



**Go GIRL (Gifts in Real Life)**

**by Monique Hall, 2020 CTI Black Girl Magic, Fellow**

**Devonshire Elementary School**

**This curriculum unit is recommended for Health/SEL grades 4th -5th**

**Keywords:** Black Girl Magic, SEL, self-awareness, self image, social media

**Teaching Standards:** See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

**Synopsis:** In this unit, student focus will be on character development/education. When students are self-aware, they begin to develop an understanding, how they see themselves may be different from how others see them. Students who are self-aware also recognize their strengths and their challenges. Self-awareness helps students build self-esteem and speak up for what they need. By focusing on the qualities that are distinctive to young Black Girls, self-awareness will be optimized.

I plan to teach this unit during homeroom which includes time for Social Emotional Learning (SEL) during the 40-minute block.

## **Background:**

As soon as I saw the opportunity to be a part of “Black Girl Magic” I was immediately drawn to it. I think back to when I was in school. I had positive and negative experiences. In high school I had a great set of friends and overall, my feelings about high school were positive. I became pregnant in 12th grade and my experience at school began to change. I remember my counselor looking at me with such disdain and telling me I should apply to the local community college. I said to him, “no I’m going to apply to Rutgers University. I plan to start in the spring.” Even though I had good grades, he felt I could not succeed. I felt ashamed and unworthy. To this day, the grown adult me thinks back to that time and wishes I would have gone back to Union High School and shown him my college degree from Rutgers University.

If I would have let that moment define my future, I would have never applied to Rutgers University. As an educator, I began to ponder the question; have I in some way unintentionally made a young lady in my class feel unworthy and/or devalued because I dismissed an idea and/or comment because it didn’t fit into the pacing or schedule. I want young Black girls to know, no matter your circumstances you matter, you can use your voice and you can have your dreams actualized.

As I was growing up, I saw shows like Good Times. It was a show centered around a family growing up in the projects. By watching that show, I identified with the situation because my family was living the same way. Then I began to watch the Cosby Show and I was impressed. The father was a doctor and the mother was a lawyer. I began to believe I too could be successful and not beholden to what societal images portrayed by persons of color visualize us to be. That show was important as it portrayed positive images of people of all ages who looked just like me. Now for some, social media is driving the narrative. My unit will utilize social media and course work to help promote and foster positive images of Black women who are creative, driven, and successful in many fields not limited to but including math and science.

There are many young Black Women on television today. Unfortunately, some of the Black Women on network and reality shows and/or images of Black women portrayed on social media are not showing women making the best choices and displaying behavior reflective of Black Women as a whole. I often wonder if people feel it is one size fits all. I often wonder if my high school counselor thought I was promiscuous and would just amount to a “baby mama.”

In this unit I will explore how social media helps to paint young Black Women as angry and promiscuous. I wanted no other young impressionable Black Girl to feel ashamed and unworthy. I wanted to seek to change the narrative by creating a curriculum that explores “Black Girl Magic” and its true meaning.

***Black Girl Magic*** means we are unique, smart, beautiful, powerful, risk takers, resilient, kind, self-reflectors, internal motivators, nurturers, teachers, sisters, aunts, girlfriends, wives, and mothers. We are a part of history and we are the future. To truly learn about our beautiful and unique selves it starts with a curriculum reflective of who we truly are.

### **Rationale**

Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools on average have grown 1.3% annually since the 2007-2008 school year which equates to about 1900 students per year. Most of the growth is taking place in the northern and southern portions of the city. This trend is expected to continue for the next ten years. Charlotte Mecklenburg's overall demographics are changing. To support these changes, Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools formed an equity Committee. "Equity is one of the biggest challenges facing our community," said Mary McCray Board Chairperson.

The Charlotte Mecklenburg School System in its partnership to support students in marginalized communities has established *Social Academic and Emotional Learning* (SEL) for the 2020-2021 school year. According to The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (**CASEL**), Social Emotional Learning is defined as the process through which children understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. As determined by Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools:

The local and national context makes social and emotional learning even more necessary and relevant.

- A global pandemic that has caused collective trauma and grief
- A community with disparate views about returning to school
- A renewed national spotlight on racial injustice
- A local climate of student and community advocacy about racial inequity in CMS
- Increased concern about child and adolescent social and emotional wellness and mental health

## **School Demographics**

**Devonshire Elementary** is a Kindergarten-5th grade school. The school's mission is to make the world a better place one student at a time. Devonshire Elementary is a title one school located in Charlotte. The student population is approximately 624 students.

