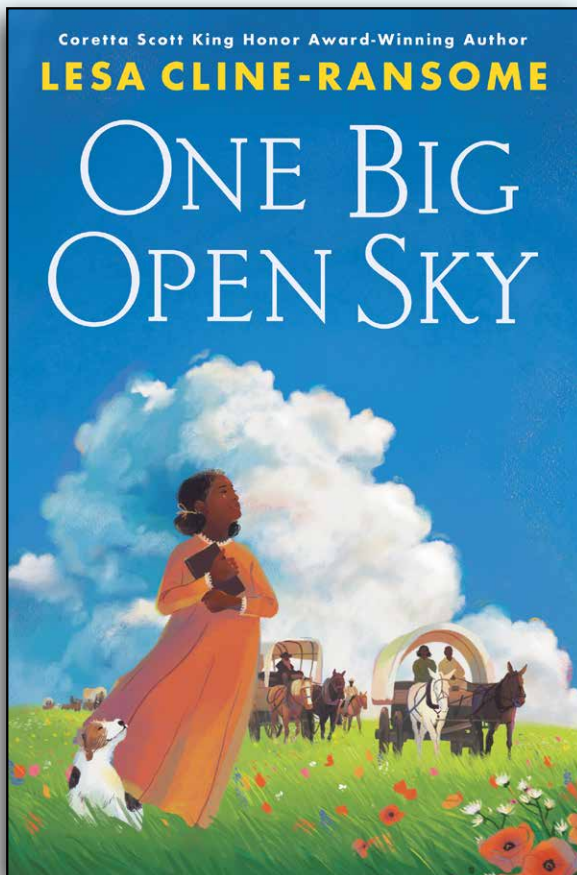


# HOLIDAY HOUSE

## EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



### *One Big Open Sky*

by Lesa Cline-Ransome

★ “Cline-Ransome once again demonstrates her incredible literary skills . . . a deeply moving story that centers a distinctive part of the African American story.” —*Kirkus Reviews*, Starred Review

A Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection

#### ABOUT THE BOOK

Three women narrate a perilous wagon journey westward that could set them free—or cost them everything they have—in this intergenerational verse novel that explores the history of the Black homesteader movement.

1879, Mississippi. Young dreamer Lettie may have her head in the stars, but her body is on a covered wagon heading westward. Her father, Thomas, promises that Nebraska will be everything the family needs: an opportunity to claim the independence they’ve strived for over generations on their very own plot of land. Lettie; her mother, Sylvia; and young teacher Philomena are free from slavery—but bound by poverty, lack of access to opportunity, and patriarchal social structures. Will these women survive the hardships of their journey? And as Thomas’s desire for control overpowers his common sense, will they ever truly be free?



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will analyze why Black Americans settled in Nebraska and what challenges they faced before and during their migration west.
- Broaden idea of migration in the United States to include Black farmers leaving the South.
- Discuss the impetus for Black families to homestead in communities rather than independently.
- Reflect on how homesteading offered Black Americans new access to the “American Dream.”

## BACKGROUND HISTORY

The Homestead Act had an immediate and enduring effect on North America that led to profound and lasting changes to the land, Native American life, and migration. The act distributed millions of acres of prairie land in the Western US to individual settlers, known as homesteaders. The Homestead Act promised recently freed Black Americans and others the opportunity to settle on public lands taken from Native American Plains Tribes. Most Black Americans left homes in the South to escape racial violence, pursue economic and educational opportunities, and obtain freedom from oppressive Jim Crow laws. Many Black homesteaders settled in clusters or “colonies” with other Black families.

### Visit [HolidayHouse.com](https://www.holidayhouse.com) for the complete guide:

Teaching with Timelines: Building a Historical Context

Activating Background Experience: Migration

Reading Journal: Character Experience

Discussion Questions

Post-Reading Activities

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Lesla Cline-Ransome** is the author of more than twenty books for young readers from picture books to novels for middle graders and young adults, including the award-winning Finding Langston trilogy. Her work has received a plethora of honors, including dozens of starred reviews, NAACP Image Award nominations, a Coretta Scott King honor, the Scott O’Dell Award for Historical Fiction, and a Christopher Award. Her work has been named to ALA Notable Books and Bank Street Best Children’s Book lists, and she lives in the Hudson Valley region of New York. *One Big Open Sky* is Lesa’s first novel in verse. Learn more at [LeslaClineRansome.com](https://www.LesaClineRansome.com).