



Reading Roundup



The Oldest Student

Written by Rita Lorraine Hubbard

Illustrated by Oge Mora

Reading Roundup
Partners



Introduction

Gather the students around you so that they are able to see the illustrations of the book. Most classrooms will have an area rug defining this space. Introduce yourself and tell the students that you are excited to share The Oldest Student – How Mary Walker Learned to Read, written by Rita Lorraine Hubbard and illustrated by Oge Mora.

Before Reading

I could hardly wait to share with you a book about the life of an amazing woman who did incredible things. The genre, or type of writing, is called a biography. A biography is a piece of nonfiction writing that tells the reader about someone and his/her life. When we learn about a person, we sometimes say that we are learning the person's character traits. Traits are words we use to describe what a person is like. Let's read together to see what we can learn about Mary Walker.

During Reading

- Begin reading the book by starting on the front cover. Hold the book so that students are able to see the illustrations. Give plenty of time for students to “read” and think about the pictures.

- **Front Cover** - *Think back to the time when you first started learning to read. Think about how old you were. Look at the illustration on the cover of *The Oldest Student – How Mary Walker Learned to Read*. -P- Do you think the illustration is a picture of Mary Walker? How old do you think Ms. Walker is in this picture? (Answers will vary.)*

- **Page 7** – *I feel like I’m already beginning to know Mary Walker. -T/T- Think about what we’ve learned. Turn and talk to someone about how you would describe Mary Walker and her character traits. (She was a dreamer and dreamed of being free. She was ambitious and determined to learn how to read.)*

- **Page 11** -*Although Mary is free from slavery, her life remains hard. -P- What character trait does Mary demonstrate when she offers Mama all of the money she earned during the week – a lonely quarter? (Mary demonstrates responsibility, love for her family, and generosity when she gives her earnings to Mama.)*

- **Page 17** – *We know Mary dreamed of learning to read. The author tells us she continued to work for four decades. -P- How long is a decade? (Ten years). Let’s count by tens to see how long four decades is – 10, 20, 30, 40. Yes, four decades is forty long years. -T/T- What does this tell us about Mary’s character? (She is determined and patient.)*

- **Page 23** – *Mary’s life begins to change in this scene. She is tired of waiting and decides to start learning to read at 114 years old. Mary gripped her cane, lifted her chin, and entered the reading class. What character trait is Mary demonstrating? (Mary is brave and proud of herself.)*

After Reading

Mary Walker graduated from her reading class when she was 116 years old. She lived to be at least 121 years old. Let’s think about Mary Walker and her character traits. Remember, character traits are what we learn about how a person lives and how he/she behaves. -P- What are some of the many character traits demonstrated by Mary Walker? (Mary Walker was a fascinating woman who was a hard worker, a dreamer, and a responsible daughter who loved her family and gave to them generously. She was determined and patient, brave and proud.)

Invite students to look at the photos on the inside cover of the book. Read the captions and allow plenty of time for the students to “read” the photos.

Remember – No matter how old you are or how hard your life may be, “You’re never too old to learn.”

Vocabulary

Tattered garments – old, torn clothes p. 8

Surged – moved fast p. 9

Outhouse – outside restroom p. 11

Evangelist – preacher p. 13

Clutch – hold tightly p.18

