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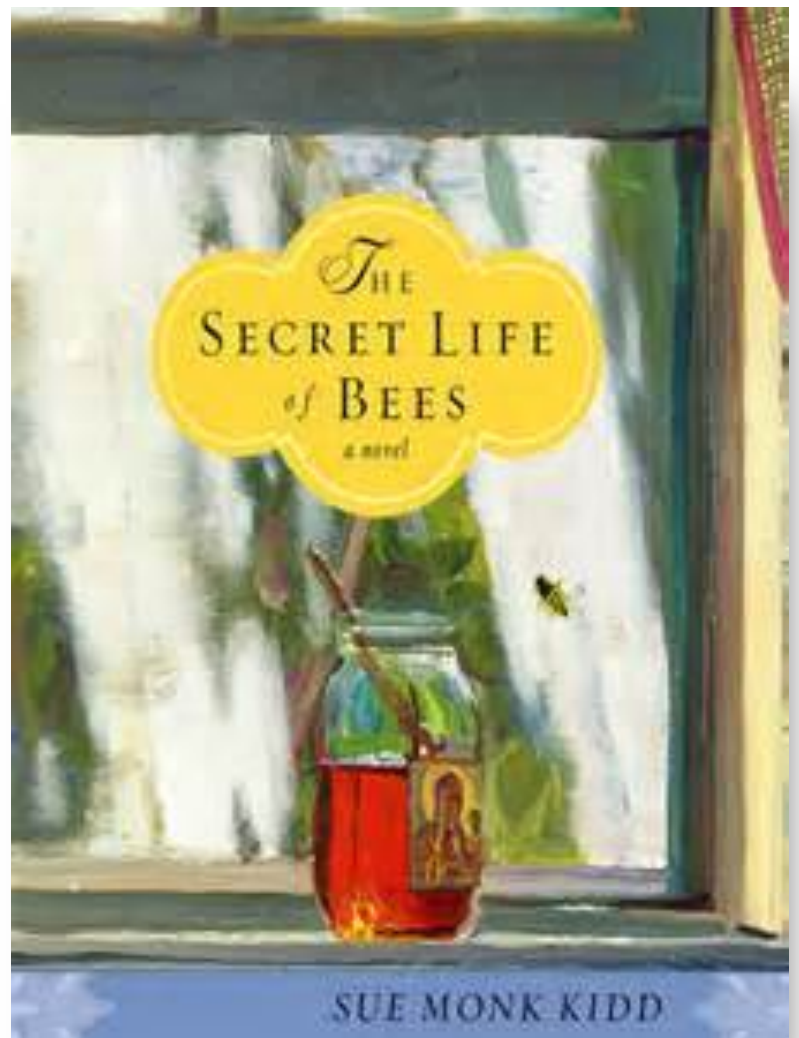


Building Communities that
Support Children's Reading

The Secret Life of Bees

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Texas
Grades 7-8



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The Secret Life of Bees

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Synopsis

The Secret Life of Bees



Set in the South, during racial tensions in 1964, Lily Owens, a 14 year-old girl is haunted by the memory of her late mother. To escape her lonely life and troubled relationship with her father T-Ray, Lily flees with Rosaleen, her caregiver and friend, to a South Carolina town that holds the secret to her mother's past. Taken in by the intelligent and independent Boatwright sisters, Lily finds comfort in their fascinating world of beekeeping. She lives on a peach farm with her cruel father, T. Ray, who tells Lily that she accidentally shot her mother when she was four. Lily accompanies the family's black housekeeper, Rosaleen, to town to register to vote. Taunted by white men, Rosaleen spills the contents of her snuff jar on their feet, is beaten, taken to jail, and later to the hospital. T. Ray reacts by punishing Lily, prompting her to run away. Eventually, she learns the truth about her past.

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

- RL.7-8.2** I understand new vocabulary and use it when reading and writing.
- RL.7-8.3** I can analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.
- RL.7-8.4** I understand, can make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of poetry and provide evidence from text to support my understanding. I can analyze the effects of diction and imagery in a text.
- RL.7-8.6** I understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support my understanding.
- RL.7-8.7** I understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the varied structural patterns and features of literary nonfiction and provide evidence from text to support my understanding. I am able to describe the structural and substantive differences between an autobiography or a diary and a fictional adaptation of it.
- RI.7-8.8** I understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support my understanding. I am able to determine the figurative meaning of phrases and analyze how an author's use of language creates imagery, appeals to the senses, and suggests mood.
- RI.7-8.9** I can analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about the author's purpose in cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support my understanding. I am able explain the difference between the theme of a literary work and the author's purpose in an expository text.

