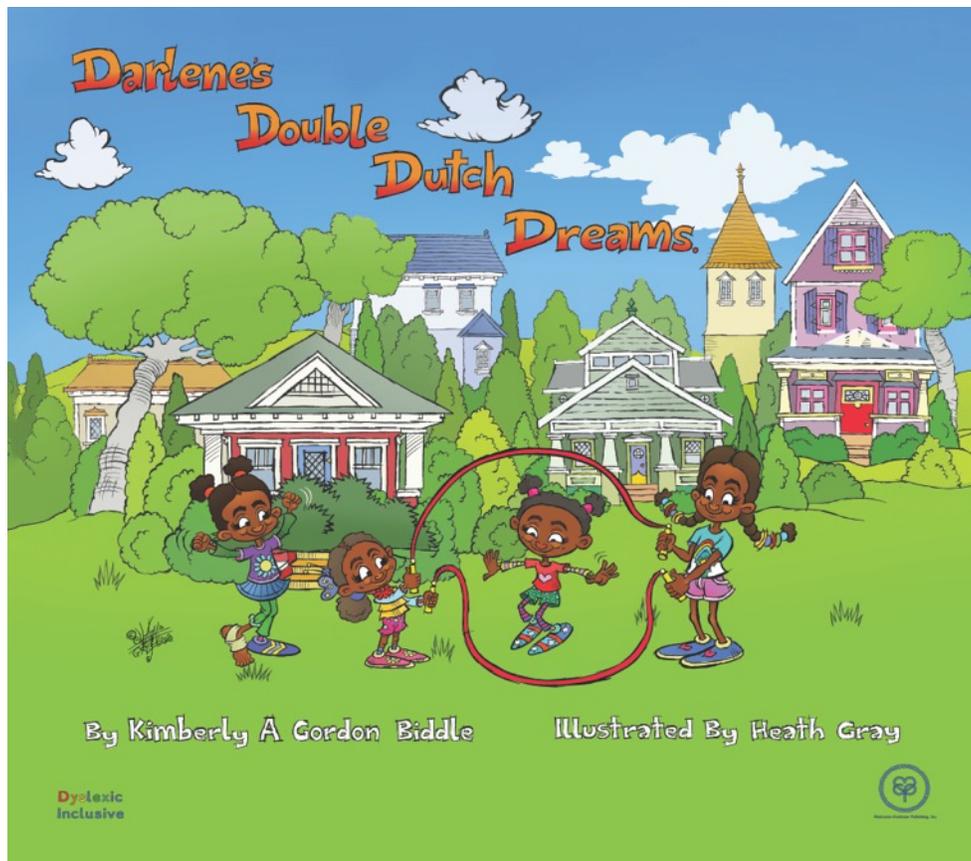


# Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams

A teacher's guide created by Marcie Colleen  
based upon the picture book  
written by Kimberly A. Gordon Biddle and illustrated by Heath Gray



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**Kimberly A. Gordon Biddle**  
**Author, *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams***

Kimberly A. Gordon Biddle is a lover of books. Her nose was always in a book when she was younger. She still loves to read, when she gets the chance, and she also loves to write. She has co-authored a textbook on early childhood education and one about child development careers. *LaDonna Plays Hoops* was her first book of fiction. It was a finalist in the American Fiction Awards of 2019. Her second picture book is *LaDonna's Easter in Paris*, published in 2020. *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams* is her third picture book. She is an Emeritus professor of child and adolescent development. Kimberly is also a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and

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**Heath Gray**  
**Illustrator, *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams***

Heath James Gray was born in West Auckland, New Zealand. He has had a passion for illustration from the time he could pick up a pencil. He started out as a sign writer from the age of fifteen. Heath worked as a 2d character animator for eight years, where he trained under a Disney animator, John Ewing. Here he worked on television shows for Disney, and Warner Bros. Heath Gray also worked on many New Zealand TV series, and commercials. And directed two of these TV commercials. Heath has dedicated his life to illustration, and specializes in children's book, and cartoon illustrations. There is nothing else Heath Gray would

rather do than illustration, except perhaps travel the world in a hot air balloon.

