

Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key

written by Tracy Oocomy Crowder

About the Book

Genre: Middle Grade Fiction/Mystery

Format: Hardcover
304 pages, 5 x 7-1/2

ISBN: 9781643795171

Reading Level: Grade 5

Interest Level: Grades 4–8

Guided Reading Level: W

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Childhood Experiences and Memories, Diversity, Families, Fiction, Friendship, Middle Grade, Mystery, Overcoming Obstacles, Paranormal, United States History

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/montgomery-and-the-case-of-the-golden-key

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

SYNOPSIS

In 2008 Chicago, in the Southside community of Washington Park, Montgomery “Monty” Carver had hoped for the best summer ever! Unfortunately, things aren’t going as planned. Monty is struggling to prove to his parents that he’s old enough to be without adult supervision—especially after a very embarrassing incident with a metal detector. *Man!*

So when Monty finds a golden key in Old Lady Jenkins’s sunflowers, he decides he’s going to unravel the key’s mystery all by himself, thank you very much. No parents allowed. Besides, he’s ten years old now, and he’s mastered the perfectly round ‘fro! (It takes a protractor, you see.)

Soon Monty’s hunt to determine the origin of the key leads him to discover the rich history—like famous Black jockeys!—of his Chicago community, which has been speculating its future since one of their residents, Barack Obama, is running for president and the Olympics might come to town in 2016.

On top of all that speculating, there are rumors going around that a ghost is hanging out behind their apartment building, and that Monty’s elementary school may have to close.

So much to solve! Should the Olympics come to Washington Park? What happens if his school closes? Is there really a ghost? And where, oh where, did the key come from anyway? Monty is determined to find out.

BACKGROUND

Author's Note from Tracy Ocomy Crowder

"While *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key* is a work of fiction, the background and setting are based loosely on real events, places, and people. In 2008, Chicago was one of four finalists for the 2016 Olympics, with Washington Park proposed as the site of the main stadium and swimming venue. While it was beaten out by Brazil in 2009, community groups were able to establish a Community Benefits Agreement (a "deal") guaranteeing jobs to area residents for the Olympic Village, contracts for Black- and women-owned construction companies, and adequate compensation for displacement in the event that the Olympics took place in Washington Park.

Isaac Burns Murphy (1861–1896) was a Black man who is considered the best jockey in American history, and he did win the first American Derby at the Washington Park Race Track in 1884, as well as three Kentucky Derbies. The Broken Arrow Riding Club holds an annual High Noon Ride on the last Saturday of July in Washington Park.

The following are real places in the community and park of Washington Park: FX Tennis is based on the real XS Tennis, which is a world class tennis facility; KLEO Center is a community center on Garfield Boulevard; the Exchange Café—although it didn't exist in 2008 when *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key* takes place—opened in 2014 on Garfield Boulevard; the Jean-Baptiste Pointe DuSable Museum is the oldest Black history museum in the country; and the Roundhouse, designed by architect Daniel Burnham in 1880–1881 and later renovated, serves as an event venue in conjunction with the DuSable Museum. And, while Park Elementary is a fictitious school in Washington Park, many schools on the Southside have closed due to underutilization. In Washington Park, students, parents, teachers, and community groups, like the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization, fight to keep them open..."

History of the South Side of Chicago

The Chicago History Museum's "South Side of Chicago" has additional information, primary sources, and historical facts about the rich culture, diversity, and identity of the South Side (<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1177.html#:~:text=Neighborhoods%20developed%20south%20of%20the,industry%20away%20from%20the%20Loop.>).

WTTW's "Chicago's South Side" is an interactive map detailing different areas of the South Side and the kinds of landmarks and neighborhoods you can see today (<https://interactive.wttw.com/southside>).

Additional Information about Isaac Burns Murphy

The Kentucky Horse Park has additional information about Isaac Murphy, whom many consider the greatest American jockey of all time (<https://kyhorsepark.com/equine-theme-park/park-memorials-statues/isaac-burns-murphy/>). He was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1955, was the first jockey to win three Kentucky Derbies, and was the first jockey elected into the Hall of Fame. The National

Museum of Horse Racing Hall of Fame also has a video about Isaac Burns Murphy for more about Murphy's life and impact (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYZAGkH4F14>).

