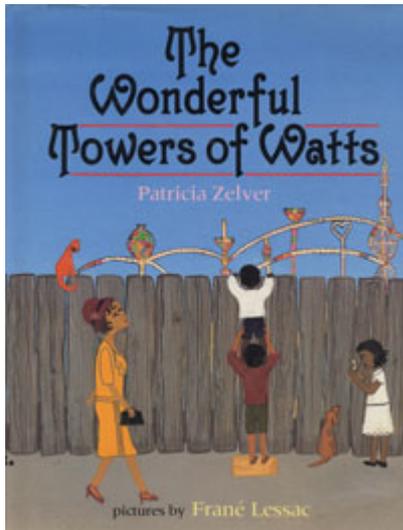


# Teachers' Notes

## Wonderful Towers of Watts



These notes to accompany *Wonderful Towers of Watts* provide suggestions for classroom activities based on or linked to the book's text and illustrations and highlight points for discussion.

### Topics for Discussion

Before viewing the book, begin to build a definition of "community". Have the students identify what makes up a community. Note all of their thoughts on a chart so they can add to it after they have read the book. Extend the discussion to include ideas for how a community can be made stronger.

Discuss with the students the different communities to which they belong, e.g., the classroom community, the community of all the children and teachers at their grade level, the school community, their own neighborhood, and their town or city.

What are some common threads across these communities?

Have the students compare their larger community with the Watts community shown in the book.

What features do communities have in common regardless of their location or size?

Pose these problems to the students:

In an effort to maintain a nonviolent world, what can children do to help create a peaceful community for themselves?

What kinds of choices can they make in an effort to create a productive, safe life for themselves in a community where violence is a problem?

The story presents opportunities for students to engage in some critical thinking:

# Teachers' Notes

Why did old Sam build the towers? What did towers represent for him (or mean to him)? What were his feelings when he moved away? Why did he never come back to see the towers again?

## **Curriculum Extension Activities**

Have the students think of someone they admire from their community

(or neighborhood) and write a short piece about that person and why they admire her/him. Include photographs or drawings. Put all the pieces on a "Local Heroes" bulletin board.

Have students write letters to appropriate community leaders or to the newspaper encouraging efforts to stop violence in our society.

Research background information on the Towers of Watts. For example, how tall are they? In what year were they completed?

Have students think of other questions they would like to have answered.

Working in cooperative groups, have students construct towers. Depending upon the availability of materials, there are several ways to do this activity. Students could use a variety of math manipulative to build table-top towers. They could use recyclable materials to build towers in the classroom. With adult supervision and a greater array of materials, they could construct towers outside on the school grounds. It is important that groups make a plan for their tower before they begin building. The plan may be modified as they work, but it will provide a starting point. With regard to safety considerations, the class as a whole should what materials are not appropriate for use and the limitations on size and methods of construction.

Encourage students to notice not only the qualities that make communities unique, but also the characteristics that they share.

Have students interview someone who has lived in their neighborhood (or community) a long time about how it has changed over the years. The class should be responsible for generating the questions wish to ask in the interview.

Have students conduct a survey of adults about structures in the community that people take pride in. (structures might be physical structures such as an art museum, a statue in the park, or a sports stadium, or they might be less tangible. such as the school system).

Conduct the survey school wide or even extend to other schools. Use of the Internet would enable the survey to reach a larger audience.

Have the students examine the results for possible categories in which structures that were mentioned could be grouped. Have them think different types of graphs that might be used to report their results. To extend the

# Teachers' Notes

activity further; students might make a one page newspaper about community pride, in which they publish their graphs and write short descriptions about the structures mentioned most often in the survey:

So that students understand some of the story details, locate on the world map and discuss the concept of immigrant.

Listen to some music that Old Sam listened to, by Enrico Caruso.

Discuss the work of an architect and why towers and tall buildings are designed by architects.

## RELATED THEMES

- community building
- individual decision making
- cultural diversity
- architecture
- landmarks
- city life

## FAMILY ACTIVITY

**VIEW:** This book describes how an Italian immigrant built three unusual towers in his backyard in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles, California.

**DO:** The entire family can join in to build an unusual tower of your own. The best part of this tower is you can eat it!

### You will need:

- Chunks of fruit, such as melon, pineapple, or even thick banana slices
- Additional fruits, such as berries, grapes, bits of kiwi and mandarin oranges
- Toothpicks

### Directions:

1. Place fruit chunks around the edge of a serving plate, leaving 1/4 inch space between.

# Teachers' Notes

2. Add another layer by placing fruit chunks over the spaces of the first layer to resemble a brick-laying pattern.
3. Continue building the tower until it is five or six levels high.
4. Add decorative fruits on the outside of the structure using toothpicks. Continue until decorated as desired.
5. Place the tower in the center of your table and invite the family to dig in!