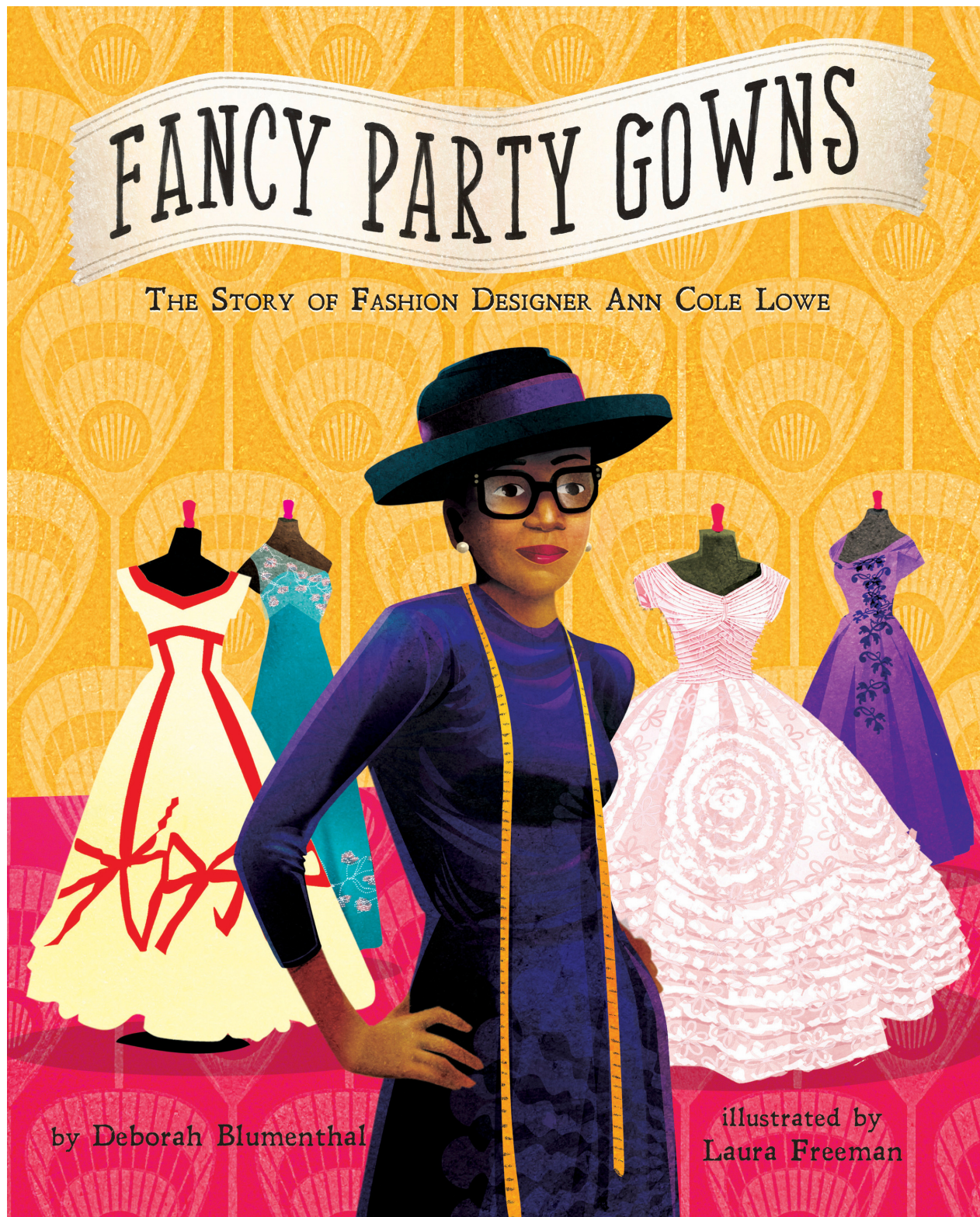


Fancy Party Gowns: The Story of Fashion Designer Ann Cole Lowe Educator Guide



by Deborah Blumenthal

illustrated by
Laura Freeman



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Fancy Party Gowns: The Story of Fashion Designer Ann Cole Lowe Educator Guide

Watching her mother and grandmother as a young girl,
“Ann would turn cloth into flowers as bright as roses in the garden.”

