

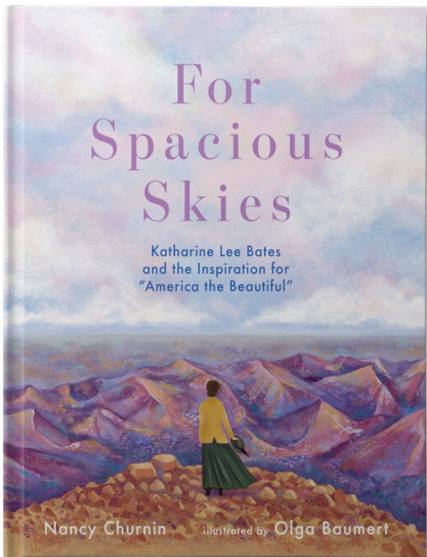
# FOR SPACIOUS SKIES

KATHARINE LEE BATES AND THE INSPIRATION

FOR “AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL”

WRITTEN BY NANCY CHURNIN

ILLUSTRATED BY OLGA BAUMERT



## SUMMARY

Katharine Lee Bates, not satisfied with the women’s Civil War–era role of mending and cooking, broke out to become a reformer, poet, writer, educator, and suffragette. She became inspired to pen one of our most beloved patriotic songs, America the Beautiful. This is her story.

## THEMES

Women’s Rights, Patriotism, Civil War, Katharine Lee Bates, Women’s Suffrage, Reformer, Unity

## COMMON CORE

CCSS.ELA-Literacy RI.3.1, RI.3.2 RI.3.3, RI.3.4, RI.3.5, RI.3.6, RI.3.7, RI.3.8, RI.3.9, RI.3.10

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nancy Churnin is the author of the picture book biographies *The William Hoy Story: How a Deaf Baseball Player Changed the Game*; *The Queen and the First Christmas Tree: Queen Charlotte’s Gift to England*; and *Irving Berlin: The Immigrant Boy Who Made America Sing*. A native New Yorker who now lives in Texas, Nancy loves sharing books with her husband, Michael Granberry, and sons Ted, Sam, David, and Josh. Her website is [www.nancy-churnin.com](http://www.nancy-churnin.com).

## AUTHOR PROJECT

Author Project: FOR SPACIOUS LINES. Calling all readers to share poems and written thoughts about what you love about America and how you would love to see it improved. Send your responses to Nancy on her contact page: [www.nancy-churnin.com](http://www.nancy-churnin.com)

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Olga Baumert is an artist, graphic designer, and illustrator whose work includes several picture books and novel covers. Like Katharine Lee Bates, Olga is inspired by the overwhelming beauty of being part of something vast and majestic. Originally from Poland, she studied graphic design and illustration in England, where she now lives. Visit her online at [www.olgabaumert.com](http://www.olgabaumert.com).

## BEFORE YOU READ

Read Nancy Churnin's blog post about why she wrote the book.

<https://www.nancychurnin.com/thekidsareallwrite/2019/8/3/happy-birthday-wishes-for-katharine-lee-bates-poet-of-america-the-beautiful>

Listen to a recording of "America the Beautiful."

With photos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmP9LvHgcaA>

Audio only: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsbEkQBYZPQ>

Read "America the Beautiful," and discuss the meaning of the lines.

Find Falmouth, Massachusetts, on a map.

Discuss the time period around the Civil War.

Discuss women's roles in 1865.



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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Katharine saw men trudging home in tattered blue. What does tattered blue tell you about the life of the soldier?

How would you feel seeing soldiers in tattered uniforms. What would you do upon seeing them?

When Abraham Lincoln was shot, Katharine's mother wept. What does this tell you about how people felt about the president? What bad news would make you weep? If our president was shot, why would we weep?

Today we would know in seconds if our president had been killed. How did the nation find out when President Lincoln was killed? How long did it take for people to find out?

What does the phrase "a hush suffocated the streets" mean? What would cause this? Why would a shooting make it hard to breathe? Would any shooting cause this or only the shooting of a president? Explain your answer.

The country's heart was ripped in two. Can this happen today? Give examples of things that can rip a country's heart in two.

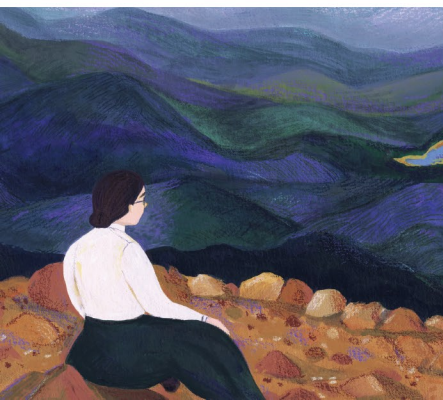
Why was Katharine gazing at the sea? What effect does gazing at the sea have on a person? Where do you go, or what do you do when you need to think? Why do you go there, and how does it help?