**Marcie Colleen, Curriculum Writer** This guide was created by Marcie Colleen, a former teacher with a BA in English Education from Oswego State and a MA in Educational Theater from NYU. In addition to creating curriculum guides, Marcie can often be found writing books of her own at home in San Diego, California. Visit her at [www.thisismarciecolleen.com](http://www.thisismarciecolleen.com).

## How to Use This Guide

This classroom guide for *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams* is designed for students in second through fourth grade. It is assumed that teachers will adapt each activity to fit the needs and abilities of their own students.

It offers activities to help teachers integrate *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams* into English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies curricula. Art and drama are used as a teaching tool throughout the guide.

All activities were created in conjunction with relevant content standards in ELA, math, science, social studies, art, and drama.

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**Title: Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams**

**Author: Kimberly A. Gordon Biddle**

**Illustrator: Heath Gray**

**Ages: 5-12/Grades: 2-6**

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Brief synopsis:

Darlene and her sisters always enter the local double Dutch contest. Darlene and Loretta always twirl and Venesha always jumps. Big sister, Trina, always cheers for them. Mom and Dad always watch. The routine is always the same and the chant is the same, too. However, this year everything is different.

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# English Language Arts

## **Reading Comprehension**

Before reading *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams*, help students identify the basic parts of a picture book: front cover, back cover, copyright page, and title page.

Describe the cover illustration.

- o What do you see? Describe in your own words.
- o Choose two words to describe each character you see. Explain your answer using evidence from the illustration.
- o Mimic each character on the front cover. How does each make you feel?
- o How do you think each character is feeling? What do you think they are thinking?

Read the title of the book and look closely at the cover illustration. Can you guess what the story might be about? What clues can you find?

Now read or listen to the book.

Help students summarize in their own words what the book was about.

- What kind of contest is Darlene and her sisters competing in?
- Do you know what double Dutch is? Describe double Dutch in your own words.
- How do Darlene and her sisters work together to double Dutch?
- What is different in Darlene's double Dutch dreams?
- Why might you think Darlene and her sisters are "jumping for" their mom?
- What happens that prevents Venesha from participating in the contest?
- Why is Darlene hesitant to jump in Venesha's place?
- How do her sisters and her mother encourage Darlene to overcome her fear?
- What happens at the contest?
- What do the sisters do with their prize money?

Help students define the events in terms of a plot arc by using the following chart.

Beginning	Middle	End
<p>Darlene and her sisters are practicing double Dutch for the big contest.</p> <p>Introduce characters:</p>	<p>Darlene has her own dreams of double Dutch and her own chant. Venesha gets hurt and can't be in the contest.</p> <p>Describe:</p> <p>The Climax, when everything changes...</p> <p>Darlene draws the short straw.</p>	<p>Resolution. How are things solved?</p> <p>The ending...</p>

- BONUS: Using the basic plot structure above, students can create an original story about Darlene and her sisters. Students can work individually or as a class.
- Art center ~ Provide a variety of art materials including crayons, pencils, markers, paint, scissors, colored paper, old magazines, and glue for students to illustrate the scenes in their stories.
- Drama center ~ Provide puppets, costumes, and props so students can recreate their new stories.

Let's talk about the people who made *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams*.

- Who is the author?
- Who is the illustrator?
- What kind of work did each person do to make the book?

Now, let's look closely at the illustrations.

- Check out some of the following details that Heath Gray includes. Can you find:
  - Five blue and yellow flowers
  - A bed with a purple bedspread
  - A blue teddy bear
  - A pink bedspread
  - A first aid kit
  - A red bird

- A blue butterfly hair clip
- One red flower
- Six trophies
- A pink teddy bear
- A yellow necktie
- Six orange balloons

Who is Darlene? ~ Character Study

How a character acts says can tell readers a lot about who the character is.

Read *Darlene’s Double Dutch Dreams*. Scene by scene, record your thoughts regarding character, in a chart like the one below.

What Darlene says	What Darlene does	How would you describe Darlene?
Example: <i>"The beat and wind of the ropes are music to my ears."</i>	Practices for the big contest with her sisters.	Excited, someone who loves double Dutch, musical, coordinated.

After gathering information regarding Darlene’s character, try doing the same for Loretta, Venesha, and Trina. Then, use the scenarios below to write a new scene for *Darlene’s Double Dutch Dreams*. What would the sisters do in one of the following situations?