### **The demographic makeup is as follows:**

The student to teacher ratio is 15:1 which is slightly lower than the North Carolina state level of 16:1.

The racial makeup of the school is 59% Hispanic, 34% Black, 1% white and 1% biracial.

The diversity score of Devonshire Elementary School is 0.53, which is less than the diversity score at state average of 0.68. This diversity rate has stayed relatively flat over the last five years.

98% of the students are eligible for free lunch and 2% of students are eligible for reduced lunch.

The Math proficiency rate is 52% (top 30%) and the reading proficiency rate is 22% (bottom 50%).

The female population is 50% and is comparable to the male population of 50%.

The 4th grade class make up is reflective of the above demographics. I plan to teach the Curriculum Unit during homeroom which includes time for SEL, Social Emotional Learning.

## Research

### **Where does the term Black Girl Magic stem from?**

The term “Black Girl Magic” was not started by CaShawn Thompson. When interviewed in the article, *Black Girl Magic was always the Truth*, publication February 08, 2019 by Feminsta Jones, Thompson stated, “I started using the term Black Girl Magic on twitter around June 2013.” Jones responded, “upon my research I discovered you (Thompson) wasn’t the first person to use the term. Thompson replied, “The difference was, I was the first person to use it and reference Black girl empowerment. Other times it was used before, it was always something about Black girl’s and Black women’s hair. I was the first person to use Black Girl Magic or Black Girls Are Magic in the realm of uplifting Black women. Not so much about our aesthetic but just who we are.”

### **How are Black women defined?**

According to *Wikipedia*, *the term Black Women is both multifaceted cultural identity and a social construct with different meanings in different places and Black women are defined as women who are of West African, East African, North African, South African, or Afro-diasporic descent. The African Diaspora is the voluntary and involuntary movement of Africans and their descendants to various parts of the world during the modern and pre-modern periods.*

### **How is Social Media Defined?**

*Social media* (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat, Tik Tok) is defined as computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through the building of virtual networks and communities. By design Social Media is internet based and gives users quick electronic communication of content.

### **Essential Question:**

How has the portrayal of Black Women on social media and on television negatively affected young Black girl’s self-image?

Social media can be a way for teens to express themselves. Some use social media to connect with their friends and share artistic views and works. Many posts what they are feeling and what is happening in their lives and in the lives of family and friends. Some also have blogs where they post fashion advice, musical choices and/or sports achievement. These seem innocent enough. Not all interactions on social media are positive and empowering to teens, especially preteens of color. Teens have been harassed, bullied, victimized, and sexualized on social media.

Pre-teens are spending hours of time on social media. According to the article *It's A Smartphone Life: More than Half of U.S. Children Now Have One*, October 31, 2019, by Anya Kamenetz, 53% of students by age 11 have a smartphone. 84% of teenagers have their own phone. According to the article, students from families making \$35,000 or less spend more time on Social Media than students from families making more than \$100,000. Girls report using Social Media more and watching videos while boys reported using their phone to play video games.

Social media can lead to young Black girls having a poor self-image of their looks and body. As a result, Black girls can become depressed and develop low self-esteem. Connections are cultivated through social media but what happens to Black girls when those connections are not always positive? The results can be devastating to their innate creativity and inner peace.

According to CNN Health, *how girls use social media to build up, break down self-image* by Caroline Knorr, Common Sense Media, there are steps we can take to help combat doubt about self-image:

- **Talk about the pictures they post:** What poses they should strike.
- **Ask how feedback makes them feel:** Do they feel better when photos are liked or are, they stressed out about other comments and feedback.
- **Help them develop a healthy self-image.** Emphasize what the body can do instead of what it looks like.
- **Rely on role models:** Cultivate relationships with women young ladies can look up to.
- **Help them to stop the cycle:** Ask them to post constructive comments that support their friends for who they are and not what they look like.
- **Help them view media critically:** Talk about oversexualized images or unrealistic body ideals of girls in the media.

