

Reading *Miss Lady Bird's Wildflowers*

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ACTIVITY SUMMARY

During this activity, you and your child will actively read *Miss Lady Bird's Wildflowers*, using the suggested reading strategies.

WHY

Through this activity, your child will have fun while learning about the life of first lady Claudia “Lady Bird” Johnson and her impact on America. In the process, your child will build reading skills and develop vocabulary.

TIME

- 30 minutes

RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

This activity will work best for children in kindergarten to 4th grade.

YOU NEED

- This Reading Guide
- *Step Back in Time* sheets (*attached*)
- *Miss Lady Bird's Wildflowers* book, written by Kathi Appelt and illustrated by Joy Fisher Hein

CHALLENGE WORDS

- **assassinated:** suddenly, surprisingly murdered (especially for a prominent figure)
- **bayou:** a slow-moving, marshy area of water in the southern United States (shown on page 17)
- **brink:** to be very close to
- **companion:** someone with whom you spend time or travel
- **dismal:** bad in a sad or depressing way (shown on page 23)
- **festoons:** garlands of plants or ribbons held up in loops between two points (shown on page 17)
- **exotic:** unusual and interesting, usually because it comes from or is related to somewhere far away

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/firstlady/>

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- **extinction:** the death of all members of a species of plants or animals
- **gnarled:** knotty and misshapen; made rough by age or hard work
- **mansion:** a large house with fine furniture (shown on page 6)
- **mourning:** feeling or showing deep sadness, often after someone has died (shown on page 8)
- **unkempt:** not looked after carefully or kept neat (shown on page 23)

PARENT PREPARATION

- If you have time, read *Miss Lady Bird's Wildflowers* yourself before sharing it with your child. Also read the notes on the last two pages of the book and the *Step Back in Time* sheets.
- If you have time, preview some of the reading suggestions below. Pick just a few suggestions that look interesting and fun for you.

BEFORE YOU READ

- Before reading, take a look at the pictures on pages 7, 17, 23, and 30. Look carefully at the pictures and describe what you see. Then describe how you think the people in the pictures feel in that place.

DURING READING

- Setting describes the time, place, and environment of a story and can have a big impact on the characters in the story. Listen for ways that the author describes different settings in *Miss Lady Bird's Wildflowers*. In each setting, what feelings does Lady Bird have about the natural and man-made things around her?
- After you read these pages, guess what will happen next:
 - **After reading page 18:** Lady Bird has gone on many adventures and is in college now. From what you know about Lady Bird, what kind of job do you think she might be good at?
 - **After reading page 27:** As first lady, Lady Bird had to help the country recover from the death of John F. Kennedy. What other responsibilities might a first lady have?
 - **After reading page 31:** When Lady Bird's husband, Lyndon, dies, she is very sad. How do you think she will cheer herself up?

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- Listen for the names of places that are mentioned in the book. Have you ever been to those places? After reading, try to find the places on a map and find your own town. How far away are those places? How does the book say Lady Bird changed those places?

Tip

Consider using one of National Geographic's Xpeditions Atlas maps (<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/atlas/>) to locate your hometown and the places named in *Miss Lady Bird's Wildflowers*.

The book sometimes uses directions to describe places, like "East Texas." Talk about things that are east, west, north, and south of where you live.

AFTER READING

- Throughout the story, Lady Bird Johnson finds comfort and happiness in flowers and the environment. What things cheer you up when you are sad? What things made your parents happy when they were children or now that they are grown?

For more activities and information about *Miss Lady Bird's Wildflowers* and Lady Bird Johnson, visit (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/firstlady/>).

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For more information, visit the National Museum of American History Web site <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/firstlady/>.

Part of a woman's traditional role in America has been to care for her family and help the needy in her community. Similarly, a wife of a U.S. president (called "the first lady") often supports charities and other social causes. Recent first ladies have supported and brought attention to literacy, health care, prevention of drug abuse, volunteer work, and taking care of historic places. Their examples have encouraged women to take action at many levels, and have provided role models for women and girls.



Illustration of Lady Bird Johnson and her daughters in their garden.

Illustration from *Miss Lady Bird's Wildflowers*



Lady Bird Johnson in her inaugural gown, 1965. Courtesy of Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum

Claudia "Lady Bird" Johnson, the wife of President Lyndon Baines Johnson, was first lady from 1963 to 1969. She took her job as first lady seriously. She carefully chose and announced the project she would work on while her husband was president. In a 1994 interview, she told the *Washington Post*, "Once you are [first lady] and you want to serve whatever your husband's efforts are on behalf of the country, you choose those which make your heart sing."



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Because Lady Bird Johnson loved nature and the environment, she turned her interest into projects to support her husband's efforts to improve living conditions for all Americans. She called it **beautification**. Lady Bird Johnson worked hard to get Congress to pass laws that protected the **environment**. She encouraged Americans to plant gardens and clean up neighborhoods and parks.

After leaving the White House, she continued to work on **beautification** and helped to start the National Wildflower Center, now called the *Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center* (www.wildflower.org/).

For more information on Lady Bird Johnson and other first ladies, visit the online exhibition *The First Ladies at the Smithsonian* (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/firstladies/>).



Lady Bird Johnson planting a cherry tree. [LBJ Library Photo by unknown]

beautification: to fight against ugliness and improve the looks of a place or thing

environment: the conditions that surround someone or something; for people, this includes the weather, earth, air, water, plants, animals, and more

Illustrations from *Miss Lady Bird's Wildflowers* used by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

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See the “Reading Guide” sheets for specific reading questions and strategies.

OBJECTIVES

The students will be better able to:

- Read for understanding.
- Describe Lady Bird Johnson, her accomplishments, and her place in history.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Discussion exhibits understanding of story and historical details.
- Discussion exhibits understanding of vocabulary in the context of the story.

STANDARDS

NCHS History Standards

K-4 Historical Thinking Standards

- 3C. Analyze historical fiction.
- 3F. Analyze illustrations in historical stories.

K-4 Historical Content Standards

- 4C. The student understands historic figures who have exemplified values and principles of American democracy.

IRA/NCTE Language Arts Standards

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

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3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

21st-Century Skills

Information, Media, and Technology Skills

- Information Literacy
- Media Literacy