



THE GIRLS OF GETTYSBURG

by Bobbi Miller



About the Book

Pickett's Charge, one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War, is the powerful climax of this gripping, deeply affecting Civil War novel, told from the perspectives of three girls: Tillie, a frivolous Union loyalist; Grace, a free Black; and Annie, a southern girl disguised as a boy fighting in the Confederate Army.

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SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Literature/Language Arts

The Gettysburg Address—This short speech by Abraham Lincoln is often considered to be one of the most important addresses in American History. Students have been memorizing and reciting it for over 150 years. Invite students to do the same. [CCSS 3-5.SL.6](#)

Similes—The author uses this form of writing throughout the story to make it come alive. Explain to students that a simile often uses the word *like*: “sauntered *like* a young buck” or *as*: “*as thick as cold molasses*.” Have students find other examples of similes as they read the story and then work at writing their own which can be shared with the class. [CCSS 4-5.L.5](#)

Vocabulary—Students may be unfamiliar with some of the terms used in the story: *artillery*, *bivouacked*, *cavalry*, *conscripted*, *dandified*, *gaunt*, *gumption*, *haversack*, *infantry*, *reveille*, *sentry*, and *soirees* are a few they may need to find in a dictionary to reinforce their meanings. [CCSS 3-5.RL.4](#)

Questions for Discussion / Writing

This story, set in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, during the Civil War, contains many themes and issues that are relevant to young people today. Ask students to choose one of more of the following to discuss with a partner, in small groups or as a prompt for writing. [CCSS 3-5.RL.2](#), [3-5.SL.1](#), [3-5.W.1](#)

Point of View—The stories of Annie, Grace, and Tillie are told through alternating chapters that discuss some of the same incidents. Students can compare the points of view of the three girls and determine how they are alike and how they are different. [CCSS 3-5.RL.3, 6](#)

Station in Life—At various times in each girl's story, she is reminded by an adult to remember her “place” or “station” in life. What does this mean to you? Do you feel that people are born into a certain “station in life”? Is it something they can change? How? Do you feel that today's society assigns its members to a certain “place” in life? Provide examples. [CCSS 3-5.W.1](#)

Bravery—There are several incidents throughout the story where one of the characters performs an act of bravery which goes against what their family/friends/fellow soldiers believe they should do. What are your own feelings about this? Do you think that sometimes certain acts are required for a higher purpose? Why or why not? How do you feel about the consequences? Are some acts worth the ultimate consequences? Why or why not? [CCSS 3-5.W.1](#)

Conflict in Families—Miss Mary and her sister, Martha (Mrs. Scott) had a difference of opinion regarding whether they should help runaway slaves. Who do you think was correct? Why? Describe a time in your own experience where you had a difference of opinion with a family member regarding a certain action. How did you handle it? [CCSS 3-5.W.8](#)

Music—Various songs played an important part for the Union and the Confederates during the Civil War. Visit YouTube for versions of songs mentioned in the story. How does music play a part in your own life? Why are certain songs or recordings important to you while others are not? **CCSS 3-5.RL.6, 3-5.SL.4**

Friendship—At one point in Annie’s story, after a long period of being at odds with Dylan, they work together to help the wounded Jasper. Later Tillie helps Warrick to write a letter to his mother, even though he is a Rebel soldier, and at the end of the book *Tillie* is friendly with Grace—a big change from her original feelings toward Grace. Did you predict that these friendships would happen after the different characters’ experiences together in the war? Do you think that conflict sometimes leads to friendship? Why or why not?? Describe similar incidents in your own life where an “enemy” later became a friend. **CCSS 3-5.W.8**

Battles—There are very detailed descriptions of the battles that occurred in Gettysburg. Compare this to some of the stories you see on the TV news today. Do you feel that these types of descriptions

are important so that people can truly understand a war and its causes? Why or why not? **CCSS 5.SL.4**

History/Research—Many references were made to people and events that played a part of life in Gettysburg during the period from July to November 1863. Ask students to select one of the topics below and prepare questions they have about further details. They can use print and/or electronic resources to find information and then select an interesting way to present their findings to the class: a written or oral report, a newspaper article, a mini-drama, a PowerPoint presentation or another creative method. Here are some suggested topics: the Battle of Gettysburg; Women Soldiers in the Civil War; Horses in the Civil War; Weapons in the Civil War; Generals George Meade (Union) and Generals Robert E. Lee, George E. Pickett, and James Longstreet (Confederate); the Underground Railroad. (See Online Resources below for links to a few relevant websites.) Read also the Author’s Note at the end of the book for additional links and bibliographic references. **CCSS 3-5.SL.2, 4, 5; 3-5.W.6, 8**

Online Resources

Women Soldiers—<http://1.usa.gov/1s3TG4l> presents an overview and additional links to information on women and girls who dressed as men to fight in the Civil War.

The Battle of Gettysburg—<http://bit.ly/1s3TPFi> presents a 22-minute film narrated by Morgan Freeman on this history-making event. Additional information, including an eyewitness account written by Tillie Pierce and a photo of her at the time can be found here: <http://bit.ly/1sLHERw>.

Whitworth Rifle—<http://tinyurl.com/n59ytad> presents photos of this rifle that played an important part in the story.

Civil War Generals—<http://bit.ly/1t47jqg> presents alphabetical lists of the important officers during the war, and clicking on them provides access to their biographies. The site contains links to information on battlefields, maps, photos, and to primary sources and other resources.

Underground Railroad—<http://bit.ly/ZMRyrP> presents photos and information on important Underground Railroad sites in and near Gettysburg.

Horses in the Civil War—<http://bit.ly/1wmvjDK> presents a detailed discussion and an extensive bibliography related to horses in the Civil War.

Miss Mary Mc Allister—<http://bit.ly/1t95b1m> presents her first-hand description of what happened during the time of the story.

Abraham Bryan— <http://bit.ly/1w48sjI> presents photos and information on *Grace’s* father, including a photo of his actual house in 1863, as well as additional links to information related to the story.

Classroom Activities prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant.