

# **DELIA RAY: BRINGING HISTORY TO LIFE**

**Grades 5 & 6**

**VISITING AUTHOR  
2016**

**Sponsored by the ICCSD Foundation and Hills Bank**



**Kristi Harper—Garner Elementary Teacher Librarian  
Connie McCain—Lucas Elementary Teacher Librarian**

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**Delia Ray**  
**Hills Bank/ICCSD Foundation**  
**Visiting Author**  
**2016**

The following materials were created to prepare ICCSD fifth and sixth grade students for an author visit during Community Reading Month. Teacher librarians and classroom teachers are encouraged to use these materials to assist in building background knowledge about the author before her visit in October 2016.

This unit includes the following:

1. Biographical information about the author with a bibliography
2. A matrix of four books written and illustrated by Delia Ray with annotations, curricular ties, and themes
3. An introductory lesson for the author visit and a guide for each of the four titles with suggestions for background building, discussion questions, and activities

## **DELIA RAY: BRINGING HISTORY TO LIFE**

### **HILLS BANK/ICCS D FOUNDATION VISITING AUTHOR 2016**

Delia Ray was born in Newport News, Virginia on April 29, 1963. She grew up in Tidewater, Virginia with her father, an aeronautics engineer, her mother, a reading teacher, one sister, and one brother. Her family's historic old farmhouse, which had been built in 1830, actually had an old slave cottage on the property. During the summers she enjoyed many adventures with her sister and cousin while playing and exploring the woods and ponds near her home.

Delia enjoyed writing when she was young. She and her best friend wrote poems on pieces of paper, which they stapled together into books, and they even took turns writing the chapters of a novel. After reading books about Greek gods and goddesses (many years before the Percy Jackson series was written!), the girls wrote stories about gods and goddesses that they invented. In sixth grade, Delia wrote the Christmas play for her school, and in high school she was chosen to write the poem for her school's prom program.

Not surprisingly, when Delia went to the University of Virginia for college, she majored in English. She took as many creative writing classes as she could find, and she planned to begin a career as a writer. However, after graduation, she realized that she first needed a job that would pay the bills. She enrolled in a course at Radcliffe College in Boston that would teach her about the field of publishing. During the course, she became interested in becoming an editor because it would allow her to "surround [her]self with books *and* earn a living." She also hoped that she could learn more about being a writer by studying others' work.

Although most of her classmates from the Radcliffe course went on to find jobs in New York City, Delia's husband Matt needed to move to Seattle for his residency as a neurosurgeon, so she went to the west coast with him instead. As luck would have it, a former Radcliffe instructor was starting a publishing company in Seattle, and she was hired as one of its first employees. At this small company, she edited all types of writing, from stories to reports.

A few years after starting her job, Delia got her first big break. Her company had recently published a book for adults about the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897, and the publisher wanted a children's books about the same topic. Delia's boss asked her if she would write it.

Writing the book wasn't easy for Delia. She enjoyed doing lots of research to gather information for the book, including a trip to Canada, and made at least ten outlines, but "was paralyzed" and unfocused when she tried to sit down and write. Meanwhile, she noticed how disciplined her husband was with his time as a neurosurgical resident, and she finally decided to use his good habits to her advantage. She traveled to his research lab with him every evening, and while he performed experiments on rats, she wrote her book. Her unique strategy worked, and in 1989 Delia's first book, *Gold! The Klondike Adventure*, was published. This book was followed by two more nonfiction books, both about the Civil War.

After spending almost ten years in Seattle, Delia and Matt moved to Iowa City, where they raised their three daughters, who are now grown. Matt became a professor of neurosurgery at the University of Iowa and Delia continued to write books. As she was researching what was to be her fourth nonfiction book, a biography of first lady Lou Henry Hoover, she spent a significant amount of time at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in nearby West Branch. One day she stumbled upon some information about a school that the Hoovers built in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, and the idea for her first fiction book was hatched. *Ghost Girl* is a story about the students, teacher, and community of the President's Mountain School. She has since written three more fiction books, each with a historical element as the basis of the story. Delia says that she is "determined to make history exciting, perhaps to make up for all the dull history books that I was forced to read as a child." She has accepted that fact that her writing pace is not a quick one, and sometimes she sits in front of her computer for an hour before any words are typed. This doesn't bother her anymore, because she says that "every few days of writing, I get a rush of inspiration and excitement, and the words fly. And that thrill carries me through the next bout of snail-pace writing." Sometimes she works through her writer's block by spending time in her family's two-story treehouse, which has its own wood-burning stove and porch overlooking the Iowa River.

During the summer after fifth grade, Delia made copies of her books and tried to sell them for twenty-five cents apiece, but her parents were her only paying customers. Thankfully, things have changed; today thousands of people want to buy her books! Delia Ray's books have received numerous starred reviews and have been nominated for Children's Choice lists in ten states. *Singing Hands* and *Here Lies Linc* have both been nominated for the Iowa Children's Choice Award.

