

Teacher's Guide for *The Liberation of Gabriel King*, by K.L. Going

Note to Teachers

Kids often ask how I come up with the ideas for my books. It's never a straightforward process. The first draft of *The Liberation of Gabriel King* was written by hand in a notebook and then set aside. It wasn't until much later, after 9/11, that I took the story out again and decided to revise it.

I was working in publishing at the time, and after that traumatic event we were inundated with manuscripts dealing with 9/11. I couldn't help wishing there were more books being submitted that dealt with the topic of fear in a more general sense. That's when I remembered my "shelved" novel about two kids who decide to overcome all their fears in the course of one summer. The time was right to take it out again.

We all have fears - big ones, small ones, funny ones, and serious ones - and *The Liberation of Gabriel King* helps kids to work through their fears, while also learning some history and hopefully having a great time reading or listening to the story.

I hope the questions and activities below will help you bring Gabe and Frita to life in your classroom!

--KL



Questions for Discussion by Chapter

Chapter 1

Vocabulary word: liberation

History Activity

Research the Bicentennial. Find and display pictures of the celebrations around the classroom. You can do the same for the 1970s.

Q: Gabe is afraid of moving into a new wing of his school. Have you ever had to make a big change at home or at school? How did you feel about it?

Chapter 2

Vocabulary word: waylaid

Q: Have you ever had to deal with a bully? How did you deal with them? Have you ever bullied someone else? How do you think that made them feel? Why did you do it?

Chapter 3

Vocabulary word: justified

Q: Frita uses her fists to fight back against the bullies. Do you think that was the right thing to do? Why or why not?

Q: Mr. Evans calls Frita a nigger. Have you ever heard anyone use that word? Has anyone ever called you a name that hurt?

Chapter 4

Q: Gabe and his momma get real mad at each other. Have you ever been real mad at one of your parents? How did you work it out?

Chapter 5

Q: Is there a difference between kids calling Gabe shrimp and shorty and Mr. Evans calling Frita a nigger? Why are names that have to do with race so hurtful?

Chapter 6

History Activities

- Discuss the Olympics. Where and when were the last Olympics held? Where and when will the next ones be? Ask a gym teacher to do a mock-Olympics with the students.
- Who were Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter? What information can students find on-line about them? After the information is collected hold a mock election.

Chapter 7

General Activity

Challenge students to make a fear list that can be either shared or kept secret.

Chapter 8

Q: Why does Frita “take off running” and leave Gabe alone on the old dirt road?

Q: Look at the sentence at the top of page 42. “There are slick snakes that slither by and spider webs with giant yellow and black spiders...” What is it called when the same sound is used over and over again?

Chapter 9

Vocabulary words: segregation, faith, integrity

History Activities

- Discuss Watergate. What information can students find on-line? Why might a President do something illegal?
- What was television like in the 1970's? How was it different from today?
- In addition to Watergate, Gabe's Pop is upset about Vietnam and the cost of gasoline. Discuss with students the historical background of these events.

Q: Why would Jimmy Carter stand up to the White Citizens Council? Have you ever stood up for something you believed in?

Chapter 10

General Activity

Look up the *Argiope aurantia*. Draw a picture of this spider, including as many of the facts you've learned about it as possible.

Chapter 11

Vocabulary words: portent, racist

History Activity

Find out who the Black Panthers were. What did they believe in? Why might Terrance want to join them instead of going to college?

Chapter 12

General Activity

Just for fun, make a class sundae featuring everyone's least favorite foods. On separate pieces of construction paper, have everyone draw and cut out their least favorite food. Make a separate sundae dish with ice cream and pin it to a bulletin board. Have each child add their cut-out, leaving everyone with one gross sundae!

Chapter 13

Q: Have you ever had a pet die? How did that make you feel? Is it okay to kill bugs?

Chapter 14

Q: Why do you think Mrs. Wilson told Frita to stay away from the Evans trailer?

Chapter 15

Vocabulary word: courage

Q: Terrance tells Frita that black people won't be going to the fireworks in Hollowell. Earlier in the book, Gabe's parents tell him he shouldn't go to

Frita's church because that church is for black people. Why do you think people of different races might choose to do things separately?

Chapter 16

Vocabulary words: perseverance, confidence, oppression

General Activity

What might it mean to be a Peace Warrior? Design and draw membership badges for this club. Make a list of all the things the Peace Warriors might do. What would be the qualifications for membership?

Chapter 17

Vocabulary word: insight

Q: Do you think Terrance is scary? Why or why not? When should you trust your instincts if you feel scared of someone and when is it okay to get to know them?

Chapter 18

General Activity

Have your own Bicentennial celebration. Measure out a sixty foot cherry pie (if you have enough room!). Bring in red, white and blue foods. Tell everyone to wear clothes of red, white and blue. Retell the story of the first Fourth of July.

Chapter 19

Q: Does the Ku Klux Klan exist today? What do you think we can do about groups like this one?

Chapter 20

Q: Even adults have things they are afraid of. What can Gabe do to help his Pop be brave?

Chapter 21

"Mr. Evans's words were like the sticky strands of a spider web. Even though they seemed tiny, we knew they could spread everywhere..."

Q: How can small things cause big problems or lead to big solutions? Can you think of any examples of when this has happened?

General Activity

Make a class spider web with one small thing in the middle (good or bad) such as calling a name or giving a compliment, then draw all the strands of the web showing how that thing could affect many other things. Maybe the person who gets complimented goes home and pets their cat, or buys their little sister an ice cream cone, etc.

Chapter 22

Q: Is Frita's fear list different from Gabe's? How is it different?

Q: What's the difference between not being scared and being brave?

Chapter 23

Q: What do you think happens to Gabe and Frita after the book ends? What do you think happens to Duke and Frankie?

Q: Why didn't Gabe and Frita tell on Duke and Frankie at the end?

General Activity

Have students write a class letter to me! I'd love to hear their thoughts about the book. Students can also write individual letters. I may not have time to write individual responses, but I will definitely write something back to the entire class.

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