

OFFICE OF CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY RESPONSIVE INITIATIVES



Brownies' Books: Grades 5 & 6

The Brownies' Books are comprised of stories (folktales, fantasies, as well as more realistic stories), poems, games, articles on current events of the era, letters from young readers and photographs. In 1920, these literary magazines celebrated African American identity, urged racial pride, and encouraged its young readers to aspire to positions of leadership within their communities. The books are intended to be read with other members of the family. Many of the life lessons taught in the books are applicable to the uplift of young people of all races today.

The office of CLRI, has chosen literary works from the Brownies' Books, edited by renowned scholar, W.E.B. Du Bois, for you and your child's reading pleasure. Each literary work has standards-aligned reading, writing, and critical thinking activities to supplement core-curriculum reading materials. The Brownies' Books are written by diverse authors, and particularly, authors of African American descent. According to historical literacy expert, Dr. Ghody Muhammad, citing W.E.B. Du Bois, the Brownies' Books are "designed for all children, but especially for ours." Moreover, "the content of the readings was intended to recognize and cultivate the genius within youth" (Muhammad, 2020, p.152). The text represents people of color in a positive light dispelling falsehood and stereotypes. Please enjoy these historically and culturally responsive stories.



More stories can be found here: <http://childlit.unl.edu/topics/edi.brownies.html>

The following stories can be read independently or aloud with families. Complete activities and questions under each story.

[The Boy's Answer](#)

[Wishing Game](#)

[The Story of Prince Jalma](#)

[A Story of a Former Slaveboy](#)

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THE BOY'S ANSWER

BROWNIES' BOOK- JANUARY 1920, W.E.B. DU BOIS, EDITOR

A. U. CRAIG

One day, while in a park, I saw a little ten or twelve year old boy sitting on a bench and, on taking a seat by him, he looked at me and I looked at him; he smiled and I smiled.

"Little man, what are you going to do when you get to be a man?"

"Well," said the little boy, "I am going to be a Civil Engineer, like my father."

The little man's answer was a surprise to me, because most little brown boys of whom I ask the question, "What are you going to do when you get to be a man," usually say, "I don't know." This little fellow gave me his answer at once and said he was going to be a Civil Engineer! (All boys who know what a Civil Engineer is and some of the things he does, hold up your hands.)

His next answer to my question surprised me even more, when I put this one to him, "What do you know about Civil Engineering?" Without hesitating, he said: "I can draw a railroad bridge, and its joints; I can draw the sections of the different kinds of sewers; and I can draw a map with the contour lines."

I heard a whistle in the distance and my little friend said, "Mother is calling me." And away he ran, leaving me to think that I had met a little brown boy who would some day become a great Civil Engineer. At the age of ten or twelve this little boy knows more about Civil Engineering than most men do when they enter college to learn Civil Engineering, and so he is sure to be far ahead of his class as he goes through college.

How many boys, who expect to be physicians, can, at the age of—say 15, name one-half of the bones in their bodies, or locate their stomach or liver?

Nearly all great men have shown remarkable interest in their chosen calling when they were still very small boys. Coleridge-Taylor was playing on his violin when he was only five!

DEFINE VOCABULARY: civil engineer, calling, contour, physician

READING, WRITING AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS ACTIVITIES:

1. Respond to this question: Little man/woman, what are you going to do when you get to be a man/woman?
2. Identify and research a career field that interests you. Create a list of skills you are currently learning about in your classes that will help prepare you for that profession.
3. Read the biography of Coleridge-Taylor ([link to biography](#)) write two paragraphs about his life and contributions to society.
4. Listen to Coleridge-Taylor's music by visiting: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKtIbkP3tgM&feature=youtu.be>) How does his music make you feel? What do you think about while listening to his music? Write a short paragraph.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Biography

