

# BOOKNOTES

EDUCATORS GUIDE

## thematic connections

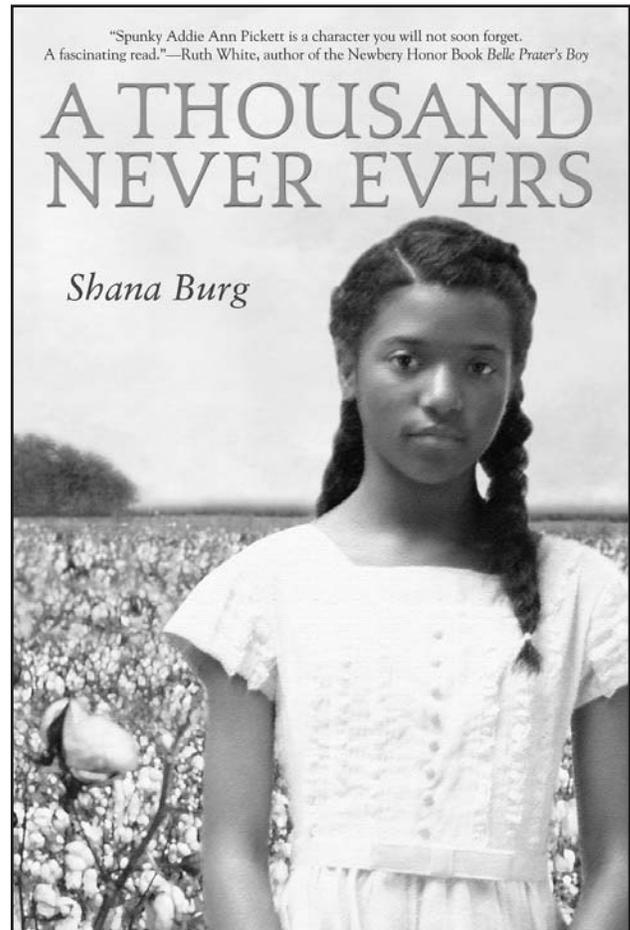
**Racism & Prejudice • Courage  
Fear • Community  
Truth & Loyalty • Family**

**Grades 5 up**

## about the book

**Set in 1963 in Kuckachoo, Mississippi, 12-year-old Addie Ann Pickett comes face-to-face with racial discrimination, and learns that silence won't solve the problem.**

Twelve-year-old Addie Ann Pickett is about to enter West Thunder Creek Junior High School, but her real education begins when Old Man Adams wills his garden to the entire community of Kuckachoo, Mississippi. The white citizens cannot accept the fact that Mr. Adams intended them to garden side by side with the blacks. When Addie Ann's Uncle Bump is accused of destroying the garden, the blacks, led by a local reverend, unite to come to his defense. Addie Ann's mother is crazy with worry and grief. Her son is missing, their house has been burned, and Uncle Bump's fate is now in the hands of an all-white jury. But Mrs. Tate, the wife of a white seed salesman, has firsthand knowledge of the guilty culprit, and finds the courage to testify on behalf of Uncle Bump. Addie Ann is stunned by the events in her town and for the first time understands the importance of speaking out.



Delacorte Press HC: 978-0-385-73470-7  
GLB: 978-0-385-90468-1  
Listening Library CD: 978-0-7393-6740-7

**"The things that I don't like  
I will try to change."**

—Medgar Evers

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CHILDREN'S BOOKS

## pre-reading activity

Ask students to read "A Note to Readers." Then have them write a short paper about why the civil rights movement was important to all minorities, and to all Americans. Encourage students to share their writing in class.

