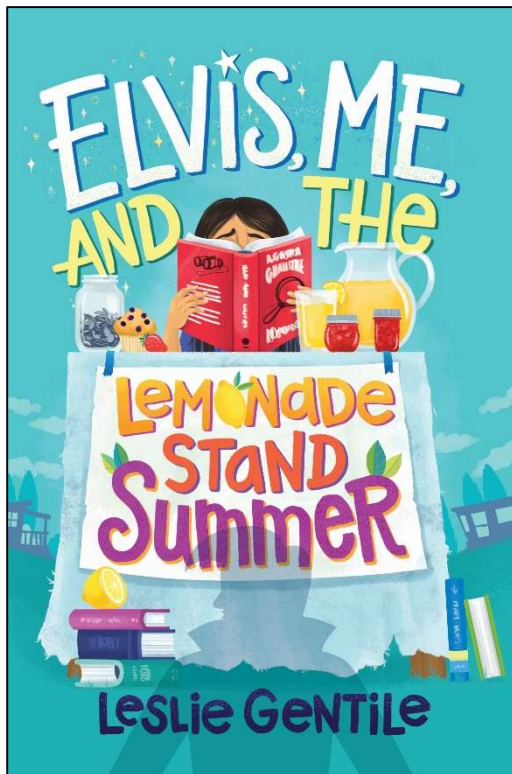


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Elvis, Me and the Lemonade Stand Summer by Leslie Gentile Teacher's Guide

Created by Martha Brack Martin with support from Leslie Gentile and Jennifer Brown



It's 1978 and eleven-year-old Truly Clarice Bateman can take care of herself. You have to be self-sufficient when your mom isn't exactly maternal – and too busy drinking and looking for the next Mr. Wrong. To be fair, Clarice wasn't prepared to be a mom in grade 10. Lucky for Truly, the owner of the Eagle Shores Trailer Park keeps an eye on her and tries to help. Andy El is Salish and she and her welcoming family in the nearby Eagle Shores First Nation all support Truly as best they can. Andy El suggests Truly operate a lemonade stand to keep her busy – and to distract her from her mother's increasingly frequent absences and neglect. One day a stranger appears, and Truly recognizes him immediately as Elvis Presley. The rest of the world believes Elvis died the year before, but Truly isn't convinced. When she learns that her unnamed birth father was a fan of Elvis and is apparently living a ferry ride away, Truly is determined to make enough money to go search for him. When her mother leaves for good, humiliating Truly in the process, she learns that family is more than blood, and sometimes, the family you're meant to have is right in front of you.

Themes

Some key themes and “big ideas” in this book include:

- Family
- Kindness
- What makes a place “home?”
- How do people cope with life's challenges?
- Childhood neglect
- Prejudice
- Appearance vs. Reality

- Resiliency

The Setting

The story takes place on the north shore of Vancouver Island, in the fictional town of Newman Bay and its nearby Eagle Shores Reserve, in the summer of 1978.

What Kind of Reader Will Love This Book? One who...

- Likes stories told with rich voice
- Enjoys strong characters who triumph over adversity
- Is interested in stories with irregular family dynamics
- Is fascinated by Elvis Presley
- Wants to learn more about the 1970s

Pre-Teaching Prep

Trigger Warnings: This book uses the term “Indian” as it would have been used in the era of the book. Also, this book deals with parental neglect and child abandonment. Consider the home lives of your students and prepare them for these heavier themes ahead of time.

Here are some resources that may be helpful to provide background or improve your own understanding.

The Use of the Term “Indian”

Because the story is set in the 1970s, the term Indian is occasionally used, as it would have been more common then. Before you begin, explain why this is no longer an acceptable term today, and why it is used here.

[The word Indigenous - explained | CBC Kids News](#)

Child Neglect in Canada

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/conditions/child-neglect>

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/child-welfare>

Elvis and His Legacy

Introduce students to Elvis Presley and his legacy, both as a musician and a pop culture icon. Discuss the rumours that swirled after his death, especially in the tabloids. If they don't know what a tribute artist is (“impersonator”), be ready to explain that as the book continues.

<http://www.robertnewman.com/elvis-is-alive/>

<https://www.memphistravel.com/trip-ideas/elvis-tribute-artists#:~:text=The%202022%20event%20will%20feature,a%20gospel%20brunch%20and%20more>
[2021 Top 10 Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist Finalists Announced](#)

Chapter Questions

Pick and choose the questions that work for *your* students in *your* classroom. Use as many or as few as you like.

Chapters 1 and 2

1. The author tells us many things about Truly in the first chapter, yet it never feels like an “information dump.” What do we learn? List what you learn about Truly using jot notes.
2. How does the author write the first paragraph of the book to make the reader want to read more? Explain.
3. Why do you suppose Clarice, Truly’s mom, has never bothered to tell Truly anything about her father?
4. Truly tells us how she came by her name. What does Truly mean when she says, “that pretty much summed up Clarice’s parenting style” (p. 8)?
5. Why do you think Clarice was so angry when Angela decided to go away to university? Explain using evidence from the text and your own ideas.