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

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

- Have you ever tried to solve a mystery? What skills do you need to solve mysteries?
- Why is Barack Obama an important figure? What do you know about Obama's life?
- Do you believe in ghosts? Why or why not?
- Think about the people you live with and those who take care of you. How is each person important to you?
- What is something positive about your neighborhood? Who are the people in your neighborhood and what do you know about them?
- What does community mean to you?
- As a hook for readers, consider showing students a trailer for *Antiques Roadshow*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GL1ALnJcB8>

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- Talk about the title of the book. Ask students what they think this book will most likely be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
- Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, author's note, etc.
- Point out the epigraphs throughout the story. Ask students why the book might be use these quotes. How does it enhance the story?

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- what problems the main character, Montgomery, encounters
- why community is important

- what you can learn from elders
- how Montgomery solves his mystery and what he discovers
- how Montgomery changes from the beginning of the book to the end

Encourage students to consider why the author, Tracy Oocomy Crowder, would want to share this story with young people.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word. (Many of the Spanish words can be found in the book glossary, but there are also some that are not included. Students could be encouraged to create a log of these words—they will not be listed here.)

Content Specific

supersonic, ambrosia, solstice, petunia, marigolds, impatiens, hex, shadowboxing, archenemy, beret, bridle, begonias, delphiniums, banisters, curlicues, papier-mâché, limestone, porter, mulling, sheepish, tarp, spokes, satchel, loot, cicadas, stirrups, heirloom, cataracts, mulch, stirrup, imitating, underutilized, archenemy, elders, murmur, intercom, microfiche, hypothesis

Academic

lagoon, concoction, devise, nonexistent, precinct, compost, nemesis, imitating, antique, keepsake, specimen, modesty, contraption, compensate, reassurance, ignition, hoarder, protractor, manure, conspiring, mingle, aquatic, swarm, demolition, subdivision, goatee, archivist, rowboat, tilling, detour, agriculture, tripod, trek, jockey, gibberish, appraised

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/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

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

Part 1

1. What is “the Roar” and what causes it?
2. What is Montgomery’s nickname?
3. Who does Monty resemble?
4. Why is Washington Park the center of the universe at the beginning of the story?
5. Why is Monty excited for the first day of summer?
6. What sport does Monty play?
7. What does Monty enjoy about his afro?
8. Why is Monty terrified of Old Lady Jenkins?
9. What are the rumors about a ghost haunting Monty’s yard? How does it impact Monty?
10. What is a silver lining?
11. Who is Monty’s best friend?
12. What did Monty get for his birthday? How did Monty get access to his birthday present early?
13. What does Jaron find in Old Lady Jenkins’ sunflowers?
14. What bet does Monty make with Jaron?
15. How do Monty’s parents react to him using his birthday present before his birthday?
16. What happens to Monty’s metal detector? How does he feel?
17. What consequences does Monty face after he’s caught with his early birthday gift?
18. Who is Monty’s first customer? What is her name? How does Monty feel about her?
19. What instrument does Monty play in the jazz band?
20. What does Monty learn about Black cowboys while at camp?
21. Describe Monty’s relationship to his grandfather.
22. Why does Monty re-spark his interest in the key he found?

Part 2

23. What is written on the golden key?
24. How does Monty find out the key is made of real gold?
25. Why does Monty need to start communicating with the elders in his community?
26. How does Monty feel about his peers leaving Park Elementary, the school he attends?
27. What is a skeleton key?

