



A GUIDE TO  
Doreen Rappaport's  
Big Words Books

TEACHER'S GUIDE  
Disney • HYPERION BOOKS



Cover art © Flip Schulke

## About Doreen Rappaport's Big Words Books

The Big Words books by Doreen Rappaport give young readers an accessible, thorough introduction to the lives of our nation's most compelling historical figures. Drawing upon quotes from her subjects, and a variety of sources, Rappaport's lyrical prose creates very human portraits of Martin Luther King, Jr., John Lennon, Abraham Lincoln, Eleanor Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, and Helen Keller. By beginning from childhood and showing the obstacles that each subject faced on their path of accomplishment, the books allow readers to admire and identify with people who might once have seemed difficult to relate to. Illustrated by an impressive roster of award-winning illustrators, each person and their world is recreated with accuracy and in stunning detail. A thorough list of sources and suggested books for further reading is included in each book to help readers expand upon their newfound knowledge.

### Common Core Alignment

This guide is aligned with the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards (CCR) for Reading (Informational Text), Writing, and Language. The broad CCR standards are the foundation for the grade level-specific Common Core State Standards. Each question and activity in this guide includes a reference for the CCR strand, domain, and standard that is addressed. To support instruction also reference your grade-level specific Common Core State Standards to scaffold the questions for your students.



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# Helen's Big World: The Life of Helen Keller



## About the Book

Helen Keller could not see, hear, or speak, yet she spent her life advocating for all people to have equal rights. This powerful story describes Helen's journey from living in silence to sharing her story with the world after receiving help from a dedicated teacher. The road was difficult because she had to learn to navigate the environment around her, communicate with others, read, and write. Today, her resilience, passion, and wisdom continue to inspire people with and without disabilities.

## Pre-Reading Activities

### Anticipation Guide

**Step 1:** Display the table below and ask students to decide as a group or individually whether the answer is true or false. If time permits, also ask students why they selected a particular answer.

**Step 2:** After the completion of the story, refer back to the chart and ask students to answer the questions again. (*Reading: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: RI.CCR.10*)

BEFORE	STATEMENT	AFTER
	Helen Keller was a famous woman who could not hear.	
	Individuals who cannot see will never be able to write or read.	
	Helen Keller traveled the world fighting for all people to have equal rights.	
	Helen Keller had a teacher who worked with her while she was a child and adult.	
	Only elderly people can lose their ability to hear or see.	

## Vocabulary

**Step 1:** Introduce the key terms, definitions, and questions in the table to help students better understand individuals with specific types of disabilities.

**Step 2:** After introducing the vocabulary make a connection to the text by presenting students with the following quote and question. Helen Keller says, “We do not think with eyes and ears, and our capacity for thought is not measured by five senses.” How do you think this quote from the text relates to the key terms in the table? (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.4*)

KEY TERMS	DEFINITION	QUESTIONS: Activating Background Knowledge
Individuals with Visual Impairments	A person who can either see very little or has no vision at all. If a person has no vision at all he or she is considered blind.	What is the difference between a person who wears glasses and a person with a visual impairment?  Can you think of any famous actors or singers who are visually impaired?
Individuals with Hearing Impairments	A person who can only hear some sounds, which may sound unclear or muffled. A person is considered deaf if he or she cannot hear any sound.	Do you know anyone who wears a hearing aid?  Can you think of inventions that help individuals with hearing impairments (e.g., closed captions, flashing crosswalk signs, books in Braille, etc.)?



# Discussion Questions

## EARLY YEARS

- 1 What events occurred that caused Helen to lose her hearing, sight, and ability to speak? Describe the effects of that loss on Helen and her family. How does Helen communicate her needs and frustrations? (*Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.CCR.8*)
- 2 Why do you think Annie keeps tracing letters in Helen’s palm? Make an inference by using your own ideas/experiences and details from the text to answer the question. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)
- 3 The author includes many quotes from Helen Keller. For example, “That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, and set it free.” How does this quote help us understand Helen? What figurative language can you find in the quote? (*Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: L.CCR.5*)
- 4 Although Helen cannot see, hear, or speak, what senses does she use to understand what is going on around her? Give examples from the story. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)
- 5 What do we learn from the timeline of Helen’s writing (July 12, 1887–January 29, 1889)? How does this information help the reader? (*Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: R.CCR.7*)
- 6 How is it possible for Helen to read if she cannot see? What steps does Annie take to teach Helen to read? (*Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.CCR.8*)

