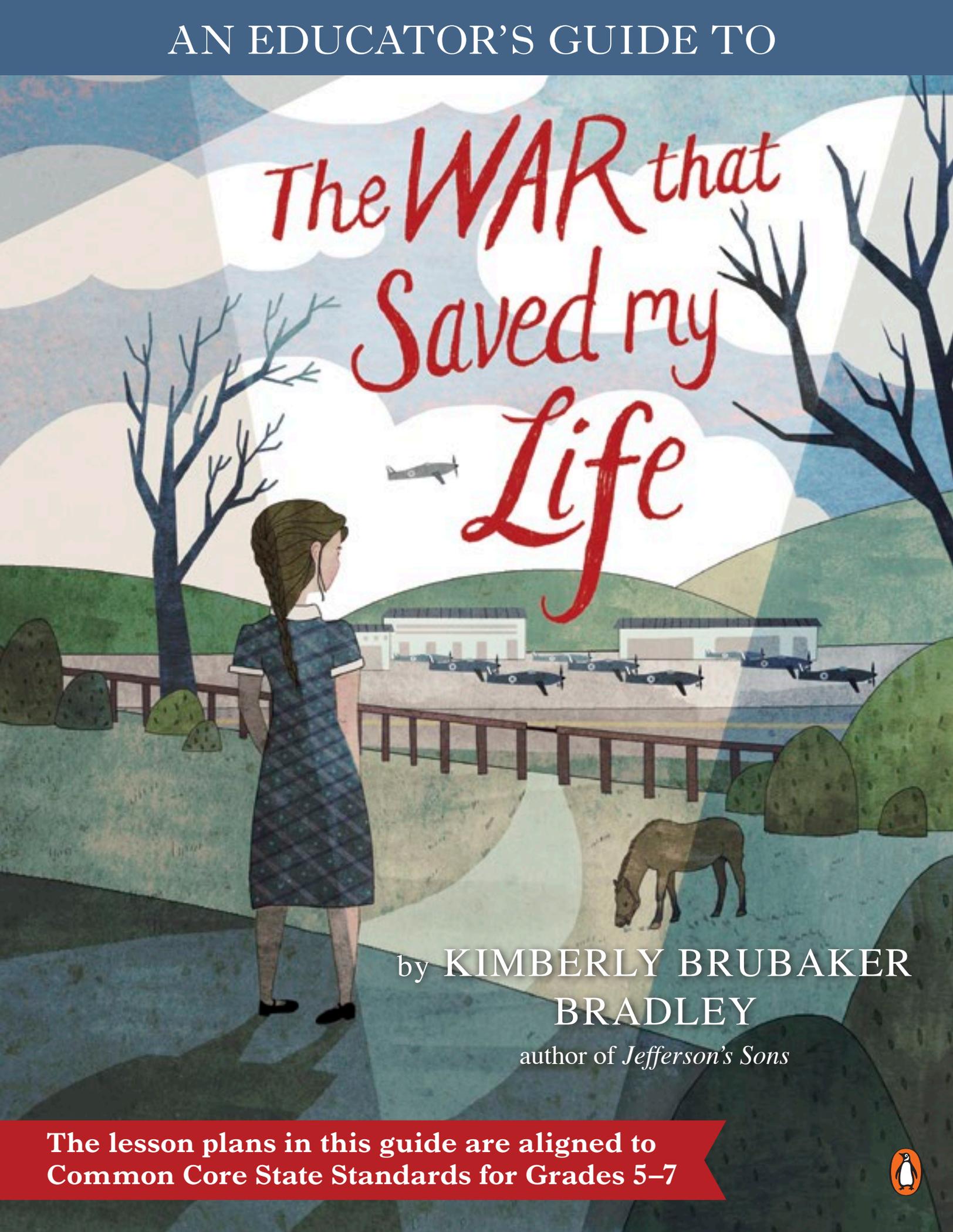


AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO

The WAR that Saved my Life

An illustration of a woman with a braid, wearing a blue patterned dress, standing on a path and looking towards an airfield. In the airfield, several military aircraft are parked on the tarmac, and a single airplane is flying in the sky. In the foreground, a brown horse is grazing. The background features rolling green hills and bare trees under a sky with stylized white clouds.