- It’s their mother’s birthday and the sisters are planning a party.
- The sisters want to create a way to best display the family’s double Dutch trophies.
- It’s the first day of school for the sisters.

## **Writing Activities**

### **My Own Double Dutch Chant**

Imagine that you will be participating in a double Dutch contest like Darlene. You will need your own chant.

Use Darlene's chant as inspiration and create your own. Be sure that it rhymes.

*Take a hop, take a jump*

*Take a sweet, sugar lump!*

*Take a jump, take a hop*

*Find the rhythm; Don't stop!*

*Optional:* Create the chant together as a class.

### **Someone Else's Shoes ~ Point of View**

Either as a class or individually, explore *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams* from the point of view of some of the minor characters.

- Venesha
- Loretta
- Trina
- Darlene's mother

How would each of these characters tell *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams* in their own words? Do these points of view change the way you feel about Darlene?

Advanced classes will be able to actually create *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams* from another's point of view. However, if this is too difficult, create the story together as a class.

## **Speaking and Listening Activities**

Picture books are written to be read aloud. Here are some ways to bring *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams* to life in the classroom and have fun with speaking and listening skills.

### Mime

- Ask students to silently act out a page from the book, exaggerating body motions and facial expressions. See if others can identify the page that goes along with the mimed action.

### Drama

- Create a TV commercial to encourage people to read *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams*.
- In small groups, act out *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams* as an opera, a western, a "breaking news" story, a thriller, etc. The rest of the class should guess what the "style" is.
- Use the *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams* Reader's Theatre script to perform the entire book as a class.

## **Language Activities**

### **Exploring Verbs**

*Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams* is a story of trying, persisting, overcoming fears, and doing. For this reason, *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams* is a wonderful book to teach action verbs.

- Look closely at each illustration in the book and ask students what Darlene is actively doing. Have them answer using only ONE word (jumping, running, sleeping).
- Explain that these action or "doing" words are called verbs.

### **Simon Says Verbs**

The Simon Says Verbs game is a fun activity that helps students identify verbs from other parts of speech. The students will get some healthy exercise while playing this game.

- Stand in front of the class and say, "Simon says..." followed by a verb. The children do what Simon says. For example: "Simon Says dance." The children should dance.
- Mix in some words that are not verbs. For example: "Simon says table." At this time, students should not move because table is a noun, not a verb. Ask students to determine what type of word that is, if it is not a verb, such as "Is a table a verb? No, it is a noun, which is a person, place, or thing."
- Additional activity: Individual students can take turns playing Simon Says Verbs with each other.

### Exploring New Vocabulary

*Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams* contains many words which may be new for students. Encourage them to use context clues from both the text and illustrations to infer meanings.

contest	rhythm	weave	chant
wide-eyed	fierce	heal	routines
wriggle	wheelchair	confidence	proceed

Additional Exploration:

- While they read, ask students to look carefully for words they do not know. As soon as they come across a new vocabulary word, they should jot it down.
- Look up the unknown word in the dictionary. (Depending on the level of your students, a student volunteer can do this or the teacher can.) Read the definition.
- Come up with a way to remember what the word means. Using Total Physical Response, students can create an action that symbolizes the word and helps them remember it.

### Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is an imitation of a sound in words. In *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams*, onomatopoeia is used to describe the sounds of the jump rope—Whoosh, whoosh.

- Discuss why writers use onomatopoeia, and perhaps why author Kimberly Gordon Biddle chose to use onomatopoeia when writing about double Dutch.

- Create a class list of other onomatopoeia words.
- Read through *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams* and replace the text on each page with onomatopoeia. What are some other sounds you can think of to tell the story.

## Math

### **Under Where? Spatial Sense**

Look at the opening spread in *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams*.

Describe where the bird is.

[examples: next to the girls, in between the girls and the flowers, on the grass]

Describe where the trees are.

[example: behind the girls, under the clouds]

Describe where Darlene is.

Describe where the Venesha is.

Describe where Loretta is.

Have students pick another illustration in *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams* and discuss where things are spatially within that illustration.

Now look around your classroom.

