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1941



A Teacher's Guide to

The Spirit of Aloha

*A story about Pearl Harbor
and World War Two
in America*

Lexile measure: 610L



About the Book

Nanea Mitchell lives in Honolulu on the island of Oahu in the territory of Hawaii with her parents and her older brother and sister. When Japan bombs Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, America enters World War Two. The peaceful life that the Mitchells and their neighbors have enjoyed is replaced by martial law. Schools are closed, strict curfews are established, and mandatory blackouts are enforced. Rumors of additional attacks and frequent air-raid drills have everyone on edge. Nanea and her best friends, Lily and Donna, want to help the war effort. They organize a bottle drive for the Red Cross, which needs containers for the collection and storage of blood. But there are bigger problems the girls can't solve. Nanea's brother wants to enlist. Lily's family, who is Japanese, faces discrimination. Donna and her mother fear they may be ordered to move to the mainland. Amid the changes and uncertainties, Nanea wonders how her beautiful island will ever be the same again. (Lexile measure: 610L)

About This Guide

Nanea's story begins in 1941, the year Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. This event led the United States to enter a war that had been raging in other parts of the world for several years. Because elementary students have yet to study this period, the novel offers a glimpse of the sacrifices that the people on Oahu faced during the war. The layered discussion questions ask students to think deeply about the themes of family, friendship, diversity, prejudice, discrimination, courage, responsibility, safety, sacrifice, and community. There are natural connections to the language arts, social studies, science, and arts 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.

Pre-Reading Activity

Nanea's story takes place in 1941 as the United States enters World War Two after Japan bombs Pearl Harbor. Establish the context for the time and place of the novel by asking students to read "Inside Nanea's World." (p. 128-131) Then ask them to share what they learned about life in Hawaii after this devastating event. What sacrifices did people make? Have the students write a paragraph about what they believe was the most difficult sacrifice. Ask them to give reasons for their opinion and write a concluding sentence. Allow time in class to share their paragraphs.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts Reading Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 2-4.2; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 2-4.1; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 2-4.1, L. 2-4.2; Knowledge of Language L. 2-4.3.

Thematic Connections

Family

Discuss the difference between immediate and extended family. Describe Nanea's immediate family. Who are her extended family? How do they support one another in times of crisis? Nanea is the youngest in her family. How does she view her role at the start of the book, and how does it change throughout the story?

Friendship

Discuss the friendship between Nanea, Lily, and Donna. Why are they called the Three Kittens? Their friendship is occasionally challenged. At what point does their friendship seem most at risk? What reunites them? Donna and her mother are forced by the U.S. government to leave Hawaii because they are considered "nonessential citizens." Compare and contrast this to how Lily's family is treated.

Diversity

Define diversity. How are the Kittens a diverse group? Explain how Nanea's family celebrates the diverse population in their neighborhood. The Japanese custom is to leave shoes at the door. Eventually this became a custom throughout Hawaii. Describe the customs unique to Hawaii. How do the Sudas and the Hills adopt these customs?

Prejudice and Discrimination

Define prejudice and discrimination. How do prejudices lead to discrimination? How is the U.S. government guilty of prejudice and discrimination toward the Japanese after Pearl Harbor is bombed? Why is it wrong to assume that Uncle Fudge is the enemy simply because he is Japanese? Lily's brother finds "Go home, Jap" (p. 69) written in soap on his windshield. How is this a sign of prejudice and hatred?

Responsibility

When the story begins, Nanea is eager to take on "grown-up responsibilities." (p. 4) Discuss the ways that Nanea becomes more responsible as the story progresses. How does her perspective about responsibility change? Why does her father say, "You're not the baby of the family anymore"? (p. 120)

Safety

Nanea has always felt safe at home. Explain why it feels unsafe after the events of December 7. Discuss why the quiet inside the house seems frightening. Nanea's grandparents stay with her family after Pearl Harbor is bombed. How does their presence make Nanea feel a little safer? Discuss the fear that overtakes Lily when the government takes her dad away.

Sacrifice

How does life on Oahu change after the bombing of Pearl Harbor? What sacrifices do the people of Oahu make? Describe Nanea and her family's adjustment to the changes. What do the Kittens sacrifice? Refer to the glossary of Hawaiian words at the end of the novel. What does *kokua* mean? How do the characters in the novel practice *kokua*? Explain how *kokua* is especially important after Pearl Harbor is bombed. Discuss how Nanea and Lily do *kokua* for Donna.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 2.1, RL. 2.3, RL. 3-4.1, RL. 3-4.3; Craft & Structure RL. 2-4.5; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 2-4.1, SL. 2-4.2, SL. 2-4.3; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 2-4.1; Knowledge of Language L. 2-4.3.

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts

A simile is a figure of speech where two things are compared, often using *like* or *as*. Explain the following simile: “Nanea felt like a tiny canoe on a choppy sea.” (p. 45) Then ask students to write a simile that describes Nanea’s and Lily’s feelings as they say good-bye to Donna.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 3-4.5.

