



Classroom Guide for
***I and I* Bob Marley**
Written by
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Illustrated by
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Reading Level

*Reading Level: Grade 4 and up
Interest Level: Grades 3–8
Guided Reading Level: S
Lexile™ Measure: NP

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Themes

Poetry, Music, Family, Dreams and Aspirations, Overcoming Obstacles, History and Politics, Spirituality, Poverty, Nonfiction/Biography, Biracial Interest, World Cultures

Synopsis

Born in the Jamaican countryside in 1945, Bob Marley seemed special from birth. The curious, intuitive boy had an extraordinary gift for absorbing and interpreting the world around him.

Influenced by his biracial heritage, his island home, and the injustices he observed in everyday life, Bob went on to become a musician and messenger, a poet and prophet of reggae culture. His music echoed from Jamaica all the way across the globe, spreading his heartfelt message of peace, love, and equality to everyone who heard his songs.

Told in a collection of poems reflecting the songs and rhythms of Bob Marley's music, and brimming with imagination and insight, *I and I Bob Marley* is a multifaceted tribute befitting this international musical legend. Soulful, sun-drenched paintings transport readers to Bob Marley's Jamaica, while uniquely perceptive poems bring to life his fascinating journey from boy to icon.

Background

Born on February 6, 1945, Nesta Robert Marley was the son of Captain Norval Sinclair Marley (a white man) and Cedella Malcolm (a black woman). Bob Marley grew up in the village of Nine Miles in the St. Ann parish of Jamaica. Legend has it that three little birds perched on the windowsill and sang to Marley as a baby, which Cedella took as a blessing from God and a sign that Marley was destined for greatness. Not too long after Marley's birth, his father left the family and went to live and work in the Jamaican capital of Kingston. Throughout his life, Marley struggled with his biracial ancestry, both internally and as a result of the prejudice of others.

When Marley was ten years old, his mother remarried and they moved to Trenchtown, a shantytown of Kingston built over a sewage drain. In this neighborhood, Marley

discovered a sense of belonging and his love of music. He was influenced by the local music scene as well as by American R&B broadcasts he heard on the radio. At the age of fourteen, Marley dropped out of school to pursue music full-time and formed a band, the Wailing Wailers. He later met and married his wife, Rita Anderson, and over the course of his life became a legendary musician and an ambassador for the Rastafarian movement, Jamaica, and reggae music to the rest of the world.

(For additional detailed information about Bob Marley's life, please refer to "Notes for I and I Bob Marley" at the end of the book.)

Jamaica is an island country located in the Caribbean Sea and part of a group of islands called the Greater Antilles. Christopher Columbus claimed Jamaica for Spain after he landed there in 1494. In 1655 the British took full control of the country. By the late 1700s, Jamaica had become one of the largest African slave markets for the Western Hemisphere. After many slave uprisings, slavery was abolished in 1838. Starting in the mid-1900s, Jamaica slowly gained independence from the United Kingdom, and in 1962, it attained full independence. Students can find more information about Jamaica's history, geography, and wildlife online at [National Geographic Kids](#) and other sites.

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Informational Text, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 & Reading Standards, Literature, Craft & Structure, 5)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. What kinds of music do you like? Why do you like them? Tell us what you know about the origins of your favorite kind of music.
2. Have you ever heard of the musician Bob Marley? What do you already know about him? About his music?
3. What do you know about the island country of Jamaica? What do you think it would be like to live there?
4. What are some of your goals? What have you done to try and achieve them? How do you deal with obstacles?
5. What is a biography? Why are biographies of interest to readers? What biographies have you read?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Informational Text, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 & Reading Standards, Literature, Craft & Structure, 5)

Open the book so students can see the front and back covers simultaneously, and read the title aloud as: *I and I Bob Marley*. Ask students what they think "I and I" means. You may wish to read students the "About the Title" note on the copyright page to help encourage discussion.

Ask students who they think the person on the front cover is. Invite them to comment on the illustration and how it might relate to the title of the book.

Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: title page, dedications, acknowledgment, author's sources, introduction, poems and illustrations, and extensive "Notes for *I and I Bob Marley*" at the end of the book.

Ask students to predict what the book is going to be about. Which parts of the book did they use as clues to making their predictions?

