the Extracts

*Taken from Chapter One of 'When I Was the Greatest' and Chapter One of 'Needle'.*

### Discussion Questions

1. On page 2 of *When I Was the Greatest*, Ali says that 'family is family'. What does he mean by this? What does this reveal about his character?
2. Who is Doris Brooks? How is she described in the early pages of the extract? Why doesn't Ali see much of her?
3. What is your impression of the neighbourhood that Ali and his family live in? How has the area changed since the Brysons moved away?
4. How did Ali first become friends with Noodles and Needles? Why doesn't Noodles sit on the stoop of his own building? What adversity does he face?
5. How did Needles get his nickname? How does his condition affect him? How do the community and different characters respond when he has a 'meltdown'?
6. In the opening pages of *Needle*, which passion does Charlene describe? Who else shares this passion? What else do we learn about Charlene and her family?
7. What is your impression of Charlene's relationship with Blake? What about her relationship with Annie? Who does she 'miss so much'?
8. Who do you think is to blame for the incident in the shop and why? Do you think that Charlene was treated fairly by the security guard?
9. On page 11, what do you think Charlene means by 'when you're a Black girl in care, there's bumps and twists'?
10. Why do you think Charlene refuses to apologise even though 'it would be easy'?



Patrice Lawrence and Jason Reynolds

## Get to Know the Authors and the Books!

### Hardships and Injustice

*Patrice and Jason's books are full of heart and warmth, but also tell difficult stories of teenage characters facing hardships. They both explore the different challenges that young people face, often without a choice, and how this injustice impacts their lives.*

- What do you think Patrice and Jason are passionate about? What is important to them? What type of stories do they want to tell?
  - Consider what Patrice and Jason's stories have in common. Create a Venn diagram to show their differences and also their similarities. Do they explore similar themes? What are they?
  - Think about the characters in the stories – Charlene, Ali, Noodles, or Needles. For each character, write down the challenges or hardships they face without choice. How do these hardships impact their identities – and their entire life?
  - You might want to consider some of the ideas below:
    - *Prejudice and discrimination (consider race, class, gender, disability)*
    - *Challenging home life (consider relationships, housing, local communities)*
    - *Financial hardship and poverty*
    - *Lack of education, aspirations and opportunities*
    - *Strained relationships with family and friends (consider neglect, abusive relationships, peer pressure)*
  - Choose a hardship that interests you or that you feel passionate about and write a summary of how it is explored in one of the books.
  - Are there any hardships that you see in the world that you would like to write a story about? How do you think writing these stories can help to raise awareness and help young people in difficult circumstances that are not their own making?
  - Finally, reflect on why it is important to read stories like *When I Was the Greatest* and *Needle*. How do they help us understand and explore social injustice?
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## Your Turn: Challenging Discrimination!

### A Persuasive Speech for Social Justice

*For both authors, giving young people a voice and the confidence to speak up is central to their work. Think about the societal issues that you are passionate about; write your own powerful speech for social justice...*

- What type(s) of discrimination are explored in Patrice and Jason’s books?
  - Choose one example of discrimination that you would like to challenge in a persuasive speech. It can be an example from one of the books, or a real-life example. Use the questions below to help you plan your speech:
    - *What is the impact of this form of this discrimination?*
    - *Who is affected by it and how?*
    - *What kinds of misconceptions and prejudice are at the root of the problem?*
    - *What makes you so passionate about this topic?*
    - *How can we develop greater empathy for one another?*
    - *How can we support people who suffer from this type of discrimination?*
    - *What changes need to happen in your school and local area? What about on a national and global level?*
  - Think about persuasive language techniques you could use to make your speech more engaging. Could you use any real-life examples or anecdotes to support your points and make your speech more powerful?
  - Perform your speeches in pairs and have a discussion about the ideas you have raised. How can you support one another in challenging discrimination?
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## Reflection and Further Questions

### Reflection Activity

*Think over all that you have learned. Perhaps you have been inspired to tell a difficult story? Or you’ve thought about ways to raise awareness about the issues discussed today . . .*

*Patrice Lawrence and Jason Reynolds are from two different parts of the world: the UK and America. Research and compare the criminal justice systems in these two places. Consider how each system could be improved to ensure that young people are supported, and that their ‘difficult stories’ are not held against them.*

Lastly, do you have any final questions you would like to ask Patrice and Jason if you got the chance? Try to think of at least two and make a note of them.

Keep your eye out for more awesome books from Patrice Lawrence and Jason Reynolds, as well as the other authors from the Edinburgh International Book Festival!

 Edinburgh  
International  
Book Festival



| *Actual Investors*