

**Sweet Dreams, Sarah** by Vivian Kirkfield, illustrations by Chris Ewald  
ISBN 978-1-939547-31-6  
Spring, 2019

Curriculum guide available at [www.crestonbooks.co](http://www.crestonbooks.co) Educational Description: nonfiction narrative prose, based on true events, picture book biography of Sarah Goode, STEM title, third person narrative. History: pre-Civil war, post-Civil war, slavery. Technology: engineering, design, patent. Story elements: setting; South and Chicago, plot and character development, problem and solution, author's purpose, repeated words and phrases, illustrations enhance meaning and tone, rhythmic language, repeated words, figurative language: simile, hyperbole, metaphor. Themes: racial and gender discrimination, problem-solving, cause and effect, invention, change, hope, determination, innovation, creativity. Back matter: Note from the Author. Guided Reading Level P, Grade equivalent 3, Lexile Level 560; Decoding Display 81, Very High, Semantics 88, Very High, Syntactics 79, High, Structure 80, High. CCSS/ELA-Literacy: W.2.1,2,3,5,6,7,8; SL.2.1,1b,1c,2,3,4,6; RF.2.3,3c,3d,3f,4,4a,4c; L.2.3,4,4a,4b,4c,5,5a,5b,6; RL.2.1,2,3,4,5,7,10

**Themes:** invention, creativity, determination, problem-solving.

This guide is divided into three sections to facilitate discussion: **Prereading, During Reading, and Post-reading.**

### **Pre-reading:**

Get the readers thinking about folding furniture and inventions in general. What are some things that fold? (folding chairs, towels, sheets...) Why do we fold such things? (to save space, to make the area neater, etc)

During this pre-reading stage, you could also have students generate discussion as to what they would want to invent and what problems they would encounter (too young, not enough experience, not enough money...)

Draw a picture of what you think a typical inventor looks like. Are there other ways an inventor could look? What kind of people are inventors? What qualities do you need to be an inventor? Do you need to be curious? Do you need to be patient? Do you need to be strong? Do you need to be a scientist? Do you need to be a singer?

### **During Reading:**

The story allows for several places to stop and discuss Sarah's feelings and her character traits that are coming through. This will show her evolving and changing as a character and human being facing obstacles. Guide the students to notice a character's motivation and problem-solving tactics. Who is standing in her way? Why is she experiencing this? What sense of Sarah's character do you get from the book? Point to specific pages that give you an idea of her personality.

How does Sarah's life change from the beginning of the book to the end? How does she make things different for herself?

## **After Reading:**

Revisit the Pre-Reading discussions and have the students point out what her challenges ended up being and why. Was Sarah a typical black woman for her time (the 1880s)? How or how not? What do you imagine life was like for most black women in the 1880s? Could Sarah vote? Could she own property? Could she go to college? Could she be a doctor or a lawyer? What kind of jobs do you think most black women had in the late 1800s? What kind of jobs do you think most white women had in the late 1800s? What kind of limits did black men face in the 1880s? What kind of limits did white men face in the 1880s?

What was the problem that Sarah was trying to solve? What was her solution? Were there other possible solutions? Draw your own invention to the problem of saving space. Are there other kinds of folding beds you've seen? Are there other kinds of folding furniture?

Think of a problem that you would like to find a solution for. Problems are the starts of all inventions. The woman who invented the windshield wiper was trying to figure out how to keep a screen clear so drivers could see even in the rain. Sarah was trying to figure out how to make a desk that could also hide a bed inside. Describe your problem. Now try to think of an invention that could solve your problem. The invention can be fantastical or realistic. It could be a flying robot or a new kind of hover skateboard. Draw your invention and label as many parts as you can. How would you describe it to submit it for a patent? Think of ways to describe your invention that help someone see exactly how it would work.

Some inventions look very simple like the folding lip on milk cartons. Some look more complicated, like the zipper. Make a list of inventions you think are the most important, whether simple or complicated. Now do research on who made the inventions on your list. Did you find any surprises?