## ADULT YEARS

- 1 How did Annie have a positive impact on Helen’s life? Give specific examples from the text. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)
- 2 Helen Keller says, “Teacher read many books to me. In spite of repeated warnings from oculists, she has always abused her eyes for my sake.” Use the context clues in the quote to figure out what the word *oculists* means. What is Annie risking for Helen? Do you think that this risk helped Helen succeed? Why or why not? (*Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: L.CCR.4*)
- 3 Many people say that Helen Keller is an inspirational woman who helped many people. What details from the story show that her life made a difference? (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.2*)
- 4 If Helen hadn’t influenced others, how might the lives of blind and deaf individuals be different today? Give examples from the book. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)



## Post-reading Assignment

Pick a book from the “If you would like to learn more about Helen Keller, you can read” list. Then, give a five-minute oral report on what you learned about Helen Keller by reading both stories. (*Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.CCR.9*)

## Across the Curriculum

### Writing

Do you believe that all books should be available in Braille? Write an opinion essay that explains why you do or do not agree. Be sure to support your argument with an introduction, multiple reasons, and a concluding statement. (*Writing: Text Types and Purposes: W.CCR.1*)

## Math

Use the timeline of important dates, which are located on the final pages of *Helen's Big World* to calculate Helen's age during each year. Next, summarize what you learned from the timeline. (*Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.CCR.7*)

## Music

Since many individuals with hearing impairments cannot listen to music by using their ears, they must rely on vibrations to enjoy a song. Insert earplugs into your ears and use the vibrations to "hear" the song. Research the use of vibrations online and write a report that explains how vibrations allow people to listen to music. Be sure to include an introduction, develop the topic with facts, and provide a concluding statement. (*Writing: Text Types and Purposes: W.CCR.2*)

## Home-School Connection

American Sign Language (ASL) is used by individuals who are deaf to communicate with others. With someone at home, use the Internet to research the history of ASL and the Manual Language Chart in *Helen's Big World* to create an informational book on each letter. In class with a partner present your work and discuss what you each tried to teach your audience. (*Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: W.CCR.6*)



# Jack's Path of Courage: The Life of John F. Kennedy



## About the Book

As a boy, Jack Kennedy was frequently ill and fought to stay out of the shadow of his older brother. Jack worked hard to be recognized for his own talents and strengths. He came into the public eye as a writer, war hero, U.S. senator, and then a most vital American president. But this image did not come easily. He still struggled with his health problems and faced tough decisions that affected the country and the world. Despite these difficulties, John F. Kennedy forged a path that made him beloved by people all over the world. His path demanded strength, compassion, determination, and a tremendous amount of courage.

*Jack's Path of Courage* follows John F. Kennedy from childhood to the White House. In her signature style, Doreen Rappaport combines quotes from Kennedy and those close to him with her own lyrical prose to create a moving portrait of a beloved figure. Matt Tavares's stunning artwork vividly depicts this unique time in history.

## Pre-reading

Do you agree with this quote from Jack Kennedy: "Things do not happen. Things are made to happen"? What does he mean by this? What details about Jack Kennedy can you look for in the story to support your answer? (*Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.CCR.1*)

Create a KWL chart like the one below to use before, during, and after reading this biography. Allow students to engage in a small group discussion with agreed-upon rules as you fill in the chart. (*Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: SL.CCR.1*)

