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In the segregated south, a young girl thinks that she can drink from a fountain marked "Whites Only" because she is wearing her white socks.

White Socks Only Details

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Author : Evelyn Coleman , Tyrone Geter (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review White Socks Only for online ebook

Valeta says

Summary

This story is about a young African American girl who asks her grandma if she could go into town. The grandmother then shares a story of her own childhood experience. Grandmother begins by taking us back to a hot summer day when she was a young girl. On her way into town she past a chicken man, that's what people called him, since there was a rumor that if he didn't feel what a person was doing was right he could change them into a chicken. She walked swiftly passed, afraid he might change her into a chicken. Once she got into town she cracked an egg on the cement, just to see if it was hot enough to fry an egg on a sidewalk. And it was. It was so hot that she became mighty thirsty. So she went to get a drink from the fountain. However she noticed a sign that read "Whites Only". So she took off her black shoes and stepped up to get a drink in her white socks. A white man scolded her and began to take his belt off and whip her for drinking from the fountain. Just then, an old black woman took off her shoes and took a drink from the fountain. Soon Black folks from all around were taking off their shoes and getting a drink. All of a sudden everything went quiet and everyone moved aside to make a path for the chicken man. The chicken man took off his shoes and proceeded to get a drink from the fountain. Afterwards, he pointed at the white man, he wiped the tears from the girls face and sent her home. No one ever seen the white man after that day, and no one asked about the big chicken in front of the court house either.

Response

I give this book a five star rating. It presents a strong message that everyone should be treated equally despite our differences. I felt a connection to the bond between the child and her grandma. I had a close relationship with my grandma growing up and remember all the stories she told me about her upraising.

Classroom Connection

Wouldn't it be cool if a guess speaker who was an adult in the early 1950's could come to class and share her experiences just like the grandma in the book? I think an important activity would be to have the students come up with ideas of what they could do to stop discrimination.

Text Complexity

According to the School Library Journal this book is recommended for second through fourth graders.

Isabelle Jimenez says

This book is a story within a story... In the beginning the little girl asks her grandma if she can walk to town alone, knowing that this would cause her grandma to tell her the story of when she was a little girl and went to town alone. The illustrations are paintings, and they are paired with a classic font for the text. Together it creates an imagery of a story being told of an event that happened a while ago. The color scheme is bright and there aren't very intricate details, but they are blended to crate the image beautifully. It's truly amazing that something as horrible as racism and segregation can be turned to such a cute story, with chickens added for comic relief. A must read, especially for a unit on social issues.

Brittany says

Summary:

This book is about a young African-American girl who wants to go to the town by herself. Her grandma tells her that she is too young to have any business going there alone. Then she proceeds to tell a story about when she was a young girl and took a walk to town by herself. She dressed herself up in a fine white dress, white socks, and black shiny shoes. In each pocket she had an egg. Her intentions were to go to town and try to fry an egg on the cement. She made it to town and tried her experiment. To her surprise it worked! On her way home she got very thirsty. She spotted a water fountain and went to it. There was a sign that said "Whites Only". In her young mind she took this as direction to take her black shoes off so that she was only wearing white. This is what she did and as she took her sip a large, scary, white man pushed her down and yelled at her for drinking from there. He even threatened to beat her with his belt. The girl was so confused. She has on white only; a white dress and white socks. What was she doing wrong? Before she knew it, a line of African-Americans were lined up behind her with their socks off too. Before long, both the white man and the "Whites Only" sign were gone and the fountain was open to anyone.

Response:

To me this book sent a message of being yourself and going good things, then good will come to you. This girl was just being herself. She went out exploring and without meaning to fight for civil rights. It sends a message to kids that if they do what they know they are supposed to do, they will do great things.

I think that kids can really relate to the character in this book. The little girl had no idea that she was getting herself into trouble. She just wanted a drink of water. A sign reading "Whites Only" didn't click in her mind as a form of discrimination. Kids don't see each other by race, but rather as people. If more people had the mindset of kids, perhaps we could all get along a little better.

Classroom Connection:

Two ideas that came to mind when reading this are a science experiment and expanding learning on civil rights. For a science experiment I would have children work through the whole scientific process to test if an egg can really fry on hot cement. As for civil rights, I would use this book as a read aloud or have it available in a classroom library during a unit on civil rights or black history month.

Text Complexity:

The intended interest level for this book is k-4. This book has a grade level equivalent of 4.6. It has a lexile level of 530. I feel that kids in grades 4+ can read this book independently. Younger children may enjoy it as a read aloud, but not until 3rd or 4th grade would a child really be able to grasp what the book is about.

