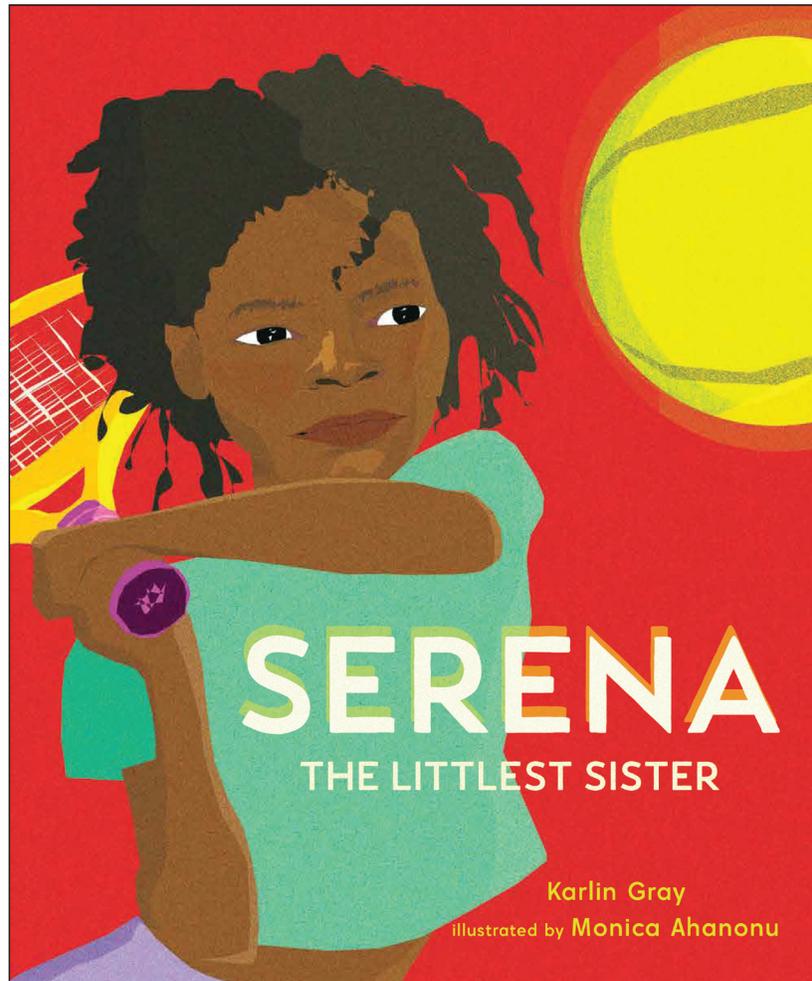


CLASSROOM GUIDE

SERENA

THE LITTLEST SISTER

Written by **Karlin Gray**
Illustrated by **Monica Ahanonu**



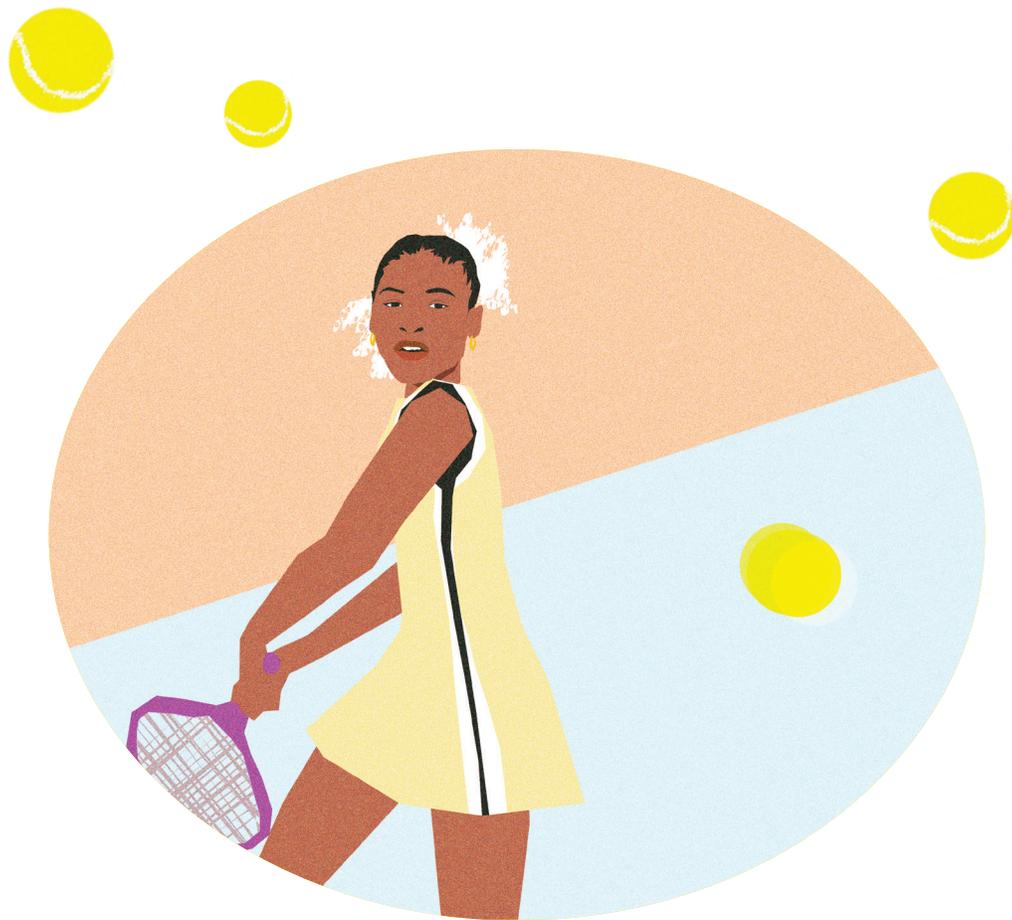
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Introduction