28. What is Monty's father's job?
29. What does Monty see the first night he records the yard at night?
30. What does Monty learn about how an Olympic stadium in Chicago would impact his community through his interviews?
31. What is a Pullman Porter?
32. Why is Alex going to New Orleans?
33. What causes Monty's afro to lose its perfect spherical shape?
34. What is thermal imaging?
35. What does Monty learn about ghost dust while in the library?
36. Why does Monty want to see the Roundhouse in person? Who goes with him?
37. What clue does Monty find by talking with Ms. Williams's son?
38. How does Monty feel about the summer tennis tournament?
39. Who are Monty's cousins?
40. What do Monty and Billy find in the sunflower garden?
41. Who is J and why does Monty sneak out to meet him?
42. What does Monty learn from J about the key?
43. Who is Isasc Burns Murphy? What is his significance?
44. What is the American Derby? What is its significance?
45. What happens when Ms. Jenkins finds Monty out by himself?
46. What is the high noon ride?
47. What is Ms. Jenkins relationship to horses?
48. Who does the golden key belong to?
49. What does Ms. Jenkins reveal about the ghost in the backyard?
50. How did Ms. Jenkins grandfather make the best mulch?
51. What is a deadhead knife?
52. When Monty finally solves the mystery of the golden key, what does he discover?
53. How does Monty feel the first time he rides a horse?

Part 3

54. How does the potential of Park Elementary closing impact Monty and his family?
55. What skills does Monty use when campaigning for Obama?
56. Why does J ask Monty to be a research assistant? What are Monty's responsibilities in this

role?

57. Describe J and Monty's proposal for Park Elementary. How do people in the community react to their proposal?
58. Why does Mrs. Williams call *Antiques Roadshow*?
59. How much money is the golden key worth?
60. What is the value of the golden key, beyond money?
61. What does the school district decide to do with Park Elementary?
62. What does Monty learn from his summer?
63. What deal does Monty strike with LaTasha and why?
64. What is the relationship between Ms. Jenkins and Ms. Williams?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

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

1. Describe Monty's relationship to his apartment building's yard. What is your favorite part of where you live and why?
2. How does Monty's perception of Ms. Jenkins change over the course of the story?
3. Throughout the story, Monty learns a lot from the elders in his community. Why are elders so important?
4. What is the main problem in the story? Is there more than one? Does the problem get resolved by the end of the story? How do you feel about the way the story ends? Why?
5. Describe how Monty's relationship with Jaron changes during the book. How is their relationship at the end of the story?
6. The scientific method is the process of observing, asking questions, and seeking answers through tests and experiments. How does Monty use the scientific method throughout the story? What does the scientific method teach Monty? What does the scientific method teach about research and asking questions?
7. Why do you think the author Tracy Ocomy Crowder, chose to use scientific method in the story? How does the skills used in the scientific method apply to the obstacles in Monty's life?
8. What character traits would you use to describe Monty? Why?
9. What role does history play in the story? How does the history that Monty learns about throughout the summer shape how Monty feels about his community?
10. Why is it significant that Ms. Jenkins is an activist? Why is activism important? What other Black activists do you know?
11. Why is Obama important to the story? What does he represent for Monty?
12. *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key* emphasizes Chicago's rich history. What did you

learn about Chicago from reading?

13. What evidence in the book demonstrates Monty's persistence and passion?
14. What is the role of community, family, and friendship in helping Monty become who he is?
15. Do you think there could be a sequel to *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key*? Would you want to read a sequel? If so, what do you hope would happen in it?
16. Name three to five themes you found in the book and cite specific scenes from the text where you see those themes emerge.

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

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 response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. What do you think Tracy Ocomy Crowder message to the reader is? Read the Author's Note and think about possible motivations behind Crowder's intentions to write this book. What do you think she wanted to tell readers?
2. Have students make a text-to-self connection. Describe Monty. What are his defining characteristics? Do you find any similarities between you and Monty? Other characters throughout the book?
3. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books or movies while you read *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key*? Why did you make those connections?
4. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world or on the news? Why did *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key* make you think of that?
5. How has reading *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key* impacted your understanding of activism? What are some other ways to think about activism? How would you define activism?
6. What ways can you be active in your own community? How do you engage with your own community? How is your community important to you? What's your place in your community, and how are you meaningful in your community?

Multilingual Learner Teaching Activities

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

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are Multilingual Learners.

1. Assign ML students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.

2. Have each student write three questions about each part as they read the book. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose Multilingual Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.
4. Have students give a short talk about why Monty is a hero.
5. Have students create a chart of the different characters in *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key* and discuss their characteristics.
6. Consider consulting <https://www.multilinguallearningtoolkit.org/> for more ideas on how to support Multilingual Learners.

