

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# Marley Dias: The 13-Year-Old Author Who Made a Difference

By Barrett Smith  
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*Activist and author Marley Dias was only 11 years old when she felt compelled to start the campaign #1000blackgirlbooks. In this informational text, Barrett Smith discusses how it has developed over time. As you read, take notes on how Dias responded to the problem she encountered, and how her work has affected others.*

- [1] Have you ever felt tired of the books you read in school? That's how Marley Dias felt when she was 11 years old and all of the books she read in school "were about white boys and their dogs." Dias says she couldn't connect with the characters in the books so she "couldn't learn lessons from those stories."

When Dias complained to her mother about her problem, her mother asked her what she was going to do about it. Dias thought about her options. She could just ask her dad to buy her a lot of new books. But after doing some research to find books with black girls as the main characters, she realized that there weren't very many to choose from. According to Cooperative Children's Book Center, fewer than 10 percent of children's books released in 2015 had a black person as the main character. Recently, there has been a movement to make books more diverse.<sup>1</sup> Many school libraries tend to have older books, though, which are even less diverse. Dias realized she probably wasn't the only black girl feeling like she couldn't relate to her school reading curriculum. With the help of her mother, she decided to create a drive called #1000blackgirlbooks.



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Dias' goal with the #1000blackgirlbooks campaign was to collect 1,000 books about black girls. She would donate these books to communities such as schools and libraries. She also created a resource guide to help people find these books. Dias has raised almost 4,000 books. Now, she has started talking to teachers and lawmakers about how to include diverse books in schools. She is also starting a book fair to continue to collect books to donate to other schools and communities where children might feel the same way she did.

1. **Diverse (adjective):** differing from one another

At first, Dias says she was worried about not meeting her goal of 1000 books. Now she says there are strangers thanking her for doing this. Dias has been able to reach so many people with her hard work because she is fighting for an important issue. Dias says the exclusion<sup>2</sup> of black girls in literature and schools “hurts all of us. I’m working to create a space where it feels easy to include and imagine black girls and make black girls like me the main characters of our lives.” Dias has inspired many young people to do similar drives.

- [5] Dias wants to continue to inspire young people to do something about their frustrations. She is writing her own book called *Marley Dias Gets It Done — and So Can You*. Her publishers say her book will be a “keep it real guide” to social activism.<sup>3</sup> She will share tips for kids to make changes in their lives and communities and “pay it forward about whatever makes your heart sing.” Dias wants to give other kids the tools to get support from their parents and teachers, use social media for good, and make change effectively.

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2. **Exclusion (noun):** the act of leaving someone out  
3. the practices or actions of creating social change

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which of the following identifies the central idea of the text?
  - A. Dias' decision to take action when she faced something unfair led to a movement that influenced others.
  - B. Dias drew attention to the issue that black girls are rarely the main characters in books, prompting authors to include them.
  - C. Dias believed that she lucked into her role as a social activist, and that it would be hard for others to accomplish something similar.
  - D. Dias was met with resistance when she attempted to bring attention to the lack of black main characters in books, but she persisted.
  
2. How did Dias' mother react to her complaints about the lack of black main characters in books?
  - A. Her mother encouraged Dias to take action and carry out her plan.
  - B. Her mother offered to buy her more books with black main characters.
  - C. Her mother encouraged her to write her own books with black main characters.
  - D. Her mother sympathized with her, but didn't think there was much that could be done.
  
3. Which quote from paragraph 2 best supports Dias' motivation for her campaign?
  - A. "When Dias complained to her mother about her problem, her mother asked what she was going to do about it."
  - B. "Dias thought about her options. She could just ask her dad to buy her a lot of new books."
  - C. "But after doing some research to find books with black girls as the main characters, she realized that there weren't very many to choose from."
  - D. "With the help of her mother, she decided to create a drive called #1000blackgirlbooks."
  
4. How does the description of the book drive contribute to the main idea of the passage?
  - A. It highlights how Dias always knew the drive would be successful.
  - B. It details Dias' disappointment at how slow the book drive began, and how she almost gave up.
  - C. It describes how Dias was surprised by the number of books she collected, which inspired her activism.
  - D. It focuses on how Dias couldn't believe how many books she collected, and how she considered her mission accomplished.

5. Write a summary of the article in 4-5 sentences.

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## Discussion Questions

**Directions:** *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. Marley Dias didn't feel represented in the books that she read. Have you ever felt like you couldn't relate to the main characters of books? Why or why not? What type of protagonists would you like to see in books?
2. How does the text show what kids are capable of at a young age? Have you ever engaged in any activity to create positive change? If so, describe it. If you haven't, what kind of positive change would you like to see in your community? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
3. How has Marley Dias changed how people approach children's literature and how they view activism? How has she influenced your own views on what you might be able to accomplish as a child or young adult?
4. How did Marley Dias become the leader of the #1000blackgirlbooks campaign? What traits does she possess that make her a good leader?