

BOOKNOTES

EDUCATORS GUIDE

LANDMARK
BOOKS

“One of the most critically acclaimed, best-selling children’s book series ever published.”

–The New York Times

about landmark biographies

Teachers know that biographies are great learning tools. Teachers also know that many students, when presented with a biography, often discount them out of hand. So, how can teachers get this important material into the hands (and brains) of their students?

The answer is easy: **Landmark Books**. Since 1950, Landmark has offered young readers biographies that are well-written, informative, and fun. Interesting details and anecdotes help students to identify with each historical figure as a real person—one who encounters challenges, celebrates accomplishments, and endures hardships. By reading books in the Landmark series, students will not only deepen their understanding for and appreciation of history, but may very well develop a new love for biographies.

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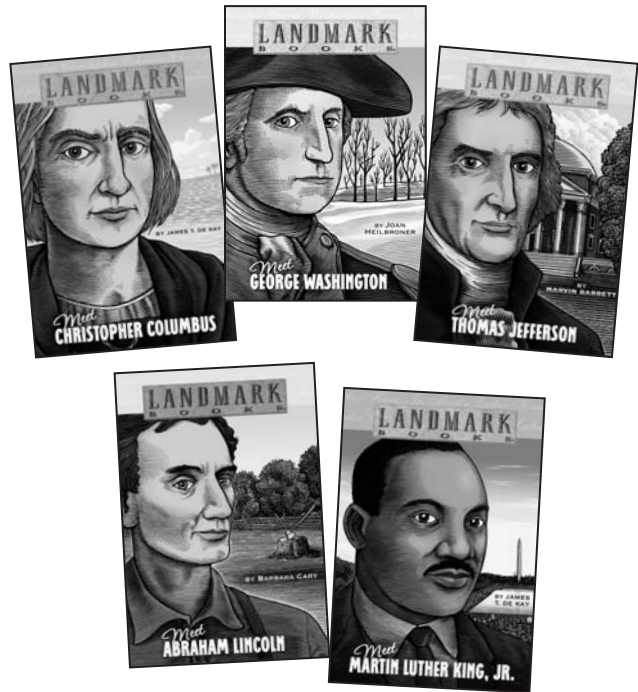
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using biographies in the classroom

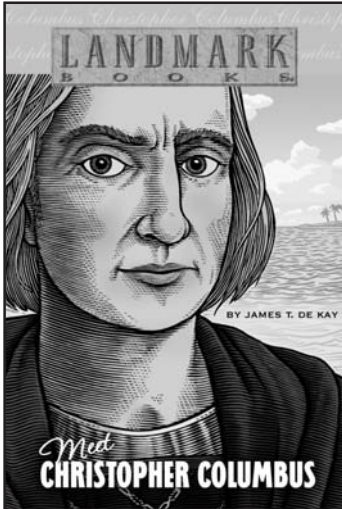
- Build biography into every unit of the curriculum. For example, if students are learning about time, have them read about Albert Einstein. If students are studying Black history, have them read about Abraham Lincoln or Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Start a biography-of-the-month book club. Each month, students can choose a biography to read and report on. At the end of the year, bind each student’s reports into a book.
- Have a “living history” day where students come to school dressed like a person they have read about. Each student will have a chance to “address” the class in character.

For a complete listing of Landmark Books for your classroom, visit

www.randomhouse.com/teachers/landmark



Meet Christopher Columbus



James T. de Kay
Illustrated by John Edens
Grades 2 up
Random House paperback:
978-0-375-81210-1 (0-375-81210-5)

about the book

In this compelling story of the world's most famous explorer, readers will sail along with Columbus on his dangerous and thrilling journey of discovery and adventure. *Meet Christopher Columbus* tells the tale of a man who, through perseverance and courage, changed the course of history.

questions for discussion

- Columbus kept two separate journals during his first voyage: one with accurate facts and figures, and another with false information which he shared with his crew. Do you think Columbus was right in giving his men false information? Why or why not?
- When Columbus landed in what he thought were the Indies, he claimed the land as the property of Spain. Do you think Columbus had the right to do this? How do you think the native peoples felt about Columbus and his crew inhabiting their land?

