

Raising a President, the story of Rachel Clark and Jimmy Carter

Study Guide

Written by Joanna Maddox

ARTIST BACKGROUND

Joanna Maddox is a professional actress, singer, storyteller who writes and performs dramatic portrayals of historical American women. She received a BFA in Drama from the University of Georgia. She has toured throughout the US and is an approved Touring Artist of the National Women's History Project, Fulton County Arts Council School Arts Program and Character in the Arts Program. She has appeared in numerous television and radio commercials, corporate videos and is a member of Screen Actor's Guild and AFTRA.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

This program highlights women's history and social studies. It connects with the study units which cover The Great Depression.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- To gain knowledge about the struggles of those who lived during The Great Depression.
- To demonstrate how the people in Archery despite living in the segregated south helped each other to survive.
- To present a live history lesson.
- To present Rachel Clark a black woman who in her own quiet way influenced the 39th President of the United States, President Jimmy Carter.
- To present a positive female role model.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

During the Depression years, a time long past, way down south on a Georgia farm lived a little boy who would one become President. Rachel Clark was a black woman who lived in a small tenant house on the farm of Jimmy Carter's family with her husband, Jack Clark. Jimmy Carter worked side by side with Rachel Clark in the fields and he often spent the night in the Clark home when his parents were out of town. Although farm life was hard work, Rachel and Jimmy would find time to go fishing in the nearby creek. On the walk to the creek, Rachel would tell Jimmy stories about life's lessons and would share with him her words of wisdom. These words stayed with him all of his life. Do you think it ever occurred to Rachel Clark that she was "Raising a President?"

VOCABULARY WORDS

Landowner - rented a plot of land to tenant farmers and sharecroppers who in turn paid for using the land with a share of the crops grown.

Tenant farmer - a person who pays money to use land that belongs to someone else

Sharecroppers - worked the land for a share of the crops

Arsenic - a gray poisonous substance used in insect poisons.

Molasses - a sweet, thick yellowish brown syrup that is made from sugarcane

Boll weevils - a beetle that lays eggs in the seed

Pallet - a bed or mattress made of straw

Pods of the cotton plant. Boll weevils cause a great deal of damage to cotton plants.

OVERVIEW OF ART FORM

The art forms presented in this program are dramatic art, storytelling and music. Information presented in the narrative form is the information that will be remembered. Before television and radio people told stories and the ancient art of storytelling is making a comeback. Storytelling can be used to entertain, inspire, encourage, heal and to pass down cultural history and information from generation to generation. Through stories people can connect, learn about and appreciate each other.

PRE AND POST ACTIVITIES

- Read books from Resource Guide
- Visit the Jimmy Carter Library/Museum in Atlanta GA
- Visit Jimmy Carter's Boyhood farm and Rachel Clark's house at the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site in Plains GA
- Read poem Rachel written by President Carter (Always a Reckoning) see below

-Write a poem about a member of your family that has deeply influenced you. Use details that give insight into the whole person. First you may want to write a long journal about that person and focus on one event that you shared together. Next choose your favorite phrase and write as a poem.

-Write a letter to this special person telling them all the favorite things you love to do together. Don't forget to mail your letter.

Pretend you could interview President Carter. Write five questions you would like to have answered by him.

Create a timeline of President Carter's life. What did you learn by examining and creating a time line of his life?

RESOURCES

BOOKS

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| "An Hour before Daylight" | by Jimmy Carter |
| "Christmas in Plains" | by Jimmy Carter |
| "Always a Reckoning" | by Jimmy Carter |
| "Why not the Best" | by Jimmy Carter |

WEBSITES

www.jimmycarter.info
www.JimmyCarterlibrary.org
www.carter.library@nara.gov

For School Field Trips to Jimmy Carter NHS in Plains GA
Contact Annette Wise 229-824-4104 ext 16
300 North Bond Street
Plains GA

Visit the Jimmy Carter Library/Museum
441 Freedom Parkway
Atlanta GA 30307
404-865-7100

Rachel
By Jimmy Carter

My young life, shaped by those I loved
Felt the gentle touch of Rachel Clark.
Our neighbor the farm, whose husband, Jack
Cared for the barn and did the kind of work
That we boys most admired. He tended mules,
and rang the cast-iron bell that brought an end
to sleep, and later tolled the time to rest.
His wife was small and quiet. Her brown skin
Fixed her in our segregated worked,
Yet Rachel had the aura of a queen
That somehow wouldn't let the white folds ask
For her to do the chores around their place
Like cooking, ironing clothes or tending babes.
But she would volunteer with quiet grace and
Any time she learned the need was real.

For miles around, the farming folks would know w
What Rachel did while working in the field.
I'd pick a hundred fifty pounds or so
Of cotton if I never stopped to rest
No man could do much more—but Rachel Clark
Could pick near twice as much as second best/
At sundown we would tie what we had got
In burlap sheets, and watch the foreman weigh,
See for ourselves that Rachel had the most,
And if she topped her own best mark that day.

She'd put a lot more peanuts on the stacks,
Hoe more weeds, shuck more corn-no one,
In fact, could equal anything she did,
These kinds of deeds that may seem small to some
Were big events for us, in which we all
Competed, as our farm life would allow.
When work was done, or when a heavy rain
Made the fields too wet to hoe or plow
And open cotton bolls too damp to pick
Sometimes she'd smile at me and mention fish.
Then she and I would leave the farm and walk
Six miles or so to reach a stream she knew.
These journeys gave us ample time to talk-
Or rather, I would listen to her words
As she would think a while and then hold forth
About God's holy way: how when we deal
With Nature, we are stewards of the earth,
She'd say that blessings bring on debts to pay,
Describe the duties of a man and wife,
And say the brave and strongest need not fight.
She'd tell how praying gave her life a lift,
And how it made her act and not just talk
Like staying up all night with someone sick.
It wasn't empty preaching, like in church:

Sometimes I wasn't glad to reach the creek.

Our bait was crawfish, lizards, crickets, worms
Or whatever she would recommend
For perch, catfish, and bass—which we called trout,
Misnamed by our European kin,
Or mine at least; I knew that Rachel's folks,
Were brought, themselves, to be my people's slaves.

The swamps and woodlands came alive for me.
She taught the way that every person craves
to learn. Our creels were empty flour sacks
That kept our catch in water, fresh and safe
From water snakes and snapping turtles, that
Would have left us bones instead of fish.
Rachel used exactly seven poles,
For reasons I could never figure out.
I asked her, "Why not eight or six?" She only
Smiled at me, then went ahead and caught,
With luck or skill, five fish to one of mine.
She made it seem a favor, heading home
If some of hers would wind up in my sack.
Those might have been the best days I have known.

With my folks gone, I'd stay with her and Jack.
News papered walls all leaned, the sagging doors
Stayed open, letting flies and breezes in.
I smelled the lye that cleaned the holy floors.
Saving kerosene, we slept at dusk
On lumpy corn shucks, not my feather bed.
They always made me feel like I belonged
And knew what things were better left unsaid.
Although the food was plain and seldom changed.
I never thought our big house down the road
Was better. They all knew I liked to be with
Rachel Clark. I guess my feeling showed.

In later years, I'd visit Rachel home
In public housing; sometimes I'd find
Her on Village Street. Then, still a queen,
Her apron sagging with a can of beer,
She'd laugh about what good times there had been,
And tell me what she thought I ought to do
In Washington, where I was working then.