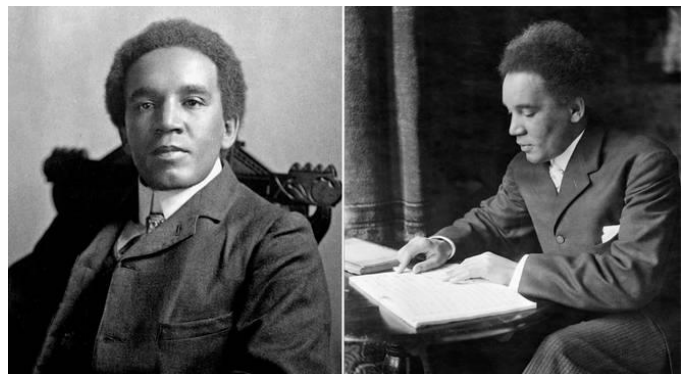
By: Helena Asprou

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was an English composer, conductor and political activist who fought against race prejudice with his incredible compositions.

Born in Holborn in 1875 to an English mother and a father originally from Sierra

Leone, he liked to be identified as Anglo-African – and was later referred to by white New York musicians as the 'African Mahler', owing to his musical success.

His name was given to him after the famous poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge who, curiously, became a great source of inspiration during his career.



Where did Samuel Coleridge-Taylor study?

Raised in a family of keen musicians, Taylor's father taught him to play the violin at a young age.

The boy's talent and affinity towards music was obvious, so he was encouraged to join the Royal College of Music when he was just 15 years old and it was here that he perfected his technique.

Soon enough, Taylor began writing compositions under the guidance of professor Charles Stanford and after completing his degree, his career as a composer went from strength to strength.

Coleridge-Taylor – a life of music and poetry

The bright young composer made his musical debut with 'Ballade in A Minor', for which he was called "a genius" by music publisher August Jaeger.

Conscious of his African descent, Taylor's classical compositions were heavily influenced by traditional African music and this made him one of the most progressive writers of his time.

He also became well-known for his use of poetry – particularly in his cantata trilogy, *The Song of Hiawatha*, which included the epic *Hiawatha Overture* and was based on a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Despite the black community's ongoing battle against racism, the first part of this work, *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, was so popular that it led him to embark on three tours of the United States.

In fact, his work across music and politics was so well received that in 1904, he was even invited by President Theodore Roosevelt to visit the White House – a bold statement and a positive step forward for African Americans.

Sheku Kanneh-Mason cover 'Deep River'

Some of Taylor's best-loved works include 'Nonet in F Minor', his extraordinary 'Christmas Overture' and 'Deep River' – a traditional African-American spiritual.

Written in 1904, 'Deep River' was originally arranged for the piano – but now cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason has re-imagined the piece with added violin and cello.

Coinciding with National Freedom Day, the single is being released 115 years after the song was first published, making Taylor's music just as relevant today as it was then.

This sweet-sounding tribute is also Sheku's first recording with his brother and sister, Braimah and Isata, as part of the Kanneh-Mason Trio.

The siblings first heard the track while filming for a *Chinekele* Documentary and instantly fell in love with Taylor's melody.

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THE WISHING GAME

BROWNIES' BOOK- JANUARY 1920, W.E.B. DU BOIS, EDITOR
ANNETTE BROWNE

WE gathered 'round the fire last night,
Jim an' Bess an' me,
And said, "Now let us each in turn
Tell who we'd rather be,
Of all the folks that's in our books."
(Of course, we wouldn't want their looks.)
Bess wished that she'd been Betsy Ross,
The first to make the flag.
She said, "I'd like to do some deed
To make the people brag,
And have the papers print my name,—
If colored girls could rise to fame."
An' I stood out for Roosevelt;
I wished to be like him.
Then Bess said, "We've both had our say,
Now tell who you'd be, Jim."
Jim never thinks like me or Bess,
He knows more than us both, I guess.
He said, "I'd be a Paul Dunbar
Or Booker Washington.
The folks you named were good, I know,
But you see, Tom, each one
Of these two men I'd wish to be
Were colored boys, like you and me.
"Sojourner Truth was colored, Bess,
And Phyllis Wheatley, too;
Their names will live like Betsy Ross,
Though they were dark like you."
Jim's read of 'em somewhere, I guess,
He knows heaps more than me or Bess.

DEFINE VOCABULARY: brag, deed

READING, WRITING AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS ACTIVITIES:

1. Choose one of the African Americans listed in the poem (Paul Dunbar, Sojourner Truth, Booker T. Washington, Phyllis Wheatley). Write a 1–2 page biography about their life and their accomplishments.

