

Interdisciplinary Ideas

LANGUAGE ARTS

Have a choral reading of the poetry narrative in the story beginning with Mama's words, "Little girl, little boy, Let's play the hair name game..." In pairs, choose one of the stanzas from this part of the story, memorize it, practice saying your part with rhythm, and together present to another class.

SOCIAL STUDIES

1. Bring to class symbols of family traditions you honor such as objects, clothing, recipes, costumes, or food. Write a paragraph about your symbol and read to the class. Place symbols and writings on a display table for all to see.
2. Read a biography of a famous African American. Together list people mentioned in the story and other famous African Americans. Take your list to the library and borrow a book about someone on the list. Read the book, take notes on "biography notes,"* and write a report.

ART

1. In pairs, find pictures of and background information on Yoruba art (Keyword: Yoruba art Nigeria) or make an online visit to the National Museum of African Art. (Keyword: National Museum of African Art) Take notes on your favorite exhibition or piece of art and share with the class.
2. Learn to braid or practice braiding with yarn, leather, or string. Braid together your individual braids.

* Visit www.heartwoodethics.org and choose Teaching Heartwood, Intermediate Activities, for acrostic poem instructions and biography notes page. Culture Keys offer cultural information.

Cornrows

Camille Yarbrough
1979
New York: Coward-McCann, Inc.

LOYALTY

U.S.A./African American
Fiction
Reading Time: 11 minutes

CONCEPTS

Loyalty
Respect
Love

SUMMARY

This rhythmic story weaves a spell as Mama's and Great-Grammaw's fingers create a cornrow design. Every cornrow pattern has a name and reflects the strength and richness of African heritage. Carol Byard's stylized black and white illustrations transport us to far off times and places.

OBJECTIVES

The student will be able to identify, define, and discuss loyalty, respect, and love as they apply to the story. The student will become aware of the importance of heritage and traditions passed down from one generation to another.

After the Story

Cornrows

DISCUSSION

1. What is Great-Grammaw conveying in her songs and stories as the braiding is being done? How does she show respect for her ancestors?
2. What do Sister and Me Too learn about their heritage? How does passing on traditions show loyalty to a heritage? What do cornrows represent? What other traditions are portrayed in the story?
3. How were traditions brought from Africa and how were they passed down during earliest times? How are traditions passed down today from one generation to another? What symbols or signs of loyalty do the family members show to one another? To the past?
4. What terrible things happened? How do you think people and cultures survive terrible events? What attributes are involved?
5. How is love shown in the story? What does Great-Grammaw mean when she talks about, "hand-me-down love"? Who gives you "hand-me-down love"?

ACTIVITIES

1. On the world map, locate the African countries mentioned in the story: Egypt, Senegal, Somalia, and Swaziland.
2. Invite an adult or teenager to the classroom to demonstrate cornrow braiding.
3. Look at the last illustration in the story. With charcoal or pencil, draw someone you love with her or his arms around you and another child (a sibling, relative, or friend). Write a title for your picture.
4. Write an acrostic poem with the name of a person you love and respect using as many Heartwood words as possible.* Draw illustrations or designs around your poem (see Art activity #2), and give it to your special person.

EXTENSION

1. With your family, talk about your traditions, heritage, and cultural roots. Discuss symbols that convey your roots. With permission, share with the class.
2. Invite parents, grandparents, or other family members to class to talk about family traditions.

WRAP-UP

1. In *My Heartwood Journal* write about what loyalty to and respect for traditions and heritage mean in the story and/or in your own life.
2. Create a "Book of the Month" bulletin board, and begin with *Cornrows*. Under the title and author post a summary of the story, images of cornrows from the Internet or magazines (Keyword: Yoruba cornrows), and writings and photographs from Social Studies and Art activities.

VOCABULARY

heritage
tradition
ancient

wisdom
sculptured
ritual

clan