



This guide was written and compiled by Lynne Hobbs, Librarian—Fairfax County Public Schools

About Alice McGill

Alice McGill is a storyteller and much more. A native of North Carolina, McGill holds a master's degree in education and has taught school for many years.

Using theater, film, print, and radio, McGill preserves the spirit of American history. She has published several books and recordings and has created numerous stage performances, most notably her production of *Sojourner Truth Speaks*. She has been a featured storyteller at the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesboro, Tennessee.

In addition, McGill has developed storytelling workshops for teachers and students as well as acting and creative writing workshops for university-level students. McGill is the recipient of many awards, notably the Presidential Citation from the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, the first-day issue Sojourner Truth commemorative postage stamp, and honor from the National Theater in Washington, D.C.

Activities for Specific Books and Recordings by Alice McGill

Flying Africans (sound recording)

Flying Africans

1. Listen to the story, stopping the tape just before the denouement, as the children are about to look into the bucket. Ask students to imagine what they think Mr. Bucket is hiding in his bucket. Younger children can write sentences and/or draw pictures of their ideas. Older children can write about their ideas and explain why Mr. Bucket might want to carry that “something” around with him. They could also imagine what they would carry if they were he and why. Ask the children to share their ideas in small groups or with the class, and then play the end of the story. Ask them to share or write about their reactions to the solution. (Grades 2-6)
2. After listening to the story, encourage the children to discuss why we are curious about—and even afraid of—someone or something that is out of the ordinary. Ask your students to discuss the children's characters versus Mr. Bucket's character and whether the children's pursuit of the mystery was right or wrong. (Grades 3-6)

Never Laugh in a Lion's Face on the Ground

1. After listening to the story of the brave but foolish monkey, direct your students to work in groups to create some other silly and foolish ideas for proving bravery. Ask them to list some of the possible outcomes. (Grades 1-6)



In the Hollow of Your Hand: Slave Lullabies (book and compact disc)

1. Listen to one or more lullabies on the CD included with the book; Alice McGill narrated the text as well as performed the lullabies. Direct the children to draw pictures that illustrate their ideas and feelings about the song, then look at the work of the artist. How are they the same? How are they different? (Grades 1-6)
2. Look closely at the illustrations in the book, and identify the objects used to create them. Direct the children to use the media of the illustrator (cloth, buttons, etc.) to create their own pictures or to transfer the idea in the picture they drew for the previous activity into a new medium. (Grades 2-6)
3. Divide the children into small groups and ask them to talk about and sing songs that they remember from “when they were babies.” Ask them to talk about their feelings and, as a group, to decide which ones they might want to share with the rest of the class. (Grades 2-6)
4. Alice McGill explains that two of her songs have ideas behind them that are not usually considered appropriate for children. “Liddy Lay Low” is a song that sustained a family friend through his war experiences, and “Hush-a Little Baby” is about death. Ask your students to discuss how music can be a calming, comforting, and sustaining element in people’s lives. Ask them to exchange examples of how it helps them. (Grades 4-6)

Molly Bannaky

1. Activities surrounding family history and heritage are obviously choices for related activities. Students can count and list the number of family members (immediate, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins), then make family trees. Often students are surprised with the number of people who are related to them and are a part of their history. Asking parents for stories of when they (the parents) were little, then recording them, along with illustrations, can be fun for any age, and can start an activity that will become more valuable to them over the years. Direct your students to create family storybooks or ask them to bring in pictures and mementoes and create family scrapbooks that they can keep. (Grades 1-6)
2. *Molly Bannaky* offers several excellent foils for comparison. A Venn diagram can be used to compare and contrast life on an established English farm and in the wilds of America. It can also be used to look at the similarities and differences between an indentured servant and a slave. Finally, Molly Bannaky’s characteristics and characters can be compared. (Grades 2-6)
3. Names are inherited and changed in out-of-the-ordinary ways in the story. Direct students to explore the meanings of their own first and last names, and direct them to ask their parents why they chose their names. Finally, direct the students to create names for themselves that describe something important about them. (Grades 1-6)
4. Create a coat of arms. This activity can be used in two different ways—creating one for the Bannaky family or creating coats of arms for the students themselves. (Grades 1-6)

Sojourner Truth Speaks (videorecording)

1. One of the first problems that Sojourner addresses is the need for the newly freed slave to become self-supporting, thus gaining self-respect. Direct your students to divide into groups and discuss ways that they have been achieving self-reliance and independence as they have been growing older. As babies, they were totally reliant on their parents and other adults to care for them. As adults, they will rely on themselves for most everything. Ask each group to choose one example and chart the steps they had to take to master a responsibility in their everyday



life. Tell them to consider tasks that they take for granted, like cooking a meal, as well as more complicated ones.

2. After reading a little about the Civil War and Reconstruction, ask your students to write entries in fictional journals, describing the first few weeks of life after emancipation.
3. Sojourner asks the women who are listening to her speak to sign a petition and says that she is an “agitator.” She sees these activities as necessary to bring about change for the better. Explore ways that individuals can change things in society and in everyday life.
4. Defend the Bill of Rights, an addition to the Constitution that Sojourner held in her hands, which is for all people, male and female, regardless of color.
5. One of the anecdotes that Sojourner relates to the woman was of her realization that she has never slept in a bed that she’s made up the next morning. Many of the things that were foreign to her were things we take for granted. Direct your students to work together to make a list of things we take for granted in our everyday life.