



The Secret Life of Bees: *Discussion and Activity Guide*

*Curriculum for youth leaders, educators, and families to accompany
the movie and book The Secret Life of Bees*

F.I.L.M.
Integrating Film into the Learning of Middle School



Ages 13 - 17
youthFILMproject.org

The Secret Life of Bees official website:
<http://www.foxsearchlight.com/thesecretlifeofbees>

Introduction

Dear Group Facilitator:

The Secret Life of Bees is a moving story from Fox Searchlight Pictures based on the novel by Sue Monk Kidd.

Set in South Carolina in 1964, *The Secret Life of Bees* tells the touching story of Lily Owens as she leaves her troubled life in pursuit of her deceased mother's past. Accompanied by her caretaker, Rosaleen, the two seek shelter in the Boatwright home, a family of three intelligent, talented, African-American sisters who manage their own honey business.

In this new home, Lily begins to confront her guilt and pain over the loss of her real mother, whom she accidentally killed as a small child. Yet troubles continue as the harsh realities of a still racially segregated South confront Lily and her new friend, Zach. In spite of numerous challenges that face Lily and the Boatwright sisters, Lily realizes that love and happiness are possible, even if it requires leaving home. *The Secret Life of Bees* touches on many powerful themes including the importance of love and home, the consequences of secrets, finding courage, learning about the Civil Rights Movement, and valuing empowered women.

This FILM curriculum, *The Secret Life of Bees: Discussion and Activity Guide*, is structured for use after youth have read the story and viewed the movie. It offers discussion topics, activities, and service project ideas for youth ages 13 - 17 based on the central themes.

The FILM Project is made possible through the partnership of Heartland Truly Moving Pictures and the National Collaboration for Youth. Heartland is a nonprofit organization that seeks to recognize and honor filmmakers whose work explores the human journey. The National Collaboration for Youth is a nonprofit organization providing a unified voice for its coalition of more than 50 national, nonprofit, youth development organizations, and concentrates on improving the conditions of youth in the United States and enabling youth to realize their full capabilities.

Steps For Facilitators To Use When Implementing This Curriculum:

Objectives for youth in this curriculum:

- Read about the “secrets” of the story
- Recognize the importance of love and family
- Learn about important moments and figures in the Civil Rights Movement
- Deconstruct female gender stereotypes
- Uncover the consequences of secrets in the movie, book, and your own life
- Take steps to forgive and heal to find happiness

Steps for Youth to Take with *The Secret Life of Bees*: Discussion and Activity Guide

Step 1) Read the book and see the movie

The Book: *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd.

The Secret Life of Bees has spent over two years on The *New York Times* Best Seller list, was chosen as the BookSense Paperback Book of the Year in 2004, and was nominated for the prestigious Orange Prize in the U.K, among others. *

* *The Secret Life of Bees* Production Notes. 2008. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation

The Movie: *The Secret Life of Bees*, a Fox Searchlight Pictures production, is available on DVD. The movie is rated PG-13.

Step 2) Participate in activities







Take part in meaningful discussions and activities about:

- The secret life of bees and other amazing creatures
- Significant milestones in the Civil Rights Movement
- Powerful women leaders and family members
- The search for love and a safe place to call home

Step 3) Take the lead to help others

Engage in service projects within your community based on lessons learned in this curriculum. Just as the Boatwrights — August, May and June — offer love and shelter to Lily and Rosaleen, you can take the lead to reach out to people in your community who can use some kindness, healing, and attention. Project ideas are included in the guide and a free, downloadable service-learning supplement is available to assist in the planning and managing of *The Secret Life of Bees* service projects. Please visit www.youthFILMproject.org to download the supplement.

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The pencil icon designates pages that can be distributed to youth as worksheets.

Module One: The Secret Life Of...

Dear Facilitator,

The following section, Module One: The Secret Life Of..., provides an opportunity for youth to explore a central theme in the book and movie. Lily's shameful past leads her on a course of secrets and lies during her initial stay with the Boatwrights. The module encourages youth to draw comparisons about the book and movie while learning behind-the-scenes information about the author's writing of the story. Youth will also learn exciting facts about the secrets of bees and other important animals while delving into discussions and activities about the secrets that characters abstain from sharing throughout the novel. Additionally, participants will have the opportunity to reflect on secrets or lies that they have kept or told in the past.

Objectives for Youth:

- Learn about the writing of the book
- Read about the social nature of bees and their importance to humans
- Discuss and analyze the secrets of Lily and her family
- Examine the secrets that they have kept

Module One: The Secret Life Of...

Activity One: The Story

While many movies are based on original screenplays, often the best movies are based on beloved novels, such as *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd.

Do you ever read a fictional book and wonder what compelled the author to write it? Do you wonder if the plot or characters were informed by personal experiences of the writer? Read the following segment, courtesy of Fox Searchlight Pictures, which explains why Sue Monk Kidd chose to write her fictional book based on the setting of her childhood in the 1960s.

Reading: Behind The Book *

Sue Monk Kidd's internationally acclaimed novel *The Secret Life of Bees* was born from her experience growing up as an adolescent in the South during the 1960s. "I do think race is the wound of my geography," she says. "It's the wound of the South and of American life." Despite the power of that experience, it took almost 30 years for Monk Kidd's deeply internalized feelings to surface, when she started to share her memories with her husband and when they began to crystallize into book form.

Monk Kidd grew up in a large country house in Sylvester, Georgia, where bees inhabited a wall in the guesthouse. "I remember my mother cleaning up puddles of honey that had seeped out, and the unearthly sound of bee hum vibrating through the house," the writer has noted. The bees never left, and even years later, when Monk Kidd's husband visited her childhood home, he woke to find the bees flying around his room. That was when his wife "began imagining a young girl lying in bed while bees poured through cracks in her bedroom walls." Unable to shake that image, she still had to answer two profound questions: "Who is this girl?" and "What is the desire of her heart?" Answering them led to the creation of Lily Melissa Owens, the girl who yearns for her mother, and who became central to Monk Kidd's story.