What were the opportunities for girls in 1865? What are they for girls today? Would you rather live in 1865 or today? Explain your answer.

How would you feel if you had no opportunities? If there was nothing else you could do, would you still yearn to be more or be satisfied with your lot in life? Explain your answer.

Girls mended and cooked. Do you have these skills? Do you think they are necessary skills to have today? Explain your answer.

Should boys learn to sew? Mend? Explain your answer.



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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why would Katharine think having separate roles is not fair if girls and boys had always had separate roles? Name areas where girls are changing their roles today and doing what boys do. Should some things be just for boys or just for girls? (e.g. boy scouts, etc.) Is it okay for girls/boys to challenge their roles?

Katharine wrote in her diary. Why is keeping a diary or journal important?

Katharine wrote that, "Sewing is always expected of girls. Why not of boys?" How would you answer this question?

Katharine's mother took in sewing and washing and grew and sold vegetables to help Katharine go to school. What does this tell you about Katharine's mother? Was school free back then? How much did it cost? What are the benefits of having a vegetable garden?

Some people said girls couldn't learn as well as boys. Why did they think that? Is it true? What do you believe and why?

During Katharine's time, girls were expected to think about marriage, not books. Is it okay to not get married? Could a woman support herself in 1865? What about now? Is there a stigma about women who aren't married? Are they thought of differently? Explain your answer.

Katharine marveled at the power of words to make people think and feel differently. Do you agree words have power? Give examples of times where words had power to make people think and feel differently in history and today.

Today do we have colleges that are just for girls? Would you want to go to an all-girl college? What are the benefits and drawbacks? Why did an all-girl college open back then? Was it so girls could have opportunities to be educated or because people thought they wouldn't be able to keep up with the males in the existing colleges?



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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The rich and poor at Wellesley ate the same food and lived in identical rooms but didn't mix outside of school. Do you think in school the rich looked down on the poor? Sitting side by side in classes, what do you think they learned from one another? Do you think they came to respect one another more? Explain your answer. Do you think your answer would be different if you were talking about students of today? Explain.

In 1865 women couldn't become doctors or lawyers because medical schools and law schools were just for men, but why couldn't women own businesses? Could women own land in 1865? Is a business considered land? Is selling vegetables and sewing and washing considered a business, or does a business include a building?

Make a list of what you believe a woman might be able to do in 1865 if she were creative.

In the book's illustrations, the rich women of leisure row, practice archery, and play croquet and badminton. Why didn't the poor women participate in these pastimes among themselves?

Katharine helped establish a settlement house for immigrants and college women. What is a settlement house, and what is involved in establishing one? What does this tell you about Katharine and her character?

Katharine spoke for women's suffrage and world peace. What would you say to convince people women should be allowed to vote? What countries today do not let women vote?

What was going on in the world of 1865 that Katharine felt she needed to speak out on world peace? What about today?

Katharine wrote a novel about people who labored in sweatshops and struggled to care for their sick children. What is a sweatshop? Do we have them in America? Is a sweatshop a form of slavery? Explain. Children as young as ten worked in sweatshops. How would you feel about leaving school today to work twelve to sixteen hours a day in a sweatshop for the rest of your life?



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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If you were to write a novel that addresses an issue we have today, what would you write about and why? Brainstorm ideas.

Katharine's novel *Rose and Thorn* inspired talk about how to help the poor. Make a list of ways you or your class can help the poor. Katharine's ability to write this novel shows she had compassion and empathy. What is empathy? Do you have empathy?

Katharine's book was inspiring. Name a book you read that inspired you, moved you to feel a certain way, or take action. Explain how you felt, what you did, and why the book made you feel that way.

Katharine wrote poems, books, and essays. What is an essay, and what is the purpose of one? Are you more persuaded by reading something or hearing a speech? Why?

In 1893 Katharine rode by train from Massachusetts to Colorado. How long would this take in 1893? How long would it take today? How would you feel traveling alone across the country on a train in 1893?

Katharine saw beauty and hope out of her train window. How would seeing the beauty of the country give Katharine hope? Why is hope important?

Katharine sees herself as a reformer. What is a reformer, and what was she trying to change? Should all of us be reformers for change? What would you work on changing in our society today and why?

People struggled in dark mines, picked crops in blistering sunlight, or choked for air in smoke-stained factories. How would you change these jobs to make them more tolerable, or is that possible?

What is an economic depression, and why would it cause people to feel scared, angry, and alone? How does one fix an economic depression?

