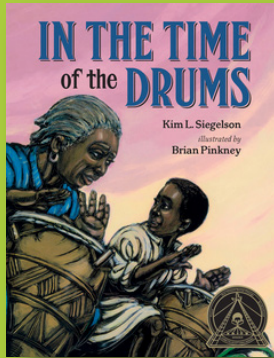


TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

In the Time of the Drums

written by Kim L. Siegelson

illustrated by Brian Pinkney

About the Book

Genre: Folklore/Legend

***Reading Level:** Grades 3–4

Interest Level: Grades 1–5

Guided Reading Level: W

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: N/A

Lexile™ Measure: AD570L

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Themes: Courage, Slavery, Grandparents, Family, Heroism, Music, Persistence/Grit, Religion/Spirituality, United States History, Gullah Legends, African/African American Culture and History, African American Interest

SYNOPSIS

It used to be that huge ships often landed near Teakettle Creek, bringing African people to work on the island's plantations. Some of the Africans who lived on the island made goatskin drums and played music to remind themselves of home. Young Mentu was island born, but grandmother Twi had come from Africa, and she longed for home. Thanks to Twi, Mentu learned to play the drums and to respect the strength of the music.

One day a new ship carrying Africans docked at Teakettle Creek sent out the beat of drums—a roar from the Africans inside the ship who were pounding for their homeland. The beat called to Twi, urging her to seek freedom. But the only place for freedom was in the murky waters of Teakettle Creek. Now Grandmother Twi had to choose between the drum's lure and the island that young Mentu called home.

Here is an extraordinary Gullah tale of mysticism, intrigue, strength, and courage that will leave readers of all ages spellbound.

Awards and Honors:

Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award, American Library Association (ALA)

“Choices,” Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC)

Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People, National Council for the Social Studies/Children's Book Council (NCSS/CBC)



BACKGROUND

From the author's note: *In the Time of the Drums* is based on an oral account that has been passed down through generations of African-American communities near the Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina. I first heard the story from my maternal grandmother, who told it as a ghost story. Most often the tale is recalled as a fragment of memory or as a short legend. One such telling can be found in the book *Drums and Shadows*, published by the University of Georgia Press.

Many Sea Islands communities claim the event. Most of these have ties to the Gullah people, or as some Gullah people refer to themselves, Saltwater Geechee people. The exact derivation of the word *Gullah* is unknown, but linguists and social historians have traced its origin to the slave trade. During that time, Gullah came to denote Africans brought from Angola. Now it refers to the decedents of enslaved black Sea Islanders and their unique culture.

Among slaves, the Gullah were often credited with supernatural powers: the ability to work magic, to control inanimate objects, to fly. As the tale is typically told, the Ibo people chose physical death, or “a slave’s freedom,” when they walked into the river. Indeed, for many Africans the appearance of physical death did not signal an end. Only then could the spirit find release to travel back across the Middle Passage to the shores of home. Enslaved, Africans were people empowered by faith, conviction, and hope. As a storyteller, I extended their powers to include the ability to walk beneath water.

With these things in mind, I settled myself beside the water of Dunbar Creek at the place designated as Ibo’s Landing, on St. Simons Island, and listened for the chains to rattle; for the water to speak. *In the Time of the Drums* is the story I heard.

The Middle Passage: The Middle Passage was the three-part voyage of the transatlantic slave trade, also called the Triangular Trade route (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1p277.html>). The passage began in Europe, where ships departed for Africa loaded with goods (including iron, gunpowder, weapons, and brandy) and spices. These goods and spices were traded for African people, who were taken captive as slaves. The enslaved people were sent to the New World (the Americas and the Caribbean), where they were sold or traded for

goods and materials, such as tobacco, cotton, sugar, molasses, and rum. These goods and materials were then transported back to Europe.

Through the middle passage, millions of Africans were taken from their homelands and transported on a deadly voyage across the Atlantic Ocean. Due to the inhabitable and brutal living conditions for the enslaved Africans, who were chained together below deck, many suffered from illnesses and diseases, or died during the long voyage. The enslaved Africans were viewed by their captors as cargo and treated as such. Many of the captive Africans chose to commit suicide rather than be subjected to a life of slavery. It is estimated that about two million Africans died as a result of the Middle Passage.

