Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters
By: Barack Obama
Illustrated By: Loren Long
Knopf Books for Young Readers

Why use this book? Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters can be used in multiple ways. The book can be used to teach history and language arts, but it can be used to teach something more meaningful. One of the main themes in this book is diversity. This book describes how various people from diverse backgrounds make up the United States. A take home message from this book is that everyone is special and has the potential to do something important and pursue our dreams.

Grade Level: PK-5
Lexile Level: 830
Curricular Areas: English Language Arts, History, Social Studies, Music
Genres: Biography, Nonfiction
Standards:
Social Studies:
1 – H2.0.7 Identify the events or people celebrated during United States national holidays and why we celebrate them (e.g., Independence Day, Constitution Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day; Presidents’ Day).
2 – H2.0.3 Use an example to describe the role of the individual in creating history
Language Arts:
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.1
With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
Summary: In a letter to his daughters, President Barack Obama, pays tribute to thirteen individuals who have contributed great things to American history. From the intelligence of Albert Einstein to the strength to Helen Keller, from the compassion of Martin Luther King Jr. to the patriotism of George Washington, President Obama relates these traits of these heroes to America’ children and specifically his daughters.

Objectives: Students will be able to identify key individuals discussed in the book and tell why they are important and a characteristic about them. Students will identify certain historical figures mentioned in the book and relate them to holidays or special dates in time. Students will identify characteristics about themselves and people they know that make them important.

Duration of Time: The lesson should take anywhere from 45-60 minutes.

Materials: Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters, pencils, historical figure table worksheet, family and friends worksheet, calendar

Anticipatory Steps:
The teacher will ask the students to brainstorm important American historical figures and make a list on the board.. After the list is as complete as possible introduce Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters by playing the Youtube video of the song My Country Tis’ Of Thee and ask if anyone recognizes the author. Once the students have heard the song and have seen the lyrics they should be able to make a connection between the book title and song title, but if they do not prompting may be necessary. Now the teacher will read Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters to the class. The teacher will ask the students questions after finishing the book.

- Who was the author writing the book to?
- Did any of you notice how the illustrator drew each famous person as a child?
- Who were some people that you have heard of? / Were there any that you did not know of?

Engagements:
Now that the children have been read the book, the first part of the activity is to compare the list they made of historical figures to the ones mentioned in the book. As a class look at a calendar and to determine if any of the historical figures have a special date dedicated to them. The students will then split into small groups to complete the table (attached). In order to complete the table the students need to identify two things, what makes the person famous and what are some good characteristics that person possess? They will more than likely need to reference the book so have it available to use.
Once the table is completed, have the students complete the family and friends worksheet (attached) individually. In order to complete this worksheet, the students need to compare people
in their lives to the historical figures in the book based on characteristics. If the students can’t think of anyone for a certain category have them skip it.

**Closing:**
As a whole class go over both of the worksheets. Starting with the table and have groups volunteer information from their table, and the teacher will make a big table on the board. Answer any questions the students may have in relation to the table. Next, take volunteer to share their family and friends worksheet. At this point if any student had a blank on their worksheet they can fill it in if they have a new idea. Give the students a few minutes to journal about what they learned from the lesson and anything they want to make sure to remember. Close the lesson with this statement “As we all saw from reading Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters, we all have potential to be great. Everyone is special and unique, and together we are America.”

**References/Resources:** teachingbooks.net, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sN2I6vdzgts
## Why are each of the following people important?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Georgia O’Keeffe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Albert Einstein</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jackie Robinson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sitting Bull</td>
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<tr>
<td>Billie Holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helen Keller</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maya Lin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jane Adams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin Luther King Jr.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neil Armstrong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ceasar Chavez</td>
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<tr>
<td>George Washington</td>
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</table>
Write the name of a family or friend that demonstrates one of the characteristics below:

Good Citizen _____________________________________________

Honest ________________________________________________

Good Learner __________________________________________

Good Singer ____________________________________________

Good At Sports __________________________________________

Good Scientist __________________________________________

Photographer __________________________________________

Nice __________________________________________________

Host or Hostess __________________________________________

Friendly to All __________________________________________

What is special about you?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________