You can learn even more about Delia Ray and her books by visiting her website, <http://deliaray.com/>.

**Books Written by Delia Ray:**

**GOLD! THE KLONDIKE ADVENTURE.** New York: Lodestar, 1989.

**A NATION TORN: THE STORY OF HOW THE CIVIL WAR BEGAN.** New York: Lodestar, 1990.

**BEHIND THE BLUE AND GRAY: THE SOLDIER'S LIFE IN THE CIVIL WAR.** New York: Lodestar, 1991.

**GHOST GIRL: A BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAIN STORY.** New York: Clarion, 2003.

**SINGING HANDS.** New York: Clarion, 2006.

**HERE LIES LINC.** New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011.

**FINDING FORTUNE.** New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2015.

**Sources of Biographical Information:**

Berg, Zach. "Meet Iowa City-based Children's Author Delia Ray." *Iowa City Press-Citizen*. Wwww.press-citizen.com, 10 Dec. 2015. Web. 22 July 2016.

"Delia Ray." *Contemporary Authors Online*. Detroit: Gale, 2002. *Contemporary Authors Online*. Web. 18 July 2016.

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[http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CH1000110765&v=2.1&u=uiowa\\_main&it=r&p=CA&sw=w&asid=a2e0a366b991e79dbb4ffa3347b4b39f](http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CH1000110765&v=2.1&u=uiowa_main&it=r&p=CA&sw=w&asid=a2e0a366b991e79dbb4ffa3347b4b39f)

Howard, Delia Ray. "About Delia." *Delia Ray*. Authorsontheweb.com, 2015. Web. 22 July 2016. <<http://deliaray.com/about-delia/>>.

"Ray, Delia." *Something About the Author*. Volume 179. Detroit: Gale Research, 2007. Print.

## Delia Ray: Bringing History to Life

TITLE	TOPICS/ CURRICULAR TIES	TYPE OF LITERATURE	ANNOTATION	THEME
<i>Ghost Girl</i> (2003)	Family relationships Grief Schools Herbert Hoover Southeast region, Virginia Blue Ridge Mountains Shenandoah National Park American history	Historical Fiction	When President and Mrs. Herbert Hoover build a new school for the children in April's mountain community, she is excited for the chance to learn to read. When her dream of receiving an education is threatened, she finds acceptance from her teacher, Miss Vest, and her grandmother, Aunt Birdy, who care for April when she needs it most.	A family can take many forms.
<i>Singing Hands</i> (2006)	Deafness Disabilities Family relationships Friendships Respect for others Southeast region, Alabama Historical period, 1948	Historical Fiction	Gussie has a wild side and tries to get away with things that her deaf parents can't detect, but things get complicated when her simple antics catch up with her.	Just because you can do something, doesn't make it right. True satisfaction comes from being your best self.
<i>Here Lies Linc</i> (2011)	Cemeteries Death Junior high schools Friendships Family relationships Midwest region, Iowa	Realistic Fiction	Linc is trying to fit in at the public junior high school after being home-schooled for many years. In his attempts to impress his peers, he gets himself into situations that he can't undo and end up affecting other people in ways he didn't intend.	Your actions have consequences, for better or for worse.
<i>Finding Fortune</i> (2015)	Family relationships Divorce Military families Shells Button-making Midwest region, Iowa Mississippi River American history	Realistic Fiction, Mystery	When Ren runs away from home, she meets an interesting group of people at an old school-turned-boarding-house. Although her stint as a runaway only lasts one night, Ren is drawn back to the school and its residents, where she attempts to help solve a mystery involving a hidden treasure relating to the shell button-making history of the river town.	Good friends can help you discover your own strengths.

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## *Getting to Know Delia Ray*

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### **Introduction:**

Guess which of the following statements about author Delia Ray are true:

- A. As a girl, she was in a club called Brave Girls with her sister and cousin.
- B. Her aunt was an actress in a movie with legendary actor Jack Nicholson.
- C. She had a pony named Shadow.
- D. She owns a shelter dog named Griff who was the model for the dog in one of her books.
- E. ALL of these statements are true.

E is the correct answer; all of the statements are true. We will learn more about these statements later in this lesson.

Now guess which of these statements are true:

- A. Delia Ray loves popcorn.
- B. Delia Ray loves mushroom and sausage pizza.
- C. Delia Ray loves mocha almond fudge ice cream.
- D. Delia Ray likes to read, garden, and play banjo.
- E. ALL of these statements are true.

Again, E is the correct answer; all of the statements are true. Maybe you have something in common with Delia Ray!

### **Objective:**

Students will become familiar with the life and work of author Delia Ray.

### **Activity 1: Biography**

Read the biography of Delia Ray that is found on pages 3-4 of this Curriculum Guide. Use maps to locate Tidewater, Virginia and Iowa City, Iowa.