Additional titles to teach about strength and perseverance:

Brothers in Hope: The Story of the Lost Boys of Sudan written by Mary Williams, illustrated by R. Gregory Christie
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/brothers-in-hope>

Calling the Water Drum written by LaTisha Redding, illustrated by Aaron Boyd
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/calling-the-water-drum>

Frederick Douglass and the Last Day of Slavery written by William Miller, illustrated by Cedric Lucas
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/frederick-douglass>

Richard Wright and the Library Card written by William Miller, illustrated by R. Gregory Christie
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/richard-wright-and-the-library-card>

The Three Lucys written by Hayan Charara, illustrated by Sara Kahn
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-three-lucys>



VOCABULARY

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below. Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Content Specific

bluff, Teakettle Creek, plantation farms, Africa, brush-tail squirrel, shirttails, overseer, islanders, root magic, native, charm bag, strong-strong, cotton, cane, harvesting, gnats, Ibo people, Benin, fate, marsh meadows, cotton spurs, Ibo's Landing, egrets

Academic

pound, bang, pulsing, strike, noisy, thump, rocked, gently, paddled, tapped, drifted, splashed, calmer, scooped, rough, overturned, swirled, foamy, nearby, thumped, crick, flung, pounding, frosty, softly, rises, spills, taps

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strands 4–5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. What are folklore and legends? Why are these kinds of stories important? How are they passed down through generations?
2. What does the word *freedom* mean to you? How would you define the concept of freedom?
3. Where do you think the Sea Islands are located?
4. What do you know about the trade route that brought enslaved people from Africa to North America?
5. What do you know about Gullah people? In what area of the United States do they live?
6. How would you define the word *strength*? What does it mean to be strong?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Read and talk about the title of the book. Ask students what they think the title *In the Time of the Drums* means. Then ask them what and whom they think this book will most likely be about. What places or situations might be talked about in the text? What do you think might happen? What information do you think you might learn? What makes you think that?

Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, inside front cover, dedications, title page, illustrations, and author's note.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- what Twi teaches Mentu
- how Mentu finds strength
- the meaning and value of freedom
- how Twi and the Ibo people achieve freedom

Encourage students to consider why the author, Kim L. Siegelson, would want to share this story with young people.



AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses.

To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3 and Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strand 4)

1. Where does Mentu live? Where does Twi live? Where is she from?
2. Why does Twi want Mentu to be “strong-strong”? Why is this important?
3. What is an overseer?
4. Why do the islanders call Twi the “Ibo conjure woman”?
5. What happens that makes the enslaved people lose their memories of Africa?
6. How does Twi “remember the time before”?
7. How does Twi teach Mentu about their African roots?
8. Why does Twi want Mentu to carry the water buckets?
9. How do Mentu and the other islanders communicate through drums?
10. What message does Mentu hear coming from the far end of the island?
11. What/Who is the ship carrying and why?
12. Why do the enslaved Ibo people on the ship think they have returned home? What do they hear?
13. How does the overseer react when the Ibo people refuse to set foot on the island? How do the Ibo people respond?

14. How do the Ibo people plan to go back home to Africa?
15. Why does Twi give Mentu her charm bag?
16. Why won’t the water take Mentu or the other enslaved people on the island?
17. How does Mentu feel about Twi returning home to Africa?
18. What does Twi mean when she says Mentu’s “time to be strong-strong is near”?
19. When will Mentu’s time to be “strong-strong” come?
20. What happens to Twi as she runs toward the water?
21. Why aren’t the slave catchers able to catch the Ibo people? What happens to the ropes and chains?
22. What do Twi and the Ibo people chant as they enter the water?
23. Why doesn’t Mentu run toward the water?
24. What do Mentu and the other islanders believe happened to Twi and the Ibos?
25. What is Ibo’s Landing? Why is the name of this place significant?
26. Why did people stop fishing at Ibo’s Landing?
27. How does Mentu find strength? How does he keep his heritage alive? How does Mentu teach his own children to be “strong-strong”?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3, Craft & Structure, Strands 4–6, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strand 4)

1. How is Twi both a guardian of and teacher to Mentu?
2. What does Twi mean when she says that Mentu’s time to be “strong-strong” will come? To what is she referring?
3. “Some said his first breath had come from her own mouth. That as a new babe he had been still until she whispered the secret of life onto his tongue.”



“At once magical yet chillingly real, this is a thought-provoking and memorable work.”

–*Publishers Weekly*

“The rhythms hint at Gullah language, but the narrative is clear, accessible, and at the same time poetic. This thought-provoking story would be a splendid addition to any collection.”