At first, however, *Bees* was very much a story, not a novel. It was only after writing the short story in 1993, and after it drew a rapturous response when read aloud at a New York literary event, that Monk Kidd thought of turning it into a novel. During years of research and preparation that took her through collage making and more contemplative periods, the author turned her attention to matters of race and spirituality. Ancient statues and "archetypal feminine images" of the Virgin Mary became her focus and she set out to learn more about the origins and significance of the Black Madonna, in particular, a journey that took her far from the South and all the way to Europe. There she found that images of the Black Madonna were symbols of defiance among oppressed women. She knew now that the Black Madonna must be included in the novel.

A coming-of-age story, *The Secret Life of Bees* takes place in an intricate emotional landscape that explores the psyches of its young heroine and the matriarchs who mentor her. These characters,

Module One: The Secret Life Of...

Activity One: The Story

so genuine and true to life, are culled from the novelist's imagination and from impressions drawn from her years in Georgia. Deeply affected by the social dynamics of growing up white in the racially polarized South, Monk Kidd also benefited from her own immersion in African-American culture — especially with the character of Rosaleen, partly modeled on her own black caretaker; and the characters of May, June, and the women who belong to the Daughters of Mary, all of whom called on memories of the Southern black women whose enthralling stories and kind nature left an indelible impression on Monk Kidd. As for August, the matriarchal figure played by Queen Latifah, she sprang from what Monk Kidd describes as “a vision I carry inside, of feminine wisdom, compassion, and strength ... what I would have wanted to find if I'd been in Lily's complicated situation.”

The novel was published in 2002 to critical acclaim and has since been published in more than 23 languages. The novel spent more than two years on *The New York Times* Best Seller list and has sold more than 4.5 million copies.

* *The Secret Life of Bees* Production Notes. 2008. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation

Discussion Questions

1. What surprised you about Sue Monk Kidd's inspiration for the novel? Why?
2. Explain what Monk Kidd means when she says, “I do think race is the wound of my geography”.
3. Why is it so essential for writers to research the lifestyles of their characters in historically based fictional writing? Did Monk Kidd's characters seem authentic after reading the book? Why or why not?
4. The premise for Monk Kidd's story is based on the bees in her childhood home. Have you had a strange or unique experience in your life that you could develop a story around? Explain.
5. What do you think were the challenges of bringing her story to the screen? Do you think her story was accurately portrayed as a movie? Why or why not?
6. What differences can you see between the book and movie? (Hints: the movie theatre scene with Zach; Lily's final conversation with her father.) What purpose did these changes serve?
7. Why do you think Lily narrates the story? How would the story change if it were narrated by another character, like Rosaleen?

The Secret Life of Bees

Module One: The Secret Life Of... **Activity 2: Bees!**

"Honeybees are social insects and live in colonies. Each colony is a family unit, comprising a single, egg-laying female or queen and her many sterile daughters called workers. The workers cooperate in the food-gathering, nest-building and rearing the offspring. Males are reared only at the time of year when their presence is required."

~ Bees of the World

Sue Monk Kidd. *The Secret Life of Bees*. 2002. Penguin Books. New York, New York, p. 67

Between the swarms of bees that invade the walls of the Owens' house and the beekeeping of the Boatwright sisters, these buzzing insects clearly play a central role in the book and movie. Lily's fascination with the bees in her house leads her to become an apprentice with August Boatwright as a fledging beekeeper. The Boatwright sisters even sing a daily honey song in praise of the bees:

*Place a beehive on my grave
And let the honey soak through.
When I'm dead and gone,
That's what I want from you.
The streets of heaven are gold and sunny,
But I'll stick with my plot and a pot of honey.
Place a beehive on my grave
And let the honey soak through.*

Sue Monk Kidd. *The Secret Life of Bees*. 2002. Penguin Books. New York, New York, p. 83

While many people are nervous around a buzzing bee, fearful of getting stung, Lily Owens embraces its secret and productive life, much like the one she is living. In a conversation with August, August remarks, "Most people don't have any idea about all the complicated life going on inside a hive. Bees have a secret life we don't know anything about" (p. 148). Throughout the story Lily learns some of their secrets such as the power the queen bee possesses and the roles that every other bee has to play. Read the intriguing facts about bees on the following page, which show how they are different from every other creature.

Module One: The Secret Life Of...

Activity 2: Bees!

BUZZ-Worthy Facts About Bees

- There are nearly 20,000 species of bees in nine recognized families, though many are not catalogued and there are probably more!
- Honeybees live in hives or colonies. A small hive contains about 20,000 bees, while some larger hives may have over 100,000 bees. Hives include one queen, hundreds of drones, and thousands of worker bees.
- The worker bees are female, but they do not breed. The queen bee is female and creates all the babies for the hive! The drone bees are male and do not have stingers.
- Bees communicate with each other about food sources using dances. The sounds from the movement of the bees are picked up by the tiny hairs on the bee's head. Bees without stingers communicate only by sounds.
- The honeybee's hive has cells made of wax. This is where the queen bee lays her eggs. She can lay 2000 eggs in one day during spring and 1000-1500 during foraging season.
- Bees can travel as many as 55,000 miles and visit more than 2 million flowers to gather enough nectar to make just one pound of honey.
- A bee generally gathers only pollen or nectar. As she sucks the nectar from the flower, it is stored in her second stomach ready to be transferred to the honey-making bees in the hive. If hungry she opens a valve in the nectar "sac" and a portion of the payload passes through to her own stomach to be converted to energy for her own needs.
- When her nectar "sacs" are full, the honeybee returns to the hive. Nectar is delivered to one of the indoor bees and is then passed mouth-to-mouth from bee to bee until its moisture content is reduced from about 70 percent to 20 percent. This changes the nectar into honey.
- The bee is a wonderful flying machine and can carry a load of nectar or pollen close to her own weight.
- When a bee stings, the stinger, poison sac, and several others parts of the bee's anatomy are torn from the bee's body. It soon dies.

