WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT MAULIK PANCHOLY



Maulik Pancholy is an award-winning actor, author, and activist best known for his roles in *30 Rock*, *Phineas & Ferb*, *Weeds*, *Sanjay and Craig*, and *Schmigadoon*!. He is the author of *The Best at It*, which won a 2020 Stonewall Honor Award in Children's and Young Adult Literature and was named a Kirkus Reviews Best Books of the 21st Century. *Nikhil Out Loud*, his second book, won the 2023 Lambda Literary Award for Middle Grade Literature. He also created, co-wrote, and stars in the award-winning Audible series *Murder at the Patel Hotel*. In his work as an activist, Pancholy served on President Obama's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders as well as co-founded the anti-bullying nonprofit organization Act to Change.

ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETIES

BOOK CLUB KIT

QUESTIONS: *NIKHIL OUT LOUD* (2022)

- Why is it important for Nikhil to be Raj Reddy?
- How does Nana's perspective about Nikhil change from the beginning of the book to the end? Why is this important to Nikhil?
- Nikhil's voice changes throughout the book. What is the significance of this change?
- Why do you think Nikhil has the confidence to tell the whole school he is gay while Mateo is nervous to come out to his parents?
- How and why do Nikhil's friendships change throughout the book? What does Nikhil learn from both the good moments and rough patches with his friends?
- Why do you think Constance Shaffer is so hateful toward Nikhil while other characters are so supportive? How do Nikhil and his friends overcome her negative reaction?
- What kind of message is delivered from the musical? Why was it important for Nikhil to stay in the musical?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

- Everyone knows Nikhil as Raj Reddy. What other characters can you recall that put on a persona or different personality for certain people? How are their reasons for doing so similar or different from Nikhil's?
- Ms. Reed tells her musical cast that theater challenges people to think in different ways. In your experience, how has engaging with theater—either as a viewer or performer—made you see things from a different perspective? How is the medium different from literature in that regard?
- Nikhil and his mom can't decide whether they want to move back to LA or not. What considerations do queer individuals have to make based on geographical location? What do you think of the characters' ultimate decision?
- Why is it important for readers to experience stories like Nikhil's? What other texts have given you similar insights into characters with lives vastly different from your own?

LITERATURE AS PRAXIS

- Have any instances occurred in your school or community where you or someone you know experienced a lack of inclusiveness? What could have been done differently?
- Is there a safe and welcoming environment for people of different identities in your community? If not, how could you foster one?
- How can we encourage people who hold negative attitudes toward a certain group of people to view their opinions from a different perspective? Are there events you could host that would help bridge these gaps in some way?
- How can we use artforms like theater and literature to promote inclusive ideas?
- In what ways can we encourage people to read, watch, or listen to stories about characters with diverse backgrounds that may differ from their own?

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- Lambda Literary
- Act to Change
- LGBT National Youth Talkline
- Teen - Gender Identity Support & Resources
- Cultural Identity and Belonging in Teens
- Unpacking Identity for Teens

ADDITIONAL READINGS

- Kacen Callender, *Felix Ever After* (2020)
- Tanuja Desai Hidier, *Born Confused* (2002)
- Leah Johnson, *You Should See Me in a Crown* (2020)
- Casey McQuiston, *Red, White & Royal Blue* (2019)
- Maulik Pancholy, *The Best at It* (2019)
- Mitali Perkins, *You Bring the Distance Near* (2017)