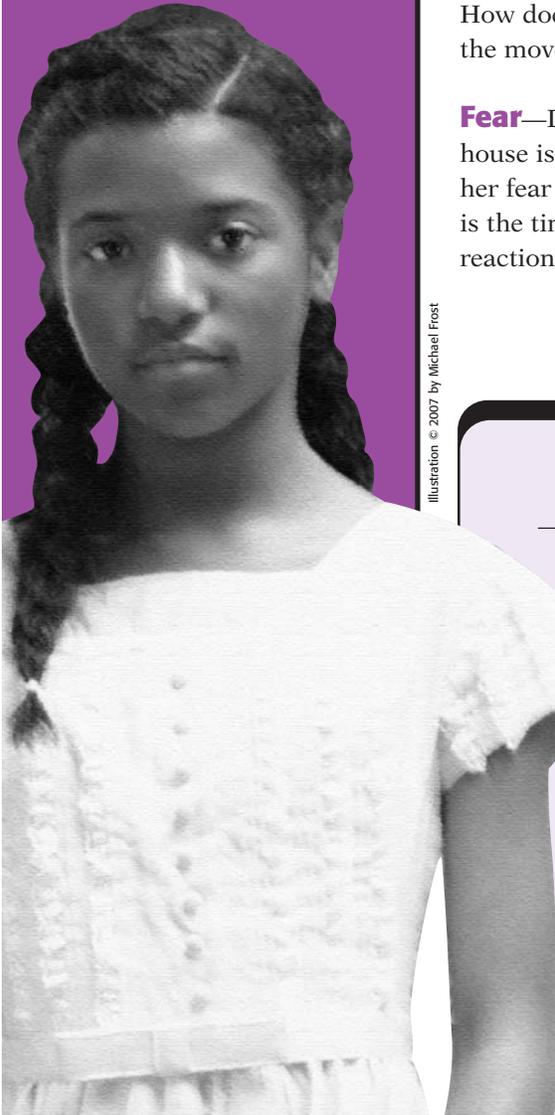


Illustration © 2007 by Michael Frost

# thematic

**Racism & Prejudice**—Ask students to discuss the difference between prejudice and bigotry. How does Addie Ann experience both? Given the content of Mr. Adams's will, explain the irony of the fact that the blacks who worked for him weren't allowed to attend his funeral. Discuss how the mayor is determined to break the law and enforce segregation in Kuckachoo. Explain what he means when he says, "Integration here? . . . That ain't nothin' but a thousand never evers!" (p. 70)

**Courage**—"Turn me loose" were Medgar Evers's last words. How do these words give people like Elias, Uncle Bump, and Addie Ann the courage to continue the fight for their civil rights? Discuss how Mrs. Jacks, the teacher at West Thunder Creek Junior High School, instills courage in her students. What gives Mrs. Tate the courage to testify on behalf of Uncle Bump? The reverend says, "There comes a time when a man's dignity's worth more than his life. Oh Lord, this is our time!" (p. 149) How does this speech give the blacks of Kuckachoo the courage to bring the movement to their town?

**Fear**—Discuss the relationship between courage and fear. The Picketts' house is bombed. Describe the fear that Mrs. Pickett feels. Explain how her fear is grounded in the events of her past. Why does Elias feel that this is the time to tell Addie Ann the truth about her father's death? Discuss her reaction. Is it fear, or anger?

## vocabulary/use of language

The vocabulary in the novel isn't difficult, but students should try to define unfamiliar words using clues from the context of the story. Such words may include: *rummage* (p. 58), *provocation* (p. 60), *traipse* (p. 86), *fedora* (p. 119), *despicable* (p. 124), *orate* (p. 157), *desegregate* (p. 158), *economist* (p. 168), *shard* (p. 174), *conjure* (p. 201), *preliminary* (p. 202), *allegations* (p. 204), *arraignment* (p. 204), *heinous* (p. 217), *scapegoat* (p. 219), *irrelevant* (p. 225), *veracity* (p. 247), *perjury* (p. 247), and *flabbergasted* (p. 250).

# connections

## QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

**Community**—Compare the black side of Kuckachoo to the white side. What does Addie Ann mean when she says, “Once we cross the railroad tracks everything seems whiter and brighter, and I don’t mean just the people who live here”? (p.3) How does Mr. Adams attempt to create a community that unites both black and white citizens? Discuss how different people in Kuckachoo, such as the mayor, Uncle Bump, and Mrs. Worth, explain Mr. Adams’s intention.

**Truth & Loyalty**—Addie Ann’s mother is extremely loyal to Mrs. Tate. How does she instill this type of loyalty in Addie Ann? Debate whether Addie Ann’s mother is loyal out of fear. Addie Ann is taught that

“telling someone’s secret is just like telling a lie.” (p. 137) How does Addie Ann’s mother justify the lie that she has told Addie Ann about her father’s death? Explain the conflict within Addie Ann about attending the picking. Why does she think her absence will appear disloyal to the “cause”?

**Family**—Addie Ann’s father died before she was born. How is Uncle Bump a father figure to her? Explain how the black side of town resembles a family. At what point does Addie Ann realize that the future of the black citizens of Thunder Creek County is the responsibility of a large extended family?