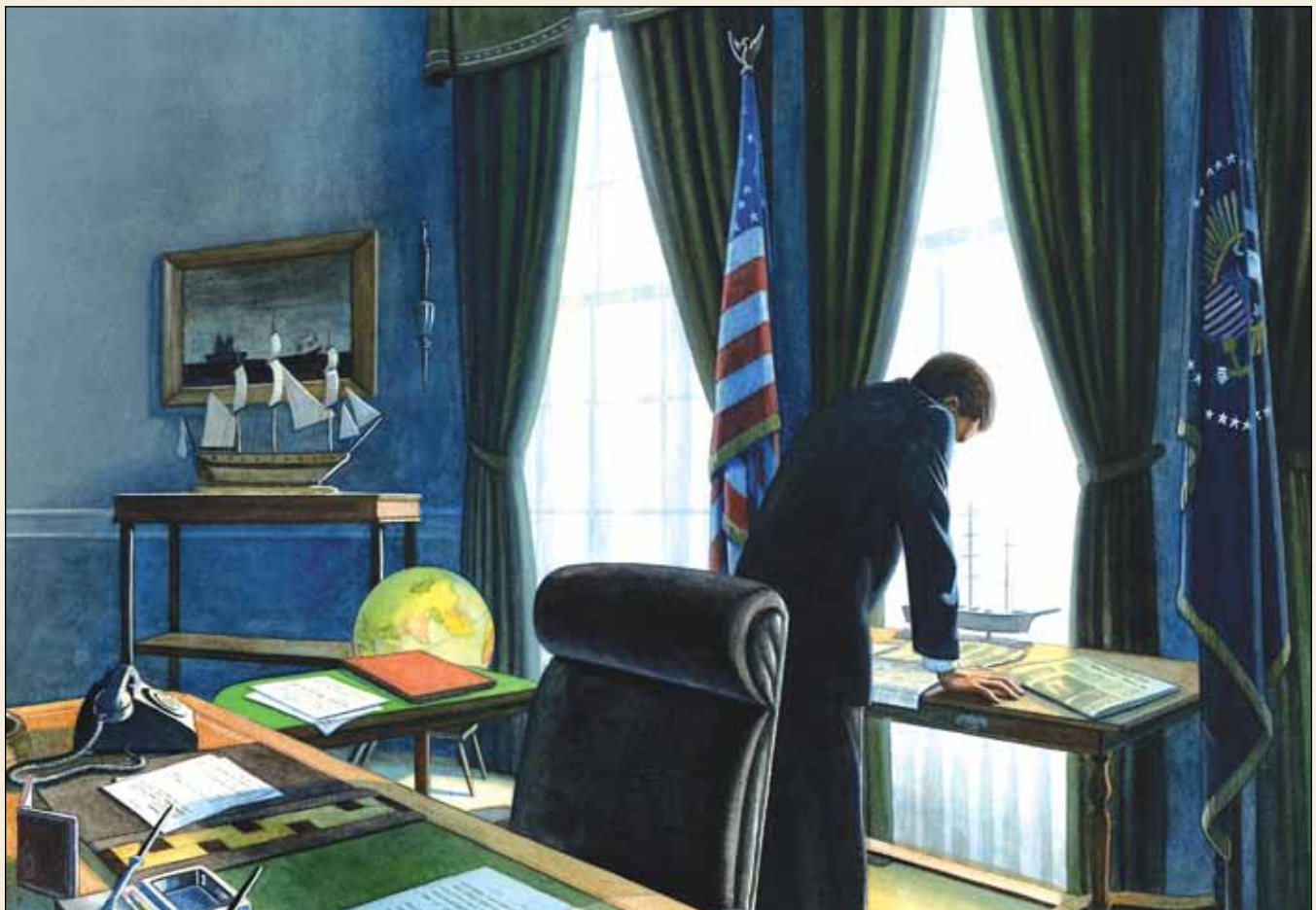
What I KNOW about JFK	What I WANT to know about JFK	What I LEARNED about JFK



# Discussion Guide

## EARLY YEARS

- 1 In the book the reader learns that young Jack loved adventure stories. What types of stories do you love best? Do you think Jack's habit of reading a lot as a young person helped him become successful? What key details from the story support your answer? (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)
- 2 How did Jack's father push his children? Give examples from the story. Do you think his father was right about competition? Why or why not? Do your parents ever push you to compete? How does that make you feel? What happens when they do that? (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)
- 3 Many stories provide examples of cause and effect. What was the effect of Jack's hurting his back while playing football? Did this injury hold him back? What sports did Jack excel at? Use examples from the text to support your answer. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.3*)
- 4 How did Jack become famous at the age of twenty-three? What do you think his book was about? Use the text and illustrations from the book to explain your answer. (*Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.CCR.7*)



## A LEADER AND HERO

- 1 Describe what happened when Jack's PT boat was hit during the war (the cause). How did he react and show courage (the effect)? What did he say when he was asked about this incident? (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.3*)
- 2 What happened to Joe, Jack's oldest brother (the cause)? What expectations landed on his shoulders because of this loss (the effect)? (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.3*)
- 3 How did Jack's campaign for Congress go? Use text examples to explain why he found such easy success with people. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)
- 4 Do you think Jack's second book, *Profiles in Courage*, helped shape him as a politician and leader? What information from the story supports your answer? What do you learn from reading biographies of leaders? Why do you think he chose this topic to explore? (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)
- 5 How is JFK's story a *Profile in Courage* itself? What important details from the story show that he was courageous? (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.2*)