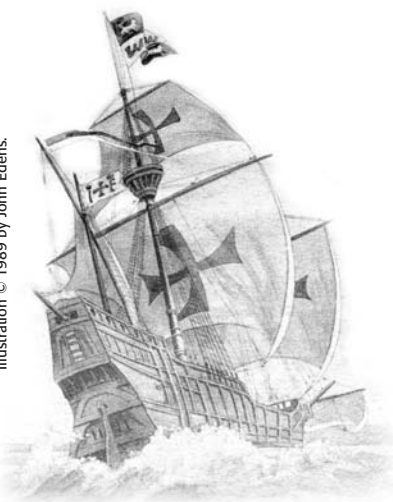
vocabulary use of language

Have students find, define, and discuss the following words: *port* (p. 2), *Arabs* (p. 9), *voyage* (p. 14), *advisors* (p. 14), *heartbroken* (p. 17), *shabby* (p. 18), *messenger* (p. 20), *rudder* (p. 26), *briskly* (p. 29), and *wreck* (p. 45).

curriculum connections

- By the time Christopher Columbus was 25 years old, he had sailed to all major ports on the Mediterranean Sea. Introduce the geography of the Mediterranean region by having students “explore” the countries that border this historic body of water. First, show students a map of the Mediterranean Sea and have them locate all of the countries that lie on it. Show students how to use the scale to determine the distance Columbus sailed from Italy to Portugal.
- During his voyage across the Western Ocean, Columbus kept a journal of his experiences. Have students set a goal that they would like to accomplish over the course of the school year. Each day or week, have students write about their experiences in trying to accomplish this goal.
- Columbus was fascinated with the adventures of the Italian explorer Marco Polo. Have students read biographies about Marco Polo and recreate his route on a world map.

Illustration © 1989 by John Edens.



internet resources

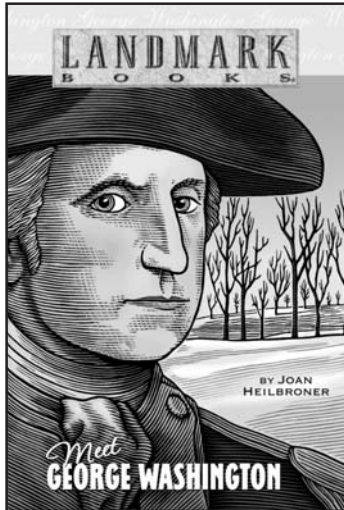
Enhanced Learning

www.enchantedlearning.com/explorers/page/c/columbus.shtml This site includes background information on Columbus's four voyages to the new world, as well as printable maps and activity pages on the explorer.

Ibiblio

www.ibiblio.org/expo/1492.exhibit/Intro.html This is the companion Web site to the Library of Congress's exhibit *1492: An Ongoing Voyage*.

Meet George Washington



Joan Heilbroner

Illustrated by Stephen Marchesi

Grades 2 up

Random House paperback:

978-0-375-80397-0 (0-375-80397-1)

vocabulary use of language

Have students find, define, and discuss the following words:

wilderness (p. 14), *surveyor* (p. 10), *colonists* (p. 24), *gentleman* (p. 33), *colony* (p. 34), *government* (p. 33), *taxes* (p. 24), *general* (p. 33), *independence* (p. 39), and *declaration* (p. 36).



Illustration © 1989 by Stephen Marchesi.

about the book

From his birth in 1732 as an English subject, to his years as General of the Continental Army, and on to his years as the first president of the United States, this biography of the father of our country tells the fascinating story of George Washington, one of the greatest and most beloved American leaders.

questions for discussion

- What character traits did Washington exhibit as a young man that would later serve him well as a general and as the first U.S. president?
- Why do you think that every state chose Washington to be the first president?
- Washington is known as the father of our country. What do you think this means?
- How do you think history would be different if Washington had not helped the English win the French and Indian War in 1759?

curriculum connections

- Share a map of the United States and point out that the original 13 colonies became the first 13 states after the Revolutionary War. Provide students with a blank template of the 13 colonies, and have them write the names of colonies in the appropriate place. Challenge students to study current maps of the Eastern United States and to locate historic sites of the Revolutionary War, such as Lexington, Trenton, Long Island, Saratoga, the Delaware River, the East River, New York City, Yorktown, Valley Forge, and Philadelphia. Have students label their maps with these important sites.
- George Washington led a very full and exciting life. As a class, create a time line of the events in Washington's life. Assign students the task of illustrating and writing captions for each major event.

internet resources

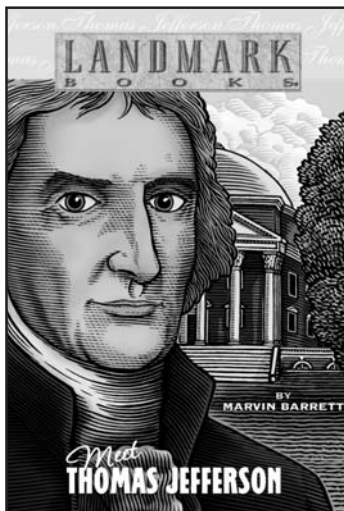
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

www.metmuseum.org/explore/gw/el_gw.htm This site from the Metropolitan Museum of Art examines in detail the famous painting by Emanuel Leutze, *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (1851).

