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A Group of One

Rachna Gilmore



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A girl of mixed heritage discovers that both cultures are important parts of who she is.

Mr. Toller grins. "I guess we plain old regular Canadians need to know the history of other places to get a real and balanced view." Plain old regular. As in white. It jolts through me like lightning. I almost bought his idea of regular--that's why I was afraid to read my grandmother's story. My heart pounds, but I have to say it. "Mr. Toller, I AM a regular Canadian."

Hey, Tara, what's your mother tongue?

It's questions like these that make fourteen-year-old Tara Mehta boil, especially when they're asked by teachers who ought to know better. Yes, her parents were raised in India, but Tara has lived in Ottawa her whole life -- she's as Canadian as everybody else. There are much more important things than where her family came from. Jeff, for instance. He's the new guy with the blue eyes and a brain that actually works.

But then she meets her grandmother for the first time. Naniji fought with Gandhi in the Indian Indepence movement, and she's horrified to learn that her grandchildren know almost nothing about their heritage. Tara resents her grandmother's attitude until she learns how Naniji came to join the fight for indepence. Shocked and angered by the history that she's never been taught in school, Tara decides to tell Naniji's story to her class. In the wake of the violently mixed reactions that follow, Tara comes to realize that most people need to expand their definition of what it means to be a "regular" Canadian -- including herself.

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