## PRESIDENT

- 1 How was Jack different than U.S. presidents that had come before him? Compare and contrast him to other presidents. Why did even his own close friends and family believe that he might not get elected? Why do you think he was able to overcome this prejudice? (*Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.CCR.8*)
- 2 Examine Jack's acceptance speech. What did he ask people to think about in his acceptance speech? Give examples from the text. What part of his acceptance speech was most important to you? Make a connection. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)
- 3 Use examples from the book to discuss his two responses about being president. Why do you think he answered this way? What did he mean? (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)
- 4 Some of Jack's decisions were misguided. What were the most serious mistakes he made as a leader? How could this have ended badly for the United States? Use the timeline in the back of the book to show what other conflicts he faced as president? (*Reading: Craft and Structure: RI.CCR.5*)
- 5 Why was his death such a shock to the nation? How did Lyndon Johnson try to carry out his legacy? Use examples from the text to support your answer. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)

## Across the Curriculum

### Reading

After filling out the KWL chart from the pre-reading activities, allow students the opportunity to share their answers with a partner and compare their responses. Pose the question: What do you think is the most important thing to know about JFK? (*Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: SL.CCR.1*)

### Writing

Inspired by this book, write a biography of another U.S. president in this same style by using technology to design the book and create illustrations. (*Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: W.CCR.6*)

### History

Use the book and Web sites to create a timeline of JFK's life and include at least five facts on it. Also, add three important events from history on the timeline. Be sure to include all the sources that you used to find your timeline information. (*Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge: W.CCR.8*)

# Eleanor, Quiet No More: The Life of Eleanor Roosevelt



## About the Book

As First Lady of the United States, Eleanor was often criticized for her beliefs. But she still spoke up, to change things that needed changing, and to help those who felt too vulnerable to speak for themselves. Doreen Rappaport lyrically combines poignant biographical details with Eleanor Roosevelt's words, while Gary Kelley's moving illustrations re-create a true first in First Ladies, and the world she helped make better. The quotes in this book have been taken from Eleanor Roosevelt's autobiographies, her letters to Franklin, speeches before various Democratic women's groups, her newspaper columns, and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Rights.

## Discussion Questions

- 1 Why does the author, Doreen Rappaport, include quotes at the end of each page? Why do you think it was important to include Eleanor's own words? How do you know when Eleanor is speaking? (*Reading: Craft and Structure: RI.CCR.5*)
  - 2 What did Franklin love most about Eleanor? Provide examples from the story. Do you agree with him that "most people only pretend" to listen? How do you become a good listener? (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)
  - 3 In the story, what issue helped Eleanor find her voice? How did she organize women to help? Provide examples to support your answer. How do you think we can help soldiers today? (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)
  - 4 Which illustration is your favorite? How do the illustrations help the reader know about the time period? Why do think Gary Kelley chose the colors he did? (*Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Skills: RI.CCR.7*)
  - 5 What can you learn from reading about the life of Eleanor Roosevelt? What are the important details that we learn about her life in the story? Which quote in the book is your favorite? Why? (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)
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# Across the Curriculum

## Reading

Many people may ask, what type of person was Eleanor? Create a character web based on the life of Eleanor Roosevelt. Brainstorm a list of adjectives to describe Eleanor (for instance, *brave*) and then use example from the book that support why you chose each adjective. (*Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: L.CCR.5*)

## Writing

Choose your favorite Eleanor Roosevelt quotation from the book and write your opinion about the quote. What does the quotation make you think about? How does it make you feel? How can you apply what you've learned to your own life? (*Writing: Text Types and Purposes: W.CCR.1*)

## Mentor Text

Study how the author uses quotes from Eleanor to enhance the story. How can you add direct quotations to strengthen a connection between the reader and your topic? Where can you find quotations for your next piece? (*Reading: Craft and Structure: RI.CCR.3*)



## Math

Research the cost of living during the Great Depression and the cost of similar goods and services now. Also, find the average salary of Americans during each time period. Create an essay that compares the cost of living and salaries of Americans then and now. Be sure to include a list of your sources. (*Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge: W.CCR.8*)

## Science/Health

President Franklin Roosevelt was stricken with polio, but today vaccines have nearly eradicated the disease. Research the history of polio by using books and Web sites. Present the facts and relevant details that you learned to a partner or small group in class. (*Speaking and Listening: Presentation of knowledge and Ideas: SL.CCR.4*)

## Current Events

Research the New Deal using books and technology. Find out what kinds of projects FDR initiated to help fuel the economy. Compare them with solutions that were used by President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama. In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different? (*Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge: W.CCR.7*)



# Abe's Honest Words: The Life of Abraham Lincoln



## About the Book

From the time he was a young man, Abraham Lincoln was pained by the cruelty and evil of the institution of slavery. A voracious reader, Lincoln spent every spare moment of his days filling his mind with knowledge—from history to literature to mathematics—that helped him make difficult and crucial decisions when he eventually became president. Lincoln guided the nation through a long and bitter civil war and penned the document ending slavery in the United States. Doreen Rappaport's accessible, absorbing prose and Kadir Nelson's powerful illustrations reveal the passion for humanity that defined Lincoln's life.

