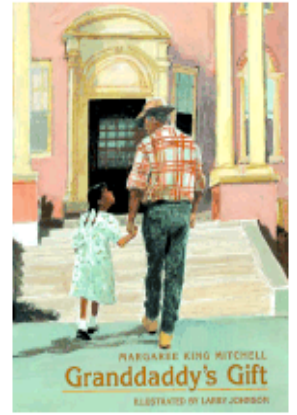


## ***Granddaddy's Gift***

By Margaree King Mitchell and Larry Johnson

A young African-American woman reminisces about a memorable incident from her childhood on Granddaddy's farm in segregated Mississippi in the 1960s a time when she learned the value of education and the struggle for democracy. When a lawyer addresses a local gathering looking for volunteers to register to vote, the girl's grandfather was the only one to step forward. That same day he had impressed upon her the importance of going to school, telling her, "I want you to learn as much as you can so when you grow up, you can choose what you want to do. I didn't have that choice."



Readers are told why the man's actions were dangerous, how his livelihood was threatened because he wished to exercise his constitutional right, and how his granddaughter's life was affected by his bravery. A complex social and political situation is addressed in a manner that children can understand. The grandfather is portrayed as a man of great wisdom and dignity, reminding the girl to press on even in the face of danger.

Focusing on everyday people making a difference, the author of this picture book presents an "intelligent look at a chapter of American history."

Define:        Democracy        Constitution        segregation

Background Information: The Constitution test is no longer required for voting. Clarify that, although understanding the Constitution is a good idea for everyone, the test was unfair because only some people (generally African Americans) had to take it and their education had been limited by circumstances in the country at the time so they had little chance to learn about the Constitution. People who have moved to the United States and want to become citizens do have to take a test that includes some questions about the Constitution and government. They must study for the test by themselves or in special adult classes.

In small groups or as a whole group activity, use discussion, graphic organizers, and journal writing to answer the following questions:

- Why didn't Little Joe want to go to school?
  - Why did Granddaddy say she should go?
  - Who do you think was right?
    - Give reasons for your answer.
- What are segregation laws?
  - Are these laws good or bad?
    - Why?
- Describe what happened when Granddaddy first tried to register to vote.
  - What bad things happened to the family after that?

- Was voting worth the trouble the family experienced?
- Who do you think burned the church?
  - How did the members of the church react?
  - Were you surprised by their reaction?
    - Explain your answer.
- What happened when Little Joe went to register to vote for the first time?
  - What was her grandfather's gift to her?
    - How do you think she felt about this gift?

Follow-up Activities:

- Encourage students to talk to their parents about their experiences registering to vote and voting. Did they have any difficulties? What are their most memorable experiences?
- Ask all of the students who were born between January 1 and March 15 to leave their seats and stand at the side of the room.
  - Tell them they represent minorities in the United States. Then ask the seated students to count off by twos: 1's who represent white women, should join those at the side of the room; 2's, who represent white men, should remain seated. Next, ask those who live in a rented apartment or house to stand.
  - Tell half of these to join the students at the side of the classroom and allow the others to be seated. Explain to students that those who are seated represent the people who could vote when our nation was just beginning. In half the states, all white males could vote, while in the other half, only white males who owned property could vote. Allow time for students to react to this mini-simulation.
- Discuss with students why voting is important in a democracy.
- For additional information and lesson plans: Teaching Tolerance (<http://www.tolerance.org>)