by KIMBERLY BRUBAKER
BRADLEY

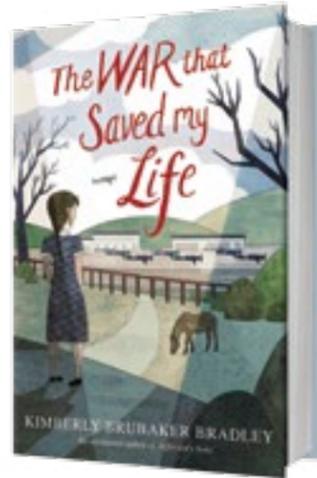
author of *Jefferson's Sons*

The lesson plans in this guide are aligned to
Common Core State Standards for Grades 5–7



Dear Educators,

The War That Saved My Life is historical fiction set in England during World War II in the time of the Dunkirk evacuations—or what Winston Churchill called England’s “finest hour,” when 330,000 British soldiers were saved—and during the aerial bombings of the Battle of Britain. As the soldiers and civilians of England bravely fight for freedom in this novel, the main character, Ada, fights her own battle for freedom. Students will grapple with the themes of **self-discovery**, **acceptance**, and **family**. This layered novel also allows students to explore the idea of **identity** and how our concept of self is shaped by the way others treat us and our experiences in the world. The characters in this novel will encourage students to consider the concepts of depression, shame, loneliness, and the lingering effects of emotional and physical abuse. Yet, overcoming hardship through the power of acceptance and understanding is the overarching message.



These Core Curriculum Lesson Plans present discussion questions, activities, and writing prompts that align with the **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and History and Social Studies for grades 5–7**. This guide is divided into **three parts**. The lessons can be used as part of a comprehensive English and/or History unit that lasts for three to four weeks, or you might choose to use the lessons as enrichment activities to deepen student thinking as you conduct a whole class or small group novel study. This novel offers many options for further exploration and research about the causes and effects of World War II and England’s role in the war.

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Content of these Core Curriculum Lesson Plans was created by Jennifer M. Bogard, who taught elementary school for more than ten years. She is a literacy coach in southern Maine and a PhD candidate at Lesley University. Her research focuses on transitional readers, specifically the sociology of families, reading pedagogy, and family and school engagement. Jennifer is also an adjunct professor in the Language and Literacy Division of the Graduate School of Education at Lesley University. Her work is published in *The Reading Teacher*, and she has presented for the Center for Reading Recovery and Literacy Collaborative.

PRAISE FOR KIMBERLY BRUBAKER BRADLEY’S THE WAR THAT SAVED MY LIFE

★ **“Ada’s voice is brisk and honest; her dawning realizations are made all the more poignant for their simplicity. . . . Things come to an explosive head, metaphorically and literally. Ignorance and abuse are brought to light, as are the healing powers of care, respect and love. Set against a backdrop of war and sacrifice, Ada’s personal fight for freedom and ultimate triumph are cause for celebration.”** —*Kirkus*, starred review

★ **“Involving, poignant, nuanced . . . This is a feel-good story, but an earned one . . . distinct and powerful in its own right.”** —*The Horn Book*, starred review

★ **“Proving that her courage and compassion carry far more power than her disability, Ada earns self-respect, emerges a hero, and learns the meaning of home.”** —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

“There is much to like here—Ada’s engaging voice, the vivid setting, the humor, the heartbreak, but most of all the tenacious will to survive.” —*School Library Journal*

“The home-front realities of WWII, as well as Ada’s realistic anger and fear, come to life in Bradley’s affecting and austere story, and readers will cheer for steadfast Ada as she triumphs over despair.” —*Booklist*



1. Invite students to complete the following anticipatory guide in order to generate curiosity about the story and to begin thinking about some of the big ideas.

Directions: Read the statement and place a checkmark to show whether you agree, disagree, or are not sure.

Statement	I agree.	I disagree.	I’m not sure.
Everyone deserves freedom and the right to make decisions about their lives.			
A person who tells lies is a liar, no matter what.			
There are different kinds of truths, not just one “real” truth.			
Sometimes, we start to believe what other people think of us.			

