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COMMON CORE ALIGNED CIRRUCULUM GUIDE

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For Picture Book Biographies

Picture book biographies provide an excellent way to introduce people, both past and present, to readers of all ages. These biographies are unique in that authors and illustrators must determine what to include and what to exclude when presenting the story of an individual's life. In a well-crafted picture book biography, the text reveals aspects of a person's life while the illustrations provide a sense of time and place. In addition, picture book biographies contain:

- Fascinating accounts of people who have made a difference in our world
- Clear and concise text that appeals to a range of readers
- Eye-catching illustrations that present the subject of the biography in a unique way
- Unique layout and design that captures readers' attention

This teachers' guide offers strategies for involving students before, during, and after the reading of the picture book biographies *On a Beam of Light: A Story of Albert Einstein*, and *Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker*. These strategies support students in the following ways:

BEFORE READING:

- Use prior knowledge to think about the subject of the biography.
- Make predictions about the life of that individual.
- Preview the text by skimming and scanning to get a sense of the overall meaning.

BEFORE READING, QUESTIONS MIGHT INCLUDE:

- Who is this biography about?
- What do you already know about [name of person]?
- When and where do you think this story takes place after looking at the illustrations?

DURING READING:

- Check interpretation and understanding by questioning, thinking about, and reflecting on ideas and information presented in the text and illustrations.

DURING READING, QUESTIONS MIGHT INCLUDE:

- What have you learned about [name of person] so far?
- Are there any words that you aren't familiar with in the text?
- What questions are bubbling up for you about [name of person] as we read?

AFTER READING:

- Reflect upon the ideas and information in the text about the subject of the biography.
- Relate what they have read to their own lives.
- Determine their comprehension of the text and illustrations.

AFTER READING, QUESTIONS MIGHT INCLUDE:

- What was the most important thing you learned about [name of person]?
- What were the problems [name of person] had to overcome and how did he/ she do so?
- Did you make any personal connections with [name of person]?
- How did this person impact the lives of people during his/her time? How does this person impact our lives today?

The Common Core State Standards are also addressed through the use of many of the reading strategies and extension activities featured in this guide.



On a BEAM of Light

A Story of Albert Einstein by Jennifer Berne pictures by Vladimir Radunsky



EXPLORING ON A BEAM OF LIGHT THROUGH DISCUSSION & WRITING

BEFORE READING

- Show the cover of *On a Beam of Light: A Story of Albert Einstein* and read the title. Ask, “What do you know about Albert Einstein? What do you notice about how he looks? What do you think he is looking at?” Record any questions students raise from this discussion for later reference.
- Conduct an illustration walk through the book. Have students ask questions or make predictions about the narrative and write those on a sticky note, placing the note on the respective page.

Correlates to CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.7: Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting or events.

DURING READING

- As you read *On a Beam of Light*, pause to review the questions that were raised prior to reading the book. For each question, ask if it is answered by the text or illustrations.

Correlates to CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.1: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.1: Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text

- Albert Einstein wondered about many things throughout his life. Have students generate a list of different wonderings as the book is read. Students can also list their own wonderings that are prompted by the text or illustrations.

AFTER READING

- After reading *On a Beam of Light*, have students write down all of the following:
 - One thing they learned about Albert Einstein.
 - One question they generated from the story.
 - One connection they made to the book.
- Using the ideas prompted from the above writing activity, ask students where in the text they found these main ideas.

Correlates to CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.8: Describe how reasons support specific points the author makes in a text.

CHECKING COMPREHENSION - ON A BEAM OF LIGHT: A STORY OF ALBERT EINSTEIN:

- How would you describe Albert Einstein?
- Do you think he was a “disruption to the class” because he asked so many questions? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Albert Einstein was so fascinated by the compass his father gave him? Why would you use a compass?

CHECKING COMPREHENSION (Continued...)