The Secret Life of Bees Production Notes. 2008. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation

The Secret Life of Bees

Module One: The Secret Life Of... **Activity 2: Bees!**

Follow-Up Activity

As a group, look at the following list of other animals that are known to display social characteristics like bees (i.e., forming relationships and power roles within the group). Small groups of 2-3 people can research an animal and report back to the group about human-like qualities that they display in their daily lives.

Gorillas

Penguins

Dogs

Wolves

Chimpanzees

Dolphins

Lions

Bonobos

Meerkats

Hyenas

Check out Animal Planet for information: <http://animal.discovery.com/animals>

Visit National Geographic to learn more: <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/a-to-z>

Module One: The Secret Life Of...

Activity 2: Bees!

Honey and More

Bees are not only responsible for the flowers we grow and fruits we eat, but they also produce a variety of “homemade” products that humans use. Read the following passage from the book to give you an idea about the versatility of honey and beeswax:

We lived for honey. We swallowed a spoonful in the morning to wake us up and one at night to put us to sleep. We took it with every meal to calm the mind, give us stamina, and prevent fatal disease. We swabbed ourselves in it to disinfect cuts or heal chapped lips. It went in our baths, our skin cream, our raspberry tea and biscuits. Nothing was safe from honey. In one week my skinny arms and legs began to plump out and the frizz in my hair turned to silken waves. August said honey was the ambrosia of the gods and the shampoo of goddesses.

Sue Monk Kidd. *The Secret Life of Bees*. 2002. Penguin Books. New York, New York, p. 84

Honey Cake Recipe

The Boatwrights use honey in almost everything they eat. Try the delicious recipe below for a sweet breakfast or midday treat.

Ingredients

- 2 eggs
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup honey
- 1 cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup plus 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup walnuts chopped (optional)
- 1 cup strong liquid coffee
- 2 cups flour

Instructions

Put all the ingredients into a large bowl and beat for 5 minutes with an electric mixer or beaters on medium speed. Pour the batter into 2 large greased loaf pans or 3 smaller ones. Bake for approximately 45 minutes at 375 degrees in the oven. Enjoy!

For more about honey and bees, visit www.honey.com, website of the National Honey Board.

Module One: The Secret Life Of...

Activity 2: Bees!

Bees Keep Us Buzzing

In addition to being social and productive, bees are also essential for the survival of human beings! This is because bees play an important role in pollinating flowers when they gather the pollen or nectar. In doing so they are helping with the flowers' sexual reproduction by transferring pollen from flower to flower. By helping flowers develop, diversity of plant life is ensured. Because the fruits we eat are actually the ripening ovaries of fertilized, flowering plants, human beings are truly dependent on bees. It is even estimated that one third of the human food supply depends on insect pollination, the majority of which is done by bees. So next time you go to swat a bee, think twice.

Follow-Up Activity

Although many animals are killed for human consumption or other uses, bees are one of the only creatures that produce items (such as honey and beeswax) used by humans without their death being a necessity. However, some animal rights activists argue that the practices of collecting honey are inhumane (i.e., smoking the hives to calm them, sometimes killing and replacing queens, etc.). People who are vegan, meaning they refrain from eating any animal product, also abstain from eating honey.

In addition to bees, other animals produce items and foods that are used and consumed by humans. As a group, look at the following list of animal products. Small groups of 2-3 people can research a product and learn more about the animals that provide or produce it. In your small groups find out if the food or product is taken from the body of the animal or produced by the animal. Does the animal need to die for people to extract or create the product? Are any of the animal product practices controversial? If so, why?

Silk

Milk and Cheese

Eggs

Wool

Gelatin

Lard

Rennet

Ivory

Leather

Pearls

Carmines

Module One: The Secret Life Of... Activity 3: The Characters

ACTIVITY

Throughout the story, Lily Owens is obsessed with learning the secrets of her mother. To seek the truth about her mother's love for her, Lily escapes to the home of the beekeepers in Tiburon, South Carolina. There she restrains from sharing her own secrets about running away and her loveless father. To cover up the guilt of her past and fears for the future, Lily conceals her secrets with lies.

Despite Lily's many secrets, she is not the only character to avoid telling the truth. The entire Owens family holds secrets that come out during the course of the story. Deborah's accidental killing causes Lily to feel intense guilt and self-loathing, while T. Ray uses anger to deal with his pain. Because of racism, even relationships must be hidden, such as the budding romance between Lily and Zach. Can you think of other secrets?

With a partner, fill-out the following chart pertaining to secrets.

Character's Secrets	How, If, and Why Secrets are Revealed
Lily:	
T. Ray:	
Deborah:	
Others:	

Module One: The Secret Life Of...

Activity 3: The Characters


Discussion Questions

1. Why is it so painful for Lily to admit the truth to August? How does she finally spill the truth?
2. Do you think Lily should have revealed her secrets earlier to August? Would she have been ready?
3. Are some secrets worth keeping with regards to one's protection or safety? Explain and give examples from history. (Hints: black slaves escaping slavery; Jews hiding during the Holocaust)
4. In the movie Lily finally gets resolution about whether her mother came back for her. In the book this is never determined. Why do you think the secret was revealed differently in the book versus the movie? Which ending do you prefer?
5. How does Lily reveal the secrets of how she feels about her father in the letter she tears up (book, page 162)? How is this helpful even though she doesn't send it?
6. How can lies become oppressive? Give an example.
7. Do you have any secrets? Would you ever reveal them? If so, to whom?
8. Lily describes revealing her secret about her mother to August in the following sentence: "It was scary, my secrets spilled out across the room, like a garbage truck had backed up and dumped its sorry contents across the floor for her to sort through" (p. 240). Why are secrets so scary to reveal? What does Lily fear? Why might you fear letting go of your secrets?
9. Has anyone ever divulged your secret(s) without your permission? How did this make you feel? Did you seek revenge? Is revenge appropriate?

