

The Bessie Coleman Story

Early Childhood Teaching Guide





Dear Early Childhood Teachers,

Welcome to *The Bessie Coleman Story* Teaching Guide! Sweet Blackberry is infinitely grateful for teachers like you who want to bring inspiring and diverse stories into the classroom. The following lessons touch on complex themes that are so important to talk about with young students. Opening up discussion around abstract topics like equality and determination will give children the skills they need to think critically and open their minds and hearts to the people around them.

The lessons in this guide are meant to encourage discussion. As you well know, language development is a key component of early childhood education so the activities in this guide are designed to bring out high-level conversation and questioning through film-to-self connections. And although this guide is written specifically for Kindergarten, 1st Grade, and 2nd Grade students, it can be modified to fit the needs of Prekindergarten curricula as well.

You are encouraged to utilize or photocopy the materials in this guide to supplement an existing unit or to use as individual lessons.

Thank you for purchasing *The Bessie Coleman Story* and teaching the next generation of history-makers that they can fly as high as their dreams will take them!

Your partner in education,

Sweet Blackberry



Themes

Discrimination
Racial/Gender Equality
Persistence
Determination

Vocabulary

Discrimination
Segregate
Marvel
Achievement
Persistence

Places

Texas
Chicago
France

NYS Next Generation Standards

| Kindergarten | 1st Grade | 2nd Grade |
|--|---|---|
| <u>ELA</u> : KW1-4, 7 <u>Math</u> : K.CC.5a, K.MD.2 | <u>ELA</u> : 1W1, 1W7 <u>Math</u> : 1.MD.2 | <u>ELA</u> : 2W4, 2W7 <u>Math</u> : 2.MD.1, 2.MD.2 |



Discussion Questions/Prompts

Use any number of these questions/prompts to assess comprehension.

- What did you notice about Bessie?
- Tell about Bessie's family.
- Share 2 things that Bessie was really good at.
- Why did Bessie want to become a pilot? How do you know?
- Give an example of how Bessie showed persistence.
- Bessie loved her family, but she decided to move away. Why did she do that?
- Why was Bessie turned away from so many flight schools in America?
- How did Bessie feel when she moved to France? Why did she feel that way?
- What did Bessie have to do to become a pilot in France?
- How did Bessie feel when she earned her pilot's license? How do you know?
- What were Bessie's air shows like?
- Who has Bessie's story inspired?
- Why did some people call Bessie, Queen Bess?
- Did Bessie grow up recently or a long time ago? How do you know?



ELA

Informational Writing

Guiding Question: Bessie Coleman worked through great hardships and discrimination to achieve her dream of flying airplanes. How are you similar Bessie Coleman?

Objective: Write an informational piece connecting one or more of Bessie Coleman’s traits or characteristics to yourself.

Vocabulary: similar, discrimination

Materials: blank writing booklets and a variety of writing utensils

Activity:

Teach:

- Whole class discussion: “How are you similar to Bessie Coleman?”
 - Example: “I am similar to Bessie Coleman because we both work really hard.”
- While discussing, teacher makes a list of student responses on chart paper
- Teacher models how to write in the booklet (option for interactive writing)

Workshop:

- Students write for 20-30 minutes
- After 5 minutes, remind students to refer to the chart made during the discussion to help generate ideas

Share:

- Bring class to the carpet or meeting area with their informational books
- Students read their books to a partner
 - 1 student reads, the other students asks 1-2 questions about the writing or drawings
 - Switch readers after 3 minutes

*Option to extend activity for multiple days and continue working on the book for a gallery walk or to display

Differentiation:

- Kindergarten: Write or tell about at least one similar trait.
- 1st Grade: Write about at least two similar traits with a full sentence describing each.
- 2nd Grade: Write about three similar traits with at least two sentences on each page.



Social Studies

Creating a Play

Guiding Question: Why is Bessie Coleman an important person?

Objective: Create a play that teaches about Bessie Coleman's life.

