

Cultures & Connections

is a series of multicultural book kits that connect fiction and nonfiction texts, Ohio history and biography, and Ohio's New Learning Standards (Common Core).

Cultures & Connections was designed and produced by Desiree Thomas, as part of her fall 2014 internship at the State Library of Ohio, through the Kent State University School of Library and Information Science Culminating Experience (practicum) program.

This project was developed in conjunction with **Choose to Read Ohio**, a project of the State Library of Ohio and the Ohioana Library Association which encourages public libraries, schools, families, and others to build a community of readers and an appreciation of Ohio authors and literature.

Learn more about Choose to Read Ohio:
<http://library.ohio.gov/ctro>.

This toolkit created
September 2014.

Check it Out!

Combine fiction and nonfiction titles in print and multimedia to explore topics and themes in depth, to gain background knowledge and vocabulary, and to encourage comparison and analysis, all of which helps students to meet the expectations of the Common Core standards. The following titles can be used as companion pieces for *Jump into the Sky*, and jumping-off points to create extensions.

***Courage has no color: the true story of the Triple Nickles : America's first Black paratroopers* by Tanya Lee Stone.**

This book explores the lives of the Triple Nickles. Walter Morris secretly trains his service men to become paratroopers and, inadvertently, America's first smoke jumpers.

***We were there: voices of African American veterans from World War II to the war in Iraq* by Yvonne Latty, with photographs by Ron Tarver.**

Journalist Yvonne Latty honors her father's commitment to service and the sacrifices of countless other veterans in this historical account of African Americans' contribution to the war efforts.

***Double victory: how African American women broke race and gender barriers to help win World War II* by Cheryl Mullenbach.**

African American women worked as war correspondents, in factories, and as political activists. Cheryl Mullenbach examines the lives of African American women during war times at home and abroad.

Roi Ottley's World War II: the lost diary of an African American journalist.
Edited with an introduction by Mark A. Huddle.

The culture of prejudice inherent in white war correspondents overseas is examined in this primary source historical account by journalist Roi Ottley. Ottley's personal journal highlights the struggles faced by African American servicemen overseas and within their own army.

Fighting for America: Black soldiers—the unsung heroes of World War II
by Christopher Paul Moore.

The personal correspondence of African American servicemen and women are compiled by Christopher Paul Moore. Their accounts depict the perils of war, and the courage and bravery needed to win World War II.

***Red-tail angels: the story of the Tuskegee airmen of World War II* by Pat McKissack.**

This text chronicles the journeys of America's only all African American flying fighting unit.

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act (1944), known as the G.I. Bill.

<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=76>

Jim Crow Museum at Ferris State University

<http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/>

***Black history. WWII, the beginning of change (DVD)* by St. Clair Vision.**

The transition of African American servicemen and women into positions of authority are highlighted in this award-winning documentary.

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A Cultures & Connections Book Kit

Meet the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion and other historic African American servicemen.

Discover connections between history and fiction. Use the discussion questions to further examine a topic.

Explore engaging activities that align with Ohio's New Learning Standards.

Go further by pairing *Jump into the Sky* with nonfiction texts to enhance student learning.

Jump Into the Sky

By Shelley Pearsall



About the Book

My aunt said, "I been doing a lot of thinking and praying about your daddy, and I decided the time's come for you to see him again. There's a train leaving for North Carolina today."

Good grief almighty, was she out of her mind? Did she remember my daddy was still serving in the U.S. Army? And our country was still in a big war? And nobody had surrendered yet?

It's May 5, 1945. Carrying nothing but a suitcase and a bag of his aunt's good fried chicken, thirteen-year-old Levi Battle heads south to a U.S. Army post in search of his father.

The fact that his father doesn't even know he's

coming turns out to be the least of his problems.

While the war may seem to be ending, Levi discovers his father's secret mission is just beginning—and it is more unbelievable than anybody ever imagined. Ultimately, Levi will have to decide if he wants to go along for the ride.

Inspired by actual events, *Jump into the Sky* follows the surprising and little known mission of an all-black paratrooper unit in World War II. An Author's Note at the end of the book provides additional details for readers.

Alfred A. Knopf, 2012.
ISBN 9780375836992. Ages 9 and up. 940L Lexile.
<http://www.randomhouse.com/book/201837/jump-into-the-sky-by-shelley-pearsall>.



Permission to use book description and book jacket image granted by Random House.

Available through the State Library of Ohio Talking Book Program: <http://www.klas.com/talkingbooks/ohio>.

Available as an e-book and e-audiobook through the Ohio Digital Library: <http://ohdbks.lib.overdrive.com>

Book kit Information

Educators: Cultures & Connections Book Kits may be used to support Ohio's New Learning Standards (Common Core) English Language Arts reading, writing, and speaking and listening standards. Examples follow; other standards also apply. *Jump into the Sky* may also support standards in Science (Environmental Science: Global Environmental Problems and Issues) and Social Studies (World Geography: Movement).

Librarians, parents, and others: The discussion questions and activities are also for library and community programs and home use. Learning Standards define what students should know and be able to do at each grade. They are included for teachers who want to use this book in school. For more information, see the Ohio Department of Education website, <http://education.ohio.gov>. Click on "Ohio's New Learning Standards" in the Teacher Resources section.



Photograph and biographical information courtesy Shelley Pearsall; used with permission.