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- RI.7-8.10** I can analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about expository text and provide evidence from text to support my understanding.
- RML.7-8.13** I am able to use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact meaning.
- W.7-8.14** I use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text.
- W.7-8.15** I can write literary texts to express my ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas.
- W.7-8.16** I can write a personal narrative that has a clearly defined focus and communicates the importance of or reasons for actions and/or consequences.
- W.7-8.18** I am able to write persuasive texts to influence the attitudes or actions of a specific audience on specific issues.
- W.7-8.22** I am able to ask open-ended research questions and develop a plan for answering them.
- SL.7-8.28** I can work productively with others in teams. I can participate productively in discussions, plan agendas with clear goals and deadlines, set time limits for speakers, take notes, and vote on key issues.



High Level Questions

The Secret Life of Bees

Chapter 1

1. What is Lily longing for?
2. What obstacles prevent Lily from getting what she desires?
3. What are Lily's conflicts?
4. What words and figurative images indicate the strength of Lily's feelings? Use textual evidence.
5. Explain the allusion to the angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary.
6. Compare Rosaleen's reaction to the bees, to Lily's beliefs.
7. "Rosaleen had never had a child herself, so for the last ten years I'd been her pet guinea pig" (2). Explain what Lily means by this.
8. The author foreshadows Lily's life up until now by writing, "People who think dying is the worst thing don't know a thing about life (2). Use textual evidence citing why Lily feels her life is worse than death.
9. Analyze the following quotes and tell how it lends to the one of the themes. "...my mother had peeled off her sweater and stood in short sleeves, jerking at the window in her bedroom, wrestling with the stuck paint" (5). "Later [the fury of their words] would remind me of birds trapped inside a closed room..." (7). "When I slid on the lid, [the bee] went into a tailspin, throwing itself against the glass over and over with pops and clicks..." (10).
10. Lily's father "would half kill" Lily if he found out she was reading in the peach stand. Lily reveals, "I think he believed it would stir up ideas of college, which he thought a waste of money for girls, even if they did, like me, score the highest number a human being can get on their verbal aptitude test" (15). How does this quote speak to her father's character?

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Chapter 2

1. Lily hears a voice say, “Lily Melissa Owens, your jar is open.” (41). Lily looks at the clock which reads 2:40. Research the significance of the number 240. What is the significance to the above quote? Why do you think the author chose this number?
2. “Walking along the weedy strip beside the highway for the second time that day, I was thinking how much older fourteen had made me. In the space of a few hours I’d become forty years old” (43). What does Lily mean by this?
3. Why wouldn’t Rosaleen apologize to Franklin Posey?
4. “There wasn’t a soul anywhere to help us. But still, I felt painfully alive, like every cell in my body had a little flame inside it, burning so brightly it hurt” (50,51). Why did Lily feel this way?
5. Compare Rosaleen’s account of Lily’s mother when she was behind the tractor shed on page 53 to Lily’s dream on page 54.

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Chapter 3

1. The narrator reveals, “I started appreciating Mother Nature, what she’d done with the world. In my mind she looked like Eleanor Roosevelt” (57). Research Eleanor Roosevelt. Compare Mother Nature to Eleanor. Which characteristic do they both share?
2. In many cultures, the ladybug is a symbol of good luck or good fortune. Why might the author have placed a ladybug on the Holy Mother’s cheek?
3. Contrast Rosaleen’s dream about the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., to the expectations of the white church.
4. Compare Brother Gerald’s outlook toward Catholics to his church’s treatment of black worshippers, as described in Chapter 1. Why is his viewpoint ironic?
5. Lily was brought up to believe that Catholics were sinners, yet she reveals, “All I could really figure was my mother had been mixed up with the Catholics somehow, and –I have to say—this secretly thrilled me” (58). Why does Lily feel this way?
6. Rosaleen and Lily are walking, heat overtaking them, when Rosaleen says, “Too bad there’s not a church we could steal some fans” (61). What does this quote say about Rosaleen’s character? Back up your answer with textual evidence.
7. Lily has just seen the Black Madonna Honey in the store. She reflects, “I realized it for the first time in my life: there is nothing but mystery in the world, how it hides behind the fabric of our poor, browbeat days, shining brightly, and we don’t even know it” (63). To what is Lily referring? What is meant by “mysteries of the world”? How does this connect to your own life?
8. Lily is looking through the drugstore’s window when she thinks, “...soon [the cherry cokes and banana splits] would not be just for white people anymore” (65). Why does a Lily care? What characteristics does one need to care about justice for others?
9. Describe the town of Tiburon through Lily’s eyes.
10. Lily compares herself to another hero of American letters: Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau’s book chronicles his experiences on Walden Pond and describes his theories of self-reliance and spiritual simplicity. Site textual evidence showing that Lily wants to be self-reliant.

