

CELEBRATE GREAT WOMEN IN HISTORY

Nonfiction Picture Book Biography Kit

Includes inspirational posters for your classroom or library and discussion questions and activities for celebrating prominent women in history who "**shake things up**"!

HarperCollins*Children's Books*

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WHY TEACH A PICTURE BOOK BIOGRAPHY UNIT?

Young children love learning about their world. They make discoveries through their experiences, explorations, interactions with others, and through literature. Nonfiction literature encourages children to wonder, to ask questions, and to seek answers. It inspires children by expanding their world and introducing them to new people, places, and ideas.

Biographies are especially inspiring, because readers learn about how real people who faced real challenges in the real world managed to overcome their difficulties. Biographies teach children to dream big, think deeply, and navigate challenges.

TIPS FOR PLANNING & ORGANIZING YOUR UNIT

The books in the biography unit will be read aloud to young children, while older students can read the books independently, in pairs, or in small groups. Reading these books as a unit is powerful, because students are given the opportunity to compare biographies, identifying themes from world history and making connections between the people featured in the books and events that occurred during their lifetimes.

Introduce the biography unit by first capturing the students' attention. For example, present images of the people featured in the biographies and then ask students if they know who these people are. You can offer clues, making it a guessing game. Or do a picture walk with one of the books. As you turn the pages, pause to ask students to infer from the illustrations what is happening in the book.

After introducing the unit, choose one book and create a three-column **KWL** chart. Before reading, ask students what they **Know** about the person and record their thoughts in the first column. Then ask the students what they **Wonder** or **Want to know** about him/her, and record their ideas in the middle column. Finally, after reading the book, ask the students what they **Learned**. Record their new knowledge in the final column of the chart. Refer to the middle column to see if the students can answer some of the wonderings. After introducing the first book, share the other biographies with the students and then have each student, pair, or group select a biography of the most interest. Students should create individual KWL charts filling in the first two columns before reading the book; after reading, they should capture their new knowledge in the last column.

Students should then create a culminating project to share their new learning with their classmates. This allows students to learn about not only the person they have read about, but also those whom their peers have studied. Culminating projects might include oral reports, written projects, or digital presentations. You could also host a "Biography Heroine Day" in your classroom and invite the students to come to school dressed up as their favorite biography subject.

CELEBRATE WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH



March is an especially meaningful month to implement this biography unit because it is Women's History Month. The books featured in this kit highlight accomplished women, all of whom have made great contributions to history, culture, and society:

Shaking Things Up: 14 Young Women Who Changed the World
by Susan Hood; Illustrated by various artists

No Truth Without Ruth: The Life of Ruth Bader Ginsburg
by Kathleen Krull; Illustrated by Nancy Zhang

Free as a Bird: The Story of Malala
by Lina Maslo

Hidden Figures: The True Story of Four Black Women and the Space Race
by Margot Lee Shetterly; Illustrated by Laura Freeman

Alabama Spitfire: The Story of Harper Lee and *To Kill a Mockingbird*
by Bethany Hegedus; Illustrated by Erin McGuire

Ordinary, Extraordinary Jane Austen
by Deborah Hopkinson; Illustrated by Qin Leng

Bloom: A Story of Fashion Designer Elsa Schiaparelli
by Kyo Maclear; Illustrated by Julie Morstad



Teaching Materials in this kit were prepared by Sue Ornstein, a first-grade teacher in the Byram Hills School District in Armonk, New York.

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WOMEN AND GIRLS
HAVE BEEN
SHAKING
THINGS UP
FOR A LONG
TIME.