Black Women succeed in education, owning businesses, and are supportive to their partners, children, and family members. Oftentimes you do not see Black women's portrayal on television showing these positive attributes. Have there been some shows? Yes, shows like *Girlfriends* and now *Insecure*, but there have been far more that show the stereotypical perception of Black women. The reality shows like *Love and Hip*

*Hop, Atlanta, New York and Los Angeles, and Housewives of Atlanta* show the cast constantly having disagreements, arguments, and fights. Have Black Women been shown in a positive light on social media? Yes, but what is shared most is when women are arguing and/or sharing very nasty exchanges. We have been shown to show characteristics of anger and promiscuity. Reality television seems to have heightened the false narrative of how we behave when it comes to treating each other. Many women are pitted against each other especially when it comes to the misperception that women are rivals when it comes to garnering the attention and affection of a man. Many women have sisterhoods with live long friends and/or biological sisters whom they share a bond.

### **Essential Questions:**

- What happens when we watch programs, use social media, see people who are deemed beautiful yet when we look in the mirror the image staring back at us does not match?
- How does self-image affect how you feel about your birth given features?
- What is in a hairstyle and can one be defined by its length, style, and texture?

In my research, I *googled images* of beautiful women. What came up was thin, white, or fair skinned women with long hair. To get to Black Women you had to go to the next page by clicking more. What happens to young Black girls, self-image when society defines images of beauty that do not represent them. In this unit, we will define beauty for ourselves together. We will start with the anchor text; *I am Enough* by Grace Byers. There is a part in the book that resonated with me as a Black woman. “I’m not meant to be like you; you’re not meant to be like me. Sometimes we will get along and sometimes we will disagree.” Those words can fit any relationship (friendship, sister, mom, aunt, daughter, daughter -in -love, and/or niece). Sometimes relationships are difficult, but one thing is constant, they are beneficial to our well-being when going through a difficult time or a crisis.

In the book *Hair Love*, copyright 2019, by Matthew A Cherry, is about a father doing his daughter’s hair for the first time. In the book it states “My name is Zuri, and I have hair that has a mind of its own. It kinks, coils, and curls every which way.” *Black Girl Magic* was originally about Black Women’s Hair. Cashawn Thompson used it to reference Black Girl empowerment.

This unit will also shine a light on young Black girls and women that are doing remarkably well, popular, have confidence and represent themselves as the beautiful young girls they are and destined to be all while contributing to their communities and/or the world which in turn would validate young Black girls and let them know they are beautiful and most certainly “enough.” Using the anchor text, *I Believe I can*, by Grace Byers. There is a part in the text that states, “Sometimes I am right, and sometimes I

am wrong. But even when I make mistakes, I learn from them to make me strong.” We will affirm to love and believe in ourselves.

There are young Black girls and women who are using their social media platforms to highlight their black girl magic and social causes. We will look at the following Instagram platforms and discuss the accomplishments of these powerful women.

**Marsai Martin:** She stars on *Blackish* and at 16, she is the youngest executive producer in history with 2.6 Instagram followers. Marsai has produced the movie “Little” and will produce the comedy *Queen* and is developing an unscripted series on “Trailblazing Black Women.” If the series is picked up, she will be the first budding actress to produce a series.

**Marley Dias** is a 15-year-old activist and author. She is the author of the book *Marley Dias Gets It Done: And So Can You*. She is the founder of #1,000 Black Girl Books. She collected books which feature African American children as essential characters. She has over 15 thousand followers on twitter and over 100,000 followers on Instagram. At such a young age she has brought diversity into classrooms and she is also an activist.

**Tamika Mallory** is an activist who helped organize the Women’s March in 2017 and founded *Until Freedom*. She has a million followers on Instagram and is a proponent of gun control, feminism, and Black Lives Matter.

**Black Girls in Stem** on Instagram showcases positive images of Black Women in Stem. Its founder, Astronaia, highlights companies that support women of color seeking scholarships in STEM programs as well as graduates of studies in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. As a math teacher, I want young Black girls to know there are many opportunities in the fields of math and science.

According to *Time Magazine*, *Why Instagram is the Worst Social Media for Mental Health*, May 25, 2017, by Amanda MacMillan, a survey of 1,500 teens and young adults was conducted. Participants answered questions about how different social media platforms impacted 14 different issues related to their mental and physical health. YouTube got the highest marks for providing trustworthy health information, Twitter came in second followed by Facebook, SnapChat and then Instagram. As stated in the article, the photo-based platform was associated with high levels of anxiety, depression, and cyberbullying. We will utilize Instagram and Twitter to focus on positive agents of change, who are people of color, students will see people who mirror their image. When you see people, who look like you on Social Media, on television and as your teacher, it prepares you to live and work in a diverse society.