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Chapter 4

1. Read the excerpt from *Bees of the World* that introduces Chapter 4. Compare how bees interact with humans.
1. Kidd describes August Boatwright with images of food and candy. Describe a person you know using food.
2. Most people have desires of fitting in. Compare Lily's desire to fit in and feel normal with desires of your own.
3. Provide a brief summary of Chapter 4.

Chapter 5

1. The author uses a boxing ring as a metaphor for life. What is the metaphor and what does it mean?
2. The names of the "calendar sisters" have a connection more significant than the summer months. Briefly explain the meaning of the names May, June and August to identify this theme.
3. What character traits distinguish May, June and August Boatwright?
4. Why does August Boatwright agree to shelter Lily and Rosaleen? What conflict does this decision create?
5. What is the effect of watching the television news in the Boatwright house? How does the TV news function as a literary device in the narrative?

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Chapter 7

1. What effect does meeting Zach have on Lily?
2. The author provides parallel incidents involving June and Neil, and Lily Rosaleen. What is the effect of these incidents in the rising action of the novel?
3. Lily's friendship with Zach is growing. How might having a friendship or a romance could be between a white girl and a black boy during this time period in the American South.

Chapter 8

1. Lily's list of what she loves can be written as a list poem. What does Lily's list say about her?
2. Lily saved a Coke bottle from Massachusetts "as a tribute to how far something can go in life" (139). What does she mean? Why is she attached to something like an old Coke bottle?
3. What does August mean when she says: "the hardest thing on earth is choosing what matters" (147)?
4. Why does Lily call her father? Is she homesick? Worried about him? What did she expect to gain from talking to him?
5. Though writing her letter to T. Ray brought Lily some relief, it didn't bring her any joy. Why?

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Chapter 9

1. After Lily learns that her mother, Deborah, had stayed with the Boatwright sisters, she dreams that her mother looked like a roach. What change does this image symbolize regarding Lily's attitude and understanding?
2. When the black boys in Tiburon confront the armed men by the theater, one man calls them a "bunch of cowards." Do you think the boys were cowards in this social conflict?
3. Lily tells Zach that she'll write down his story about being in jail, to show that it matters. Cite additional examples from the novel on the theme that stories and writing make a difference to people.
4. Compare and contrast how Lily and May face crises in their lives.

Chapter 10

1. After May commits suicide, August announces that they'll be sitting vigil. What do they do to the bee hive, and why do they do this?
2. Why do they eat seeds during the vigil? For what are the seed a symbol?

Chapter 11

1. Explain the purpose of the Boatwrights' rituals after May's death.
2. This chapter concludes with the words, "Wading in up to my neck." What does this mean as a transition in Lily's life and the structure of the novel?
3. What does Zach mean when he tells Lily: "That jail cell is gonna make me earn grades higher than I ever got"

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Chapter 12

1. When Lily learns the truth about her mother, she thinks, “Knowing can be a curse on a person’s life. I’d traded in a pack of lies for a pack of truth...” (255). How is she coping with this knowledge? What is she feeling now?
2. August tells Lily, “There is nothing perfect, there is only life” (256). Give your own examples of life’s imperfections.

Chapter 13

1. In this chapter, Lily confronts many of her feelings about her mother leaving her. Write about how people can deal with being left, about broken families, etc.
2. Describe the ritual of Mary Day. How does the ritual help Lily overcome her anger?
3. August gives Lily some things she had kept that belonged to Lily’s mother. Among them is a mirror, a hairbrush, and a volume of William Blake’s poems. Lily finds a poem that her mother had underlined. How does seeing something that belonged to a relative help a person know that relative?
4. How does seeing the photograph of her mother holding her make Lily feel? How is this a sign to Lily?

