

★ American Girl®

Kit

1934

A Teacher's Guide to

Read All About It!

*A story about
the Great Depression
in America*

Lexile measure: 670L



About the Book

Kit Kittredge is nine years old when her dad loses his car dealership because of the Great Depression. It's 1932, and many people are out of work and even being evicted from their homes. As Kit's own family struggles to pay the mortgage, Mrs. Kittredge decides to take in boarders. This means big changes for the entire family, especially for Kit and her 16-year-old brother, Charlie. Kit moves into the attic and gives her room to Stirling Howard, a quiet and sickly boy, and his mother. Just when Kit thinks that things can't get any worse, she is shocked to see her father standing in line at the soup kitchen. There are friendships gained, lost, and reclaimed, along with sacrifices and hard work on everyone's part, and Kit is right there doing her share. The future is uncertain for the Kittredge family, but like many people affected by the Great Depression, they pull together and find happiness despite the economic difficulties. (Lexile measure: 670L)

About This Guide and the Common Core Standards

Elementary students may know very little about the Great Depression. The essay at the back of the book, "Inside Kit's World," sets the stage for this distressing period in American history. 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 the discussions and activities presented in this guide. The layered questions and "Thematic Connections" ask readers to think about how the Kittredge family and their friends are affected by the Great Depression. There are natural connections to the language arts, social studies, drama, art, music, and physical education curricula. Some activities take longer than others, and a teacher should feel free to use only those activities that meet the learning needs of the class.

Throughout this guide, we note wherever an activity helps students achieve specific Common Core Standards. A key to the standards referenced is provided at the end of the guide.

Pre-Reading Activity

Ask students to read and discuss "Inside Kit's World." In class, take a look at these websites and ask students to take notes about how everyday life changed for people during this era:

<https://kidskonnnect.com/history/great-depression/>

https://www.ducksters.com/history/us_1900s/great_depression.php

http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/wwii/jb_wwii_subj.html

Ask students to think about these questions: What aspects of life changed during the Great Depression? In general, were people better off or worse off because of these changes? Have the students use the information they gathered to write a few paragraphs about changes in family life during the Great Depression.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language Arts in Reading Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 3-4.3; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 3-4.1, Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 3-4.4; Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W. 3-4.4, Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 3-4.8.

Thematic Connections

Friendship

Kit and Ruthie are best friends, but their relationship is troubled after Kit's father loses his car dealership. Which event in the novel causes the break in the girls' relationship? Analyze why Kit responds the way she does to Ruthie's invitation. How do the girls reunite? At the beginning of the book, Stirling Howard appears to be a sickly, quiet boy. How do Kit and Ruthie make friends with him by the end of the novel? What does he bring to the friendship?

Change

Kit says, "I wish something would happen around here. Some dramatic *change*." (p. 2) Discuss the dramatic change that occurs for the Kittredge family. How do they adjust to the change? What is Kit's reaction to her mother's "brainstorm"? Explain how having boarders in the house dramatically changes the way Kit and Charlie must live. How does working for Uncle Hendrick change Kit? Debate whether Kit changes her uncle or Uncle Hendrick changes her.

Sacrifice

Define *sacrifice*. What are the things that Kit has to sacrifice because of her family's financial situation? What does her brother, Charlie, sacrifice? What do their parents sacrifice? Do good things come out of the sacrifices Kit and her family make? Kit doesn't think Ruthie and her family have to make any sacrifices. (p. 92) Do you agree with Kit?

Anger and Fear

How might fear create anger? Give examples of how the Great Depression caused both fear and anger. Charlie tells Kit that their father closed the car dealership and that the Kittredges are out of money. Discuss how the following quote describes Kit's emotions: "It was as if a match had been struck inside her and a little flame was lit, burning like anger, flickering like fear." (p. 20) How is the quote both a metaphor and a simile? (Discuss the differences between a *metaphor* and a *simile* with the class.) What is the match that causes the flame? Explain Kit's anger and fear. How does she learn to deal with both?

Secrets and Honesty

Stirling gets a letter from his father with \$20 enclosed, but later he reveals to Kit that he wrote the letter and enclosed the money. Why does he want his mother to believe that the letter is from his father? Debate whether Stirling was wrong to deceive his mother in this way. Kit sees her father at the soup kitchen; how does he mislead his family about his whereabouts during the day? Why does Kit run out of the soup kitchen? Discuss whether Kit's father was being dishonest or trying to protect his family. How does the incident change the way he communicates with his family?

