

MELODY

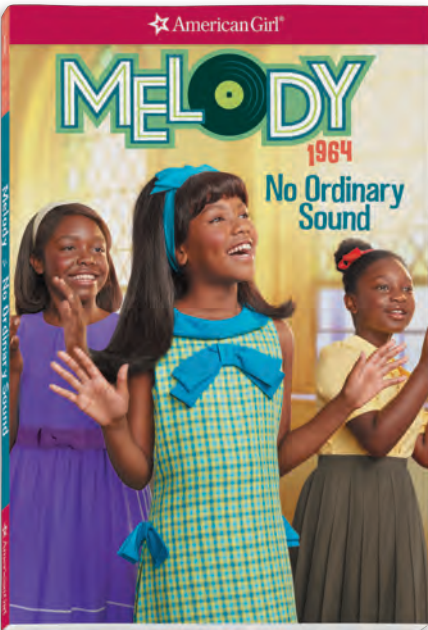
1964



A Teacher's Guide to

No Ordinary Sound

*A story about the
civil rights movement
in America*



About the Book

Growing up in Detroit in 1963, Melody Ellison is looking forward to singing a solo in the Youth Day program at church. Her family offers advice as she struggles to select—and perfect—the right song. When her family attends the Walk to Freedom, nine-year-old Melody is inspired by the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. She’s also influenced by her oldest sister, a college student who is taking action to make things fair for black people. When Melody experiences discrimination herself, she decides to add her voice to those who are speaking up about civil rights by choosing a powerful song for Youth Day: “Lift Every Voice and Sing.” A few weeks before Melody’s solo, a church bombing in Birmingham kills four little girls. Melody is devastated. She can’t speak and she can’t sing. She can’t even walk into her own church. With her family’s love and patience, Melody finds her voice and the strength to use it. (Lexile measure: 650L)

About This Guide

Elementary students often have some knowledge of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The layered discussion questions ask students to think about racial discrimination and what it takes to change public opinion. There are natural connections to the language arts, social studies, science, art, drama, and music curricula. This guide encourages students to be careful readers without diminishing the pleasure they gain from reading. It is recommended that students read the entire book before engaging in a detailed study of the novel.

Common Core Standards

Common Core Standards are applied to the discussion and activities to aid schools that use the standards. Those schools that don’t use the standards should simply ignore them and recognize that the guide supports a quality reading program.

A Note About Language

When Melody’s story takes place, the terms “Negro,” “colored,” and “black” were all used to describe Americans of African descent. All of those words are used in *No Ordinary Sound*. Today, “Negro” and “colored” can be offensive because they are associated with racial inequality. “African American” is a more contemporary term, but it wasn’t commonly used until the late 1980s. Additionally, the term “Big Momma” is a sign of respect for Melody’s grandmother. It is not a reference to her size but to the fact that she’s the oldest mother in the family.

Pre-Reading Activity

Divide the class into small groups and give them the following vocabulary words to look up: civil rights, discrimination, segregation, activism, prejudice, stereotype, protest, boycott, integration, emancipation, oppression. Ask each group to explain the definitions or give examples to the class.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Reading Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 3-4.1, RI. 3-4.2, RI. 3-4.3; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-4.2; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 3-4.6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 3-4.7.

Thematic Connections

Family

Describe the Ellison family. What makes them a close-knit family? What are their values? How do Mr. and Mrs. Ellison instill these values in their children? Describe Melody, Dwayne, Lila, and Yvonne's respect for their grandparents. Explain how Big Momma and Poppa support their grandchildren and contribute to raising them.

Sibling Relationships

Describe Melody, Lila, Dwayne, and Yvonne. Identify their talents. Big Momma says, "Everybody's got a right to shine." (p. 9) How are Melody and her siblings each different in the way they "shine"? Melody and Dwayne have a special relationship. What factors contribute to their relationship? What does Yvonne contribute to the education of her younger siblings? Each of the Ellison children has important decisions to make. How do they help one another in the decision-making process? When Melody loses her voice before the Youth Day program, how do her siblings help her regain it?

Leadership

Miss Esther tells Melody, "You're never too old or too young to stand up for justice." (p. 57) This story depicts different types of leaders and leadership: in the family, in school and church, and at the community and national levels. Which leaders influence Melody? In what ways do they inspire her? One of the story's themes is that bringing about change takes many kinds of leadership and contributions large and small. How does the story show this? In what ways does Melody stand up for what she believes?

