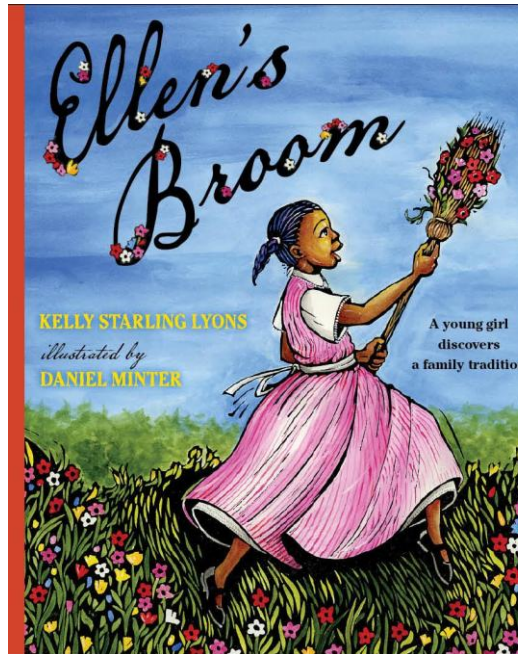


A Companion Craft and Discussion Guide for

Ellen's Broom



Written by Kelly Starling Lyons

Illustrated by Daniel Minter

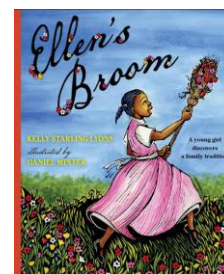
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Guide Created by Debbie Gonzales

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Pre-Reading Discussion Questions



The Front Cover:

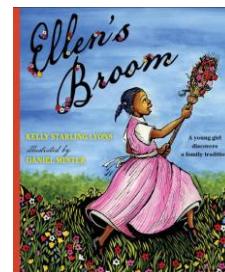
- Describe what you see.
- Is it an everyday broom or is it special in some way? How do you know?
- How does the girl feel about the broom? How do you know?
- What do you think the story's setting is going to be? Where will the story take place? How do you know?
- Can you guess what time in history this story takes place?
- Do you think the story will be a happy one or a sad one? How do you know?
- The words, "A young girl discovers a family tradition," are printed on the front cover. What is a family tradition?
- What do you think the connection between the word 'tradition' and the happy girl holding a flower-decorated broom might be?

The Back Cover:

- Describe what you see.
- What is mounted above the fireplace?
- Do you find it strange that this family has a broom mounted in such a special place in their home. Why do you think this was done?
- How do these family members feel about each other? How do you know?
- Are these people wealthy? How do you know?
- Below the illustration is a quote that reads, "A rare story about family and the meaning of freedom." If something is 'rare', what does that mean?
- What does freedom mean to you?
- What do you think freedom means to the family featured in the illustration?

What do you think will happen in this book? Explain your answer.

Post-Reading Discussion Questions



1. Describe what is happening in the beginning of the book, in the church congregational scene. Look closely at all of the people featured in this illustration.
 - How are they feeling?
 - What do you see?
 - What is the mood depicted in this picture?

2. Looking at the same illustration, which character is Ellen?
 - How do you know?
 - How is Ellen different than the other characters featured in this illustration?

3. The story states that there was "...something new in the voices that swelled in the church."
 - What was that something new?
 - What's different about this day?
 - What has changed?

4. Consider the illustration featuring Ellen's family in their cabin standing near the fireplace.
 - What story is Mama retelling?
 - Why is she excited?
 - Look at Ellen in this illustration. How is she feeling?
 - Why is she standing near her father?
 - Why is his arm around her shoulder?
 - Is this a happy family?
 - Is there love in this home?
 - How do you know?

5. What is a broom wedding?

6. Look closely at the illustration featuring a group of men chained together, a man with a whip and a stick in hand, and another man holding an unhappy woman.
 - What is happening in this picture?
 - Why is the woman featured in this illustration unhappy?
 - Who is the man holding the woman? Why is he holding her so tightly?
 - Who is the man holding the stick and the whip? What is he doing?

- Notice that one man in the chain gang is glancing back at the unhappy woman.
 - Why is this person looking back at the crying lady?
 - What is the relationship between the man and woman?
 - Are they being “ripped apart”? How so?
 - Is the man being “sold away at any time”? What does that mean?
 - Why do you think the artist chose these specific shades of brown to illustrate this scene?
 - How does Ellen feel about this memory of the way things once were?
 - How do you feel about the way things once were?
7. Consider the illustration featuring Mama and Papa jumping the broom. It has been shaded in the same brown tones as the slave scene, yet the mood is quite different.
- Why is this so?
 - What is happening in this illustration?
 - What is the message in this illustration?
8. On the pages featuring Ellen’s family at the court house the story reads, “Papa bowed his head and gave thanks that they arrived safely.”
- Would there be concern that the family would not arrive safely?
 - Why do you think this illustration is more brightly depicted than the slave scene or the broom jumping scene?
9. When Ellen handed the flower-decorated broom to Mama the story reads that, “Her mother’s eyes filled with tears.”
- Why is Mama crying?
 - Is she sad?
 - What is she feeling?
 - What is Ellen feeling?
 - How do you feel?
10. Though the broom is part of the past, Mama says that, “It will always be a part of who we are.”
- What does she mean by that comment?
 - Why was Papa hesitant when Ellen said that she wanted to jump the broom when she became married?
 - Why is it important to remember troubled times in the past?
 - How does this help us live better lives today?
 - What lessons can be learned by remembering such things?
 - Can remembering help us to become better, happier, more thankful people today?
 - How so?

Make a Block Print

Daniel Minter used a technique called linoleum block printing to illustrate Ellen's Broom, in which a design is carved into a piece of linoleum with a sharp knife. The raised, uncarved spaces create space for ink or paint to print an image onto a surface. The linoleum sheet is inked with a rolling brayer and pressed onto paper or fabric. The technique can be somewhat difficult to master.

Try your hand at creating a block print by following the easy steps listed below.



Supplies:

- A clean Styrofoam meat tray
- A pointed object such as pen, a toothpick, or a sharp pencil
- Small paint brushes
- Paper
- Tempera paint



Step 1: Make an etching of an object by carving into the meat tray with the pointed object. Make deep grooves, being careful not to poke through the tray.



Step 2: Cover the entire surface with watery-thinned tempera paint.

Step 3: Press Styrofoam block print on paper. Notice the reverse of the print.



Step 4: If you like, fill in the blank spaces of the image with brightly colored tempera paint.

Make Ellen's Broom

The sisters ran out and carefully plucked some flowers. Then they weaved them through the straw until the broom was decorated with blooms of red and pink.



Supplies:

- A pencil
- Raffia
- Scissors
- Tacky glue
- Silk flowers



Step 1: Cut several pieces of raffia 2 to 3 inches long.

Step 2: Cover pencil eraser tip with raffia strips.

Step 3: Cut raffia strip around 6 inches long. Wrap this piece around the top portion of the broom's whisk, securing them like a band.



Step 4: Cut silk flower blossoms from the stem.

Step 5: Glue silk flowers all around the pencil broom's whisk and band.



Step 6: Lay broom on ground. Grab a friend's hand and JUMP!

Acknowledgments

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