Teasing

Roger teases Kit about Stirling living at her house. Is teasing different from bullying, or can it be a type of bullying? Explain how Stirling gets back at Roger. The incident gets Kit, Stirling, and Ruthie in trouble, but Roger is not punished. Debate whether or not this is fair.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 3-4.1, 3-4.3, Craft & Structure RL. 3-4.4, 3-4.5, 3-4.6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 3-4.7, 3-4.9; 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. 3-4.1, 3-4.2, Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 3-4.6.

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts

Kit writes newspapers for her dad and gives them to him when he comes home from work. Her articles are brief and fit on one page. In chapter 3, she writes an article called “It’s Not Fair.” How does her idea of what’s “not fair” change as the story progresses? Other characters also experience situations or changes that aren’t fair, although they don’t always complain about them (for example, Charlie has to give up going to college, and Stirling loses his home—and his father). Ask students to write an article titled “It’s Not Fair” that Kit or another character might write at the end of the novel.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 3-4.1; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-4.3.

Kit isn’t fond of fairy tales, but Ruthie loves them. Engage the class in a discussion of the characteristics of fairy tales:

- They begin with a variation of “once upon a time.”
- They end with a variation of “they lived happily ever after.”
- There are good and evil characters.
- They portray both royalty and poverty.
- There is an element of magic.

As a class, analyze a familiar fairy tale, such as Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty, to help students fully grasp how the tales are structured. With students who are ready for more advanced study, define literary terms such as *allegory*, *symbolism*, *archetype*, and *quest*, and guide students to see how such patterns are common in the fantasy genre.

At the end of the novel, Kit writes a story called “The Story of Princess Ruthie.” Divide the class into small groups. Ask them to consider all the elements of a fairy tale and then to write the story that Kit gives to Ruthie. The characters should come from the novel, and the magical element should repair Kit and Ruthie’s friendship.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 3-4.9; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-4.3..

Social Studies

The Great Depression occurred during the presidencies of Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Like Uncle Hendrick, some people blamed the president for the Depression, and most people expected the president to help the country recover. Ask students to select either Hoover or Roosevelt and to use books in the library or online sources to learn about that president’s role in the Great Depression.

Then have students write a letter to the president from Kit or Stirling that tells the president how the Great Depression has affected her or his family and make a plea for help for all Americans. Make specific references to events in the novel (such as Kit’s observations at the soup kitchen, homes being foreclosed, and people’s difficulty in finding work).

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

Soup kitchens, like the one in Cincinnati where Kit's father went at noon, were created during the Great Depression to feed those who didn't have money for food. Soup kitchens still exist, and various organizations offer shelter for people who are experiencing homelessness. Ask students to find out what organizations in their community offer assistance to those in need. Then have them create a brochure about one of the organizations. Include the following: name of organization, mission statement, funding source, and services provided. *(Note: If there are homeless or underprivileged students in your class, be sensitive to their situations and feelings in deciding whether this activity is appropriate for your classroom. While some students may welcome the chance to share their knowledge, compare their own situation with Kit's and Stirling's, and put their situation into a historical context, others may not want to discuss or focus on difficult personal experiences.)*

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-4.2, Production & Distribution of Writing W. 3-4.4, Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 3-4.7.

This novel takes place in Cincinnati, Ohio. Locate this city on a map of the United States. Stirling's father moved to Chicago to find work. How far away is Chicago from Cincinnati? Why was the distance too far for him to visit his family? Were there other reasons Mr. Howard was not able to visit his family? How did this affect Mrs. Howard and Stirling?

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading Informational Text: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RI. 3-4.7.

Drama

Kit and Ruthie like to act out stories they've read. Ask groups to act out "The Story of Princess Ruthie" that the class wrote in the Language Arts activity above. If groups aren't large enough to accommodate all the characters in the story, allow students to recruit other classmates to complete the cast of characters.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 3-4.7; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 3-4.4.

Music and Art

"Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" was the most popular song of the Great Depression. Ask students to go to <http://www.npr.org/2008/11/15/96654742/a-depression-era-anthem-for-our-times> and listen to the song and the description of it. Have students write down all the emotions that are expressed in the song. What is the overall mood? Then have a class discussion that examines the reasons for the claim that it is a song "for our times." Ask students to illustrate the song, using colors to reflect the various emotions and tone of the song.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 3-4.1, RI. 3-4.2, Craft & Structure RI. 3-4.5, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RI. 3-4.7; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 3-4.1, 3-4.3.