–*School Library Journal*

“*In the Time of the Drums* nicely captures the soft-voiced, poetic quality of stories about the supernatural power enveloping those who could not be otherwise memorialized.” –*The New York Times Book Review*

- What does this mean? How did Twi help Mentu when he was born?
4. What does the sentence “the old ways had slowly slipped away and been left behind like sweat drops in a newly plowed row” mean?
 5. What was the journey on the ship across the ocean passage like for the Ibo people? What were the living conditions like? How dangerous was the journey?
 6. Look at the illustration of the enslaved Ibo people beneath the ship deck. How does the illustrator use color in this image? What emotions and feelings does the illustrator convey?
 7. How do you think the Ibo people feel after being taken against their will and chained beneath the ship deck?
 8. What does the author mean when she says “The ship had not returned them to Africa. Would never take them home again.”?
 9. “Mentu listened as though his soul lived in his ears.” What is the author saying about the songs and music of the Ibo people?
 10. What type of strength is Twi referring to when she says to Mentu that it “takes a mighty strength not to forget who you are”?
 11. What type of power do the songs, stories, and traditions of the Ibo people contain? How do the songs, stories, and traditions give the people strength?
 12. What does the sentence “the years melted from her like butter on an ash cake” mean?
 13. What does the simile “The ropes slipped through flesh and bone like it was smoke and seawater” mean? What is being compared?
 14. Why do you think Twi doesn’t turn back to look at Mentu when she leaves?
 15. How does the water take Twi and the Ibo people home to Africa?
 16. Do you think Mentu’s suffering is less because he has never known a life of freedom? Why or why not?
 17. Do you think the author, Kim L. Siegelson, wants the reader to interpret the story literally? Why or why not?
 18. How do Twi and the Ibo people retake their freedom through death?
 19. How is Twi’s and the Ibo people’s decision to go into the water an act of resistance?
 20. What message does this story give about perseverance and the human spirit? About the value of freedom?

Reader’s Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1 and 2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)
 (Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strand 1 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4 and 6)



Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. **Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. Twi, Mentu, and the Ibo people use songs and music to express their feelings and remain connected to their homeland. Does your family have any traditions or customs that help make you feel connected to your family and culture? If so, what are they? What significance do the traditions or customs have?
2. Twi and the Ibo people were ruthlessly taken away from their homeland against their will. They lost everything and were sold into slavery. How do you think you would feel if someone forced you to leave your home, friends, family, and everything you know? How do you think you would react? How so you think you would find the strength to persevere?
3. People find the strength and courage to persevere in seemingly impossible situations. Think of a time that you needed to be strong to overcome a difficult obstacle. How did you find strength? Who or what helped you? Who or what did you rely on? How did being strong help you overcome your obstacle? What did you learn about yourself through this experience?
4. What does the word *freedom* mean to you? What does freedom allow you to do? What opportunities do you have? How does freedom allow you to be yourself and express yourself openly? How would you feel if someone took away your freedom? What would you do or sacrifice to keep your freedom?
5. It can be very difficult when close family members or friends leave us or pass away, and people experience grief differently and react in different ways. What do you do to cope with or manage your feelings when you are missing someone and feeling sad? What advice might you give to someone who has lost a friend or family member?

ELL/ESL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about what freedom or strength means to them or the overall message of the story.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.



INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection

English Language Arts

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–2, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. Ask students to write a persuasive essay against slavery from the perspective of an abolitionist during the 18th or 19th century. Why should slavery be outlawed in the United States? Why should it be illegal? What rights/laws does slavery violate? How does slavery contradict the liberties and rights provided in the Constitution? How do the negative effects outweigh any economic benefits?
2. Encourage students to write a diary entry from the perspective of Mentu. Students should include multiple dates and passages as Mentu chronicles his feelings and experiences after Twi and the Ibo people leave. What is life like for Mentu now? How does he feel without Twi by his side? How does he cope with his feelings? How does he remain strong? How does he overcome obstacles? What does he hope or wish for?
3. Have students identify and then list on a chart all of the similes used in *In the Time of the Drums*. Then ask students to explain each simile in their own words. What does the narrator or character mean? What is the narrator or character trying to express? Is the simile effective? Why or why not?

4. Ask students to imagine they are going to interview the author and illustrator of *In the Time of the Drums*. Students should develop interview questions to ask the author and illustrator if they were on a talk show, news show, or radio show. What do students want to learn more about in terms of the writing process, the illustration process, inspiration or research for the story, slavery, or Gullah culture?
5. Have students read additional books about overcoming obstacles and resiliency: *Frederick Douglass and the Last Day of Slavery* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/frederick-douglass>) and *Calling the Water Drum* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/calling-the-water-drum>). Ask students to compare and contrast each story to *In the Time of the Drums*. What is the central idea of each book? How are the books connected? What themes or ideas do they share?

Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Craft and Structure, Strand 4, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1 and 2, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. On a map, ask students to identify and label the following: Africa, Europe, Caribbean Islands (West Indies), North America, South America, the Sea Islands, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Caribbean Sea. Then ask students to use one color to trace a route connecting Europe to west Africa, a line from west Africa to the Caribbean Islands (West Indies), and from the Caribbean Islands to Europe. Then have students use another color to trace a line from Europe to west Africa, west Africa to North America, and North America to Europe. What shape is created? Explain to students that this shape represents the movement of people and goods through the slave trade, or the Triangular Trade. Have students identify the Middle Passage and research where goods and enslaved Africans were traded at each leg of the Triangular Trade.
2. Have students research the living conditions and what life was like for enslaved Africans on



the Middle Passage through the account of a former enslaved using the lesson plan from the Smithsonian National Museum of American History (http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/oral_histories/life_at_sea/pdf/guide_equiano.pdf).

