

Little People, BIG DREAMS™

TEACHERS' GUIDE



Michelle Obama

Little People, BIG DREAMS™

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LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

Michelle Obama was born Michelle Robinson and grew up in a close-knit family on the southside of Chicago. Her family valued hard work and education, and she had big dreams. After attending Princeton and Harvard Law School, Michelle was a successful lawyer at a firm in downtown Chicago, where she met Barack Obama. Together, they would start a family and work together to make the world a better place, especially for those less fortunate. When Barack was elected President, he was the United States's first Black President, and Michelle became the first Black First Lady. In the White House, she continued dreaming big and working to help others do the same to make the world a better place.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS IN THIS UNIT

1. How did Michelle's family influence her life both as a child and as an adult?
2. What were some of the dreams that Michelle had for herself and others?
3. Who did Michelle marry? Why was he important?
4. Why was it extra special that the Obama family lived in the White House?
5. Why is Michelle Obama a dreamer we should know?

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. At Michelle's high school, all the students looked different but shared the same passion for learning (p. 5). Sit in a big circle as a class and discuss how all of the students look different in your class as well. Ask students to share things that they have in common. Topics can include things they have in common as a whole class or something they share as a commonality with one student or a group of students in the class.
2. Michelle had big goals: go to college at Princeton, go to Harvard Law School, become a lawyer in Chicago, and help the young people of America. Explain to the students the difference between short-term and long-term goals and examples of them based on the students' age. Give your own example of a goal you have set for yourself. Have the discussion as a whole class or pair the students up and have them share a goal.

3. Public Allies, the group that Michelle worked for after her father died, helped young students become leaders (p. 10). Help students understand what a leader is and discuss how they can be a leader in the classroom, at home, and out in the world.
4. Michelle felt that once you make your own dreams come true, it becomes your job to help others do the same (p. 15). Explain that this is sometimes called “paying it forward,” and give examples of paying kindness forward (like if someone holds the door for you, you hold the door for the person behind you as well). Have the students sit in a circle and practice paying it forward with compliments in a waterfall style. It can start with you or with a student, but the first person turns to the person on their right and gives a compliment or says something kind. That person then does the same to the person on their right, and so on.
5. Family was a theme that was woven throughout the book because it was so important in Michelle’s life. Ask the students to share something special about their families. What is important to their families? What special traditions do they have?

Student Activities

1. Michelle’s parents used to tell her the same thing every day to inspire her to be her best: “Study hard and be great!” (p. 3). Michelle would then tell her stuffed animals the same mantra. Have the students bring in a favorite stuffed animal or toy. Brainstorm some possible inspirational phrases together and then have students choose one or create one of their own and practice saying it to their stuffed animal or toy.
2. Show the students the yearbook page on p. 5 of the book. Provide each student with a small, blank rectangle and have them create a self-portrait, similar to those shown. Ensure that any staff members’ pictures are included as well. Once each individual picture is done, have them come up and add it to the class page to create a class self-portrait. Celebrate how each person is individually unique and together they all create the whole picture.
3. One of Michelle’s passions is fitness, and she has worked hard as the First Lady and beyond to better the health of young people all over the country. With the help of the physical education teacher, set up a Fitness Day. Provide different exercise or sports activities and have students experience each one for a set amount of time before moving to the next. After they have completed all of the centers, have them discuss their favorites and set a goal for a number of minutes they want to be active each day.
4. Along with fitness, Michelle is also passionate about healthy eating. She planted a garden of fruits and vegetables on the White House lawn (p. 13) and wanted to improve the eating habits of children, especially for school lunches. Brainstorm a list of healthy versus unhealthy foods for school lunches. Provide students with paper and markers and have them design their dream school lunch menu, ensuring foods chosen would be approved by Michelle!