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3 & Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- who Bob Marley was and why he is an important historical figure
- how Bob Marley contributed to music
- how Bob Marley contributed to his community and the world

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Informational Text, Craft and Structure, 4 & Reading Standards, Literature, Craft and Structure, 4)

The book contains several words and terms that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below. Then ask students to write their own meanings and sentences for each word and term. If students also know synonyms for any of the vocabulary, have them list the synonyms as well.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

chile	Africa	Europe	swirl	scrape and fuss
roam	lifelines	duppy	read palms	conqueror
bamboo	thickets	prophet	hurricane	tuff gong seer
grimy	rickety	cranky	potbelly	monsoon wind
rude boys	haggard	beanie man	dominoes	Marcus Garvey
hook up	mentors	makeshift	ghetto life	running the streets
blaring	hypnotizing	sassy	hardship	police baton
expanse	redemption	Jah	down-pressed	consciousness
tornado	unleashed	musty	Rasta Man	Emperor Haile Selassie
atwirl	Ethiopia	rubble	Zion	Christopher Columbus
natty dread	parish	port-of-call	Maroons	King's English
shantytown	dance hall	raggedy	sufferers	Zimbabwe
hurled	hailed	dreads	fate	windswept
sardine	guava	blessed		

MUSIC-RELATED VOCABULARY

roots	rock	reggae	ska	harmony
wail	blues	jazz	R&B	doo-wop ditties
guitar riffs	brassy	skank dance	blues man	lyrics
troubadour	rock steady	rhythm		

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. **Encourage students** to refer to passages and photographs in the book and **to cite evidence from the text to support their responses**.

Literal Comprehension

1. Refer to the first poem, "I Am the Boy from Nine Miles." Who is the narrator of the poem? How do you know? (Reading Standards, Literature, Craft and Structure, 6)
2. Look back at the poem "My Heart the Island." What event in Bob Marley's life is this poem about? How does he feel about his mother? About his father? What did you learn about his parents? How is this information important to understanding Bob Marley? (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 5–6)

3. In the poem “Palm Reader,” what does Bob Marley do? How does he feel about his talent? How do you know? Cite evidence from the poem to support your answer. (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 5–6)
4. Refer to the poem “When My Papa Sends for Me.” How does the narrator feel about what is happening? Describe his journey from Nine Miles to Kingston. (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 5–6)
5. What happens to Bob Marley when he gets to Kingston? How does he feel about his father? Who takes care of him? What does he do all day? What does he learn from the beanie man? (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 5–6)
6. Where does Trenchtown get its name? What kind of place is it? How would you describe it? What clues did you find in the poem “Trenchtown”? What is a rude boy? How do you know? (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 4)
7. Where does Bob Marley learn about music? How old is he when he joins his first band? How does his mother feel about it? (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 5–6)
8. Look at the poem “Wailing Wailers.” Why does Bob Marley sing? What is he hoping to do with his music? Cite evidence from the poem to support your answer. (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 5–6)
9. In the poem “Underneath a Plum Tree,” what happens to Bob Marley? Who does he meet? How does he feel about her? How do you know? (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 5–6)
10. What is the poem “Island Song” about? Who does Bob Marley want to take his island back from? What does Christopher Columbus have to do with it? Cite evidence from the poem to support your answer. (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 6)
11. In the poem “Music Takes Me,” what has happened to Bob Marley? What is his message? How do you know? (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 5–6)
12. What important event is described in the poem “Fate Opens Up Its Hand”? How does this event change Bob Marley’s life? Cite evidence from the poem to support your answer. (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 5–6)

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

1. Refer to the poem “I Am the Boy from Nine Miles.” What is Nine Miles? How do you know? What clues does the author give you? (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 4)
2. Look at the poem “My Heart the Island.” What do you think the poem’s title means? How can a heart be an island? (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 4–6)
3. In the poem “Palm Reader,” the author uses a lot of comparative language. To what does he compare lifelines? What does the narrator see buzzing like a beehive and hear humming like music? How do you know? (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 4–6)
4. In the poem “When My Papa Sends for Me,” to what does the narrator compare his sadness? What two weather images are used? Cite evidence from the poem to support your answer. (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 4–6)
5. In the poem “In Kingston,” what is a beanie man? What does he do? How do you know? (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 4–6)
6. What mood is conveyed in the poem “Trenchtown”? What images is the narrator hoping to give the reader? How does the illustrator help create this mood? Cite

evidence from the poem to support your answer. (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 4–6)

7. In the poem “At Fourteen,” what does the word “wail” mean? What does “running the streets” mean? How do you know? (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 4–6)
8. Besides music, what is important to Bob Marley? What parts of his personal history and his country’s history impacted him? How do you know? (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 5–6)
9. In the poem “Underneath a Plum Tree,” how does the narrator use weather imagery to describe Rita? Cite evidence from the poem to support your answer. (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 4–6)
10. What is a Rasta man? Who are some people who influenced Bob Marley? What does he have in common with them? Cite evidence from the poems to support your answer. (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 4–6)
11. What tone is conveyed in the poem “Island Song”? What is the tone of the poem “Reggae”? What clues do the author and illustrator give you? Cite evidence from the poems to support your answer. (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 4–6 & Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, 7 and 9)
12. Look at the poem “Hope Road.” How does Bob Marley feel about making music? What images are used to describe this feeling? (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 4–6 & Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, 7 and 9)
13. Look again at the first poem, “I Am the Boy from Nine Miles,” and at the final poem, “Song in My Heart.” What do you notice about the two poems? Why do you think the author repeats so many lines and ideas from the first poem in the final poem? (Reading Standards, Literature, Key Ideas and Details, 1–3 & Craft and Structure, 4–6)