### **Activity 2: Delia Ray's Books**

Use the bibliography listed on page 5 of this Curriculum Guide, the library catalog, and your library's collection to familiarize students with books written by Delia Ray.

### Activity 3: Exploring Delia Ray's Website (This may happen on Day 2)

Direct students to some highlights from <http://deliaray.com/>:

- Notice that there is a picture on almost every page of the website. Clicking on the picture will allow you to see a caption AND several more pictures.
- Students will find great pictures and biographical information on the "About Delia" tab.
  - Refer students to the first question of this lesson. Details about A, C, and D can be found on this part of her website.
- In reference to choice B from the introductory question, Delia's aunt, Louise Fletcher, played Nurse Ratched in "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" starring Jack Nicholson. Read the fascinating details in an Iowa City Press-Citizen interview: <http://www.press-citizen.com/story/entertainment/go-iowa-city/2015/12/10/meet-iowa-city-based-childrens-author-delia-ray/76998848/>
- In "Delia's Books" you will find three sections for each book:
  - "Description" gives a summary of the story.
  - "Key Research Find" gives some tidbits (and more pictures!) about the historical background of the story.
  - "Order the Book" is self-explanatory; however, students will have the opportunity to order copies of the books which Delia will autograph while she is here. Ask your teacher librarian for details.

### Assessment: 3-2-1 Exit Slip

First, write three things you learned about Delia Ray.

Next, identify two things you want to learn about Delia Ray.

Finally, write the title of one of her books that looks interesting to you.

### Pre-Visit Review

Shortly before Delia Ray's visit to your school, look at the introductory questions again.

Discuss what you have learned since your study of Delia Ray began. Do you feel like you know her well now? What questions do you want to ask her when she visits?



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## *Ghost Girl* by Delia Ray

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**Type of literature:** Historical Fiction

**Characters:**

April Sloane –nicknamed Ghost Girl because of her white hair and pale eye color

Alma Sloane –April’s mother, emotionally distant after death of son

Aunt Birdy – April’s grandmother

Miss Christine Vest – schoolteacher hired by President and Mrs. Hoover

**Setting:** 1929-1932; Blue Ridge Mountains, Virginia

**Plot:** April lives in a remote area of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. Her parents are grieving the death of her younger brother, and April bears guilt relating to the accident that killed Riley. When President and Mrs. Herbert Hoover build a new school for the mountain children, April is excited for the chance to learn to read. When her dream of receiving an education is threatened, she finds acceptance from her teacher, Miss Vest, and her grandmother, Aunt Birdy, who care for April when she needs it most.

**Point of view:** First person

**Theme:** A family can take many forms.

**Pre-Reading and Background:**

- Define the following terms, events, and items that may not be familiar to students: geegaw, phonograph, Victrola, Great Depression, Hooverville
- Locate one or more of the following on a map: Shenandoah National Park, Blue Ridge Mountains (Virginia), Doubletop Mountain, Camp Rapidan. These real places provide the setting for Ghost Girl.

**Discussion:** [RL.5.2, 5.3, 5.6, RL.6.2, 6.3, 6.6]

- Delia Ray used the diaries and letters of the real Christine Vest as the inspiration for this story. Why is it important for people today to record their histories? What are some ways in which people do this? (blogs, diaries, social media, etc.)
- What is your opinion of April’s mother? Why do you suppose she acts the way she does? (Today she might be diagnosed with depression.)

- April's father is away from home often because he can no longer find work on the mountain. Discuss how the chestnut tree blight affected the way of life of the people living in this area.
- Many people in America blame Herbert Hoover for causing the Great Depression. However, he and his wife did many good things for the world, such as founding the mountain school. Discuss how important it is not to judge others without knowing everything about them. How does the media influence our perceptions of public figures? (Since this is an election year, this conversation is timely!)
- Discuss the pros, cons, and effects of carving Shenandoah National Park out of the mountain region portrayed in the book.

**Activities:** [W.5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.7, 5.10, W.6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.7, 6.10]

- Rewrite one of the scenes in the book using another character's point of view. You might choose to think about how Riley would describe the day of the fire, or of how Miss Vest felt when April refused to open the door.
- Keep a diary, write on a blog, or send a letter to someone describing recent events in your life.
- The students in the President's Mountain School are fascinated by the items in the Sears, Roebuck catalog. Use Google Images to search for "sears roebuck catalog 1929." Make a list of some things you could purchase in 1929 if you had ten dollars.
- April gets to know President Hoover and his wife during the time that Herbert Hoover is in office. Visit the official White House website, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>, to learn more about Herbert Hoover and his wife, Lou Henry Hoover. Click on the *1600 Penn* tab and choose *Presidents* or *First Ladies*.
- View the video about Camp Rapidan on the Shenandoah National Park website: <https://www.nps.gov/shen/learn/historyculture/rapidancamp.htm>
- Visit the website of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum (<http://hoover.archives.gov/>). This historic site is located just east of Iowa City in West Branch, Iowa. Plan a field trip to the museum, birthplace, and gravesite of Herbert Hoover.
- Look at a map of the White House: <https://whitehouse.gov1.info/visit/tour.html>. See if you can identify some of the rooms April saw when she visited Mrs. Hoover.
- Visit Delia Ray's website, <http://deliaray.com/> for more information about this book.