Serena: The Littlest Sister tells the story of Serena Williams and her journey to the top of women's tennis. **Karlin Gray** describes how the littlest sister became the biggest winner and how her close-knit family supported her along the way. **Monica Ahanonu** brings the story to life with bold illustrations and vivid colors. Readers will feel the energy popping off the page of this vibrant picture book biography. As the 20th anniversary of Serena's first Grand Slam victory approaches, readers will become inspired by the positivity and determination of one of the strongest athletes of our time. Use this book to spark important dialogue about women in sports, the power of positivity, grit and the importance of a supportive family.



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Essential Questions

- Compare the tennis equipment and facilities used by the girls in the beginning of the story with what they used when they moved to Florida.
 - What can you learn about the setting of the story from these descriptions?
- Describe Serena as a young girl.
 - How does this description help the reader understand her and the path that she ended up taking in life?
- How did their parents influence the girls when they were young?
 - How would you describe their parenting style?
 - How does it compare with your own parents' parenting style?
- The book says "One newspaper article claimed Serena would never be as successful as Venus because younger siblings never go very far in sports"(23). How do you think this affected Serena? Venus? Their mother and father?
- Make a text-to-self connection: Have you ever been compared to a sibling, friend, or classmate?
 - What were the circumstances?
 - How did you handle the situation?
 - Was it a positive or negative experience? Why?
- Analyze the illustration of the tennis players in Florida. What do you notice?
 - How does the text support the illustration?
 - How do you think the similarities and differences affected Serena and Venus' game?
 - How do you think race impacted Venus and Serena when they moved from California to Florida?
- Serena and Venus have their own sense of style. How do you think their unique style has impacted women in tennis and women athletes in general?
- Throughout this story the Williams family has a consistent tone of positivity. Find examples in the book of this positivity.
 - How do you think this contributed to the success of Serena?
 - How did it contribute to the success of the entire family?
- What are some of the challenges that Serena faced?
 - Do you think this affected her positively or negatively? Explain.
- How would you describe Serena's personality? She possesses many strong qualities; would you add grit to the list of her characteristics? Why or why not?
- Discuss Serena and Venus' relationship.
 - Do you think they have a typical sibling relationship? Explain.

Activities

BIRTH ORDER

The title of the book gives the reader a great clue about the significance of birth order. Serena is the youngest sister. Why does this matter? What does birth order have to do with a person's character traits? Is a person's birth order important or is it irrelevant? Explore the ideas behind the psychology of birth order.

Here are a few resources to get you started:

- Does Birth Order Matter?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNwQbhMqmJ4>
- How Does Birth Order Affect Who You Are?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zw8_SQLZ-A
- Guess Your Birth Order in 9 Questions
<https://www.buzzfeed.com/perpetua/birth-order-quiz>



How do you think birth order affected Serena Williams? Based on what you have learned, do you think she possesses the qualities of a youngest sibling? Do you think this contributed to her success? Now tell your story. What is your birth order? Are you an oldest, middle, youngest, or only child? Do you think your character traits are in line with what is expected from your place in the family? Write a persuasive essay about birth order. Do you agree with the information about placement in the family? Do you think birth order is an accurate science? Based on your experience and your research is it an accurate measure or is it flawed? Share your opinion and begin a debate!

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.8

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

VISION BOARD

Serena's father had an extremely positive parenting style. He even hung inspirational signs around the tennis court and the word can't was not used in the Williams' family. This positivity and motivation is highly effective. Everywhere you go you can find signs, coffee mugs, tweets, and t-shirts that spread the word of positivity. Some people even make vision boards to focus themselves and immerse themselves in optimism. What would your vision board look like? What are your goals? What do you need to achieve your goals?

