

Paired Teacher's Guide for
Stella By Starlight and *They Called Themselves the K.K.K.*

Grade 7

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Warm Up Activity

Before reading each book, students will participate in small group pre-reading discussions.

Stella By Starlight

Students will work in groups of four to complete a think, pair, share style activity, utilizing the following questions:

- What kinds of communities are you a part of? School, friends, parents, religion, sports, etc.
- Do you feel safe in these environments? Why or why not?
- Have you ever felt discriminated against or excluded because of your community?
- How does that make you feel?
- In *Stella by Starlight*, Stella experiences discrimination because of her skin color. Think about these community experiences that you have had as you read this book.

They Called Themselves the K.K.K.

Students will create KWL charts in a think, pair, share format, answering the following questions:

- After reading *Stella By Starlight*, how do you feel about the K.K.K.?
- What do you know about the K.K.K.?
- What have you learned before about the Civil War and reconstruction?
- What are you interested in learning about this historical time?

Bulletin Board

The instructor will create a Word Wall bulletin board that highlights key terms that students will encounter and learn about during their readings. The instructor will list these on the board in big letters, and as the students understand and discover facts about these words, they will add their own comments underneath each one. Later, students will utilize these terms for a presentation project.

Some key terms include: Great Depression, Reconstruction, discrimination, segregation, community, clan, suffrage, 15th Amendment, 24th Amendment, terrorism

Reviews

Stella By Starlight

Ages 10 and up. *Stella by Starlight* tells the story of eleven-year-old Stella as she navigates depression era racial discrimination in her rural North Carolina community. As the novel begins, Stella and her younger brother Jojo stumble upon a Ku Klux Klan ceremony in the middle of the night. After telling their parents, the community quickly gathers to ensure that everyone is both aware of the situation and safe. The novel develops as Stella begins to understand the racial inequalities between Black and White people in her small town. Draper does an excellent job recounting the experiences of Stella and her community, emphasizing the importance of uniting as a community to support and help one another. The novel delves into intense and difficult topics in a very realistic and appropriate manner. While the material can be affronting to some, it is important to recognize the past and learn from it. Draper effectively communicates the experiences of Black southerners in this highly recommended novel for middle grade readers.

The Called Themselves the K.K.K.

Ages 12 and up. Using first person accounts and primary images, Susan Campbell Bartoletti effectively tells the history and development of the Ku Klux Klan. The non-fiction book recounts the origins of the K.K.K. and the actions that they took to ensure white supremacy beginning during Reconstruction after the Civil War. While some of the language and topics may be deemed mature, Bartoletti's true telling of these events justifies the inclusion. The abundance of primary images, letters, and documents provide great background and context for this part of US History. The writing level is appropriate for middle school students and for the most part reads in an intriguing and captivating manner. Bartoletti does an excellent job relating the cruel and terrorizing actions that these individuals took for over a century in this recommended book.

Discussion Questions

Stella By Starlight

1. Stella struggles with her writing. How does Stella's writing change throughout the book?
Why do you think she decides to continue practicing instead of giving up?
2. Why is it so important for Stella's father to register to vote? What do you think about him?
3. What racist actions do you see in the book? How do these make you feel?
4. What kinds of communities exist in *Stella by Starlight*? What strengths do you see in them? Can you relate to these communities in your own life?
5. Discuss the differences between the Black characters' experiences and the White characters'. How are their opportunities, attitudes, and actions different? How do you think Stella feels about these differences?

They Called Themselves the K.K.K.

1. How did the Ku Klux Klan originally develop? What caused their existence?
2. Why do you think the Klansman chose to wear costumes? What effect did these costumes have?
3. Bartoletti subtitles her book "The Birth of an American Terrorist Group." What is terrorism, and how does the KKK fit the mold?
4. What role did the KKK play in segregation? Be sure to discuss what segregation is and how it was implemented.
5. How did the US government react to the KKK? What role did the government play in their existence?

