



## BACKGROUND/SUMMARY

Author Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrator Frank Morrison created a biography of world-renowned, multitalented artist Aretha Franklin. The text incorporates various stylistic techniques to present key moments, people, and actions in Aretha's life. A riff on Franklin's hit song, "R-E-S-P-E-C-T", the rhyming text uses spelled out words as signposts to introduce rhyming couplets charting her journey from the church choir to international fame. Weatherford notes key cultural influences: a father with a commanding presence; a mother whose influence was truncated because of marital issues; faith rooted in the African American religious traditions of the Baptist faith; musical talent nurtured in the Black church; burgeoning stardom; participation in the civil rights movement; and later achievements and honors.



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## PREREADING

The prereading strategies, discussion questions, and extension activities meet a wide array of standards for the arts, literacy, literature, music, science, technology, social studies, and writing, including R1.K.1–R1.3.10.

1. Tour the book. Look at the front and back covers. What do you see, feel, or think about when you examine them? What do you find when you remove the book jacket and look at the cover and the first few pages? Is there a glossary? Why might an author decide to add one? What is included at the end of the book?
2. Write down what *respect* means to you. Why do you think the author chose that title?
3. Are you familiar with Aretha Franklin and her music? List three things you'd like to learn about her.
4. Listen to a few of Aretha Franklin's songs. List three reasons why you think people like her music. How does her music make you feel?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following discussion questions and activities encourage readers to look and listen for clues in the book's pictures and text, covering R1.K.1–R1.3.10.

1. Where was Aretha born?
2. How many brothers and sisters did she have?
3. What games did she enjoy playing?
4. Why did Aretha's father move to Detroit, Michigan?
5. Describe Aretha's personality as a child. Are you surprised to see where she ended up as an adult?
6. Identify information you'd like to know about Aretha that is not presented in the book. Were the three things you listed in the prereading section answered? Where might you look to learn more?



7. How does the author describe R&B music? What words would you use to describe your favorite kind of music?
8. Why do you think the illustrator puts Aretha's family's portrait on the tree?
9. Aretha sang at President Barack Obama's inauguration and President Jimmy Carter's inauguration gala party. Why do you think they wanted her to sing at their special ceremonies?
10. Why is Aretha called the "Queen of Soul"?
11. Aretha's hairstyles, jewelry, and clothing changed during different ages and time periods. Compare styles in two different decades, such as the 1960s and the 2000s. What are some differences?



## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

The following activities particularly address the following standards: (R1. K.1–R1.3-10) (RL.K.1–RL3.1-3.10).

1. **Music.** Play samples of different types of music in your classroom, including classical, country, hip-hop, soca, rock and roll, and others. Work with a partner to brainstorm what makes these genres alike or different. Make a list of singers, composers, musicians, and types of music you'd like to learn more about, and what kinds of books you would stock in a music center. Describe how different music makes you feel, and if *RESPECT* changed the way you think about musical styles. In a blog post (<https://cbweatherford.com/2020/08/26/encomium/>), Carole Boston Weatherford says that her picture book biographies are "encomia—also known as paeans or praise songs." How do you see this reflected in the book?
2. **Writing.** Interview a classmate about an instrument they play, a song they like, or music their family listens to for certain occasions like birthdays and holidays. Write an article about your classmate's experiences. Consider combining the class's pieces into a classroom newspaper.
3. **Geography.** Many people leave a neighborhood, town, city, state, or country and move to another. Aretha's family moved from Memphis, Tennessee, to Detroit, Michigan. Look at a map of the US, and identify the direction in which the family traveled. What is the fastest way to get there? Consider buses, trains, planes, cars. What might have been the best option for Aretha's family? List the states and a major city in each state they passed through.
4. **Math.** Calculate the miles Aretha and her family traveled between Memphis and Detroit. What do you think they might have seen along the way? What might have impacted how fast they could travel?
5. **Technology.** The way we hear music has changed over the past one hundred years. Consider live music, radio, records (78, 33, 45 rpm), cassette tapes, compact discs, and streaming. Which are you most familiar with? Which don't you know much about? Can you create a classroom display with examples of each? Can you describe how they work?
6. **Information Searches.** Identify ways you might discover more information about Aretha Franklin, such as using newspapers or magazines. Find at least one article about Aretha, and share the most interesting facts with your classmates.
7. **Music Vocabulary.** Define each of these terms: solo, duet, trio, quartet, orchestra, symphony, instrument types (brass, woodwind, string, percussion), a cappella, and opera. Find terms that are associated with different cultures or languages, such as adagio.
8. **Art.** Draw a picture or portrait of your favorite performer or group in the same style as *RESPECT*'s illustrations.
9. **Science/Cooking.** Aretha loved to cook. At home, create and make a recipe that includes three to four fresh fruits (one half cup of each), nuts, cranberries, raisins, coconut, and yogurt (optional). Then write up a list all ingredients, amounts, and directions to include your recipe in a classroom cookbook.
10. **Social Studies.** What major laws were passed because of people like Thurgood Marshall, Carter G. Woodson,



Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer, and many others, including entertainers like Aretha Franklin and Harry Belafonte? Are you inspired by anyone working to pass laws today?

11. **Current Events/Music.** Create a list of five major modern singers. What kind of music do they perform? Do you think any were influenced by Aretha?
12. **Poetry.** Write a poem about your favorite singer, musician, band, group, or type of music; try to use a rhythm and language similar to the ones they use in their music, like author Carole Boston Weatherford did in *RESPECT*. Recite your poem to the class.
13. **Vocabulary.** Several words and phrases are highlighted in the book: blessed, Detroit, music, strife, tree, gifted, example, talent, voice, groove, right, someday, we'll all be free, sweet land of liberty, and respect. Choose three to describe in your own words and explain why they're important to the story. What words would you use to describe Aretha?
14. **Interdisciplinary.** Create musical instruments using containers and boxes of different shapes, such as oatmeal cartons, cereal boxes, and yogurt containers. Identify the shapes. Tap the boxes and containers with your fingers, hands, and pencil. Discuss the sounds with a partner, and write down the similarities and differences between each instrument. Does the shape matter for the sound it creates? Does the size factor in? Write down your observations in your science log.
15. **Music.** Aretha performed concerts to support the Civil Rights Movement. Other singers also performed music to change the world for the better. Listen to songs by Woody Guthrie; Odetta; Joan Baez; Peter, Paul, and Mary; Sam Cooke; and Sweet Honey in the Rock. Discuss similarities and differences in the music of each individual or group. Which of the lyrics are most powerful? How can music move groups of people to action?

## USING BACK MATTER

In the back matter, Carole Boston Weatherford provides more detailed information about Aretha, including experiences in her youth, her formal and informal musical training, her early success singing in churches, her shift to R&B, her political activities, and her many achievements. More details are shared about her chart-topping, award-winning recordings. What does the back matter add to your understanding of Aretha and her life? Why might the author have chosen to include it?



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