

# Being Teddy Roosevelt

By Claudia Mills

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**Summary:** Riley, an average student, was assigned to be Teddy Roosevelt for his class biography tea party and written report. As he learns more about Teddy, he starts applying President Roosevelt's philosophies to his own life. School work isn't really Riley's forte, but more than anything, he wants to play the saxophone. The students in Riley's class end up working together, applying knowledge from their own assigned biographies to help Riley out.

## **Book Information:**

Time Period: Contemporary

Setting Location: 4<sup>th</sup> grade

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Curriculum Ties: Biographies: Pocahontas, Napoleon, Helen Keller, Queen Elizabeth the First, Theodore Roosevelt, Mahatma Gandhi

Music: Saxophone

**Booktalk:** [http://nancykeane.com/booktalks/mills\\_being.htm](http://nancykeane.com/booktalks/mills_being.htm)

## **Author Information**

[www.claudiamillsauthor.com/](http://www.claudiamillsauthor.com/)

This website includes a biography of the author, summaries of other works, a link to Ms. Mills' blog spot, information about her trips and school visits.

# Illustrator Information

<http://www.rwalley.com>

Includes his biography, his art portfolio, and many of his drawings

## Pre-Reading Activities

1. Being Teddy Roosevelt is about a classroom's experiences during their biography report assignment. Before introducing the book, a teacher could come in dressed like a famous person in history and tell the class all about this person's biography. It will not only inform them of the information they will be looking for, but also get them excited about the finishing project. (a Biography Tea Party- just as the class in the book had)
2. As an introduction to biographies, the class could write their own life biographies. They should be given a list of criteria including some things that they might have to find out from parent's (how a student was as a baby and a small child).

## Chapter 1

### Questions:

1. If you had to pick a title for your own biography what would it be?
2. There were many different types of students mentioned. If you had to categorize yourself into a 'type' what would it be?
3. Most of the students were disappointed with the person they were assigned for the biography tea party. Do you think they will end up enjoying the assignment?

Journal Writing: If your class was to have your own biography tea party who would you want to be? Why? Who is the last person you would want to be? Why?

### Vocabulary:

Biography (pg.4) - a description or account of someone's life

Invent (pg.5) - to come up with (an idea, plan, theory, or item) after a mental effort

Exaggerate (pg.7) - to describe more than is fact, to enlarge beyond the truth  
Liberated (pg.10) - grant freedom to

## **Chapter 2:**

### Questions:

1. Why do you think Riley likes music class so much?
2. Based off of Riley's personality, what instrument do you think he would chose to play?
3. Do you think Riley will give up on his hope to play this instrument?

Journal Writing: If you could pick any instrument to play for the school year, what would it be? How does that reflect your personality?

### Vocabulary:

Impress (pg.12) - to have an emotional impact on

Instrumental music (pg.12) - music intended to be performed by a musical instrument or group of instruments

Percussion section (pg.17) - the section of the band that plays percussion instruments (an object producing a sound by being hit, shaken, rubbed, or scraped).

For example: drum, triangle, cymbals, xylophone

## **Chapter 3:**

### Questions:

1. Where could you go to get information for a biography?
2. When Grant found out Gandhi had worn loincloths occasionally, he decided he was going to go to the extremes for his assignment and do the same for the biography tea party. Sophie is another example of going to the extremes with her assignment. Would you go to the extremes if you were in either of their positions?
3. Do you think Grant will go to extremes being Teddy Roosevelt? Why or why not?

Journal: Grant said, "That's all right...Sometime in life everyone has to wear a loincloth. In public. To school. In front of the whole class." He was talking about

that sometimes we have to do things that are embarrassing. Describe a time when you were embarrassed.

Vocabulary:

Loincloth (pg.21) - a one-piece male garment which covers from the waist to the above the knee

Scornfully (pg.25) - showing scorn or disrespect

Mount Rushmore (pg.27) - a mountain in the Black Hills of South Dakota with the faces of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Roosevelt carved on it

## **Chapter 4:**

Questions:

1. While reading about their assigned characters, Riley, Grant, and Erika found out about their assigned person's father. Do any of their father's remind you of your father or a father you know?
2. Riley starts to talk about Teddy Roosevelt's rich father that built him his own gym and was able to give him anything he wanted. If you had someone who would give you anything you wanted, what would you ask for?
3. What do you think Teddy Roosevelt would've done to get a saxophone?

Journal: Riley starts a list of ways to get a saxophone. If you were to make a list for him, what ways would you include and how would you go about getting it?