Christi says

The story starts out with a grandmother and granddaughter sitting out on a front porch, while the grandmother tells a story. The grandmother tells the story of when she snuck into town by herself, in her finest shoes and socks with two eggs in her pockets. She runs into the Chicken Man on her journey into town. When she got into town, she was amazed at all the white women in their finery. The she saw her Mama's friend, Miss Nancy. She hid behind a tree so that Miss Nancy would not see her. But while she was hiding, one of her eggs burst and the yoke made a mess down her legs and dress. She went to a statue, and broke her remaining egg. The egg's inside fell to the cement. She watched as the egg started to cook. What

they said was true, it could be so hot that an egg could fry on the sidewalk. Her goal complete, she started to head home. The sticky egg on her dress stuck to her leg as she walked. She grew thirsty. The water fountain she found said 'White Only'. She took her shoes off, and in her white socks climbed up the stool to take a sip. A larger white man found her, and grabbed her off the stool. He pushed her to the ground and pointed to the 'Whites Only' sign, asking "Can't you read, girl?" The man threatened her, and a crowd of white people gathered around as she started to cry. She did not understand why the man was so angry. An older black woman went up to the fountain, and without her shoes on took a drink. And then more black people came to drink, removing their shoes as well. The large white man continued yelling. More white people started yelling too. The large white man started hitting the black people with his belt, but everyone remained firm. Suddenly, everyone got quiet. Everyone moved as the Chicken Man made his way through. He reached the girl, took off his shoes to show a pair of clean, white socks. He stepped up and took a drink from the fountain. The Chicken Man pointed at the large white man, who remained still. The Chicken Man cleaned the little girl's face and told her she did good, and it was time to go home. The group of black people surrounded her and took her home. When they told her Mama what happened, her Mama laughed. She said that she guessed the girl was old enough to go to town by herself, because she is old enough to do some good. No one saw the large white man every again, though there was a new chicken that hung around the courthouse. The 'Whites Only' sign on the water fountain was gone forever.

This story is a fictional account of a family story. It showcases a recent time in history, where overt racism and prejudice was the norm. The story tells of a small rebellion, like many that happened throughout the country, that helped breakdown racially motivated rules.

Laquita Covington says

White Socks Only is a historical fiction story told from the viewpoint of a grandmother sharing her experience growing up in the deep south during the Jim Crow time period. After taking a trip into town by herself as a little girl, the grandmother mistakenly drinks water from a “whites only” water fountain and is confronted by a large white man. This book would be a wonderful read for second grade teachers and up, to discuss historical narratives and cultural changes over time. This book allows students to not only see the hatred that was faced during this time period through the eyes of an innocent child, but it also discusses the coming together of a community to protect one of its own members. I truly enjoyed reading this book because I was able to connect with the young girl listening to her grandmother tell stories. Even to this day I enjoy listening to my grandmother tell stories about her upbringing and the challenges her parents and grandparents faced that helped to grow our family to what it is today.

Mariah Roze says

This was a different approach to the treatment of African-Americans that did not follow the "white only" signs. And at times it was unrealistic. For example, when the "chicken man" came, the white man stopped abusing the girl.

The illustrations did not help either. They were hard to follow and not clear on what was going on.

Shelby *trains flying monkeys* says

Something very rare happened. My boy child actually recommended this book to me. We watched *The Help* last weekend and he told me that this was one of his favorite books and that I needed to pick it up. (It's a 3-6th grade book)

After I woke up from passing out I put in a request for it.

ETA: I'm adding his review to this one at the bottom.

A little girl asks her grandmother about walking to town and the grandmother starts to tell her story about a trip to town from her past. She was going to town with a couple of eggs in her pocket. She was being so careful but still ended up cracking one of the eggs in her pocket. She did manage to save one of them. What did she want to do with them? See if it was hot enough to fry eggs on the pavement.

She then heads over to a fountain to get a drink of water and wash off some of the egg that didn't make it. She doesn't realize that the "whites only" sign on it means anything other than you just need to have on white socks to drink from it. She has on her best white socks.

A white man sees her drinking and comes over and starts yelling at her, he ends up hitting the little girl. A group of white people stand around watching but the black people start coming up and drinking from the fountain. They all don't even have on white socks.

The boy child's review: We homeschool- so this is one of his projects:

White Socks Only is about a young girl that was not treated fairly because of her skin color. So the little girl was on her porch one day with her Grandma and the grandmother wanted to tell the girl a story. She told her that she was walking to town with eggs in her pocket to see if they would could because it was so hot!

So the girl got there but she was thirsty. But then she found a water fountain that said whites only. She took off her shoes revealing white socks then she stood up and started sipping at the fountain.

I personally loved this book. I was very proud of what the girl did at the end. This book made me happy in some parts but sad at others. The only bad thing about the story was that is was sorta short, I would have preferred it being longer. So if I had to give it a score of one out of five I would give it a solid 4/5.

Ashley Lopez says

White Socks Only is about a child who wanted to go out but when she asked her grandmother she was told no and then told a story about when she sneaked out on her own. When she sneaked out she went to go cook an egg on the street to see if it is really true about the heat in Mississippi. When the girl was finished she headed to the fountain to take a drink but when she saw the whites only sign she proceeded to take off her black shoes and climb onto the step stool to take a drink with white socks only. A white man came to scold at her, when he did many other black people came to take off their shoes and take a drink from the fountain as well.

The story was during the times when blacks and whites were segregated. The book features the innocence of

a young child unaware of the conditions surrounding her. Children can very well relate to this because many children do not fully understand certain things, and may even be reading the story and not understand why the child was pulled of the stool as well. This story is a great way to incorporate history with the point of view of a child.