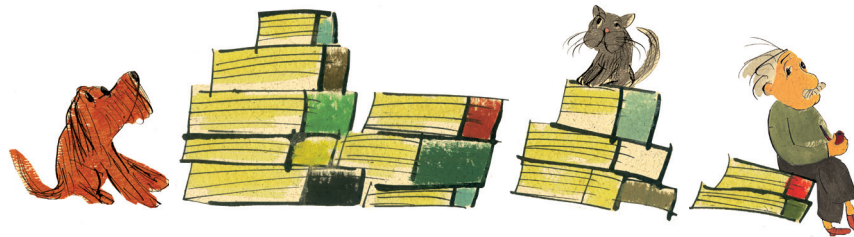
- What is different about the illustrations when Albert is trying to prove that “everything in the world is made of atoms” and when Albert “realized that everything is always moving”? Why do you think he used this kind of illustration?
- Do you think Albert Einstein was a genius? Why or why not?

Correlates to CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.7: Explain how specific images (e.g., a diagram showing how a machine works) contribute to and clarify a text.

EXTENSION STRATEGY

CHARACTER COLLAGE

The final endpages in *On a Beam of Light* offer illustrations of Albert Einstein's favorite things. Have students create a poster by drawing other favorite things of Albert Einstein that are featured in the story or are found on websites such as <http://www.sciencekids.co.nz>. As they share their posters, students can explain why they think those items would be Einstein's favorites and then compare and contrast their poster with others. Students can also create a character collage for other biographies they read, such as those featured in this guide, or design a poster containing their own favorite things.

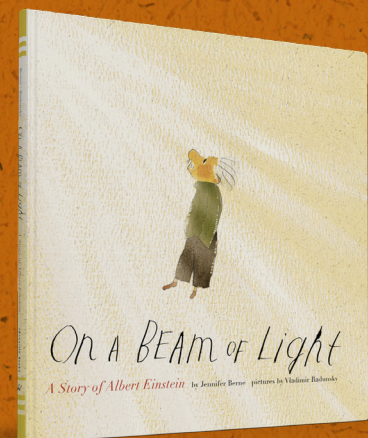


ON A BEAM OF LIGHT: A STORY OF ALBERT EINSTEIN

BY JENNIFER BERNE ILLUSTRATED BY VLADAMIR RADUNSKY

A boy rides a bicycle down a dusty road. But in his mind, he envisions himself traveling at a speed beyond imagining, on a beam of light. This brilliant mind will one day offer up some of the most revolutionary ideas ever conceived. From a boy endlessly fascinated by the wonders around him, Albert Einstein ultimately grows into a man of genius recognized the world over for profoundly illuminating our understanding of the universe. Jennifer Berne and Vladimir Radunsky invite the reader to travel along with Einstein on a journey full of curiosity, laughter, and scientific discovery. Parents and children alike will appreciate this moving story of the powerful difference imagination can make in any life.

- ★ – *Publishers Weekly*, starred review
 - ★ – *School Library Journal*, starred review
 - ★ – *Booklist*, starred review
 - ★ – *Kirkus Reviews*, starred review
 - ★ – *The Horn Book Magazine*, starred review
 - ★ – *Library Media Connection*, starred review
- A Junior Library Guild Selection



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Ages 5-9 • Guided Reading Level: N

This curriculum guide was written by Cyndi Giorgis, a professor of children's and young adult literature at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.



JOSEPHINE

WORDS BY PATRICIA HRUBY POWELL

PICTURES BY CHRISTIAN ROBINSON

EXPLORING JOSEPHINE THROUGH DISCUSSION AND WRITING

BEFORE READING

- Show how several pages of text and illustrations that contain words that are written in large font. Ask, “Why do you think these words are written that way? Do the illustrations provide any clues as to the importance of these words?”

Correlates to CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.7: Explain how specific aspects of a text’s illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story.