Smithsonian Institution

www.georgewashington.si.edu/kids/teacherguide.html Visit this address for the online teachers guide to the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery's exhibit George Washington: A National Treasure.

Meet Thomas Jefferson



Marvin Barrett

Illustrated by Pat Fogarty

Grades 2 up

Random House paperback:

978-0-375-81211-8 (0-375-81211-3)

vocabulary use of language

Have students find, define, and discuss the following words:

declaration (p. 1), *independence* (p. 1), *colony* (p. 2), *plantation* (p. 2), *explored* (p. 3), *slavery* (p. 5), *handsome* (p. 8), *governor* (p. 11), *taxes* (p. 15), and *liberty* (p. 24).



Illustration © 1989 by Pat Fogarty.

about the book

This biography introduces young readers to the life of this amazing American, describes his many accomplishments, and stresses Jefferson's lifelong belief in fairness, education, and freedom.

questions for discussion

- In *Meet Thomas Jefferson*, the author writes that Jefferson “fought with words.” (p. 1) How did Jefferson use words as weapons for change?
- As a country lawyer, Jefferson never accepted payment from the poor. What does this say about Jefferson's character?
- As president, Jefferson did not like to dress up in fancy clothing. Do you think it's important for a president to act or dress in a certain way? Why or why not?

curriculum connections

- Thomas Jefferson is best known for writing the Declaration of Independence. Share with your class a reproduction of this historic document and review Jefferson's main points, such as “All men are created equal” and “Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Ask students to give reasons why the founding fathers decided to declare their independence from England. On a large sheet of paper, write a class letter to King George III declaring why they (as colonists) want to be independent from England. To conclude, have each student step forward and sign their names at the bottom of the letter.
- Have students pretend they could transport Jefferson to the present for one hour. Instruct them to write down questions that they would ask Jefferson if given the chance to interview him. Have students share their questions with the class. You can also extend this activity by having a parent, another teacher, or the school principal dress up as Jefferson and be interviewed by the students.

internet resources

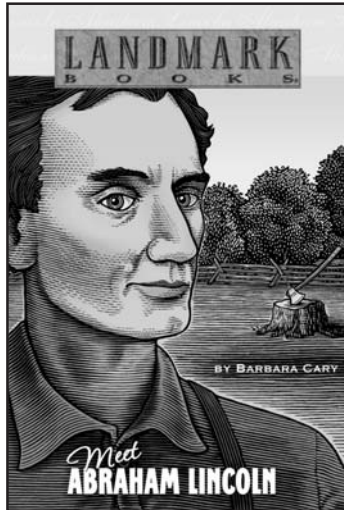
The National Archives

www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/declaration.html Charters of Freedom, part of the National Archive's Web site, showcases important American documents including the Declaration of Independence.

The White House

www.whitehouse.gov/kids/presidentsday Visit this White House Web site to see video biographies of United States presidents made by fifth graders.

Meet Abraham Lincoln



Barbara Cary

Illustrated by Stephen Marchesi

Grades 2 up

Random House paperback:

978-0-375-80396-3 (0-375-80396-3)

about the book

Readers meet the young, hardworking, curious boy from Kentucky and watch him grow into a gifted lawyer, politician, and eventually become the 16th President of the United States. Learning about the historic events of Lincoln's presidency—the Civil War, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Gettysburg Address—helps young readers discover why “Honest Abe” Lincoln is revered by people all over the world.

questions for discussion

- The young Abe asked a lot of questions as a boy. Why is it important to be inquisitive?
- How do you think Abe's trip to New Orleans influenced his feelings about slavery?
- What character traits did Lincoln show during his childhood and young adulthood that served him well as the president during wartime?

vocabulary use of language

Have students find, define, and discuss the following words: *slavery* (p. 3), *lawyer* (p. 8), *hero* (p. 20), *cross* (p. 20), *politics* (p. 28), *representative* (p. 29), *election* (p. 33), *capital* (p. 34), *Congress* (p. 42), *Confederate* (p. 50), and *Union* (p. 53).