Kali Guest says

This book is about a young African American girl who asks to go into town by herself. In turn, her grandmother tells her a story about the segregation between them and white people. She had snuck into town one summer day, and she went to a whites only fountain. She assumed this meant no shoes, not understanding it was directed at her race. Then a group of African American people followed on her footsteps, taking drinks from the fountain. This story is a fictionalized memoir because it is a fictional story that took place in the same era when segregation was big. The images in this book are blurry, I believe they are watercolor. They help to story to show what is going on, but the text enhances the experience. The character is not a well known figure, just a young girl and the plot is one that created conflict, two characteristics of historical fiction.

Kendall Hagerty says

'White Socks Only' by Evelyn Coleman is a heartbreaking story about the past of the United States. A young girl asks her grandmother if she can go into town. Her grandmother tells her a story of a time when she was a child and she went to the town. She saw a drinking fountain that said 'Whites Only' and she believed that meant her white socks. It was difficult to read this story because of the actions of some of the people in the town.

This story is fiction based on research. It is about a certain time-period and the author needed to do some research to correctly portray the characters. The grandmother is the main character with her granddaughter being a minor character. The plot of this book involves two stories. The daughter is asking to go into town; as well as the grandmother's story of her past. I think the illustrations were very impactful in this book. Each picture showed what was happening with its' realistic illustrations and darker colors. I really enjoyed reading this book and I would love to read it again.

Jala Collins says

Text-to-Text Connection

"White Socks Only" by Evelyn Coleman is a phenomenally written story just as "Freedom Summer" by Deborah Wiles. As I read both stories, I can literally visualize the stories as if I were the main character living through the settings in the stories. I like the way both stories took a quiet approach into the bigotry, racism and segregation during the time of the Civil Rights Movement in the south (Mississippi) without really mentioning it. Both stories are narrated through the lives of children. The stories set the tone of how the children were slightly oblivious of what was really happening around them. More so speaking about the understanding the hearts of men. Both stories also share their own unique way of how the children still made a difference during that time by standing up for what they simply thought was right.

Kayla Reents says

White Socks Only is a brilliant and heart touching story of a little girl during the civil rights movement. While the story is fictional, the events like separate entrances, water fountains, etc. for white and black people were a reality at this time. This book is particularly moving because it shows the point of view of a young girl during all of this. She has seen the signs before but does not truly understand the meaning behind them. When she reads "whites only" she thinks they mean only white clothes and promptly takes off her black shoes. This is inspiring to others and provides a sense of innocence to the story. The lines in this book are not very clear. The images are paintings, but are not like a picture, they are almost blurry. However, the characters have very detailed clothes. The color is bright, especially the girls white outfit to allow it to stand out.

Matthew Ciccarone says

In this story, an African American woman and grandmother tells a story to her granddaughter. As a young girl the grandmother was playing near the courthouse, shortly after meeting the chicken man. The chicken man is named as such, because it is rumored he turns the bad eggs of society into chickens. When the girl becomes thirsty, she walks to a water fountain which reads "whites only." Reading the sign through innocent eyes, she takes off her shoes to reveal her white socks, and takes a drink. A Caucasian man takes offense and pulls her away from the fountain, and more African American bystanders are compelled to take a drink. The conflict escalates, and then the chicken man shows up to show solidarity.

This is an interesting piece of historical fiction. The setting and characters are believable for the time period, except for maybe the chicken man. The subject matter is serious, but infused with humor as well. It's an appropriate story for children, while still exposing some terrible and historically accurate pieces of our country's past. Historical fiction today is less likely to take an idealized view of the past, and this story follows suit by showing the true everyday struggles of discrimination. While not as overt today, the struggles of discrimination are still relevant to us now. The conflict grows out of the nature of this time period, as is the case with good historical fiction, and the characters act believably.

Katy says

I watched this book read on storylineonline.net Actors read the stories while the pictures and words are shown. It was the story of a black girl in Mississippi who thought the "whites only" sign on a drinking fountain meant that she had to take off her shoes. When she does a white man pushes her down and threatens to beat her for drinking from the fountain. Other black people remove their shoes and drink from the fountain until the whole town is watching in shock. This story is so touching because this sweet innocent little girl only wanted a drink of water on a day that was hot enough to fry an egg on the sidewalk. The brutality of the adult male pushing her down is sickening! The honesty of this story is necessary for children to start to understand how things used to be, and so that it never happens again.

Gillianne Litvack says

“White socks Only” is a short informational picture book written by Evelyn Coleman and illustrated by Tyrone Geter. The story is about a little girl and her introduction to the history of her people and how she struggled with racism in the past. The story begins with a little girl asking her grandmother if she could go into town, so her grandmother takes this opportunity to teach her granddaughter how going into town was like for her growing up. The story switched to the perspective of her grandmother, this book portrays the emotional toll and power that resulted from racism in our country. His writing is accompanied with charming water colored pictures that take you from the page to each setting in the story. I believe this book is very inspiration and would beneficial to educating our younger generation.