By tackling these issues and questions, Black girls in 4th and 5th grade will be able to evaluate content presented in diverse media outlets such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Young students will be able to read and locate information in digital media. Students will be able to communicate with the teacher and other students about

personal experiences with social media. Students will be able to articulate their feelings about the emotions they are experiencing when seeing images and reading posts on social media.

This unit will help to build confidence in Black girls, help give students a voice in class, ask and answer questions and ask for help when needed. By asking questions and speaking in class, they will be able to heighten their understanding of the material being presented. When you understand what is being taught to you in class, you are happier and eager to learn.

### **Lesson Plans**

#### ***Lesson 1 Part A and Part B***

**Background:** A study by the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine says depression from social media could develop from:

- **Seeing your peers posting idealized representations of themselves, fostering feelings of jealousy and low self-confidence.**
- **Engaging in meaningless social media activities that produce feelings of wasted time and guilt.**
- **An emerging internet addiction.**
- **Cyber-bullying or other negative interactions.**

According to an article in the Nation's Health, a publication by the American Public Health Association, young people, particularly young women, and teen girls who frequently use social media, are at highest risk for depression. Overall, half of teenage girls consider themselves near-constant online users, compared with 41 percent of teen boys, a possible contributor to this statistic.

## **Lesson 1 Part A**

### **[Anchor Text: I Am Enough \(3.5 minutes\)](#)**

**Introduce Curriculum Unit by letting students know we will engage in lessons about the effect social media and television shows have on the self-image of young people. Discuss collecting photographs of women in their family who are important to them for a future culminating activity at the end of the unit. (mom, grandparents, guardian, aunts, sisters, mentors)**

Essential Questions:

#### ***What is beauty? (3-5 minutes)***

A combination of qualities, such as shape, color, or form, that pleases the aesthetic senses, especially the sight.

**Ask students to describe what beauty means to them in 3-5 sentences.**

#### **[What does beauty mean to you recording sheet](#)**

*It may take them 5-7 minutes to complete as they may not be able to come up with a definition quickly because this may be the first time the question may have been posed to them.*

#### ***How do you see yourself? Does it depend on how others see you? (3-5 minutes)***

Show images of beautiful people on Google:

*(Every time I research images of beautiful people on google, white and/or very fair skin women are shown.)*

*Ask the next question; What do all these people have in common?*

It should start the discussion about the similarities between your definition of beauty and how others define beauty based on the images you see on Google (which is a technology-based information system. **(3 minutes)**)

*Draw a circle on Chart Paper. Write the word beauty in a circle. Record responses in a circle. If the description is not positive, record the response outside the circle. Ask students why they think the response was written outside of the circle. (3 minutes)*

### [Venn Diagram for Lesson 1](#)

Ask students to create an image of what beauty looks like and write words of affirmation around the image. (10-15 minutes) Use the picture below as an example.

Name one positive characteristic about yourself. **(3-5 minutes)**



*Possible Answers: They all look beautiful, look like their having so much fun; eating the best foods, going to beautiful places, travelling and*

Do you think the images you see are real? **(3-5 minutes)**

*Use discussion starters below to talk to students about how they take and post pictures. Next talk to students about how they view and respond to questions about pictures they post as well as their friends. (10 - 15 minutes)*

According to CNN Health, *How girls use social media to build up, break down self-image* by Caroline Knorr, Common Sense Media, there are steps we can take to help combat doubt about self-image:

- **Talk about the pictures they post:** *What poses they should strike.*
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- **Help them view media critically:** *Talk about oversexualized (heightened) images or unrealistic body ideals of girls in the media.*

View Instagram pages of: **(10 minutes)**

**Marsai Martin:** She stars on *Blackish* and at 16, she is the youngest executive producer in history with 2.6 Instagram followers.

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*By viewing positive platforms on Instagram with thousands of followers, students will begin to make the connection if you have something to share with the world that is worth seeing and reading, people will come, post comments and follow you without ever having to see and respond to negativity.*

***This would be the day to introduce the GO GIRL Instagram page (3 minutes)***

## **Lesson 2**

### **Essential Question**

How are people of color portrayed in television (Reality) and/or Social Media?