SHAKING THINGS UP

14 YOUNG WOMEN WHO CHANGED THE WORLD

BY SUSAN HOOD

ILLUSTRATED BY VARIOUS ARTISTS

ABOUT THE BOOK

The author, Susan Hood, writes: "Women and girls have been shaking things up for a long time, resisting those who would box them in. Here are fourteen inspiring young rebels (one just six years old, another only thirteen) who broke down walls to pursue their interests, talents, and rights. They fought fires, discovered prehistoric animals, circled the globe, braved Nazis, championed sports, changed the way we eat, integrated schools, improved medicine, and reached for the skies. The world is a better place for all of us because they dared to step out of the box."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How did MOLLY WILLIAMS become the first female firefighter? When did the next woman become a New York City firefighter?
- Why did the author arrange the text in an unusual way when she wrote about MARY ANNING? How did thirteen-year-old Mary support her family? What is a paleontologist?
- What was NELLIE BLY'S profession? How did she travel around the world? What did she do during World War I?
- Why did the doctor suggest that ANNETTE KELLERMAN take up swimming? Why was she arrested?
- Why was PURA BELPRÉ an important librarian? What did she do when she could not find enough Spanish stories in the library?
- Why was FRIDA KAHLO unable to become a doctor? What did she do instead? To what museum was she the first twentieth-century Mexican artist to sell a painting?
- Where did JACQUELINE and EILEEN NEARNE grow up? What brave acts did they do? What characteristics made them effective special agents? What happened to Eileen during World War II?
- What is segregation? What was RUBY BRIDGES'S role in ending segregation? How many children were in her first-grade class? Why?
- What did FRANCES MOORE LAPPÉ teach us about hunger around the world? How would her ideas help both people and the planet?
- What did MAE JEMISON want to be when she grew up? How did her kindergarten teacher react to this idea? What inspired her to become a scientist?
- What famous memorial was designed by MAYA LIN? Why was her design unique? If the design competition had not been "blind," do you think Maya would have won? Why or why not?
- How did ANGELA ZHANG'S curiosity shape her future? What was her important discovery?
- Why was MALALA YOUSAFZAI shot by the Taliban? The author writes that "only her fear died that day. She said, 'Strength, power, and courage were born.'" What does this mean?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Learn More! Ask children to choose one of the women in this book to research more thoroughly. Have them write an informational report about her and present to the class.

Amazing Acrostics. Ask students to choose one of the women in this book and develop an acrostic poem about her by first writing vertically down the page the woman's name or a word associated with her. Next, have them describe the woman or what she is known for. For example, a poem about Annette Kellerman might look like this:

Swimming through the
Wild waves
Incredible strength
Moving through the water . . .



My Hero! Ask the children to review the accounts of the fourteen women in this story. Have them "turn and talk" with a partner about which woman they most admire. Have them discuss why she is so inspirational and what they can do in their own lives to emulate this woman's heroism.

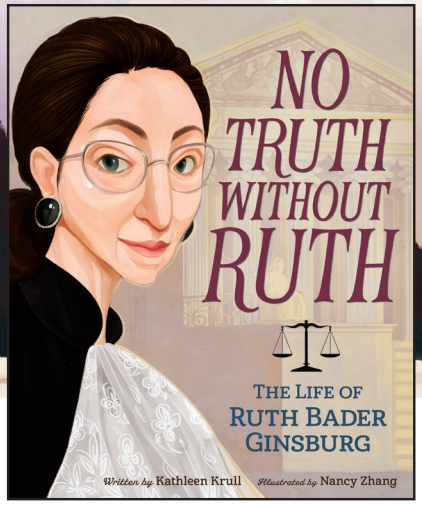
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But she kept
making her points,
a fierce fighter for fairness
and speaking up for the truth.
SUPREME COURT JUSTICE
RUTH BADER GINSBURG



NO TRUTH WITHOUT RUTH

THE LIFE OF RUTH BADER GINSBURG

By Kathleen Krull

Illustrated by Nancy Zhang

About the Book

Ruth Bader Ginsburg is a champion for women's rights and equality. As a child, Ruth learned from her mother to work hard, fight for fairness, and enact change. Ruth lost her mother to cancer when she graduated high school, but she vowed to honor her mother's memory by becoming a lawyer and working tirelessly to change the country's unfair treatment of women. Ruth's intelligence, tenacity, and dedication earned her a nomination to the United States Supreme Court.