Connection Questions

1. Has the KKK changed or evolved by the time Stella encounters them in 1932?
2. What role does the history of the KKK play in Stella's father's struggle to register and ultimately vote? What role do they continue to play towards her father?
3. What do you think about the violent acts utilized by the KKK both in their history and in Stella's community? Why do you think they chose to act so violently?
4. What role did religion play in the Black community? Think about what freedmen sought out after the war, and how Stella's family and community relied on religion.
5. After reading the chapter "A Whole Race Trying to Go to School," how do you feel about the importance of education? Do you think Stella would have gone to school in the early days of public education in America? What struggles would she have faced then, and what struggles does she face in the book in 1932?
6. In what ways do you see racism present in today's world? How has the KKK contributed to this? How has racism evolved since Stella's time? Do you think we are moving in a more positive and inclusive direction in our society? What more can be done?

Teaching Ideas

SOL:

USII.4 The student will apply social science skills to understand how life changed after the Civil War by

c) describing racial segregation, the rise of “Jim Crow,” and other constraints faced by African Americans and other groups in the post-Reconstruction South;

1. Students will learn about the 15th amendment by holding mock elections. Select two images to serve as the class mascot, and tell the class that they will vote for the winner. Randomly have students select a voting option from a hat, either they are able to vote, or they are not. As the voters make their selection, begin a discussion about the equity in voting. Have students talk about their feelings in this situation and how it could connect to the characters in *Stella* and the oppression of the KKK. This will lead to an understanding of both the 15th amendment, which is relevant in the books they are reading, as well as the 19th, 24th, and 26th amendments.
2. Students will hold a class discussion to learn about segregation through the two books. After explaining what segregation is loosely, in small groups, the instructor will ask students to identify 5 places where segregation is present in each of the two books. Next, students will discuss the equity of segregation, e.g. did *Stella* and the white children have the same opportunities? Students will then consider segregation currently and its progression over the last 150 years.

SOL:

English 7.2 The student will participate in and contribute to conversations, group discussions, and oral presentations.

a) Communicate ideas and information orally in an organized and succinct manner.

b) Ask probing questions to seek elaboration and clarification of ideas.

c) Make statements to communicate agreement or tactful disagreement with others' ideas.

d) Use language and style appropriate to audience, topic, and purpose.

e) Use a variety of strategies to listen actively.

1. Students will hold literature circles to discuss both books. Students will break into small groups of about four, and the instructor will provide five questions to start the discussion; students will develop two more each. At the end of the discussion, students will compile brief notes about what they learned to share with the rest of the class for a full group discussion.
2. Students will develop class presentations about one of the key words from the Word Wall Bulletin Board. Assign each student a word, and ask them to explain thoroughly the meaning of the word, and how it applies to each book. This may require additional research. Students will create a visual aid of their choosing to help the rest of the class better understand the key word. Encourage students to ask each other questions after presentations to stimulate further discussion or investigation.

SOL:

Music History and Cultural Context

7.7 The student will explore historical and cultural aspects of music by

1. identifying and describing the cultures, musical styles, composers, and historical periods associated with the music literature being studied;
2. comparing and contrasting musical periods and styles;
3. comparing and contrasting the functions of music in a variety of cultures;
4. describing how musicians, consumers of music, and music advocates impact the community;
6. examining the relationship of music to the other fine arts and other fields of knowledge;
8. consistently demonstrating concert etiquette as an active listener or participant.

1. The instructor will use *Stella By Starlight* to discuss the history of songs in the African American community in the early twentieth century. The characters in *Stella* frequently sing songs to cope with all kinds of situations. In a music class, the instructor could lead the group in singing these songs and discuss the significance of them. Singing the songs would bring the book more alive, and a discussion could give them greater meaning.

Some questions do drive the discussion are:

1. What role does music play in *Stella By Starlight*?
2. How were the songs appropriate for Stella and her community?
3. What similar songs exist today?
4. What do you like or dislike about the songs?

2. Students will work to create their own songs to emulate the powerful music of the African American community during the late 19th to early 20th century. The goal is to create pieces that work to represent the student's own community and personality. This can be modernized using a genre from today. Students should use their understanding of the history of this music that is seen in *Stella By Starlight* and *They Called Themselves the KKK* in generating their own pieces.

