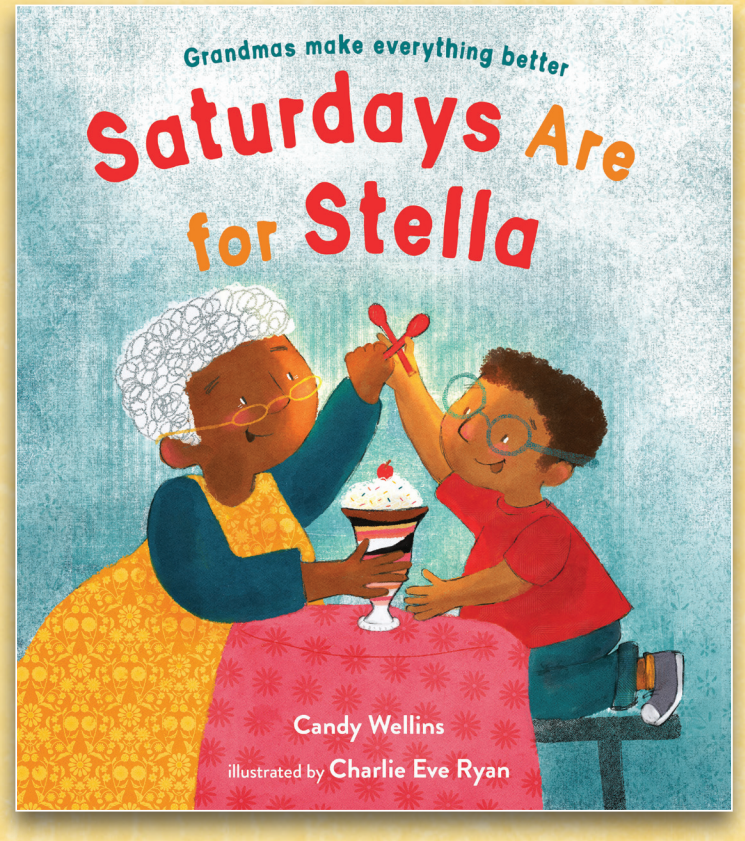


Saturdays Are for Stella

Activity Guide

George loves Saturdays. That's because Saturdays mean time with Grandma Stella. The two of them love going on adventures downtown to visit the dinosaur museum and to ride on the carousel. Even when they stay in, George and Stella have fun together, making cinnamon rolls without popping open a tube and sharing the biggest, best hugs. Then one day Stella is gone, and George is ready to cancel Saturdays. But when a new addition to the family arrives, George finds a way to celebrate the priceless memories he made with his grandma-while making new ones too.

Candy Wellins, debut picture book author, is a former teacher with a master's degree in early literacy education. After losing both her grandmothers while she was pregnant with her first child, she wrote this story to honor both the past and the future. She lives in the Austin, Texas, area with her husband and three children.

Charlie Eve Ryan works full-time from home as an author-illustrator and stay-at-home mom. She believes being a creative means she is always learning, and she has studied illustration and writing through many different academies, workshops, and classes. She lives with her family in Royersford, Pennsylvania.

How to Use This Guide

This classroom guide for *Saturdays Are for Stella* is designed for students in grades K-5. Ideas are included for reading, language and writing, STEM, social studies, drama, art and PE. Teachers may modify activities as they see fit.

Reading

- Before reading the book, look at the cover.

  - Who do you think the two people are on the cover?
  - What is their relationship?
  - What do you think this book will be about?
  - If your book has a book jacket, lift the book jacket to reveal the alternate cover. Who are these people? Who is similar? Who is different? How do you think all the people are connected?
  - Who is the author of the book? What do authors do?
  - Who is the illustrator of the book? What do illustrators do?

- After reading, summarize the story together. (George and his Grandma Stella spend Saturdays together doing fun things. When Stella dies, George is sad. When his new baby sister Stella is born, George is happy again doing the same things with her that he used to do with Grandma.)

- Find the dedication page in this book. (Though dedications often come at the beginning of the book, this book's dedication is at the end.) Who did the author and illustrator dedicate the book to? Why are the dedications significant? What does that tell you about the author and illustrator?

