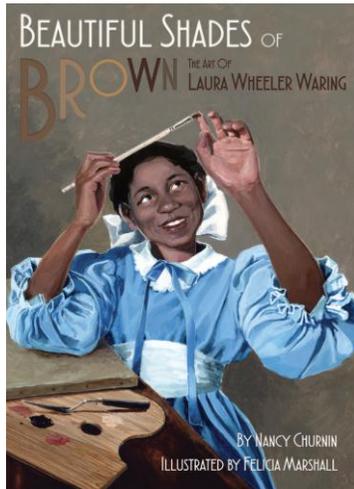


# ***Beautiful Shades of Brown; the Art of Laura Wheeler Waring***

## **Curriculum Guide**



### ***Beautiful Shades of Brown; the Art of Laura Wheeler Waring***

by Nancy Churnin, illustrated by Felicia Marshall

ISBN: 9781939547651

Format: Hardcover

Pages: 32pp, color

Category: Non-fiction picture book biography, women's history, African American history

Age Range: 6 and up

#### **Background Information:**

Growing up in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Laura Wheeler Waring didn't see any artist who looked like her. She didn't see any paintings of people who looked like her, either. As a young woman studying art in Paris, she found inspiration in the works of Matisse and Gauguin to paint the people she knew best. Back in Philadelphia, the Harmon Foundation commissioned her to paint portraits of accomplished African Americans. Her paintings still hang in Washington, D.C.'s National Portrait Gallery, where children of all races can admire the beautiful shades of brown she captured.

#### **Guided Reading Level Q, Grade Level Equivalent 4, Interest Level 3-7;**

**Key Standards:** CCSS.ELA-Literacy. L.4.3, 4, 4a, 4b, 5, 5a, 5b, 6; RF.4.3, 3a, 4, 4a, 4c; RI.4.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10; SL.4.1, 1c, 1d, 2, 3, 4,6; W.4.1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 9b, 10

#### **Educational Description:**

**Story Elements:** setting, Connecticut 1897, plot and character development, detailed illustrations enhance meaning and tone; Comprehension strategies, compare and contrast, make text to real world connections, identify changes from beginning to end of

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the story, cause and effect relationships, and author's purpose; figurative language, simile, idiom, metaphor. Back matter: paintings by Laura Wheeler Waring with explanations, A Note from the Author, Timeline, and About the Authors.

### **Themes:**

- African American experience
- Breaking racial barriers
- Women's history
- Painting and the creative process
- Determination; overcoming obstacles

### **Objectives:**

- Connect with literature.
- Teach children about women's contribution to the field of art.
- Growth Mindset/Determination
- Women's History/African American History
- Color Theory

### **Discussion Questions:**

#### *Growth Mindset/Determination:*

- What barriers did Laura face in becoming a painter? How did she succeed despite the obstacles?
- Laura painted notable African Americans. Did these notable people also need determination to achieve their goals?
- Read the short descriptions of each person in the back of the book.
- What kind of goals did these people have?
- Do you think success was easy for them? Explain why or why not.

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### *Women's History/African American History*

- What parts of the story tell Women's History?
- What parts tell African American history?
- Look at the back of the book at the portraits of Notable African Americans painted by Laura. Is there a balance of men and women?
- Are the people Laura painted still famous today? How many have you heard of?
- If you wanted to find out more about these accomplished people, where would you go?

### *Portraits:*

- What do you think Laura was trying to capture in the different portraits she painted? Did she succeed?
- How did this artist's work change from when she was a child to when she was an adult?
- What do you think she learned by going to art school? By studying in Paris?
- Is it possible for a portrait to reveal a person's personality or only their physical appearance? Explain your reasoning.
- Before photography was invented, during the Renaissance (1400-1600), women would sometimes have their portraits painted and sent to interested husbands in the hopes the painting would convince the man they were beautiful enough to marry. Should being pretty be the most important quality in a potential bride? Should being pretty be the most important quality in a portrait?
- What do you think makes a portrait painting successful? Does it need to look like the person? Does it need to suggest their character (kind, smart, stubborn, mean, proud, weak, for example)?

### *Representation and Diversity:*

- Laura wanted to paint people who looked like her, like her family. Why was that important to her?

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- Do you think it matters if all the portraits in galleries look similar? Does diversity make pictures more interesting? Does having all kinds of people in galleries feel like a more fair representation of their world?