Professional Reviews

Stella By Starlight:

Davis, T. (2015, January 1). *Stella by starlight*. Retrieved July 31, 2020, from <https://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/?reviewDetail=stella-by-starlight>

Schneider, D. (2015, January 20). *Review of Stella by starlight*. Retrieved July 31, 2020, from <https://www.hbook.com/?detailStory=review-of-stella-by-starlight>

They Called Themselves the K.K.K.:

Engberg, G. (2010, August). *Story behind the story: Susan Campbell Bartoletti's they called themselves the K.K.K.* Retrieved July 31, 2020, from <https://www.booklistonline.com/ProductInfo.aspx?pid=4326764>

Kirkus. (2010, May 31). *They called themselves the K.K.K.* Retrieved July 31, 2020, from <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/susan-campbell-bartoletti/they-called-them-selves-the-kkk/>

Additional Resources:

Facing History and Ourselves: Violence and Backlash

<https://www.facinghistory.org/reconstruction-era/lessons/violence-and-backlash>

This site gives an extensive lesson plan on introducing students to the history of the KKK and delving into this topic further. It also goes into the history of Reconstruction, facing the facts of history, rather than ignoring the existence of terrible events and people. There are many videos, readings, and questions that can be utilized in entirety or in smaller pieces to supplement the two books.

The fight for the Right to Vote in the United States:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9VdyPbbzII>

This video does a great job explaining the history of voting in the United States. As the KKK worked actively to deter Black people from voting, understanding the history of voting can help students understand the massive struggle that Stella's father and friends endured in registering to vote and voting in the book. This is a very student-friendly, clear explanation.

15th Amendment Summary: Lesson for Kids

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/15th-amendment-summary-lesson-for-kids.html#:~:text=The%2015th%20Amendment%2C%20which%20states,black%20men%20could%20now%20vote.>

This site has a lesson plan about the 15th amendment and African American voting rights.

While it is not entirely available without creating an account, there are free resources, including a good introductory video, as well as questions and lesson ideas, like graphic organizers and essay topics to help students consider the causes and effects of what occurred after the Civil War.

Teaching Tolerance: The Resurgence of Hate

<https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/the-resurgence-of-hate>

This site provides resources on teaching tolerance and understanding the history of the KKK and hate groups. There are links to videos and questions for discussion. It does a great job making connections between history and modern day, allowing students to recognize the role that history has played on their current lives.

The Daily': A Conversation With a Former White Nationalist

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/22/podcasts/the-daily/former-white-nationalist-derek-black.html>

This is a podcast interview with Derek Black who was raised in a powerful white supremacist family and in college realizes that he no longer shares the same beliefs. While this may be a bit long for 7th graders, the interview could provide good perspective for the instructor, and pieces of this interview could be used. Students may begin to understand the importance of legitimate research and perspective through hearing pieces of this interview, as well as the continued relevance of white supremacy and the KKK.

References:

15th amendment summary: Lesson for kids. (n.d.). Retrieved August 01, 2020, from

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/15th-amendment-summary-lesson-for-kids.html>.

Barbaro, M. (Interviewer). (2017, August 22). 'The Daily': A conversation with a former white nationalist. [Audio Podcast]. Retrieved from

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/22/podcasts/the-daily/former-white-nationalist-derek-black.html>.

Bartoletti, S. C. (2010). *They called themselves the K.K.K.: The birth of an American terrorist group*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Draper, S. M. (2016). *Stella by starlight*. Turtleback Books.

Griffin, N.B. (2015, November 5). *The fight for the right to vote in the United States*. [Video file].

Retrieved August 01, 2020, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9VdyPbbzII>.

The resurgence of hate. (n.d.). Retrieved August 01, 2020, from

<https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/the-resurgence-of-hate>.

Violence and Backlash. (n.d.). Retrieved August 01, 2020, from

<https://www.facinghistory.org/reconstruction-era/lessons/violence-and-backlash>.