2. Assemble a display of time-period items to generate anticipation, and have students add to it as the story unfolds. Consider primary source photographs (or objects) related to the location, to the time period, to the war, and to the characters.

Have students choose a picture or object and write about it in their journals. Ask them to infer the purpose of the object or the meaning of the picture.

As students read the text, and the artifacts are mentioned, have them research the meaning and use technology to record a description of the artifact. They might use Audacity to create a podcast.



3. In order for students to gain a sense of the setting (the location of London and Kent, England, during World War II), have them view online maps and interactive timelines.

Ask students to consider how one key event led to the next.



4. Have students consider how Americans and the British speak the same language yet the terms we use differ at times.

Invite students to explore some of these differences at this site: <http://www.timeforkids.com/destination/england/native-lingo>

Have students conduct online research to create a two-column table that contrasts common American words or phrases with the British words or phrases.

**Correlates to Common Core Standards: SL.5-7.1, RI.5-7.4, W.5-7.4, W.5-7.7, RI.5-7.7, L.5-7.6





1. The following is a list of vocabulary words and concepts that appear in this section of text:

flat (p. 4), *pub* (p. 4), *River Thames* (p. 5), *nicked* (p. 13), *walloped* (p. 11), *callused* (p. 18), *loos* (p. 24), *lane* (p. 26, 45, etc), *curdle* (p. 28), *quay* (p. 28), *cajoled* (p. 32), *brewer's cart* (p. 34), *wickery* (p. 36), *impudent* (p. 37), *posh* (p. 40), *wavered* (p. 44), *Impetigo* (p. 48), *ricketts* (p. 48), *chilblains* (p. 59), *evacuated* (p. 62), *Royal Air force* (p. 69), *shillings* (p. 75), *plait* (p. 87), *verge* (p. 96), *occupied* (p. 103)

Invite students to predict which words are specific to the British, or to the country of England, and explain their thinking.

Organize students into small groups and have each group choose three or four words. Using online dictionaries and online encyclopedias, including one that features British terms, have students research the meaning of the words. After discussing the meaning within their group, have groups create a nonlinguistic representation of the word meanings: a sketch, a 3D object, or a short skit and teach the meaning of the terms to the class.

2. Ada pictured what it would be like if her mother discovered that she could walk. She imagined her mother being proud of her instead of ashamed of her. She said, "Maybe Mam would smile at me. Maybe she'd say, 'Aren't you clever, then?'" (p. 10).

Have students discuss in small groups: What does Ada want? Ask students to contrast Ada's imagined scenario with how her mother actually treats her by locating evidence in the text.

3. When Ada feels unsafe, she escapes mentally and transports herself to another place in her mind so that she can "just be gone" (p. 13).

Display the big ideas: safety, trust, acceptance, understanding, family, freedom, and self-worth. Have students sketch the images that come to mind when they hear these words. Ask students to be on the lookout for additional instances when Ada escapes in her mind (p. 41, 50, 73, 185, 219, 229).

As the story progresses, ask: How does the author, Kimberly Brubaker Bradley, use the idea of mentally escaping to show us that Ada is healing and changing? When does Ada no longer have to escape in her mind?

4. As Ada experienced the "bright, vibrant, astonishing green" grass for the first time on page 25, she said, "there was no end to the things I didn't know."

Have students begin a list of "firsts" in their notebooks or the things that Ada learns about for the first time. Invite students to add to this list as they read. "Firsts" include pears, city blocks, the concept of a country, a girl on a pony, foal, ocean, water from a tap, crutches, looking into a mirror, tub, plumbing, pajamas, glasses, the words *taxi* and *cab*, fall leaves, birthdays, the use of a toilet (loo), tablecloths, thimble, bank, sheets, soup, etc.

Ask students to consider: How was learning new things frustrating for Ada? How did learning new things give her freedom?

5. On page 30, Ada looks into the mirror and sees her physical appearance. Have students reread page 30 and ask: What details does the author give us to show that Ada and Jamie are not being taken care of?

