



A Common Core Curriculum Guide to

jump at the sun



The True Life Tale of Unstoppable Storycatcher Zora Neale Hurston

By Alicia D. Williams, Illustrated by Jacqueline Alcántara

HC: 9781534419131 • EB: 9781534419148 • Ages 4–8

ABOUT THE BOOK

Most people know of Zora Neale Hurston's writings, but how did she come to be? *Jump at the Sun* weaves the tall yet truthful tale of Hurston's life, from her childhood listening to local folktales to chasing her dreams of becoming a famous writer. Inspired by the words of Hurston's mother, this book reflects Zora's hard work, dedication, and creativity as she continuously jumped at and eventually reached the sun.

DISCUSSION OF KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

When considering informational texts such as biographies, the Common Core State Standards encourages students to ask and answer questions as to who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details (RI K.1-3.1). Additionally, students should be able to retell the story of an individual's life, offering key details that demonstrate understanding of the text read (RL K.2-3.2), and describe the connection between individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text (RI K.3-3.3). The following questions and activities engage these standards.

1. Who was Zora Neale Hurston? What is she known for?
2. As a child, Zora loved to listen to and create her own fantastical tales. Where were some of the places that she gathered these stories?
3. Zora loved writing stories, but her papa and grandma didn't approve. Who supported Zora and her storytelling during her childhood?
4. As Zora continued to attend school and participate in different literary clubs, she met and wrote alongside a number of famous Black poets, writers, and thinkers. Can you name some of the people whom Zora worked with? What else would you like to know about them?
5. After hearing the story of Zora's life and the many challenges that she overcame, what would you say is the central message of this book?

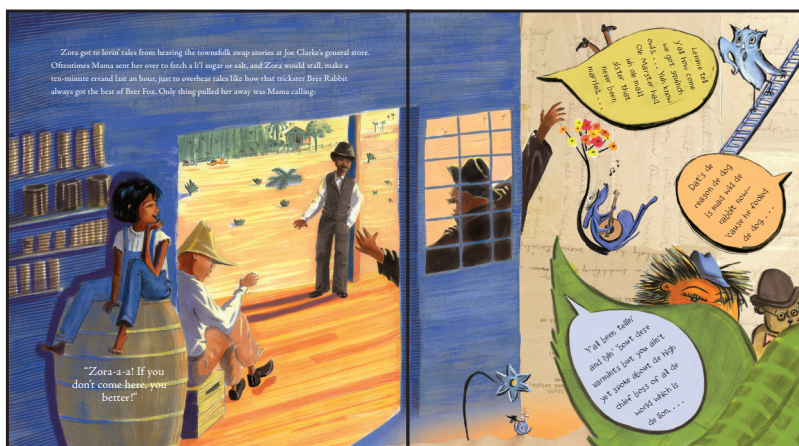
UNDERSTANDING CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

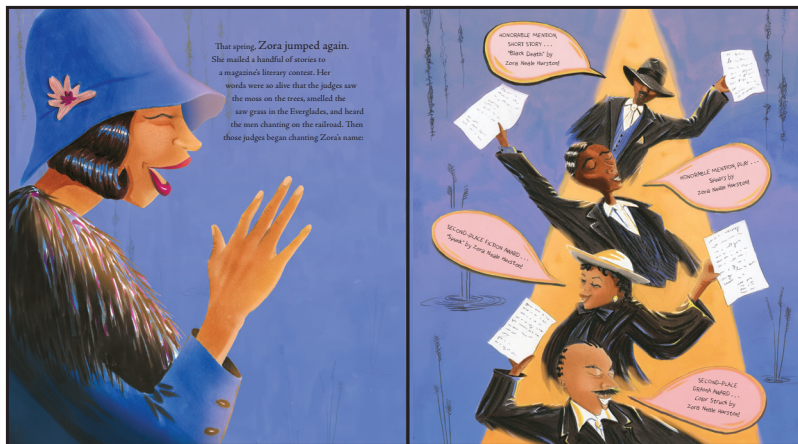
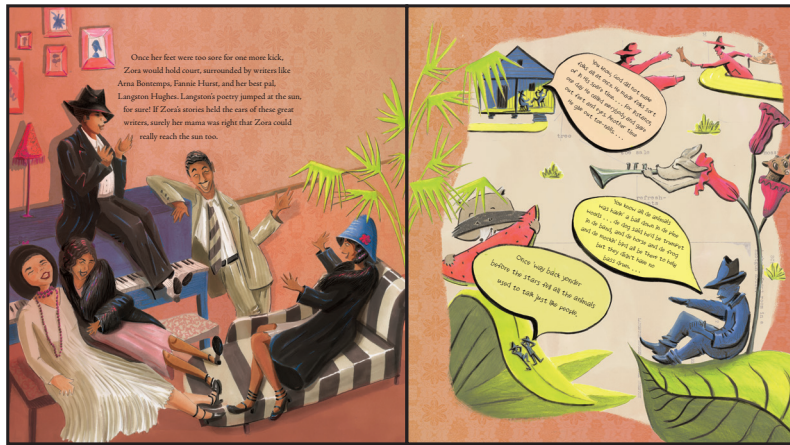
To learn about craft and structure in informational literary texts, the Common Core State Standards asks students to determine the meaning of grade-appropriate words and phrases in context (RI K.4-3.4), identify words and phrases that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses (RL.K.4-3.4), and distinguish between information provided by pictures or other illustrations and information provided by the words in a text (RI.K.6-3.6). The following questions and activities engage these standards.