Comprehension

- What things do George and Stella do downtown?
- What are some unusual things George and Stella do together?
- What are the giant, flat Frisbees that Stella owns? Why do you think George calls record albums "giant, flat Frisbees" instead of record albums?
- Why were Dad's eyes red and Mom's nose stuffy?
- What does George do when Stella dies?
- How do we know that George remembers Grandma Stella after her death? What does he do? How do you remember someone who is gone? (It doesn't just have to be people who have died, it could be a friend who moves away or a kid who goes to a different school.)

Compare and Contrast

- George's view of downtown depends on whether he's with Stella or not. Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast what he does downtown with Stella and what he does downtown when he's with his parents.

- How are Grandma Stella and Baby Stella alike? Create a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast the two.

Inference

- George and Grandma Stella always passed by a toy store when they were downtown together. Can you infer why they would always do this?

- The author never says that Grandma Stella dies, but as readers we can infer that she did. What are some clues the author and illustrator give to let you know that Grandma Stella has died?

  The author also never says a new baby is coming, but we can infer that too. What are some clues the author and illustrator give to let you know Baby Stella is coming before she is actually born?

Connections

- Make a list of connections you have when reading this book. Be sure to include text-to-text, text-to-self and text-to-media examples.

Writing

Oxymorons

- An oxymoron is a figure of speech in which contradictory terms are used together. In *Saturdays Are For Stella*, the author describes George's reaction to seeing his baby sister for the first time by saying, "She wasn't his Stella, but there was something strangely familiar about her."

    - What is the oxymoron in this sentence? (strangely familiar)
    - What does it mean?
    - Why do you think the author chose to describe Baby Stella this way? How could Stella be both strange and familiar?
    - Come up with a list of other oxymorons as a class (some are listed below) and illustrate their meanings.

Act Naturally
Clearly Confused
Deafening Silence
Definitely Maybe
Jumbo Shrimp
Only Choice
Original Copy
Small Crowd
Weirdly Normal

Adjectives

- Adjectives are words that describe nouns. In English, they can usually be found right before nouns. In this story, make a list of adjectives that you find. (Examples: boring offices, strange foods, scratchy clothes).
- How does the author's choice of adjectives help you understand the story? What would happen if the author chose different adjectives (interesting offices, yummy foods, soft clothes).

(Adjectives, continued)

- Imagine George is spending an afternoon out. Fill in the blanks with adjectives to help show what kind of afternoon he is having. (You can do this exercise twice imagining he is with Stella and without her to show the different experiences.)

First, George went to a _____ concert. He heard _____ singers and _____ instruments. Afterward, they stopped at a museum. George saw lots of _____ exhibits there. For lunch they had _____ sandwiches and _____ drinks. On the way home, George stopped at a _____ store. It was the _____ day ever.

Creative Writing

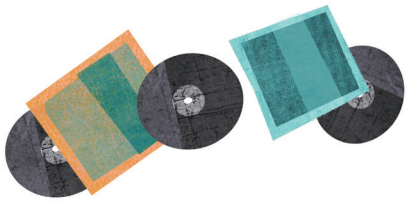
- For George, Saturdays are for Stella. What do Saturdays mean to you? Create a list of things that Saturdays represent to you. Can you turn your list into one of the following:

    - A poem
    - A story
    - A celebration of someone special in your life

- Think about all the days of the week. Does each day have a different feel? Does each day represent something unique to you? Write a sentence or more for each day. (Mondays are for _____ . Tuesdays are for _____ .)

- George both likes and dislikes trips downtown depending on whether he is with Stella or not. Make a list of several places (the mountains, a carnival, the dentist's office) and write a description of each from the point of view of liking it and not liking it.

(Creative Writing, continued)



- George calls Stella's record albums "giant, flat Frisbees that play music." Make a list of items that were once used by older generations, but not used today. Come up with creative ways to describe these old-fashioned items. (Ideas: Landline telephone, TV antenna, VCR, typewriter)

- Make a list of three or more items about someone you know and love. Title your list "The Best Things About _____." Then give your list to the person you wrote about!

STEM

- Baking is math! Use this recipe for Grandma Stella's Not-From-A-Tube Cinnamon Rolls to create a tasty treat.

