

SHELLEY PEARSALL



JUMP INTO THE SKY

EDUCATOR GUIDE

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Alfred A. Knopf



ABOUT THE BOOK

Levi Battle, a child living in the unpredictable times of World War II, embarks on a journey across the country that changes his life and perspective on the world forever.

Levi Battle has led a sheltered life as an African American living in Chicago in 1945. But when his aunt sends him away to find his father, who is stationed at an army base in North Carolina, Levi is exposed to a world of prejudice and racism that he never knew existed. The friends he makes along the way help guide him, protect him, and teach him about who he really is. And the reunion with his father sheds light on the hardships of life as well as the power of courage, family, and love.

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

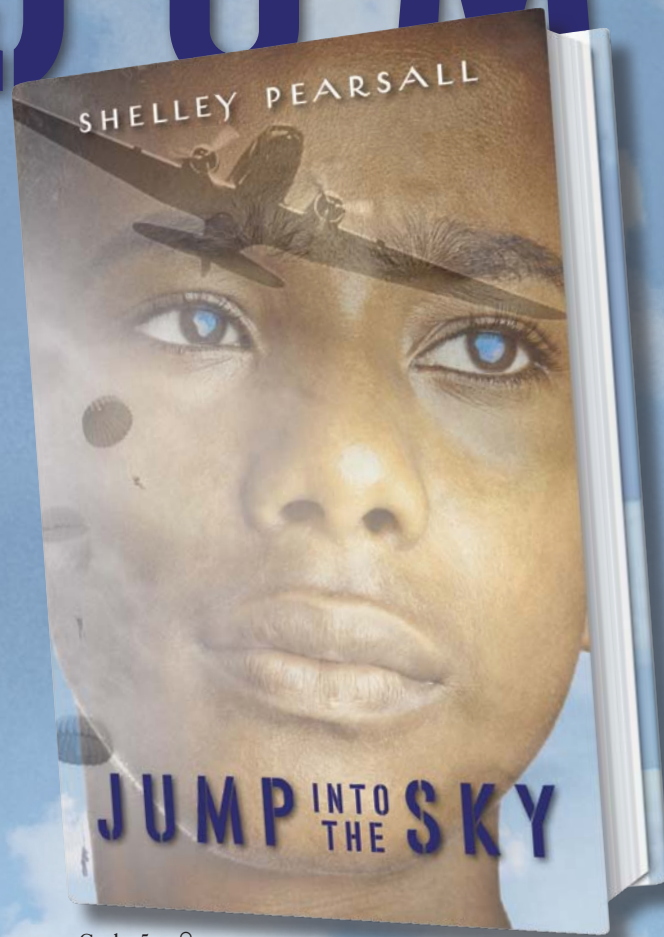
Ask students to research the causes, effects, and major events of World War II. What was the role of the United States in the war? What impact did the war have on the American people? What part did African Americans play in the war efforts? Students should use both reference books and Internet sources to gather their information. Then as a class, create a time line of World War II events to post in the classroom.

VOCABULARY/ USE OF LANGUAGE

Ask students to write down unfamiliar words, then look up their definitions and use them in sentences. They can use the context of the novel and a dictionary to help them.

blitz (p. 2)
jalopy (p. 8)
bedraggled (p. 31)
kamikaze (p. 48)
hogwash (p. 54)
silhouettes (p. 59)
razzing (p. 67)
absentmindedly (p. 70)
nonchalantly (p. 74)
apparition (p. 87)
squadron (p. 123)
sashayed (p. 127)
pandemonium (p. 154)
careened (p. 172)
forlornly (p. 177)
ambled (p. 215)
outcroppings (p. 253)
apocalypse (p. 284)
torrent (p. 286)
ricocheted (p. 295)
crescendo (p. 308)
gawked (p. 317)
furlough (p. 325)

JUMP INTO THE SKY



Grades 5 up
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GLB: 978-0-375-93699-9 • EL: 978-0-375-89548-7

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

PREJUDICE & RACISM—Levi was exposed to prejudice and racism for the first time on his trip to North Carolina, and he was shocked by what he heard and saw. How was life different for African Americans in the North and South? Do you think Levi should have been told by Aunt Odella and Uncle Otis about what to expect? Discuss the statement, “But who woulda imagined you could become an enemy in your own country.” (p. 86) How do you think Levi’s experiences in the South changed his opinion of himself and his country?

HISTORICAL FICTION: WWII—Life during World War II was difficult in many ways. Sacrifices were made not only by enlisted men, but by their families and communities as well. In what ways was Levi’s life affected by the war? What methods of communication were available for people to receive news of war events? How did Levi and the people around him respond to the dropping of the atomic bomb in Japan? Discuss the surrender of the Japanese and how life changed for Americans in the aftermath of the war.

FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS—The only relationship that Levi had with his father was through letters, and he had been convinced that the stories his father told were embellished. What were Levi’s first impressions of his father after being reunited? What did Levi learn about his father and his role in the war? How did this compare to the stories his father told in his letters? Discuss the events that took place at the end of the book that led to “the moment when the two of us—my daddy and me—felt like we were father and son.” (p. 335)

PATRIOTISM—Charles Battle led his paratrooper unit on dangerous missions to search for balloon bombs and extinguish forest fires. The men in his unit constantly questioned these missions and their role in the war, but “Boots” remained steadfast. What does this tell you about his patriotism? Do you think it was hard for Boots to remain devoted to his country given the prejudice he faced within the army? What does he teach Levi about patriotism? In what ways are you patriotic?

ABANDONMENT—There are many people in Levi’s life that have left him—his mother, father, Granny, and Aunt Odella. How has “leaving” affected Levi’s belief in love and ability to trust others? In what ways is Levi determined not to continue that pattern of abandonment? How does he eventually prove that the cycle has been broken?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

GEOGRAPHY—Levi endures a long train ride from Chicago, to Washington, D.C. to North Carolina, and marvels at the scenery he sees outside his window. What exactly would Levi have seen on his journey? Ask students to map the landscape of the country between Chicago, Washington, D.C., and North Carolina. They should work in groups to sculpt relief maps that identify physical features, such as mountains and rivers, as well as large cities that he may have passed. Students can then research the railroad system and add tracks where Levi’s train may have traveled. This activity can also be used to study Levi’s train ride from North Carolina, across the Mississippi River, and all the way to Oregon.

DRAMA—Levi meets a variety of strangers on his journey to find his father, some of which become very important in his life. We learn about each of them

from Levi’s perspective, but what would they have said about him? Assign each student to one of the characters below and ask them to think about what that character would say about their encounters with Levi. Would they think he was shy and naive or brave and adventurous? Have they thought about him since they parted ways? Then have each student “become” that character and present their thoughts to the class. They can even present in costume to make their character and presentation more realistic.

- Margie
- Man in the Jim Crow train car
- Amos “Show” Broadway
- Cal
- Peaches
- MawMaw Sands
- Mrs. Delaney
- WillaJean

SCIENCE—The paratroopers believed that they were stationed in Oregon to watch for and protect the country from Japanese balloon bombs. However, they never actually saw one of these balloons. What did they look like and how did they work? As a class, research these balloons and discuss their design, function, and efficiency. Then have each student create their own balloon model and allow them to test its ability to get from one point to another by releasing it outside.

LANGUAGE ARTS—Foreshadowing is a literary device in which an author suggests certain plot developments that might come later in the story. There are many sentences in the book that foreshadow future events. Ask students to find specific quotes from the book and determine which events they foreshadow. Some examples are:

- MawMaw Sands—believing in things you can’t see (p. 125)

- MawMaw Sands—discussion of sweetness and pain (p. 172)
- MawMaw Sands—being the keeper of secrets (p. 186)
- Levi—climbing to reach the moon (p. 204)

Students can turn these examples into a game show, by reading a quote to the class and then quizzing them on which event it foreshadowed.

ART—When Levi is leaving Chicago, he knows he won’t see his Aunt Odella again for a long time. As he watches her through the

train window, he says, “She’d turned into a photograph, like my daddy and Granny and everybody else I knew had done.” (p. 46) Ask students to think of a moment that changed their life forever, then have them turn that moment into a photograph. They can use props, draw pictures, or even use old photos to compile an image that can be captured with a camera. Print and display the finished photographs and ask students to talk about that moment and how it changed their lives.

ALSO BY SHELLEY PEARSALL

Trouble Don't Last
978-0-440-41811-5

Crooked River
978-0-440-42101-

All Shook Up
978-0-440-42139-9

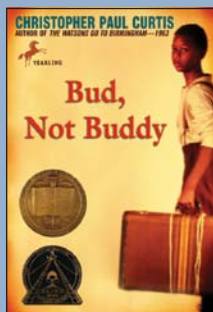
INTERNET RESOURCES

555th Parachute Infantry
www.triplenickle.com

Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia
www.ferris.edu/jimcrow

Japanese Balloon Bombs
www.japaneseballoonbombs.com

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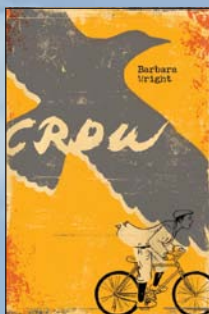
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Christopher Paul Curtis
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Christopher Paul Curtis
978-0-385-73491-2



Moon Over Manifest
Clare Vanderpool
978-0-375-85829-1



Crow
Barbara Wright
978-0-375-86928-0



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A former teacher and museum historian, SHELLEY PEARSALL is now a full-time writer. Her first novel, *Trouble Don't Last*, won the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction. She is also the author of *Crooked River* and *All Shook Up*. To learn more about the author and her work, visit ShelleyPearsall.com.

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Prepared by Jamie Simon, who has been involved in education for 10 years as both a teacher and an administrator.
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