Katharine compares the waves of water to the waves of grain and wonders if the farmers and sailors are more alike than we realize. What does she mean by this? How are they alike?



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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

When Katharine saw America from the top of Pikes Peak she exclaimed, “O beautiful!” What have you seen that made you say, “O beautiful,” and what caused you to feel that emotion?

Katharine saw America as one unbroken country with no walls between people. The astronauts on the International Space Station have made the same connection when seeing the world without borders. How would this view change how you felt about people? What do walls cause? How do no walls give hope?

How do you feel about building the border wall between the United States of America and Mexico? How have walls been viewed throughout history? Have they been effective in achieving their purposes? (e.g. The Great Wall of China and the Berlin Wall) How will the wall we are currently building be viewed one hundred or more years from now? Do you think it will still be standing?

People described Katharine’s poem as America united as a family. What would be different about America if we were to see everyone as family? After the Civil War, did our country feel like one big family? How did this poem help our country to heal?

Katharine never accepted money for her poem. It was her gift to America. What does this tell you about her? Would you have accepted the money? Explain your answer.

People from all walks of life sent Katharine thank-you notes for her poem. Why do you think they took the time to write? Katharine answered each note. If you were Katharine, what would you write in response to a thank-you letter?

In 1920 Katharine got to vote for the first time. How would you feel getting to finally vote for the first time? Why would you feel that way? Why do so many people today not vote when they have the right to? Why is voting important?

Katharine crafted a poem that sewed together the dreams of a diverse nation. How is our nation diverse? Are our dreams the same or different? Explain your answer.



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# ACTIVITIES

Learn to sew on a button and hem.

Learn to cook biscuits from scratch.

Keep a diary or journal of your thoughts.

Grow a vegetable garden.

Learn the skill of archery. How does math help you shoot arrows or throw darts?

Learn to play badminton.

Choose a state and find something inspiring to visit.

Write a persuasive letter or speech to convince someone women should be allowed to vote.

Read that speech to your class.

Write a speech to send to a world leader today to sway them to stop a war they started.

This can be a civil war.

Write an editorial newspaper article about sweatshops, and compare them to slavery.

Try your hand at writing a short story that addresses an issue we have today.

Choose a project you or your class can do to help the poor, and take it on.

Map out the places Katharine went on the train.

Write to an author, poet, or inventor thanking them for what they gave to the world.

Tell why you chose them.

Write a new stanza for “America the Beautiful” based on what you think is beautiful about America.



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# READER'S THEATER

## "AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL" BY KATHARINE LEE BATES

Narrator 1

Narrator 2

Narrator 3

Narrator 4

Narrator 5

Narrator 6

Narrator 1: O beautiful

Narrator 2: For spacious skies,

Narrator 3: For amber waves of grain,

Narrator 4: For purple mountain

Narrator 5: Majesties

Narrator 6: Above the fruited plain!

Narrators 1,2,3: America!

Narrators 4,5,6: America!

Narrator 1: God shed His grace on thee,

Narrator 2: And crown they good

Narrator 3: With brotherhood

Narrator 4: From sea

Narrator 5: To shining sea!

Narrator 6: O beautiful

Narrator 1: For pilgrim feet,

Narrator 2: Whose stern, impassioned stress

Narrator 3: A thoroughfare

Narrator 4: For freedom beat

Narrator 5: Across the wilderness!

Narrators 1,2,3: America!

Narrators 4,5,6: America!

Narrator 6: God mend thine every flaw,

Narrator 1: Confirm thy soul

Narrator 2: In self-control,

Narrator 3: Thy liberty in law!

Narrator 4: O beautiful

Narrator 5: For heroes proved

Narrator 6: In liberating strife,

Narrator 1: Who more than self

Narrator 2: Their country loved,

Narrator 3: And mercy

Narrator 4: More than life!

Narrators 1,2,3: America!

Narrators 4,5,6: America!

Narrator 5: May God thy gold refine

Narrator 6: Till all success

Narrator 1: Be nobleness,

Narrator 2: And every gain

Narrator 3: Divine!

Narrator 4: O beautiful

Narrator 5: For patriot dream

Narrator 6: That sees beyond the years

Narrator 1: Thine alabaster cities gleam,

Narrator 2: Undimmed

Narrator 3: By human tears!

Narrator 1,2,3: America!

Narrator 4,5,6: America!

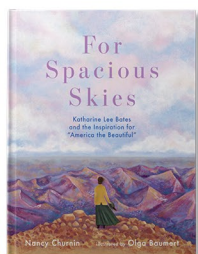
Narrator 4: God shed His grace on thee,

Narrator 5: And crown thy good

Narrator 6: With brotherhood

Narrator 1: From sea

Narrator 2: To shining sea!



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