## Discussion Questions

- 1 Why do you think the author makes a point to tell us in the first sentence that Lincoln was born in a slave state? What sequence of events occurs throughout the story to highlight the importance of this first sentence? Use illustrations and words from the book to retell the order of events. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.3*)
- 2 Why are some of the words in the book printed in italics? Why do you think the author decided to include them? (*Reading: Craft and Structure: RI.CCR.5*)
- 3 What jobs did Lincoln hold? Did they correspond to what he liked to study? Use examples from the text to support your answer. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)
- 4 How did Lincoln pursue a career that satisfied him? Describe the events from the book that occurred and led him to become president. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.3*)



- 5 Why did people doubt Lincoln’s skill to lead the country during war? How did he react to everyone’s negative views of him? Give examples from the text. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)

## Across the Curriculum

### Reading

In the following chart, pull important facts, quotes, or details from the book and list them on the left side. On the right, share your reactions, including feelings, thoughts, memories, or connections you made to the text. After you complete the left side of the chart orally summarize the text and state the main idea of the story. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.2*)

Important Quotes, Facts, or Details	Connections and Reactions
<i>Ex.</i> “He had just a mite of schooling, yet he loved words.”	Wow! I just figured that Lincoln didn’t have much schooling, but his passion for education came from reading books.

### Music

Print and memorize the lyrics for both “Battle Hymn of the Republic” and “Dixie.” After singing them, discuss what the lyrics mean and how the message of each song is similar and different. (*Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.CCR.9*)

### Social Studies

Create a three-dimensional map of the United States as it looked during the Civil War. Be sure to create categories by labeling which states fought for the Union and which for the Confederacy. (*Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: W.CCR.8*)



## Dates to Remember

**February 12, 2009** was the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth. His birthday is a legal holiday in some U.S. states, but even if it's not, you can celebrate the anniversary of his birth.

**November 19, 1863** is the date he gave the Gettysburg Address; students may enjoy revisiting the speech on or around that date.

Other important dates of interest can be found at the back of *Abe's Honest Words*. Review the timeline and summarize the new information that you learned about Abraham Lincoln. (*Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.CCR.7*)



# John's Secret Dreams: The Life of John Lennon



## About the Book

John Lennon's influence on music and culture is legendary. He was a rebel, a genius, an innovator, and a peace activist. From a young age he dreamed of fame and fortune. When he achieved it as one of the Beatles, he recognized the need for a deeper meaning in life. As a follow-up to their award-winning title, *Martin's Big Words*, Doreen Rappaport and Bryan Collier combine narrative and song lyrics, cut-paper collage and watercolor art to capture the energy and the essence of a man whose vision and creative genius continue to inspire people today.

## Discussion Questions

- 1 John Lennon is quoted on the first page of the book as saying, "I like to write about me, because I know about me." Based on examples from the book, what does this mean? Do you like to write about your own life? Should all writers just write about themselves? Why or why not? (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)





- 2 Even though his Aunt Mimi discounted John's dreams of being an artist or musician, he stuck with it. Why do you think he was able to stay true to what he wanted? Use examples from the text. (Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1)
- 3 Biographies are stories written about a person's life. Why do you think John Lennon is an important person to learn about? What is the main idea in the book? What details support that idea? Whom would you choose if you wrote a biography about someone? (Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.2)
- 4 A palette is the colors that an artist chooses to show the feelings of a picture. Choose and compare two pictures in the book. Why do you think Collier used these colors for each part of the story? (Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.CCR.9)
- 5 Review the lyrics that are in the book. Which are your favorites? Why? Based on examples from the story, how do they relate to his life? Do they remind you of any other music or poetry you've listened to? (Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1)



# Across the Curriculum

## Language Art

Write a letter to John Lennon about your own secret dreams and wishes. (*Writing: Range of Writing: W.CCR.10*)

John Lennon and Paul McCartney collaborated on song lyrics. Try your hand at collaborating with a friend: You write one line and your partner writes the next. Record the song with your partner and play it for the class. Also, remember to explain the meaning of your song to everyone. (*Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: SL.CCR.3*)

## History

Use the book to create interview questions for someone who remembers when the Beatles were popular. Ask at least five questions about the time in which the Beatles were most popular. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)

