



TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 3-5

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Raggin! A Story About Scott Joplin

Barbara Mitchell



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Raggin! A Story About Scott Joplin

Barbara Mitchell

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

ISBN 978-1-50204-100-5

Copyright infringement is a violation of Federal Law.

© 2020 by Novel Units, Inc., St. Louis, MO. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without prior written permission from Novel Units, Inc.

Reproduction of any part of this publication for an entire school or for a school system, by for-profit institutions and tutoring centers, or for commercial sale is strictly prohibited.

Novel Units is a registered trademark of Conn Education.

Printed in the United States of America.

To order, contact your
local school supply store, or:

Toll-Free Fax: 877.716.7272

Phone: 888.650.4224

3901 Union Blvd., Suite 155

St. Louis, MO 63115

sales@novelunits.com

novelunits.com

RAGGIN' A STORY ABOUT SCOTT JOPLIN BY BARBARA MITCHELL

STUDY GUIDE BY JEAN JAMIESON

Summary:

Although he grew up at a time when music was not considered to be an occupation for black people, Scott Joplin was fortunate. He had a mother who encouraged him in his love of music. Eventually, Scott found work as a pianist on the riverboats and in the towns along the Mississippi River and was able to earn an adequate living. Around the turn of the century ragtime came into being, and Scott Joplin was crowned the “king of ragtime.”

About the Author:

Barbara Mitchell was born and grew up in Chester, Pennsylvania. She graduated from college with a degree in music education. She lives in Claymont, Delaware, with her husband, Walter, and their daughter Wendy, and their miniature schnauzer, Frieda. The Mitchell family enjoys taking family trips to “the old city” section of nearby Philadelphia, as well as to other historic sites that have given Barbara Mitchell ideas for her books.

It was during the time that Mitchell was a kindergarten teacher that she began to seriously think about writing children’s books. However, it was not until after the birth of her daughter that Mitchell actually began to write. Since she had always been interested in history, Mitchell found lots of little-known bits of history that she could write about. From those books she has gone on to the writing of biographies. She has said, “As I immerse myself in the history of the person I’m writing about, I begin to get an idea of what it was like to be that person and what he or she thought and felt. It’s a real challenge for me to express this as I write the biography.”

“One of the most rewarding moments for me as a writer occurred one day at the end of a classroom visit when a shy child slipped her hand into mine and said softly, ‘I loved your story. Make some more.’ Words like those give me the encouragement and inspiration to continue to write for young people.”

Note:

The First Avenue Editions paperback version of *Raggin' A Story about Scott Joplin* by Carolrhoda Books was used to write this study guide. Other editions may yield differing page references.

Please be selective and use discretion when choosing the activities that you will do with this unit. It is not intended that everything be done, but that the discretionary choices made are most appropriate for your use and group of students. A wide range has been provided, so that individuals as well as groups may benefit from these selections.

Attribute Web

The attribute web below is designed to help you gather clues the author provides about what a character is like. Fill in the blanks with words and phrases which tell how the character acts and looks, as well as what the character says and what others say about him or her.

Acts

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Feels

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Character

Looks

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Says

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Chapter One—Pages 9-17

Prereading Activity:

To the Teacher: To help you with the prereading activities, references are given for work authored by black poets that are appropriate for the chapter. You may wish to substitute other poems, materials, or music at this time to set the time of the chapter.

The poem “Dream Dust”* by Langston Hughes, or the following spiritual, may be shared with the students as a prereading activity, and then predictions made about the chapter.

Now Let Me Fly

Now let me fly, now let me fly,
Now let me fly, way up high,
Way up high in the middle of the air.

(*See Bibliography, Hughes, *Selected Poems*.)

Vocabulary:

picked (banjo) 9 (played) by ear 9 sharecroppers 10 parlor 12
fervent 16

Vocabulary Activity:

How many words can you make from the letters of the word *sharecroppers* in three minutes? (Here are some: *share, crop, are, care, hare, rare, pear, pare, shop, pore, roar, sharp, shoe, shore, core, opera, pop, rope, soap, etc.*)

Discussion Questions:

1. Scott’s mother and father disagree about the fostering of Scott’s musical abilities. What is the opinion of each? (Pages 11-12, *Scott’s mother allows Scott to take piano lessons, and encourages him in his lessons and studies. Scott’s father fears that his son will come to love music so much that he will want to become a professional musician. He does not want to encourage that.*) With whom do you think that you would agree? Why?

How does Scott feel about music? (Page 12, *“The only thing he [Scott] knew for sure was that music brought joy and comfort to his own life. He could never give it up.”*)
2. What kinds of music is Scott exposed to as he is growing up? (Pages 11-17, *Scott is exposed to his mother’s favorite songs, the tunes played by his father [European-style dances and rhythmic African melodies], classical music taught by “the Professor,” and the ring shout rhythm and spirituals of the church.*) Do you think that this exposure to a

variety of music will be important to the future of Scott Joplin? Why? Why not? What different kinds of music have you heard? Which do you enjoy the most? (See Postreading Activity #1.)

(The first piano made in America was built in 1775. For a long time pianos were very expensive. It was not until almost one hundred years later, when several piano-making companies had been formed, that many Americans could afford pianos. Then they became quite common. In the evenings, whole families would gather and members would take turns playing the piano and would sing for fun. Poor blacks, newly freed from slavery, often did not have the money to study music, but many learned to play by ear. These black players transferred the rhythms of their drums, their work songs, their cakewalks, and their spirituals to the piano. See Teacher Information section.)

Postreading Activities:

1. Make a survey of the members of the group, to find out the different kinds of music that have been experienced. Include a preference choice. Make two graphs, to summarize the data collected.

Extend your survey beyond the group if possible. Gather as much data as you can. (It might be interesting to consider different age groups when making the survey. Do experiences and preferences differ? The resources of a senior center, junior college, high school, etc. might be worth consideration when planning the survey. Cooperative groups could investigate different sources, pool information, and make summaries.)