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

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

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, hope, perseverance and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key*.
2. Monty is saddened when he thinks his school is closing. How does Monty channel his frustrations into something productive? What are ways to deal with difficult emotions when you feel disappointed or upset?
3. Which chapter/scene in *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key* best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it is. How does it portray that emotion?
4. How do the people in Monty's life support him when he needed help? What did you learn about community from Monty's experience?
5. Consequences are the result or outcome of an action or decision. Why can it be difficult to face the consequences of your actions? Why is it important to face consequences?

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

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

- **Would you describe Monty as an activist by the end of the book?** How do you define activism? Why is Monty an activist, or why is he not an activist? Support your reasons in a persuasive essay.
- **Interview an elder in your community.** Develop a list of five interview questions you want to ask. What do they want to learn about their life? In writing, reflect on your interview and what you learned from the conversation. For more information and tips on how to help students with interviews, consult Edutopia's "How to Help Students Develop Interviewing Skills" for more information (<https://www.edutopia.org/service-learning-center-urban-pedagogy-interviewing>).
- **Have students come up with a list of questions to ask author Tracy Ocomy Crowder.** What do students want to know about the process behind writing a book? How did the author come up with the idea to write *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key*? How did she conduct her research on the Southside history, the Olympics, Isaac Burns Murphy, and more? How did her work as a community organizer in Chicago influence the development of the story? Consider contacting Tracy Ocomy Crowder and inviting her to your school, library, or other relevant setting for an author visit.
- **In an essay, describe the pros and cons of the Olympics going to Chicago.** Have students consult different articles, including NPR's "Why Chicago failed to Win the Olympics" (<https://www.npr.org/2009/10/03/113468287/why-chicago-failed-to-win-the-olympics>) and *The Chicago Tribune's* "Chicago's bid for 2016 Olympics leaves pricey legacy" (<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-olympics-chicago-2016-met-20160715-story.html>). How would the city and the residents be impacted? What would they gain and what would they lose? Reflect on whether you would want the Olympics to be hosted in your city.
- **An epigraph is a short quotation at the beginning of a book or chapter that is connected to the story being told.** MasterClass's "What is an Epigraph? Examples of Epigraphs from Literature" (<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-an-epigraph>) provides a definition and example of an epigraph. Choose an epigraph from part 1, 2, or 3. Write what the quote means to you and how that quote is connected to *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key*.

- **Encourage students to read reviews for *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key* and write their own review of the novel.** What are some important details that they want to include? How do they feel about the book, and what would they want to tell others about it? For ideas, check out this Book Review Template (<https://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/what-think-writing-review>) by ReadWriteThink.org.
- **The rich, varied, and legal language used by Tracy Ocoomy Crowder provides an opportunity for students to develop their vocabulary skills.** Challenge students to learn and practice using the academic and content-specific words listed in this teacher's guide:

 - Before reading: Provide students with a list of the vocabulary words to sort into categories (e.g. very familiar, somewhat familiar, unfamiliar).
 - During reading: Have students make note of the vocabulary words as they encounter them in *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key*. They can underline, highlight, or keep a log. Have students predict what the words mean based on context clues.
 - After reading: Have students work in pairs to look up the definitions of the "unfamiliar" words on their combined lists. Were their predictions correct? Post the new vocabulary words on your word wall.
- **Select a scene in which you disagreed how a character handled a situation, person, or event.** In the voice of that character, rewrite the scene as you think it should have happened. Afterwards, have students reflect on that experience and why they selected their particular scene.
- **Consider using *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key* as an anchor text to teach students about mystery writing.** Read Write Think has tips and step-by-step instructions on how to help students with mystery writing and the different techniques and strategies that are used to make engaging and catchy stories (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/what-mystery-exploring-identifying-865.html>). What kinds of information do students need to research? How do students make readers keep guessing? How should they present the information in the book?
- **Have students examine Monty's character in terms of helpful and harmful traits.** According to *The Reading Strategies Book* (<http://www.heinemann.com/products/e07433.aspx>), students can think about Monty in terms of traits that are helpful, or traits that are problematic. Consider providing students with a sentence starter to get them thinking about his character, "Often my character seems to _____, but sometimes _____." How do these character traits influence the story? How do Monty's harmful traits and helpful traits contribute to his character development and growth in *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key*?
- **Assign students different characters from *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key* and have them brainstorm about a guiding question: what and how can this character teach us?** Students can think about different characters to examine as a whole class and then break into smaller, specific character groups. Encourage students to think about how characters have made mistakes and have done good things in the book, and ultimately

what they learned from that character. Have students share out their findings: How is this character important to the book, and what lessons did they teach us over the course of the story? How did their actions develop the narrative, and why are they crucial to understanding the meaning of the book?