Physical Education and Sports

Kit is a baseball fan, and her favorite player is Ernie Lombardi, who was later inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Read about Lombardi on this website: <http://baseballhall.org/hof/lombardi-ernie>. Then ask students to write a newspaper feature for the sports section of the Cincinnati paper on the day Lombardi is inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Remind students to include who, what, when, where, and why. The stories should also include quotes from his fans Kit and Stirling.

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

Vocabulary and 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 *awkward* (p. 5), *vigorously* (p. 13), *serene* (p. 15), *contradicting* (p. 17), *humid* (p. 21), *acquaintance* (p. 23), *indignantly* (p. 26), *exiled* (p. 26), *swagger* (p. 48), *exasperated* (p. 49), *ingenious* (p. 64), *moocher* (p. 70), *fretful* (p. 83), *bristling* (p. 92), *dampen* (p. 105), *peculiar* (p. 110), and *extravagant* (p. 112).

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

Online Resources

- http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/wwii/jb_wwii_subj.html
This Library of Congress website for kids offers brief and easy-to-understand information about the Great Depression.
- <http://www.history.com/topics/new-deal/pictures/new-deal-programs/by-vera-bock-2>
This History Channel site provides photography with captions that explain Roosevelt's New Deal program.
- <http://www.american-historama.org/1929-1945-depression-ww2-era/great-depression-facts.htm>
This site provides additional facts about the Great Depression.

About the Author



Valerie Tripp says that she became a writer because of the kind of person she is. She says she's curious, and writing requires you to be interested in everything. Talking is her favorite sport, and writing is a way of talking on paper. She's a daydreamer, which helps her come up with her ideas. And she loves words. She even loves the struggle to come up with just the right words as she writes and rewrites. Ms. Tripp lives in Maryland with her husband.

More Stories About Kit

- *Turning Things Around*
Find out what happens after Read All About It! (Lexile measure: 720L).
- *Kit Kittredge: An American Girl*
A feature film available on DVD.

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. 3-4.5—Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

RL. 3-4.6—Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by 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 and 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—Describe the relationship between a series of historical events in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

Craft & Structure

RI. 3-4.5—Describe the overall structure of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text.

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. 3-4.5—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. 3-4.2—Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

W. 3-4.3—Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events, using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequence.

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.

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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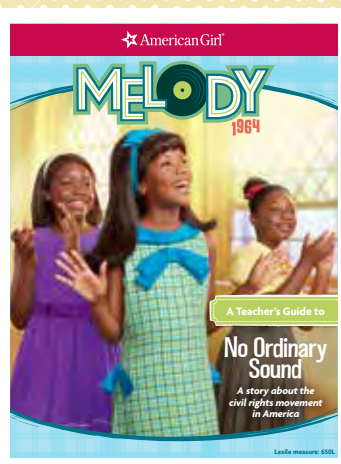
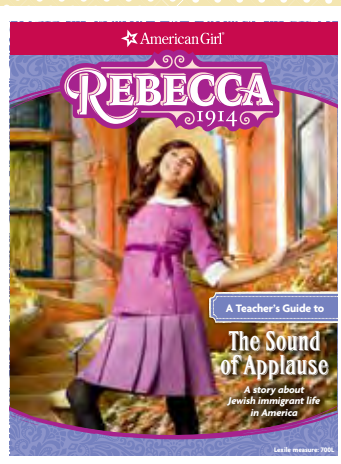
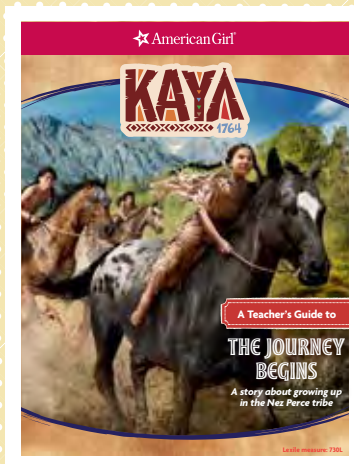
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Character Is Everything

American Girl's line of historical fiction for middle-grade readers was originally conceived and developed by a former classroom teacher. The books 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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