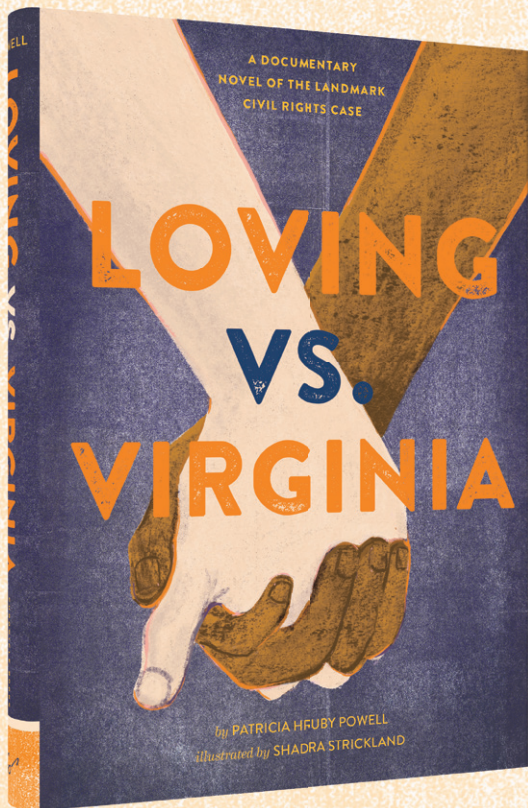


TEACHER GUIDE

Two teenagers fell in love. Their life together broke the law.
But their determination would change it.



LOVING VS. VIRGINIA

A DOCUMENTARY NOVEL
OF THE LANDMARK CIVIL RIGHTS CASE

By PATRICIA HRUBY POWELL
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— ABOUT THIS BOOK AND TEACHER GUIDE —

*My hand shakes a little
When I sign
my name.*

Does he really love me?

*When she signs
her name
I smile at her.
The sheriff—
The government—
can't tell me who I can marry.
Or who I can't marry.*

In 1955, in Caroline County, Virginia, amidst segregation and prejudice, injustice and cruelty, two teenagers fell in love. Their life together broke the law. But their determination would change it. Richard and Mildred Loving were at the heart of a landmark Supreme Court case that legalized marriage between the races.

This documentary verse novel of the landmark 1967 Civil Rights case, *Loving vs. Virginia*, tells the story of Richard and Mildred Loving. Photographs, primary source documents, quotes, and illustrations by Shadra Strickland provide context and detail.

This guide contains supplementary multimodal activities along with historical research and writing projects to accompany the book.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow

Suggested resource: *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow*, PBS

From the PBS website: “Emancipation ended slavery, but not its legacy. The Jim Crow era was one of struggle – not only for the victims of violence, discrimination, and poverty, but by those who worked to challenge (or promote) segregation in the South. Various individuals, organizations, and events played key roles in shaping the history books; equally important are the experiences of those who have lived to tell their own tales. These are the stories of Jim Crow.”

The story told in *Loving vs. Virginia* – that of Richard Loving and Mildred Jeter Loving – was one of many stories from a time in our nation’s recent past that still affects life in the United States today. Understanding more about the origins of Jim Crow, key people and events, and its legacy will help students better understand the time and place that influenced the way we live now.