Vocabulary: play, script, act

Materials: blank writing paper and a variety of writing utensils, props

Activity:

Teach:

- Whole class discussion: "Why is Bessie Coleman someone we should learn about in school?"
 - While discussing, teacher makes a list of student responses on chart paper
- Teacher models writing a short "script" about Bessie Coleman being rejected by many flight schools before ultimately being accepted to a school in France. Purposefully make mistakes by adding/taking out important pieces of information
 - Teacher invites two students to act out the story as you read your script
 - Partner talk: "What did you notice about that play?"
 - Class discussion: "How can we make this play even better?"
 - With student input, edit play so that it covers all parts of the story with accuracy and act it out again.
- Note: "The actors on stage need to talk, be sure to give them words to say in your script"

Workshop:

- Students write script for 15-20 minutes
- After 5 minutes, remind students to use dialogue so that the actors will say something

Share:

- Bring class to the carpet or meeting area with their scripts
- Each student chooses actors as he reads his script aloud

*Alternative activity: Students work in small groups to create a play and act it out in front of a different class



Math/Engineering

Paper Airplanes

Guiding Question: How can you make a paper airplane that goes _____ (all the way down the hall, from the carpet to the door, 10 feet, etc.)

Objective: Make a paper airplane and measure the distance it flies

Vocabulary: Measure, farther, closer

Materials: blank paper, grade-appropriate measuring tools (unifix cubes, rulers, etc.), student directions for folding a paper airplane, recording sheets (grid or blank piece of paper)

Activity:

Teach:

- Whole class discussion: “What makes airplanes fly?”
- Teacher models how to follow the given steps to make a paper airplane (see: picture)
- Teacher demonstrates activity (see: differentiation)

Workshop:

- Students make planes for 5-10 minutes
- Students move into the hall, onto the playground, etc. to test their planes and measure the distances flown

Share:

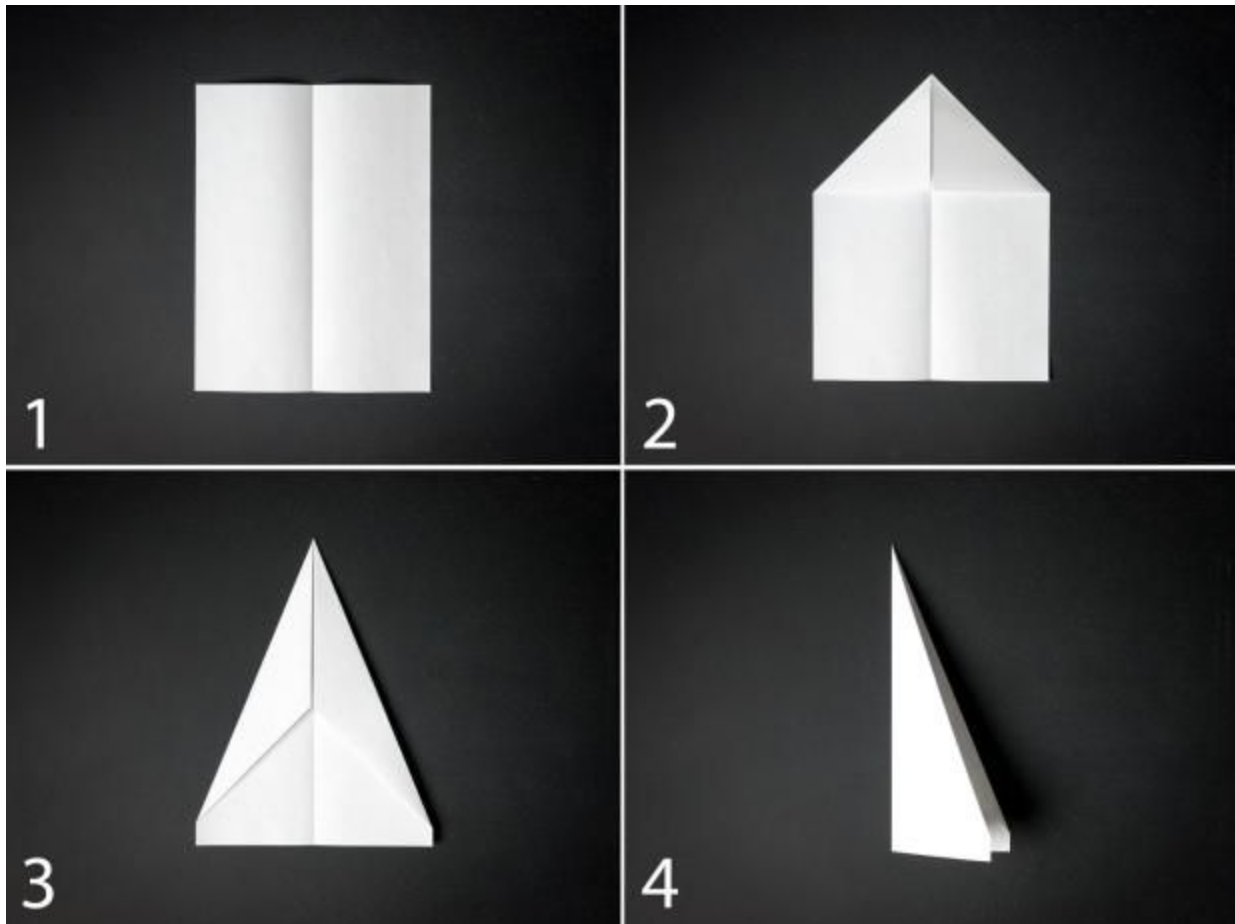
- Bring class to the carpet or meeting area with their paper airplanes
- Partner talk: How can you improve your airplane to make it fly farther?