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## *Singing Hands* by Delia Ray

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**Type of literature:** Historical Fiction

**Characters:**

Gussie (Augustus) Davis – a mischievous 12-year-old hearing daughter of two deaf parents

Nell – Gussie’s favorite sister, 15 months younger than Gussie, also hearing

Margaret – Gussie’s 16-year-old sister, also hearing, but with little tolerance for Gussie’s mischief

Mr. Davis – Gussie’s father, a deaf minister, who travels frequently in order to operate churches for the deaf in several southern states

Mrs. Davis – Gussie’s mother, also deaf, who is very proper and often in charge of the home and the local church events in her husband’s absence

Miss Grace – a boarder in Gussie’s home, a young, deaf widow

Mrs. Fernley – a boarder in Gussie’s home, not deaf, loves opera

**Setting:** Birmingham, Alabama, 1948

**Plot:** Gussie doesn’t mean to look for trouble. She just has a bit of a wild and impulsive side that seems to catch up with her far too often, causing her no end of complicated situations that become more and more difficult to resolve. But who could blame the hearing daughter of two deaf parents for trying to get away with things her parents couldn’t possibly overhear? How could playing a simple prank on her older sister or skipping out on Sunday school classes at the hearing church across town possibly catch up with her? When they do, it takes some tough love from a network of supportive adults to help her understand herself and the people around her, so she can find a way to show her true colors.

**Point of view:** First Person

**Theme:** Just because you *can* do something, doesn’t make it right. True satisfaction comes from being your best self.

**Pre-Reading and Background:**

- The sign language alphabet can be found on the first page of *Singing Hands*. For a visual, showing each letter from 3 angles, watch <http://safeshare.tv/v/tkMg8g8vVUo>

- Some beginner American Sign Language (ASL) words and phrases can be learned here: <http://safeshare.tv/v/ss578e3fadb7a45>
- On page vi, Gussie says the choir ladies were “working to keep their graceful hands in unison.” Here is a video of Handel’s *Messiah* being performed at the Sydney Opera House in Australia by a choir and orchestra and also being signed at the same time. There is a brief introduction at the beginning of the video, describing the groups on the stage, and explaining that this is a unique performance, incorporating the visual component that comes with the signing. If you watch up to 2:30, you learn that the director of the sign language choir was born to deaf parents. Watch the “Hallelujah Chorus,” beginning at 2:07:40. Why do you think the people signing don’t always perform all at the same time?
- Delia Ray does a beautiful job of making references that help the reader get a real sense of time and place. Be sure to talk about these examples:
  - Pages v-vii: Gussie refers to several songs that would have been popular in the 1940’s. (What do you notice about these songs compared to music that is popular today?) The “lyrics” links below have ads along the side the pages. If you want to avoid these, you can download the [Adblock Plus](#) extension.
    - Beautiful Dreamer [Music](#)
    - Beautiful Dreamer [Lyrics](#)
    - I’m Looking Over a 4-Leaf Clover [Music](#)
    - I’m Looking Over a 4-Leaf Clover [Lyrics](#)
    - Shoo Fly Pie and Apple Pandowdy [Music](#)
    - Shoo Fly Pie and Apple Pandowdy [Lyrics](#)
    - Dixie [Music](#)
    - Dixie [Lyrics](#)
  - Page 14: [Chenille](#) – this is a fabric with raised designs. Hover over the image to zoom in and see the detail. (What type of bed covering do you have?)
  - Page 18: [Streetcar](#) – a vehicle that runs on rails, powered by electric lines up top, along a road for cars as well (Iowa City had a streetcar at one time! Learn more [here](#).)
  - Page 18: Millinery – women’s hats: designing, making, and selling them
  - Page 19: [Catalpa](#) – tree that grows in hot, humid climates with heart-shape leaves and seeds that resemble bean pods
  - Page 25: Gussie’s dad has a “clunky” [Smith Corona typewriter](#). The model in this photo was made around 1938, so it would be about 10 years old in this story.
  - Page 25: [Crape myrtle tree](#) – a flowering tree, common in the south, that may bloom in white, pinks, reds, or purples