Discuss: Why are Ada and Jamie "the only ones not chosen" (p. 32)? How does this confirm the messages of Mam? What if they had been cared for? Have students continue to find and record evidence that Ada is not being taken care of (for ex. no crutches, p. 48 never seen a doctor before, lack of clothes p. 40, hungry p. 46, malnourished p. 48, untreated clubfoot p. 49).

Ada said, "I had never needed taking care of, but I decided not to say so" (p. 38). Ask students to discuss: Do you agree that she never needed to be taken care of? Why doesn't she say that?

6. Invite students to choose one of the following quotations and write about it in their journal:

As Susan shows compassion, respect, and care for Ada, Ada begins to question who she is and how she sees herself in the world—her identity. How is this frightening for Ada? What did Ada mean when she said, "At home I knew who I was" (p. 58)?

When talking about Miss Smith, Ada said, "She doesn't like us. She didn't want us, remember?" (p. 80). Did Miss Smith like the kids? Did she want the kids? Why or why not?

Ada said, "everybody thinks I'm nasty, back home. They think I'm some kind of monster" (p. 81). In what ways does Ada internalize these messages? In what ways does she overcome them?

7. On page 82, Ada cried out, "Crutches don't change my foot!" and "It's still the same. It still hurts. I'm still the same!"

Invite students to write a monologue from the point of view of Ada in this moment, including specific examples from the text of why she feels the way she does. Have students practice reading their monologues by recording their reading using a digital tool such as Audacity.

Have students listen back and rerecord for practice. Encourage students to perform their monologues for small groups or for the class, adapting their tone for meaning and effect. Audience members can list the key details they hear and evaluate the speaker's point of view.

8. On page 86, Ada asked Miss Smith about the meaning of freedom. Miss Smith replied, "I'd say it's the right to make decisions about yourself...about your life."

Have students research the meaning of the word *freedom*. Ask students to embody the big idea of freedom by positioning their body as a statue. For example, they might look up to the sky with arms stretched out or taking a wide stance.

Have students read across texts and find the theme of freedom in other poems, books, songs, quotations, and videos. Compare and contrast the characters of Ada and Jamie in regard to freedom.

9. One of the wartime posters read, "Freedom is in peril. Defend it with all your might" (p. 86).

Have students locate additional slogans in the texts. Invite them to research other wartime propaganda posters and find images of them online. Ask students to read across the posters closely by completing the following graphic organizer:

What text appears on the poster? What does it mean?	What details do you notice about the picture? (colors, size, use of humor)	Who is the audience?	What is the poster trying to persuade people to do? Do you think it is effective? Why or why not?

Invite students to create an original propaganda poster and use persuasion.

10. Miss Smith told Ada, "You're perfectly capable of learning. You mustn't listen to people who don't know you. Listen to what you know, yourself" (p. 92).

Ask students to locate places in the text in which Miss Smith empowers Ada. Using available software, have students record these positive messages and play them one after the other. In small groups, discuss: How do these messages impact the way Ada sees herself in the world? Ask students to locate instances when Miss Smith empowers Jamie through words and actions.

11. When Ada rides Margaret's horse to help Margaret get home safely, she thought to herself, "This was what it felt like to move fast without pain" (p. 98).

Ask students to consider: What is the significance of horses throughout the story? Gather a collection of books, songs, and poems that feature horses and freedom and locate a collection of informational text about horses (advertisements for horse lessons, nonfiction texts about horses). Invite student to read across the texts, looking for details of why horses symbolize freedom.

12. On page 98, the Women's Volunteer Service is mentioned.

Have students conduct a short research project to examine the role woman played in the war, integrating the information gathered from different sources. Use an online search engine to locate primary source photographs of the Women's Volunteer Service. Ask students to choose a photo, list the details they see, and write a story that matches the scene in the photo.