Differentiation:

- Kindergarten:
 - Each student constructs a plane
 - With a partner, throw planes forward at the same time
 - Students ask each other: “Which plane went farther? How do you know?”
 - Find another partner and repeat
- First Grade:
 - Each student constructs a plane



- With a partner, throw planes forward at the same time
- Measure the difference in distances the planes flew with an irregular measuring tool (cubes, blocks, etc.)
- Students ask each other: “Which plane went farther? Why?”
- Record measurements
- Try again with a new partner
- Second Grade:
 - Each student constructs 2 planes
 - Working individually, throw each airplane in the same direction
 - Measure difference in distance between the planes
 - Measure again using a different unit of measurement (i.e. measure the difference in distance in both inches and in cm)
 - Record measurements





Art

Mobile of Accomplishments

Guiding Question: What was unique about Bessie Coleman?

Objective: Create a mobile featuring people, places, and objects that were important to Bessie Coleman.

Vocabulary: mobile, unique

Materials: blank paper, a variety of writing/coloring utensils, chopsticks, string, scissors, tape, pre-made mobile to show class as an example

Activity:

Teach:

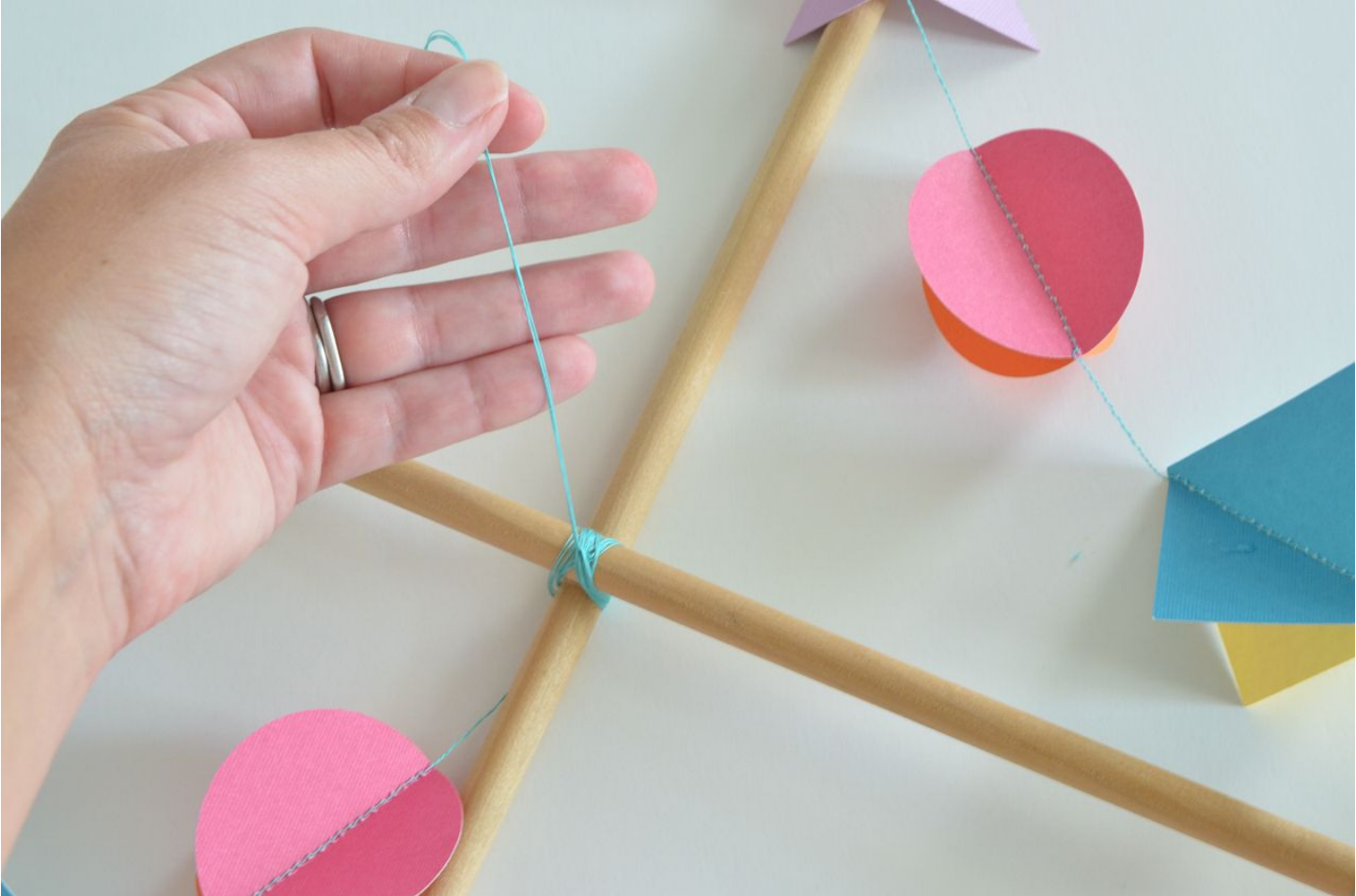
- Whole class discussion: “What people, places, or things helped make Bessie Coleman a successful pilot?”
- While discussing, teacher makes a list of student responses on chart paper
- Teacher models how to draw something from the list of student responses, cut it out, and tape it to the string hanging from crossed chopsticks (see photo)
- Show class pre-made example and note that you need four or more images to complete the mobile

Workshop:

- Students draw for 20-30 minutes
- Construct mobile for 10-15 minutes

Share:

- Bring class to the carpet or meeting area with their mobiles
- Sit in a circle and each student stands up to show mobile and share favorite drawing





