



Making History with Writing

Read Aloud Lesson based on the book

The Power of Her Pen: The Story of Groundbreaking Journalist Ethel L. Payne

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*Ethel L. Payne was an incredible journalist who shared the stories of the African American community and drew attention to the challenges they faced. **The Power of Her Pen** is an illustrated book that tells the stories of her life and the places her writing took her, from Chicago, to Japan, to the White House. Her inspiring work has earned her the title “First Lady of the Black Press.” Her story is one of determination, fearlessness, and shows the power storytelling and writing can have.*

*After reading or listening to **The Power of Her Pen** (check YouTube for a read aloud), answer and reflect on the questions below.*

1. Ethel was a journalist since she was in high school and published hundreds of articles in many newspapers. Do you read the newspaper? How about watch or listen to the news? Why is reading the news important?
2. Ethel shared the stories of African Americans and shed light on the issues they were facing in our country. Why is knowing about your community’s challenges important? Why is it important to know about the challenges others are facing?
3. In high school Ethel was one of the only black students. When she started at the White House, out of 204 reporters, she was one of the three black journalists. Do you think it was hard for Ethel to always be different than most of her classmates or colleagues? Have you ever been around people that are mostly different than you? How did you feel? Why is it important for people to learn about those of different races, backgrounds, and cultures than their own?

4. Ethel was always asking the hard questions, wanting to get to the bottom of the most important issues. She continued to do so even when she was asking them to the presidents of the United States, and even when people weren't happy about the questions being asked. Why is it important to ask the hard questions? Is change ever made if we don't question things?
5. Think of something that's happening in your community that is worth writing and telling others about. Be prepared to share.