*Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker* and most biographies. Quest Plot

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Personal (is dance) (red) World (is racism) (black) [Illustration description - blue]

[Chapter 1 – The beginning]

“I want to die breathless spent at the end of a dance.” –J.B.

America wasn’t ready for Josephine, the colored superstar. Paris was.

Jo’s family is poorest of the poor [Mama and Jo scrub floors]

Mama loved to dance [vaudeville]

“I danced to keep warm.” –J.B. [jump rope]

[Chapter 2 Leavin’ With the Show]

Race Riots cause fear, cause volcano – poof! [riots]

Segregation [Booker T. Washington Theater vaudeville]

Mishap - comic is born [cupid]

Into the land of the KKK (colored vs whites) [train]

Stows away to dance with Dixie Steppers [stowaway]

Her skin was too light [blue]

Gets funnier Volcano gets hotter [shimmy on aqua]

[Chapter 3 My Face Isn’t Made for Sleeping]

fails NYC audition Sissle says, “too small, too thin, too dark” [NYC Washington bridge]

dresser becomes dancer – “a born comic” [cross-eyed hip jut on purple]

star dancer whites only, restaurants, hotels, trains, front door [white audience lines up]

[Chapter 4 For the First Time in My Life I Felt Beautiful]

dance in Paris segregated American ship [ship]

La Revue Negre Paris is colorblind – on train, restaurants, hotels [colorblind on turquoise]

chorus girl becomes star – volcano explodes [Charleston on yellow]

stars Folies Bergere [Josephine Baker in lights]

outrageous, scandalous [with Chiquita]

called savage—sings Negro spiritual & wins[“Pretty Little Baby” on blue]

[Chapter 5 France Made Me What I Am]

Ziegfield Follies back door “Negro wench” [^ Broadway]

Marries, divorces, dances WW2 erupts

Josephine spies for French [hiding documents in her drawers]

wins Legion of Honor [Légion d’Honneur on green]

[Chapter 6 Joséphine]

Adopts 12 kids to prove humanity – prejudice is learned [Rainbow Tribe]

debt, eviction [eviction]

Carnegie Hall success [Carnegie Hall on brown]

Bobino Theater success [Bobino Theater on black]

Dies breathless spent at the end of a dance

Even shorter plot points (by chapter)

1. Josephine loved to dance – she was poor
2. a born comic – living amidst race riots, segregation caused a volcano in Josephine
3. fails audition, dancer gets sick, Jo steps in, rave reviews amidst “whites only”
4. Josephine dances in Paris, explosively and with exhiliration – Paris is colorblind
5. fails in USA dancing with Ziegfield Follies – spies for France wins Legion of Honor, she works for civil rights in the USA
6. adopts 12 kids – proves prejudice is unnatural – dies breathless spent at end of dance

You’ve done at least one “Do a Verb” session with your students

Read: *Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker* to your class

Prompt questions to pull out the quest plot (to ask throughout their “reenactment”:

What does Josephine want? (to dance)

What stands in her way? (racism, segregation)

What is Josephine’s problem at the onset? (she’s poor)

For class re-telling of Josephine start at the green page: Prompt a beginning.

“Tumpy and family moved through the slums of Saint Louie, like a band of vagabonds, from shack to shack?”

\*Ask, how would they move? (fast or slow?) fast: skip, dash, dart?; slow: shuffle, trudge?

(happy or sad?)

Reread jump rope page quote: “I didn’t have any stockings…I danced to keep warm.”

Have a student move like Josephine might move. Have students put in their own words how the classroom “Josephine” moves.

Now read the rest of that page (1) see if they retained what they heard

(2) or have they improved on what they heard or arrived at new ideas?

What world/exterior thing happens in St. Louis that influences Josephine’s life? (riots)

One student only depicts what that might look like.

Other students come up with text for what they see the enactor doing.

What is the metaphor the author uses to show how Josephine responded to the riots and racism?

One student enacts that. (volcano)

The others say or write what they see.

What kind of theater took place in St. Louis and the US? (vaudeville)

What kind of acts? (comedians, dancers, singers, acrobats, magicians, honky-tonk bands)

Have one student try one of these; have the others describe what they see without using primary verb. (Instead of *dance*, she flung her arms and legs; instead of sing, wailed; instead of *magic*, he waved his wand; instead of *play music*, blew his horn, sawed the fiddle. Let imaginations fly.)

You’re moving through the story with these exercises and will work out the quest plot as you go.

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