Module One: The Secret Life Of...

Activity 4: You

ACTIVITY



Do you have a burning secret that you would like to share but don't know how? Examples might be small, such as hiding a bad habit like biting your nails, or more significant, like not telling your parents that you smoke or have a girlfriend or boyfriend. Like Lily, who despises her father, you may have secret emotions about someone in your family or school.

Revealing secrets is never easy and sometimes takes days, months, or years. Some people live their whole lives without revealing their secrets or seeking forgiveness. One easy step, at least one that will help you let go of some of the stress involved in withholding information, is to write a letter expressing your emotions. In the book Lily writes an angry letter to T. Ray, which she proceeds to tear up. In the space provided on the following page, address a letter to the person you wish to tell about your secret. Explain the secret or secret emotion to that person. Use your genuine emotions to express yourself. Ask for forgiveness if needed and indicate what you want from this person.

After you have completed your letter, how do you feel? Did the act of writing out your emotions help you in any way? Why or why not? Would you be willing to actually send this letter to the person? How would he or she respond? If you don't plan on sending it, tear it up! As you probably know, people are eager to learn other people's secrets. If it is something private, you do not want it floating around for someone else to find.

Module One: The Secret Life Of...
Activity 4: You ACTIVITY

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Sincerely, _____

Module Two: Learning About Civil Rights

Dear Facilitator,

In this module youth will gain information about significant events and key figures in the Civil Rights Movement. Set in South Carolina in 1964, *The Secret Life of Bees* shows that each character is affected by continued racial segregation. In spite of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the law is not on the side of the blacks in the South. Youth will not only learn about facts of the movement, but will understand why it took so long for the Civil Rights Act to be implemented. They will compare this social struggle of the 1960s to present day battles over social issues and learn about the courage required to stand up to injustice.

Objectives for Youth:

- Learn about important events and people in the Civil Rights Movement
- Examine the courage needed to stand up

Module Two: Learning About Civil Rights

Activity 1: Civil Rights Timeline

The Secret Life of Bees takes place in 1964, the year the Civil Rights Act was signed by President Johnson. This comprehensive piece of legislation represented years of African-American organizing, nonviolent actions, and perseverance in courts to gain equal rights under law. In the book and movie, Rosaleen becomes determined to register to vote. Read the following passage about Rosaleen's excitement over the news:

I looked over at Rosaleen, who sat there shaking her head, mumbling, "Lord have mercy," just looking so disbelieving and happy, like people on television when they answered the \$64,000 Questions.

I didn't know whether to be excited for her or worried. All people ever talked about after church were the Negroes and whether they'd get their civil rights. Who was winning – the white people's team or the colored people's team? Like it was a do-or-die contest. When that minister from Alabama, Reverend Martin Luther King, got arrested last month in Florida for wanting to eat in a restaurant, the men at church acted like the white people's team had won the pennant race. I knew they would not take this news lying down, not in one million years.

Sue Monk Kidd. *The Secret Life of Bees*. 2002. Penguin Books. New York, New York, p. 20-21

This passage not only indicates Rosaleen's disbelief at the new changes that will occur, but also the fear that it will take time to be accepted. Much of the success of the movement for equal rights can be attributed to the nonviolent methods that the leader, Martin Luther King, Jr. espoused. King believed that violent action to overcome violent action is often counterproductive. In his words, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." (King, 1964)*

*As cited in Willie, Ridini & Willard (2008). *Grassroots Social Action: Lessons in People Power Movements*

Module Two: Learning About Civil Rights

Activity 1: Civil Rights Timeline

ACTIVITY

Making a Timeline

On the following pages are significant milestones in the Civil Rights Movement. However, they do not have dates listed and they are out of order. Also, some events take place in the same year. Small groups of youth will select an event (or two) to research. In the small groups answer the following questions, where they are applicable:

- When did this occur? (Month, Year)
- Where did it happen?
- What leaders and/or organizations were responsible for this event?
- Describe the consequences of or reactions to this occurrence. Was there violent resistance? Did it provoke another event? What significance did it have to the Civil Rights Movement as a whole?

Once the dates are determined and questions answered, everyone can cut out their squares and glue or tape them onto a poster. Make sure they are in the correct timeline order. Then the small groups can take turns describing their Civil Rights event to the larger group, using their answers to the questions above as a guide.

Module Two: Learning About Civil Rights

Activity 1: Civil Rights Timeline

ACTIVITY

Martin Luther King, at age 39, is shot as he stands on the balcony outside his hotel room. Escaped convict and committed racist James Earl Ray is convicted of the crime.

Formerly all-white Central High School learns that integration is easier said than done. Nine black students are blocked from entering the school on the orders of Governor Orval Faubus. President Eisenhower sends federal troops and the National Guard to intervene on behalf of the students, who become known as the “Little Rock Nine.”

Malcolm X, black nationalist and founder of the Organization of Afro-American Unity, is shot to death. It is believed the killers are members of the Black Muslim faith, which Malcolm had recently abandoned in favor of orthodox Islam.

Four young girls (Denise McNair, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, and Addie Mae Collins) attending Sunday school are killed when a bomb explodes at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, a popular location for civil rights meetings.

Over the spring and summer, student volunteers begin taking bus trips through the South to test out new laws that prohibit segregation in interstate travel facilities, which includes bus and railway stations. Several of the groups of “freedom riders,” as they are called, are attacked by angry mobs along the way. The program involves more than 1,000 volunteers, black and white.

President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of _____. The Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination of all kinds based on race, color, religion, or national origin. The law also provides the federal government with the powers to enforce desegregation.

The Supreme Court rules on the case *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, unanimously agreeing that segregation in public schools is unconstitutional. The ruling paves the way for large-scale desegregation.

In *Loving v. Virginia*, the Supreme Court rules that prohibiting interracial marriage is unconstitutional. Sixteen states that still banned interracial marriage at the time are forced to revise their laws.

President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of _____, prohibiting discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing.

