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## Elisa Carbone

### About the Author

Elisa Carbone is the author of *Starting School With an Enemy*, *Corey's Story*, and the highly regarded *Stealing Freedom*. Her books are funny and light-hearted, even though they deal with serious subjects. For that reason, middle graders—who find it fun to laugh even in the face of a problem—especially enjoy them. She often speaks at schools and conferences on innovative teaching methods and creative writing. When she is not writing, she is a sports enthusiast. She enjoys rock-climbing, windsurfing, cross-country skiing, boogie boarding, and running white water rivers.

This activity guide was written by  
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## Suggested Activities for *Stealing Freedom*

1. Ask each student to make an illustrated time line showing events of the story. The time lines should start in Unity, Maryland, in 1853.
2. Direct each student to draw a map showing the locations in which the story took place.
3. Ann lived in the mid-1800s. Direct each student to write a newspaper article that tells about a historic happening or event during that time period.
4. Ask students to write diary entries that Ann might have kept before, during, or after dramatic events in her life. Emotions and feelings are very important in a diary.
5. Ann Marie Weems, disguised as a boy, escaped from slavery. Direct students to do research to learn how others were able to break their chains of slavery and about the people who helped them.
6. Ask students to do research to find answers to the following questions.
  - a. Who are some famous slaves?
  - b. What kinds of things did slaves and nonslaves do to help end slavery?
  - c. When did specific activities to end slavery take place?
  - d. Where did slaves live, travel, and then settle?
  - e. Why did nonslaves help to end slavery?
  - f. How did slaves and nonslaves help bring about the end of slavery?

(Note: Students may want to use the biographies of Phillis Wheatley, Dred Scott, Harriet Tubman, George Washington Carver, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglas, and/or Nat Turner)

Then ask each student to organize the information into a game. For example:

Using index cards, make game cards with questions and answers on one side. Divide the class into two teams. A player from Team 1 selects a card and reads the question. A player on the opposing team, Team 2, must answer the question. If the question is correct, the player gets a freedom card; if the player is wrong, he or she gets a card that represents a link in the chain. A team can get rid of a chain link by answering three correct answers in a row. The winning team is the team that gets the most freedom cards first and has no link cards.

7. Direct each student to create a story pyramid using the model below. Use this pyramid as an outline for a summary of the story.

### Story Pyramid

Complete the pyramid with the following information.

- Line 1 Write the name of the main character.
- Line 2 Write two words describing the main character.
- Line 3 Write three words describing the setting.
- Line 4 Write four words stating the story problem.
- Line 5 Write five words describing one event in the story.
- Line 6 Write six words describing a second event.
- Line 7 Write seven words describing a third event.
- Line 8 Write eight words describing the solution to the problem.



### **Suggested Activities for *Starting School With an Enemy***

1. Discuss with your students the feelings a person might have when he or she moves to a new location or attends a new school. Make a list of the internal and external conflicts that might arise.
2. Ask students to compare and contrast *The Kid in the Red Jacket* by Barbara Park and *Starting School With an Enemy* by Elisa Carbone.
3. Tell students to imagine that Sarah, Alex, and Eric enter your classroom as new students. Ask each student to write a letter to a friend describing each of these new classmates.
4. Brainstorm with students the appropriate ways to deal with a school bully. Ask students the following questions: How did Sarah deal with Eric? Did Sarah change her ways? Why? Invite the school guidance counselor to your classroom for further discussion.
5. Direct students to decide which character in the book they would like to spend the day with. Ask students to decide whether they would want to visit the character in the character's world or in the students' world.

### **Suggested Activities for *Corey's Story: Her Family's Secret***

1. Direct students to compare and contrast *Corey's Story* with *Hannah in Between* by Colby Rodowsky.
2. Ask each student to design a postcard from Corey to Alex. Ask each student to write a message on one side and to draw a picture on the other side.
3. Ask students to explain how Corey felt at the beginning, middle, and end of the story.
4. Ask students to list the problems the major characters had and how they solved them.
5. Direct each student to think of one situation that occurred to Corey, Alex, or another character in the story and to write how the student would have handled it differently.