

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

DR. JO

HOW SARA JOSEPHINE BAKER
SAVED THE LIVES OF AMERICA'S CHILDREN



MONICA KULLING

ILLUSTRATED BY
JULIANNA SWANEY

DEAR EDUCATOR

Dr. Jo: How Sara Josephine Baker Saved the Lives of America's Children is a thoughtful and beautifully illustrated picture book that shares the story of a woman who has inspired generations of girls to change the world. With informative and accessible text and lively illustrations, *Dr. Jo* is a wonderful introduction to biography as a genre and tells the story of one of America's female trailblazers.

Dr. Jo can be used in the classroom in a number of ways, including:

- Exploring conceptual and thematic connections such as perseverance, prejudice, creativity, gender roles, connection, role models, feminism, overcoming adversity and innovations in health
- Introducing the genre of biography
- Enrichment for a social studies unit
- As a whole-class read aloud or for independent reading and/or research

The Educator's Guide includes a variety of discussion questions and activities to elicit a meaningful understanding of the text for children ranging in age from five to eight years. The Educator's Guide can be adapted to suit the needs of your students. Where applicable, this Educator's Guide has been aligned with Common Core State Standards.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Sara Josephine Baker was a strong girl who loved adventure. But growing up in New York in the late 1800s was difficult. When she lost her brother and father to typhoid fever, she became determined to pursue her dream of becoming a doctor. In Jo's day, people did not think that women should be doctors, but times were changing, and Jo was at the forefront.

Jo persisted and attended one of the only medical schools open to women. After graduating in 1898, Dr. Jo took a job with the New York Public Health Department. She was sent to a neighborhood called Hell's Kitchen, where many poor immigrant families struggled to survive. She focused on treating the most vulnerable patients: babies and children. Dr. Jo was determined, compassionate and full of innovative ideas to improve the health of inner-city families. Her successes made her famous across the nation for saving the lives of thousands of children.



FOUNTAS AND PINNELL READING LEVEL: M

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Monica Kulling is the author of over fifty books for children, including the popular Great Idea series, stories of inventors. The third book in the series, *In the Bag! Margaret Knight Wraps It Up*, was chosen as a Once Upon a World Children's Book Award Honor Book by the Simon Wiesenthal Center. The sixth book in the series, *Spic-and-Span! Lillian Gilbreth's Wonder Kitchen*, won the North Dakota Library Association 2016 Flicker Tale Children's Book Award (Non-Fiction), and was listed as an Amazon Best Book of the Year (Non-Fiction) and a Boston Globe Best Picture Book of the Year. Monica lives in Toronto, Canada.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Julianna Swaney is an illustrator, designer and fine artist whose work is inspired by themes of imagination, whimsy and melancholy. She studied printmaking at Maine College of Art and works in pencil and watercolor. She has illustrated Uma Krishnaswami's middle-grade novel *Book Uncle and Me* and Joanne Stewart Wetzel's picture book *Mermaid School*. She lives in Portland, Oregon.

READ ALOUD: PRE-READING DISCUSSION PROMPTS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.1

1. Introduce or review the genre of biography with the class. Take out a few simple biographies from the school library as examples. Give students the opportunity to quickly skim some of the books. As a class, make a list of the essential elements of a biography. Revisit this list after reading *Dr. Jo* to see how the format of *Dr. Jo* is the same and different from other biographies.
2. Lead a discussion about the difference between fiction and nonfiction text.
 - What is fiction? What is nonfiction?
 - Can a book have both fiction and nonfiction elements in it? Can you think of an example of this?
 - Do you have a preference for reading fiction or nonfiction? Explain your answer.
3. Show the front and back covers of the book to students and read the title of the book out loud.
 - What do you know about the book and what can you guess about the book from the title and illustrations?
 - Who do you think will be in this book?
 - Do you think this book will take place in present day or the past? How do you know?
4. The back cover of the book has a blurb that explains what the book is about. If using this book as a read aloud, help set the purpose of the reading task and get students thinking about the text by reading the blurb to students before you begin reading the book.



READ ALOUD: AFTER-READING DISCUSSION PROMPTS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.2

1. How many years ago was Dr. Jo born? Where was she born?
2. How was a young Dr. Jo different from many of the other girls at that time?
3. Dr. Jo and her family lived downstream from the Hudson River. How did the location of where she lived contribute to her desire to become a doctor?
4. Studying medicine was described as being too “grisly” and “gruesome” for women. What do these words mean? Why would something described as grisly and gruesome be thought of as inappropriate for a woman at that time?
5. The text states, “But a few women doctors were proving that this thinking was simple prejudice.” What does the word “prejudice” mean? And how did Emily and Elizabeth Blackwell prove that it was prejudice to say medicine was too grisly and gruesome for women?
6. After high school, Jo boarded a train for the Women’s Medical College. How do you think Jo was feeling as she boarded that train for New York? Have you ever had similar feelings?