Module Two: Learning About Civil Rights

Activity 1: Civil Rights Timeline

ACTIVITY

Four black students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College begin a sit-in at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter. Although they are refused service, they are allowed to stay at the counter. The event triggers many similar nonviolent protests throughout the South. Student sit-ins would be effective throughout the Deep South in integrating parks, swimming pools, theaters, libraries, and other public facilities.

Asserting that civil rights laws alone are not enough to fix discrimination, President Johnson issues Executive Order 11246, which enforces affirmative action for the first time. It requires government contractors to "take affirmative action" toward prospective minority employees in all aspects of hiring and employment.

The Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), a network of civil rights groups, launches a massive effort to register black voters during what becomes known as the Freedom Summer. It also sends delegates to the Democratic National Convention to protest—and attempt to unseat—the official all-white Mississippi contingent.

Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat at the front of the bus to a white passenger. In response to her arrest the Montgomery black community launches a bus boycott and simultaneous court action, which will last for more than a year until the buses are desegregated.

Fourteen-year-old Emmett Till is visiting family in Mississippi when he is kidnapped, brutally beaten, shot, and dumped in the Tallahatchie River for allegedly whistling at a white woman. Two white men, J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant, are arrested for the murder and acquitted by an all-white jury.

Congress passes the Voting Rights Act of _____, making it easier for Southern blacks to register to vote. Literacy tests, poll taxes, and other such requirements that were used to restrict black voting are made illegal.

The Supreme Court, in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, upholds busing as a legitimate means for achieving integration of public schools. Although largely unwelcome in local school districts, court-ordered busing plans in cities such as Charlotte, Boston, and Denver continue until the late 1990s.


James Meredith becomes the first black student to enroll at the University of Mississippi. Violence and riots surrounding the incident cause President Kennedy to send 5000 federal troops.

About 200,000 people join the March on Washington. Congregating at the Lincoln Memorial, participants listen as Martin Luther King delivers his famous "I Have A Dream" speech.

Module Two: Learning About Civil Rights

Activity 1: Civil Rights Timeline

ACTIVITY



Martin Luther King is arrested and jailed during antisegregation protests in Birmingham, Ala.; he writes his “Letter From Birmingham Jail,” arguing that individuals have the moral duty to disobey unjust laws.

The bodies of three civil rights workers — two white, one black — are found in a dam. James E. Chaney, 21; Andrew Goodman, 21; and Michael Schwerner, 24, had been working to register black voters in Mississippi and, on June 21, had gone to investigate the burning of a black church. They were arrested by the police on speeding charges, incarcerated for several hours, and then released after dark into the hands of the Ku Klux Klan, who murdered them.

Blacks begin a march to Montgomery in support of voting rights but are stopped at the Pettus Bridge by a police blockade. Fifty marchers are hospitalized after police use tear gas, whips, and clubs against them. The incident is dubbed “Bloody Sunday” by the media.

• Information from <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/civilrightstimeline1.html#1960>

Module Two: Learning About Civil Rights

Activity 2: Courage To Stand Up

Throughout the book and movie there are several defiant acts of courage by African-American characters in standing up for their rights. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, law enforcers in South Carolina do not sympathize with black rights. They do everything possible in the story to avoid implementing the new changes. Lily justifiably fears for Rosaleen's life as she pursues her voter registration:

An uneasy feeling settled in my stomach. Last night the television had said a man in Mississippi was killed for registering to vote, and I myself had overheard Mr. Bussey, one of the deacons, say to T. Ray, "Don't you worry, they're gonna make 'em write their names in perfect cursive and refuse them a card if they forget so much to do an I or make a loop in their y."

Sue Monk Kidd. *The Secret Life of Bees*. 2002. Penguin Books. New York, New York, p. 27

Rosaleen only wants to experience human dignity, but she is greeted with fierce white resistance outside the church. When she pours the black snuff spit on the shoes of the men who insult her, they attack her.

By then Rosaleen lay sprawled on the ground, pinned, twisting her fingers around clumps of grass. Blood ran from a cut beneath her eye. It curved under her chin the way tears do.

Sue Monk Kidd. *The Secret Life of Bees*. 2002. Penguin Books. New York, New York, p. 27

Beatings and even killings were not uncommon in the South when African-Americans attempted to fulfill their rights as human beings. While on paper blacks in 1964 had the right to vote, racist white authorities did everything in their power to implement clauses that would make this extraordinarily difficult. Obstacles included literacy tests, demonstrated by Rosaleen's repeated practice of writing her name. Moreover, there were poll taxes that poor black people could not afford. In August of 1965, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act, which made it easier for Southern blacks to vote by making these literacy tests and poll taxes illegal.

The beatings that Rosaleen and Zach endure affect them both physically and mentally, making them feel inferior and sub-human. Yet, neither character is broken. Rosaleen finds sisterly love, independence, and security in the Boatwright home, while Zach remains determined to become a lawyer, fighting the anger and bitterness that overtook him after his ordeal. What sustains both characters is undying courage.

Module Two: Learning About Civil Rights

Activity 2: Courage To Stand Up

Advocacy Idea

Although the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s has long past, racial inequalities and other social issues continue in the United States today. While great strides have been made through the law, problems persist in the enforcement of civil and human rights. What is a social issue that you care deeply about?

Some ideas include:

- Affordable housing
- Gay rights
- Environmental justice
- Affirmative action
- Disabilities
- Public health
- Reproductive rights
- Gender equality
- Poverty and welfare
- Death penalty
- Child welfare

Research the major current-day issues surrounding the topic of your choice. What federal laws have been passed around these issues? Are they being enforced in local communities? What laws would you like passed in support of your position?

Once you have devised your opinions and conducted your research, start a letter-writing campaign to your state's U.S. Representatives or Senators. You can even submit messages online through email. Urge them to consider your recommendations!