Vocabulary Introduction

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A selection of vocabulary words are identified for each reading section. The vocabulary meanings are according to the context of the writings. You may want to either add to this list or decrease it depending on your students. You can decide whether to introduce vocabulary before reading the section, during, or after.

Vocabulary activities could include giving the word and definition, and then having the students give the definition in their own words, drawing a picture of what the particular word means to them, including a synonym/antonym, the part of speech, etc... The students may also write original sentences using the vocabulary words, finding the words on the pages and making a guess based on context clues.

Students may be quizzed on each section of words, assign them to write their own stories with vocabulary words, or play games to reinforce word meanings.



Vocabulary

The Secret Life of Bees

Chapter 1

Word	Definition/Synonym
presumptuous	disrespectful; improper
insomniac	not able to sleep
spectacle	sight; marvel
cowlick	a cluster of hair that grows in a direction different from that of the rest of the hair
mercantile	business
imbecile	an ignorant person
carousing	partying

Chapter 2

Word	Definition/Synonym
decapitate	amputate
brazen	bold; unashamed
beseeking	pleading; begging
levee	embankment
pious	holy; devout
deliberate	careful
blaspheme	swear; curse

Chapter 3

Word	Definition/Synonym
speculating	guessing
consternation	worry

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Chapter 4

Word	Definition/Synonym
corrugated	uneven
meander	roam

Chapter 5

Word	Definition/Synonym
consolation	comfort
ambrosia	a fruit drink
naïve	inexperienced
unassuming	humble
bona fide	in good faith, without deception
bristled	stiffened
revelation	expose
righteous	moral
indignation	outrage
eclectic	diverse
immunity	protection
etiquette	custom; politeness

Chapter 6

Word	Definition/Synonym
ingenious	clever
solace	comfort; support

Chapter 7

Word	Definition/Synonym
incessantly	nonstop
consignment	batch

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Chapter 8

Word	Definition/Synonym
High-caliber	superior
Kamikaze	a person or thing that behaves wildly

Chapter 9

Word	Definition/Synonym
ambitious	strong-minded
magnitude	greatness
oblivious	unaware
cunning	crafty
crevice	gap

Chapter 10

Word	Definition/Synonym
anguish	suffering
vigil	watch; wake
hovering	lingering
ritual	ceremonial
induction	orientation
catacombs	tombs
taffeta	a light-weight fabric

Chapter 11

Word	Definition/Synonym
dillydallying	delaying
industrious	hard-working
sauntered	strolled
quiver	tremble
taunting	mocking

Chapter 14

Word	Definition/Synonym
demoralized	disheartened
melancholy	sad
skittish	wary
resolve	determine
perpetually	continually

Using Choice Boards

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Choice boards give students the opportunity to participate in multiple tasks that allow them to practice skills they've learned in class or to demonstrate and extend their understanding of concepts. From the board, students either choose or are assigned tasks to complete. Individual tasks address the grade level specific Common Core State Standards and also learning style modalities.

To scaffold the activities for struggling readers, teachers can modify the tasks using the blank template provided or give more details for performance criteria. Some teachers like to assign point values for the different tasks.

In order to support teachers, the choice boards developed for BSCBR are coded for specific CCSS standards.

Choice Board-The Secret Life of Bees

<p>Create a mural depicting a chapter or scene from the novel.</p> <p>7-8.RL.3</p>	<p>Choose two characters, and then create a collage of the characters' characteristics using words and images.</p> <p>7-8.W.12</p>	<p>May Boatwright's heart cannot bear all the pain and sorrows in the world, so in order to cope, she writes them down and hides them in her wailing wall.</p> <p>With a group, discuss how others deal with painful things. Write down things you wish you could change.</p> <p>7-8.SL.26</p>
<p>Listen to music of the Civil Rights era. Study the lyrics and themes that were prevalent. Select music to accompany different scenes from the novel and explain why each song represents that particular scene.</p> <p>7-8.SL.14</p>	<p>Racial tensions occur throughout the novel. Cite textual evidence that shows how all races can be subjected to racism.</p> <p>7-8.RL.5</p>	<p>August teaches Lily many recipes using honey.</p> <p>Create a Honey Product Recipe Book. Include only recipes that cannot be eaten.</p> <p>Choose one of the recipes and prepare it for your classmates.</p> <p>SL.7-8.25</p>
<p>Based on research, write news articles about a section of the novel. Create a timeline of world events.</p> <p>7-8.W.15</p>	<p>Analyze Lily's character and show how she develops over the course of the novel, how she interacts with other characters, and how she advances the development of the theme.</p> <p>Creatively display the analysis through the use of technology.</p> <p>7-8.RL.4</p>	<p>Honey making, bees, and beekeeping are central to the theme.</p> <p>Determine a theme found in <i>TSLOB</i> and analyze how it relates to the lives of bees.</p> <p>7-8.RL.2</p>