****Correlates to Common Core Standards: SL.5-7.1, SL.5-7.3, SL.5-7.4, SL.5-7.6, L.5-7.4, L.5-7.6, RL.5-7.1, RL.5-7.2, RL.5-7.3, RI.5-7.4, RI.5-7.9, RI.5-7.10, W.5-7.1, W.5-7.4, W.5-7.5, W.5-7.8**



1. The following is a list of vocabulary words that appear in this section of text:

brood (as a verb) (p. 118), *frail* (p. 196), *shivery* (p. 196), *curmudgeon* (p. 196), *barricaded* (p. 200), *standoffish* (p. 200), *elegant* (p. 200), *mollified* (p. 201)

Organize students into small groups and give each group a word. Using an online dictionary, have students research the meaning of the words. After discussing the meaning within their group, have students create a group tableau to represent the word meaning. As each group poses in their tableau, invite the audience to list words that come to mind as they view it. These brainstormed words can become synonyms to the vocabulary word.

2. Miss Smith told Ada, “If you have to tell lies, or you think you have to, to keep yourself safe—I don’t think that makes you a liar” (p. 112). She also told Ada that, “saying something stupid doesn’t make you stupid” (p. 205).

Ask students to discuss in small groups: How do moments like these help Ada change the way she sees herself? What other moments in the story cause Ada to reshape how she sees herself?

Have each small group create a large drawing of Ada on paper or using a digital tool. Ask students to look back into the text and locate powerful words and messages that others say to Ada (both positive and negative).

Have students type the quotations and display them in speech bubbles around the representation of Ada. As students read on, invite them to add additional powerful quotations.

Discuss: How does the way others treat Ada affect how she sees herself?

Extension: Get two clear jars. Fill one up with copies of the positive quotes that build Ada up and the other with the negative quotes that break her down.

3. When Ada brought Margaret to safety on her horse, Miss Smith didn’t believe her, and when she found out it was true, she said, “I wish I’d believed you” (p. 113).

Ask students to discuss: How did Miss Smith and Ada grow to trust each other?

What are some specific instances of how Susan treated Ada with understanding and compassion? How did Ada respond to this kindness? Why?

4. When Ada, Jamie, and Miss Smith witness a plane crash at the airfield, “Jamie leaned into Miss Smith’s arms. She held him tight, rocking him softly back and forth” (p. 116).

How is this moment significant for Jamie and Miss Smith? How is it significant for Ada?

What are the other turning points in Jamie’s relationship with Miss Smith?

5. When Ada tries to teach Butter to trot, she learns about the term *persistence* (p. 130).

Organize students into small groups. Invite each group to choose a type of character trait (physical, social, emotional). Have them locate details in the text to support their thinking.

As a class, create a word splash using an online tool such as Wordle to display Ada’s traits at a glance.

Have groups choose a supporting character and create a word splash to show their traits.

6. Ada grows and changes through her relationships with others. In order to show the importance of Ada’s relationships throughout the story, organize students into partnerships and ask each group to find one key passage in the text that highlights a meaningful moment between Ada and another character.

Give each partnership the role of Ada and the role of a different character: Mam, Miss Smith, Jamie, Fred Grimes, Maggie, Butter, Stephen, the community of Kent after she located a spy.

After they locate a key passage between Ada and another character, have each partnership turn the passage into a scene by enacting the moment. After they practice, invite partnerships to enact it for the class.

For example, if enacting a scene with Fred Grimes, students might choose this quote and the surrounding moment on page 149:

“I helped grain, hay, and water the horses, bad foot and all, and he didn’t say a word about my limping or expect me not to be able to do things.”

7. Invite students to participate in discussions through blogging. Give each group one of the following questions and the related page number from the text. Ask them to reread the part in the text, summarize the scene, and blog about their thinking using evidence from the text.

In what ways did Susan feel as if she didn’t fit in? See page 168.

Why does Ada identify with Alice from *Alice in Wonderland*? See page 223.

Jamie takes on the role of a caretaker for Bovril, the cat. How does this affect him? See pages 175–176.

Ada said, “I wanted Mam to be like Susan. I didn’t really trust Susan not to be like Mam.” What does she mean? See page 184.

Ada declined the offer to have tea with Stephen and the colonel. Why? See page 191.

8. Have students view primary source photographs of Anderson shelters (as mentioned on page 190). An online image search for the key words *Anderson shelters* and *England* will result in many photographs.