- **A Century of Segregation: Timeline of Jim Crow in the United States.** Explore the interactive timeline, “A Century of Segregation.” Read about each of the four time periods, learning more about events like the Emancipation Proclamation (1863), the *first* Civil Rights Act (1875), the landmark case *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (1893), the founding of the NAACP (1909), the Red Summer (1919), the Harlem Renaissance (1920s), the Scottsboro case that later inspired Harper Lee to write her landmark novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1931), and *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954). Ask students to figure out how much time has elapsed between each past event and the present day, then invite conversation about the ways that these laws and practices influenced United States society. Then, invite them to predict what might happen to Richard and Mildred Loving in the novel.
- **Jim Crow Stories: The People Who Defied (and Defeated) Segregation.** Like Richard and Mildred Loving, millions of people living in the United States during the time of segregation had their daily lives affected by Jim Crow policies. Yet these same individuals were involved in changing society so that this country could truly be a place where all men, women, and children were equal. Meet some of these people at “Jim Crow Stories.” Why were they notable? How did they influence society during the era of segregation? What can we learn from them today?
- **A National Struggle: The Role of the Federal Government in Maintaining Segregation.** Segregation was not restricted to the Southern region. For decades, it was both *de jure* (by law) and *de facto* (in reality) throughout the United States. Peruse the section “A National Struggle,” and learn more about the role of the three branches of the United States government in the persistence of segregation. What were past presidents’ views on race and segregation? What role did Congress play in guaranteeing – and restricting – the right to vote? Why did the Supreme Court play key roles in legalizing segregation in *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (1893), only to rule it unconstitutional in *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954)?
- **Mapping Segregation: From Sea to Shining Sea.** Use the section “Interactive Maps” to learn more about the locations of segregation. Visit the section labeled “Jim Crow Laws.” Focus on the map showing where “miscegenation,” a term used during the age of Jim Crow to refer to interracial relationships and marriages, was illegal. Click on Virginia to read about the 1924 *Racial Integrity Act*, then explore other Jim Crow era laws that Mildred Loving would have been subjected to while growing up. Ask students to explore their own state’s laws and policies during the century of segregation, comparing and contrasting to those in Virginia.

Segregation Beyond Black and White: African-Native Americans

Suggested resource: *IndiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas*, Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian

Mildred Jeter Loving was a multiracial American. She was of mixed African American and Rappahannock Indian heritage. During Mildred’s lifetime, she identified as Native American and African American. However, under Virginia’s 1924 Racial Integrity Act, she was determined to be “colored” or “Negro” (Black or African American in today’s terms). At the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian website, “IndiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas,” you can read more about the lives of African Americans with Native ancestry in the section, “By Law and By Blood.” Some are tribally enrolled, while others lack the documentation they need to prove their claim. There were connections between the Civil Rights and tribal rights movements of the mid-20th century as well, as the section “Civil Rights, Sovereign Rights” shows. Since Jim Crow policies were designed to separate White Americans from African Americans, predict what role Mildred’s Native American heritage might have played in the case. Discuss with students why the fact that Mildred Loving was herself descended from interracial marriages and relationships may have been obscured during the trial – and left out of our history books.

GENRE: FEATURES OF VERSE MEMOIRS AND NOVELS

As Sylvia Vardell observed in a recent *Booklist* article about verse memoirs, “Many writers, like Jacqueline Woodson [author of 2014 National Book Award winning verse memoir *Brown Girl Dreaming*], have found poetry to be the ideal vehicle for sharing memories and particularly for exploring issues of culture, ethnicity, and race.” Words and images can be used to powerfully tell stories about history, culture, race, identity, society, and power.

As your students read *Loving vs. Virginia*, you may wish to call their attention to the generic features of verse novels:

- The entire story is told in the form of non-rhyming free verse.
- Very often each section is less than a page in length and only rarely more than two or three pages.
- Usually each of these sections is given a title to orient the reader, which may indicate the speaker, or contextualize the content, or point to the core theme.
- The form lends itself to building each section around a single perspective or thought or voice or incident.

(Adapted from Joy Alexander, “The verse-novel: A new genre.” *Children’s Literature in Education* 36.3 (2005): 269-283.)

Here are some prompts to use for talking about the features of poetry in *Loving vs. Virginia*, as well as the genre of the verse novel:

- *Line breaks.* Throughout the novel, the author uses line breaks in the verses in order to tell Richard and Mildred Loving’s story. How do the line breaks affect the way the verses sound when read aloud? What kinds of cues about oral and silent reading are provided through line breaks? What would *Loving vs. Virginia* be like without them?
- *Dialogue.* When imagining what characters would say to one another, the author invents dialogue to represent what might have been talked about at the time. Where in each poem is dialogue located? What do these passages contribute?

