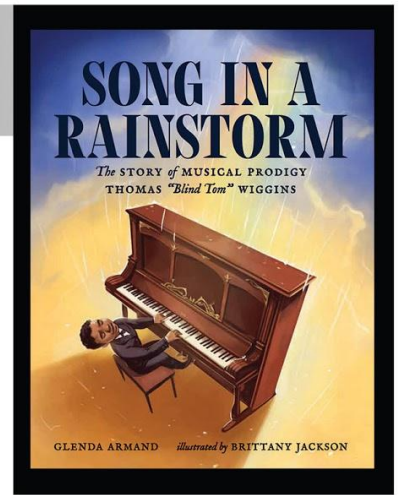


Teacher's Instructional Guide



College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading:

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Before you read:

Front-load new vocabulary

The cover and jacket of this book contain vocabulary that may not be familiar to all students, such as “prodigy” and “cacophony.” Discuss the meanings of these words with students to prepare them for reading and comprehending the text.

Anticipate questions

This book is about a family of slaves living in the South during the 1850s. Having a discussion with students about their knowledge of slavery can prompt questions that may help understand how improbable Blind Tom Wiggins’ story truly is. It may also lead to further discussions of the civil rights movement, as well as current events surrounding racial inequalities.

Deepen understanding

Although there are no recordings of Blind Tom performing his musical compositions, there are some resources available online to give students an opportunity to hear his music performed by others. Teachers can guide students to search YouTube for “John Davis performs ‘The Rainstorm’ by Blind Tom” as well as numerous other videos and biographies of Blind Tom Wiggins.

As you read:

Sequencing

Tom Wiggins’ early life took many turns that played a huge part in his musical accomplishments. As you read, keep a chronological record of decisions and events that led to Tom being able to perform his music at a time when African Americans had very few rights and opportunities. This should lead to a deeper understanding of the improbable odds he faced from birth through adulthood.

Character Study:

Character Traits

Decisions and events were not the things that truly defined Tom’s talents and success. Have students make a list of character traits that helped him persevere even under the most difficult conditions. Have students find evidence of these traits in the text.

Example – Trait: Tom was “hard-working.” Textual Evidence: “He took lessons from tutors. Then he soared on his own. Seated at the piano, Tom entered into his own world. In it, he spent up to twelve hours a day.” Have students explain how this evidence supports the claim that Tom was a hard worker.

Compare and Contrast

You may want to introduce students to other child prodigies in various fields to build interest and reinforce some of the common characteristics among them. For example: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Tiger Woods, Enrico Fermi, Pablo Picasso, etc.

Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is the process of creating a word that phonetically imitates, resembles, or suggests the sound that it describes. For example: buzz, crash, bang, etc.

The author of this book uses the literary device onomatopoeia throughout the book to create sound and help readers understand how Blind Tom began to understand how sounds he heard could lead him on his musical journey. Have students go on an onomatopoeia search throughout the book to find where the author used this literary device.

Text-dependent Questions:

Asking text-dependent questions enables students to draw on specific examples from the text to provide evidence and verify the rationale for their answers.

What were Tom's parents especially worried about after discovering that baby Tom was blind?

Slave owner Master Jones sold the Wiggins family to General James Bethune. Why was this something that Mingo and Charity had hoped for?

As a young child, Tom got into his fair share of mischief around the house. Why did Charity have to explain to Tom's sisters that he was not just "misbehaving?"

How did General Bethune's family find out about Tom's interest in music? How did they help him learn and understand sounds?

When Tom stopped living with his family and moved into General Bethune's home, Charity said she knew he would never live with them again. What do you think made her feel this way?

Why did Tom feel like music took him to a place where he felt like he "belonged?"

Where did Tom find inspiration for his music?

Toward the end of the Civil War, General Bethune made a deal to give Tom's parents \$500 per month to keep having him perform. Why was this a good deal for General Bethune as well?

After becoming a free man, how did Tom's success and traveling schedule affect his family?

What were some of the ways Tom dazzled his audiences?

Additional questions to discuss:

What was the author's purpose for writing this book? Was it to inform, entertain, or persuade the audience?

What did you enjoy most about this text?

Connection to Writing:

Opinion

Some would say that General Bethune was helpful to Tom and his family. Others might say he took advantage of them to make a profit. What is your opinion of General Bethune's role in Tom's story?