

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Addy Learns a Lesson

by
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Book Information

Connie Porter, Addy Learns a Lesson
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After escaping from a plantation in North Carolina, Addy and her mother arrive in Philadelphia, where Addy goes to school and learns a lesson in true friendship.

Topics: Interpersonal Relationships, Friendship; People, African American; People, Slaves; READNOW - Demco Media Turtleback Books, Demco Media - Read Now Grades 1-3; Series, American Girl

Main Characters

Addy Walker the main character of the story; she is learning about her new environment free from slavery

Harriet Davis a popular girl in Addy's school; her family has not struggled to win freedom

Mabel Moore Sarah's mother; she helps Mrs. Walker find a job and housing in Philadelphia

Mavis a classmate and one of Harriet's friends

Miss Dunn Addy's teacher; she is kind and understanding toward Addy

Mrs. Ford the owner of the dress shop where Momma works

Ruth Walker (Momma) Addy's mother; she gets a job as a seamstress

Sarah Moore Addy's new friend; she helps Addy adjust to her new school and neighborhood

Vocabulary

depot a train station

garret an upper room of a house, often unfurnished and unheated

infantry foot soldiers

privy an outside toilet without water

pulpit a platform used for preaching

sconces fixtures mounted on a wall to hold candles

Synopsis

On a hot August afternoon during the Civil War, young Addy Walker and her mother arrive in Philadelphia to start a new life of freedom. They are met by Mabel Moore and her daughter, Sarah, who is about Addy's age. Mrs. Moore helps Momma obtain a job as a seamstress in a shop that also has a room for Addy and Momma to live. Addy and Sarah soon become good friends. Sarah helps Addy learn how to get around in the big city and tells her all about the school they will attend where Addy can learn to read and write.

On the first day of school, Addy is nervous and worried that the other children will discover she does not know how to read or write, but she feels good having Sarah sit next to her to help. Miss Dunn, the teacher, quickly puts Addy at ease and makes her feel comfortable. The second day of school, Miss Dunn rearranges the seating and has Addy share a desk with Harriet Davis, a girl who wears beautiful dresses, has many friends, and seems confident of herself and her family's social and financial position. Sarah knows that Harriet is conceited and does not like people without money, but Addy is fascinated with her. To Addy, Harriet represents the things that she thought freedom would bring: beautiful clothes, self-confidence, and good schooling. To Harriet, however, Addy is someone who she can use to make fun of and treat menially.

One day in October, Harriet "allows" Addy to walk home with her and her group of friends. Sarah is left behind feeling alone and bitter. At first Addy is excited to be able to walk with Harriet, but soon Addy realizes that Harriet does not like her; she only wants to use her to carry her books. Later that month, when Addy wins the class spelling match that Harriet was sure to win, Addy recognizes her mistake in ignoring Sarah while being enthralled with Harriet. Addy apologizes to Sarah, telling her she was wrong to leave Sarah in order to be friends with Harriet. The two girls repair their relationship and agree to be friends.

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Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

After the spelling match, Addy opens her lunchbox and finds four cookies shaped into letters that spell L-O-V-E. Explain the significance of finding the cookies. Why are they meaningful for Addy? What is important to realize about Momma?

Addy and Momma use scraps of dough to practice spelling. Addy is teaching Momma to read as well as practicing her own spelling. The discovery of the letters in Addy's lunchbox is significant because it is an expression of Momma's love for Addy. Addy hurries out of the classroom to share the cookies with Sarah because Addy realizes that Sarah's love and friendship are important to her. After apologizing to Sarah, Addy extends her hand with the cookies to renew their friendship with love. A detail that may be overlooked is that the cookies show that Momma, too, is learning to spell.

Literary Analysis

After Addy decides to walk home with Harriet, she sees that Sarah looks hurt, but she walks with Harriet anyway. What is the conflict that Addy is facing? Why does she walk with Harriet knowing that it hurts Sarah?

