

Why can't Rachel say anything?

The narrator, Rachel, in the short story "Eleven" by Sandra Cisneros is not able to say anything when her teacher, Mrs. Price tries to give her a red sweater. There are many reasons for this inability to speak up for herself. The most obvious reason is that the teacher seems to be rigid and does not create a space where students feel comfortable speaking up for themselves. The first scene that reveals this sort of hostile environment is when Mrs. Price responds to Rachel's meek answer, "not mine" with, "Of Course it's yours." Why did Mrs. Price feel the need to force the sweater on the little girl who clearly didn't want to claim it? I would hope that a girl who seemed afraid to speak up in class would be allowed to keep her dignity in front of the class. Additionally, when Mrs. Price notices Rachel pushing the sweater aside, she forces her to put it on, It seems extreme to mandate that a student wear a sweater that she clearly does not want to wear. I think Cisneros shows how controlling the teacher is when she has the teacher say, "Now" as Rachel balks at putting on the stinky old sweater. Furthermore, when Phyllis Lopez claims the sweater, Mrs. Price ignores the fact that she was wrong and pretends everything is ok. I think Rachel deserved an apology at the very least. A person who is unwilling to admit when s/he is wrong, is uncomfortable to be around and Mrs. Price's controlling attitude must have made it so poor Rachel didn't feel like she could contradict her teacher who clearly doesn't like to be wrong.