After reading *Serena: The Littlest Sister*, create your own vision board. Gather supplies such as magazines, scissors, glue, markers, and poster board. Build your board as you find the images and words that define your vision and future goals. This project will help you feel the effects that the motivational signs may have had on Serena. They might even help you make your dreams come true!

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.5

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

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THE CLASSROOM GRAND SLAM

Serena and her sisters did not always have state of the art equipment to play tennis. They used what they had. Readers can make a connection to the characters by inventing their own tennis equipment with a fun STEM experience. Distribute materials such as paper plates, paint stirrers, tongue depressors, rulers, tape, string, etc. Invite groups to use the materials to create tennis rackets. Encourage the groups to follow the Engineering Design Process (Ask, Imagine, Plan, Create, Improve). Groups can build and use their tennis racket inventions to play tennis like the Williams sisters did during their early years in Compton. Once they have designed the tools for the game ask each group to create and write the rules of their game and create a poster so that others can play. The success of the game will be in the clear, concise explanation of the rules. Set aside time for the groups to rotate around the classroom. Each group can read the posters and try the invented tennis games. Serena and her sisters would be proud of the ingenuity!

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5

Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

WOMEN AND SPORTS

Get inspired by Allison Glock's poem *When I Play*. Watch this powerful short film to begin your journey into the world of women's sports. Prepare to have chills!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_eXE1ka4HJs

Serena Williams is a strong role model for all people but especially for girls and women, and especially in the world of sports. How have other women impacted sports? After reading *Serena: The Littlest Sister*, choose a topic that features women in sports. Choose an individual, an impactful story, or a struggle that women have faced in sports. Share your new expertise with other readers! Present your findings to the whole group or do a partner share to spread the news about women in sports. What can you do to inspire others with your life's work? Maybe you are a writer, artist, athlete, musician, or an activist. How will you inspire others?



Here are a few resources to get you started:

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/08/sports/women-sports-equality.html>
- <https://www.kidsareheroes.org>
- <https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/>

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

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Reproducible/Worksheet

SERENA WILLIAMS – TIMELINE SEQUENCING

In the following worksheets, students will practice sequencing important events in Serena Williams' life. There are two versions of the worksheet. They are modified for different levels of readers. The first one requires the reader to read very carefully to determine the order that each event occurred. The second worksheet is more open ended and challenging. It can be used as a template for research and note-taking or as a cut and paste activity after research has been completed.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.



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Name: _____

Date: _____

Serena Williams - Timeline Sequencing

DIRECTIONS: Read each milestone carefully. Determine the order of some of the important events* in Serena Williams' life. Cut each fact and glue in the correct order on the timeline.

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| September 26, 1981 | |
| 1984 | |
| 1995 | |
| 1999 | |
| 2000 | |
| 2003 | |
| 2008 | |
| 2012 | |
| 2017 | |

* Source: <https://www.biography.com/athlete/serena-williams>

Serena Williams - Life Events

DIRECTIONS: Cut and paste in the correct order.

| |
|--|
| Serena became a professional tennis player |
| Won gold medals at the Olympics in Australia |
| Serena Williams was born in Saginaw, Michigan |
| Won her first Grand Slam title at age 17 |
| Defeated her sister Venus in the Australian Open |
| Wins the "Serena Slam" - Four straight Grand Slam titles |
| Won gold medal at the Olympics in Beijing |
| Won her 15th Grand Slam singles title |
| Serena starts to play tennis |

ANSWER KEY FOR TEACHER

| |
|---|
| 1. Serena Williams was born in Saginaw, Michigan |
| 2. Serena starts to play tennis when she is three years old |
| 3. Serena became a professional tennis player at the age of 14. |
| 4. Won her first Grand Slam title at age 17 |
| 5. Nineteen year old Serena won gold medals at the Olympics in Australia |
| 6. Three years after the Olympics in Australia she wins the "Serena Slam"- Four straight Grand Slam titles |
| 7. Won gold medal at the Olympics in Beijing |
| 8. Won her 15th Grand Slam singles title four years after the Beijing Olympics |
| 9. Defeated her sister Venus in the 2017 Australian Open |

Name: _____

Date: _____

Serena Williams - Timeline Sequencing

DIRECTIONS: Use the website below to learn about the life of Serena Williams. Fill in the important events* that have shaped her life. Several sources have been provided for you but challenge yourself to find your own and list below!

Possible Sources:

<https://www.biography.com/athlete/serena-williams>

<http://www.espn.com/espnw/news/article/6948445/serena-williams-grand-slam-career>

Your Own Source: _____

| | |
|--------------------|--|
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