- **Go on a scavenger hunt throughout *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key* to track all of the different clues that Monty finds throughout the story to solve the mystery.** In a graphic organizer with two columns, label one column for the clue and one column for how it helped Monty solve the mystery. Use evidence from the text to justify how this clue helped him to resolve the problem(s) and the mystery of the Golden Key.
- **Imagine *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key* is the first in a mysteries series featuring Monty as the main character.** Students can create a title and summary and pitch the second novel in the mystery series. What mystery would Monty solve? What adventure do they think Monty will go on next? Students can accompany their summary and title with an illustration of the cover.

Social Studies & Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3; Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9; and Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3; Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9; and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

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

- **Have students create a map of Chicago and mark Monty's neighborhood.** Consider Chicago's geography and discuss redlining and segregation within the city. How did neighborhood division disproportionately affect Black people and people of color? *The Atlantic's* "Chicago's Awful Divide" provides more historical context and information about neighborhood and geographic division within Chicago (<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2018/03/chicago-segregation-poverty/556649/>). Additionally, students can research other neighborhoods in Chicago to discuss the demographics (race, class, etc). Have students refer to the History of Southside in the Background section of this guide for more information. For all research projects in this guide, work with school librarians and public librarians to gather additional texts and resources to guide students' thinking and inquiry process.
- **Design a lesson or unit on horse racing in the Chicago.** Use the resources at the end of this guide to help your planning. Learning goals should highlight key aspects of the industry such as the origins, organizers, core beliefs, profits, critiques, race, gender, and class demographics, media coverage, opposition, or challenges, as well as connections to other sports industries. The Chicago History Museum's "Horse Racing" provides more photographs, primary sources, and information about the history of horse racing in Chicago for additional research (<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/601.html>).
- **Considering the importance of the elementary school setting, students can create a timeline of Chicago Public Schools, including the challenges and successes.** Refer to *The Chicago Reporter's* "History of Chicago Public Schools" (<https://www.chicagoreporter.com>).

[com/cps-history](https://www.cps-history.com/cps-history)) and the Chicago History Museum's "Schools and Education" (<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1124.html>) for more information and for inspiration to get students started on their research projects. Create a visual presentation or other media detailing this history and legacy. Include a timeline if necessary. Account for unions, charter schools, the board of education, etc.

- **In pairs or groups, have students research school closings in the United States, focusing on Chicago.** What is the history of school closures in Chicago? WBEZ Chicago's piece, "A Generation of School Closings" provides more historical context about the crisis in Chicago (<https://interactive.wbez.org/generation-school-closings>). Why are schools being shut down? Who are the most impacted by school closings? Which cities and demographics throughout the United States experience school closings the most? Students should present their findings to the class.
- **Conduct a research study on Black women's activism in Chicago.** Ms. Jenkins is a Black woman and activist who has spent decades standing up for what she believes in. Ask students to conduct research about activism from the perspective of Black women and/or Black people with marginalized genders. Have students consult Chicago Public Library's "Chicago Black Women's Activism: Celebrating the Legacy" (<https://www.chipublib.org/blogs/post/chicago-womens-activism-in-the-vivian-g-harsh-research-collection/>). *The New York Times*' "Black Women in Chicago, Getting Things Done" (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/18/opinion/sunday/black-women-chicago.html>) is another critical article for students to refer to. Students should create a report to share with the class.
- **Have students conduct a research study on community organizing.** Ask students to answer the following questions as they conduct their research: What is community organizing? What role does community organizing play in Chicago? Who are prominent figures in the history of community organizing? Students can begin their research with the following resources: The Solutions Project: A Guide to Community Organizing (<https://thesolutionsproject.org/info/community-organizing/>), Bowie State University, Community Organizing: Scholar's Studio (<https://bowiestate.libguides.com/communityorganizing>). Students can present their findings in an informational poster.
- **Isaac Burns Murphy was an African American jockey and the first person to be inducted to the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame.** Ask students to write a research paper about Isaac Burns Murphy and his life achievements. Do you think Isaac Burns Murphy is someone Monty would respect or see as a role model or mentor? Why or why not? Have students refer to the resources about Isaac Burns Murphy in the Background section of this guide for more information.
- **Conduct a research study on President Obama, and his impact on Chicago.** What role does President Obama play in the story? How did President Obama impact Chicago and the South Side of Chicago overall? Students can create informational posters detailing their findings. Additional resources include The Obama Foundation's "Chicago: Where It Began" (<https://www.obama.org/presidential-center/administration/chicago-where-it-began/>).