- Page 26: [Vulcan](#) (god of fire) statue in Birmingham. (View close-up [here](#).) This is the largest cast iron statue in the world. It was created for the 1904 World's Fair held in St. Louis, Missouri, to showcase the rich iron and the fine craftsmanship of the Birmingham area. Including the spear and anvil, the figure weighs about 120,000 pounds (not including the pedestal he stands on)!
- Page 34: [Baby Ruth](#) and [Sugar Daddy](#) candies
- Page 35: The choir wore [black robes with white surplices](#)
- Page 43: Gussie refers to [honeysuckle](#), [kudzu vine](#), and [pine saplings](#) (this pine sapling is from a longleaf pine, common in Alabama)
- Page 56: dungarees are blue jeans or overalls
- Page 56: Mother had a [cameo brooch](#), which is a decorative pin worn on a woman's blouse that features an engraved design, often of a person's profile, on a different colored background
- Page 94: Miss Grace and Gussie enjoy some Nabs, which were peanut butter cracker sandwiches (like you can buy today) made by Nabisco
- Several times Gussie talks about segregation (p. 107 refers to separate neighborhoods, schools, water fountains, diners, separate seating sections in buses and theatres)
- Page 128: Mrs. Fernley plays a bit of the opera *Madame Butterfly* for Gussie on her turntable.
- Mrs. Fernley listens to a lot of opera, including *Madame Butterfly*, which she mentions on p. 22. Listen to a little [Madame Butterfly](#). (NOTE: As there are some adult themes to this opera, you would **not** want to watch it in its entirety.) Very briefly, a young Japanese geisha woman named Cio-Cio-San (also known as Madame Butterfly) is married to a US serviceman, Lt. Pinkerton, in the early 1900's. Cio-Cio-San (Butterfly) takes this wedding seriously, but Pinkerton does not acknowledge that is real, and he plans to someday take an American wife. Butterfly even converts to Christianity for her husband, and is disowned by her family for this. Three years pass, and Madame Butterfly and her son wait for the return of Lt. Pinkerton. When he finally does arrive, it is with his new American wife. Madame Butterfly is so upset, she insists that Pinkerton take his son with him, and she proceeds to stab herself with a dagger so she can die with honor, rather than live with shame. At the time she is stabbing herself, Pinkerton's voice can be heard from afar, calling her name.
- Gussie is supposed to teach the deaf students the Maypole dance, a traditional dance that originated in Europe. Watch this [demonstration](#). Notice how the ribbons weave further and further down the pole as the dance progresses.

**Discussion:** [RL.5.3, RL.5.IA.1, RL.5.4, RL.6.1, RL.6.IA.1, RL.6.4, RL.6.5]

- On p. 13, Gussie discovers that Mr. Snider heard and saw her in church and during Sunday lunch at Britlings. What adjectives do you think Mr. Snider might use to describe Gussie, since these two encounters are the only information he has about her? Explain why you chose these words. What feelings do you think Gussie had once she realized she had been “caught?” Why?
- Page 33-34: Nell and Gussie wore hats and put on gloves before church. This was common in 1948, but is not seen so often today. What are some other things you can think of that were common in the past, but are not seen so much today? (ex. [women wearing skirts/dresses, gloves, and high heels when in public, men wearing hats and trench coats, smoking was more acceptable and even desirable, etc.](#))
- On p. 37, Gussie refers to Missy DuPge’s mother as a “fashion-plate mother.” [Fashion plates](#) were illustrations of styles of clothes a person could make, buy, or wear. What did Gussie mean by her comment about Missy’s mother?
- On p. 39, Gussie drops her pennies for the collection basket. If this happened to you, how would you react?
- On page 80-83, why do you think Mrs. Fernley chose this particular punishment for Gussie? What do you think of Mrs. Fernley after this chapter? What do you think Mrs. Fernley thinks about what kind of person Gussie is? Give examples from the book that support your answers.
- Gussie feels nervous to enter the church for the “colored deaf” on pages 105-107. What does it tell you about her father, if he, a white man, is the minister to an all-black congregation? You might consider that the African-American community has certain aspects of culture in common, people who share a religious belief have a common culture, and the deaf community has aspects of culture in common. How do you think Gussie’s father views these communities? How do you think the people in these communities view Gussie’s father? Explain.
- On page 141, Missy DuPage makes fun of the deaf people in Gussie’s home. Are her actions the same or different from the kinds of things Gussie has done in the past? Use examples from the story to explain your thoughts. How do Missy’s actions in this chapter affect or even change Gussie as the story continues?
- What do you think of the punishment Gussie’s father gives her for her using the church offering money to get refreshments at the Tutwiler? Is it fair? Why or why not? Why do you think Gussie’s father chose this as her punishment?
- The words “singing” and “signing” are very similar. Do you think *Singing Hands* is a good title for this book? Why or why not?