### **Activities:**

- **Draw or Paint Portraits:** Draw or paint a portrait of someone you know well. What is the most important thing you want to do to succeed at a good portrait? Now draw or paint a portrait of someone you don't know well. How is the process different? How do you look at or “see” each person differently?
- **Creating Their Own Portraits:** Look in a mirror and draw your self-portrait. Is it easier to draw yourself than someone else or harder? What is the most important part of the picture for you? What makes the portrait look like YOU?
- **Explore Portraits Through Abstract Art:** Have the students explore different styles of making portraits. Present a lesson on realism verses abstract art. After the artwork is done discuss which pictures best represent the subject they painted and why. You can use the [Art Class Curator's abstract art lesson](https://artclasscurator.com/abstract-art-lesson/) but instead of painting bulls, paint people. (<https://artclasscurator.com/abstract-art-lesson/>)
- **Explore Color Theory:** Give the students different amounts of paint colors to mix to make brown. Have the students compare the different shades they made with the colors and amounts of paint that they mixed. If you wanted to mix your own brown paint, what colors would you use? Color theory tells artists to blend opposite hues on the color wheel to make brown. Blue and orange make brown. Yellow and purple make brown. Red and green make brown. But just as there are many shades of blue, red, and yellow, there are many shades of brown. If you wanted to paint your own skin color, what hues would you need to mix? Try to see if you can do it. Is it easy to match skin tone? What makes it so tricky?

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- **Social Skills:** Have the students look at portraits of different people. Ask them to write three words that describe those people. Then have the students share their descriptive words and discuss what they saw in the portraits that made them choose those words.
- **Writing:** Have the students write about what they want others to see when they look at them. Do they want to look beautiful? Handsome? Kind? Happy?
- **Writing:** Write about a time when you face a challenge. How did you handle the challenge?
- **Take a field trip to an Art Museum and pay attention.** What kind of pictures would you like to see included in museums and galleries that you don't see now? What kind of portraits are missing from museums? For example, do you see many people in wheelchairs in paintings? Do you see many people who are very old or very young? What kind of portraits are most common in museums? Who had the kind of money to pay to have their portraits painted? Those are probably the people who were painted most
- **PAINT YOUR WORLD:** Just as Laura Wheeler Waring painted her family, friends and people she admired, we would like to see your artwork of family, friends and people YOU admire. Send your pictures to Nancy Churnin (<http://www.nancychurnin.com>) with your name, age, city, state and a brief description of who this person or people are and why they are important to you and we will post on the PAINT YOUR WORLD page.

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### Resources:

- **Reading Rockets:** Book and poetry resources about African Americans for students. (<https://www.readingrockets.org/calendar/blackhistory>)
- **University of Illinois:** African American History for Kids. (<https://web.extension.illinois.edu/bhm/historyforkids.html>)
- **Incredible Art:** Color Theory Practice. (<https://www.incredibleart.org/files/color3.htm>)
- **The Art of Education:** A variety of ways to teach and explore color theory. (<https://theartofeducation.edu/2015/09/21/all-our-favorite-ways-to-teach-color-theory-in-one-place/>)
- **Growth Mindset:** An overview of growth mindset with free resources. (<https://mosswoodconnections.com/helping-children-develop-a-growth-mindset/>)
- **Visiting Museums:** Museum activities and links to virtual museums if you can't physically travel to an art museum. (<https://mosswoodconnections.com/activity/museum-activity/>)
- **Laura Wheeling:** Read more about Laura Wheeling. (<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/waring-laura-wheeler-1887-1948/>)
- **Artcyclopedia:** Laura Wheeler Waring Works Online ([http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/waring\\_laura\\_wheeler.html](http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/waring_laura_wheeler.html))

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### **About the Author:**

Nancy Churnin is the author of several picture book biographies, including South Asia Book Award winner, Manjhi Moves a Mountain, and Sydney Taylor Notable, Irving Berlin, the Immigrant Boy Who Made America Sing, both Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People. The former theater critic for the Dallas Morning News and Los Angeles Times, she now writes full-time.

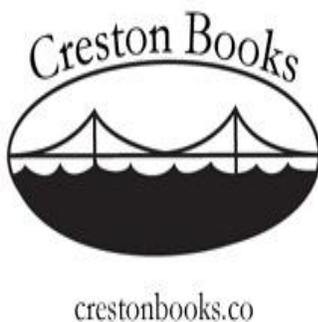
<http://www.nancychurnin.com/>



### **About the Illustrator:**

Felicia Marshall has illustrated numerous children's books. She studied art at the Pratt Institute in New York and now lives in Texas. Her paintings in this book are done the old-fashioned way, with brushes and paints, not digitally with pixels.

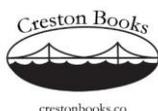
<https://www.feliciamarshallartist.com/>



### **About Creston Books:**

Creston Books fills the void left behind by the major New York publishers who no longer put out a broad range of quality picture books. The golden age of picture books, when fine books were edited and published despite not being blockbusters, does not have to be over. Creston Books is author/illustrator driven, with talented, award-winning creators given more editorial freedom.

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