

Me and Martha Black

Margriet Ruurs

This unit was lovingly created by Jayne Couillard

Grade level: 4-6

Book Summary: Melanie White likes history but she certainly doesn't believe in ghosts. However, when a voice from the past begins to haunt her, she soon discovers wisdom in her words. With the plucky ghost of Martha Black as her guide, Melanie wanders through the history books like she never has before. From the Great Fire of Chicago, to the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898, Martha Black recounts her life story vividly—sometimes a little too vividly.

Along the way, Melanie hears the stories of a whole cast of Gold Rush characters: Klondike Kate, Soapy Smith, Robert Service, Sam McGee, and, of course, Martha Black, First Lady of the Yukon. In the glow of the midnight sun, these two Yukon women encounter adventure, mystery, as well as secrets from the past.

Length of unit: 2 or 3 weeks

Materials

Class set of *Me and Martha Black* by Margriet Ruurs

Computer and internet

Student packet for each student

Me and Martha Black

By Margriet Ruurs

Margriet Ruurs is the author of *Me and Martha Black*. One way to get to know an author a bit is to read one of her books. Before you begin reading do an internet search and find out a few things about Margriet Ruurs. In class have some one record on the board all the things you learned about her. Using the board's information write a paragraph about what you found out about her.



Chapter 1

1) Find pictures of Klondike Kate, Diamond Tooth Gertie and Flora Shaw. Glue them in here and write (in your own words) two sentences about each.

Chapter 1 cont.

2) If you could go back in time and meet one person and learn about their life who would it be and why?

3) Who is Robert Service? _____

Find one poem he wrote and print it out and glue in here. Read through the poem and in your own words tell what the poem is about.

I think this poem is about...

Chapter 2

Research Martha Black. Find out ten things about her and write them here (do not cut and paste from the internet). A great way to keep things in your own words is to have someone record the notes of your class's finding on the board and to use that information when you are writing your own information

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____
- 7 _____
- 8 _____
- 9 _____
- 10 _____

Chapter 3

1) In Chapter 1 reader response you said you'd like to go back in time to meet someone. Research where this person lived and why they were famous. In your own words write one paragraph about what you found out about this person.

2) On the next page is part of the poem Spell of the Yukon by Robert Service. Highlight and memorize one stanza from the poem.

The Spell of the Yukon
by Robert Service

I wanted the gold, and I sought it;
I scrabbled and mucked like a slave.
Was it famine or scurvy, I fought it;
I hurled my youth into a grave.
I wanted the gold, and I got it --
Came out with a fortune last fall, --
Yet somehow life's not what I thought it,
And somehow the gold isn't all.

There's a land where the mountains are nameless,

And the rivers all run God knows where;
There are lives that are erring and aimless,
And deaths that just hang by a hair;
There are hardships that nobody reckons;
There are valleys unpeopled and still;
There's a land -- oh, it beckons and beckons,
And I want to go back -- and I will.

Chapter 4

1) Find and print out the poem “The Cremation of Sam McGee.” Read through it once with your teacher so you understand the concepts and then read it again all the way through. Write one paragraph about its meaning.

Chapter 5

1) Describe a trip you took (to a museum or any place) where you learned some local history about the people or place.

Or

2) Research Dawson City and take a few notes. Then, in your own words, write about what you learned about the people and the place.

3) Find a picture of the Chilkoot pass and paste it in here

Chapter 6

Vocab words: find definitions from the book or dictionary (make sure they make sense to the book).

Bard _____

Flapjack _____

Ballads _____

1) What year was the Klondike Gold Rush? _____

2) On the internet find a list of supplies each person coming to find gold had to bring with them and carry over the Chilkoot Pass? Paste it here

3) Melanie buys a postcard for her friend Sarah. If you were Melanie write a postcard to Sarah telling her about your first impressions of Dawson City. Don't forget to date and sign it!



Chapter 7

1) Research Soapy Smith the infamous “Gangster of the North.” Then in your own words write a paragraph about him.

2) In a paragraph describe Martha Black's experience hiking over the Chilkoot Pass.

Chapter 9

DESIGN A TRAVEL BROCHURE.

Illustrate and advertise the "world" of the Klondike Gold Rush.

Include pictures and information.

It is great to do research on the internet but make sure you write the information in your own words. Glue in your brochure on this page.

Skookum Jim Mason

In August 1896, Skookum Jim and two others headed north, along the Yukon River, looking for Jim's sister Kate and her husband George. The group included Skookum Jim, his cousin Dawson Charlie and his nephew Patsy Henderson. After they found George and Kate, who were fishing for salmon at the mouth of the Klondike River, they ran into Robert Henderson who had been mining gold on the Indian River, just south of the Klondike. "Gold?" They asked.



Keish (Skookum Jim)

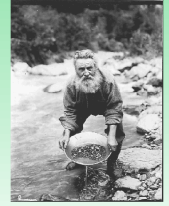


Climbing the Chilkoot Pass

The Chilkoot Pass

The climb up the Chilkoot Pass was really steep and dangerous. In one half mile it rose 1000 feet. It was too steep for pack animals, and prospectors had to pack their equipment and supplies to the top. Some 1,500 steps were carved into the ice to aid travel up the pass. Even though it was not as high, conditions on White Pass were even worse. It was known as the Dead Horse Trail, since about 3,000 animals died along the route.

Klondike Gold Rush



The Klondike gold rush began in July of 1897. Two ships docked in San Francisco and Seattle carrying miners returning from the Yukon with bags of gold. The news spread the word around the world.

Chapter 10

Glue in the book cover of *My Ninety Years* by Martha Black. Include a short book summary or book review from the internet.

Chapter 11

1) Jack London lived next door to Robert Service in Dawson City. Who was Jack London?

2) How many books did he write? _____ Name four.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

3) According to the book *me and Martha Black* what are the different definitions of “sourdough?”

4) Instead of hiking over the Chilkoot Pass how did Martha Black return to the Yukon? _____

5) Besides a saw mill or looking for gold what other businesses would have been good ideas to start in Dawson City during the Gold Rush?