The *Star-Bulletin* interviews Nanea about the bottle drive for the Red Cross. Ask students to write the feature story that appears in the newspaper. The stories should include quotes from Lily and Donna and Red Cross workers. Remind students to include who, what, when, where, why, and how. Encourage peer editing.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 2-4.3; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 2-4.5; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 2-4.1, L. 2-4.2; Knowledge of Language L. 2-4.3.

Social Studies

Discuss the many changes brought about by the war to the people on the island. Then use books in the library or sites on the Internet to identify other ways Americans were asked to sacrifice and contribute to the war effort. To help their community understand some of the sacrifices people on the mainland were making for the war effort, the Kittens might have made posters like the ones on this website: nh.gov/nhsl/ww2/sacrifice.html. Have students make similar posters and write a paragraph that explains the poster they created.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 2-4.2; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 2-4.7; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 2-4.1, L. 2-4.2; Knowledge of Language L. 2-4.3.

Have students take a virtual field trip to the Pearl Harbor National Memorial (nps.gov/valr/index.htm). Instruct them to outline the main features of the memorial park. Then ask them to write a one-page paper that explains the design of the USS Arizona Memorial.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Reading Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 2-4.2; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RI. 2-4.7; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 2-4.2; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 2-4.1, L. 2-4.2; Knowledge of Language L. 2-4.3.

Music and Dance

Nanea takes hula lessons and performs at the USO. Have students learn about the history of hula, the stories the dances tell, the costumes, and the instruments used for hula dancing by watching the video at huladancehq.com. Then divide the class into groups and ask each group to develop a presentation that explains hula to people visiting Hawaii.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W. 2-4.6.

Drama

Have students think about the drama created in Hawaii from the moment the Islanders identify the Japanese planes flying overhead on December 7. Divide the class into three groups and ask them to

write a dramatic play in three acts based on chapters 4, 5, and 6: Group One—A Sky Full of Planes; Group Two—The Real McCoy; Group Three—Missing. Perform the play.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 2-4.3; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 2-4.7; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 2-4.1; Knowledge of Language L. 2-4.3; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 2-4.4.

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 *ukulele* (p. 2), *essence* (p. 6), *gangplank* (p. 16), *diplomats* (p. 25), *deadline* (p. 27), *maneuvers* (p. 31), *mobsters* (p. 42), *precaution* (p. 46), *disheveled* (p. 54), *rummaged* (p. 61), *evacuation* (p. 65), *precinct* (p. 71), and *pantomimed* (p. 124).

Have students discuss the many meanings of aloha. Then have them identify places in the novel where aloha is used to mean hello, good-bye, love, and compassion.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Reading Literature: Craft & Structure RL. 2-4.4; Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 2-4.4.

Online Resources

- www.nationalww2museum.org
The website for the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana
- www.nps.gov/wwii/index.htm
The website for the National World War II Memorial in Washington, DC
- pearl-harbor.com/arizona/arizona.html
The website for the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor in Honolulu, Hawaii

About the Author



Kirby Larson is the author of several novels, including the Newbery Honor book *Hattie Big Sky*, and *Dash*, winner of the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction. With her friend Mary Nethery, she has written two award-winning picture books. She lives in Kenmore, Washington, with her husband and Winston the wonder dog. In her free time, she hunts for beach glass and tidbits from history that she can turn into stories for young readers. Visit Kirby at www.kirbylarson.com.

More Stories About Nanea

- *Hula for the Home Front*—Find out what happens after *The Spirit of Aloha*. (Lexile measure: 640L)
- *Real Stories from My Time: Pearl Harbor*—A nonfiction book about the bombing of Pearl Harbor that includes fiction segments featuring Nanea's perspective.

Key to Common Core Standards Referenced in This Guide

Reading Literature

Key Ideas & Details

RL. 2.1—Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

RL. 2.3—Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

RL. 3-4.1—Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring to the text as the basis for the answers.

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. 2-4.4—Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text.

RL. 2-4.5—Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

Reading Informational Text

Key Ideas & Details

RI. 2-4.2—Identify the main topic of a multiparagraph text as well as the focus of specific paragraphs within the text.

Integration of Knowledge & Ideas

RI. 2-4.7—Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).

Language

Conventions of Standard English

L. 2-4.1—Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

L. 2-4.2—Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Knowledge of Language

L. 2-4.3—Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

Vocabulary Acquisition & Use

L. 2-4.4—Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade-level reading and content.

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

Speaking & Listening

Comprehension & Collaboration

SL. 2-4.1—Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade-level

topics and texts with peers and adults in small and large groups.

SL. 2-4.2—Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

SL. 2-4.3—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. 2-4.4—Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.

Writing

Text Types & Purposes

W. 2-4.1—Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic they have written about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement.

W. 2-4.2—Write information/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

W. 2-4.3—Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events; include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings; use temporal words to signal event order; and provide a sense of closure.

Production & Distribution of Writing

W. 2-4.5—With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.

W. 2-4.6—With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

Research to Build & Present Knowledge

W. 2-4.7—Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

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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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