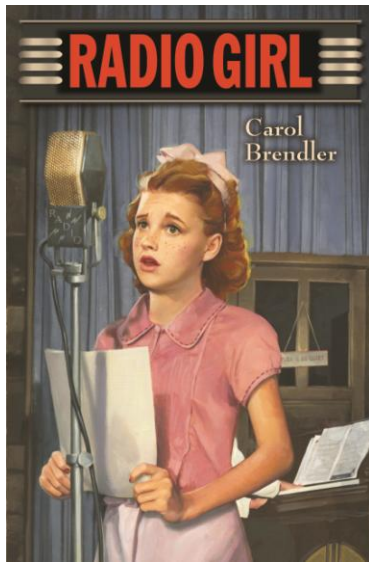


FIRST NOVEL



RADIO GIRL

CAROL BRENDLER

GRADES 5–9

About the Book

Can a girl from a middle-class Irish Catholic family living in Newark, New Jersey, in 1938 find fame and fortune (or even a job) as a radio star? Tune in to this unforgettable historical novel to find out.

978-0-8234-2861-8 • E-book available
Young Adult Historical Fiction



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Literature/Language Arts

This story, which is set in 1938, contains many important themes that are as relevant to young people today as they were then. Ask students to choose one or more of the following to discuss in small groups or to use as writing prompts. [CCSS 6-8, W.3-4; 6-8, SL.1; 6.RL.2, 3, 6](#)

- ❖ **The power of the media**—Cece (rhymes with “peace”) was obsessed with the radio, and she was a part of the “War of the Worlds” hoax broadcast that millions of people believed. Compare her feelings in 1938 with your own as they relate to today’s TV, social media, and online networks. How much importance do they have in your life? How do you decide whether or not to believe the information you find in the media? How do you find a balance between talking to “real people” rather than constantly texting/tweeting/reading e-mail online/etc.?
- ❖ **Dreams of the future**—Cece thought she knew what she wanted for her future life, and she frequently daydreamed about how specific situations would turn out; but she was often disappointed. What dreams do you have for the future? What things are you doing now to make them come true? How do you react when things don’t always turn out the way you dreamed they would? How far are you willing to go to realize your dreams?
- ❖ **Conflicts with parents**—Teenagers throughout history have had differences of opinion with their parents. How do you feel about the way Cece dealt with the conflicts with her mother? How do you handle conflict with your own parents regarding things they want you to do that are different from what you want?
- ❖ **Lying/subterfuge**—There are many instances in the story when different characters lie or refrain from being entirely truthful about actions or events. Do you feel this is just normal behavior for most people? Why or why not? Have you had situations when you skirted the truth in order to accomplish something you wanted/needed? What were the results? Were you happy with the results? Would you repeat the untruthful behavior? Why or why not?
- ❖ **“Expect orchids”**—Cece often imagines this phrase, and imagines that positive thinking will bring her everything she wants. Do you believe this is true? Explain how you think a positive attitude can make a difference. Or . . . maybe it can’t.

- ❖ **Friendship**—Cece relied on her best friend, Beverly, for many things, and her feelings were hurt when Beverly started spending more and more time with Mabel Ann, whom they had not liked very much earlier in the story. Has this type of thing ever happened between you and a friend? Compare the details of how you and your friend solved the problem with how Cece and Beverly solved theirs. How does jealousy ruin friendships?
- ❖ **Sex discrimination**—Cece and Polly were often asked by the men at CBS to get coffee or food for them. The men also didn't think it was possible for Cece to become a newswoman. Have you experienced anything similar today? What is your reaction? Do you think it's fair? Why or why not?
- ❖ **Description**—The author provided an excellent description of 1938 New York City at the beginning of Chapter 6 when Cece first traveled there alone. Write a similar description of your own town or city, including the sights, the sounds, the smells, and the feelings it gives you.
- ❖ **News reporting**—Cece's friend Frank wanted to be a reporter, and he interviewed Cece after the radio hoax incident. Imagine that you are a news reporter and create questions for an interview with one of the characters in the story or one of the famous people mentioned, such as Orson Welles or Edward R. Murrow. This can also be dramatized between two students.

Geography

Students can use wall maps, a U.S. atlas, or Google Maps to locate places that were mentioned in the story: Newark and Hoboken, NJ; Philadelphia, PA; Calcutta, India; France; England; New York City and its Hudson River; and Cape May, NJ.

Research & Online Resources

Students may wish to find out more about the many noted personalities mentioned in the book. For photos, they can use Google Images and enter the person's name plus "1938" to see how these people looked then. They can also search their names in Google or other print or electronic information sources for more details. Some people they may search for are Orson Welles, Agnes Moorehead, Deanna Durbin, Mickey Rooney, Edward R. Murrow, Shirley Temple, Claudette Colbert, and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. (Note: Ursula Parker in the story is a fictitious person.) **CCSS 6.W.7, 6.W.8**

"War of the Worlds"—<http://archive.org/details/OrsonWellesMrBruns> presents the famous (or infamous) broadcast from CBS in its entirety. (59 minutes)

Old-time radio shows—www.otr.net/ presents many of the shows that Cece enjoyed that were mentioned in the book. <http://archive.org/details/Backofth1938> presents a nine-minute film of how an actual 1938 broadcast of a Western with bad guys, horses, a lady, and a sheriff was done with actors and sound people and a little boy listening to his radio and imagining it all. See <http://tinyurl.com/ototl1c> for photos of how Cece's radio looked.

Notes from the author—<http://carolbrendlerbooks.com/2013/05/21/1938-what-a-year-part-i-shoes/> and <http://carolbrendlerbooks.com/1938-2/> both present remarks from the author Carol Brendler about shoes and radios in 1938. Visit the author's official website for lots more information.

Long Island Express/The New England Hurricane of 1938— www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/image/hurricane-path/ presents information on this disaster. Students can also look at http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/hurricanes/archives/2012/h2012_Sandy.html to learn details of Hurricane Sandy that struck approximately the same area in October 2012.

Hamshacks—www.hamfesters.org/main/picture-gallery/vintage-hamfesters-photos-archive/hamshacks-1938-1940/?show=gallery presents photos that show how Cece's friend T.K.'s hamshack may have looked.

Prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carol Brendler is the author of *Winnie Finn*, *Worm Farmer*, a picture book illustrated by Ard Hoyt. She has a master's degree in writing for children and young adults from the Vermont College of Fine Arts. *Radio Girl* is her first novel. Carol lives in Illinois, and you can visit her online at carolbrendlerbooks.com/.