

FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX

Teachers' Guide

Yankee Girl

by Mary Ann Rodman

Grade Level:

Grades 5 up

Themes:

- Civil Rights Workers
- Friendship
- Race Relations
- School Integration



Introduction

When her FBI-agent father is transferred to Jackson, Mississippi, in 1964, eleven-year-old Alice wants to be popular but also wants to reach out to the one black girl in her class at a newly integrated school.

Yankee Girl is based on the author's childhood experiences and realistically portrays the time and place. Alice's family has moved many times because her father is an FBI agent, and Alice has always been able to make friends in a new city. But this move is different and she is unprepared for life in Jackson. The Southern accents and customs are puzzling, the relationships between the races shocking, and the power and influence of the popular clique intimidating. Alice's struggles to fit in and the compromises she makes to be accepted come back to haunt her by the end of the year.

Discussion Questions

1. What were people in the South afraid would happen if schools integrated? Are some of those fears still present today between different races or groups of people?
2. Alice thought that you could tell bad people by how they looked or acted. But she learned differently in her new city. Who was a surprise to Alice? Have you ever been surprised by what you have learned about someone you know or someone in the news? How?
3. Alice had difficulty understanding the Southern accent. Which accents do you find hard to understand? Do you think you have an accent? Why or why not?
4. Different radio stations play different music. Alice loved the Beatles; Valerie preferred the Supremes. Whom do you like, and what type of music do you listen to?
5. The "Cheerleaders" were the popular girls in the sixth grade. They had power over most of the class. Are there groups in your class that are as powerful? What would you be willing to do to be popular?

Suggestions

1. Make a timeline of the real events mentioned in this book. Research these events and find nonfiction books that provide more information about the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s.

YANKEE GIRL

2. Different parts of the country have different customs, foods, and styles. Make a chart that shows some of the common or traditional ways to know you are in the northern, eastern, western, or southern United States. Which of these areas do you find most fun to live in or visit and why?
3. Explore the clothing, music, and customs of the 1960s. Write a report about what you find and how you would be different if you were living at that time.
4. Talk to your parents and/or grandparents about the 1960s. Ask them where they were living, what they were doing, and how the Civil Rights movement affected their lives. Write a report of your findings.



About the Author

The daughter of an FBI agent, Mary Ann Rodman lived in different parts of the country as a child. *Yankee Girl* is based on her experiences growing up in Jackson, Mississippi, during the Civil Rights movement. She lives and works as a librarian in Alpharetta, Georgia.

For more information on Mary Ann Rodman:

Web sites:

www.fsgkidsbooks.com

Includes a biography of the author and additional information about her novels.

www.maryannrodman.com

Contains more information about the author and her books.

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**An NCSS-CBC Notable Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies
A VOYA Top Shelf Fiction Book for Middle School Readers**

FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX

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