*What is your favorite show, blog? Why? (3-5 minutes)*

*Open the discussion with the question; do you watch reality shows and why? (3-5 minutes)*

*How do you feel when people on reality tv and/or social media treat and talk to each other fighting and using negative language?*

[Too Much Reality TV \(Poem\)](#)

# **Too Much Reality TV**

**Something has gripped the human race,  
The television blares out laughter,  
Personal people with personal issues,  
Sharing their hearts to anyone who will listen.**

**The kitchen turns into a studio for the day,  
Cameras whirring in and out of focus,  
Showing us the reality of their lives,  
Children run around giggling and laughing.**

**What is the fascination with reality tv?  
Do we need to see raw emotions daily?**

**The media feeds us more than we need to see,  
We all take it in and gasp at the right times,  
Compassion pours from us when a story is sad,  
Voices of disbelief fills our room if it's not normal.**

**Do we feel better watching someone else's life?  
Glued to the sofa while real life plays out,  
A coin is tossed for kettle duty,  
No one wants to miss what comes next.**

**Relying on others to make us happy or sad,  
Too much reality tv can drive you mad.**

**By Priscilla Cato**

[Response Sheet to poem](#)

*Questions to ask students about the poem: (10-15 minutes)*

*What is the mood of the poem?*

*Who is the speaker of the poem?*

*What is the message of the poem?*

*Create your own poem affirming how wonderful you are by using these sentence starters. After creating ask students to share out: (10 minutes)*

***I am .....***

***Who I am makes a difference***

***I believe .....***

***Who I am makes a difference***

***I choose.....***

***Who I am makes a difference***

***I will .....***

***Because who I am makes a difference***

**Remind the students to keep collecting and bring in their pictures.**

### **Lesson 3**

**Anchor Text: Hair Love** [short film](#)

*Ask the students what did they think of the short film based on the Book, Hair Love? (6.5 minutes)*

*What do you think it means for hair to have a mind of its own? How do you think it made her feel when her dad did her hair? What does Zuri put on to make her look like a superhero? What caused Zuri's hair to go from large to small? (5-7 minutes)*

[Black women share their hair stories](#) (3 minutes)

[Inspired by tyler 3d hair styles](#) (5-7 minutes)

*Ask students what do they think about the various hairstyles?*

*Hairstyles represent freedom of expression.*

*After presenting Black women and their hair stories and Inspired by tyler 3d hair styles, ask students if they think students should be suspended for wearing certain hairstyles? Why or why not?*

**Lesson 4 (students will use the pictures they have been collecting)**

**Anchor Text: I Believe I Can** (2.5 minutes)

**Culminating Activity (15 - 20 minutes)**

*Students will create a collage and/or photo album of pictures collected. The photos should show generations and/or tell the story of women who are important to them.*

[Watch Video Brown Skin Call by Beyonce](#) (6 minutes)

*Take out response from lesson 1 What is beauty?  
Have students respond again. (5-7 minutes)*

[What does beauty mean to you recording sheet](#)

## **Appendix 1**

### **Standards covered:**

MEH.2 Understand the relationship between healthy expression of emotions, mental health, and healthy behavior.

MEH.2.1 Identify unique personal characteristics that contribute to positive mental health.

MEH.2.2 Explain how effective problem-solving aids in making healthy choices.

ICR.1 Understand healthy and effective interpersonal communication and relationships.

ICR.1.1 Explain the importance of showing respect for self and respect and empathy for others.

ICR.1.5 Exemplify how to seek assistance for bullying.

## **Resources**

### ***Materials***

[Media Release Form](#) (For Instagram Post) Students will need parental permission to have their picture taken and have images posted on Instagram.

Folders (class set) to keep materials organized for students.

### ***Anchor Text: I Am Enough (3.5 minutes)***

This text is about loving who you are, showing respect and being kind.

### ***What does beauty mean to you recording sheet lessons 1 and 4***

Students will define what beauty means to them and after completing the unit students will define again what beauty means to them.

### **Venn Diagram for Lesson 1**

***This will be used to record the class definition of beauty.***

### **Too Much Reality TV (Poem) Lesson 2**

### **Response Sheet to poem Lesson 2**

Construction paper, glue, poster board and/or large construction paper and/or Chromebook to make a collage online **Lesson 4**

## Media Permission Form

### Child's Name:

Children love to see photos of themselves and friends. We will sometimes use and post photos to record as a part of our projects and activities. We will also use photos for a culminating activity at the end of the unit.

\_\_\_\_\_ **No, I do not give permission for my child to be photographed.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Yes, I give permission for my child to be photographed.**

We will be using Instagram to share photos to highlight our Go Girl Curriculum.