**Activities:** [W.5.3,W.6.3]

- Learn the sign language alphabet. Choose your 5 hardest spelling words and practice signing them.
- Play this game to practice the letters! Get into groups of 8-9 or so. Each person is assigned a letter (each group is practicing only a few letters, such as A-I, or J-R, or S-Z). Sit in a circle so everyone can see all 8 players. All players slap legs 2 times, clap 2 times, then one player stays in this rhythm to sign his/her assigned letter followed by a different letter (ex. A, F). All players do 2 slaps, 2 claps, then the player who is assigned F signs F followed by another letter, like B. After 2 slaps, 2 claps, the person who is assigned B signs B followed by another of the letters, etc. There is no need to talk during this game, but it may be helpful at first to say the letters as you sign them to help all players recognize the signs. If anyone stumbles, the game starts over and that person gets to go first in order to practice again right away.
- In chapter 10, Mrs. Fernley gives Gussie quite a few words to look up in her Funk and Wagnall's dictionary. Use the online version to look up the same words. <http://www.funkandwagnalls.com/> (Note: you must click "Search." Hitting "Enter" does not activate the search.) Compare these definitions with definitions from an online kids' dictionary: <http://www.wordcentral.com/> There are more of Mrs. Fernley's word lists on page 120-121.
- Nell entertains Abe with Cat's Cradle string tricks. Grab some string and use these videos to try some on your own. (You can find more by going to YouTube and searching "Momsminivan string tricks.")
  - [Kitty Whiskers](#)
  - [Cat's Cradle](#) (partner game)
  - [Cup and Saucer](#)
  - [Drum and Spider](#)
  - [Hand Trap and Escape](#) (partner game)
  - [Pull the Rabbit out of the Hat](#)
  - [Running Dog](#) (video takes about 12 minutes, but the dog actually moves!)
- Gussie tries her first hot tamale with Miss Grace. See a recipe and an image [here](#), or watch this 12-minute [video](#) that demonstrates the steps (they actually start making the tamales about 55 seconds into the video). (Note: This video was chosen because it is **not** dry and boring, but this also means that one of the hosts makes jokes about fart noises.☺ This should help keep 5-6 grade students' attention!)
- Gussie gets into a lot of embarrassing situations. What's the most embarrassing thing that's ever happened to you? Write about it, giving as many details as possible that help the reader to understand exactly what happened and how you felt and reacted at the time.

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*Here Lies Linc*  
by Delia Ray

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**Type of literature:** Realistic Fiction

**Characters:**

Linc (Lincoln) Crenshaw - a formerly home-schooled boy who is now in the public junior high

Lottie – Linc’s mom

Delaney – Linc’s friend at his new school

Mellecker – a boy who used to attend the same home-school as Linc, but has attended the public schools for several years now

Beez – Mellacker’s friend, who is also a bully

Jeeter – the groundskeeper at Oakland Cemetery

Kilgore – the superintendent of Oakland Cemetery

**Setting:** Iowa City: Oakland Cemetery (a real, historic Iowa City cemetery), Plainview Junior High (fictional school), Linc’s neighborhood

**Plot:** Linc and his mother have gotten along just fine after the death of Linc’s dad a few years ago. Linc’s mother continued her job as a history professor and burial customs expert at the university, and Linc was home-schooled with a few other kids with a retired professor as their teacher. Now that he’s decided to attend a public school, things suddenly get complicated. He has to learn to deal with junior high kids, who are not very accepting of a new kid. When his American Studies teacher announces a class project involving the cemetery behind Linc’s house, he finds himself spinning stories about a grave at the cemetery and even promising to get the key to a family vault so a classmate can sneak inside. He knows he’s gotten himself into deep trouble, but what he doesn’t know is that the cemetery project will reveal information that changes his life forever.

**Point of view:** First Person

**Theme:** Your actions have consequences, for better or for worse.

**Pre-Reading and Background:**

- Oakland Cemetery has been Iowa City’s main cemetery since 1843.
- The Black Angel has become a popular landmark in Iowa City, and people come from all around to see it. What stories have you heard about the Black Angel? Do



you believe any of them? A couple of examples of stories can be found at

<http://www.prairieghosts.com/oakland.html> and

<https://roadtrippers.com/stories/beware-the-black-angel-of-iowa-citys-oakland-cemetery?lat=40.80972&lng=-96.67528&z=5>

