



An Educator's Guide to:

Dr. Fauci: How a Boy from Brooklyn Became America's Doctor

By Kate Messner
Illustrated by Alexandra Bye

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Ages: 4–8

Grades: P–3

About the Book

Dr. Fauci is the definitive picture book biography of Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and one of the most crucial figures in the COVID-19 pandemic. Before he was Dr. Fauci, Anthony Fauci was a curious boy in Brooklyn, delivering prescriptions from his father's pharmacy on his blue Schwinn bicycle. His father and immigrant grandfather taught Anthony to ask questions, consider all the data, and never give up; Anthony's ability to stay curious and to communicate with people would serve him his entire life. This engaging narrative, which draws from the author's interviews with Dr. Fauci

himself, follows Anthony from his Brooklyn beginnings through medical school and his challenging role working with seven US presidents to tackle some of the biggest public health challenges of the past fifty years, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Extensive back matter rounds out Dr. Fauci's story with a time line, recommended reading, facts about vaccines and how they work, and Dr. Fauci's own tips for future scientists.

About the Author

Kate Messner is passionately curious and writes books for kids who wonder too. Her award-winning titles include picture books like *Over and Under the Snow* and *How to Write a Story*; novels like *All the Answers*, *Breakout*, and *Chirp*; engaging nonfiction like *The Next President* and *Tracking Pythons*; the Fergus and Zeke easy reader series; the popular Ranger in Time chapter books; and the History Smashers illustrated nonfiction series, aimed at unraveling historical myths and sharing hidden truths. Learn more at her website, www.katemessner.com.

About the Illustrator

Alexandra Bye is a New Hampshire local who spent her first two years of undergrad at Massachusetts College of Art and Design studying animation. She transferred as a sophomore to New Hampshire Institute of Art to study illustration and graduated in May 2017. She works as a freelance illustrator specializing in fun, colorful illustrations for a variety of media such as advertising, animation, licensing, editorial, and children's publications. Her work reflects the energy she is inspired by from outdoor adventures, friends, family, and the flourishing New England community. Learn more at her website, www.alexandrabye.com.

About this Educator's Guide

Dr. Fauci: How a Boy from Brooklyn Became America's Doctor is a picture book biography for elementary-aged students. This guide includes a range of activities and discussion ideas that can be used as written, or with slight modification across elementary classrooms. The activities and discussion ideas included relate to these Common Core standards:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9](#)

Discussion Topics and Questions

Before Reading

Invite students to recall their experiences of life during the COVID-19 pandemic. While their recollections will vary, all are likely to relate to the way activity as we knew it halted, and many will mention the use of vaccines to some degree.

Ask students about their familiarity with the scientists who worked to develop the COVID-19 vaccines, and introduce Dr. Anthony Fauci as a leader in the area of public health.

Note for students that before Dr. Fauci was lauded as an American hero for his work with infectious diseases, he was a young person not unlike many of the kids they know too.

While Reading

Emphasize the repetition of problem-solving steps: asking questions, researching or gathering evidence, and searching for answers. Guide students to notice how this pattern presents itself at various stages of Dr. Fauci's life and career.

Ask students the following questions: What does it mean to "keep an open mind" as Anthony was taught when he was growing up? Why is an open mind important in scientific research? In what other aspects of our everyday life is it important to keep an open mind? Encourage students to explain their answers using examples from the book and their own lives.

Pause to notice the verbs on the page that shows scientists working together in a lab. What things did researchers and scientists do while they were solving the mystery of COVID-19?

After Reading

Pose this question: Why is the subtitle "How a Boy from Brooklyn Became America's Doctor"?

Page through the book again to remind students of Dr. Fauci's journey from boy to epidemiologist, and collect words that describe his identity. Develop an identity chart (inspired by *Facing History and Ourselves* at <https://www.facinghistory.org/chunk/identity-chart>) for Dr. Fauci. Some examples anchored in the text might include Italian American, athlete, student, researcher, good communicator, problem solver, and perseverant. Then, engage students in drawing similarities between their identities and personal interests and those of Dr. Fauci.