Choice Board

Using a RAFT Matrix



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A RAFT matrix enhances students' comprehension of novels they're reading and information they're learning. It also provides a fun way to encourage student writing. RAFT is an acronym for *role, audience, format, and topic*:

- **Role.** The role is the person or people the student becomes for this project. Sometimes students take on the role of a book character, historical figure, or contemporary personality, such as Peyton Manning, and at other times, they are themselves.
- **Audience.** The audience is the person or people who will read or view this project. They may include students, teachers, parents, or community members, as well as simulated audiences, such as book characters and historical personalities.
- **Format.** The format is the genre or activity that students create. It might be a letter, brochure, cartoon, journal, poster, essay, newspaper article, speech, or digital scrapbook.
- **Topic.** The topic pertains to the book. It may be an issue related to the book, an essential question, or something of personal interest.

RAFT is an effective way to differentiate instruction by providing tiered activities. The BSCSR RAFT matrices are scaffolded and can be adjusted according to students' achievement levels, English proficiency, and interests.

RAFT Matrix

The Secret Life of Bees

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
Lily	Her Father	Diary	Abuse
Rosaleen	Lily	Song	Loss
The Bees	The Queen	Facebook	Death
T. Ray	Lily	Letter	Love

Extension Activities

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Writing – Research: W.7-8.20

Students will conduct sustained research projects to answer question (including a self-generated question) or solve problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation. (W.7-8.7)

Students will gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation. (W.7-8.8)

Students will draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, claims, reflection, and research. (W. 7-8. 9)

Possible Research Topics:

- **Impact of Slavery in America**
- **Emotional Abuse**
- **Beekeeping**
- **Interracial Relationships**
- **Women’s Rights**
- **Suicide**
- **Small Business**
- **Volunteerism**
- **The Grieving Process**
- **Mental Illness and the Justice System**
- **Community Farming**
- **Relationships**
- **Civil Rights Act**
- **Propaganda – Then and Now**
- **Ralph Waldo Emerson**
- **Bees and Our Environment**

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Writing – Narrative: W.7-8.14

Students will compose narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Possible Narrative Topics

- An experience that led to renewed faith
- An encounter that changed your life
- An experience that left you disillusioned
- A significant misunderstanding
- A dangerous experience
- A moment of failure or success
- A frightening experience
- A memorable journey
- An encounter of someone or something you were afraid of
- A unique friendship
- Your bond between mother/father and child
- An occasion when you experienced rejection
- An occasion when you befriended an outcast
- An event that marked a turning point in your life
- A rebellious act
- A brush with death
- Two different versions of the same event
- An experience that altered your view of someone
- An imaginary encounter with a real person

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Other Extension Activities:

- Scene Performance – Students will work in small groups and enact chapters from the novel. Switch up the chapters and students so everyone has the opportunity to perform.
- Fake Book <http://www.classtools.net/FB/home-page> - The students may use this site to create a web page that details the persons of the text. The students will choose images of actors, real people, historical images, primary source documents, etc... in order to portray the novel's characters, tone, theme, and style.
- Draw the Setting – Students will draw one of the descriptions of the setting in the text, or create a model of collage of the setting.
- Other Works – Students will read one of the author's other works and write a comparative paper discussing the similarities and differences in style, themes, and structure.
- Study Guide – Students will prepare a study guide for the class.
- Political cartoon – Choose a political cartoon regarding one or more of the novel's topics. Analyze the cartoon using the following resource:
http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/cartoon_analysis_worksheet.pdf