- **Have students research the impact of Black people on the history of Chicago.** Students can begin with the following resources: the National Park Service's "Chicago's Black Metropolis: Understanding History Through a Historic Place" (<https://www.nps.gov/articles/chicago-s-black-metropolis-understanding-history-through-a-historic-place-teaching-with-historic-places.htm>), WTTW's "DuSable to Obama: Chicago's Black Metropolis" (<https://interactive.wttw.com/dusable-to-obama>), and Chicago History Museum's "African Americans" (<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/27.html>). Students can present their findings in an informational poster with the following guiding questions: how were Black people critical to the development of the city of Chicago? What racism and discrimination did Black people face, and continue to face, in the city?

Science/STEM

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9) (Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–2 and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9) (Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3)

- **Outline the steps of the scientific method.** Have students cite examples of when Monty uses the Scientific Method. Have students reflect on how they can also use the Scientific Method in their day to day lives. Students can create visual presentations to outline the scientific method and provide their examples. If time allows, conduct a gallery walk with student presentations. Consider consulting these resources for more on the Scientific Method and how to conduct a gallery walk (<https://www.sciencebuddies.org/science-fair-projects/science-fair/steps-of-the-scientific-method>) and (<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/gallery-walk-0>)
- **Conduct a research study on how to take care of flowers.** Have students use the following questions to guide their research: What is the process of watering flowers? Why is it important to be mindful of how much water flowers receive? What other factors do you have to consider when caring for flowers? What about plant food, soil and mulch? Have students record their findings and if possible, create a student friendly guide explaining the process of taking care of flowers. Consider consulting the following resources for additional information (<https://extension.wvu.edu/lawn-gardening-pests/news/2021/03/01/how-plants-use-water>) and (https://www.chicagobotanic.org/plantinfo/smart_gardener/how_water_wisely_summer).
- **Using inspiration from the experiments Monty conducts in the story, have students create and conduct their own experiment.** Have students outline the steps involved in an experiment. Then, have students design, conduct and discuss their own experiments. Students can present their experiments in a visual format. As an additional teaching resource, PBS Learning Media has a lesson plan available on experiments, "Experimenting with Experiments" (<https://gpb.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/hs11.global.ancient.earl.lpexperwith/experimenting-with-experiments/>). If time allows, consider conducting some fun experiments with students. The National Teachers Association has ready to go resources available (<https://www.generationgenius.com/>).
- **As a follow up to the previous activity, have students conduct an experiment proving that something is gold such as Monty does in the book.** Considering consulting

the following resources for more information on how to conduct this experiment (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=L4y2j9Cqaac>) and (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1caLu7PKuo>)

Art/Media

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3; Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9; and Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3; Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9; and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