Encourage discussion by using the following questions: Who are some of the people who have been important to Dr. Fauci? What influence did these family members, friends, and teammates have on him? Who is important to you, and what influence do they have on you?

What obstacles did Anthony encounter, both as a young person and in his role as Dr. Fauci? How did he overcome obstacles and solve problems?

What kinds of skills did Anthony learn while participating in team games like stickball and basketball? How did these experiences help Dr. Fauci practice skills that were later useful in his science career? How have your own experiences working in teams or groups in the classroom helped you to be more cooperative or understanding of others?

When the AIDS epidemic struck in 1981, Dr. Fauci invited some of the protesters in to talk with him about their concerns. Why do you think the author, Kate Messner, chose to highlight this action? What does this detail tell you about Dr. Fauci and the way he conducts his work?

Teach with Back Matter

Instruct students to use the four phases of vaccine development from “Are Vaccines Safe?” in the book’s back matter to create a four-panel comic. Students’ drawings can be as simple or as complicated as they wish; just be sure they illustrate what happens in each phase of the process.

Ask students to draw themselves as disease-fighting heroes. What details will you include in your illustration to show your commitment to fighting off germs?

Lead a class discussion with the following questions:

- What advice does Dr. Fauci have for future scientists?
- What is a discovery?
- What would Dr. Fauci tell you about making mistakes or experiences that don’t work out?
- Dr. Fauci says, “Science can expand who you are.” Dig a little deeper into Dr. Fauci’s statement. How is this true? How does that happen?

Orient students to the organization of the time line, explaining that it includes major milestones from Dr. Fauci’s career.

- Talk about the starting point and the left-to-right order of the dates, like a number line. Do some time-line math to find the number of years between some of the significant dates with subtraction strategies.
- Notice that the time line extends off the right page because there will be more events in Dr. Fauci’s life. Look at the end of the text: “Soon enough it would be time to get back to work . . . searching for solutions to whatever challenges might come next.” How does this imply that there could be more time-line boxes in Dr. Fauci’s future? Consider what milestones are yet to come.
- Using the dates on the time line, ask students if they can make a list of all seven presidents with whom Dr. Fauci has worked.

Enrichment and Extensions

Language Arts

Invite students to learn more about some of the other diseases for which Dr. Fauci has helped develop prevention and treatment methods. They can choose one or more of the other diseases from his files, which include Ebola, SARS, West Nile virus, and AIDS.

Next, have them answer these questions:

- Where and how did it originate?
- Who was impacted? How?

- How long did it last?
- What kinds of vaccines or medicines were developed to fight it?

Then they can use this research to help them compare and contrast one or more of these diseases with COVID-19. You might choose to structure this with the support of a comparison matrix to ask how these diseases are the same and different.

To write this biography, Kate Messner prepared for and conducted multiple interviews with Dr. Fauci. Ask students to think about what they would like to find out about the childhood and young adult years of someone they know and consider a real-life hero. They should consider what questions they would ask to find out more about how this person found their way to the person they are today. Have them generate questions and conduct their own interviews.

Show students the two pages in the book where illustrator Alexandra Bye accentuated this quote from Anthony's father: "Don't get discouraged. Think about it carefully and try to work it out." Then have them answer these questions:

- Why do you think Bye chose to illustrate these words instead of using the same printed text as the rest of the book?
- Why do you think the quotation appears twice in this way?
- What wise words has someone shared with you in your own life that have helped you persevere?
- What wise words has another character been offered in other books you have read?

Invite students to try their hands at illustrating their own wise words or a borrowed quotation with citation on an index card, bookmark, or poster in the style of Alexandra Bye.

STEM

The book opens with a description of Anthony as a curious kid filled with wonder. Support a habit of wondering and question-asking in your classroom by modeling curiosity and questioning yourself. Make space and time for students to be aware of their own curiosity and wondering. When possible, assist them in following that curiosity and locating resources to help them learn more about what they want to know.

