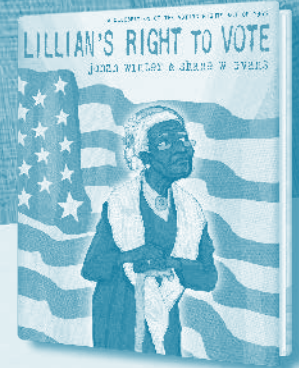


LILLIAN'S RIGHT TO VOTE

by jonah winter, illustrated by shane w. evans



Grades: K-4 • Ages: 5-9
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A NOTE TO TEACHERS

APPROACHING A COMPLEX TEXT

Lillian's Right to Vote offers unusually complex teaching material for a picture book, making it an excellent vehicle for meeting the Common Core State Standards. The complexity starts with a large cast of characters, some fictional and others real, including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and John Lewis. The story covers a wide time period, from the era of slavery to today, with the past tied to the present through the main character, Lillian. Students learn about the right to vote and its relationship to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, introduced with new vocabulary words such as *registrar*, *legacy*, and *amendment*. Powerful writing and illustrations give this book an emotional weight that reflects the importance of its themes.

KEY BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is central to this story, so you may want to talk about how a federal law is created before reading *Lillian's Right to Vote*. The U.S. House of Representatives "Kids in the House" website gives a step-by-step description of how a law is written and passed (<http://kids.clerk.house.gov/grade-school/lesson.html?intID=17>). Depending on students' prior knowledge, you may need to explain briefly what Congress is and how members of Congress are elected locally and sent to Washington, D.C., to make laws. "Kids in the House" offers a useful lesson plan on the topic "From a Bill to a Law," with an exercise called "Act It Out" in which students play the roles of citizens, representatives, senators, and the president in passing a law (<http://kids.clerk.house.gov/grade-school/teaching-resources.html>).

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Lillian care so much about voting? Talk about the purpose of voting and why it's important. Why do some people try to keep others, including blacks and women, from voting?
2. In the story, Lillian walks up a steep hill. What is it like for her to walk uphill for such a long way? How is the hill like the history of voting for blacks?
3. Reread the page that opens, "Lillian starts her slow climb." Talk about what the pictures show that isn't in the words. For example, the men who aren't doing the farm work carry a gun and a whip. What does that tell you about slavery?
4. How do the pictures let you know which people and places are in the past and which are in the present? Talk about specific pictures and how they show two time periods at once.
5. When Lillian's great-grandfather Edmund votes and his wife, Ida, goes with him, Lillian feels their "dignity, and their pride, as they enter that courthouse for the first time." What made it possible for Edmund to vote? What are dignity and pride, and why do they feel it?
6. Even though Edmund votes, his son Isaac doesn't. What changes to make it impossible for Isaac to vote? What stops Lillian's uncle Levi from voting?
7. When Lillian is shown as a child, how do whites try to keep her parents from voting? Talk about the burning cross and its effect on the family. Why won't Lillian ever forget it?
8. Discuss what you know about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. What does it mean to say, "His words still lift up Lillian?" How can words lift up her and other people? Why did blacks have to work so hard to get the right to vote?
9. On the page where Lillian finally goes into the building to vote, half of her is young and half of her is old. Why do the picture show her like this? Compare her younger self and her older self. How are they the same? How are they different?
10. Discuss how parts of the sky, and especially the sun, change in the pictures throughout the book. How does a bright yellow sun make you feel? Why do you think the illustrator shows the sun so often? Talk about what objects in the book besides the sun are yellow.
11. Compare the endpapers at the front of the book with those at that back. How are they the same? How are they different? What do the changes show you about the story?
12. Throughout the book, Lillian wears a butterfly pin. In more than one picture, three birds are flying away from her into the sky. Talk about butterflies and birds and what makes them special. Why might the illustrator have put them in the pictures?

 CORRELATES TO COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR READING LITERATURE: 1-4.1, 1-3.2, 1-4.3, 1-4.4, 1-4.7

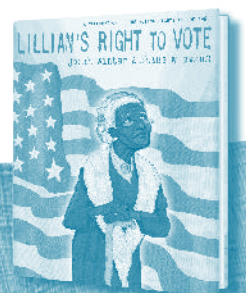


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CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. ROLL THE QUESTION CUBE ON THE NEXT PAGE

Using the template, have students create question cubes on heavy stock paper. Students should gather in small groups and take turns rolling the cube. The student who rolls the cube takes the word that comes up, such as *who* or *what*, and asks another student a question about the book, starting with that word. The small group should discuss whether they agree with the answer, referring to specific passages in the book. The student who answered the question then gets to roll the cube and ask the next question.

