

# ◆ Classroom Spice ◆

Volume 4, Issue 2 Dr. Jeanne Mather, Editor

February 2002

## Who is Wilma Mankiller?

Most of you probably already know that Wilma Mankiller was the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. But how, at the age of 31, did she become the first woman to hold this position?

Wilma was born in the Indian Hospital in Tahlequah, Oklahoma in 1945. She grew up on Mankiller Flats, a family farm granted by the government as compensation for the forced relocation of her Cherokee grandfather. Wilma's father was full-blood Cherokee and her mother was Dutch-Irish. Wilma grew up in a large family with six brothers and four sisters. Poverty was part of her daily life. While they had no plumbing and no electricity, as long as the rains fell they could manage. But in 1957 when the Oklahoma drought continued on for two years they were forced to accept the BIA's offer to move them to San Francisco and help them find a job and a home. What they found was that they had traded rural poverty with a network of family and friends, for urban poverty and isolation. Wilma, however, eventually learned to manage in the city and graduated from high school and even took college classes. She met and married a businessman from Ecuador and was content being a wife and mother to two little girls for a time.

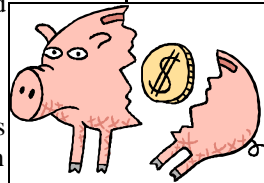
However, in 1969 Wilma became an activist for Indian  
(Continued on page 3)

## Children, Poverty, and Schools

Depending on the source it is estimated that 17-20% of children in America live in poverty. Of children in Oklahoma 25% live in poverty! In addition minority children are 2 - 4 times more likely than white children to live in poverty. Does this poverty impact their education? Of course it does! It is well documented that poor children are much more likely to suffer developmental delays and problems with communication, to be isolated, to drop out of school, and to become teen parents. Is there anything anyone can do about it? According to poverty expert Dr. Ruby Payne, there is. If you have not had the opportunity to hear Dr. Payne then you must read her book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, ISBN 1-929229-14-3. This article will share some of Dr. Payne's insights into poverty and how it impacts learning.

Dr. Payne points out the differences in various as-

pects between poverty, middle class, and upper class. When discussing poverty, she is specifically talking about generational poverty, i.e. those who have been in poverty for at least two generations. What kind of characteristics are reflected in school by poor children? Typically, such things as disorganization, missing



When even the piggy bank is empty

papers; physical aggression; laughing when disciplined; dislike of authority; higher noise levels; open display of emotions; thinking discipline is about forgiveness and/or penance, not change; propensity to entertain; and/or not knowing/using middle class courtesies.

Personally, I have found it incredibly enlightening to read about the hidden rules among classes. I grew up poor, not on welfare just poor, and was surprised to see how true the differences are in these hidden rules. There are *still* times that I have problems because I don't know the rules for a particular situation.

Let's take a moment and

discuss some of the hidden rules. For example in terms of possessions, the poor identify with people, the middle class with things, and the wealthy with **one-of-a-kind** objects or legacies. While the poor think money (on the rare occasion they have it) is to be spent, the middle class wants to manage it, and the wealthy want to save/invest it. Food is also an interesting idea, while the poor worry about if you had enough, the middle class worry if you liked it, and the wealthy are concerned with how it was presented. Similarly, while the poor value clothing for its expression of individuality, the middle class value it for its quality and label, and the rich value it for its artistic expression and the designer name. While world view tends to be limited to the local setting for the poor, it expands to the national setting for the middle class, but to the international for the rich. Social emphasis means including those they like for the poor, middle class are focused on self-sufficiency,

(Continued on page 3)

## Table of Contents

Who is Wilma Mankiller?; Children, Poverty, and Schools	1
Successful American Women	2
The Literature Connection	3

## Successful American Women

How informed are you and/or your students about successful American women? This is a great conversation starter and research motivator. Students enjoy competing against each other, other classes, their teachers and/or parents. Take a few minutes and see how well you do. Information for these questions came from *Timelines of American Women's History*, by Sue Heinemann, published by Perigree Books; ISBN 0-399-51986-6. (Answers are provided on page 4.)