Addy knows that Sarah is her friend, and she is grateful for all that Sarah has done to help her and her mother. But Addy is fascinated by Harriet. Harriet stands for all the things that Addy dreamed about freedom. Harriet's clothes are beautiful; she is good at her schoolwork; she is self-confident; her mother does not have to work; and she is popular with the other girls. Addy thinks that Harriet is nice to her because she wants to be friends. Although Sarah is also Addy's friend, Addy rationalizes her own behavior by thinking that Sarah is the one making the mistake by refusing to walk with Harriet.

Inferential Comprehension

At the end of the story Miss Dunn says Addy's bad feelings are caused because lines are drawn between some of the girls in the class. Define and describe the "lines" to which she is referring. What causes the lines to be drawn? How does Addy react to the line that is separating her from Sarah?

The line is an imaginary point over which two differing sides will not cross. The line drawn in the class is between the girls who follow Harriet's beliefs and behaviors and those who do not. Addy does not intend to hurt Sarah, yet she is drawn to Harriet. Harriet and her immediate family have never been slaves, and she feels that she is better than the girls who once were slaves. Harriet will not cross the line, and neither will Sarah. Thus, the girls in the class begin fighting over what they believe is right. Addy wants to remove the lines but does not know how. By the end of the story, she recognizes that she needs to act upon her beliefs. For that reason, she runs to Sarah and apologizes.

Constructing Meaning

After Addy correctly spells her first word in the spelling match, Harriet leans over and whispers, "I'm going to win, and my mother said I can have friends over after school for ice cream to celebrate. She said I could bring five girls. I might ask you." What is Harriet trying to accomplish by saying that to Addy?

Harriet wants to win the spelling match. When she sees that Addy is spelling correctly, she thinks she can bribe Addy into missing a word so that Harriet will win. She thinks that Addy will want to come to her house afterwards for the celebration badly enough to not out-spell Harriet.

Teachable Skills

Comparing and Contrasting Addy dreamed about being free in the North. She imagines that freedom will allow her to read and write and that her life will be better. One of the reasons she admires Harriet is that Harriet represents all that Addy thought freedom would bring her. Have the students make a list of all the things they believe

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Addy thinks represents freedom and the reasons why. Then have them develop a list of all the things that freedom means to each of them and the reasons why. The class can work together to compile a master list of all the similarities and differences of the idea of freedom. They can use the list of similarities and differences to create a poster that includes visual representations of freedom, such as the flag, a school building, etc. The poster should be displayed in the classroom to stimulate further comment and discussion.

would have needed to depend upon others in the church to support them while Momma searched for a job. Addy may not have become as close to Sarah as she did. The students should re-write the event in the story based on the change and the predicted outcome.

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors Harriet tells Addy she is named after Harriet Tubman, who helped run the Underground Railroad. Have the students imagine that the country celebrates a Harriet Tubman Day. The students can work in pairs to do research on Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad and prepare a presentation to the class. The presenters should act as though they are guest speakers invited to the class to explain the meaning and significance of the holiday. Encourage them to be creative in the presentations. For example, one pair could have one student be Harriet Tubman and the other student give a background introduction of her to the class.

Understanding Characterization On the way home from seeing the soldiers, the class sings "Rally 'Round the Flag." Have each student select one of five characters that are substantially developed: Addy, Momma, Sarah, Harriet, and Miss Dunn. Each student should then describe the character using the format of a familiar tune, such as "Twinkle, Twinkle" or "Row Your Boat." Have each student then sing the description of the character to the class. Discussion should follow focusing on the identified qualities of the different characters.

Making Predictions Many of the events in the story take place because of preceding events. For example, Momma gets a job as a seamstress because Mrs. Ford helps her. Have each student select an event in the story, change the circumstances, and then predict a different outcome. For example, if Mrs. Ford had not helped Momma get a job, Momma and Addy