

These Hands

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Illustrated by Floyd Cooper

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summary

Joseph's grandfather introduces Joseph to a different world by showing him all the amazing things his hands can do and have done throughout his lifetime. Yet, despite all the wonderful things he learns about his grandfather and his numerous skills, Joseph also learns that in times of segregation, his grandfather was limited in what jobs he could do at the factory where he worked. *These Hands* is a powerful story about how hard work and perseverance can overcome prejudice.



student introduction

Joseph learns many things from his kind and caring grandfather, such as how to tie his shoes, hit a ball, play a piano, and do card tricks. However, Joseph also learns that his grandpa was never allowed to be a baker in the factory where he worked.

A Note From the Author

Retrieved online from www.amazon.com/dp/0547215665/ref=rdr_ext_tmb

Not so long ago, during the 1950s and early 1960s, African-American workers at the Wonder Bread, Awrey, and Tastee bakery factories

hands through history

by Laura Hummell

department books to briefs

were allowed to sweep the floors, load the trucks, and fix the machines—but they were not allowed to work as bread dough mixers or bread dough handlers.

I learned this history from Joe Barnett, an old friend and leader of one of the bakery labor unions, which are groups of workers that join together to fight for fair treatment in their jobs. Joe told me the story one evening as we were driving to a Detroit Pistons basketball game, and I can still picture his hands gesturing and trembling in the crisscrossing glow of headlights. My husband, who is a labor union attorney, has also heard bakery union members talk many times over the years about these “unwritten rules” for African-American workers.

A lot of what we know about how people were treated in the past comes through the retelling of stories like Joe’s, or “oral history.” Fellow Michigan author Jean Alicia Elster remembers her mother telling her that African-American women were not allowed to try on the hats in Hudson’s department store. The father of the first African-American governor of New York, David Paterson, remembers being paid by the people he worked for to not attend holiday parties in the 1940s.

This history is shocking today to many people. But back in the 1940s and 1950s, it wasn’t news; it was just how things were. In fact, newspaper ads for jobs back then often mentioned “white only” or “no colored.” Deciding what jobs people could do based on their skin color was not against the law until the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964. Before then, people may have thought such behavior was

wrong, but they couldn’t force other people to change.

One day in 2006, a few years after Joe died, I was watching my daughter play the violin and thinking about hands. I thought of Joe’s hands, and also of his heart. And I wrote down his story.

Margaret H. Mason

design brief

Suggested Grade Levels: K-3

Ages: Ages 5-8

Read *These Hands* as a class and brainstorm together about your favorite relatives, family stories, favorite foods, or dishes. Then research different historical periods or cultures online. Using your research, create your own multimedia presentation about a chosen time period or culture. Share your presentations with the class.

Enrichment: Create posters or a bulletin board featuring your students’ research, pictures, timelines, etc.

materials needed

- Digital camera
- Software to download, edit, share multimedia presentations
- Access to the Internet
- Printer
- Paper (copier paper, construction paper, or heavyweight watercolor paper)
- Colored pencils
- Markers
- Watercolor Paints
- Paintbrushes
- Projector

- Framing or matting materials (cardboard, wood, glue, staples, matt board, etc.)
- Tape

teacher hints

- Have students brainstorm about different historical periods or cultures in the classroom and discuss their similarities and differences. Periods in U.S. history include, but are not limited to:
 - o Colonial Times
 - o The Revolutionary War
 - o The Declaration of Independence
 - o The Articles of Confederation
 - o The Constitution
 - o The New Nation
 - o The War of 1812
 - o The Westward Movement/Expansion
 - o The Mexican-American War
 - o The Early Nineteenth Century
 - o The Civil War
 - o The Industrial Revolution
 - o The Late Nineteenth Century
 - o The Spanish-American War
 - o World War I
 - o World War II
 - o Korean War
 - o Vietnam War
 - o The 20th Century
 - o The 21st Century
- Review multimedia basics, multimedia presentation techniques, proper computer usage and research methods, communication systems, and other techniques for creating multimedia presentations.
- Demonstrate how to create a multimedia presentation using a variety of software and hardware.



- Demonstrate how to find reliable information on the World Wide Web.
- Share examples of historical periods or culture through multimedia presentations using suggested websites or the teacher's personal examples.
- Compile the students' work about diverse historical periods or cultures and organize them into a school or web-based exhibit.
- Frame and display students' artwork and ideas.

Students should be encouraged to think and discover information on their own. But occasionally they may need a little help or encouragement if they come across a road

block. Use the suggested websites to help students find information and gather ideas.

Suggested Student Sites

- Social Studies for Kids – Periods in United States History
www.socialstudiesforkids.com/subjects/ushistoryperiods.htm
- Social Studies for Kids – Cultures
www.socialstudiesforkids.com/subjects/cultures.htm
- With an Even Hand Library of Congress Exhibition
www.loc.gov/exhibits/brown/brown-segregation.html
- Definitions of terms used in *These Hands*
 - o Segregation
www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/segregation
 - o Discrimination
www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/discrimination

Suggested Teaching Sites

- Teaching Kids How to Create a Presentation
www.youthlearn.org/activities/teaching-kids-how-create-presentation-its-about-story
- Prezi for Creating Captivating Presentations
<http://prezi.com/learn/>
- Multimedia Presentation Review Sheet Sample
www.teachingideas.co.uk/ict/files/multimediareviewsheet.pdf
- How Online Presentations Work
www.howstuffworks.com/business-communications/how-online-presentations-work.htm

additional enrichment activities

Clothing Activity

Have students design a new shirt or dress for themselves that represents the time period or culture they have chosen. They may include different fabrics, styles, pictures, and more to demonstrate their historical period, the culture, interests, and ideas.

Recipe Activity

Have students create a class collection of recipes representing different aspects of history, their community, culture, or family. Compile the various recipes using word processing software, and send a copy home with each student.

Hand Activity

Have the students trace their hands and the hands of an older relative. Have them ask about how life was different for these older adults and write a story or interview based on the answers.



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