

## LESSON PLAN – READING *THE POWER OF HER PEN* (GRADES K-3)

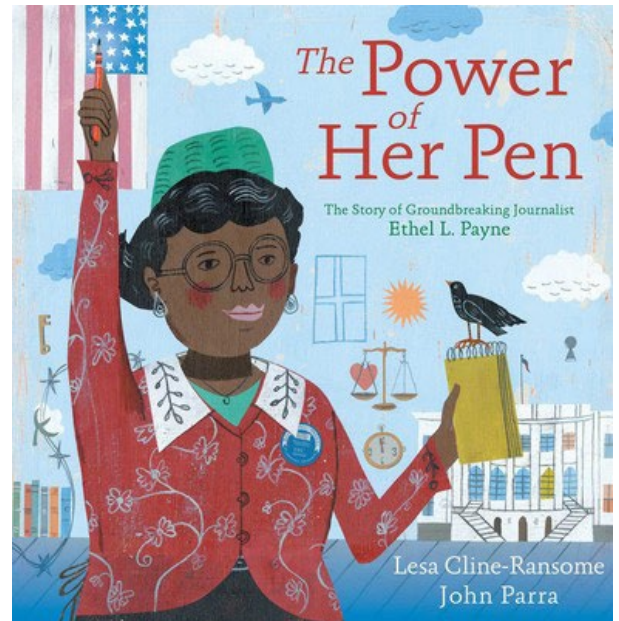
**OBJECTIVE:** Introduce students to Ethel L. Payne, a female African American journalist known as “First Lady of the Black Press.”

**CONTENT AREA:** Social Studies

**TIME ALLOTMENT:** One class period

**SKILLS:** Reading and analysis; cause and effect

**DESCRIPTION:** An inspiring story about a black, female journalist breaking barriers while seeking truth, justice and equality. This book highlights Ethel's journey from young journalist to White House correspondent, and her legacy of asking the tough questions that mattered most in the fight for Civil Rights.



**TEACHER TIP:** Great lesson plan for Women's History Month.

### PRE-READING ACTIVITY I

Ask students if they have ever heard of Ethel Payne. Then ask them to look at the picture on the front of the book and guess what they think the book is about.

### PRE-READING ACTIVITY II

Introduce the following vocabulary words. Ask students to write each of the following words on a note card (will be used for the post reading activity).

- » **Pullman Porter:** formerly enslaved African American men hired to work on railroads as porters (butlers) on sleeping cars in Chicago; they were required to carry luggage and serve passengers
- » **Journalist:** a writer or editor working in the news industry
- » **Segregation:** set apart or separated from others due to race
- » **Desegregation:** the act of allowing a racial group or class of people to live or go anywhere without restrictions
- » **Equality:** the state of being equal

- » **Civil Rights:** the rights and personal liberty guaranteed to U.S. citizens by the 13th and 14th amendment to the Constitution and by acts of Congress
- » **Discrimination:** the act of making or perceiving a difference base on race, religion, etc.
- » **Chicago Defender:** a Chicago based African American newspaper founded in 1905 that kept the African American communities informed
- » **Treaty Room:** a room located on the second floor of the White House that the President uses as a study
- » **Supreme Court:** the highest court in a country
- » **Tribunal:** a court or forum of justice
- » **Protesters:** a people who publicly demonstrate strong objections to something; demonstrators
- » **Activism:** a doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct action, especially in support-of or opposition-to one side of a controversial issue

## READING

Dramatically read *The Power of her Pen* by Les Cline-Ransome and John Parra (illustrator) with students.

## POST-READING ACTIVITY I

Ask students to name any other black female journalist that they know of. Have them look up some names and assign each student one journalist to do an oral or written report on the journalist they were assigned.

## POST-READING ACTIVITY II

Explain to the students that you will read them a sentence that is missing a word. Ask them to hold up the card with the vocabulary word that completes each sentence.

- 1) The parties in question, were not happy with the outcome, so they decided to take it all the way to the \_\_\_\_\_. (Supreme Court)
- 2) Some of the children didn't want to play ball with Jacob because he was from a different country, this would be called \_\_\_\_\_. (Discrimination)
- 3) Ethel's family and other African Americans were only allowed to live on the South side of Chicago. This is called \_\_\_\_\_. (Segregation)
- 4) Ethel worked for the Chicago Defender, and wrote articles in the newspaper, her job title was \_\_\_\_\_. (Journalist)
- 5) The President of the United States has a study in the White House called \_\_\_\_\_. (Treaty Room)
- 6) Everyone in Mrs. Dawson's class received the same treatment. This is called \_\_\_\_\_. (Equality)
- 7) Ethel's father worked on the railroad as a \_\_\_\_\_. (Pullman Porter)
- 8) People go before a \_\_\_\_\_ and found either guilty or not guilty. (Tribunal)

- 9) A large group of people came out as \_\_\_\_\_ because they didn't like what was happening. (Protesters)
- 10) Diane decided that her support for children should go all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary. This is called \_\_\_\_\_. (Activism)
- 11) Martin Luther King fought for \_\_\_\_\_. (Civil Rights)
- 12) On June 2, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act. This law allowed people to live and go wherever they choose, it is called \_\_\_\_\_. (Desegregation)
- 13) Before going to live in Washington D.C., Ethel worked as a journalist for the \_\_\_\_\_. (*Chicago Defender*)

## KEY FACTS AND INFORMATION

### Personal and Early Life

- » Ethel was born on August 14, 1911 in the Southside of Chicago, Illinois nine years before the 19th amendment was signed into law giving women the right to vote.
- » Her father's parents were enslaved until the end of the Civil War.
- » She grew up listening to stories of her parents.
- » She loved to read and loved sharing stories.
- » She attended an all-white high school.
- » Even though she was not allowed to work for her school newspaper in Chicago, she was able to persuade the paper to publish an article she wrote.

### Legacy

- » While in Japan, she noticed the segregation of African Americans fighting in World War II and wrote about it. This journalism reached across the globe to an American audience.
- » Her return to the United States landed her a job at the *Chicago Defender*.
- » She used her voice to write about the black community that was ignored by the white press.
- » She moved to Washington D.C. and became the first female African American journalist to be appointed as a White House press correspondent after working four years at the *Chicago Defender*.
- » She asked President Dwight D. Eisenhower pointed questions about desegregation, immigration and anti-discrimination legislation, so much so, that he stopped calling on her during press briefings.
- » She taught journalism at Fisk University.
- » She was the first female African American commentator on a national television network.
- » Ethel died on May 28, 1991.
- » In 2002, she was one of four groundbreaking female journalists to be featured on a U.S. postage stamp.

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