- *Description.* Techniques used by poets writing verse novels differ from those used by those writing prose. What kinds of words does the author use to help you picture what's going on in each section? Are there some words that are used more frequently than others?
- *Perspective.* The author chooses to alternate between Mildred and Richard's perspectives. They serve as narrators, retelling the events leading up to the famous court case, during, and after the verdict. How might the novel have differed if told from only Mildred's perspective? Richard's? A family member's? One of their children? The country sheriff's? Each of the judges that ruled in the case?
- *Peritext.* The illustrations throughout *Loving vs. Virginia*, as well as photographs from the Civil Rights Era, maps, and timelines help to expand meaning beyond Patricia Hruby Powell's verses. This is the peritext – the features of a book that are not the actual words of a book's text, but supplement it. How does the peritext work alongside the verse novel to tell the story of Richard and Mildred Loving?

— GENRE: FEATURES OF ILLUSTRATED TEXTS —

Along with your students, use the language of illustrated texts to talk about the people, places, and events that are represented visually in *Loving vs. Virginia*. Then in pairs, in groups, or as a whole class, invite students to create questions about the illustrations in the book.

Bleed: when the illustration extends to the edge of the page, with no white space or border

Border: limit or outer edge of a page

Continuous narration: the use of several separate illustrations on the same page (a montage) that indicate motion, action, or the sequence of time

Cut-out: illustration that has no frame; simply appears against the backdrop

Double page spread: illustration is spread over both pages of an opening

Endpages (a.k.a. endpapers): the first [and last] pages one sees when opening [and closing] the picture book

Establishing shot: a term taken from the film genre; when a picture book opens with an illustration of where the action for the story will take place

Frame: when illustrations are frequently surrounded by an illustrated border or white space, giving the impression of a framed picture ...when an illustration overlaps, it is called "breaking the frame"

Gutter: the middle line where the pages are bound

Illustration sequence: the order of the illustrations in a book

Montage: several illustrations included on the same page

Motif: recurring element in the illustrations or text

Page break: the gap between openings (that exists when we turn the page)

Title page: page indicating title of the book, author, illustrator, publisher, and city published (page with only title and small illustration is a **half-title page**)

Typography: the typeface or font used in the book

Vertical moment: important or emotionally charged moment in the plot

Vignette: small illustration used to break up a section of text or otherwise decorate a page

(Adapted from Lawrence R. Sipe, "Learning the Language of Picturebooks." *Journal of Children's Literature* 24, no. 2 (1998): 66-75.)

AFTER YOU READ: THINKING ABOUT THE ROLES OF DIVERSITY, DIFFERENCE, AND POWER IN *LOVING VS. VIRGINIA*

After reading *Loving vs. Virginia*, invite your students to think about the ways that *Loving vs. Virginia* chose to tell the story of Richard and Mildred Loving. (This activity is especially recommended if you used the suggested pre-reading activities.)

- What (or whose) views of the world, or kinds of behaviors are presented as normal by *Loving vs. Virginia*?
- Why was *Loving vs. Virginia* written as a verse novel? How else could it have been written? How would the story be different if told in another form?
- What assumptions does *Loving vs. Virginia* make about age, gender, class, and culture (including the age, gender, and culture of its readers)?
- Which points of view are included? Which are not (e.g., segregation outside of Virginia, the role of Native Americans during the Jim Crow era)?
- Select 2-3 especially intriguing passages in the book that lend themselves to an ambiguous interpretation of a character, e.g. Mildred's reaction to living away from her family. How would you interpret her emotions in this situation? What evidence lends itself to that reading?
- What moral or political themes can you identify in *Loving vs. Virginia*? (Some ideas include the importance of loving across differences and valuing and honoring all kinds of families.)
- What moral or political position does a reading support? How do particular cultural and social contexts make particular readings available (e.g., who could you not say that to)? How might it be challenged?

(Adapted from Maria Jose Botelho & Masha Rudman, *Critical Multicultural Analysis of Children's Literature*, Routledge, 2009, p. 4.)