Display the images around the classroom to create the feel of a museum.

Have students walk around the room, view the images closely, and record the details they notice and the words that come to mind as they view each photo.

Invite students to create a caption for the photographs that summarizes what they see.

9. On page 198, we learn about Susan’s holiday traditions. Gather a set of books, articles, and videos about the winter holidays in England.

Have students read and view across the texts, taking notes about the key details.

Ask students to compare and contrast traditions in England during the 1940s and in England today.

Discuss how Ada and Jamie hadn’t experienced the holidays in the way that Miss Smith had and why not.

****Correlates to Common Core Standards: SL.5-7.1, SL.5-7.3, SL.5-7.4, SL.5-7.6, L.5-7.4, L.5-7.6, RL.5-7.1, RL.5-7.2, RL.5-7.3, RI.5-7.4, RI.5-7.9, RI.5-7.10, W.5-7.1, W.5-7.4, W.5-7.5, W.5-7.8**





1. **The following is a list of concepts and vocabulary words that appear in this section of text:**

gaily (p. 218), *Gifts of the Magi* (p. 221), *requisitioned* (p. 234), *chivvying* (p. 242), *queue* (p. 247), *strafed* (p. 249)

Using online dictionaries and online encyclopedias, including one that features British terms, have students research the meaning of the words and choose a nonlinguistic way to present the meaning to the class such as a short skit or sketch.

2. **Students will read about particular events and concepts related to the war in this section.**

Organize students into jigsaw groupings in which each group member researches a different aspect of the time period. Each group should have a member who researches the Battle of Britain; a member who researches German U-boats; a member who researches the *Royal Oak*; a member who researches the use of identity cards/the concept of rationing/and Victory Gardens; a member who researches the Dunkirk evacuations; and a member who researches a map of the area including Kent, England, and the English Channel.

Have students meet in their “expert groups” before sharing with their original grouping. “Expert groups” are made up of the members from other groups that share their topic.

Once they have discussed their topic in their expert groups, have members join their original groups and share what they learned.

3. **Ada stated, “I knew Susan wasn’t real. Or, if she was a tiny bit real, sometimes, at the very best she was only temporary” (p. 202). Later, on page 216 Ada said, “Susan was temporary. My foot was permanent.”**

Have students take a stance and write a persuasive entry in their notebooks to answer the question: Is Susan temporary for Ada? Why or why not?

4. **On page 206 Ada said, “Somehow Christmas was making me feel jumpy inside. All this talk about being together and being happy and celebrating—it felt threatening. Like I shouldn’t be part of it. Like I wasn’t allowed. And Susan wanted me to be happy, which was scarier still.”**

Have students consider: Why is Ada feeling jumpy, threatened, and scared?

5. **When Ada is being cared for by Miss Smith, her physical appearance changes.**

Have students go to page 201 and locate key details to show how Ada’s physical appearance changes.

Invite students to make sketches of Ada before she is cared for, and a sketch of Ada when she is being cared for. Encourage students to locate specific evidence in the text and include it in their sketches. Have students reflect on the significance of being cared for.

6. **When Susan sees Ada in her new green dress, she calls her beautiful. Yet, Ada starts to hear the voice of Mam in her head and “couldn’t bear” to be called beautiful (p. 214).**

Have students reread pages 213 and 214.

Ask students to write a dialogue poem. One voice should be the voice of Mam and the other should be the voice of Susan.

Have students consider: How does the way Mam treat Ada differ from the way Susan treats Ada?

Extension: Students might also choose to write a dialogue poem to compare and contrast how the community in London views Ada (p. 70) versus how the community of Kent views Ada (p. 228).

7. **Ada learns that her clubfoot could have been treated when she was a baby—she could have had a “normal” foot (p. 231). She said, “I could have always lived outside the one room. I could have been like Jamie, running fast” (p. 231).**

Have students consider: What is the significance of this moment? What does Ada realize?

8. **On page 258, Ada said, “there was a Before Dunkirk version of me and an After Dunkirk version.”**

Have students consider: How did Ada change through the experience of the Dunkirk evacuation?

