



Away with Words

The Daring Story of Isabella Bird

Written by Lori Mortensen,
Illustrated by Kristy Caldwell

Peachtree 2019
Picture Book Biography
Hardcover, 32 pages, Grades 1+
ISBN-10: 1682630056
ISBN-13: 978-1682630051

Educational Activities for Teachers and Librarians

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 Geographic 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, observation, 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 title “Away with Words” mean?
- Isabella once said, “Henceforth, I must live my own life.” Why would she say this?

AFTER YOU READ

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, she rode a horse up an active volcano. Invite students to draw her exciting journey.

Character Education

- Isabella grew up with many challenges. Have students identify her challenges and specific instances where 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 affect 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 the map.

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.

History

- Isabella wasn't the only female explorer. Invited students to identify other female explorers of the time such as Mary Kingsley, Ida Pfeiffer, Fanny Bullock Workman, Alexandra David-Neel, and Annie 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 other people should be more like Great Britain? Or, did she celebrate the exciting differences?

- Isabella was the first female explorer admitted to the Royal Geographic Society. Others followed. Who were they?

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.

Mathematics

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

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 Geography Society. Invite students to discuss why they had not been admitted before and what changed once they were.

Fun Isabella Bird Facts

- Isabella endured many injuries during her travels including six broken ribs, a fractured ankle, and was knocked out.
- Isabella added photography to her talents and was 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 – National 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 - 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
2nd week – Wildflower Week

June

2 – National Trails Day
8 – World Ocean Day
15 – Nature Photography Day
26 – National Canoe Day

29 – Camera Day
29 – International Mud Day

August

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

September

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

October

27 – Make a Difference Day

November

17 – Take a Hike Day
21 – World Hello Day
22 – Go for a Ride Day

December

1 – Write a Friend Month
7 – Letter Writing Day

About the Author



Lori Mortensen is an award-winning children's book author of more than 70 books and over 350 stories and articles. Recent picture book releases include *Away with Words, the Daring Story of Isabella Bird*, *If Wendell Had a Walrus* (Henry

Holt), *Chicken Lily*, (Henry Holt), *Mousequerade Ball* (Bloomsbury) illustrated by *New York Times* bestselling illustrator Betsy Lewin, and *Cowpoke Clyde Rides the Range* (Clarion, 2016) a sequel to *Cowpoke Clyde & Dirty Dawg*, 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 at www.lorimortensen.com.

About the Illustrator

Kristy Caldwell lives in New York and has illustrated several books, including *Flowers for Sarajevo*. Her favorite way to travel is by boat. www.kristycaldwell.com.

VOCABULARY MATCH

NAME: _____

DIRECTIONS: Find the correct definition in the right-hand column. Write the letter of the correct definition in the blank next to each vocabulary word.

- | | | |
|----------------|-------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Conclusion | _____ | A. Spirit, courage |
| 2. Dutiful | _____ | B. A member of a church or parish. |
| 3. Mettle | _____ | C. Correct, right, fitting |
| 4. Monastery | _____ | D. Obedient, submissive |
| 5. Notorious | _____ | E. A decision reached by reasoning |
| 6. Parishioner | _____ | F. Disastrous or destructive |
| 7. Proper | _____ | G. A building where monks or nuns live in
seclusion |
| 8. Ruinous | _____ | H. Giving up one thing for another |
| 9. Sacrifice | _____ | I. Well known because of something bad. |
| 10. Undaunted | _____ | J. Not discouraged by disappointment or
danger |

VOCABULARY MATCH ANSWER KEY

NAME: _____

DIRECTIONS: Find the correct definition in the right-hand column. Write the letter of the correct definition in the blank next to each vocabulary word.

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