Discussion Questions

- The author suggests that we now assume that women are treated as equals. Do you agree that women are treated equally? Why or why not?
- How did Ruth's mother Celia inspire her?
- The author has a double meaning when she writes that Ruth "was hungry for knowledge, always wanting to find the truth." What does the author mean by this?
- Describe Ruth's family. Where did her parents and grandparents come from? What dreams did they have for their children? How were Celia's dreams for Ruth unique?
- How was Ruth affected by World War II?
- What activities did Ruth participate in as she was growing up?
- In college, how was Ruth different from the other girls?
- Why did Ruth agree to marry Martin?
- How was Ruth treated in law school?
- Some of the men in law school called her "Ruthless Ruthie" and other disrespectful names, but Ruth believes these nicknames were better than being called "mouse." Why did she feel this way?
- Ruth believed that whenever written laws used the word "protection" as in "women needing special protection," this meant "the slamming of a door." Why did this happen?
- In the 1970s, when women's roles were evolving and equality seemed more attainable, how did Ruth affect change in the legal system?
- Each time Ruth argued a case in front of the Supreme Court, she wore some special pieces of jewelry. Why?
- When Ruth spoke to the Supreme Court justices, she said, "I ask no favor for [women]. All I ask of our [brothers] is that they take their feet off our necks." What did she mean?
- How did presidents Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama affect Ruth's career?
- The author says that things we take for granted today happened because of a single person or "change-maker" such as Ruth Bader Ginsburg. What other change-makers do you know? What issues did they fight for, and how did they bring about change?

Extension Activities

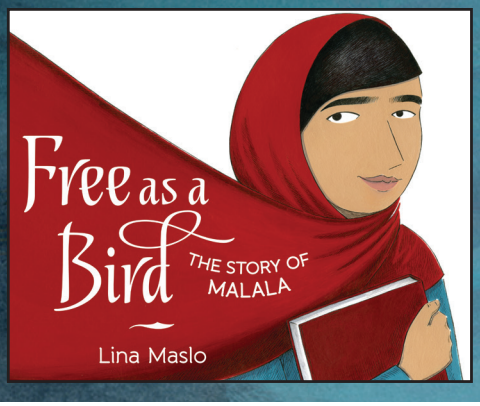
Women of Importance. Have students research another champion of equality for women. The author includes several important women on the opening pages (Ida B. Wells, Alice Paul, Virginia Woolf, and Susan B. Anthony), but there are many other historic women students can study. Have students share their research by writing an informational report to present to their classmates.

Order in the Court! A simple outline of the American federal court system is included in this book. Have students study the structure of the court system and create a poster to represent it. As an extension, students can research one of the judges on the Supreme Court and write a brief biography about him/her.

You Be the Judge of That. Have students research one of Ruth's important cases (the author highlights ten of them at the end of the book) and hold a mock trial in class.

Art © 2018 by Nancy Zhang


One child,
one teacher,
one pen, and one book
can change the world!
ACTIVIST MALALA YOUSAFZAI



Free as a Bird

THE STORY OF MALALA

by Lina Maslo

About the Book

Through lyrical, compelling prose, Lina Maslo tells the incredible story of Malala Yousafzai, a courageous Pakistani teenager who advocates for girls' education worldwide. Malala challenged her country's history and culture while fighting for justice and education for all children. Even when the dangerous Taliban infiltrated her country, she and her family continued bravely promoting their beliefs. Malala was shot by the Taliban on her school bus when she was 15 years old and nearly died, but this did not deter her quest for freedom and girls' education. Malala became the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, and she continues this important work today, traveling around the world to champion education for all children everywhere.

Discussion Questions

- On the dedication page, the author includes a quote from Malala's father. Read it aloud and ask the students to explain its meaning.
- When Malala was born, people said, "A girl. . . . What bad luck." What does that tell you about the culture of her country? Did her father share this belief? How do you know?
- Was Malala's name appropriate for her? Why or why not?
- What did Malala's father do for a living? How did this affect Malala?
- In Pakistan, what were women expected to do when they grew up? How did Malala feel about this?
- Malala's father said, "Malala will be free as a bird!" What did he mean? How did he encourage her?
- What happened when the "new enemy" (the Taliban) rose to power? How did Malala and her family respond?
- After Malala was attacked by the Taliban, where was she taken to recover?
- How did Malala react to being attacked?
- What character traits would describe Malala? Why?
- Malala says, "When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful." How does her life exemplify this statement?