Invite students to listen to audio and view primary source photographs here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/dunkirk/>

Have students explore the oral histories from the Dunkirk evacuation: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/search?q=dunkirk>

9. **On page 261, Susan told Jamie and Ada about her decision to keep them in Kent and to not send them away during the bombings.**

Invite students to write an argument piece to consider the question: Do you agree with Susan’s decision to not send Ada and Jamie to London?

Have students consider both sides of the issue and address counter claims and other points of view.

10. **Conduct an online search for primary source photographs of Victory Gardens and propaganda pictures of Victory Gardens.**

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/howtogrow/9967597/Dig-for-victory-vegetable-growing-during-WWII-in-pics.html?frame=2525421>

Choose one of the photographs.

Have students brainstorm words or phrases that come to mind as they view the photograph. Create a class bank of words.

Have students choose 5–10 words or phrases and create a found poem to capture the purpose and spirit of the gardens. An Internet search will show examples of found poems.

11. **When the police officer doesn’t believe Ada’s story about seeing a spy, she thought about how Susan would handle the situation. Ada stood up tall and said, “My bad foot’s a long way from my brain” (p. 277).**

Have students locate other instances in the text when Miss Smith says these words to Ada. Consider: How do these words empower Ada?

Why is it important that the police officer apologized and said he should have believed Ada on page 281?

12. **When Ada identifies a spy, she is seen as a hero.**

Have students summarize the spy story.

Discuss: What other moments in the story strengthen Ada’s confidence? What moments cause her to question who she is?

13. **Prime Minister Churchill said, “Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few” (p. 286).**

Have students listen to sound bites of key moments in history mentioned in the text, such as the declaration of war between England and Germany.

Students might use the following link to find sound bites from radio shows: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/forkids/>

Invite students to research Winston Churchill’s decisions and role in the victory.

14. **Provide students with the following choices of writing prompts. Have them choose one and write an essay to explore the question, citing evidence from the text to support their thinking.**

As Ada felt cared for and understood by Miss Smith, how did Ada’s thoughts about who she was, her capabilities, and how she belonged in the world begin to change? How did she change physically? Emotionally?

As Ada begins to see herself through the eyes of others who value her and treat her with respect, she at times feels like an imposter and experiences confusing feelings. At what points in the story does she truly believe in herself? When does she feel worthy? How do you know?

How do our experiences, or lack of experiences, shape our identity—or how we see ourselves? How do Ada and Jamie teach us this?

Is Ada’s clubfoot to blame for her suffering? Are individuals to blame for her suffering? Is society to blame for her suffering?

How do horses inspire Ada and give her hope?

How do role models change the way we see ourselves and the way we see the world? Consider the moment when Ada and Susan look alike. Did Ada ever experience herself acting like Mam?

There’s more to be told about Susan’s life and why she didn’t always feel that she belonged. Tell the untold story of Susan’s life as you imagine it might be.

Why was it important for Ada to confront Mam about whether or not she truly wanted Ada and Jamie? How does the truth set her free? (p. 305)

Why do you think Kimberly Brubaker Bradley decided to title the book *The War That Saved My Life*? In what ways did Susan save Ada’s and Jamie’s lives? How did Ada and Jamie save Susan’s life?



1. **Begin an author study of Kimberly Brubaker Bradley and give a book talk on *Jefferson's Sons*. Have students consider:**

How does the theme of freedom appear across her texts?
What other themes does the author explore across her texts?

2. **Invite small groups to read the classics mentioned in this story: *The Swiss Family Robinson, Alice in Wonderland, Alice's Adventures Through the Looking Glass, The Wind in the Willows, Peter Pan, The Secret Garden***

Have students consider: What are the themes presented? How might these stories have inspired Ada and Jamie? How might they reflect the values or issues of the time period in which they were written?
How do the characters handle challenges?
Have groups present their ideas to other groups or to the class.

3. **Invite students to complete a RAFT activity:**

R (Role):

Each student should choose to write as one character (either Ada OR Miss Smith OR Jamie). Students should be writing in this character's voice.

A (Audience):

Students will address Mam.

F (Format):

The format of the writing piece should be a letter, written in first person, addressed to Mam. The letter should start off, "Dear Mam..."

