



**Classroom Guide for**  
**HOWARD THURMAN'S GREAT HOPE**  
written by Kai Jackson Issa  
illustrated by Arthur L. Dawson

### Reading Level

\* Reading Level: Grade 3-4  
Interest Level: Grades 1-6  
Guided Reading Level: Q  
Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 5.1/5  
Lexile™ Measure: 840

\*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

### Themes

Education, Segregation/Civil Rights Movement, Overcoming Obstacles/Achieving Goals, United States History, African/African American Interest

### Synopsis

Born in segregated Daytona, Florida, in 1899, Howard Thurman grew up dreaming of a better life—a life where his mother and grandmother would not have to cook and clean for other people; a life where he could become a college man, honoring his late father's wishes and his own dreams.

Through hard work, perseverance, and the support of friends and family, young Howard transcended the limits on Negro education in Daytona and earned a scholarship to an out-of-town high school. His dream did not come easily and was nearly lost, until a kind act by a stranger at a railroad station aided Howard in a time of need.

### Background

Howard Thurman was born in 1899 and grew up in segregated Daytona, Florida. He was the first in his family to attend high school. His father had been an avid reader and instilled this love of knowledge in his son. Thurman was enthralled by education from an early age and worked hard to become a scholar. Along the way, the generosity of neighbors, family friends, a school principal, and a mysterious stranger propelled Thurman forward. In 1923, he graduated as valedictorian of his class from Morehouse College. In 1925, he was ordained as a Baptist minister after completing his studies at the Colgate Rochester Theological Seminary.

Thurman became an influential scholar, preacher, author, and civil rights leader. He mentored Martin Luther King, Jr., who often attended rallies carrying a copy of Thurman's book, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Thurman was also a teacher and adviser to civil rights leaders Marian Wright Edelman, Jesse Jackson, and Vernon Jordan.

Thurman also authored twenty books, founded the first interracial, interfaith church in California, and in 1935 was the first African American to meet with Mahatma Gandhi.

Following the end of the Civil War in 1865, as public school systems were established, African American children were at first excluded. Eventually separate schools were established for black students. Even so, African Americans were regarded by many as second-class citizens, and in addition to being separated from whites in schools, they were separated by law and by private action in transportation, public accommodations, recreational facilities, prisons, and the armed forces in both Northern and Southern states. In 1896, the Supreme Court ruled that separate but equal facilities did not violate the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution. In the early 1900s, Howard Thurman attended one of these segregated schools in Florida. Later, additional court cases and civil rights actions challenged the “separate-but-equal” doctrine. Eventually, with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, this doctrine was reversed, but it took many years for schools around the country to become integrated.

**Teaching Tip**

*Howard Thurman's Great Hope* is an excellent book to feature during your observance of Black History Month in February.

**BEFORE READING****Prereading Focus Questions**

Before introducing the book to students, you may wish to develop background information, tap prior knowledge, and promote anticipation with questions such as the following:

1. What is your favorite book? How many books do you think you have read in the past year? In your life?
2. Have you ever helped a stranger without being asked? Why did you help that person? What did you do?
3. What does it mean to be educated? Why is education important? What are some ways to become educated?
4. Is it easy or hard to get an education in the United States? What about in other countries?
5. What is nonfiction? Have we read any nonfiction stories? How can you tell if a book is nonfiction?

**Exploring the Book**

Display the book and read the title on the front cover. Ask students what they think the title *Howard Thurman's Great Hope* means. Invite students to comment on the illustration and how it might relate to the title.

On the back cover is a quotation from Marian Wright Edelman. Discuss the quotation. Ask students what they think they might learn from Howard Thurman?

Page through the book, noting features such as the title page, endnote, afterword, dedications, acknowledgments, and author's note.

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

Have students read to:

- Find out about Howard Thurman's childhood
- Learn about struggles for African American's during Thurman's life
- Discover the legacy of Howard Thurman

### Vocabulary

Have students discuss the following words in small groups or with partners, asking each other if they have ever heard the word before, what they think it means, and finally looking it up together. Then have each student write his or her own sentence using each word.

comet	glimmer	horizon	breathtaking
lamplight	destiny	butler	never-ending puzzle
magical	dread	disbelief	yard work
dedicated	amazement	composure	brokenhearted
agent	overalls	rawhide	economics

### AFTER READING

#### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop understanding of the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and illustrations in the book to support their responses.

<b>Literal Comprehension</b>
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1. Why was young Howard afraid of the comet?
2. What happened to Howard's father? How did this affect Howard? How did this affect the rest of the family?
3. What was Howard's dream? Who inspired Howard to dream of becoming a college man?
4. What kind of work did Howard's mama and grandma do?
5. What was Howard's first job?
6. Why didn't Howard want Principal R.H. to find him a job after the 7th grade?
7. What jobs did Howard have while he was in eighth grade?
8. What was the problem with Howard's trunk at the train station? How did the stranger help Howard?