\_\_\_\_\_ **No, I do not give permission for photos of my child to be posted on Instagram.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Yes, I give permission for photos of my child to be posted on Instagram.**

**Parent Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**GO GIRL!!! (Gifts in Real Life)**

**Name:**

***Describe what beauty means to you in 3-5 sentences.***

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**GO GIRL!!! (Gifts in Real Life)**

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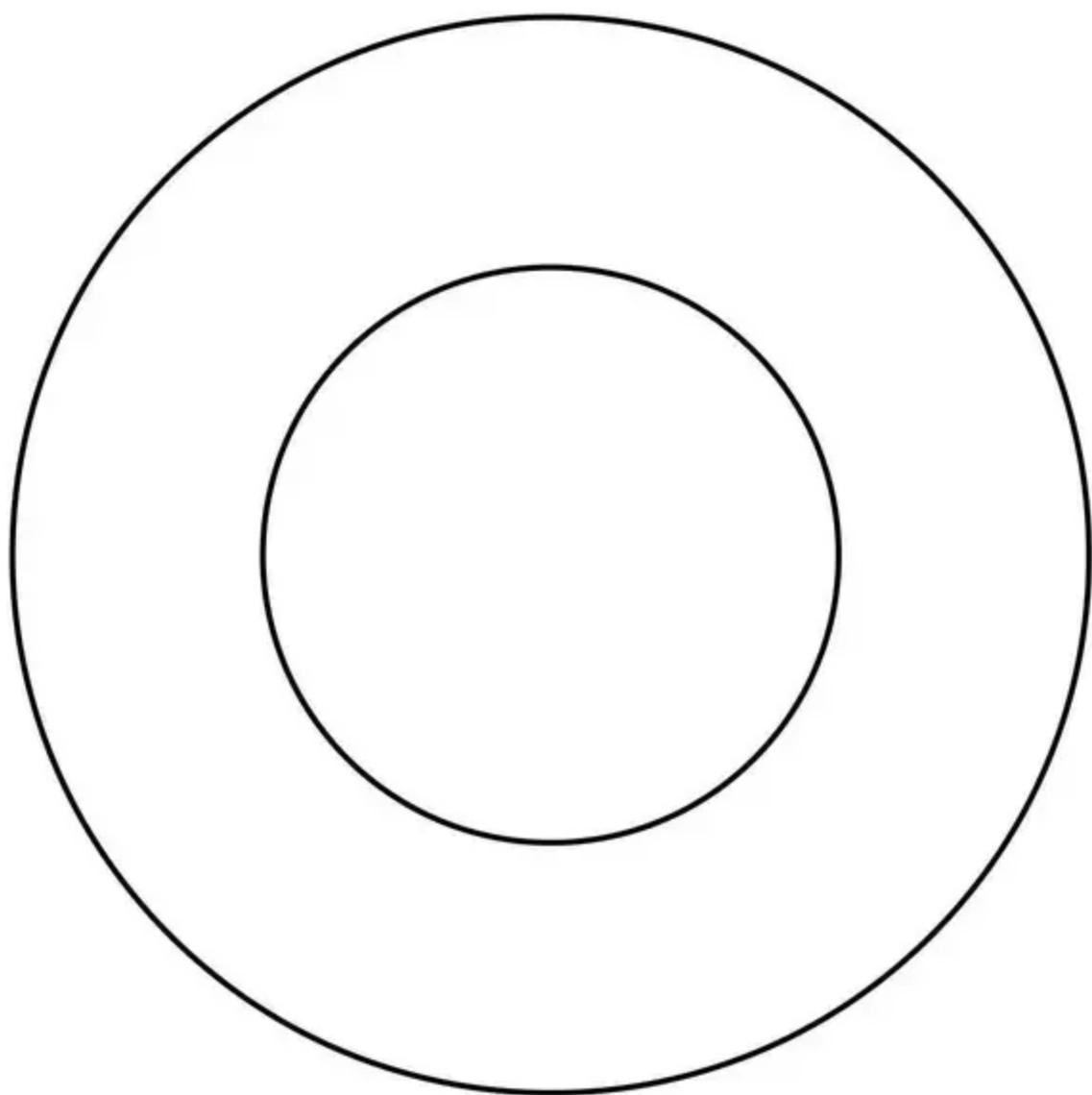
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**GO GIRL!!!**

**Name:**

***What is the mood of the poem?***

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***Who is the speaker of the poem?***

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***What is the message of the poem?***

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