

Teacher's Guide

Talkin' about Bessie:

The Story of Aviator Elizabeth Coleman

written by Nikki Grimes

illustrated by E.B. Lewis

Orchard Books / Scholastic, 2002



Pre-reading

Brainstorm what life was like in the 1890's as far as technology, transportation, daily life and social climate. Discuss the Jim Crow laws of the South and hypothesize what an African American girl of that time could be expected to accomplish with her life.

Comprehension Guide/ Quiz Questions

Knowledge:

1. Describe Bessie Coleman's childhood.
2. Identify the traits that made Bessie unique.
3. Find a quote that describes Bessie in the first five poems. Discuss why you picked it to represent her character.

Comprehension:

1. Give examples of Bessie's determination to "make something out of herself."
2. Explain why the laundry customer describes Bessie as odd.
3. Predict what Bessie might choose to do today if she were young. Can you imagine what organizations she might belong to? Do you think she would still choose to fly airplanes?

Application:

1. What did you learn about determination from Bessie Coleman's story? How does it apply to your own life?
2. Pretend you could interview Bessie Coleman. Write three questions you would like to have answered by this legend.
3. How did Bessie Coleman create hope for others?

Analysis:

1. How does the author get the reader to know the whole truth about Bessie?
2. Create a timeline of Bessie Coleman's life.
3. What did you learn by examining and creating a timeline of her life? Is there anything that surprised you by putting the information into a different format? What?

Synthesize:

1. Write a journal entry as if you are Bessie at three different ages.
2. Create a scene between Bessie and a character from the book. Write the dialogue staying true to Bessie and the character you choose. Use correct punctuation!
3. Create a scene between Bessie and a character from the book. Write the dialogue staying true to Bessie and the character you choose. Use correct punctuation!

Evaluate:

1. Predict what Bessie would say about life in America as it is today.
2. Evaluate the illustrations for the book. Which one is your favorite? Why?
3. Choose which poem is your favorite and discuss why.