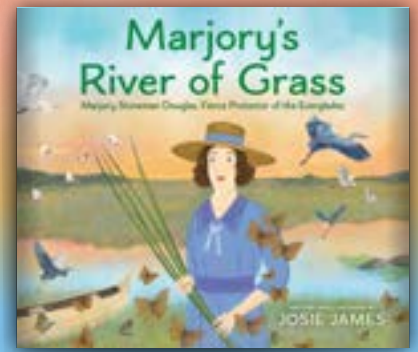


Marjory's River of Grass

Marjory Stoneman Douglas, Fierce Protector
of the Everglades

BY JOSIE JAMES

Teaching Tips



9780316446914

Marjory's River of Grass is a well-researched, fascinating picture book biography of Marjory Stoneman Douglas, an environmental journalist and conservationist whose advocacy for the Everglades helped preserve this important wetland ecosystem for generations to come. As you explore the book with your students, the following are some possible engagements for interacting with the text and the topics it introduces for young readers.

Sketching Predictions

Before reading the book with students, give them some time to do some imaginative predictions with important aspects of the text. Ask them to sketch what they picture when they hear the phrase “rivers of grass.” Then read them the title of the book and ask them if they want to add anything to their sketch predictions—what might this story be about? Give them a little more sketching time to add any more visual predictions they might want to make before reading the book aloud with them. (An extension activity would be to return to their sketches after reading the book and learning more about the Everglades and allowing students to revise their sketches to add details from the book or your classroom research about the Everglades).

Verb Choice Exploration

Marjory's River of Grass is full of lively and powerful language, including amazing verb choice throughout. Together with your students, use chart paper or the white board to record a list of powerful words and verb phrases. Examples might include: rustled, roared, drenched, pillaged, etc. Keep the anchor chart of powerful verbs present for students to use in their own writing about the text's events. Discuss how powerful verbs impact a reader. A follow up extension could include a sentence frame about new vocabulary, such as “My favorite verb from the book is _____, which means _____.” (Students could take turns and talk about their favorite words from the story.)

Picture It with Primary Sources

Throughout the book, important individuals, geographic locations, and historical events are mentioned that students may need background knowledge for. Gather online images of a variety of primary sources to share with students before, during, and after reading the book with them. A few suggested items include: early newspaper advertisements of the Everglades land for sale, photographs and maps of the Everglades at different stages of development and reclamation, documents from the creation of Everglades National Park and Big Cypress National Preserve, articles authored by Marjory and her father, and images from the book, *River of Grass*. (A strong compilation of primary sources about the draining and later restoration of the Everglades can be found online through [the University of Florida's library system](#)).

Biography Character Sketch

Marjory Stoneman Douglas was an environmental activist and an advocate we can admire for her impact on saving the Everglades and preserving other public lands. After reading the story, have students create a character sketch of Marjory. There are many free templates online for recording characterization details such as what the character thinks, does, says, and values. This can also be created in a simple graphic organizer or process grid.

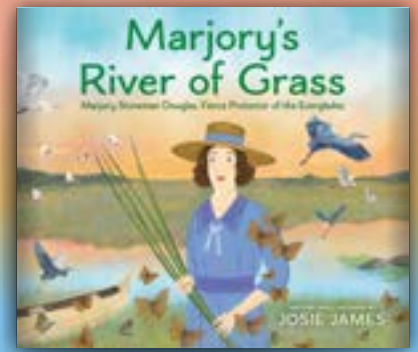


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Hashtags

This book discusses a variety of ways that Marjory Stoneman Douglas and other environmental activists ‘got the word out’ about the vital need to preserve the Everglades. In today’s world, we often share messages via social media. Have students create hashtag slogans about the importance of preservation (including spaces in their own geographic area) or of details they have learned about the unique and important ecosystem of the Everglades. Examples might include:

#riversofgrassmustbepreserved, #protectthespoonbills, or #keepourwaterclean.

National Parks

The book reminds us that, “In December 1947, Everglades National Park became the twenty-eighth national park in the United States.” Visit the [Everglades National Park website](#) with students and explore the images, maps, and information contained on the site. Under the “Learn About the Park” resources, there are opportunities for a variety of educational activities, including free virtual field trips to the park! Students who live geographically distant from the park and its unique geographic features can experience the wetlands themselves. If your students’ interests are piqued, spend some time exploring other virtual field trips on the National Park website—many national parks and preserves offer virtual field trip opportunities.

Literary Language and Writing Extension

The book includes strong examples of literary devices throughout that students can both appreciate as readers and adopt into their own writing. Here are a few examples to zoom in on during your reading of the text with your students; consider rewriting them on the whiteboard or chart paper for literary analysis and discussion.

- “Softly, it sang as it stretched endless and free into the gathering clouds” (p. 4). (personification)
- “Birds sang, woodpeckers tapped, frogs croaked, and insects buzzed as the observers slogged beneath the majesty of a cypress dome” (p. 19). (onomatopoeia, imagery)
- “Luckily in 1940, an idea leaped into her life like a tarpon” (p. 24). (simile)

Author Josie James uses these literary devices to bring the Everglades to life. Encourage students to try to recreate their own similes, metaphors, or personification using a beloved place in their own lives.

Teaching Tips created by Marie A. LeJeune