### WHO AM I?

- 1 \_\_\_\_ The first woman to serve in a U.S. President's Cabinet. She served as Secretary of Labor, 1933-1945, under FDR. She drafted legislation including the Social Security Act, National Labor Relations Act, National Industrial Recovery Act, and the Fair Labor Standards Act.
- 2 \_\_\_\_ She delivered the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and received a standing ovation when it passed the U.N. General Assembly in 1948.
- 3 \_\_\_\_ This woman served 4 terms as a U.S. Representative from Maine, before winning a Senate seat and serving for 24 more years in that capacity. She was one of the few politicians who condemned Joe McCarthy's Communist witch-hunt.
- 4 \_\_\_\_ This woman who served as head of the Women's Bureau and Assistant Secretary of Labor in JFK's administration opposed the ERA.
- 5 \_\_\_\_ This woman argued and won a case involving an Idaho law that gave preference to a male over a female in the administration of an estate—if all other qualifications were equal. This was the first time the U.S. Supreme Court declared a law unconstitutional based on discrimination against sex. She later would become the second woman appointment as a Supreme Court Justice.
- 6 \_\_\_\_ An early entrepreneur, this exceptional woman operated a whaling business in New England in 1707.
- 7 \_\_\_\_ One of the first African Americans to own property in California, she won her freedom from slavery in 1856, worked as a midwife and put her savings into real estate where she amassed a fortune.
- 8 \_\_\_\_ She was the first woman to attend medical school. The president of Geneva Medical College in New York asked the male students to vote on accepting her application. As a joke they said yes. In 1849 she received her M.D. graduating at the top of her class.
- 9 \_\_\_\_ George Whipple, 1943 Nobel Prize winner for work on pernicious anemia publicly credited this research associate as equally deserving of the award.
- 10 \_\_\_\_ This woman scientist of the late 1800s developed a system of classifying stellar spectra and while at Harvard identified 10 new novae, 300 variable stars, and 59 nebulae.
- 11 \_\_\_\_ She entered John Hopkins as a "special student," completed her dissertation in mathematics in 1882, but was denied a degree because she was a woman. She finally was awarded her Ph.D. in 1926, 44 years later!
- 12 \_\_\_\_ This woman biologist established the baseline for gorilla research. Two years following the publishing of her 1983 book, *Gorillas in the Mist*, she was mysteriously murdered in Rwanda.
- 13 \_\_\_\_ This frontier scout helped save Fort Lee in 1791 from an attack. When ammunition ran low she risked her life, escaping while under fire, galloped 100 miles and returned in 3 days with the needed gunpowder.
- 14 \_\_\_\_ This chemistry graduate from Oklahoma College for Women, now U.S.A.O., was the first to isolate vitamin E and begin pioneering research on the relation between nutrition and cancer.
- 15 \_\_\_\_ This physician/astronaut was the first African American woman in space.

### Name Bank

- |                        |                              |                             |
|------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| A. Ann Bailey          | B. Elizabeth Blackwell       | C. Gladys Anderson Emerson  |
| D. Williamina Fleming  | E. Dian Fossey               | F. Christina Ladd Franklin  |
| G. Ruth Baker Ginsburg | H. Mae Jemison               | I. Biddy Mason              |
| J. Frances Perkins     | K. Esther Eggersten Peterson | L. Frieda Robschert-Robbins |
| M. Eleanor Roosevelt   | N. Margaret Chase Smith      | O. Martha Turnstall Smith   |

## The Literature Connection

(Wilma Mankiller—cont'd from page 1)

rights in a response to the Indian takeover of Alcatraz Island in an attempt to draw attention to the plight of the Indian Nations. Aside from speaking out on the issue and hosting fund raisers, she went back to school to study sociology and community development, and took a job as Native American Programs Coordinator for Oakland Public Schools.

In 1976, Wilma moved back to Oklahoma with her two daughters. In time she started to do volunteer work for the Cherokee Nation. Writing grants and teaching tribal members how to build and repair their own houses, and how to install their own water systems. By 1979 she was serving as tribal planner and program development specialist for the Cherokee Nation, as well as working on a graduate degree. But then her car was struck head on by another car. With shattered legs, broken ribs, and a smashed face she had to undergo seventeen operations and plastic surgery. Her amazing recovery reached a stumbling block when she was then diagnosed with myasthenia gravis, a form of muscular dystrophy. In 1986 she remarried, and soon afterward faced yet another surgery, a kidney transplant.

But Wilma does not give up easily. In 1983 she ran and was elected as Deputy Principal Chief for the Cherokee Nation, and in 1985 when Principal Chief Swimmer accepted the position as head of the BIA she became Principal Chief. In 1987 she was elected in her own right, and reelected in 1991. Her administration focused on unemployment, education, health issues, women's issues, developing the economy, and retaining the Cherokee culture. She has been inducted into both the Oklahoma and National Women's Halls of Fame.

**You and/or your students** are invited to attend a lecture by this incredible woman on March 26th, 7 p.m. in the Troutt Hall Auditorium, on the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma Campus. Wilma Mankiller will be speaking on "The Changing Role of Women in the 21st Century." For tickets (\$10) call 405 574-1217.

This month our literature connection will focus on Black History and Women's History Months. See what great books are available with a possible tie-in to your content/grade level.

Some excellent resources for teachers and students are available. Teacher Created Materials publishes *Focus on Women*, ISBN 1-55734-495-7. It includes six sections representing women in social studies, literature, science and math, fine arts, sports, and politics. Geared for 4th-



8th graders, it includes short biographies, suggested activities, blackline masters and related keys, and recommended reading. The range of women included is excellent. Let your students learn about Barbara Jordan, Babe Zaharias, Georgia O'Keefe. Barbara McClintock, and Mother Jones to name just a few.

Frank Schaffer publishes *Distinguished Women in History* by Valerie Vos, ISBN 0-86734-806-2. It is similar to *Focus on Women* but is for middle and upper grades., i.e., junior and senior high students will enjoy it. It too has biographies, activities, but also includes suggestions for

further research. Great social studies resource.