1. The title of this book is *Jump at the Sun*. We also see this phrase used throughout the text. What do you think it means to "jump at the sun"? Do you believe this is a good title for the book? Explain your answer.



2. Throughout the story, the narrator carefully uses words and phrases that help us to imagine Zora's life and her writing. This is what we call descriptive language. Below are phrases from the book that illustrate this literary device. Listen to each phrase and notice what feelings or senses come to mind. Write them down in the space given, or share your thoughts with a partner.
- a. "In a town called Eatonville—a place where magnolias smelled even prettier than they looked, oranges were as sweet as they were plump, and the people just plain ol' got along . . ."
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-
- b. "Zora and her sister and brothers were so sobbing-hearted that even the house seemed to mourn."
-
-
- c. "Come nighttime, Zora'd be swinging in Harlem, where Count Basie or Fats Waller pounded on the piano, and folks danced the Charleston."
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-
- d. "Her words were so alive that the judges saw the moss on the trees, smelled the saw grass in the Everglades, and heard the men chanting on the railroad."
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3. On some pages, there are illustrations that include word bubbles filled with lines from folktales, awards Zora won, and beliefs of the people of Eatonville. Look over these illustrations and reread the word bubbles. What do you learn from these illustrations that you wouldn't otherwise know? Think about what they tell you about Zora, Eatonville, and folktales. Jot down your thoughts in the lines below the illustrations.





INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

To learn about the integration of knowledge and ideas, the Common Core State Standards asks students to explain how images help in understanding a text (RI K.8-3.8), use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas (RI K.7-3.7), and compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories (RL.K.9-3.9). The following questions and activities address these standards.

1. Why were Zora's papa and grandmother so against her telling stories? Do you agree with them? Support your responses with details from the text and illustrations.
2. In the story, the author mentions that Zora kept company with well-known African American writers Arna Bontemps, Fannie Hurst, and Langston Hughes. Why do you think the author includes this detail? How does it connect to Zora's life and goals?

3. Despite many challenges, Zora always found a way to use her storytelling to help her continue toward her goal. We know this from the words on the page; without them, we might think something entirely different. Look at the illustrations below and compare what you see and what is said.



I see:

It says:



I see:

It says:



I see:

It says:

WRITING, SPEAKING, AND LISTENING

The activities below provide opportunities for children to write and supply facts about a topic (W K.2-3.2), research and present knowledge (W K.7-3.7), and gather information from provided sources in order to answer a question (W K.8-3.8). Additionally, students will have the opportunity to write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences (W.K.3-3.3) and create engaging audio recordings of stories or poems that demonstrate fluid reading at an understandable pace, adding visual displays when appropriate (SL.K.5-3.5). The following activities address these standards.

1. In college, Zora collected folktales as part of her final project for school. Speak with an adult in your life and ask to record them as they share their favorite childhood story or folktale. Using the recording, draw a picture illustrating the story they shared with you. You may choose to perform the tale aloud for your classmates.

2. Zora traveled many places throughout her life as a writer, accomplishing amazing things. Use the reproducible activity at the end of this guide to trace Zora's travels and accomplishments throughout her life.
3. What does it mean to till land? Why might Zora's mother not want Zora to spend her life doing this? First discuss your thoughts and ideas with a partner, and then as a class. What resources might you use to learn more about tilling land or sharecropping in the South when Zora was growing up?
4. Zora moved to NYC in 1925, in the middle of the Harlem Renaissance; the book depicts scenes of Zora dancing in Harlem and then captivating rooms of writers with her words. What do you know about the Harlem Renaissance? Why might Zora have been excited to arrive to the Harlem Renaissance scene? How might she have added to the movement, especially with her experiences listening to folklore?

EXTENDING THE EXPERIENCE

Read other books similar to *Jump at the Sun*:

- *Planting Stories: The Life of Librarian and Storyteller Pura Belpré* by Anika Aldamuy Denise
- *She Made a Monster: How Mary Shelley Created Frankenstein* by Lynn Fulton
- *A Likkle Miss Lou: How Jamaican Poet Louise Bennett Coverley Found Her Voice* by Nadia L. Hohn
- *Lies and Other Tall Tales* collected by Zora Neale Hurston
- *The Quickest Kid in Clarksville* by Pat Zietlow Miller

For older readers, read the middle grade novel *Genesis Begins Again*, also written by Alicia D. Williams.

Read other books illustrated by Jacqueline Alcántara:

- *Freedom Soup* by Tami Charles
- *The Field* by Baptiste Paul
- *Your Mama* by NoNieqa Ramos



Melanie Kirkwood Marshall holds a BA in secondary English education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a MEd in reading education from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She has taught in many learning contexts from High School ELA teacher to Primary Literacy Interventionist. Currently, Melanie is completing her doctoral studies in multicultural children's literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

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Name: _____

Date: _____

Locations and Details Activity

Use the worksheet to trace all of the many places Zora visited as she jumped at the sun! Be sure to include the name of the place and a detail about what Zora did there.



Location:
Detail:

Location:
Detail:

Location:
Detail:

Location:
Detail:



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REPRODUCIBLE

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