With hard work, passion and many obstacles,
Ann became the first African-American designer to become part of the
New York Establishment in 1950. Fancy Party Gowns by Deborah
Blumenthal introduces a driven, elegant, one of a kind woman
who is as fine as her apparel.

Leveling Information:

Guided Reading Level- **N**

Grade Level Equivalent- **3**

Interest Level- **Grades 2-5**

Common Core / Instructional Alignments in this guide Grades 2-5

RI.2-5.1,2,3,4,7,8,10

RI.4-5.1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10

L.2-5.4,5

RF.2-5.3,4

SL.2-5.2,4,5,6

W.2-3.1,2,7,8

W.4-5.1,2,4,7,8,9,9a,10



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Before Reading

Discuss the following:

1. What do you know about Ann Cole Lowe by looking at the title and cover illustration? What is she wearing around her neck? Why is she dressed like that? Etc.
2. What type of book is *Fancy Party Gowns: A Story About Fashion Designer Ann Cole Lowe* by Deborah Blumenthal?
Explain (literary non-fiction/biography)
3. Why should we be interested in reading biographies?
4. How do we know what happened in the past?
5. How does the legacy of an individual influence later generations?
6. Share a story about someone you have personally read about.
How did that person change the way you think, or behave?
7. Take a poll. How many students in the group/class have heard of Ann Cole Lowe?
8. Define and give examples of figurative language.
(ex. Simile, metaphor, and hyperbole)

Vocabulary: Discuss and predict the word meanings.

Then distinguish shades of meaning among related words

| | |
|-------------|-----------|
| fancy | elegant |
| gown | salon |
| glorious | obstacles |
| design | bouffant |
| designer | pleated |
| couturiere | reception |
| extravagant | gala |



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During Reading

1. Read to find out about The Story of Ann Cole Lowe and how she impacted society.
2. As you come across challenging words use strategies to gain meaning.
Look at the words in context and write what you think they mean.
Check the inferred meaning later.
3. Discuss the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the story distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.

For example:

“...as bright as roses in the garden”

“...just to get by”

“...set your spirit soaring”

“...no two alike”

“...the pipe had burst”

Think about the Story Elements: Setting, plot and character development

- Where does the story take place?
- Who are the characters?
- What happens in the beginning, middle, and end?



4. What conflicts arise? Man vs man? Man vs society? Man vs fate? Man vs self?
Man vs nature?
5. How does the author use illustrations to enhance meaning and tone of the story?
6. What kind of person is Ann Cole Lowe?
7. What are the central ideas and themes?
8. How does Deborah Blumenthal use repeated lines to enhance the development of the themes?
9. How does the author choose to arrange the sentences? Discuss the style of writing.
10. What is the sequence of events? Describe the connection between events.

After Reading

Look up new vocabulary words and any other difficult words.

Check the inferred meanings.

Re-read or listen to the story uninterrupted.

Discuss or write about the following:

1. Go back to the poll on how many students knew about Lowe before reading *Fancy Party Gowns: The Story of Fashion Designer Ann Cole Lowe*.
Use examples from the story to explain why she is considered a “little-known” designer?
2. If she had designed gowns today, what kind of recognition would she receive?
3. What can we learn from the past based on the story of Ann Cole Lowe?
4. What did you learn from Ann Cole Lowe as a person? Use examples from the book.
5. How has the world changed?
6. What do you think causes change?
7. What influence did Ann Cole Lowe have on society?
8. How did Ann’s family influence her career path and her drive for success?
What events lead up to her success?
9. How are the themes of determination, “life isn’t fair”, and overcoming obstacles developed in the story.
Find examples of Ann’s thoughts, feelings and actions in the book
10. Ann said that she made fine clothes “to prove that a Negro can become a major dress designer.”
Why do you think Ann made fine clothing?



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Follow Up Activities

1. Problem and Solution Chart

Using examples from the story, create a chart showing how Ann faced each problem and found a solution.

ex. **Problem:** The water pipe had burst. 10 out of 16 dresses were destroyed.

Solution: Ann bought more supplies, hired others to help,
and re-made the dresses.

2. Create a time line of Ann Cole Lowe's Life

3. Plan, research, and present a report on the life of Ann Cole Lowe using online resources and visual aids

4. Design a "Lifetime Achievement Award" for Ann Cole Lowe

5. How is Ann Cole Lowe like her dresses? (one of a kind, classy, creative, beautiful)



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