Use the book to make a timeline of historical events that span John Lennon's lifetime. Then add notations about major events in John's life. In a short journal (or classroom discussion) explain how you think some of them are related. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.3*)

## Art and Music

Illustrate the main idea and important details of any Beatles or John Lennon song. Use any technique you prefer, but consider a collage inspired by Collier's illustrations. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.2*)

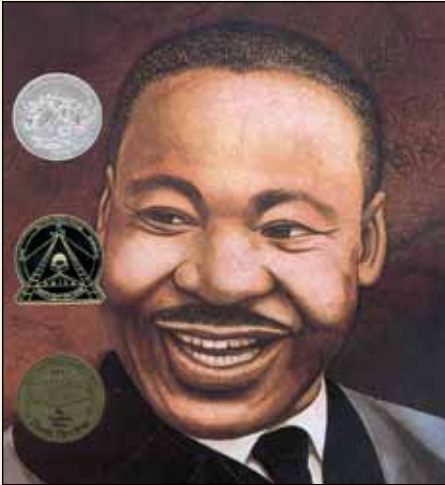
As a reward for completing the illustration activity, listen to the music of the Beatles and John Lennon! Throw a 60s party featuring the music, clothing, and sayings of the period.





# Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Cover art © Flip Schulke



## About the Book

This picture book biography of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. brings his life and the profound nature of his message to young children through his own words. Martin Luther King, Jr., was one of the most influential and gifted speakers of all time. Doreen Rappaport uses quotes from some of his most beloved speeches to tell the story of his life and his work in a simple, direct way. Bryan Collier's stunning collage art combines watercolor paintings with vibrant patterns and textures. A timeline and a list of additional books and Web sites help make this a standout biography of Dr. King.

## Pre-reading

With a small group discuss questions about leaders. What is a leader? What does a person do to become a leader? What makes a good leader? (*Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration: SL.CCR.1*)

## Genre: Biography

We study biographies to learn from the lives of others. Why is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., an important person to read about? What can we learn from the way he lived his life? Use examples from the text. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)

The author inserted many of Dr. King's own words throughout the text. Why do you think this was an important thing to do? Pick one quote and explain the significance. (*Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.CCR.1*)

## Illustration

Read the illustrator's note and study each page before answering the following questions: What does the collage add to the story of Dr. King? Which illustration is your favorite? Why? Why do you think they decided not to put any words on the front cover of the book? (*Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.CCR.7*)

What does Bryan Collier mean when he says, "windows allow you to look past where you are"? Why is that idea important to the civil rights movement? Use examples from the text to support your answer. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)

## Theme: Equality

The civil rights movement worked to create equal opportunities for African American people. What are

some specific examples in education, employment, and public settings that needed to change for equality? Use the book to provide specific examples that support your answer. Are there still things that need to be changed? (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)

## Setting

What are the major settings in the biography of Dr. King? Which illustrations give you a clue that it is in a time different than today? What part of the country did most of Dr. King’s work focus on? Why? Show where you found your answer in the text. (*Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RI.CCR.7*)

## Across the Curriculum

### Language Arts

Use technology to research another hero or major figure of the civil rights movement and write a biography. Use a style similar to that of Rappaport—allowing your subject to speak for him or herself whenever possible. (*Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge: W.CCR.7*)

Write a letter to Dr. King about what you learned from him by reading the story. (*Writing: Range of Writing: W.CCR.10*)

### Vocabulary

Define the following words and draw a picture that will help you remember what they mean: *hymn, citizen, courage, protest, rights, movement, peace, freedom, and segregation*. Use your text to find how the words are used in the story. (*Reading: Craft and Structure: RI.CCR.4*)

### Social Studies

In small groups, research one of the following events or people from the civil rights movement and create a pamphlet about it. Include who was involved, where it took place, why it is important, and what effect it had. (*Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: W.CCR.7*)

- *Brown vs. Board of Education*
- Rosa Parks
- Montgomery bus boycott
- Ruby Bridges
- March on Washington, D.C.
- Bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama
- Civil Rights Act
- March on Birmingham, Alabama
- Voting Rights Act
- Twenty-fourth Amendment





## Art

Explore the technique of collage and depict another scene or person from the civil rights movement by printing online pictures and adding captions to the images. Present the collage to the class and answer any questions that classmates have about the scene. (*Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: SL.CCR.4*)

## Science/Health

Dr. King worked hard to help people earn a living wage, to make enough money to help their families get out of poverty. Research what effects poverty has on children's health and education. Make a poster that includes paragraphs and pictures about what you learn. (*Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge: W.CCR.7*)

## Music

Find recordings of these songs that were sung during the civil rights movement. Write a brief journal about why you think they were important. Record one of the songs on tape, play it for your classmates, and explain the significance. (*Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: SL.CCR.5*)

- "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing"
- "We Shall Overcome"
- "Oh, Freedom"
- "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize"
- "We Shall Not Be Moved"
- "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round"

# Biography Project

You can use these activities with all of the Big Words books or other biographies.

