TeachersFirst READING TREKS

Bread and Roses, Too

Teacher Guide

Grade Level & Content Areas

Access Reading Trek Map

Ages: 10–12
Grades: 4–6
Reading Level: 6th grade
Lexile Measure: 810L
Guided Reading Level: T-U
Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA): 40-44

Content Areas: English/language arts, reading, literature, social studies (including history, geography, economics, and civics), visual arts, social justice, and social-emotional learning (SEL).

Synopsis of Book

Bread and Roses, Too by Katherine Paterson is a historical fiction novel set during the 1912 textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Rosa, an Italian-American schoolgirl, fears for her mother and older sister as they join workers demanding better wages and working conditions. When Rosa is sent to stay with a family in Barre, Vermont, until the strike ends, she meets Jake, a boy trying to escape hardship at home, who asks her to pretend he is her brother. Through their experiences, the novel explores how the strike affects children and families, highlighting courage, friendship, solidarity, and the desire for a life with both basic necessities and dignity. Faced with long hours, dangerous conditions, and unfair treatment, Rosa and the other workers joined the historic 1912 Lawrence textile strike. Through Rosa's eyes, readers learn how workers united to demand fair wages and safer conditions, as well as dignity, beauty, and hope, symbolized by the phrase "bread and roses." The story highlights courage, solidarity, and the power of collective action in the fight for justice.

Standards

Common Core State Standards for K–5

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Ideas

Common Core State Standards for 6–12

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Theme 1: CULTURE
- Theme 2: TIME, CONTINUITY, and CHANGE
- Theme 3: PEOPLE, PLACES, and ENVIRONMENTS
- Theme 5: INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, and INSTITUTIONS
- Theme 6: POWER, AUTHORITY, and GOVERNANCE
- Theme 7: PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, and CONSUMPTION
- Theme 10: CIVIC IDEALS and PRACTICES

National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts

- CREATING
- PRESENTING
- RESPONDING
- CONNECTING

National Core Music Standards

- MU: Re7.1.4–6 – Perceive and Analyze Music
- MU: Cn10.0.4–6 – Connecting Music to History, Culture, and Lived Experience

Social Justice Standards

- Identity
- Diversity
- Justice
- Action

Using a TeachersFirst® Reading Trek to Explore This Book

TeachersFirst Reading Treks create a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or text using the My Maps feature of Google Maps. To motivate and enrich student reading, teachers and students can reference this visual collection of web resources and images as they relate to the contents of a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this teacher guide and the accompanying Reading Trek map as you and your students explore this book. And if you feel inspired, you (or your students) can create your own Reading Trek about this or another book!

Using This Reading Trek in Class

Below is a list of ideas for how to use this Reading Trek in your educational setting.

Working with the Map:

1. Introduce the book to the whole class on an interactive whiteboard using the Reading Trek map, highlighting its various layers.
2. Trace the spread of the labor movement beyond Lawrence by creating an infographic with Canva Infographic Maker (TeachersFirst review). Research one mapped location connected to the strike and show what was happening there, who was involved, and why it mattered to Rosa's or Jake's experience.
3. Build a collaborative labor-history vocabulary wall using Stormboard (TeachersFirst review). Add key terms from the novel, link each term to a relevant map location, and include a definition, a text-based example, and an explanation of how the word helps clarify events at that place.
4. Experience the geography of the movement through a Living Map Walk. Rotate through printed map locations placed around the room, read short excerpts at each stop, and write brief reflections explaining how each place affects power, safety, or voice for workers or children.
5. Synthesize learning by creating a cause-and-effect timeline with Padlet's Timeline feature (TeachersFirst review). Include key locations, significant events, and resulting impacts to show how actions in one place led to wider public attention and reform.

Extension Activities:

1. Inspired by the outcomes of the 1912 strike, students can use Book Creator (TeachersFirst review) to write an epilogue titled "After the Strike: What Changed?" Writing from the perspective of Rosa, Jake, or another child, students can describe what life looks like months or years later. They should reference real historical outcomes, such as labor reforms or increased public awareness, and reflect on whether the promise of "bread and roses" was ultimately fulfilled. Pages may include illustrations, captions, or scanned student artwork to enhance meaning.
2. To connect the novel's themes to the present day, students can use Padlet (TeachersFirst review) to respond to the prompt: "Where do we still see people fighting for fairness today?" Have students post examples from current events, school life, or their community and explain how these situations connect to ideas of dignity, safety, voice, or respect from Bread and Roses, Too. Class discussion should focus on the similarities between past and present struggles for justice.
3. Using SlidesGo Infographic Maker (TeachersFirst review), challenge students to compare Bread and Roses, Too, with another historical or modern movement. Infographics include the cause, the people involved, the methods of protest, and the outcomes. Students can highlight how ordinary individuals can create meaningful change, drawing clear parallels between the children and families in the novel and the people involved in the chosen movement.
4. To reflect on the author's message, have students use Google Drawings (TeachersFirst review) to create a symbolic representation of the phrase "Bread and Roses." Students can

visually represent what “bread” and “roses” symbolize in the novel and label each part with textual evidence. Students can write a short reflection explaining how the symbol captures the novel’s central message and why it still matters today.

5. Using Timeline JS (TeachersFirst review), have students create a digital timeline that traces key events from *Bread and Roses, Too,* alongside real historical events from the 1912 Lawrence Textile Strike. Entries may include major plot moments, important strike milestones, and short captions explaining how each event affected children and families. Have students incorporate images, dates, and brief quotations from the novel or historical sources to show how fiction and history intersect. An accompanying reflection paragraph can explain which events drove the most change and why understanding the sequence clarifies the novel’s message about justice and collective action.

Helpful Resources

From TeachersFirst:

- TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps
- TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps
- OK2Ask: Building Background Knowledge with Reading Treks
- OK2Ask: No Passport Required: Cross-Curricular Learning Journeys with Google My Maps

Other Resources:

- Zinn Education Project
- Teaching Books
- Katherine Patterson Website
- Jan. 11, 1912: The Bread and Roses Strike Started