Use the following links to assist with your letter writing:

<http://usgovinfo.about.com/library/weekly/aa020199.htm>

http://www.pulmonaryfibrosis.org/sample_letter.htm

<http://www.congress.org/congressorg/home/> (Write your zip code on the home page to find your elected officials and get their contact info.)

Module Two: Learning About Civil Rights

Activity 3: Confronting Prejudices

Growing up in the segregated South, Lily Owens is aware of the racism that permeates society. She overhears conversations among white churchgoers who disapprove of black civil rights, and she even witnesses the brutal attack on Rosaleen. Instead of urging Rosaleen to pursue her rights, Lily only worries about her safety. However, in a courageous act, Lily flees with Rosaleen from the hospital, both in search of a better life: Rosaleen held captive by her race and gender, Lily held captive by her abusive father and painful memories.

When Lily enters the world of the Boatwrights, her previous assumptions and prejudices about African-Americans are confronted. For example, read the discussion between Lily and Zach about future career aspirations:

“Well you could play football for a college and then be a professional player.”

“Why is it sports is the only thing white people see us being successful at? I don’t want to play football,” he said. “I wanna be a lawyer.”

“That’s fine with me,” I said, a little annoyed. “I’ve just never heard of a Negro lawyer, that’s all. You’ve got to hear of these things before you can imagine them.”

“Bullshit. You gotta imagine what’s never been.”

Sue Monk Kidd. *The Secret Life of Bees*. 2002. Penguin Books. New York, New York, p. 120-121

Discussion Questions

1. How do the personalities of August, June, and May counteract views that Lily previously had about black women?
2. How does the black Madonna affect Lily?
3. Why does Lily’s romantic attraction toward Zach surprise her? What does this say about interracial dating at that time? Is this still looked down upon in your community? Why or why not?
4. In the book Lily narrates, “This was a great revelation — not that I was white but that it seemed like June might not want me here because of my skin color. I hadn’t known this was possible — to reject people for being white” (p. 87). What prejudices does June hold against white people? Why is she so resistant to accepting Lily?

Module Three: Empowered Women

Dear Facilitator,

The Secret Life of Bees is a story of powerful women, particularly African-American women who counter stereotypes of the times. As business owners living independently from men, the Boatwright sisters show Lily that you don't have to conform to society's norms. In this module, youth will analyze the traits of women in the story. In doing so they will understand more about female stereotypes in the real world and how they are reinforced through the media. Participants will also learn about important female leaders in the Civil Rights Movement and reflect on positive female role models in their own lives.

Objectives for Youth:

- Recognize the unique traits of female characters in the book and movie
- Analyze positive and negative characteristics of girls and women in the media
- Write a thank you note to a positive female role model

Module Three: Empowered Women

Activity 1: Gender Stereotypes in the Media

The media (television, movies, print sources, the Internet, video games, music, and more) is often criticized for portraying women in stereotypical roles. Examples include showing women solely as mothers and housewives instead of independent, career-minded women. Furthermore, girls and women are frequently portrayed with one-dimensional personalities — passive and relationship-obsessed, also depicted with unrealistic body proportions. Moreover, women are frequently overly sexualized, perceived as objects by men.

The Secret Life of Bees stands out as a book and movie for having a predominantly female cast that deflects these stereotypes. The story depicts the strength of realistic women — independent, strong, and shown to have varying body types and personalities. Perhaps one of the reasons the story translated so effectively onto the screen is because it was mostly women who made the film. The Screenwriter/Director is Gina Prince-Bythewood, the Producer is Lauren Shuler Donner, Jada Pinkett Smith is the Executive Producer, and the Costume Designer is Sandra Hernandez (to name a few). According to statistics from 2004, the total number of employed film writers was 18 percent women, and the total number of TV writers was 27 percent women.* Even more alarming is that only 13 percent of the top executives of American media and telecommunications are female. Clearly, the dominance of men in upper management of the media industry may influence the frequency of female stereotypes in the media.

* Smith, L. and Cook, C. (2008). Gender Stereotypes: An Analysis of Popular Films and TV; Conference 2008: The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media. Retrieved from www.geenadavisinstitute.org.

Module Three: Empowered Women

Activity 1: Gender Stereotypes in the Media

ACTIVITY

Look at the following chart to differentiate stereotypical female characteristics in the media from more realistic female roles, attitudes, and behaviors. When a combination of the attributes on the left are repeated over and over again in the media, young girls may begin to associate them as the only qualities that women possess. That is why it is important that television, movies, and other media forms remember to show women with more attributes listed on the right. Add your thoughts to the lists.

Stereotypical Female	Realistic Female
Passive Submissive Overly sexualized Housewife/stay-at-home mom Dependent Searching for love Emotional Superficial Mean Fashion and make-up Outer appearance Inferior Unintelligent Thin, tiny waist	Strong Courageous Realistic and varying body types Career-minded Athletic Working mother Leader Inner beauty Intelligent Independent Determined Talented Diverse Cooperative Friend

Module Three: Empowered Women

Activity 1: Gender Stereotypes in the Media

ACTIVITY

Using the attributes from the previous page, analyze the female characters in *The Secret Life of Bees*. What qualities characterize them? Are they mostly stereotypical or do they counter the traditional roles of women?

Character	Roles, Attributes, and Personalities
Lily	
Rosaleen	
August	
May	
June	

Module Three: Empowered Women

Activity 1: Gender Stereotypes in the Media

Follow-Up Activity: Making a Collage of Gender Stereotyping

Note to Facilitator: Magazines will be needed for this exercise. Ask youth to bring in old magazines from home, especially magazines geared for girls and women.