2. THE MAGIC OF THE SPOKEN WORD

Reread the section in *Lillian's Right to Vote* about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Then share parts of his "I Have a Dream" speech either by reading Kadir Nelson's *I Have a Dream* (Schwartz & Wade) or by reading from the website below. The website also provides a recording of the speech. Have students talk about the speech and what it means to them. If you use the Nelson book, have students compare the two books in terms of content and illustrations.

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihaveadream.htm>

3. MEET NEW WORDS

Lillian's Right to Vote incorporates vocabulary related to voting and government. Many of the words may be unfamiliar to students. Have the class as a whole create a list of vocabulary words such as *denied*, *abridged*, and *servitude*. Continue working as a class or have students work in small groups, discussing the words in context and then looking them up in a dictionary.

4. MARCHING FOR FREEDOM

Share with your class the "Freedom March" newsreel footage of the march from Selma to Montgomery, available at the website below. Before watching the one-and-a-half minute video, discuss the word *Negro*, which was common at the time and is used in the newsreel. Have a discussion in which students connect the video to the section in *Lillian's Right to Vote* about the three marches. Talk about the concept of a "peaceful protest march" as described in the book. Finally, have students compare the book and the video in terms of what kind of information each provides.

<http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/selma-montgomery-march>

INTERNET RESOURCES

- Kids in the House. The U.S. House of Representatives website introduces concepts of government to children. <http://kids.clerk.house.gov/>
- Growing Voters. Created by a Lesley College professor with lesson plans and resources for K-12 about voting. <http://www.growingvoters.org/>
- Civics. Nonprofit with educational resources to prepare the next generation of students to become knowledgeable and engaged citizens. Founded by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. <https://www.icivics.org/>
- Teaching Tolerance. This website from the nonprofit Southern Poverty Law Center offers a wide range of classroom resources and lesson plans at all levels about tolerance, racism, and related subjects. <http://www.tolerance.org/>

RESOURCES ON THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965

- A transcript of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 at Learning History: http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/1965_voting_rights_act.htm
- The text of President Lyndon Johnson's speech posted by University of Virginia: <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/speech-3386>
- A video of President Lyndon Johnson's speech posted by University of Virginia: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxEauRq1WxQ>

This guide was prepared by Kathleen Odean, chair of the 2002 Newbery Award Committee. Kathleen Odean was a youth librarian for seventeen years. She is the author of *Great Books for Girls*, *Great Books for Boys*, and *Great Books about Things Kids Love* (all published by Ballantine). She currently gives workshops on new books and the Common Core State Standards.

5. DELVING INTO THE PAST

As a class, go through *Lillian's Right to Vote* and brainstorm a list of topics for a simple research project. The list could include real people mentioned in the text, slavery, laws, constitutional amendments, or civil rights events. Have students work individually, in pairs or small groups, or as a class to learn more about one of the topics, using print and Internet resources. The final product should be a short research paper that demonstrates at least three new pieces of knowledge.

6. CLIMBING THE HILL

On a long piece of butcher paper, draw a diagonal line to represent the hill that Lillian climbs. As a group, label the hill with years that correspond to the story. Then have each student draw a picture of a character in the book, including those in the marches. Students should place their picture at the right place in the story's sequence. They can also write a short description of the character near their picture. Post the paper on a wall in the classroom or in a school hallway.

7. CALLING ALL ACTORS!

Because *Lillian's Right to Vote* has many characters and scenes, it lends itself to reenactment. Assign roles to students for a readers' theater. Some students can supply narration for each scene, saying where and when it takes place before the characters speak. Other students can be part of the freedom march scenes. Each student playing a character should say who they are and what they did or what happened to them. Invite other classes to watch the performance.

8. DEAR GRANDCHILD

Lillian cares a lot about family as well as about voting rights. Have students, working alone or in pairs, write a letter from Lillian to her grandchild about the importance of voting. Students can have her relate some of the information from the book and add thoughts of their own about what Lillian would say.