- Write down the chapter names “The Beginning 1906-1917,” “Leavin’ with the Show 1917-1921” and so on. Read aloud the first full page of text prior to the beginning of the first chapter. Next, have students brainstorm the meaning of each chapter title based on what they have learned from that initial page.

DURING READING

- At the end of each chapter, have students pause to think about the events that occurred in Josephine’s life, the challenges she encountered, and how she tackled those challenges.
- As students read, have them mark the text using sticky notes to help them pay attention and to remember what they read. Give students different colored sticky notes to code their thinking, such as using yellow to denote, “This reminds me of . . .”, blue to signify an “I wonder. . .” question, or pink to indicate an inference like “I think . . .”.

Correlates to CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.1: Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

AFTER READING

- Author Patricia Hruby Powell uses free verse poetry to tell the story of Josephine Baker. Have students generate their own poetry by creating a found poem. First, students select 10-15 words written in large font located throughout the book. The words should then be arranged in a way that tells about Josephine’s life, describes something about her character, or provides a glimpse into the struggles she encountered.

Correlates to CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.3, RL.4.3: Describe characters in a story and explain how their actions contribute to a sequence of events.

- Illustrator Christian Robinson has captured Josephine’s movement and playfulness with his gorgeous acrylic illustrations. Have students view the book trailer at www.chroniclebooks.com/titles/josephine.html to see and discuss how the illustrations and music contribute to the words of the story.

CHECKING COMPREHENSION - JOSEPHINE: THE DAZZLING LIFE OF JOSEPHINE BAKER:

1. What does the author mean by the subtitle, “The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker”?
2. What were the most important events in Josephine Baker’s life? How did those events influence the choices she made?
3. What type of discrimination did Josephine face? What was different about her life in the United States and her life in Europe, particularly Paris?
4. This biography of Josephine Baker was written in free verse. Why do you think the author chose poetry for conveying the story of this famous dancer?
5. If Josephine Baker had a motto for how to live life, what do you think it might have been? Why?



EXTENSION STRATEGY

PAPER BAG BIOGRAPHY:

Have students select a chapter from *Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker*. Using a paper bag, students draw a picture of Josephine on the front panel and list six character traits associated with the dancer. Next, on one side panel, students write a sentence about one of Josephine’s accomplishments. On the other side panel, a timeline of events from that chapter can be shown. On the bag’s back panel, students write a letter or diary entry summarizing the events from that chapter. Inside the bag should be three objects chosen by the student that represent Josephine. Students can then share their paper bag in the same order of the chapters to provide an overview and retelling of the significant aspects of the biography.



Correlates to CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.3, RI.4.3: Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in a technical procedure in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.2: Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.

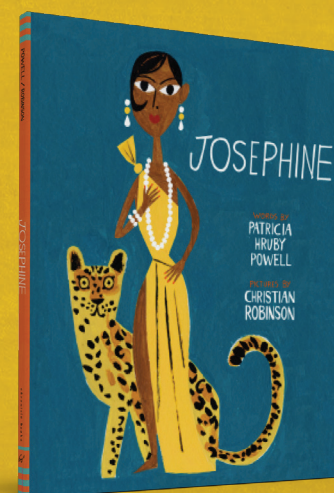
JOSEPHINE: THE DAZZLING LIFE OF JOSEPHINE BAKER

BY PATRICIA HRUBY POWELL • ILLUSTRATED BY CHRISTIAN ROBINSON

In exuberant verse and stirring pictures, Patricia Hruby Powell and Christian Robinson create an extraordinary portrait of the passionate performer and civil rights advocate Josephine Baker, the woman who worked her way from the slums of St. Louis to the grandest stages in the world. Meticulously researched by both author and artist, Josephine’s powerful story of struggle and triumph is an inspiration and a spectacle, just like the legend herself.

- ★ – *Publishers Weekly*, starred review
 - ★ – *School Library Journal*, starred review
 - ★ – *Kirkus Reviews*, starred review
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