



Title: Of Thee I Sing

Author: Barack Obama

Illustrator: Loren Long

Age Range: 7-10

Topic/Themes: potential, American heroes, individuality, uniqueness, patriotism, personal virtues

Vocabulary: thee, sacrifices, amidst, recalling, inspired, creeds, lunar, picketed, kin

See video of this book read aloud here: [Of Thee I Sing](#)

★ 3rd Grade Common Core Reading Standard ★

Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

I. INTRODUCTION (PREP QUESTIONS)

- Draw students' attention to the title and author. Ask what they know about Barack Obama. Discuss the significance of the title, defining *thee*. Who do you think President Obama was referring to? Why?
- Ask students to share their thoughts on what makes America the greatest nation in the world, and why. Have students share names of notable people in history who have made important contributions to our country, including those that have been subjects of our recent books.
- Tell students that although this is a love letter to his own daughters, this story is also a love letter to the United States of America. Tell students to think about the many reasons that President Obama believes his daughters and our country are great as we read this story.

II. INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIES

During Reading

- P. 1: Read; have students identify colorful examples of **figurative language**.
- Pp. 2-3: Read; discuss the connection between **creative** and the artist, Georgia O'Keeffe. Direct the students' attention to the illustrations on both pages of this American hero (and on upcoming pages). Ask them to explain the significance (heroes are shown as *adults* but then are illustrated as *children* on left side). Why do you think the illustrator did this? What message did he want us to understand?
- Pp. 4-5: Read; discuss. Note the significance of the illustrations. It says that Albert Einstein (On a Beam of Light) "**turned pictures in his mind** into giant advances in science". What does that mean?
- Pp. 6-7: Read; discuss. Note the significance of the illustrations.
- Pp. 8-9: Read; discuss. Note the significance of the illustrations, including the face of Sitting Bull. Why is his face shown this way (significance of last sentence: *his spirit soared free on the plains*).
- Pp. 10-11: Read; discuss. Note the significance of the illustrations.
- Pp. 12-13: Read; discuss. Note the significance of the illustrations. On p. 13 it says that Helen Keller (Helen's Big World) was *strong*. What kind of *strong* does this mean?

- Pp. 14-15: Read; note the significance of the illustrations. Discuss what it means to sacrifice and how it relates to the sacrifices mentioned on p. 15. What is a memorial? Is there a part of the word that reminds you of other words? (*remember, memory*)
- Pp. 16-17: Read; discuss. Note the significance of the illustrations.
- Pp. 18-19: Read; discuss. Note the significance of the illustrations.
- Pp. 20-21: Read; discuss. Note the significance of the illustrations.
- Pp. 22-23: Read; discuss. Note the significance of the illustrations. Help students understand *picketed*. Tell them that we will be reading a book in the future about Cesar Chavez.
- Pp. 24-25: Read; discuss. Note the significance of the illustrations. Have students discuss the information on p. 25 as it relates to a previous story, Henry's Freedom Box. Help students understand the meaning of *kin*.
- Pp. 26-27: Read; discuss. Note the significance of the illustrations.
- Pp. 28-29: Read; ask students to share their observations about the significance of the illustration and how it has changed. Discuss the descriptors on p. 29.
- P. 30: Read; have students discuss what it means when it says that ***you are the future***.

III. INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIES

Post Reading

- How does this book make you feel? What did Barack Obama want his daughters to know? What did he want all of us as readers in America to know? Why do you think so?

IV. SMALL GROUPS

- There were six defining adjectives as part of the book: *creative, smart, brave, strong, kind, inspiring*. Ask students to choose one of the adjectives and ask them to describe how it could reflect their life actions when they have grown.
- Discuss the different heroes and their accomplishments. Which one do you think was the most courageous? Why do you think so? Which here had the hardest accomplishment? Why do you think so? If you could have been one of them, which one would it be, and why?