WRITING AND RESEARCH CONNECTIONS: FINAL PROJECTS TO CONSIDER FOR YOUR STUDENTS

Childhood under segregation. Invite your students to write their own verse novel about what it might have been like to be a child growing up during the Jim Crow Era. Encourage them to use the resources found in the pre-reading activities, as well as *Loving vs. Virginia*. They may write about a character in the novel, or they may choose a person from the Jim Crow stories available on the PBS website. The award-winning photographs of Gordon Parks of life under segregation are another useful resource.

History of interracial relationships and families. The United States was a nation of interracial relationships and families long before *Loving vs. Virginia* made it the law of the land. There are many possibilities for your students to research and write about couples whose stories, like Richard and Mildred Loving, cross racial and cultural boundaries. The PBS resource "Interracial Couples That Changed History" provides historic and contemporary couples and families to explore.

Landmark Supreme Court cases before Loving. *Loving vs. Virginia* happened three years after the 1964 Civil Right Act was passed. Yet more than a century of rulings led to Richard and Mildred's victory. Invite students to create a timeline of civil rights in the United States, revisiting the interactive timeline, "A Century of Segregation."

Alternately, you may wish for your students to focus on individual cases. A good starting point may be the 1857 *Dred Scott vs. Sandford* decision, in which the Supreme Court under Justice Roger Taney ruled that no person of African descent could be a citizen of the United States, whether enslaved or free. PBS provides resources for learning more about this case, which exacerbated sectional tensions that would lead to the Civil War.

Landmark Supreme Court cases after Loving. Long after *Loving*, people in the United States today discuss, debate, and have very different opinions about what constitutes legal marriage and families. Invite your students to explore more recent cases, including the recent "Love Wins" decision supporting marriage equality, *Obergefell vs. Hodges* (2015). Before the recent decision, same-gender marriages were banned in 14 states. Students can make an illustrated timeline of these cases, or choose to explore one in depth.

— ADDITIONAL RESOURCES —

The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow (PBS)

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/>

IndiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas (Smithsonian Museum)

<http://nmai.si.edu/exhibitions/indivisible/index.html>

Teaching Tolerance: Explore the History of "Loving" (Teaching Tolerance)

<http://www.tolerance.org/publication/explore-history-loving>

Teaching Tolerance: Using Photographs to Teach Social Justice (Teaching Tolerance)

<http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/using-photographs-teach-social-justice-legal-action-supreme>

The Loving Story (Documentary) - Resources (HBO)

<http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/the-loving-story/detail/resources.html>

Loving v. Virginia, 1967 (Bill of Rights Institute)

<https://billofrightsinstitute.org/educate/educator-resources/lessons-plans/landmark-supreme-court-cases-lessons/loving-v-virginia-1967/>

Created Equal Film Project - The Loving Story (National Endowment for the Humanities)

<http://createdequal.neh.gov/for-teachers/why-non-violence/loving-story>

Interracial Couples Who Changed History (PBS)

<http://www.pbs.org/black-culture/explore/interracial-marriage-relationships>

The Loving Story - Photographs by Grey Villet (International Center for Photography)

<http://www.icp.org/exhibitions/the-loving-story-photographs-by-grey-villet>



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



PATRICIA HRUBY POWELL

Patricia Hruby Powell's previous book, *Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker*, won a *Boston Globe-Horn Book* Honor for Nonfiction, a *Parents' Choice* Gold Award for Poetry, and earned five starred reviews. You can visit Patricia online at Talesforallages.com. She lives in Illinois.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



SHADRA STRICKLAND

Shadra Strickland studied design, writing, and illustration at Syracuse University and later went on to complete her M.F.A. at the School of Visual Arts in New York City. She won the Ezra Jack Keats New Illustrator Award, the Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe Award for New Talent, and the NAACP Image Award. She lives in Maryland.

Also by Patricia Hruby Powell:



Robert F. Sibert Information Book Award—Honor

Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor Book

School Library Journal Best Book of the Year

Junior Library Guild Selection

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Ebony Elizabeth Thomas is an assistant professor in the Division of Reading/Writing/Literacy at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education. A former Detroit Public Schools teacher, Dr. Thomas's program of research is most keenly focused on children's and adolescent literature, the teaching of African American literature, and the role of race in English language arts classroom discourse and interaction.

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