 CORRELATES TO COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR READING LITERATURE: 1-4.1, 1-3.2, 1-4.3, 1-4.4, 1-4.7; WRITING: 1-4.2, 3-4.4, 1-4.7, 1-4.8, 4.9; SPEAKING & LISTENING: 1-4.1; 1-4.2; 1-4.5.

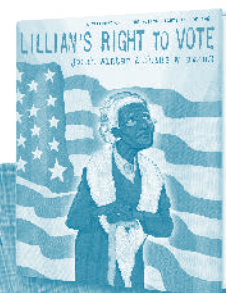


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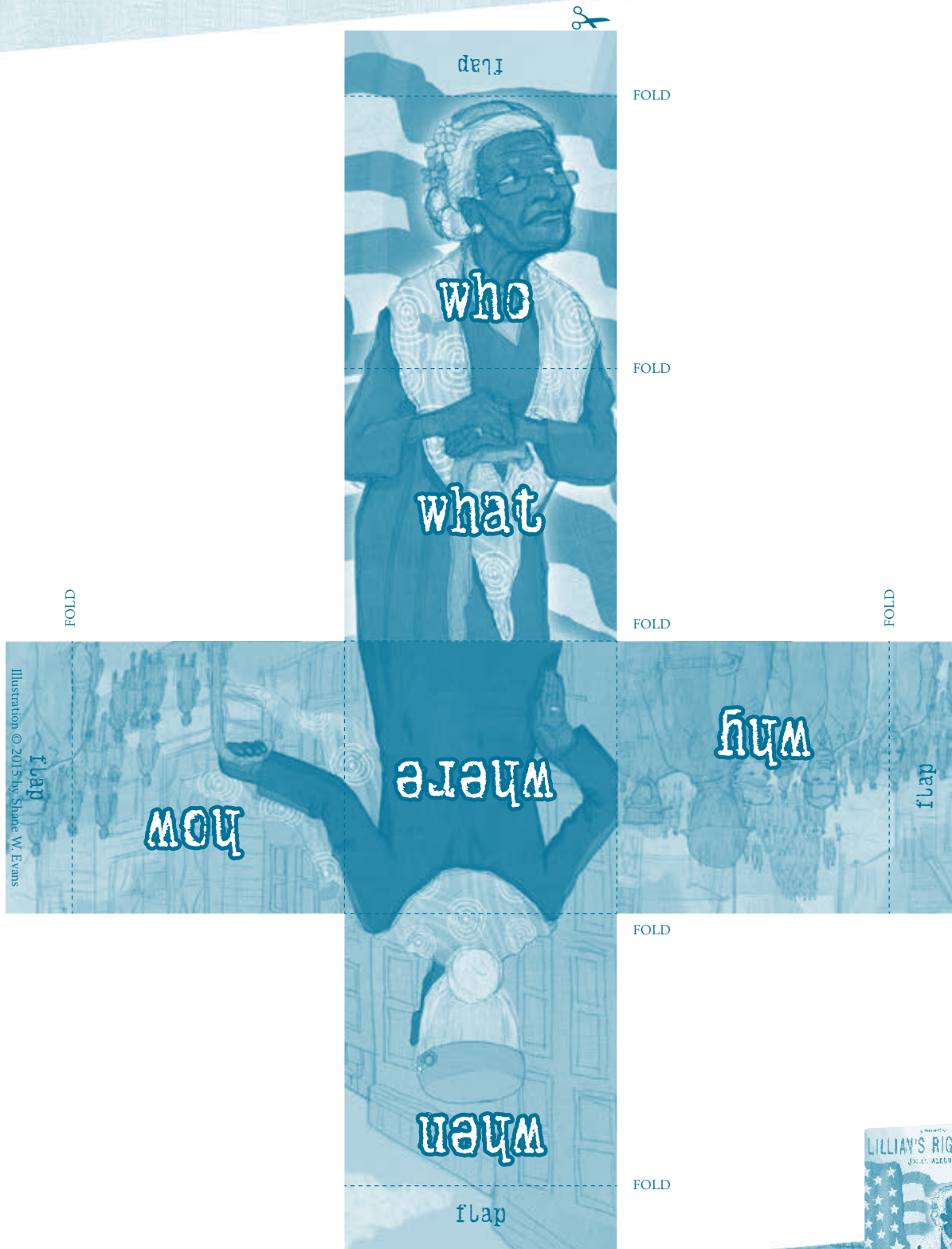


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EDUCATORS: REPRODUCE THIS ACTIVITY FOR YOUR CLASSROOM