Create a timeline to organize information on any person you study in a biography unit. You might want to, as a class, brainstorm the topics that are most important to find out about a person. Or, you could create a web on the following topics: Person's name, early years, major accomplishments, education, sports and hobbies, etc. (*Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: W.CCR.7*)

## Discussion Questions or Writing Prompts

If you are using the questions as writing prompts be sure that students include the following: An introduction, multiple reasons that support the main idea or opinion, and a concluding statement.

- 1 Why do you think the author chose this person to write about? Whom would you write about? Why? (*Writing: Text Types and Purposes: W.CCR.1*)
- 2 What are the most important things that you learned about this person in the text? What will you remember about this individual a year from now? Five years from now? (*Writing: Text Types and Purposes: W.CCR.2*)
- 3 Which biography is your favorite? Why? Explain your answer by using specific examples from your favorite text. (*Reading: Key Ideas and Details: RI.CCR.1*)

## Research Assignment

Research the life of someone you think is important to know about. Write a newspaper article about them and include an introduction, at least five important facts, and a conclusion. Share your article with a classmate and discuss why your selected person is important. (*Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: W.CCR.6*)

How do people find information to create biographies? Describe the process that the author used to write each story. Use online sources and related informational texts to research the topic. (*Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge: W.CCR.7*)

Great research is best done with primary sources rather than secondary ones. Primary sources are actual letters, notes, diaries, pictures, or other firsthand documentation of a person's life. As you research a famous person for a biography, be sure to list your sources and categorize them as primary or secondary. (*Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge: W.CCR.8*)



## Music

Research the type of music that was popular during your subject's life. You could look at the year they were born and also the year they died. What do you notice about the music's lyrics, instruments, beats and rhythms, and style? Create and record a song that you believe would have been popular during that time period. (*Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: SL.CCR.5*)

## Art

Create a piece of sculpture or collage that best represents the person you are studying. Use images that show important aspects of their life. Present your sculpture to the class and use it to tell the story of the selected person's life. Be sure to answer any questions that classmates ask about the sculpture at the end of the presentation. (*Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: SL.CCR.6*)



## About the Author

Doreen Rappaport ([www.doreenrappaport.com](http://www.doreenrappaport.com)) is the recipient of *The Washington Post* Children's Book Guild Award for Lifetime Achievement for the writing of non-fiction. Among her many award-winning books are *Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, illustrated by Bryan Collier, which received a Caldecott Honor Award, a Coretta Scott King Award, the Jane Addams Book Award, and an Orbis Pictus Honor Book and *Abe's Honest Words: The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, illustrated by Kadir Nelson won the prestigious Library of Virginia Whitney and Scott Cardoza Award. She lives and writes in upstate New York.



## Q&A with Doreen Rappaport

### 1 Can you describe your process for bringing your biographies to life?

The idea to tell a person's life including his/her words came from writing the first biography on Martin Luther King, Jr. I thought about *what* was the *essence* of Dr. King, how did he communicate his ideas and beliefs to the world, how did he reach other Americans, many who were not concerned with the difficulties of being black in the United States. I worked in the Civil Rights Movement in the South and in the North. I was at the March on Washington and heard the famous "I Have a Dream Speech." I was well acquainted with the power of other of Dr. King's speeches. So as I was researching the details of his life, I heard his words. I believe in the power of words to convince, to persuade, to clarify. I wanted children to hear words that inspire, that confront and declare the values I believe in, and so as I shaped my narrative for my biographies, it was natural to include words in all of them.

### 2 What have you learned about writing over your career?

Writing is a process of thinking, focusing, and refining. The hardest books to write are the ones for younger children, for you must simplify complex ideas and use fewer words, always taking care not to "dumb down." Writing cannot be rushed. To write a good book always takes longer than you want, but the time between the drafts, the time you let the manuscript sit waiting for your next revision, is crucial time for you to get a fresh eye on what works and what doesn't. It takes time. You must go over and over your words. You must have the courage to cut out phrases you love if they do not belong.