Extension Activities

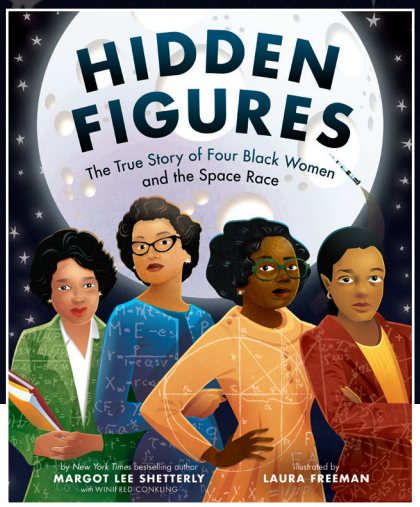
Freedom Fighters. After reading and discussing this book, ask students to research another person who fought for freedom and equality. If this unit occurs during Women's History Month, students should focus on female freedom fighters such as Harriet Tubman, Mary McLeod Bethune, Eleanor Roosevelt, Susan B. Anthony, Indira Gandhi, or Rosa Parks. Have students share their research with the class by creating a poster highlighting the most important aspects of this person's life.

Speak Up! Show students the video of Malala addressing the United Nations Youth Assembly (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rNhZu3ttIU). Ask students to record five ideas from her speech that stand out to them. After viewing the video, have students work in pairs or small groups to share and discuss what they recorded. As an extension, have students write and present their own speeches about the importance of education for all children.

Free-for-All. Hold a debate in class about freedom in America. What does freedom mean? In what ways are we free? Is everyone free? Have students prepare statements to support their ideas, which they then present to the class. Encourage the students to support or refute their classmates' statements with their own beliefs about freedom.

Art © 2018 by Lina Maslo


With hard work, perseverance, and a love of math, anything was possible.
Mathematicians Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, Katherine Johnson, and Christine Darden



HIDDEN FIGURES

The True Story of Four Black Women and the Space Race

By **MARGOT LEE SHETTERLY**

Illustrated by **LAURA FREEMAN**

About the Book

Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, Katherine Johnson, and Christine Darden were all phenomenal mathematicians who were among the first black women to work for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. They used their spectacular math abilities to make significant contributions during World War II and then as the United States joined the Space Race. Though these incredible women faced many challenges, they persevered, and today we recognize their brilliance, their determination, and the undeniable impact they had on our country's exploration of air and space.

Discussion Questions

- ★ What special strength did Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, Katherine Johnson, and Christine Darden use to help the United States?
- ★ In the 1940s, what did "computer" mean?
- ★ How did Dorothy want to help her country during World War II?
- ★ What was the state of Virginia like during the 1940s? How did segregation affect black people? How was segregation evident at Dorothy's job?
- ★ Describe Mary Jackson's job at the Langley Laboratory of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics.
- ★ Katherine Johnson learned how to analyze turbulence. How would this be helpful?
- ★ Katherine wanted to join her research group's meetings, but women were not permitted to attend. How was she able to change this?
- ★ Mary wanted to become an engineer, but she was told it was impossible. Why? How did she overcome this?
- ★ When the Langley Laboratory got its first machine computer, how did it function? What was necessary to make it operate successfully?
- ★ What was *Sputnik*? When the Russians launched it into space, how did this affect Katherine's job? How did the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics change?
- ★ For many years, Langley had used math principles to design and improve airplanes. After *Sputnik*, what else was designed using math? How did Katherine's strong math ability help send astronaut John Glenn into space?
- ★ In the 1960s, how did segregation laws change?
- ★ How did Dorothy, Mary, and Katherine help Christine Darden become an engineer? What was her first job at NASA?

Extension Activities

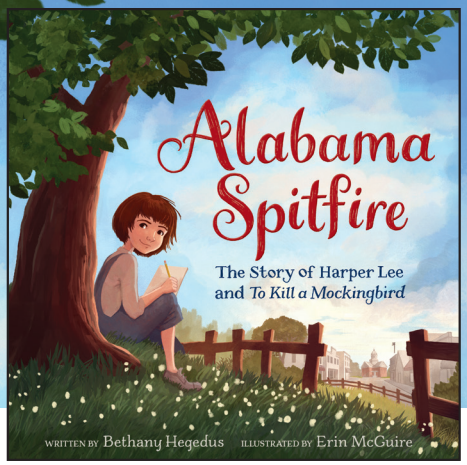
Marvelous Math. Ask the class to think about how and when we use mathematics in our daily life. List these examples on a chart, and discuss why there are so many applications of math in the real world. Then use math to accomplish a task in the classroom, such as tallying up the lunch count or calculating how many students are present vs. absent.

Meet the Computers. Toward the end of the book, the author invites readers to learn more about these influential women. Have each student choose one of the Meet the Computers passages to read. Then have them "turn and talk" with a partner and share their new knowledge with each other.