2. Identify a person who you would want to be and who also looks like you (is of your own race and/or ethnicity). Explain why using the following writing prompt: “ _____ looks like me and is someone who I’d want to be because _____.”

OFFICE OF CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY RESPONSIVE INITIATIVES



THE STORY OF PRINCE JALMA

BROWNIES' BOOK- MARCH 1920, W.E.B. DU BOIS, EDITOR
TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY MARY COOK

Once upon a time,—long, long ago, there lived an old man who had a very beautiful daughter. He was quite ignorant, and knew not gold from silver. Every day he went into the thick forest to cut firewood, which he carried to the city and exchanged for food. In this way, he supported his wife and daughter. One day, while he was cutting the trunk of a large tree, he heard painful lamentations within. Then an ugly man appeared, and said:

"You have wounded me, and shall die for this."

The old man excused himself, saying:

"Sir, pardon me. I am very poor, and have to search for firewood to support my wife and daughter."

"And is your daughter beautiful?"

"Oh, yes sir, very much so."

"Very well, I will grant you your life if you will allow your daughter to become my wife; if not, I must kill you. Within eight days, bring me her reply,—whether or not she will do as I desire. And. now, open the trunk of the tree, and you will find much gold. You may take it to your wife and daughter."

The old man cut the trunk of the tree, and within found much gold. He loaded his ass with it and returned to the house. When he arrived, his wife and daughter asked him why he was so late. He explained the case to them, and the young girl said that she would consent to the marriage, to save her father. Then he gave them the gold which he had brought. They had never seen gold coins, and did not know that they were money.

"What is this?" they asked: "What beautiful medals are these?"

"It would be good, father, to sell them in the city, if it is possible," said the daughter.

The old man went to the city, carrying his gold. He desired to sell it, but they told him that he had found gold coins, and that with them he could buy many things. He bought food and clothes for his family and returned at once to the house.

At the end of the eight days, he took his axe and mule and went into the forest. He knocked on the trunk of the tree, and the same ugly man appeared.

"What reply do you bring me?" he asked

"My daughter consents to the marriage." the old man replied.

"Good; but there is one condition, and that is that the wedding be celebrated in the dark, and that she never try to see me until I give her permission."

The old man said that it should be as he wished.

And so the wedding was celebrated in the dark, and the young girl lived very happily. Her husband left very early each morning and returned for the night.

One day an old woman came to visit the young girl and asked how she liked her married life. The young girl responded that she liked it very much. Then the old woman wanted to know if her husband was young or old, ugly or handsome, tall or short. The young girl responded that she did not know, because she had never seen him.

"What!" cried the old woman "You have never seen your husband! It is not possible."

"But, you see, he asked it before we were married."

"My child, you do not know whether your husband is a dog. or Satan. You must see him. Take this match and when he falls asleep, light it, and you will be able to tell what he is."

So the girl did as the woman told her. When her husband arrived in the middle of the night, she lit the match and looked at him. She saw that he was very handsome, but forgot the match, and a piece of it fell on her husband's face. He awoke at once.

"Ungrateful wretch, you have not kept your word! Now you must know that I am an enchanted prince. I am the Prince Jalma. My enchantment was almost broken, but now it is impossible for a long time. If you ever wish to see me again, you must wear iron shoes and search over the whole world. Good-bye."

The prince disappeared, and the girl began to weep and regret having taken the advice of the old woman.

The next day she bought the iron shoes and went to search for her husband. She visited many cities, asking for the Prince Jalma, but no one had seen him. At last she came to the end of the world, and seeing the mother of the North Wind, asked:

"How are you, good woman?"

"Very well, but what brings you here? Not even birds dare come so far. My son will eat you."

"Madam, I come in search of my husband, the Prince Jalma. I am compelled to wear iron shoes until I find him."

"I do not know him, child, but it is probable that my son does. Hide yourself under this pot and when he arrives. I will ask him."

When the wind arrived, he began to roar:

"Hu-u-u-u-u! I smell human flesh here."