### 3 Why do you think it is important for young people to study biography?

Like all of us, the people I write about struggled with how to overcome hardship, how to shape their lives, how to confront contradictions, and how to make meaningful choices to lead lives of integrity. Martin Luther King, Jr. gathered inner strength from his early surroundings despite the degradation of racial segregation. John Lennon dealt with the pain of his abandonment by his mother by secretly dreaming of being a poet and musician. Eleanor Roosevelt had the luck to have a great teacher who helped Eleanor value herself and opened her mind to "think" and "respond" to the world around her. Abraham Lincoln refused to let his lack of formal education limit his life. John F. Kennedy struggled to create his own path out of the shadow of his older brother. I know lots of children and adults who face and faced similar problems. I believe reading about people's lives and struggles helps young people understand their own capacities for change and that change is possible.

## About the Illustrators



### Bryan Collier

#### *Martin's Big Words, John's Secret Dreams*

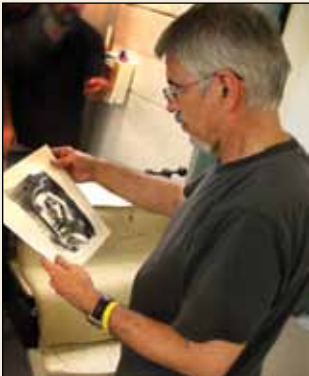
Caldecott Honor Book and Coretta Scott King Book Illustrator Award winner Bryan Collier has created art for many award-winning children's books, including his master achievements: *Rosa*; *Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*; *Freedom River*; and *John's Secret Dreams: The Life of John Lennon*.



### Kadir Nelson

#### *Abe's Honest Words*

Kadir Nelson is the illustrator of many books for children, including *Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom* by Carole Boston Weatherford, an NAACP Image Award winner, a Caldecott Honor Book, and a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award winner, and *Ellington Was Not a Street* by Ntozake Shange, a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award winner. He is also the author/illustrator of *We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball*, which won the Sibert Medal, a Coretta Scott King Author Award, and a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor.



### Gary Kelley

#### *Eleanor, Quiet No More*

Gary Kelley earned a degree in art from the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls. Among his many awards are twenty-three gold and silver medals from the Society of Illustrators and the 1991 Hamilton King Award for best illustration. Gary lives in Cedar Falls.



### Matt Tavares

#### *Helen's Big World, Jack's Path of Courage*

Matt Tavares is the illustrator several books, including *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*; *Jack and the Beanstalk* written by E. Nesbit; *Iron Hans: A Grimms' Fairy Tale*, retold by Stephen Mitchell; and *Lady Liberty: A Biography*, written by Doreen Rappaport.



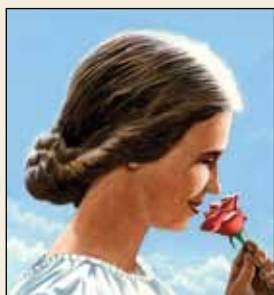
## GUIDE WRITERS

**Dawn Jacobs** has a doctorate in Special Education: Learning Disabilities, and works to improve academic outcomes for all students through teacher development, instructional design, and research in the areas of response to intervention, social support, and parent involvement.

**Tracie Vaughn Zimmer** is an award-winning children's author and literacy specialist.

Many more Teacher's Guides can be found on the Disney • Hyperion Web site at [www.disneyhyperionbooks.com](http://www.disneyhyperionbooks.com).

## Doreen Rappaport's Big Words Books



### Helen's Big World

The Life of Helen Keller

Illustrated by Matt Tavares

Tr. ed. 978-0-7868-0890-8

★ "Stirring and awe-inspiring."  
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Booklist: Youth Editor's Choice Titles  
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### Jack's Path of Courage

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Tr. ed. 978-1-4231-2272-2

Doreen Rappaport combines real-life quotes with her own lyrical prose to create a moving portrait of a beloved figure, vividly brought to life by Matt Tavares's stunning artwork.



### Eleanor, Quiet No More

The Life of Eleanor Roosevelt

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Tr. ed. 978-0-7868-5141-6

★ "Once again Rappaport celebrates a noble, heroic life in powerful, succinct prose, with prominent, well-chosen, and judiciously placed quotes that both instruct and inspire."  
—*School Library Journal* (starred review)



### Abe's Honest Words

The Life of Abraham Lincoln

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Library of Virginia Whitney and  
Scott Cardoza Award



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### Martin's Big Words

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Illustrated by Bryan Collier

Tr. ed. 978-0-7868-0714-7

Pbk. ed. 978-1-4231-0635-7

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(starred review)

Caldecott Honor Book  
Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award

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