Materials Needed:

Girl's or Women's magazines

Scissors

Glue or tape

Markers

Poster board

Art supplies (optional)

Steps:

1. Get into groups of three or four.
2. Each group should have at least three or four magazines.
3. Examine articles and pictures in the magazine, paying particular attention to advertisements with girls or women depicted. How are females portrayed? What is the subject matter of the articles?
4. Cut out pictures and headings of articles that either demonstrate stereotypical attributes in the preceding chart or counter them.
5. As a group, begin organizing the clippings into piles — positive portrayals versus negative or stereotypical portrayals. Remember, these decisions are subjective, meaning there is no right or wrong answer.
6. Using your creativity and imagination, design a collage using these magazine clips. You may wish to use the markers to group photos or articles in headings such as “Passive” or “Strong.”
7. When you are finished, come up with a 2-minute presentation to describe your group's poster and what you learned from the exercise. Is there diversity in depictions of women and messaging geared toward women in the magazines you used?
8. Share your presentations with the larger group. What did you learn from this activity? Are the magazines representative of all girls and women? Why or why not?

Module Three: Empowered Women

Activity 2: Business Savvy

In *The Secret Life of Bees*, Lily is amazed to see three African-American sisters living independently, thriving off their Black Madonna Honey business. While it may not be shocking to us today, in the 1960s it would be uncommon to see a black, female-run business in the South due to racial segregation and gender limitations. Even Lily, a white girl, is hindered from pursuing her dreams:

What kind of person is against reading? I think he believed it would stir up ideas of college, which he thought a waste of money for girls, even if they did, like me, score the highest number a human being can get on their verbal aptitude test.

Sue Monk Kidd. *The Secret Life of Bees*. 2002. Penguin Books. New York, New York, p. 15

In a conversation with August, Lily asks August why she never got married. August explains that she had enough restrictions on her life (being a black woman in the South) and valued her freedom more than her love for a man. The black Madonna on the label of the Boatwright honey represents the strength and spirituality of black woman everywhere. The depiction of a black, female religious symbol stands out among traditional of male-dominated symbols. The gathering of the Daughters of Mary at the Boatwright house on Sundays reinforces the strength and resilience of the female black community.

Module Three: Empowered Women

Activity 2: Business Savvy

ACTIVITY

Your Future Business

Think about your present interests. Do you love cooking, drawing, helping people, or playing a particular sport? If you are determined and hard working, your interests can turn into a business venture. If you love cooking, you could open a restaurant or sell a line of food products like the Boatwrights. If you love drawing, you could become an architect or designer. If you enjoy helping people, you could run a consultant business. If sports are your passion, you could run a sports agency.

Have you ever considered running your own business? What would you sell or provide? Even if you are unsure about the business world, think of a product or service that you may be interested in providing for the purpose of this activity.

My product or service is: _____

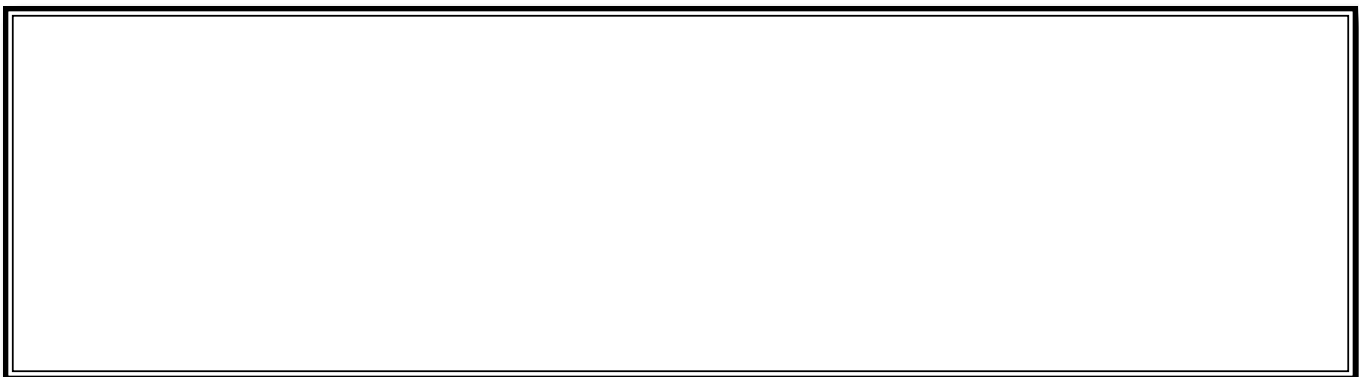
Once you have the concept figured out, think of a catchy name for your business:

Name of business: _____

Who is your target audience? (Who will buy the product or use your services?)

Successful businesses often have a catchy slogan or logo attached to their product or service. This creates a brand that people will recognize and trust. For example, the golden arches of McDonalds are recognizable throughout the world.

The Boatwrights use a unique and powerful image to attract their audience with the picture of the black Madonna. What can you include that will catch the eye or ear of your target audience? Think carefully about pictures and/or words that will attract customers. Using the Boatwright honey as inspiration, draw your own label or logo below.



Module Three; Empowered Women

Activity 3: Female Role Models

Although Lily's real mother has died, Lily has wonderful female role models that help guide her through painful memories toward a better future. Because her father makes her feel insignificant, Lily needs these strong women to show her that happiness and success are possible for a woman. In the book Lily indicates that one of her teachers had a big impact on her aspirations:

Up until Mrs. Henry came along, I'd believed beauty college would be the upper limit of my career. Once, studying her face, I told her if she was my customer, I would give her a French twist that would do wonders for her, and she said — and I quote — “Please Lily, you are insulting your fine intelligence. Do you have any idea how smart you are? You could be a professor or a writer with actual books to your credit. Beauty school. Please.”

Sue Monk Kidd. *The Secret Life of Bees*. 2002. Penguin Books. New York, New York, p. 15–16

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever been told by someone that you couldn't succeed? What did that do for your self-confidence?
2. Has anyone ever had an impact on how you perceive your future? What did this person say to make you see things differently?
3. Can you think of a teacher like Mrs. Henry who inspired you to try something new or aspire to reach greater heights? Did you listen to his/her advice? Explain.
4. Besides Mrs. Henry, who else in the story influences Lily in a positive way? Describe the actions or qualities of this person and why they make a difference.
5. Think about the women in your life who have served as positive role models or mentors. Use the suggestions on the following page to celebrate these women.