Vocabulary:

Couch potato (pg.29)- a person who spends most of his or her free time sitting or lying on a couch

Papier mache (pg.29)-a material made from paper pulp that can be molded when wet to make a hard solid when it dries

Asthma (pg.30)- a disorder that includes swelling of the lungs making the airways narrow, causing difficulty breathing

## **Chapter 5:**

Questions:

1. If you were playing Teddy Roosevelt, what do you think he would wear?

2. Do you think Riley will be able to get Sophie's brother's saxophone?

*Journal:* Riley was willing to work so hard to get his mother to agree to let him play the saxophone. What is something you would be willing to work equally hard for in order to get it?

Grant and Riley both found something at Sophie's yard sale that they found great joy in. What item would give you that kind of joy if you were to find it at a yard sale?

*Vocabulary:*

Yard sale (pg.37) - an outdoor sale of used personal or household items held on the seller's property

Fringed (pg.38) - having slashed edges

Bandana (pg.40) - a large, brightly colored handkerchief

## **Chapter 6:**

*Questions:*

1. How have Riley's study habits changed from the beginning of the book to now?
2. Do you think the children have been learning a lot from their biography assignments?
3. How did Riley alter his thinking to get the notecards back?

*Journal:* Grant and Riley gave a lot of suggestions on changes you would have to make in everyday life to adjust to wearing a loincloth. How would your life change if you had to wear a loincloth like Gandhi all the time?

*Vocabulary:*

Indignant (pg.46) - showing anger at something wrong.

Encyclopedia (pg.47) - a book containing articles on various topics arranged in alphabetical order.

Assassinate (pg.49) - murder or destroy

Wheeze (pg.53) - a continuous whistling sound

## Chapter 7:

### Questions:

1. What are ways you have earned money?
2. How did Grant help Riley with his money situation?
3. What is one life lesson Riley learned at the yard sale from their biography characters?

*Journal:* What is one sacrifice you have seen similar to the one Grant made for Riley? How grateful was the person that they had helped out?

### Vocabulary:

Apologetically (pg.59) - offering or expressing apology or an expression of regret

Political (pg.61) - relating to politics, the art and process of governing (states and other political units)

Obstacle (pg.62) - something that stands in the way or holds up progress

Protest (pg.64) - strong public expression of disagreement and disapproval

## Chapter 8:

### Questions:

1. The boys start chuckling when the teacher asks where Grant is. Why do you think they were laughing?
2. Riley worked really hard on this assignment. What letter grade do you think he received?
3. How do you think Riley felt when Sophie told him that her brother had already sold the saxophone he was saving up for?

*Journal:* Riley has just found out that the saxophone he was saving up for has been sold. How do you think this story will end from here on out?

### Vocabulary:

Suitably (pg.65) - appropriate

Rugged (pg.65) - sturdy and strong

Pronounce (pg.65) - speak in a certain way

Swagger (pg.66) - to walk proudly

Astonishment (pg.68) - feeling surprised

## **Chapter 9:**

### Questions:

1. How did the bad news about the saxophone affect Riley?
2. Did the parents play a big part in this tea party?
3. How would the tea party have been different if they wouldn't have helped?

Journal: Riley asked all of the other students what they would do if they wanted something more than anything and didn't have the money to buy it, how they would get it. If you were in that position, what would you do?

### Vocabulary:

General (pg.74) - the highest officer rank

Contributor (pg.74) - someone who contributes or donates to a cause

Saucer (pg.75) - a flat circular plate made to hold a cup

Gleam (pg.75) - shiny

Conquer (pg.77) - to defeat in combat

Liberate (pg.77) - to give equal rights to/grant freedom to

## **Chapter 10:**

### Questions:

1. What do you think the students are going to say to the band director when they get there?
2. The music made Riley feel braver inside. He said it could change the way you feel. How does music make you feel?
3. What do you think the band director was thinking as the students walked in his room in their costumes?

Journal: If the band director would have said he didn't have a saxophone for Riley, what do you think Riley would have done? How would the story end?

Vocabulary:

Hesitate (pg.84) - to pause or hold back in uncertainty or unwillingness

Battered (pg.89) - damaged by blows or hard usage

Emperor (pg.90) - the male ruler of an empire

## **Other Works by Claudia Mills:**

*Ziggy's Blue-ribbon Day*

*Gus and Grandpa and the Halloween Costume*

*The Secret Life of Bethany Barrett*

*Hannah on Her Way*

*Cally's Enterprise*

## **Related Works**

*Bully for You, Teddy Roosevelt* by Jean Fritz

## **Additional Websites:**

Ezine Articles : <http://ezinearticles.com/?Interview-With-Childrens-Author-Claudia-Mills&id=1456459>

This website includes an interview with Claudia Mills, the author of *Being Teddy Roosevelt*. It includes where she got the inspiration for her ideas and the origin behind her famous books.