T (Topic):

The topic for this assignment is for the student, as Ada OR Miss Smith OR Jamie, to take the opportunity to express everything that he or she wants to express to Mam. Consider these topic questions:

As Ada OR Jamie:

What experiences have I been through since I left Mam?
What has Miss Smith taught me about myself? About life?
What do I want Mam to know?
Do I forgive Mam or not? Why?
Did Mam teach me anything?

As Miss Smith:

What do I want Mam to know about her daughter, Ada?
What do I want Mam to know about the experiences Ada has had while in my care?
What examples can I tell Mam to show how I care for Ada and how I understand her? What examples can I tell Mam to show how Fred Grimes, Jamie, the soldiers, the community, and Maggie all appreciate Ada?
Invite students to publish using a digital tool such as a blog or share as a Google document.

**Correlates to Common Core Standards: RL.5-7.2, RL.5-7.3, RL.5-7.6, SL.5-7.1, SL.5-7.3, W.5-7.1, W.5-7.3, W.5-7.4, W.5-7.5, W.5-7.6



A Q&A WITH *THE WAR THAT SAVED MY LIFE* AUTHOR

KIMBERLY BRUBAKER BRADLEY

After examining American history in *Jefferson's Sons*, what inspired you to travel "across the pond" and write a book set during World War II in England?

I find England's position in World War II very interesting—never invaded, but repeatedly bombed, so that while the civilian population was all directly involved in and threatened by the war, they did get to live relatively normal day-to-day lives. But it was the mass evacuations (there were more than one) of the children that really fascinated me. Talk about scope for fiction!

Why did you choose to have Ada tell the story as a flashback?

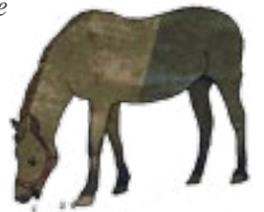
Ada tells the story as a flashback because at the start of her story she knows so very little. She doesn't have words for all that she sees and experiences. The reader needs to understand her ignorance without the story being hampered by it, and the way around that is to have her telling the story from a short remove—where she's not coloring her experiences through a mask of adulthood, but at least has developed the vocabulary to convey them.

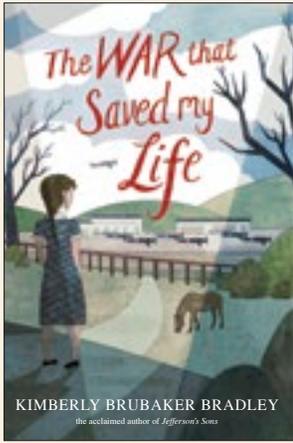
Ada has to rise above so many challenges in this book—mental, emotional, and physical. Is there any symbolism in your choice of a clubbed foot as Ada's physical deformity?

The clubfoot isn't meant to be symbolic, it was actually a pragmatic choice. I wanted her to have a disability that was fairly common, so that Susan and Dr. Graham, for example, would recognize it; that was physically limiting and unsightly, so that it could be used as an excuse for her mother to keep her locked up; that could be fixed to some degree; and that wouldn't have affected her speech or intellect. Clubfoot fit the bill nicely.

What can you tell us about horses and their importance to the story?

I can tell you all sorts of stuff about horses! I love them; I live on a farm with seven of them (three very old and completely retired, one belonging to a friend). Horses are often used to provide therapy to disabled people—riding is excellent exercise and also strengthens the specific muscles used in walking. Horses are also entirely non-judgmental—Butter doesn't care about Ada's foot, or her lack of education, or her shabbiness. And on Butter Ada gets to move, fast and without pain. Think of how wonderful it feels to her!





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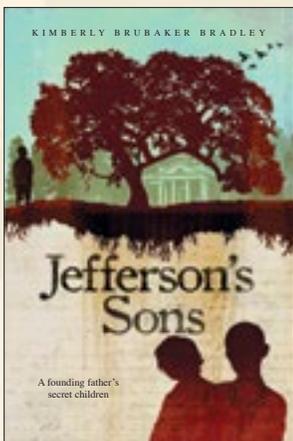
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