7. Why did Dr. Jo leave the medical practice that she and her friend Florence had opened?
8. Instead of feeling discouraged by the illness and poverty that she saw in Hell's Kitchen, Dr. Jo felt determined. What do you think she was determined to do?
9. A lot can be learned about a person not only by what they say but by what they do. When Dr. Jo shared her cornbread with the hungry family she had been called to help, what did this action show about the type of person she is?
10. Dr. Jo had a few ideas to help improve the health of children in Hell's Kitchen. What were her ideas and how did she come up with them?
11. "Dr. Jo understood the connection between poverty and illness." From what you learned in this book and what you knew before you read the book, what is the connection between poverty and illness?
12. What extra information is provided about Dr. Jo in the section at the end of the book called, "More about Dr. Jo?"
13. Given what you learned about Dr. Jo in this book, do you think she would have gone on to become a doctor and make such an impact had her life started off differently? Explain your thinking.

READ ALOUD AND INDEPENDENT READING: SUGGESTIONS FOR FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. The author writes, "... it was brave Dr. Jo who took on the job of helping those who needed her help the most — infants and children." Have students write a description of what it means to be brave. Encourage students to refer back to what they learned about Dr. Jo or to other people they know of who are brave in their written description.
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.1](#)

2. There is a variety of interesting and descriptive vocabulary used in the book. Review the reading strategy of using the context of text to understand the meaning of words by studying the following words and phrases used in the book:

- adventurous (page 4)
- epidemic (page 4)
- prejudice (page 7)
- "spread like wildfire" (page 12)
- sturdy (page 14)
- frantic (page 14)
- flawed (page 26)
- mass-produced (page 28)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.4](#)



3. "Dr. Jo tackled another problem — swaddling — by designing her own infant wear. Her sleeper opened down the front. It made changing diapers easier and allowed for movement and better temperature control."

- What problem did Dr. Jo's new design address?
- How did her design get into the hands of new mothers?

Design a poster that would communicate the benefits of using this new design of sleeper.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.3](#), [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.2](#)

4. To this day, Sara Josephine Baker is a role model for other independent and determined people, especially young girls. Have students name the achievements and the personality traits that make Dr. Jo a role model.

- Do you think that there are more opportunities for girls now as compared to when Dr. Jo was growing up?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.4](#), [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.2](#)

5. As a class, review the illustrations in the book carefully. Have students identify the different things and ideas presented in the illustrations that show the era in which Dr. Jo lived (for example, the type of car Dr. Jo drives). Review the important reading strategy of looking carefully at illustrations when they are included in a book to support and extend understanding.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.5
6. Review the list of essential elements common to biographies that was created in the pre-reading discussion.
- How does *Dr. Jo* differ from typical biographies?
- Write a simple storybook biography of somebody you know who has contributed positively to your community. Plan out the book as you would if you were writing a fictitious story. This means drawing pictures or making simple notes before you begin drafting about what happens at the beginning, middle, and ending of the story and thinking about the story's characters and plot. The main difference is that this story is true! After you have drafted and revised your story, add illustrations to support the text.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.3
7. "Jo was seeing firsthand how grateful immigrants were to live in America, but also how hard that new life could be if you were poor."
- What does the word "immigrant" mean?
 - If you are an immigrant to this country or know somebody who is, what are some of the challenges of moving to a new place?
 - If your school is one that has a lot of newcomers to the country, what are some of the things your school does already to help welcome immigrants in the community?
- After thinking about everything that your school already does, have students think about other ways the school community can support new immigrants to the country. As a class, draft a list with the brainstormed recommendations to share with the rest of the school community.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.1

APPENDIX: COMMON CORE STATE STANDARD

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.1	Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.2	Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.3	Describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas or pieces of information in a text
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.4	Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in a text.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.5	Know and use various text features (e.g., headings, tables of contents, glossaries, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.8	Identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.1	Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or name the book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply a reason for the opinion, and provide some sense of closure.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.3	Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1** Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.2** Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.1** Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.5** Know and use various text features (e.g., captions, bold print, subheadings, glossaries, indexes, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text efficiently.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.3** Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.1** Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.2** Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read-aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