9. Where did Howard attend high school and college? What kind of student was he?

<b>Extension/Higher Level Thinking</b>
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1. Which people in Howard's life made it possible for him to go to school? Why did these people help him?
2. Why did Howard do so well in school? What motivated him?
3. What would have happened to Howard if Principal R.H. hadn't taught him the 8th grade lessons? Do you think Howard would have found another way to further his education? What makes you think so? Find passages in the story that helped lead you to your conclusion.
4. How did Howard feel about going to Jacksonville for high school? Why? What gave him the support he needed to take such a big step on his own?
5. Why do you think the stranger helped Howard at the train station? Why did the stranger disappear?
6. What life lessons can readers learn from Howard? What can they learn from other people in the book?
7. What do you think was Howard Thurman's greatest achievement as an adult? Why do you think so?

### Literature Circles

If you use literature circles during reading time, students might find the following suggestions helpful in focusing on the different roles of the group members.

- The **Questioner** might use questions similar to the ones in the Discussion Question section of this guide.
- The **Passage Locator** might look for lines in the story that suggest how each character feels at different times.
- The **Illustrator** might create scenes on a timeline that follow the plot.
- The **Connector** might find information about other African Americans who overcame obstacles to obtaining an education.
- The **Summarizer** might provide a brief summary of the group's reading and discussion points for each meeting.
- The **Investigator** might look for more information about Howard Thurman's adult life and achievements.

\*There are many resource books available with more information about organizing and implementing literature circles. Three such books you may wish to refer to are: *GETTING STARTED WITH LITERATURE CIRCLES* by Katherine L. Schlick Noe and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 1999), *LITERATURE CIRCLES: VOICE AND CHOICE IN BOOK CLUBS AND READING GROUPS* by Harvey Daniels (Stenhouse, 2002), and *LITERATURE CIRCLES*

RESOURCE GUIDE by Bonnie Campbell Hill, Katherine L. Schlick Noe, and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 2000).

### **Reader's Response**

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work, if they wish to.

1. What are three emotions you felt while reading this story? Describe them in writing and tell why you felt this way.
2. What lesson(s) did you learn from Howard's life and work? How might you apply these lessons to your own life?
3. Think about the people in the story who helped Howard learn and advance his education. Are there ways that you help others to learn? What are they?
4. Which person are you most like in this story? How are you alike?
5. Have students research a country in the world where education is not a right. Have students write a letter to the head of education in that country, or a part of the country, explaining why it is important to make education accessible to all children.
6. Have students write a book recommendation for this story explaining why they would or would not recommend this book to other students.

### **ELL Teaching Strategies**

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English language learners.

1. Assign ELL students to read the story aloud with strong English readers/speakers.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
  - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.

4. Have students give a short talk about what they admire about a character or central figure in the story.

### INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas.

#### Social Studies

1. Have students research the Jim Crow laws and the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling by the Supreme Court that declared the laws unconstitutional. Have students write a short report about the history of the laws and ruling. Make sure students examine how “separate but equal” was not a fair system and how it impacted students like Howard. Depending on the ages of students, you may wish to provide smaller, more manageable amounts of information for them to read and write about. For example, for younger students, you might have them write about how “separate but equal” was actually unfair.
2. Have students research African American authors and others who spoke out in favor of peaceful resistance and the rights for African Americans from pre-Civil War times to the present day. Have students create presentations of their findings.

#### Math

1. Howard Thurman had to walk an hour each way to the hotels to deliver and pick up laundry. Provide students with math problems based on Howard’s walking. For example, if Howard walked at a rate of three miles an hour, how many miles did he walk in a week? A month? A year? Or, how many hours did Howard spend walking to and from his deliveries each week? Month? Year? And so on.
2. As the cost of education rises, some students may find themselves in the same situation as Howard Thurman in terms of their families being unable to pay for college. Provide students with statistics on college tuition and have them create graphs to compare the data. Students can create a line graph to demonstrate rising tuition rates across the country or a bar graph to compare different tuitions at colleges and universities in their state.

#### Language Arts

Have students create a scene for a play based on events in the book. Provide students with help, as needed, for the different aspects of play writing, including describing the setting, indicating the movements of characters, and writing dialogue.

#### Art

Give students a list of books or possibly an annotated bibliography of the books Howard Thurman wrote. Discuss the books with students. Then let students who are interested create their own cover illustrations for the books.

#### About the Author

**Kai Jackson Issa** is a freelance writer specializing in communications for individuals, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations. She is also managing editor of The Howard Thurman Papers Project at Morehouse College in Atlanta. Jackson Issa holds a PhD in the Humanities and has worked for years with education and nonprofit

organizations. She lives in Clarkston, Georgia, with her husband and their two children. *Howard Thurman's Great Hope* was her first picture book.

### **About the Illustrator**

**Arthur L. Dawson** is a self-taught artist who grew up in Wakulla County, Florida. With an established career as a fine artist, Dawson also spends time teaching art to young people as part of his two nonprofit endeavors: the Youth Art Program and Younique Art Parables. He lives in Orlando, Florida. *Howard Thurman's Great Hope* was his first picture book.

### **Book Information**

\$8.95 PAPERBACK

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32 pages, 8 3/8 x 10 1/2

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### **RESOURCES ON THE WEB**

Learn more about *Howard Thurman's Great Hope* at:

[http://www.leeandlow.com/books/358/pb/howard\\_thurman\\_s\\_great\\_hope](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/358/pb/howard_thurman_s_great_hope)

### **Order Information**

#### **On the Web:**

<http://www.leeandlow.com/order> (general order information)

#### **By Phone:**

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212-683-1894

#### **By Mail:**

Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, NY NY 10016

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