curriculum connections

- Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas engaged in many debates during their political campaigns of 1858. Explain to students that a debate is a spoken event in which two or more people present and argue opposing sides of a given topic. Have students think about an important school issue for a class debate. The topic should be simple enough that students can choose a side: *for* or *against*. Lead students through a debate where students have the opportunity to express their viewpoints.
- When he was campaigning to be a state representative, Lincoln addressed issues that were important to people of Illinois, like improving roads and public schools. Ask students to create their own school-based platforms and hold a class election.
- After reading *Meet Abraham Lincoln*, work with students to construct a time line of the events in Lincoln's life. Collaborate with the school art teacher and have students design and create a mural that represents the events from the book.

Illustration © 1989 by Stephen Marchesi.



internet resources

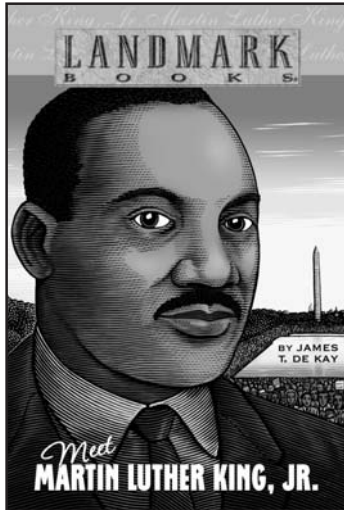
A to Z Teacher Stuff

www.atozteacherstuff.com/Themes/Abraham_Lincoln This page from this popular teachers' site is loaded with activity and project ideas to further students' learning of Abraham Lincoln.

Loogootee Elementary West

www.siec.k12.in.us/~west/proj/lincoln Students will love this site on Abraham Lincoln, designed by Indiana first graders and their teacher. It features quizzes, animation, a picture gallery, and many ideas for classroom activities and projects.

Meet Martin Luther King, Jr.



James T. de Kay

Grades 4 up
Random House paperback:
978-0-375-80395-6 (0-375-80395-5)

about the book

In *Meet Martin Luther King, Jr.*, the life of the great civil rights leader is profiled, beginning with his birth and formative years in Atlanta, Georgia, through the tumultuous 1960s. Young readers will be inspired by the strength, courage, and determination of a man who dreamt of a better world for all people.

questions for discussion

- In this biography, the author writes that Martin Luther King, Jr. “fought with words and ideas.” (p. 1) Why did King use words and ideas, instead of fists and guns, to fight for civil rights?
- How did King show courage throughout his life? How has his courage helped to make the world a better place?
- What does it mean when the author described King as a “drum major for peace”? (p. 100)

vocabulary use of language

Have students find, define, and discuss the following words: *hymns*, (p. 4), *Jim Crow*, (p. 10), *segregation*, (p. 11), *passive*, (p. 23), *resistance*, (p. 23), *independence*, (p. 23), *boycott*, (p. 34), *phonies*, (p. 87), *nonviolence*, (p. 93), and *justice*, (p. 100).

**“We must meet hate
with love.”**
—Martin Luther King, Jr.

For a complete listing of Landmark Books for your classroom, visit www.randomhouse.com/teachers/landmark

curriculum connections

- Create a Civil Rights Hall of Fame. Direct students to research key historical figures from the civil rights movement, as well as other people who have fought in the struggle for racial equality. Students can then present their knowledge by giving speeches dressed in character, creating a poster highlighting key events and images from the person’s life, or organizing an awards ceremony to celebrate the life of their subject.
- Share with students the text of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech from the 1963 March on Washington. (Text can be found at www.usconstitution.net/dream.html). Ask students to share lines from the speech that they find most meaningful, and discuss why King’s words were, and still are, so inspiring. Students can write “I Have a Dream” essays, describing their own personal dreams for a better world.
- During the 1963 March on Washington, marchers sang the song “We Shall Overcome.” Working in collaboration with the school music teacher, begin a unit on freedom songs. You may want to refer to www.turnerlearning.com/tntlearning/freedomsong/resources.html.

internet resources

The King Center

www.thekingcenter.org The King Center site contains print and interactive information on the lives of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King.

Education World

www.education-world.com/a_lesson/lesson248.shtml This Education World Web page offers more than 20 cross-curricular and cross-grade lessons for teaching about Dr. King.