



HC: 978-0-8234-2528-0 / E-book available

NEW SHOES

by Susan Lynn Meyer
illustrated by Eric Velasquez



GRADES
1–4

About the Book

Set in the South during the time of segregation, this lushly illustrated picture book brings the civil rights era to life for contemporary readers as two young girls find an inventive way to foil Jim Crow laws.

★ “Gripping piece of historical fiction . . . vividly precise in its detail.”—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Literature/Language Arts

Vocabulary—Students may not be familiar with some of the terms used in the story: *civil rights*, *discrimination*, *Jim Crow* and *segregation*. For maximum understanding of the story, discuss these terms and their meanings with the students prior to reading. [CCSS K.RL.4](#), [2.L.4](#)

Realistic Fiction—This story is a work of *fiction*, meaning that it comes from the author’s imagination and did not actually happen. However, the author got the idea for this story from real events and the assumption, based on facts she found in her research, that the actions and issues in the story really did happen in the U. S. in the 1950s. Make students aware that this type of writing is called *realistic fiction*, i.e., it’s not really true, but it *could be/could have been* true and is based on real incidents. [CCSS 1.RL.5](#), [2.L.5](#)

Character Profiles—Ask students to create a profile of Ella Mae and/or her cousin Charlotte. Have them use the text and the illustrations and their own imaginations to describe the girls in detail: what they wore, how they lived, what was important to them, what they liked to do and any other details they might think of. Ask them to cite the parts of the story that informed their ideas. They can share their profiles with the class. [CCSS 2.RL.3](#), [2.RL.7](#), [3.RL.3](#), [3.RL.7](#)

Author’s Note—Call the students’ attention to this section at the end of the story. Explain how many authors add such a note to make sense of the time,

setting and events of the story for the readers. Ask them to be on the lookout for the Author’s Note in other books that they read.

Questions for Discussion

Students may discuss the following questions in pairs, small groups or as a whole class. They can also write their feelings and opinions. [CCSS 2.RL.3](#), [2.SL.1](#), [3.RL.6](#)

How did Ella Mae feel when the man wouldn’t let her try on the shoes? Do you think what he did was fair? Why or why not?

Ella Mae and Charlotte earned money for their “shoe store.” Describe what you have done to earn money for something that was important to you.

The girls created a change in their community. Do you think children have the power to create change? What can you do to create change in your own community?

The Author’s Note mentions many rights that we have today due to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Which of these rights are the most important to you? Why?

Describe your favorite pair of shoes and why you love them.

Online Resources

Civil Rights Act of 1964—<http://blogs.loc.gov/teachers/2014/02/the-civil-rights-act-of-1964-titles-ii-and-iii-the-right-to-go-where-you-want/> presents the section of this important act that governs people's freedom to do things such as try on shoes in a store. It includes many suggestions for teachers that can help them reinforce its meaning with students.

Children from the Civil Rights Movement—<http://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/> presents firsthand accounts by people who were children in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963 and their memories of how they felt during a time of discrimination and the fight for civil rights.

Saddle Shoes—<http://vintagedancer.com/1920s/saddle-shoes-history/> presents an illustrated history of saddle shoes from the 1920s through the 1960s, including ads showing their cost.

Children's Shoes: 1950s—<http://tinyurl.com/mcyvxpv> presents many photos of the styles of shoes children were wearing in the 1950s.

Classroom Activities prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant.

About the Author



Photo Credit: Hannah Meyer-Winkler

Susan Lynn Meyer is a professor of English at Wellesley College and an award-winning author of two books for children. She lives in Massachusetts. Visit her website at www.susanlynnmeyer.com.

About the Illustrator



Photo Credit: Elizabeth Rosario

Eric Velasquez is the illustrator of *Ol' Clip-Clop: A Ghost Story* by Patricia C. McKissack. His honors include the Pura Belpré Book Award, the Carter G. Woodson Book Award and the Coretta Scott King–John Steptoe Award for New Talent. He lives in New York State with his family. Visit his website at www.ericvelasquez.com.