Grandma Stella's Not-From-A-Tube Cinnamon Rolls

Makes 12 rolls

For the dough

3½ cups all-purpose flour
¼ cup sugar
1 tablespoon dried active yeast
1 teaspoon salt
1 stick butter (melted)
¾ cup milk

For the filling

⅓ cup brown sugar
⅓ cup white sugar
2-3 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 stick softened butter

Combine your dry dough ingredients in a bowl or stand mixer with a dough hook attachment. Add the melted butter to the milk and combine then add the liquid mixture to the dry ingredients.

Knead the dough for about 10 minutes. Add more milk (1 tablespoon at a time) if the dough feels too dry. Shape the dough into a smooth ball and place inside an oiled bowl. Cover with Saran Wrap or a tea towel and let rise for 45 minutes to an hour.

In a new bowl, combine all the filling ingredients together.

Practice your ninja skills or read a good book while you wait for your dough to rise.

When the dough has doubled, punch it down then cut it half. Roll each half out into a rectangle, approximately 15 x 12 inches.

Spread the filling mixture evenly over each rectangle. Starting at the short side, roll each up into a log. Using a piece of unscented dental floss, cut each log into six rolls. Place the rolls in a 9 x 13 casserole dish. Give the rolls room so they can rise and expand. Cover gain and let rise for 20-30 minutes. Preheat your oven to 375°F.

Once the rolls are big and puffy, place them in the oven. Bake for 12-15 minutes or until golden. Eat when cool or frost with your favorite icing. (Grandma Stella recommends a cream cheese icing.)

- George uses a calendar to mark the days he misses Stella. Create a calendar for a month (or year). Mark down important events like holidays, birthdays on an annual calendar and recurring events (sports, time with family and friends, religious commitments, or school) on a weekly one. For extra fun, create a picture to go along with each month.

- George's parents use a calendar to keep track of things they need to do to prepare for Baby Stella. Use a calendar to plan steps you need to do to complete a task. (Ideas could be practices for a recital or concert, lessons before a test, games before the playoffs)

- Take a survey of different ways people spend their Saturdays. Once completed, look over your data and group similar activities (e.g. Playing baseball and swimming could both be listed under sports). Create a graph that shows the different ways people spend their Saturdays. Alternately, you could graph how people wish they spent their Saturdays or what their favorite activity to do with a grandma is.)

- Grandma Stella and George love listening to records together. Do this simple experiment to see sound in action. Tightly place a piece of Saran Wrap around the opening of a glass. Place a pile of rice or salt on top of the Saran Wrap. Without touching the glass, get real close and make a lot of noise. (George recommends singing opera or banging a drum.) Watch the sound waves move the salt and rice off the glass!

- George loves visiting museums with Grandma Stella. Create a science museum about a topic you think they'd love to visit. Be sure to include lots of facts, pictures and models in your museum.

Social Studies

- Interview an older person about his/her childhood. What are some of the things they used to have or do that are no longer common? What are some things they did as children that you also do today?

- Find out why your parents chose your name for you or find out what your name means. What language does your name come from? Were you named after someone or something? Alternately, you could discuss the names of pets owned by classmates. Why were the names chosen? Why are they significant?

- Create a family tree. If possible include pictures of the people in your family. What similarities exist between family members? Names, appearances, habits? Interview a family member and ask them how you are like other members of your family. Who do you look like? Who do you act like? Whose interests or hobbies match yours?

Drama & Art

Which Stella?

- Partner up students to act out a scene from the story. One partner should be George and the other should be Stella. The partners should act out their scene without words. Can you guess who is who? Is Stella the grandma or the baby? How could you tell?

Family Portraits

- The illustrator of this book used a combination of supplies (pens, paints and textures) to create the characters. Using a combination of your favorite supplies make portraits of people you love.

PE

- Do George's favorite ninja warm-up:

  - 10 jumping jacks
  - 10 frog jumps
  - 10 push-ups
  - 10 side shuffles
  - 10 seconds of holding a plank

- Create a ninja-worthy obstacle course and practice running it. Some ideas include:

  - Crawling through a tunnel.
  - Jumping over rocks, logs or villainous toys.
  - Running up a hill or climbing to the top of a playscape.
  - Going down a slide.
  - Balance walking across a log.