Superwomen! Have a class discussion about why these women's contributions have not been celebrated until recently. Then have students choose one of these women, or another woman who is renowned in the field of science and engineering, to research using both printed and digital resources. Have the students prepare an oral report on their research to present to the class.

Art © 2018 by Laura Freeman


Nelle loved words …
Words had weight.
Words held
meaning.
Author Nelle Harper Lee



Alabama Spitfire

BY Bethany Hegedus

ILLUSTRATED BY Erin McGuire

About the Book

What was Nelle Harper Lee like as a child? How did she become a writer? What was the inspiration for her renowned book, *To Kill a Mockingbird*? Bethany Hegedus shares fascinating details about Harper Lee's childhood growing up in a small Alabama town, her relationships with family and friends, how she became a world-famous writer, and how she chose to lead her life as a prominent, Pulitzer Prize–winning author.

Discussion Questions

- What is a "spitfire"? Do you know anyone like this? Why would you call that person a spitfire?
- How was Nelle different from her sisters?
- What did the author mean by "when it came to justice, separate was most definitely not equal"?
- What was Nelle's father's occupation? How did this affect her life?
- Why was Nelle's friend Truman targeted by bullies in the schoolyard? What did the two friends do together? What special gift did they receive from Nelle's father?
- When Nelle attended college, what made her different from the other girls?
- Why didn't Nelle finish law school?
- When Nelle moved to New York City, she reunited with her friend Tru. How did this affect her life?
- When Nelle began writing a novel, what inspired her? What details does she recall about her hometown? How do you think these sensory details enhanced her story?
- Describe Nelle's writing process. How long did it take her to write *To Kill a Mockingbird*? Why?
- How did Nelle feel about becoming a famous writer?
- What did the author mean by the closing sentence, "And *To Kill a Mockingbird* continues to do the speaking and fighting for her"?



Extension Activities

Do You Know Nelle? Spirited spitfire, faithful friend, literature lover . . . Ask students to describe Nelle Harper Lee, focusing on her personality traits and interests. Have students provide evidence from the text to support their descriptions.

Read About Writers. Ask students to choose an author they would like to study. As they research this author, ask them to learn about the author's childhood and journey to becoming a writer. What important people inspired this author? What experiences impacted their writing? Have students create a digital slideshow using presentation software (e.g. PowerPoint, Keynote, or Google Slides) to share their research with the class.

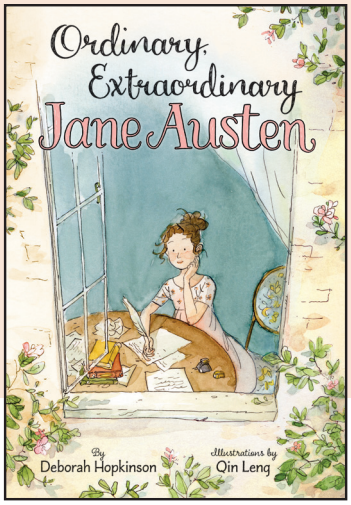
Weighty Words. The author writes: "Nelle loved words. She loved the sounds they made, how she could string them together to appease someone or to rile them up. Words had weight. Words held meaning." Ask students to think about the power of words. Can they recall powerful words, phrases, or sentences from books they have read in the past or speeches they have heard? Hegedus opens this book with Atticus Finch's famous line from *To Kill a Mockingbird*. ("You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view . . . until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.") Read it aloud and discuss its significance.

Art © 2018 by Erin McGuire

I will write about
the ordinary world
in the most
extraordinary way.



Author Jane Austen



Ordinary, Extraordinary Jane Austen

By Deborah Hopkinson Illustrations by Qin Leng

About the Book

Jane Austen grew up in a large, boisterous family. No matter who she was with or what she was doing, Jane always listened and closely watched others around her. When she grew older and decided to become a writer, Jane's observations inspired her to write about ordinary people living ordinary lives, an unusual topic in the early nineteenth century. It took perseverance for Jane to get her novels published, but over two hundred years later Jane's books are still loved by readers all over the world.

