



## Teacher's Guide for *The Bravest Girl in Sharpsburg*

By Kathleen A. Ernst  
(White Mane Publishing, 1997)

### Activity Suggestions

1. Ask students to look in the media for examples of modern issues that are causing deep divisions within families or communities. What parallels can students find in other areas of the world today?
  - Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Social Studies: B.4.4, B.4.9, C.4.1, C.4.3, E.4.2, E.4.3; E.8.2
2. Have students create Venn Diagrams, comparing Teresa, Savilla, and Bethie. What characteristics and beliefs do they share? How are they different?
  - Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for English Language Arts: A.4.2; A.8.2
  - Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Social Studies: E.4.7; B.8.4
3. Ask students to write a diary entry from the point-of-view of one of the civilians sheltering in the Kretzer cellar during the Battle of Antietam.
  - Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for English Language Arts: B.4.1; B.8.1
4. Discuss the difficult position of people living in Maryland and other border states during the Civil War. Ask students to write two first-person letters to President Abraham Lincoln on the subject of the declaration of war: one from the point-of-view of a Sharpsburg Unionist, and one from the point-of-view of a Sharpsburg Secessionist. Or, ask students to choose design a recruitment poster, or radio ad, intended to convince people to support the Union or the Confederacy.
  - Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for English Language Arts: B.4.1, E.4.3; B.8.1, E.8.3
  - Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Social Studies: E.4.14; B.8.4, B.8.10
5. Take a vote in class: which of the three main characters do students think is the bravest girl in Sharpsburg? How do Savilla and Teresa, who did daring things but felt little fear, compare with Elizabeth, who needed to summon a great deal of courage to help her friend Timothy? Ask students to write an essay explaining their answer.
  - Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for English Language Arts: B.4.1; B.8.1
6. Discuss the constraints Teresa and Savilla felt throughout the book. What do they say about gender roles in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? Guide students through an independent study of women's roles during the Civil War. How did women around the country find ways to express their patriotism and serve their cause?
  - Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Social Studies: E.4.3; E.8.2

7. Allow students to choose a prominent historical figure from the period you are discussing. Ask them to read a biography or other nonfiction book about the person, then try fictionalizing one experience. They should include the character's thoughts and feelings. Afterwards, have students discuss the experience. Did they find it difficult to put themselves in that individual's place? Are they comfortable fictionalizing real people, or do they think all main characters in novels should be created from the author's imagination?
- Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for English Language Arts: A.4.3, B.4.3
  - Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Social Studies: B.4.3

### For Further Exploration

Antietam National Battlefield  
P. O. Box 158, Sharpsburg, MD 21782  
Phone: 301- 432-5124  
<http://www.nps.gov/anti/home.htm>

A visit to the national battlefield will provide a good overview of the Battle of Antietam. The park's website is a particularly rich resource, and includes background information, maps, timelines, historic photos, and other resources.

### Author Presentations

Kathleen A. Ernst offers a number of programs and presentations for student audiences. Information about her current offerings can be found on her website. Contacted Kathleen by phone (Central US time zone) or via email to discuss content, cost, and scheduling of programs.

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