Music

Discuss the role that music plays in the story. What impact does it have on Melody's relationship with her brother and grandmother? How does Melody's opinion of Diane change because of music? Why is Melody nervous about singing a solo if she's comfortable singing in church? In what ways does Melody "use her voice"? Discuss what Dwayne means when he says, "I have to use my talent to become a famous singer if I want things to be different." (p. 67) Why does he think of the music of Motown as his chance for freedom?

Racism

Define racism. Why was it racist for Poppa to be called "boy"? (p. 11) Explain why Big Momma and Poppa left Alabama. Discuss how the bank discriminates against Yvonne and why Melody decides to close her savings account at that bank. How does Melody's memory of her experience with the soda machine in Alabama contribute to her thoughts and actions? Analyze Melody and Dwayne's experience in the department store in Detroit. What impact does this incident have on Melody?

Activism/Protests

What does activism mean? How does Yvonne become an activist as a college student? Explain how her experience registering black people to vote motivates her to continue her activism in Detroit in the summer of 1963. Discuss the symbolism of Yvonne's Afro. What is her family's reaction to this new hairstyle? How does Yvonne get her family involved in the Walk to Freedom in Detroit? Why are Charles and Tish reluctant to participate? Why is Dwayne? How do his views change by the end of the novel? Discuss Melody's own form of protest against the bank that didn't hire Yvonne.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 3-4.1, RL. 3-4.3; Craft & Structure RL. 3-4.6; Reading Informational Text: Integration of Knowledge

& Ideas RI. 3-4.7; *Language: Conventions of Standard English* L. 3-4.1; *Knowledge of Language* L. 3-4.3; *Vocabulary Acquisition & Use* L. 3-4.5; *Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration* SL. 3-4.2, SL. 3-4.3; *Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas* SL. 3-4.6; *Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing* W. 3-4.4, W. 3-4.5.

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts

Ask students to read *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* by Christopher Paul Curtis. Then have them write a short essay that compares and contrasts the way Kenny and Melody each deal with the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. Who helps them on their respective journeys?

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 3-4.9; *Writing: Text Types & Purposes* W. 3-4.1.

Social Studies

Have students take a virtual field trip to the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (www.bcri.org) or the National Civil Rights Museum (civilrights museum.org). Ask them to design a brochure or poster for schoolchildren about what they can expect to see.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-4.2.

Define historical fiction and discuss which parts of Melody's story really happened. Historical events referenced in her story include the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham (nps.gov/articles/16thstreetbaptist.htm), the Walk to Freedom (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detroit_Walk_to_Freedom), the March on Washington (history.com/topics/black-history/march-on-washington), as well as the Children's Crusade in Birmingham. Have students research one of these events and write a news story about it. Remind them to include who, what, when, where, and why, along with quotes by key personalities.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-4.2; *Research to Build & Present Knowledge* W. 3-4.7, W. 3-4.9.

Art

Ask students to design a poster or sign that Melody might have carried in the Walk to Freedom. (Students could also design a poster calling attention to a current issue in their own community.) Have students look for examples of posters and signs in the websites listed above. Point out that effective signs and posters often use only a few strong words or a simple image to make their point.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 3-4.7.

Music

Civil rights events almost always included the singing of gospel and freedom songs. "Lift Every Voice and Sing," sometimes called the Black National Anthem, is the song that Melody sings at Youth Day. Read aloud the scene at the beginning of chapter 9 (p. 71-72) where Melody and Yvonne discuss what the lyrics mean. Then divide the class into small groups and ask them to listen to the song on this website: youtube.com/watch?v=0fdMbRwGAsg. Encourage the groups to discuss the meaning of the rest of the lyrics. Sing the song as a class.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Writing: Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 3-4.8; *Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration* SL. 3-4.1.

Listen to the sounds of Motown at youtube.com/playlist?list=PL48C34A43BD992628. Do the

students recognize any artists or songs? Have students explore the Motown Museum at motownmuseum.org. After they read the history of Motown, have them write a paragraph about why they think Motown earned the distinction of “The Sound That Changed America.”

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-4.1; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 3-4.7.

Drama

Melody’s family shares a meal every Sunday after church. Have students role-play the conversation the family has in chapter 2. Students can read aloud the dialogue from the book as reader’s theater, or they can create their own dialogue to show how different characters in the story view segregation, discrimination, and activism. To relate this conversation to the present day, tell the class to imagine a reunion of Melody’s family today. Stage another dinner conversation that they might have about racial issues in today’s society. What has changed since 1964? What has not?

Have the class read aloud Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech from the March on Washington (archives.gov/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf). Divide the speech into segments so that each student reads three or four sentences. After each paragraph or so, pause and discuss what Dr. King was saying, and how he said it. (This assignment might require more than one class session to complete.)