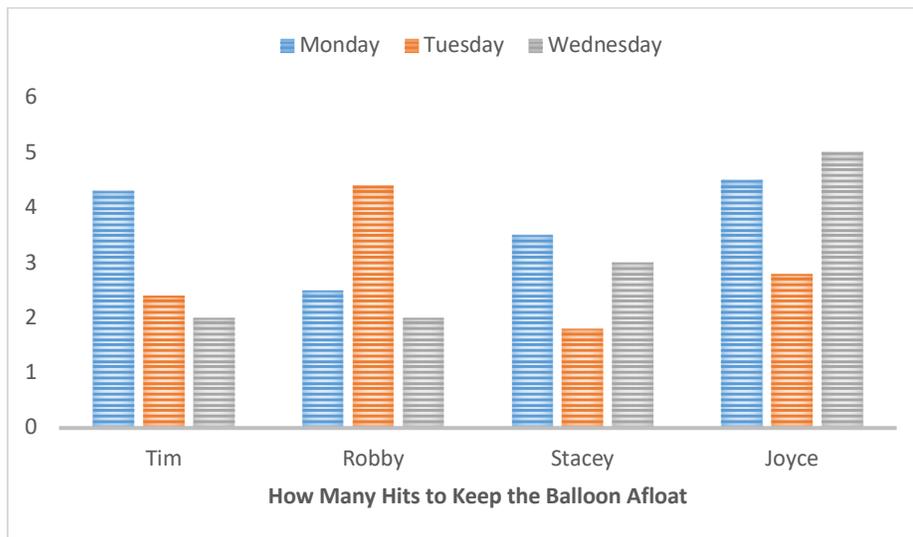
- Describe where your desk sits.
- Describe where your teacher is sitting or standing.
- Describe where the chalkboard/whiteboard is.
- Describe where the clock is.
- Describe where the door is.
- Can you describe where anything else is?

### **Graphing Persistence**

In *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams*, Darlene learns that with practice and persistence she improves over time.

Try the following activity to learn the power of persistence.

- Play a game to see how high each student can build a tower out of blocks or how many times they can hit a balloon without letting it touch the floor. These activities build motor skill and concentration.
- Create a graph and chart results over several days. Students should work independently and try for their personal best. Goals can be set at the end of each session—what to try and what to accomplish the next day.



## Science

### **A Speedy Jump Rope Challenge**

Have you ever wondered how you could do jump rope faster? The U.S. jump-rope record for the greatest number of jumps in one minute is 367! That's more than six jumps a second! How close do you think you can get to that number? What are some of the factors that will help you jump faster? One is the length of the jump rope!

Jumping rope is great exercise. Professional boxers do it to improve their coordination and endurance. Plus, it can be a lot of fun! And, there are official competitions for speed jumping.

What would you do to improve your speed? The length of the jump rope can change how many jumps a person can make in a minute, but what length jump rope is ideal? The longer the jump rope the more time it takes to turn it in a full circle. The shorter the jump rope the faster it turns, but because the circle is smaller the jumper might have to jump higher to get over the jump rope, and that might slow the person down or cause them make a mistake.

## Materials

- A three-meter (10-foot) jump rope
- Stopwatch or watch with a second hand
- An open, flat space large enough for doing jump rope

Choose an open, flat space that has enough room for doing jump rope. (Make sure nothing is nearby that you might bump into while you jump.)

## Instructions:

- Fold the jump rope in half to find the midway point. Stand on this point with both feet. Put a handle in each hand and pull the handles straight up along your sides.
- Shorten the rope by moving the handles halfway between your belly button and armpits, then tie knots in the rope just below the handles. This is the shortest jump-rope length you'll test.
- Have your partner time you while you jump rope for one minute. As you jump, count how many jumps you do. When one minute is up, your partner should tell you to stop. If you "mess up" within the minute do not stop, but continue timing, jumping rope and counting the jumps. For example, if after 10 successful jumps, the rope hits your foot and you have to restart, count the next successful jump as number 11. *How many successful jumps did you do in one minute using the shortest jump-rope length?*
- Re-adjust the rope length so that the tips of the handles are now just barely brushing your armpits. This is the medium length you'll test.
- Again have your partner time you while you jump rope for one minute and count how many jumps you do in that minute. *How many successful jumps did you do a minute using the medium length? Was it greater or less than the number of jumps you made using the shortest rope length?*
- Re-adjust the rope so that the tips of the handles just barely brush your chin. This is the longest length you'll test.
- Again have your partner time you while you jump rope for one minute and count how many jumps you do during that period. *How many successful jumps did you do per minute using the longest rope length? Was it greater than or less than the number of jumps you made using the shortest and medium lengths?*
- Switch places with your partner and have them repeat the activity so that now you time while they jump rope using the three different jump rope lengths. *Was the same jump rope length the "best" one for both of you or did each person do better with different lengths? Was the same rope length the "worst" one for both of you?*

