

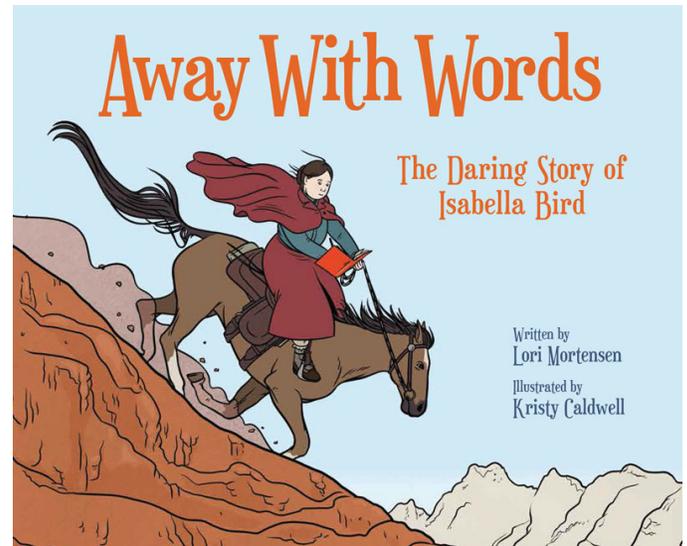
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PEACHTREE
TEACHER'S GUIDE

Away With Words

The Daring Story of Isabella Bird

Written by Lori Mortensen
Illustrated by Kristy Caldwell

HC: 978-1-68263-005-1
Ages 6–10 | Biography
Lexile • F&P • GRL U; Gr 5



ABOUT THE BOOK

“Isabella Bird was like a wild vine stuck in a too-small pot. She needed more room. She had to get out. She had to explore.” Exploring was easier said than done in Victorian England. But Isabella persisted, and with each journey, she breathed in new ways to see and describe everything around her. Question by question, word by word, Isabella bloomed. First, out in the English countryside. Then, off to America and Canada, and eventually around the world to Africa, Asia, Australia, and more. This dashing picture book biography about the first female member of the Royal Geographical Society takes readers around the world with a daring 19th century female explorer and author.

THEMES

Women in history | Women explorers
Biography | Writing | Geography
Character education: fearlessness, determination,
persistence, patience, breaking barriers

BEFORE YOU READ

Discuss the following questions:

- Who was Isabella Bird?
- Where and when did she live?
- What different meanings could the phrase “away with words” have?
- Isabella once said, “Henceforth, I must live my own life.” Why would she say this?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

CHARACTER EDUCATION

- Isabella grew up with many challenges. Have students identify her challenges and specific instances when she could have given up.
- When Isabella followed her heart, her physical ailments declined. Ask students to explain why this could be.
- After Isabella’s father died, she vowed to stay home. Ask students to explain why she made this vow and what compelled her to change her mind. What effect did this have on her health and state of mind?

GEOGRAPHY

- Isabella traveled all over the world. Have students plot her journeys on a map.
- Some of the countries Isabella visited are known by other names today. What are they?
- Isabella traveled extensively in the United States and Canada. Ask students to chart her journeys on a map of North America.

HISTORY

- Isabella wasn’t the only female explorer. Invite students to identify other female explorers of the time such as Mary Kingsley, Ida Pfeiffer, Fanny

Bullock Workman, Alexandra David-Néel, and Annie Edson Taylor. How were they alike? How was Isabella different from the others?

- Other writers wrote about their travels. How was Isabella's style different from other writers of the time? Did she think people from other places should be more like Great Britain? Or, did she celebrate the exciting differences?
- Isabella was the first female explorer admitted to the Royal Geographical Society. Others followed. Who were they?

SOCIAL STUDIES

- Isabella grew up during a time when women's opportunities were limited. What were these limits? Why did society impose these restrictions?
- Isabella's first journey to North America opened her eyes. Invite students to discuss how and why English society differed from American society.
- Isabella was the first woman admitted to the Royal Geographical Society. Invite students to discuss why they had not been admitted before and what changed once they were.

MATH

- How many countries did Isabella visit?
- How many trips did Isabella make?
- How many books about her explorations did Isabella write?