*Celebrating Women's History: A women's History Month resource book*, published by Gale Research and edited by Mary Snodgrass is a must for any school district. It has 300 activity suggestions ranging from language, geography, library research, humor, health, food and cooking, to cinema and business. It has four indexes to make it usable to everyone, one is alphabetical by entry, the second is by age/grade level, the third by budget, and the fourth is by general key word. Each lesson plan includes age/grade, description/goal, procedure, budget, sources, and alternative applications. Do not let the budget scare you, most of the activities are less than \$25 to implement. Note that while it ranges from pre-K to adult activities, the majority are junior-high and up.

*Behind Rebel Lines: The Incredible Story of Emma Edmonds, Civil War Spy*, by Seymour Reit is published by Harcourt Brace, ISBN 0-15-200424-6. It takes place in 1861 as 20 year old Sarah Emma Edmonds, cuts her hair, dons men's clothing, and enlists as a Michigan recruit. She takes on many dangerous assignments and disguises. She is perhaps the most well known, of what is estimated as 400 women spies who served in

(Continued on page 4)

(Poverty—cont'd from page 1)

but the wealthy work on social exclusion. There are even hidden rules for fighting: the poor resolve conflict with physical fighting, the middle class with verbal fighting, and the wealthy through social exclusion and lawyers.



So what can you do to help children of poverty? Recognize the different cultures and hidden rules and help them learn the middle class rules that will allow them to succeed. Help them learn other ways to deal with discipline, rather than just laughing at it. You will need to learn to use *the adult voice* when interacting with them rather than *the parent voice*. Teach them alternatives for the vulgar or inappropriate speech that they may use. Teach them alternatives to

physically resolving conflict. If they can't keep their hands off of others, let them doodle or find other ways to keep their hands occupied. Provide for kinesthetic teaching whenever possible. Teach them organizational skills. Model behaviors you want them to use. Write out steps or procedures to help them be able to follow directions. Provide them with rubrics to understand what is expected of them. Help students to use planning skills, learn to control impulsivity, use graphic organizers, set goals, and to build positive relationships in school. Utilize cooperative learning, and child centered lessons as much as possible. *Don't* force them into selling things for fundraising, but *do* let them offer work services to help fundraise. In short let them know the rules of the game that will let them play and win on a field *other than* poverty.



USAO Multicultural  
Resource Center  
1727 W. Alabama  
Chickasha, OK 73018

Phone (405) 574-1291

facmatherj@usao.edu

**n his ssue...**

Wilma Mankiller; Children, Poverty, & Schools; Successful Women; Literature Connections

**The U.S. Constitution was modeled after that of the Iroquois, but differed in what significant way?**

Women's rights! Unlike the U.S. Constitution, the Iroquois Constitution **did** grant women full rights. They owned land, controlled the economy, determined the fate of captives, declared war, helped select the male leaders, appointed new chiefs, and had a voice in public policy.

(Literature—Cont'd from page 3)  
the Civil War. 4th graders and up will enjoy this suspense filled drama.

*Those Remarkable Women of the American Revolution*, by Karen Zeinert is published by Millbrook Press, ISBN 1-56294-657-9. This book presents the varied roles that women played during the war, from raising money for the war, running the family business or farm while husbands/fathers/brothers fought in the war, to political activists, and spies. This book is appropriate from 4th grade—high school.

*Sojourner Truth: Ain't I a Woman?* by Patricia McKissack and Frederick McKissack, ISBN 0-590-44691-6, is published by Scholastic. It is a biography of the slave Isabella who in 1827 earned her freedom and became Sojourner Truth. Sojourner was more than an abolitionist, she was

also a suffragette. Her commitment to equality for men and women, black or white, made her a powerful activist. She was a well known and powerful speaker. Read about her fascinating life.

*Up from the Ashes*, is a wonderful presentation about the Tulsa Riots. While Hannibal Johnson, has also written a related adult text, *Black Wall Street*, this book is aimed at middle schoolers. It is published by Eakin Press, ISBN 1-57168-385-2. It is beautifully done and explains the events and misunderstandings leading up to the devastating events of 1921. In addition it tells about the rebuilding of the community. A must for any Oklahoma middle school or junior high classroom.

If you have not read *Pink and Say* by Patricia Polacco you are missing a classic. It is based on an actual account of

Sheldon Russell Curtis. What happens when black and white union soldiers are trapped behind confederate lines? A story that will touch your heart and that of your students. Written at a middle school level, it is well received by high schoolers and adults.

*Five Brilliant Scientists* by Lynda Jones, ISBN 0-590-48031-6 is a nonfiction book for 2nd and 3rd graders. It introduces them to five African American scientists: Ernest Just, George Washington Carver, Shirley Jackson, Susan McKinney Steward, and Percy Julian. Part of the Hello Reader series.

**Answers to Quiz**

- |       |        |        |
|-------|--------|--------|
| 1 - J | 6 - O  | 11 - F |
| 2 - M | 7 - I  | 12 - E |
| 3 - N | 8 - B  | 13 - A |
| 4 - K | 9 - L  | 14 - C |
| 5 - G | 10 - D | 15 - H |