Bonus: Do this activity again, but this time count both the successful jumps and the number of times the jumper messes up. *Did the rope length affect the number of mess-ups?*

Bonus: Listening to music may affect a person's jumping ability. Try doing jump rope to slow music, fast music and no music. *Does the music change how many successful jumps you can make in a minute? How about the number of successful jumps you can make in a row without messing up?*

Bonus: Can jumping rope help you on a spelling test? Randomly assign volunteers to two groups. One group will not jump rope, but rather copy down 10 words from a spelling list with pen and paper. Members of the other group will jump rope and work with a partner who will call out from the list each word and its spelling first; the jumper will then repeat it, "jumping out" each letter of the word—one jump per letter. *How well do the volunteers from each group spell the words the next day (using pen and paper)?*

## Social Studies

### **All About Me; All About My Family**

Darlene and her family are very close, helping each other when they need it and working together toward the common goal of winning the double Dutch contest.

This project allows students the opportunity to get to know one another and their families better.

Students will make books that contain pages with answered questions and pictures about themselves and other loved ones in their lives.

Yarn is used to bind the pages together.

Each student should have a special day that he reads his book to the class.

- Pages in each book include:

A portrait  
I am called \_\_\_\_  
My first and last name is \_\_\_\_  
My address is \_\_\_\_  
I live in \_\_\_\_ (the country, a city, etc.)  
I live with \_\_\_\_  
I am good at \_\_\_\_

- In addition to the page about themselves, additional pages should be created about other loved ones in the student's life. This is their community.

### **Lifting Spirits**

Have a class discussion about how compliments and encouragement help make others feel better, as well as how put-downs make others feel unhappy.

Darlene is worried that she doesn't have what it takes to jump in the double Dutch contest, but her sisters and her mother offer kind words and encouragement to help her believe in herself.

- Read through *Darlene's Double Dutch Dreams*. Make a list of the many things that Darlene's sisters and her mom say to her to lift her spirits.
- Identify compliments and put-downs that you have heard.
- How do compliments and put-downs make people feel?
- How does giving compliments help others when they feel sad or angry?

### **I Can't: Overcoming Fears**

Sometimes we don't want to try something new because we are scared, just like Darlene didn't want to try jumping double Dutch even though she dreamed of it.

- What do you think it means to be brave?

Being brave means a lot of different things, such as:

- Doing something that is really hard to do like trying to learn to ride a bike
- Getting a shot at the doctor's office even though it might hurt
- Saying "No" to someone who is trying to get you to do something that you know is wrong
- Trying to help yourself and others be happy even though you feel sad
- Is it possible to be scared and brave at the same time?

It is okay to be scared sometimes, and brave people get scared too. Sometimes the bravest people are the ones who do what they are supposed to do even though they are scared. It's okay to be scared or have fears; being brave means that you try not to let those fears control how you live or act.

- What is Darlene scared of?
- Even though Darlene is afraid, does she act brave?
- How can you act brave like Darlene when you are afraid of something?

Have the students use lunch bags, crayons, yarn, and glue to make puppets of themselves being brave-these will be their brave puppets to help them be brave or act out being brave when they feel scared.

### **Build Your Confidence**

Obstacle courses represent a fun, healthy way to build confidence. Courses can be designed to fit the needs of students with varying abilities.

- Using playground equipment, demonstrate crawling under the slide, swinging across the monkey bars, hopping through a row of tires, and so forth.

OR, at the park, demonstrate leaping over logs, crawling under bushes, somersaulting on the grass, and so forth.

OR, create obstacles out of everyday materials. For example: a string between two trees for a low hurdle, a blue towel for a pool, etc.

- Before beginning the race, walk through the course to make sure everyone understands how to get to the end in a safe manner.
- At race time, let each student run it alone while being timed. Offer rewards based on fastest time, but include awards for best sportsmanship, best balance, safest runner, and more. Students can also compete against themselves and try to improve each time.