- Iowa City author Timothy C. Parrott has written a well-researched history of the Black Angel and the woman who commissioned it. Relevant information from his book, *Delia Ray's Author's Note* at the end of *Here Lies Linc*, and some of the urban legends found on the Internet can be read [here](#). Teachers may want to read this document **before** reading *Here Lies Linc*, but they may want to share it with students **after** reading the book together, so students can see how Delia Ray incorporated fact into her fiction story without ruining the mysterious qualities of the statue while reading the book.
- On page 101, Linc uses a microfilm viewer. This video demonstrates: <http://safeshare.tv/v/mRuT7TEs2O4>
- Define new vocabulary:
  - **Columbarium** – an indoor or outdoor structure with smaller sections called niches that holds cremated ashes in an urn
  - **Epitaphs** – something written (often on a tombstone) about a person who has died; it might be a quote, a poem, or a few words describing the person
  - **Gipped** (also spelled gyped) – cheated out of something
  - **Mausoleum** – a large tomb, usually made of stone, that has room for several people's coffins (usually all from one family)
  - **Midwife** – someone other than a doctor who helps with prenatal care, delivery of babies, and care of the mother and baby after birth. Some people still use a midwife today (especially in other countries), but their services were more common in the USA up to the early 1900s, when hospitals became more easily accessible. This is also when the medical community gained an understanding of the prevention and dangers of bacteria (the need for a sterile environment) and the use of anesthesia to ease pain during childbirth. As the medical community gained skill and knowledge, midwives became seen in a different and less favorable light, and sometimes they were even thought to practice witchcraft. Since they also were knowledgeable about performing abortions, they were considered evil by some. The evil/witchcraft perceptions of midwives (and likely, then, about Theresa Dolezal Feldwert herself) may have led to the creation of the mysterious stories about the Black Angel. For more information, see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midwifery> or <http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/health-info/history-of-midwifery/>

- **Susanky** – Czech word for biscuit or cookie. (Pronounced soo-**shenk'**-ee.) There are a number of different kinds. Some images can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/susanky-images>
- **Vault** – a large liner, usually made of concrete today, that a coffin is put inside to protect it from water and to keep it and the ground around it from sinking or settling. Vault can also be another word for a mausoleum.

**Discussion:** [RL.5.1, RL.5.IA.1, RL.5.3, RL.5.4, SL.5.1, RL.6.IA.1, RL.6.4, L.6.5, SL.6.1]

- On page 174, Linc gets caught in a very uncomfortable situation. Have you ever had an incident like this, where someone observed you saying or doing something that you regretted? Tell about it. Be sure to tell what you tried to do to fix the situation. (Be sensitive to others' feelings. If your story could upset another person in your class, it may be best not to share it.)
- How do you think Linc felt when he learned that Jeeter lost his job because of Linc's actions? Were you surprised at how Jeeter reacted to being fired? What does Jeeter's reaction to being fired tell you about what kind of person he is?
- What do you think of the punishment Kilgore gave to Linc? Does it sound fair? Why or why not? If it were up to you, what punishment would you have suggested?
- After everything you learned about Theresa Dolezal Feldwert, what do you think of her? Do you think she had a cursed life? Do you think she was remarkable in any ways? Explain.
- On page 292, Linc makes a connection between Theresa Dolezal Feldwert and Adeline (Addy) Raintree. Discuss this comparison. How are these women alike? How are their stories different?
- Now that you have learned about the life of Theresa Dolezal Feldwert and the true history of the Black Angel, discuss why you think all of the rumors and false stories about the statue's history came to be so popular. What reasons do you have for your ideas?
- Usually when we see "Here Lies \_\_\_\_\_" we think of a gravestone inscription. Is that how Delia Ray used this phrase in the title of this book? Are there other meanings she might have wanted the reader to consider? What meaning(s)? Explain your idea.

**Activities:** [RI.5.7, RL.5.4, RL.5.7, W.5.4, L.5.5, RL.6.4, W.6.4, L.6.5]

- Three people who are buried in Oakland Cemetery have Iowa City schools named after them. Who are they? (Hint: Check Wikipedia)
- Think of a favorite book character or a famous person. Write an epitaph that would fit that person. Why is that a fitting epitaph for the character/person you chose? For example, Walt Disney's epitaph would probably say something about

him creating so many memorable characters and stories, for example: *May the joy he created during this life return to him in the next life.* Or, write an epitaph for yourself. Draw a gravestone to go with the epitaph you write.

- Linc talks a lot about common symbols on gravestones and what they stand for (ex. on page 28). Use any of the following websites to learn more about gravestone symbols:
  - <http://www.raogk.org/encyclopedia/tomb/>
  - <http://www.graveaddiction.com/symbol.html>
  - <http://msghn.org/usghn/symbols.html>
  - [http://genealogy.about.com/od/cemetery\\_records/ig/tombstone\\_symbols/](http://genealogy.about.com/od/cemetery_records/ig/tombstone_symbols/)
- On page 111, Linc uses a simile to describe Mr. Krasny's hair: "...his white hair sprang out from his head like dandelion fuzz." Draw a picture of hair that looks like dandelion fuzz. Use the images of many different hairstyles found at <http://tinyurl.com/hair-similes> to write your own similes. Can your classmates guess which photo you used for your simile?
- Use the Oakland Cemetery map link to find the Black Angel statue and the graves of Eddie Dolezal, Theresa Feldwert, and Nicholas Feldwert. (Zooming in will help you.) Can you also locate Babyland?  
<http://www.map.ramaker.com/iowacity/> Or, plan a field trip to Oakland Cemetery to see these sites first hand.
- Extension activity, possibly for ELP: In *Here Lies Linc*, Linc's father is not buried underground, but his ashes are in a columbarium. Oakland Cemetery has two columbaria. Using the following information from the Oakland Cemetery website and the Oakland Cemetery map at <http://www.map.ramaker.com/iowacity/>, locate the columbarium.

