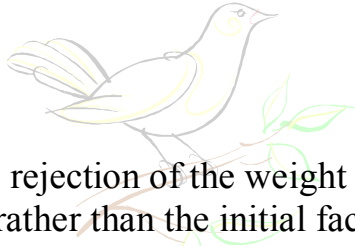


Jericho Walls

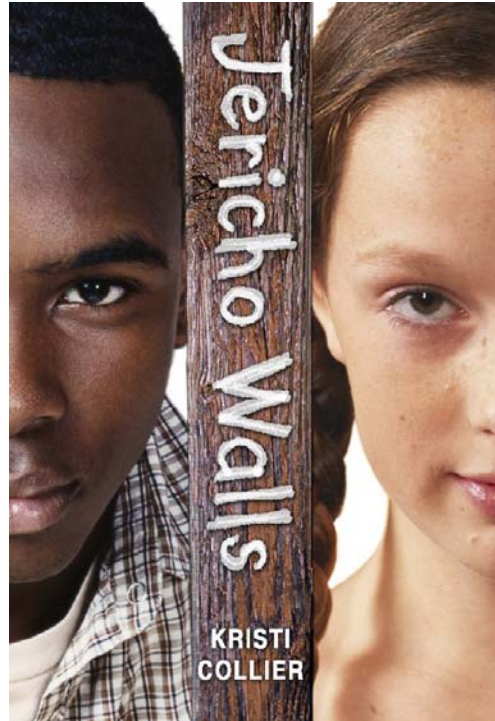
by Kristi Collier

Educators Guide



“Jo’s rejection of the weight of racism, rather than the initial fact of it, . . . creates a realistic, but seldom articulated, Southern setting of fifty years ago.”

--*The Horn Book*



Jacket art by Laurent Linn

About the Book

“It’s different here, Mama,” I said softly.

A look of pain flashed across her face. “It’s hard. I know. But you’ll adjust, Jo. You always do.”

Jo Clawson is a preacher’s daughter, so she is used to moving around a lot. But that doesn’t make this new move to Jericho, South Carolina any easier.

Being the new kid in town is never easy, but this time Jo has decided to stop picking fights and to start fitting in. Living in the south in 1957 throws her some curve balls, however. There are new rules that must be mastered, rules that don’t always make sense, at least not to the “Yankee.”

When Jo befriends Lucas, she begins to realize that fitting in is about a lot more than proper manners. As the realities of Jim Crow laws begin to impact her world, Jo must make choices that call into question her own values and beliefs.

Questions for Discussion

Family Relationships

- Jo has an awkward relationship with her father, in part because she’s not the child he expected. What challenges arise when parents want their children to be different?
- Jo’s mother and father hold different beliefs, which leads to tension. What are some ways that children respond when their parents are in disagreement?

Friendship

- Jo desperately wants to fit in with Bobby Sue’s gang, so much so that she tries to be someone she’s not. How do kids you know try to fit in?
- Why is friendship so important?
- Jo tries to hide her friendship with Lucas. Have you ever tried to hide a friendship because you were afraid your parents wouldn’t approve?
- What causes Jo to realize the importance of Lucas’ friendship?

Questions for Discussion

Society and Culture

- In much of the country prior to the late 1960's, discrimination against African-Americans was accepted as normal. What had to happen, historically, and what still has to happen, for people to be treated with equality?
- Misunderstandings occur between Jo and Lucas because they don't understand each other's different worlds. How do misunderstandings occur between people today?
- Jo had certain expectations placed on her by society, while Lucas had other expectations placed on him. What expectations do people place on you?

Character and Conscience

- What are Jo's beliefs, and how do they change over the course of the book? Which of Jo's beliefs do you share? Are there any of her beliefs that you disagree with?
- Jo goes against her core values on several occasions when she's trying to fit in. How does peer pressure and the need to be liked cause people to act against what they believe?

Comprehension

- How was life different in the south in the 1950's, and how did that affect Jo and her family?
- How does being the preacher's daughter influence Jo?
- How does Jo's friendship with Lucas challenge her beliefs about equality?
- What is the story of the "Little Rock Nine" and how did that impact Jo?
- What did Jo mean when she thinks *until the day when you make up your very own song, and decide that's the one you need to sing*?

About the Author



Kristi was raised in Richmond, Indiana, right in the heart of basketball country. A preacher's grand-

daughter, she grew up hearing her mom tell stories about life as a preacher's kid in the south.

Kristi started writing in fifth grade, but in those days it was more of a hobby than a viable occupation. Concerned about her ability to make a living as a writer, she studied journalism at Indiana University, and then went on to receive her Master's degree in mental health counseling. She worked as a counselor in a variety of venues, all the while continuing to dream about writing fiction for young readers.

In addition to spending most of her days in front of the computer, writing stories, Kristi currently teaches two writing courses for the Institute of Children's Literature. She also keeps her hand in counseling, working one day a week for a mental health hospital.

Internet Resources

- www.civilrightsmuseum.org – National Civil Rights Museum.
- www.crmvet.org – history of the civil rights movement and stories from civil rights veterans.
- www.centralhigh57.org – the anniversary site of the integration of Central High in Little Rock.
- www.collierbooks.com – read an author Q&A, learn how to make Ms. Abilene's sweet tea, link to Kristi's blog and more at the author's official website.