3. In small groups, have students construct a timeline of slavery and its abolition in the United States, including the transatlantic slave trade. How long did it take for slavery to be completely abolished? What factors contributed to the slow extinction of the slave trade? What critical laws were passed that helped eradicate the slave trade and slavery in the United States?
4. Have students research the Ibo Landing and the mythological and folklore stories surrounding the event. When did it occur? What happened? Then, using a Venn diagram, ask students to compare and contrast the historic account of the Ibo Landing and the folklore stories. What parts of the stories are similar? What parts are different? What symbolism is involved? How does the folklore version borrow from the historical event?
5. Have students research the Gullah people of the Sea Islands and present the information they find on a chart or with another kind of graphic organizer. Who are the Gullah people? What is the origin of the Gullah people? Where are they from? Where do they live? What language do they speak? How big is the Gullah population? What cultural traditions and beliefs do they have? How has the unique Gullah culture been preserved? Encourage students to explore the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission for more information (<http://www.gullahgeecheecorridor.org/>).

Art/Media

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. Have students explore African drum music with lesson plans from Smithsonian Folkways (<http://www.folkways.si.edu/lesson-plans/smithsonian>) and listen to recordings of African drums (<http://www.allmusic.com/album/african-drums-smithsonian-folkways-mw0000577907>).

2. In small groups, have students examine and discuss images and illustrated depictions of the Atlantic Slave Trade from the Smithsonian National Museum of American History (http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/exhibition/1_4.html) and African-American slavery from the Library of Congress (https://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/082_slave.html). Ask students to discuss the portrayal of enslaved Africans in the illustrations. How were the people treated? What were their lives like? How were they viewed or regarded by others? What words and phrases are used to describe them? How do the images make you feel? What thoughts, feelings, or emotions do you have?

School–Home Connection

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 4)
(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 2, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–8)

1. Encourage students to research and talk with their parents or other family members about their family’s culture and traditions. What special music, stories, legends, folktales, food, and other traditions does your culture have/celebrate? How do you and your family honor or celebrate your cultural heritage? What elements do you incorporate? Ask students to present their findings to the class and, if possible, share an object or an example of something significant to their culture with the rest of the class.
2. Have students interview their parents about a time or event in their lives where they needed to be strong and persevere. What types of obstacles did they face? How did they learn to be strong? What helped them? How did they feel? What did they learn from these difficult or challenging experiences? What advice do they have for others who need to be strong in the face of adversity?
3. Ask students to write a letter to a mentor or someone in their lives who guides, teaches, supports, and inspires them. How does this person act as a mentor to you? What do you respect about this person? What do you learn from this person? What do you want this person to know? How will you express your appreciation?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kim L. Siegelson is the author of several picture books, as well as a popular speaker at conferences, writing workshops, and school visits. She grew up hearing the unforgettable account of Africans walking into the water near Georgia's Sapelo Island, and this story became the inspiration for *In the Time of the Drums*. Siegelson lives with her family in Atlanta, Georgia. Visit her online at <http://kimsiegelson.blogspot.com/p/home.html>

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Brian Pinkney is the acclaimed illustrator of numerous award-winning books. In addition to the Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award for *In the Time of the Drums*, he has been honored with two Caldecott Medal Honors, four Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award Honors, and the Boston Globe/Horn Book Award. Pinkney lives in Brooklyn, New York, with his wife and frequent collaborator, Andrea Davis Pinkney, and their two children. Visit him online at <http://www.brianpinkney.net/>

ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

LEE & LOW BOOKS is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at leeandlow.com.

ORDERING INFORMATION

On the Web:

www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering (general order information)

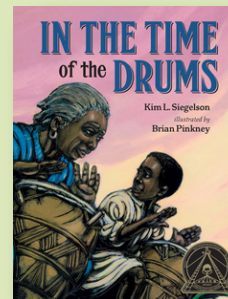
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/in-the-time-of-the-drums> (secure online ordering)

By Phone: 212-779-4400 ext. 25

By Fax: 212-683-1894

By Mail: Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

Book Information for *In the Time of the Drums*



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*Reading Level: Grade 3–4

Interest Level: Grades 1–5

Guided Reading Level: W

Lexile™: AD570L

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: N/A

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

THEMES: Courage, Slavery, Grandparents, Family, Heroism, Music, Persistence/Grit, Religion/Spirituality, United States History, Gullah Legends, African/African American Culture and History, African American Interest

RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/in-the-time-of-the-drums>

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.