

Interdisciplinary Ideas

LANGUAGE ARTS

1. Grimes uses the noun "poet" as a verb in "The Dream," when she writes, "Oh! To poet like a laser." Find other examples of poetic license and creative use of words in her poems. Make a list of metaphors and similes.
2. In her introduction the author answers the question, "Where do writers come from?" Write a letter to Nikki Grimes telling her which of the poems you liked best and why. Then ask a few questions you would like her to answer. Send the letter to the publisher's address.

SOCIAL STUDIES

1. Research "soul food." What is it, and where did its name originate? Take notes and report to your class. Host a "soul food" party.
2. Hopscotch is still popular in some neighborhoods. Make a list of games kids play in your neighborhood. Interview parents and grandparents about street and neighborhood games they used to play. Add to your list and report to your class.

ART

Make charcoal drawings on white textured paper. Experiment with shading, light and shadows. Draw steps, the folds in a blanket or expressive faces similar to the illustrations in the book.

MUSIC

Listen to a recording of Handel's music. Try to identify the various instruments mentioned in the poem by that name (e.g., piccolo, cello, trombone, kettledrum and violin).

A Dime a Dozen

Nikki Grimes
1998
New York: Penguin Putnam, Inc.

HONESTY

USA

Realistic Fiction

Reading Time: 12 minutes

CONCEPTS

Honesty
Hope
Love
Perseverance

SUMMARY

Nikki Grimes explores the joys and struggles of growing up in this autobiographical collection of poems. Honestly confronting her feelings through poetry, she describes being "inspired, comforted, disappointed and infuriated" by members of her family. Believing in herself and trusting her own instincts, she holds on to her dream of becoming a writer. Angelo's expressive black and white portraits enhance the sensitivity of the poetry.

OBJECTIVE

The student will be able to define and discuss honesty, hope and perseverance as they apply to the poems. The student will understand honesty in terms of being honest with oneself.

After the Story

A Dime a Dozen

DISCUSSION

1. In the introduction Nikki Grimes writes, "...it pays to listen to your own heart." What does she mean? How does she listen to her own heart? How is this advice related to honesty?
2. Reread "Gin Rummy," "Hair Prayer" and "Sister's Skin." What does the author reveal about her feelings? Why is it important to be honest with yourself?
3. Reread the first and last poems. How are they related to the author's hopes and dreams? How does she use words to keep her hopes alive? How do you keep your hopes alive?
4. Why do you think Nikki Grimes used the expression *A Dime a Dozen* for the title and last poem of her book? How does she persevere against opposition? What actions does she take? What does it mean to "chart your own path" or "discover who you are"?
5. Although the author talks about following her own instincts in becoming a writer, her poems show that family members did influence her and her career choice. Discuss. Who influences you?

ACTIVITIES

1. Find New York City on the world map and place a story pin.
2. In groups of three or four, make a list of qualities or attributes you think the author possesses. Match each attribute with a line from one of her poems as an explanation for your choice.
3. With your class, review the steps in a conflict resolution process. Discuss the need for being honest with yourself and others when you give an "I feel..." message. (See Activities and Resources in the *Teachers Guide* for a summary of conflict resolution.)

HOME CONNECTION

Talk with family members about dreams and ambitions, both in Nikki Grimes' poetry and in your own lives.

JOURNAL

1. Write what you found out about Nikki Grimes from reading her poetry. Describe her likes, dislikes, character traits and evidence of Heartwood attributes you think she possesses.
2. Write a paragraph about why you would or would not like to be friends with the girl in the book. Give reasons and explanations for your opinion. What might be challenging and/or interesting about this friendship?

VOCABULARY

perseverance
pierce
sanctuary

forge
parquet
fluent

stroll
bilingual