Discussion Questions

- What was Jane's childhood like? How did families spend their time? Was Jane's childhood similar to yours? Why or why not?
- What was young Jane like? How did this affect her writing when she became an author?
- Describe Jane's schooling. How did she become a great reader?
- Jane first began writing for her family. What did she write for them? Why?
- How did Jane's father support her talent for writing?
- The author writes that Jane wanted her books to "hold up a mirror to the ordinary world so readers could recognize (and laugh at) themselves." What does she mean by this? How was Jane's writing unique?
- Did Jane get her novels published right away? What did she have to do to get them published?
- Why did Jane's published novels say they were written "by a lady"?
- How did Jane feel about others knowing that she had published books?
- Why do you think Jane's novels are still enjoyed by so many people today?



Extension Activities

Look and Listen. Jane listened closely and watched people's behaviors so that she could create characters that were believable and real. Have students observe someone closely in school or at home, paying attention to small details about their appearance, behavior, or speech. Then have them write a description of that person. Have students read their description to a partner and ask them for feedback. Did the person seem real? Did the writing include details that brought the person to life? Based on the feedback, students should revise their writing as necessary.

All in Good Time. Show students the timeline of Jane Austen's life toward the back of the book. Discuss what a timeline is and how it focuses on the most important events in a person's lifetime. Then ask the students to research an author and design a timeline that represents the important milestones in that author's life. Younger students can make a simple timeline of their own life by including milestones such as when they were born, when they started school, when they got their pet, and when siblings were born.

Same or Different? As a whole class or in pairs, have students complete a Venn diagram that compares the lives of Jane Austen and Nelle Harper Lee. For example, both were renowned writers, both were inspired by their fathers, both loved to read, and both had happy childhoods. However, Nelle was a tomboy, while Jane behaved as young ladies did at that time. When the women became successful writers, Jane loved the recognition while Nelle shied away from it. After the students complete the Venn diagram, ask them to decide which writer they identify with more and why.

BALZER + BRAY
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Art © 2018 by Qin Leng

Women don't want to just sit around looking pretty. They want to DREAM and DO bold things.

Fashion Designer Elsa Schiaparelli





Bloom

A Story of Fashion Designer Elsa Schiaparelli

by KYO MACLEAR

Pictures by JULIE MORSTAD

About the Book

When Elsa was young, she felt ugly and unloved, but she found beauty and joy in the world around her. Inspired by her uncle, Elsa followed her dreams to become an artist and a fashion designer. She created new colors and innovative designs for women's clothing. Collaborations with artists, such as Dali and Giacometti encouraged Schiaparelli to create everything from the lamb chop hat to the color known as "shocking pink", and soon, Elsa saw "the beauty of my art reflected in the world." Her avant-garde designs delighted and still influence the fashion industry today.

Discussion Questions

- When did Elsa first notice color and beauty? What inspired her as a child?
- Describe Elsa's family life. Did she have a happy childhood? Why or why not?
- Ask the children what they think "Bella" and "Brutta" mean on pages 5–6. How do you know?
- When Elsa was seven years old, what important wondering did she have?
- When the seed seller pinned a flower to Elsa's dress, she got an idea. What did she do? What happened to her?
- The author talks about flower seeds and "a seed of wild imagination." What does she mean by that?
- Describe Elsa's relationship with her uncle Giovanni. Why was this relationship so important to her?
- When Elsa returned home from Milano, she began her journey as an artist. Where did she find ideas?
- Elsa needed money to follow her dream to become an artist. What job did she take?
- When Elsa designed her first dress, what happened?
- Elsa believed that "to be an artist is to dream big and risk failure." What does this mean? Did Elsa become a fashion designer right away?
- What was Elsa's first successful design?
- What were some of Elsa's unique designs? How did they inspire other women?
- Why is this book titled *Bloom*?



Extension Activities

Dress Up. Have students explore Schiaparelli's clothing designs. Then ask the students to replicate one of her designs on paper or, inspired by her designs, create their own design. Hold a "fashion show" in the classroom by displaying the students' designs.

Color Mixing on Coffee Filters. Have each student fold a plain white coffee filter into fourths. Using colored markers, have students color the filters with their own creative designs. Unfold the filter, and lightly spray with water. Have students observe the colors running together to create a beautiful, unique design!

In Fashion. Ask the students to choose another fashion designer to research and then have them write a brief biography about the designer. They should present their research to a partner or in a small group and include why they are inspired by this person's designs.

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