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

- **Record a podcast like how Monty's dad does his radio show.** Students can select a topic that's relevant to their schools or community that they're passionate about. Why did they select that topic? What do they want to discuss and let people know? Maybe discuss a topic relevant to their schools. *The New York Times* has additional resources on teaching students to produce their own podcasts (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/19/learning/lesson-plans/project-audio-teaching-students-how-to-produce-their-own-podcasts.html>). NPR's "Teaching Podcasting: A Curriculum Guide for Educators" (<https://www.npr.org/2018/11/15/662116901/teaching-podcasting-a-curriculum-guide-for-educators>) also has more ideas and guidance on how students can record podcasts in their relevant settings.
- **Mr. Finch creates elaborate papier-mâché art.** Have students create their own art from papier-mâché. As a resource see, <https://teachingideas.ca/2020/03/24/paper-mache/>
- **Using the graphic organizer from the clue activity in the English Language Arts section of this guide, create a physical map of where Monty finds the clues to solve the mystery of the Golden Key.** How can students visually represent the different areas where Monty finds the clues? Along with the map, students can draw the actual clues that Monty finds. Students can think about the most important aspects to show on the map and how it tracks the clues that Monty finds.
- **Have students write, recite, and film a live news segment that is reporting on Monty, the golden key, high noon ride, and Black jockeys in Chicago.** They should discuss all the context for the event. Be sure to include key details leading up to Monty solving the mystery and connecting it to Chicago's history. Interview important characters.
- **After reading, have students watch *Antiques Roadshow*.** (<https://www.youtube.com/@RoadshowPBS>). Ask students to take notes while watching. What in the show is similar to and different from the show in *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key*? What history did you learn watching the show? Ask family members if there are any heirlooms that are meaningful to the family. What are they? And what is the history of the heirloom?
- **Have students create informational posters about their school, what their school means to them, and how it could improve.** Provide students with time and materials to create their art and display them in your classroom or hallway.
- **Encourage interested students to carry around sketchbooks and to draw scenes of their neighborhood, their friends, their family, things they like, special events,**

and so on. Students may provide drawings to display around the classroom. Students can reflect on what they appreciate about their neighborhoods, and what they chose to visually convey in their pieces.

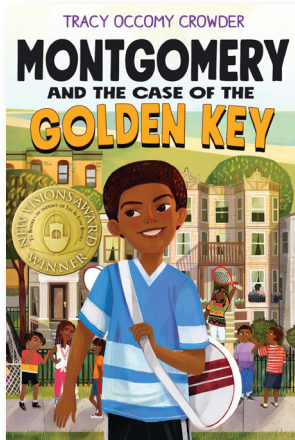
School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

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

- **Ask students to create portraits of people who are their personal role models through drawing, collage, or photograph.** In writing, students should describe what actions and qualities they admire about this person. Students can write in prose or submit a poem or song.
- **Have students interview a parent, guardian, or adult mentor about their experiences with fighting for something they believe in even when they were insecure or unsure of themselves.** How did this person react to and handle the situation when they were faced with obstacles? What advice do they have for someone trying to take up a cause and stand up for what they believe in?
- **Have students research various programs that are available to students and other children in the community.** What school or local enrichment programs are available to students? Have students choose one program and write a letter to the editor of the school or local newspaper about what makes it a quality enrichment program. How does it help and engage children? What could be improved? What other enrichment programs would students be interested in? Or, if there are no or too few local enrichment programs available, have students write a persuasive letter to the principal or parent association about why these programs should exist, their benefits, and what kinds of programs would be of interest to students.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tracy Occomy Crowder is an avid mystery lover and community organizer. She has worked to address issues of racial equity across Illinois for the past thirty years, particularly in education, economic security, and housing. In this work, she supported parents to bring recess back to Chicago Public Schools. As an author, she enjoys creating work steeped in Black history, culture, and struggles—blending unknown historical facts with humor and everyday experiences. This is Tracy's first middle grade novel. She can be found at blackteacupmysteries.com.

REVIEWS

"Tu Books' New Visions Award winner Crowder's debut depicts a vibrant community, showcasing the importance of civic responsibility and the power of grassroots organization. The narrative's first-person perspective captures Monty's infinite curiosity and endearing sense of wonder...An engaging novel drawing strength from its rich narrative voice and celebrating Black historical luminaries."
—*Kirkus Reviews*

"Crowder employs Monty's inquisitive and irrepressible first-person narration to rousing effect, making for a spirited novel that encourages curiosity while highlighting a protagonist alongside the neighborhood and history fueling his personal growth." —*Publishers Weekly*

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