"What?" cried his mother, "You smell human flesh here, when not even the birds can come so far?"

But the wind continued:

"Hu-u-u-u-u! I smell human flesh here."

His mother set the table and after they had eaten, she said, "Will you grant me a favor!"

"Speak, mother."

"There is a girl here, in search of her husband, the Prince Jalma. Do you know him?"

"No, but it is probable my friend, the South Wind, knows him. I will take her there, if she wishes."

The mother of the North Wind gave the girl a golden hen and some golden wheat, and the North Wind took her in his arms and carried her to the other end of the world. There she saw the mother of the South Wind, who cried:

"My child, what brings you here, when not even the birds come so far? My son will eat you."

"I am in search of my husband, the Prince Jalma. The North Wind said that your son might know him. Is it true?"

"Hide yourself behind this pot and when he comes, I will ask him."

When the South Wind arrived, he began to growl:

"Hu-u-u-u! I smell human flesh here."

"What! You smell human flesh here, when not even the birds come so far? Come, eat your dinner and we will talk."

After they had eaten, the mother asked:

"Will you grant me a favor?"

"Speak. I will grant it."

"A little girl has come here, looking for her husband, the Prince Jalma. Do you know him?"

"No, but my friend the East Wind must know him. I will take her there."

The mother of the South Wind gave the girl a cross of gold, and her son carried her off to the East Wind. He had not heard of Prince Jalma either, but offered to take her to his friend, the West Wind. The mother of the East Wind gave the girl a comb, to sell in case of necessity.

When the East Wind arrived with her, they met the West Wind's mother sitting on the steps, and the young girl asked her the same question which she had asked the others, and the woman replied:

"It is more than likely that my son knows him. Hide yourself behind this pot."

When the West Wind came, he was very angry, but after he had eaten, the mother brought out the girl who asked, at once, for the Prince Jalma.

"Yes, I know your husband, my child, and I know where he is; I will take you there. He is imprisoned in a palace, with an old witch and her daughter. The daughter desires to marry him. No one can see him and he can see no one. He sleeps under seven keys."

The mother of the West Wind gave her a cup of gold, to sell in case of necessity.

Finally she arrived at the palace, where they told her that within four days, the prince must marry the Witch's daughter. So she sat down in the garden and tried to make herself appear as a fool. She washed her face with clay and, taking out the golden hen, attempted to feed it with the wheat. In this way she attracted much attention. Very soon the witch's daughter came up to her.

"Will you give me your hen!" she asked.

"No, no," replied the girl.

"Sell it to me, then. What do you wish for it?"

"If you will allow me to sleep in the prince's room for one night, you shall have it for nothing."

"Very well, you may sleep there."

They turned the seven keys, and the girl entered the prince's room; but before she came, they had put something in his wine to make him sleep, and she could not wake him, although she cried very loudly:

"Prince, awake! I am your wife. I have worn the iron shoes and have at last found you, but if you do not recognize me, you must marry another."

But the prince did not awake, and the next morning they took her away, and she went back into the garden. She brought out her comb and began to comb her hair. Soon the Witch's daughter appeared and bought it under the same condition: but the same thing happened with the prince. The third day she brought out the cross of gold, and the witch's daughter bought this also; but the girl was not able to awake her husband.

The fourth day the girl brought out the golden cup, and the witch's daughter bought that too. But this time the prince had begun to suspect something and did not drink the wine. The poor girl entered his room and began anew her lamentations:

"If you do not recognize me tonight, I am lost forever. I have not another thing with which to gain my entrance to your room. The witch's daughter has the hen, the wheat, the comb, the cross, and the cup. Besides, tomorrow you must marry her."

At this moment, the prince awoke. He beheld his wife, and with great joy clasped her in his arms:

"No one shall be my wife but you!"

The next day they celebrated the wedding all over again, and the wicked witch and her daughter were burned.

This story, "El Principe Jalma" is taken from "La biblioteca de las tradiciones populares españolas," (Madrid, 1886).

DEFINE VOCABULARY: compelled, consents, lamentations, ungrateful

READING, WRITING AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS ACTIVITIES:

1. The old man's daughter was brave and selfless to decide to marry someone she has never seen as a sacrifice for her father. Write two paragraphs about a time you were brave or selfless.