Literature Circles

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3 & Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

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 each poem that tell what part of Bob Marley’s life the poem is about.
- The **Illustrator** might create scenes on a timeline that follow the events in the text.
- The **Connector** might find other books about Bob Marley and his music or stories that are based on Marley’s songs.
- The **Summarizer** might provide a brief summary of the group’s reading and discussion points for each meeting.
- The **Investigator** might look for information about other influential reggae musicians.

*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

(Reading Standards, Literature & Informational Text, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, & Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7–9)

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 kind of person was Bob Marley? How would you describe him? What did he value? How did he act in the face of adversity? Of accomplishment? Write a short paragraph that answers these questions about Marley. Cite parts of the poems to support your ideas.
2. Which parts of Bob Marley's life story did you connect with the most? Why? Which parts of the text did you have a hard time connecting with? Why?
3. How do you think Bob Marley wanted his music to make people feel? Why do you think he wanted people to feel that way? Use information from the poems to support your answer.
4. How does this book affect your thinking about prejudice and the ways people are sometimes treated by others?
5. Have students write a book recommendation explaining why they would or would not recommend this book to other students.

ELL Teaching Activities

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

1. Assign ELL students to read the book 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

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7, "Students establish a base of knowledge across a wide range of subject matter by engaging with works of quality and substance. They become proficient in new areas through research and study. They read purposefully and listen attentively to gain both general knowledge and discipline-specific expertise. They refine and share their knowledge through writing and speaking.")

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

Social Studies

Ask students to research Jamaica, its history, and its culture. Students may particularly want to learn about some of the places referred to in the poems such as Kingston, Trenchtown, and Nine Miles.

Social Studies/Music

Interested students may wish to learn more about some of the different kinds of music mentioned in the book or some of the musicians who are referred to, such as James Brown, Nat King Cole, Fats Domino, Little Richard, Sam Cooke, The Drifters, and so on.

Science

1. Ask students to research the weather in Jamaica. How is it similar to and how is it different from the weather where you live? How does the weather in Jamaica and the

weather where you live affect the foods people grow and eat, how people dress, the games people play, and so on?

2. The author uses several weather terms in his poems (monsoons, hurricanes, tornadoes, etc.). Have students look through the poems and make a list of the weather terms used. Then let each student choose one term and research the characteristics that are unique to that kind of weather event. Students may then compare and contrast their information.

Math

In the poem “In Kingston,” the author describes young Bob Marley visiting a vegetable stand at the town market. If necessary for younger students, review how to measure weight in pounds and ounces on a scale. Then bring in various fruits and vegetables for students to weigh and record their results on a chart or graph. For older students, assign a price per ounce or a price per pound for each food and ask students to figure out how much various amounts of each fruit or vegetable would cost. For example: How much would 11 ounces of tomatoes cost at 50¢ per pound? How much would 32 ounces of potatoes cost at \$1.08 per pound?

Writing/Art

1. Listen to Bob Marley’s song “Three Little Birds” or read the lyrics (the lyrics can be found online [here](#)). What is the song’s message? How does the song make you feel? Try writing a free verse poem about how the song affects you.
2. Imagine that the poem you wrote, or the lyrics for “Three Little Birds” as Bob Marley wrote them, were to be included in the book *I and I*. Create an illustration for the poem or lyrics. Try to use color to evoke the setting and feelings, as the illustrator did in *I and I*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tony Medina is the author of *Love to Langston*; *Christmas Makes Me Think*; *DeShawn Days*; and *I and I Bob Marley*; all published by Lee & Low Books. In addition, he has written a book for young adults, *FYI: Follow-up Letters to Santa from Kids who Never Got a Response*, and five volumes of poetry for adults, been included in more than eighty publications, and edited several anthologies featuring the work of emerging poets. An associate professor of Creative Writing at Howard University, Medina lives in the Washington, DC, area.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Jesse Joshua Watson is a fine artist and an illustrator whose work has appeared in galleries, on CD covers, and more recently in several children's books, including Lee & Low’s *Chess Rumble* and *I and I Bob Marley*. An avid traveler, Watson's artwork reflects the cultures and people he connects with along the way. Watson lives with his wife and their sons in Port Townsend, Washington. His website is jessewatson.com

Book Information

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RESOURCES ON THE WEB

Learn more about *I and I Bob Marley* at:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/364/hc/i_and_i_bob_marley

Order Information

On the Web:

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

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212-779-4400 ext. 25

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