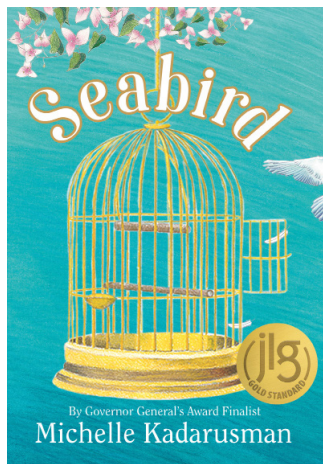




Story Summary

Inspired by the true story of a nineteenth century feminist, *Seabird* follows Kartini's early teen years as a young noble girl. Confined to the family home in preparation for an arranged marriage, Kartini's desire for freedom ignites as she fights to have a say in the decisions that shape her life.

In late nineteenth century Indonesia —then known as the Dutch East Indies—a Javanese girl from a noble family is confined to her home before her thirteenth birthday, where she must remain until she is married. Removed from school and the outside world, Kartini writes to her former Dutch schoolmate, Lesty, who has returned to the Netherlands. With Lesty's support Kartini begins to challenge the role expected of her, and that of girls and women in her community. Determined to gain her freedom, Kartini bravely battles prejudice and tradition stirring change for her family, and for her country.

Governor General's Award finalist **Michelle Kadarusman** shows us that no matter how powerless you feel, your voice can have great impact. By virtue of writing down your dreams and ideas, you can inspire generations to come—as Kartini continues to do through Kartini Day in Indonesia.

Juvenile Fiction Ages 8–12 | ISBN: 978-1-77278-349-0 (HC) | Pages: 224

Reading Level

Fountas & Pinnell: W

Lexile: 820L

BISAC Codes

JUV039290 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Activism & Social Justice
 JUV035000 JUVENILE FICTION / School & Education
 JUV014000 JUVENILE FICTION / Girls & Women
 JUV039060 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Friendship
 JUV016030 JUVENILE FICTION / Historical / Asia
 JUV013070 JUVENILE FICTION / Family / Siblings

Before reading

1. Find Java, Indonesia, on a map. Do an image search and choose a picture to use as inspiration for a descriptive paragraph. Start by creating a web with the five senses (touch, taste, smell, hear and see). List details and then incorporate them into a paragraph describing the picture.
2. 'Seabird' takes place in Java, an island in the Dutch East Indies known today as Indonesia. The backmatter explains the Dutch Colonial Rule in Indonesia. In your own words, explain colonization. What impacts did colonization have on the original inhabitants? What other countries did The Netherlands colonize?
3. In 'Seabird' you will learn about many Javanese customs. Customs are behaviors that are considered culturally normal. For example, in North America, we shake hands when you meet someone. In Japan, bowing is a common practice. As a class, make a list of some of customs practiced by your classmates.
4. Throughout the book, Kartini feels like she is a caged bird. What could this mean? What predictions do you have?

During Reading: Chapters 1-6

1. The opening line of the book is mysterious. Who do you think 'the Lady' is and why is the main character being summoned?
2. In Chapter 3, Kartini finds out her friend Lesty's letters have been kept from her. What argument would you make on Kartini's behalf to get the letters back?
3. Kartini has a very large family. To keep track of the different family members, make a diagram or family tree that starts with Kartini's father, Ma and Mother. Add in the siblings you have met so far. (There will be more to come as the story continues.)
4. Kartini's passion is writing. Why does she enjoy it? Do you enjoy writing? Why or why not?
5. Make a web of characteristics a good friend should have.
6. Using Lesty's letter in Chapter 6, find three quotes that support the statement: Lesty is a good friend to Kartini.

Chapters 7-20

1. In chapter 12, Kartini is excited to meet Marie Ovink-Soer, a writer, when she visits the house. Marie asks Kartini to tell her about the gamelan music that is being performed. As a class, listen to some gamelan music. After listening, do you think Kartini's description of the music on p.81 is accurate? Why is this musical artform important to Kartini?
 2. In a letter to Lesty (Chapter 16), Kartini describes her home in detail. Draw a picture of what she describes. Either draw or describe your home in the same amount of detail.
 3. Michelle Kadarusman incorporates sensory detail and imagery into all her books. It's what makes her writing so transporting. 'Seabird' is filled with similes, comparisons using like or as. A few have been identified here. As a class, record other ones you find in the book.
- 'The betrayal settles like a heavy stone.' (p. 19)
 - '[I am]...trapped like a rare thing in a golden cage' (p. 44)

After you have finished this section, choose one simile from the list and explain what it means. Make an illustration to visually represent the simile.

Chapters 21-33

1. In what ways does the Pirate Queen serve an important role in the story? Why did Michelle Kadarusman include her tale? What does it teach Kartini?
2. In this section of the book, three secondary characters have realizations. As you read Chapters 23, 24 and 26, identify what Kartono, Lesty and Yanti learn about themselves and the world.
3. On page 155, Kartini explains the meaning behind her pen name. If you could rename yourself, what names would you choose and why?
4. Is Yanti making the right choice joining the Pirate Queen?
5. In Chapter 27, there is a discussion about dreams for the future. What are your dreams? What steps do you need to take to make them come true?
6. An ally is someone that supports a cause for another individual or group of people. When in 'Seabird' did you see Kartini being an ally? When was someone an ally to her? Why do we need allies?
7. On page 178-179, Father explains the different points of view he considered when making his decision about Kartini. What does this tell you about him? Which point do you think is the most valid?

8. On page 192, Tante Marie gives Kartini a gift. Why does Kartini find the lace cap offensive? On page 193 Kartini says “I want to be Javanese girl with the same rights and freedoms as a Dutch girl...” Why is this distinction important?

9. The last lines of ‘Seabird’ are powerful and a beautiful way to conclude Kartini’s story. Look at other books you’ve read and find two other ‘legendary last lines’. Record them and explain why you’ve chosen them and the impact they have on your understanding of the story and the main character.

After Reading:

1. Kartini was a real person. As Michelle Kadarusman explains in the back matter, she was a trail blazer for women’s rights in Indonesia. Research other historical figures who fought for human rights and create a ‘living museum’ as a class. (Information about ‘living museums’ are available online’.)

2. Michelle Kadarusman’s novel, ‘Girl of the Southern Seas’ (Pajama Press, 2019) has many similarities with ‘Seabird’. Read the novel and make a Venn diagram to compare and contrast character, setting, climax, point of View and theme. Do the books share more similarities or differences?

3. A theme is the underlying message or lesson of a book. As a class, brainstorm for the themes in ‘Seabird’? On your own, write a paragraph, explaining which one is the most relevant for young people today?

*This Teacher’s Guide was written by award-winning author and middle-school teacher, **Colleen Nelson**. Colleen Nelson is the author of Mystery at the Biltmore!*

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