About the Author

A native Ohioan, Shelley Pearsall has enjoyed writing since childhood. Her first historical novel, **trouble don't last**, was the recipient of the prestigious Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction in 2003 and a Choose to Read Ohio selection. Her first contemporary novel, **All of the Above**, was a 2007 ALA Notable book.

Shelley Pearsall has been a public school teacher and a museum historian. In her spare time, she wrote historical scripts and short stories for Cleveland-area museums. She was the recipient of an Ohio Arts Council Fellowship in Writing in 1999 and was named the 2005 Children's Writer-in-Residence for the James Thurber House. She has taken part in a Revolutionary War shipwreck archaeology project, worked in an 18th century shoemaker shop in Colonial Williamsburg, and performed Great Lakes stories on a steamship--just to name a few of the unique historical jobs she has held over the years. She graduated from the College of Wooster (B.A.) in 1989 and holds a master's degree in education from John Carroll University.

Although she no longer works as a classroom teacher, Shelley enjoys visiting schools as a guest author! Shelley Pearsall lives in Silver Lake, Ohio with her husband Mike, stepson Ethan, and rescued barn cat Marbles.

Author Resources

Shelley Pearsall's official website
<http://www.shelleypearsall.com/>

Common Core Standards Alignment for Shelley's books (PDF)
<http://www.shelleypearsall.com/CommonCoreApril2013.pdf>

Discussion questions for **Jump Into the Sky** (PDF)
http://www.shelleypearsall.com/JumplnToTheSky_EG_WEB.pdf

Author interview from the Urbana Leader TV show. Shelley talks about her writing technique and about **trouble don't last**.
<http://youtu.be/DkhheZfXBTs> (part 1)
<http://youtu.be/GuWn1oij-9o> (part 2)

For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:
See <http://www.shelleypearsall.com/workshop.htm>.

Explore More!

Book trailer for **Courage has No Color: The True Story of the Triple Nickles: America's First Black Paratroopers**
<http://youtu.be/plaSF12VKBE>

Interview with Tanya Lee Stone, author of **Courage Has No Color**
<http://youtu.be/6weRJaNm484>

Triple Nickle Website
<http://www.triplenickle.com/>

African American World War II Medal of Honor Recipients
<http://www.history.army.mil/moh/mohb.html>

The 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion
http://history.army.mil/news/2014/140200a_tripleNickel.html



Shelley Pearsall standing outside one of the C-47s used for dropping U.S. paratroopers in World War II. Photograph courtesy Shelley Pearsall; used with permission.

Talk About It!

References to Common Core standards are included for the convenience of teachers. The discussion questions are also for library programs, family activities, and other projects.

Ask students to research the causes, effects, and major events of World War II. What was the role of the United States in the war? What impact did the war have on the American people? What part did African Americans play in the war efforts? Have students use both print reference texts and online sources to gather their information. Then as a class, create a timeline of World War II events to post in the classroom.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1; RH.6-8.3; RH.6-8.7]

Discuss the statement, "But who woulda imagined you could become an enemy in your own country." (p. 86) How do you think Levi's experiences in the South changed his opinion of himself and his country? [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6-7.1; RL.8.3]

After serving their country, many American servicemen benefited from the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (G.I. Bill). Have your students research the G.I. Bill. Discuss African American servicemen's access to the GI Bill. What benefits did African American servicemen receive? What barriers still existed at the end of the war for African American servicemen? [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1; RH.6-8.8; RI.5-8.1; RI.5.6; RI.5.7]

Charles Battle led his paratrooper unit on dangerous missions to search for balloon bombs and extinguish forest fires. The men in his unit constantly questioned these missions and their role in the war, but "Boots" remained steadfast. What does this tell you about his patriotism? Do you think it was hard for Boots to remain devoted to his country given the prejudice he faced within the army? What does he teach Levi about patriotism? In what ways are you patriotic? [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5-8.1; RL.5.3; RL.6-7.6; RL.7.9]

The paratroopers believed that they were stationed in Oregon to watch for and protect the country from Japanese balloon bombs. However, they never actually saw one of these balloons. What did the balloons look like and how did they work? As a class, research these balloons and discuss their design, function, and efficiency. Then have each student create a balloon model and allow them to test its ability to get from one point to another by releasing it outside. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7; RST.6-8.3]

Some discussion questions from *Jump Into the Sky Educators Guide* by Jamie Simon; used with permission. Download the complete *Educators Guide* here: http://www.shelleypearsall.com/JumplnToTheSky_EG_WEB.pdf.

Go Further!

During World War II, Americans from all walks of life made sacrifices. Have students research and learn about the items Americans went without for the war effort. What are ration books and victory gardens? [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4]

Many soldiers receive medals for their service to their country. Have students research the different types of service medals. What medal did the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion receive? When did they receive their medals? [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1]

During World War II, African American soldiers fought for a chance to serve their country and to end segregation in the armed forces. Have students research the Army and the president's response to the challenges faced by these servicemen. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2]

Have students research the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (GI Bill). Why was this law created? Which president signed this act into law? What kinds of services did this act provide for soldiers? How did African American servicemen access this benefit? [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1; RH.6-8.3]

"My father jumps out of airplanes. Real airplanes. Into the sky."

"Whole war, the army's been looking for ways to get us to give up and quit..."