Module Three: Empowered Women

Activity 3: Female Role Models

Saying Thank You

Write a thank you card to a woman who has impacted your life in a constructive fashion. This can be a mother, aunt, cousin, grandparent, teacher, mentor, neighbor, or friend. Thank her for being a positive role model and for the encouragement she has given you in pursuit of your interests or dreams.

Celebration

In your thank you card invite your special role model to a group celebration of strong, beautiful, encouraging women in the community. Determine a date and location as a group beforehand to hold this Bees-themed event. The event can be pot-luck and you can request that guests bring a honey-themed food. Ideas include tea with honey, apples & honey, or the honey cake recipe from Module One, Activity One of this curriculum. You can even have beeswax candles and fresh flowers on each table. During the event youth can take turns volunteering to read their thank you cards out loud. You may even wish to devise an awards ceremony, with certificates awarded to the women.

Service Project Idea

As an addition to the party, planners and guests can bring in items that can be donated to a local woman's shelter. Possible ideas include girls' and women's clothing, canned goods, and toiletries. If time permits, members of the group can donate the items following the event and visit with the women and children at the shelter.

Module Four: The Importance of Love and Home

Dear Facilitator,

The following module will focus on the emotional content of *The Secret Life of Bees*, namely the enduring quest for love and a place to call home. In the search for the secrets of her dead mother's past, Lily finds three adoring "mothers" in the most unlikely of places. Youth will learn that sometimes suffering and pain are steppingstones to understanding and knowing love. While the love portrayed in this story may be unconventional, it shows youth that love can shine through in a variety of forms: parental love, romantic love, sisterly or brotherly love, etc. Moreover, Lily's decision to stay at the Boatwright house demonstrates that family and home are not always based upon what one is born into.

Objectives for Youth:

- Examine the close sisterly bonds of the Boatwrights
- Reflect upon the complementary nature of loss, pain, and love

Module Four: The Importance of Love and Home

Activity 1: Celebrating Siblings

ACTIVITY

The Boatwright sisters are named after the spring and summer months of the year: April (who died), May, June, and August. While together the sisters share a strong bond, each of them has a unique personality and talent that sets them apart from the others.

Fill out the chart below, describing the personalities, roles, and talents of the three sisters:

Sister	Personality Traits	Talents or Hobbies
May		
June		
August		

Personal Reflection Questions

1. Which sister do you relate to the most? Why? Do you aspire to have any of the personality traits or talents that she possesses?
2. Do you have siblings? If so, how are your personalities and interests similar? How are they different?
3. How did April, the deceased sister, complete May? Why? Do you think May's subsequent suicide could have been prevented?
4. What do the sisters teach Lily? How is she affected by each of them?

Module Four: The Importance of Love and Home

Activity 2: Pain and Healing

The Secret Life of Bees is a story about the triumph of love, but also one of pain and tragedy. Nearly every character is affected by a tragedy or violence, whether it is the suicide of May, the accidental killing of Lily's mother, or the racially motivated beatings that Zach and Rosaleen face.

Partner Activity

With a partner analyze the four tragic events mentioned below:

1. Deborah Owens' death (Lily's mom)
2. May's suicide
3. Rosaleen's beating when she tries to vote
4. The disappearance of Zach (or the jailing of Zach in the book version)

For each event answer the following questions through a conversation with a partner:

1. Which characters are affected by this event? How?
2. Do these characters find a way to heal? Who do they turn to for help?
3. Is there resolution at the end of the story?
4. How does love counter pain through these tragedies?

Module Four: The Importance of Love and Home

Activity 2: Pain and Healing

Your Pain and Healing

In *The Secret Life of Bees* Lily uses writing as therapy for her guilt about her mother and anger toward her father. Similarly, May expresses her sadness on pieces of paper that she places in her “Wailing Wall,” her version of the wall in Jerusalem.

Have you ever experienced a great sadness in your life? Is there someone in your life who contributes to intense feelings of anger like T. Ray does for Lily? Personal writing is an excellent way to release your feelings without any consequences.

For a week try writing about any sadness or anger that you have on pieces of paper like May or in a journal like Lily. After the week is over, go back and reflect on what you wrote. Did the process help you deal with your feelings?

During dark times not every child is lucky enough to come across supportive and loving “mothers” like August, May, and June. If your daily reflections and thoughts are getting worse, you should always ask for support from a trusted family member, teacher, or friend. If you feel like you need additional help, there are websites that can give you some insight.

Visit:

www.kidspeace.org - The National Center for Kids Overcoming Crisis

www.teencentral.net - A website by teens and for teens

Service Project Idea

Send positive messages and cards to people who could use a lift in their spirits. Possible recipients include patients in the hospital, seniors, or soldiers based overseas. Many local hospitals even have websites where you can send e-cards to patients.

Here are a couple good places to start if you want to send letters to troops:

<http://amillionthanks.org/>

www.letsaythanks.com

The Secret Life of Bees: Discussion and Activity Guide Post Program Evaluation

Dear Facilitator,

Please take a few moments to answer the questions in the evaluation for *The Secret Life of Bees*: Discussion and Activity Guide at www.youthFILMproject.org/evaluations.

We value your feedback, and your comments and stories can help inspire others and keep the FILM Project alive.

Please visit www.youthFILMproject.org/evaluations at the completion of this curriculum and tell us what you think. You can also send your stories to FILMinfo@trulymovingpictures.org

Thank you for your support!

Sincerely yours,

The FILM team

The FILM Team
filminfo@trulymovingpictures.org

The FILM Project is made possible through the partnership of Heartland Truly Moving Pictures and the National Collaboration for Youth. Heartland is a nonprofit organization that seeks to recognize and honor filmmakers whose work explores the human journey.

The National Collaboration for Youth is a nonprofit organization providing a unified voice for its coalition of more than 50 national, nonprofit, youth development organizations, and concentrates on improving the conditions of youth in the United States and enabling youth to realize their full capabilities.