Social/Emotional

Showing Persistence

Guiding Question: Bessie Coleman showed persistence by not giving up on her dream to become a pilot. When did you show persistence in your life?

Objective: Draw and write about a time when you showed persistence.

Vocabulary: persistence

Materials: blank writing booklets or single pages and a variety of writing utensils

Activity:

Teach:

- “Bessie Coleman was told many times that she couldn’t be a pilot but she didn’t give up on herself and she worked every day towards achieving her dream.”
- Whole class discussion: “When have you shown persistence by trying again and again to accomplish something?”
- While discussing, teacher makes a list of student responses on chart paper
- Teacher models how to draw/write about a real-life time your were persistent (option for interactive writing)

Workshop:

- Students write for 20-30 minutes
- After 5 minutes, remind students to reference the chart for help generating ideas

Share: (Gallery Walk)

- Half of the students will be the authors who stand at tables with their work while the other half are the guests
- Guests walk around and talk to the authors saying things like:
 - “Please read me your work.”
 - “How did you feel when you showed persistence?”
 - Offer compliments
- Switch author/guest roles after 10 minutes

Differentiation:

- Kindergarten: Draw about a time you didn’t give up and write a one sentence description
- 1st Grade: Draw about a time you didn’t give up and write a two sentence description
- 2nd Grade: Draw about a time you didn’t give up and write a four or five sentence description



The Bessie Coleman Story

Produced and written by Karyn Parson

Narrated by Laurence Fishburne

About Sweet Blackberry

Sweet Blackberry is a non-profit media company founded by Karyn Parsons. Its mission is to bring little known stories of African American achievement to children everywhere.