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 3-4.4.

Vocabulary/Use of Language

The vocabulary in the novel isn’t difficult, but students should be encouraged to jot down unfamiliar words and try to define them using clues from the context. Such words may include *corsage* (p. 32), *radical* (p. 44), *harmonized* (p. 57), *oppressed* (p. 72), *transform* (p. 75), *lozenges* (p. 105), and *vestibule* (p. 123).

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Reading Literature: Craft & Structure RL. 3-4.4; Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 3-4.4, L. 3-4.4c.

Online Resources

- mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_march_on_washington_for_jobs_and_freedom/
This site offers information about the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.
- www.metrolyrics.com/the-black-national-anthem-lyrics-james-weldon-johnson.html
This site gives the lyrics of “Lift Every Voice and Sing.”
- www.motownmuseum.org
This is the official Motown Museum site.



About the Author

Denise Lewis Patrick grew up in Natchitoches, Louisiana. Every week, Denise and her brother went to the library, where she would read and dream in the children’s room. She wrote and illustrated her first book when she was ten, sewing the pages together on her mom’s sewing machine. Today, Denise lives in New Jersey, but she loves returning to her hometown and taking her four sons to all the places she enjoyed as a child.

More Stories About Melody

- *Never Stop Singing*—Find out what happens after *No Ordinary Sound*. (Lexile measure: 680L)
- *Real Stories from My Time: The March on Washington*—A nonfiction book about the historic civil rights march that includes fiction segments featuring Melody’s perspective.

Key to Common Core Standards Referenced in This Guide

Reading Literature

Key Ideas & Details

RL. 3-4.1—Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RL. 3-4.3—Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text.

Craft & Structure

RL. 3-4.4—Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text.

RL. 3-4.6—Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.

Integration of Knowledge & Ideas

RL. 3-4.7—Make connections between the text of a story or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

RL. 3-4.9—Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events.

Reading Informational Text

Key Ideas & Details

RI. 3-4.1—Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RI. 3-4.2—Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.

RI. 3-4.3—Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historic text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

Integration of Knowledge & Ideas

RI. 3-4.7—Use information gained from illustrations (photographs) and the words in the text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., interactive elements on Web pages).

Language

Conventions of Standard English

L. 3-4.1—Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Knowledge of Language

L. 3-4.3—Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

Vocabulary Acquisition & Use

L. 3-4.4—Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade-level reading and content.

L. 3-4.4c—Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print

and digital, to find the pronunciation and determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases.

L. 3-4.5—Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meaning.

Speaking & Listening

Comprehension & Collaboration

SL. 3-4.1—Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade-level topics and texts with peers and adults in small and large groups.

SL. 3-4.2—Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

SL. 3-4.3—Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.

Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas

SL. 3-4.4—Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.

SL. 3-4.6—Speak in complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.

Writing

Text Types & Purposes

W. 3-4.1—Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.

W. 3-4.2—Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

Production & Distribution of Writing

W. 3-4.4—With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

W. 3-4.5—With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

W. 3-4.6—With guidance and support from adults, use technology to produce and publish writing (using keyboarding skills) as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

Research to Build & Present Knowledge

W. 3-4.7—Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

W. 3-4.8—Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.

W. 3-4.9—Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

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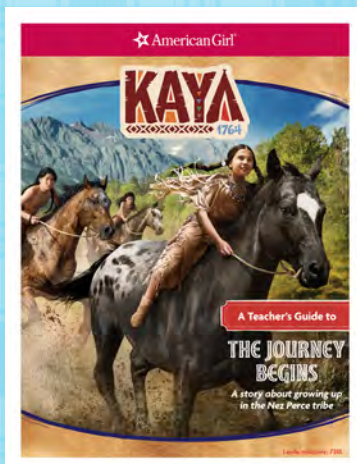
Cover image by Blake Morrow. Grateful acknowledgement is made to [iStock.com/Karenfokyphotography](https://www.istock.com/Karenfokyphotography) for permission to use images in the cover design.

Characters That Teach

American Girl's line of historical fiction for middle-grade readers was originally conceived and developed by a former classroom teacher. These books and characters are grounded in thorough historical research and bring history to life for children.

Each historical character's story helps readers make connections. Girls and boys can explore the past, find their place in the present, and think about the possibilities the future can bring. They will see how a young person can stand up for what he or she cares about most: helping others, protecting the earth, and overcoming injustice. Through these stories, young readers will discover how staying true to their own beliefs helps define *their* character.

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