In his memories of playing stickball in the streets of Brooklyn, Dr. Fauci describes himself as a "two-sewer guy" because he could hit the ball beyond the rough measurement of two sewer covers. Take this opportunity to talk about nonstandard units of measurement in comparison to standard units of measurement.

Ask students these questions:

- What examples can you generate of other nonstandard units of measurement?
- When does it make sense to measure with nonstandard units? When is it important to use standard units?
- What descriptions can you write about yourself and your own achievements with nonstandard units of measurement?

An epidemiologist is a less common aspiration for elementary-aged students. Brainstorm with students about various health- and science-related aspirations they can pursue and the ways in which these careers provide a service to others.

Social-Emotional Learning

Lead a discussion by asking students these questions:

- What people skills did Dr. Fauci have that helped him to be successful?
- What problem-solving skills did Dr. Fauci use to help him persevere?

Anthony's father once told him, "Don't get discouraged. Don't run away because you don't understand the problem. Think about it carefully and try to work it out." Make Anthony's father's words the center of a bulletin board space. Use this powerful mantra that motivated Dr. Fauci to remind students to persevere through challenges, and use the bulletin board space to record and document examples of student perseverance and problem-solving. Make time and space to celebrate the process of puzzling through challenges and overcoming obstacles!

Speaking Up, Speaking Out

While not addressed directly in the book, you may find that the book's subject matter brings up tough conversations related to misinformation and anti-Asian racism. This section provides some framework and tools in case you'd like to use this opportunity to educate and discuss with your students.

In 2019, the virus that causes COVID-19 was first detected in the Wuhan province of China. The virus is highly contagious and transmissible by droplets in the air, factors that helped it to spread rapidly beyond the borders of China to many other people and places around the globe. This is how COVID-19 became classified as a pandemic.

Since the virus was first identified in China, a lot of myths and misinformation have been spread. The World Health Organization no longer names diseases for the places they were first identified because this can lead to racism, but some people have continued to use made-up names for the virus that causes COVID-19 instead of calling it by its scientific name, SARS-CoV-2. This has contributed to an increase in racism and hate crimes toward people of Asian descent.

While home and classroom conversations will vary depending on the age of readers, adults can take a developmentally appropriate path toward equipping children with a voice for allyship. Young readers can engage in conversations from the stance of curiosity about and appreciation for others' cultures. Even the youngest readers can be encouraged to seek help from a grown-up when someone's unkind words or actions give them an uncomfortable feeling. Older readers can relate this to developing empathy, or the social-emotional skill of trying to understand what someone else's experiences and feelings might be. They can engage in inquiry-based work about stereotypes, biases, and microaggressions. Adults can coach students to be critical consumers of information, making them more discerning about how they interpret the messages they hear about individuals and groups of people.

When encountering anti-Asian sentiment and/or language in the elementary setting, adopt a teaching stance. Presume the student does not know the weight of the words or phrases being used. Explain in a matter-of-fact way that the words or phrases are not okay. You might try something like, “I don’t think you know that what you said is insulting (unkind, racist). That word/phrase is actually rooted in a stereotype (bias, wrong information). I know that now that you know, you’ll stop using that word/phrase.” Trust that the student will do better. Likely, with your respectful approach and teaching, they will.

Empower young people to be allies when encountering racist language. Some responses you might offer students include:

- I don’t find that funny.
- What you just said is harmful.
- It’s not okay to talk about people like that.
- That’s not a kind thing to say. You’re better than that.

Rehearsing options of how to address the comments others make that are hurtful, cause discomfort, and/or that students recognize are wrong will increase the likelihood that they will have the confidence to do so when a situation arises. Remind them that while they can speak up about incidents of racism, they should also share these situations with a trusted adult for more support.

Additional Resources for Educators and Families

- National Association of School Psychologists (NASP): [Countering Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Stigma and Racism: Tips for Parents and Caregivers](#)
- EmbraceRace: [Asian Americans, racism, and antiracism in the COVID Era](#)
- Learning for Justice: [Addressing Anti-Asian Bias](#)
- NPR Code Switch: [How to Start Conversations about Anti-Asian Racism with Your Family](#)

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