LANGUAGE ARTS

- Young Isabella listened to letters from her uncles in faraway lands. Ask students to write a letter she might have received from one of her uncles.
- Isabella kept detailed journals on her travels. Invite students to go somewhere and write their own journal entry of what they experienced. Ask students to include three different sensory details, such as sight, sound, and smell.
- Isabella wrote letters to her sister, Hennie, as she traveled. Invite students to write a letter to Hennie telling her about their travels.
- Isabella traveled all over the world. Ask students to write a detailed description of a well-known place and see if others can guess where or what it is.

ART

- Isabella learned to notice everything around her while she rode on her father's horse. Invite students to go on a walk and draw something they observe.

- Isabella rode horses, camels, mules, and elephants across five continents. Have students draw Isabella riding one of these animals.
- When Isabella visited the Sandwich Islands (now Hawaii), she rode a horse up an active volcano. Invite students to draw her exciting journey.

HEALTH

- Isabella suffered from mysterious aches and pains throughout her life. Invite students to discuss why her explorations improved her health and staying home made her health decline.
- Ask students to investigate the different ways doctors tried to improve her health at the time. Research will reveal a neck/back brace, surgery, and fresh air.

FUN ISABELLA BIRD FACTS

- Isabella endured many injuries during her travels including six broken ribs, a fractured ankle, and she was knocked unconscious.
- Isabella added photography to her talents and was also elected to membership of the Royal Photographic Society in 1897.
- Isabella canoed the length of the Yangtze River.
- Isabella Bird is in the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame.

HOLIDAYS AND OBSERVANCES

January

26 – National Australia Day

February

1 – National Freedom Day

22 – World Thinking Day

March

1 – National Women's History Month

8 – International (Working) Women's Day

30 – Take a Walk in the Park Day

April

2 – International Children's Book Day

7 – World Health Day

12 – Walk on Your Wild Side Day

13 – International Plant Appreciation Day

14 – Look up at the Sky Day

16 – Save the Elephant Day

22 – Earth Day

23 – Take a Chance Day

May

- 1 – National Photograph Month
- 1st full week – National Wildflower Week

June

- 1st Saturday – National Trails Day
- 8 – World Ocean Day
- 15 – Nature Photography Day
- 26 – National Canoe Day
- 29 – National Camera Day
- 29 – International Mud Day

August

- 1 – National Mountain Climbing Day
- 9 – National Book Lover’s Day
- 26 – Women’s Equality Day

September

- 6 – National Read a Book Day
- 13 – Positive Thinking Day
- 22 – Elephant Appreciation Day

October

- 15 – Isabella Bird’s Birthday
- 4th Saturday – National Make a Difference Day

November

- 1 – Picture Book Month
- 17 – Take a Hike Day
- 21 – World Hello Day
- 22 – Go for a Ride Day

December

- 1 – Write a Friend Month
- 7 – National Letter Writing Day

REVIEWS

“Mortensen distills a very full life into a condensed but readable narrative for primary-grade children... Children who hope to forge their own paths can take heart from this picture-book biography.”
—*Booklist*

“Caldwell's illustrations are clean and beautiful.”
—*Kirkus Reviews*

“Mortensen writes in a precise, poetic manner... This volume captures the spirit of a woman who embraced new experiences and played by her own rules...”
—*Publishers Weekly*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lori Mortensen is an award-winning children’s book author of more than 100 books and over 500 stories and articles. Recent picture book releases include: *Away With Words: the Daring Story of Isabella Bird*; *If Wendell Had a Walrus*; *Chicken Lily*; *Mousequerade Ball*, illustrated by *New York Times* bestselling illustrator Betsy Lewin; and *Clyde Rides the Range*, a sequel to *Cowpoke Clyde & Dirty Dawg*, and one of Amazon’s best picture books of 2013. When she’s not on her own birdwatching adventures, she’s tapping away at her computer, conjuring, coaxing, and prodding her latest stories to life. For more information about her books, critique service, events, and upcoming releases, visit her website.

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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Kristy Caldwell, illustrator of *Flowers for Sarajevo*, grew up in Louisiana and moved to NYC, where she received her MFA in Illustration as Visual Essay from the School of Visual Arts. She has illustrated posters and video projections for professional theater in New York. She now lives in Astoria, a multigenerational, multicultural community whose residents have roots in every part of the world.

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Teacher’s Guide for
AWAY WITH WORDS
prepared by Lori Mortensen

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