## Columbarium

The Forestview Columbarium is a gleaming black granite wall located in the east end of Oakland Cemetery. It is lined with 352 niches for the interment of cremains, and the maximum size a cinerary urn may be is 9 inches high by 9 inches wide by 9.5 inches deep. To obtain fee information refer to the "rates and charges" section above or [click here](#).

The Cherish Columbarium is the second columbarium at Oakland Cemetery, located in the far East side of the cemetery. This black granite structure has 64 niches - 32 (12"x12"x12") and 32 (12"x12"x16") for interment of cremains. The pricing will vary depending on size, height on wall and the side the niche is facing. Single niches are located on the North and South ends of the structure and accommodate a slightly larger cinerary urn than the Forestview Columbarium. The double or dual niches can accommodate 2 cinerary urns and are located on the West and East sides of the structure. To obtain fee information refer to the "rates and charges" section above or [click here](#).

<https://www.icgov.org/city-government/departments-and-divisions/oakland-cemetery>

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## *Finding Fortune* by Delia Ray

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**Type of literature:** Realistic Fiction

**Characters:**

Ren Winningham –12 years old, upset about her mother’s new relationship, worried about her father in the military

Hildy Baxter –landlady of the Fortune School boarding house

Hugh Miliken– 8 years old, lives with his mom in the library of the Fortune School

Tucker Baxter – 13 years old, Hildy’s grandson from Des Moines, staying with Hildy for the summer

**Setting:** Present day; a tiny Mississippi River town called Fortune

**Plot:** Ren’s dad will be returning from military service in Afghanistan soon, but her mom doesn’t seem interested in fixing the problems in their marriage. When Ren runs away from home in protest, she meets an interesting group of people at an old school-turned-boarding-house in a town with a population of twelve. Although her stint as a runaway only lasts one night, Ren is drawn back to the school and its residents, where she attempts to help solve a mystery involving a hidden treasure relating to the shell button-making history of the river town.

**Point of view:** First person

**Theme:** Good friends can help you discover your own strengths.

**Pre-Reading and Background:**

- Use a map to locate Muscatine, Iowa and Le Roy, Iowa, two real places upon which the fictional town of Fortune is roughly modeled. Muscatine is a thriving city, but Le Roy and the fictional Fortune are nearly ghost towns. Discuss the reasons why some towns fail and others succeed.
- Learn about the shell button industry in Muscatine. These websites contain a large amount of historical information on this topic:
  - <http://www.iptv.org/iowapathways/mypath.cfm?h=no>
  - <http://www.muscatinehistory.org/>

**Discussion:** [RL.5.2, 5.6, 5.9, RL.6.2, 6.6, 6.9]

- Read the Author’s Note at the back of the book. Delia Ray had some interesting experiences as she gathered information and ideas for this book. How important were these experiences to the eventual story?
- Why do you think Hugh and Mine chose to live in Fortune for the summer? What will life be like for them when they return to Chicago?
- The twin sisters own Bengal house cats. Use Iowa AEA Online (<http://www.iowaaeaonline.org/>) – *Britannica Online* – *Middle School level* to look up “Bengal cat.” What do you think of these cats? For fun, watch a [video](#) on YouTube showing Bengal cats on exercise wheels.
- Ren’s favorite book is *Little Women*. Read a synopsis of this classic story such as this one: <http://www.gradesaver.com/little-women/study-guide/summary>. Discuss why Ren might identify with the March family. (The dad returns from war to a happy home, which is what Ren wants.)
- What do you think will happen to Ren’s family? Do you think Ren will be able to handle changes that may be coming? How has her experience at the Fortune School changed her? (She knows that she can affect her own fortune.)

**Activities:** [W.5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.7, W.6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.7]

- Imagine that your elementary school has closed and that your family has bought it. Do one or more of the following:
  - Write a descriptive essay about how your family would use the school. Describe your new bedroom and other living spaces.
  - Draw and label a map of the school and how it will be used by your family.
  - Write a story in which you live in the school. Be sure to include a conflict/problem and its resolution.
- Look at page 145 for the names of many types of shells that Hildy owns. Find pictures of them on the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service website: <https://www.fws.gov/>
- Visit the Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum website. (A rainy-day visit to this place on a family vacation to Florida first gave Delia Ray the idea to write this book.)
- Are you interested in learning even more about button-making, shells, or how pearls are made? Use Iowa AEA Online to do some research with a partner or small group. Present your findings to the class, using pictures you have found.
- Visit Delia Ray’s website, <http://deliaray.com/> for more information about this book.