ELEANOR, Quiet No More

By Doreen Rappaport
Illustrated by Gary Kelley
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This guide was created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist at Endeavor Elementary and an award-winning children’s author. Visit her Web site at www.tracievaughnzimmer.com to find hundreds of other guides!
About the Book

A quiet girl, Eleanor was born to a life of privilege, but not one of love. When she couldn’t please her mother, she learned that it was better to disappear. “I wanted to sink through the floor in shame.” When Eleanor was a teenager, a teacher in France encouraged her to speak up for what she believed in. As First Lady of the United States, Eleanor was often criticized for her beliefs. But she still spoke up, to change things that needed changing, and to help those who felt too vulnerable to speak for themselves.

Doreen Rappaport lyrically combines poignant biographical details with Eleanor Roosevelt’s words, while Gary Kelley’s moving illustrations brilliantly re-create a true first in First Ladies, and the world she helped make a little bit better.

The quotes in this book have been taken from Eleanor Roosevelt’s autobiographies, her letters to Franklin, speeches before various Democratic women’s groups, her newspaper columns, and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Rights. Her words have been edited and shortened without changing their meaning.

Questions to Consider

1. Describe Eleanor’s life as a young girl. Why was she so serious and sad?

2. Who “shocked” Eleanor into thinking? How? Has a teacher or other adult ever done this for you? Give an example.

3. Why does the author, Doreen Rappaport, have quotes at the end of each page? Why do you think it was important to include Eleanor’s own words? How do you know when Eleanor is speaking?

4. What did Eleanor see while in New York City that shocked her? How did she try to help those who had so much less? How can you help others too?

5. What did Franklin love most about Eleanor? Do you agree with him that “most people only pretended” to listen? How do you become a good listener?

6. Why was Albany a happier place for Eleanor to live? Have you ever moved and been happier in a new place?

7. What issue helped Eleanor find her voice? How did she organize women to help? How do you think we can help soldiers today?

8. When did Eleanor finally stand up to her mother-in-law, Sara? How did her standing up help her husband?

9. Explain how Eleanor became a voice for women. What did she want women to do?

10. Do you think the author, Doreen Rappaport, admires the life of Eleanor Roosevelt? How can you tell? Do you also admire this First Lady?

11. What happened during the Great Depression? How did Eleanor help the president help the people?
Projects

Reading
Create a character web based on the life of Eleanor Roosevelt. Brainstorm a list of adjectives to describe Eleanor (for instance, brave) and then list examples from the book that support it.

Writing
Write a response journal to the book or your favorite Eleanor Roosevelt quotation. What does the quotation make you think about? Feel? How can you apply what you’ve learned to your own life?

Mentor Text
Study how the author uses quotes from Eleanor to enhance the story. How can you add direct quotations to strengthen a connection between the reader and your topic? Where can you find quotations for your next piece?

Math
Research the cost of living during the Great Depression and the cost of similar goods and services now. Be sure to also find the average salary of Americans of each time. Compare.

Science/Health
President Franklin Roosevelt was stricken with polio. Research this disease and how vaccines have nearly eradicated it.

Current Events
Research the New Deal. Find out what kinds of projects FDR initiated to help fuel the economy. Compare them with solutions that were used by President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama. In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different?

12 How did Eleanor stand up against racism? How do you think her example helped others to take a stand?

13 Which illustration is your favorite? How do the illustrations help the reader know about the time period? Why do think Gary Kelley chose the colors he did?

14 Did everyone like Eleanor? Did she care if everyone liked her? How did she become First Lady of the world?

15 What can you learn from reading about the life of Eleanor Roosevelt? Which quote in the book is your favorite? Why?
About the Illustrator

Gary Kelley is well known for both his fine art and his illustration work. He has received awards from the New York Society of Illustrators, American Booksellers Association, Print magazine, Los Angeles Society of Illustrators, the Bologna Book Fair, and others. His clients include The New Yorker magazine, Rolling Stone, and many major publishers and advertising agencies. Mr. Kelley lives in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

About the Author

Doreen Rappaport has written numerous books for children, including Abe’s Honest Words, illustrated by Kadir Nelson, Freedom Ship and The School Is Not White, illustrated by Curtis James, and John’s Secret Dreams, illustrated by Bryan Collier. Her book Martin’s Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., also illustrated by Bryan Collier, was a Jane Addams Award Book, a Caldecott Honor Book, a Coretta Scott King Honor Book, and an Orbis Pictus Honor Book for Outstanding Nonfiction. Ms. Rappaport lives and writes in upstate New York.

Author Interview

1 How did you become interested in the life of Eleanor Roosevelt?
My parents loved Eleanor Roosevelt. I was too young then to understand why they thought she was so wonderful, but later when I read about her I realized why. She was fearlessly outspoken when most women kept what they thought to themselves; she had dignity and intelligence and determination, and set an example for women and girls and the whole world.

2 Why do you think biography is an important genre for kids to read?
If we read about other people’s struggles, we not only learn about their lives, we find models by which to lead our lives.

3 What can your fans look forward to next?
My biography of the 35th president, John F. Kennedy, which will be illustrated by a glorious artist named Matt Tavares.