2. Often in short stories, a woman's hand in marriage is exchanged for a product or service. Why do you think a man's hand in marriage is not offered as often?

3. Write a different ending to the story if the prince did not realize that the wine was tainted to make him sleep through the night. Provide at least two paragraphs.

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A STORY OF A FORMER SLAVE BOY

BROWNIES' BOOK- MARCH 1920, W.E.B. DU BOIS, EDITOR
ARTHUR HUFF FAUSET

In slavery days, colored boys and girls could not go to school. Very often they were not even permitted to learn how to read. Nevertheless, many of the young slaves were determined to learn somehow, no matter in what manner. Such a boy was Booker T. Washington; another was Frederick Douglass; still another was Blanche K. Bruce.

When Blanche was a boy, he had to work as a slave on a plantation in Mississippi. Like many a slaveowner, his master needed him too much to allow him any time to get an education. But young Blanche made up his mind he was going to learn his abc's the best way he could, and get all the knowledge that was possible for himself, so that when he became a man he might help his people and his country. Every spare minute he could get away from his slave toil, he would go off to himself and work hard over the few books he was able to get hold of. In this way he learned quite a little bit.

In 1863 Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves throughout the entire United States, Blanche Bruce was a free man. How glad he was that he had studied hard while he was a slave! Now he had a chance to use his learning.

People began to take notice of this earnest, bright, young fellow. They continued to admire him, and encouraged him in his efforts to rise in the world. Each passing year found him a little higher than before, and the time came when the people of Mississippi, both white and colored, called on him to take one of the greatest positions a state has to offer,—to be a Senator from the State of Mississippi, in the great Congress at Washington. Here, with one other Senator from Mississippi, and a number of Senators from all the other states of the Union, Bruce was to help make the laws for Mississippi, and the whole United States. Bruce and his friends rejoiced that he had studied so earnestly when a youth, that he was able to take up the big task at Washington.

While he was in Washington, assisting Congress and the President of the United States to make our laws, word came to him of his old slavemaster. He was no longer rich but was heavily in debt, and was so poor and friendless that the State of Mississippi had decided to send him to the poor house, a place where no respectable man cares to go. Bruce felt sorry for his former master. He set to work immediately to help him. Through a friend, he learned that at Vicksburg,

Mississippi, a man was needed to inspect the ships as they came into port. Bruce saw his chance to assist the aged slaveowner.

He went directly to the President of our country, and asked a favor of him.

"My dear Bruce," said the President, "I'm only too glad to be able to serve you. What can I do for you?"

Bruce replied, "Mr. President, there is a position open at the port of Vicksburg, Mississippi. May I name an old friend of mine to take the place?"

"That's a small favor you ask," said the President. "Of course, your friend may have it. You may name him any time you wish,"

Bruce went away happy.

But the thought occurred to him that his proud old master would, doubtless, rather go to the poorhouse than feel that he owed his rescue to a Negro who once had been his slave.

"He must never know I got the job for him," said Bruce to himself.

He straightway went to the other Senator from Mississippi, a white man, and told him the story.

"And I want you to name him for the position," Bruce said, "for if he knows that I, a colored man and his former slave, named him, he will feel so humiliated, he won't accept the position."

The other Senator agreed, and he himself named the former slaveowner for the position at Vicksburg.

You may be sure Bruce's old master was happy when he learned that he did not have to go to the poorhouse, but that he had a fine position, instead.

He never knew to the day he died that it was his former slave, Blanche K. Bruce, who had saved him from disgrace.

DEFINE VOCABULARY: disgrace, earnestly, rejoiced, toil

READING, WRITING AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS ACTIVITIES:

1. Why do you think the slavemaster would rather go to the poorhouse than feel that he owed his rescue to a Black man?
2. Name three modern day figures who arose from hard circumstances to become famous and influential today.
3. Write about what you want to be in life and how you would like to help others similar to how the protagonist, Senator Blanche K. Bruce, helped the slavemaster.
4. Research the biography of Senator Blanche K. Bruce, write a 500 word essay on his achievements and contributions to America.