

FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX
Teachers' Guide

Fame and Glory in Freedom, Georgia

by Barbara O'Connor

Grade Level:

Grades 3–7

Themes:

- Friendship
- Spelling bees
- Popularity
- Poverty



Introduction:

Bird (Burdette Weaver) needs a friend, so when Harlem moves to town she knows she has to make friends with him before “somebody poisons his mind” against her. When the state spelling bee is announced, Bird might be able to reach her goals—to become famous and to go to Disney World—but she needs a partner. She and Harlem work together to become the spelling champions.

This book gives readers a good look at small-town poverty. Bird shops for bargains at the Have-to-Have-It Shop, Harlem lives above a tattoo parlor, his father collects cans for a living, and Harlem is afraid to tell him he needs glasses because they can't afford them. In reading this book, more affluent students will get a window on the culture of poverty while others will identify with Bird and Harlem and how they face their problems. This is a very believable story that could take place in any small town.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can you be a friend? What could you do to help Bird if she was in your class? If Harlem moved to your school, what could you do to make him feel welcome?
2. If you were going to be in a spelling bee, what are some ways to study words? What ways did Bird and Harlem use in the book?
3. Bird wanted people to see her true self. However, she makes assumptions about Harlem that turn out not to be true. What did she believe about him? What are some other assumptions made about characters in this book?

Activity Suggestions:

1. Make a flyer for the spelling bee, including the rules and prizes.
2. How could someone get glasses if they couldn't afford them? Invite the school counselor to talk to the class about helping the less fortunate. Brainstorm ideas the class could carry out, such as helping at a soup kitchen or collecting food for a food bank.
3. Locate Valdosta, Georgia, on a map. Although Freedom, Georgia, is an imaginary town, authors sometimes set their story in a real town but change the name. Select and research a town that might have been used as a model for Freedom. Make an informational brochure for this town. Be prepared to explain why you think this town might be Freedom, Georgia.



Barbara O'Connor
photo credit: Bill O'Connor

About the Author

Barbara O'Connor grew up in Greenville, South Carolina, and has always loved to write. She has published several notable biographies and novels for children, including *Me and Rupert Goody*, an ALA Notable Book, and *Moonpie and Ivy*. *Fame and Glory in Freedom, Georgia* has been nominated to several state reading lists and was named a Children's Book of the Year by Bank Street College. Barbara lives in Duxbury, Massachusetts, with her husband, son, two dogs, and cat.

For more information on Barbara O'Connor:

Web sites:

www.fsgkidsbooks.com

Includes a biography of the author and additional information about her novels.

www.barboconnor.com

Contains more information about the author and her books.

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A Bank Street Best Children's Book of the Year

FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX

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