## connecting to the curriculum

**Language Arts**—Addie Ann reads *Ebony* magazine that she borrows from the church. Ask students to research the contribution of Medgar Evers to the civil rights movement and write an article about him for *Ebony*.

Have students read the provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and write a news story about the act for the fictional *Delta Daily* newspaper. Include interviews with local citizen like Addie Ann, Uncle Bump, Elias, Mrs. Tate, and the mayor.

**Social Studies**—Ask students to read the 15th Amendment of the United States Constitution. Then have them research the poll tax introduced in the late 1800s and ended by the 24th amendment in 1964. The America’s Story Web site at [www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/jb/modern/polltax\\_2](http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/jb/modern/polltax_2) gives a clear definition of the poll tax. Instruct students to write a brief paper about the injustice of the voter registration for poor citizens, both black and white.

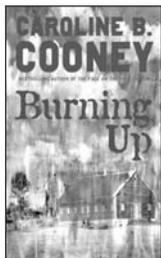
Ask students to pick a central figure from the civil rights movement and write a one-page biography for a children’s history book. Ruby Bridges, Medgar Evers, Fannie Lou Hamer, President Lyndon B. Johnson, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Thurgood Marshall, Terrence James Roberts, and Rosa Parks are among the people they might want to feature.

**Drama**—Addie Ann aspires to be a television geography teacher. Prepare a lesson that Addie Ann might deliver on the geography of the South. Consider how the Civil Rights Act of 1964 changed the face of the South.

**Music**—Mrs. Jacks joins the effort to free Bump Dawson. She leads the crowd in singing “This Little Light of Mine.” Divide students into groups and ask them to perform a song from the civil rights movement. Students may want to consider these songs: “We Shall Overcome,” “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing,” “Oh Freedom,” “I Shall Not be Moved,” and “Blowin’ in the Wind.”

## related titles

### by theme



### Burning Up

**Caroline B. Cooney**

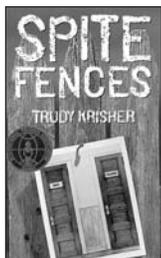
Grades 7 up  
Racism & Prejudice • Family  
Self-Discovery • Courage  
Laurel-Leaf PB: 978-0-440-22687-1



### The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963

**Christopher Paul Curtis**

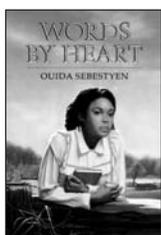
Grades 5 up  
Racism & Prejudice • Family  
Self-Discovery • Fear • Courage  
Yearling PB: 978-0-440-41412-4  
Laurel-Leaf PB: 978-0-440-22800-4  
Delacorte Press HC: 978-0-385-32175-4



### Spite Fences

**Trudy Krisher**

Grades 7 up  
Racism & Prejudice • Family  
Self-Discovery • Courage  
Laurel-Leaf PB: 978-0-440-22016-9



### Words by Heart

**Ouida Sebestyen**

Grades 7 up  
Racism & Prejudice • Family  
Self-Discovery • Fear • Courage  
Yearling PB: 978-0-440-41346-2  
Laurel-Leaf PB: 978-0-440-22688-8

🔊 = Listening Library audio available



Photo Credit: Gabriella Tai

## about the author

*A Thousand Never Evers* is **Shana Burg's** first novel. She was born in Birmingham, Alabama. Her father's role as a lawyer in the civil rights movement there inspired her to write the book. Burg's childhood was filled with riveting stories of the grassroots struggle to end racial discrimination. She has worked with a Mississippi community nutrition project, and taught sixth grade in a racially diverse public school. She lives with her family in Austin, Texas.

For more information about the author, visit [www.shanaburg.com](http://www.shanaburg.com)

## internet resources

### Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

[www.bcri.org](http://www.bcri.org)

The official site of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute located on 16th St. in Birmingham, Alabama.

### National Civil Rights Museum

[www.civilrightsmuseum.org](http://www.civilrightsmuseum.org)

The official site of the National Civil Rights Museum located in Memphis at the Lorraine Motel where Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated.

### The Legacy of Medgar Evers

[www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1294360](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1294360)

An NPR story of the legacy of Medgar Evers.

### The History of Jim Crow

[www.jimcrowhistory.org](http://www.jimcrowhistory.org)

This site provides a history of the Jim Crow Laws.

## on the web

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