Mark's Dilemma by Darren Chetty

Read the email below. It's written by Mark, a teacher at a primary school. After you've read it, think about the questions on the next page. If you can, find someone to read it with you and you can talk about the questions together!

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To: Robbie	
Subject: My dilemma	
From: Mark	
Hi Robbie	
How were your holidays and how are things back home in Trir because I could do with some advice. You never know when a on you and I've got one now.	
The thing is that the school I'm teaching at has announced a b	ook day.
All the staff and pupils are asked to dress up as a character from children's fiction. I wanted to choose a Black character. I am a Black Caribbean man after all. The thing is, I couldn't think of any that the children would recognise nobody as well known as Max from 'Where the Wild things are', Bernard from 'Not Now Bernard', Charlie from 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' or Tin-Tin. The more I tried to come up with something, the more frustrated I got. You know some of the kids I teach are West Indian, African and Asian but the central characters in the stories they write are all White. There is something wrong there don't you think? 🛞	
At least back in Trinidad there were lots of Black and Indian pe It seemed people like us could be at the centre of things. Kids that. Anyway I asked a few colleagues.	
One White guy said other things were as important to identity background things like whether the characters were good potter.	
A fellow Trinidadian has chosen a character. He wouldn't tell n nicked his idea. He'd spent the whole day in a library looking t He said is going to suggest that non-fiction be allowed next y	hrough the children's section.
I did find a story-book with a minor character, a father, who is thought that might be a bit 'boring'. She's Black and from Trin Snow White because she says folk tales are exciting and 'unive fairest of them all I guess.	idad too but she's coming as
A Muslim teacher is coming as a character called Birbal. That's It turns out he was the hero of many Indian folk tales and reall century. In the stories, the Moghul ruler turns to him for advic The stories are pretty funny but I don't think the kids know the	y existed in the sixteenth e and Birbal is very clever.
What do you think? Can you suggest anything? I'd like my kids and people like them as being significant in school.	to be able to see themselves
Cheers Your friend Mark	

Activity: Now Go Find Out!

Conduct a survey of books in your classroom/home.

- 1. How many include Black main characters?
- 2. How many are set in your country and include Black characters?

Has thinking about this led you to believe any action is required? If so, why? What action? If not, why not?

Imagine Mark emailed you instead of Robbie. Write an e-mail back to Mark. Tell him what you think about his email and share any suggestions you have.