Chapters 3 and 4

6. In chapter 3 the author shows us the relationship between Clarice and Truly in action. What are some things you noticed about their relationship? Were you surprised? Why or why not?
7. When Truly finds Angela’s postcard in the garbage, what plan does she create? In your opinion, how likely is this plan to work? Explain your ideas.
8. Why do you think Mrs. Wyman gives Truly more baskets of strawberries to pass on to Andy El (p. 42)?
9. In these chapters we learn that not everyone is nice to each other in the small town of Newman’s Bay.
 - a. How are Andy El’s family treated in town?
 - b. How does Mrs. Bateman treat Truly and Clarice?
 - c. How do you feel about the way these characters are treated? Explain.

Chapters 5 and 6

10. Andy El has quite an extensive family of her own, yet she always has time for Truly, even feeding her and letting her sleep on her porch. How would you describe her role in Truly’s life? Use details from the story and your own ideas in your description.
11. In your own terms, define the underlined words in the following sentences from these chapters:
 - a. “Raymond lived on the reserve proper, along with Andy El’s grown-up kids” (p. 45).
 - b. “She was back...carrying a handful of dog-eared paperback books” (p. 47).
 - c. “I was just trying to gauge whether or not I should stay out of Clarice’s way...” (48).
 - d. “I sat there, just gaping like a guppy, as he fished out a dollar...” (p. 49).

12. Truly has gathered ten clues about Mr. Kingsley in the book so far. Do they make a good case for his being Elvis Presley? Why or why not?
13. In these chapters, we learn more about Truly's life with Clarice, and her very different experiences with Andy El's family. Make a T-chart with Clarice on one side and Andy El and her family on the other. Now use jot notes to record examples of ways each side has "taken care" of Truly in her eleven years. Share your thoughts and feelings after making the chart.

Chapters 7 and 8

14. Why is Truly so focused on Mr. Kingsley, in your opinion?
15. Truly's life has certainly not been easy. At the start of chapter 8 she says, "For me, happiness is always a fleeting thing. Something would always go horribly wrong to wreck any good thing that came along for me" (p. 72). What would you tell Truly if you were her friend? Write her a brief note or a card, giving her your best advice.
16. On page 78, Truly says, "...lying to Clarice wasn't really lying. It was more about survival. I didn't want her to know I was earning money." What do you think Truly is worried about?

Chapters 9 and 10

17. Truly shares earlier in the book about her life at school, and how isolated she is from her peers. Why doesn't she have friends? Explain.
18. Andy El's granddaughters go with Truly to see the puppies. How do they react when they first meet Mrs. Wyman, and again when she joins them in the barn? Why?
19. Why does Clarice's new boyfriend say, "They probably can't even read the can to make it right anyway" (p. 88)? Who is he talking about?
20. Esther is furious but Truly says, "I was just – kind of numb" (p. 89). Describe the feelings you would have if you were Truly in that moment and explain why.

Chapters 11 and 12

21. Are you surprised at the number of people who are visiting the lemonade stand daily, and giving Truly things to sell? Why or why not?
22. Do you think Clarice understood that her new boyfriend was insulting and racist to Truly and Andy El's family as he drove by the stand the previous day? Give evidence from the story to prove your theory.

Chapters 13 and 14

23. Truly is worried Mr. Kingsley is going to fall for Clarice's flirtations, but he proves her wrong. Why do you think he made it clear he wasn't interested?
24. In your opinion, why do you think Andy El was so determined to have Truly start the lemonade stand? Explain.

Chapters 15, 16 and 17

25. Truly decided to go with Andy El and her family to the town celebration. How does Truly's grandmother react when she sees Truly in the parade crowd?
26. Later Truly runs into two girls from school who have treated her badly. How does the author use this encounter to show us how Truly has changed through the summer?
27. When Truly runs into her grandmother again, Mrs. Bateman is rude to Truly. How would you have handled her if you were Truly?
28. Mr. Kingsley arrives as the schoolgirls and then Mrs. Bateman are upsetting Truly. He assesses the situation and saves the day. How does he do this? What does this show us about Mr. Kingsley?

Chapters 18, 19 and 20

29. How do you feel about the way Clarice reacted to Truly's news about the lemonade stand?
30. Why do you think Andy El asked Truly if her mom would "be home some time today" (p. 138)?
31. What kind of birthday party would you plan for Truly, if you could plan anything? Make a list of all the items you would need. Then explain to a friend of the class how you'd use them to make Truly's day perfect.
32. Which is worse: Clarice not being home for Truly's birthday at all, or driving right by her without even noticing her as she does at the end of chapter 20? Explain your reasoning.

Chapters 21 and 22

33. Truly finally tells Clarice about her plans to visit Angela in Vancouver. Did it go the way you thought it would? Why or why not?
34. Have you ever felt incredibly disappointed by something in your life? How did you handle it? How did your disappointment compare to Truly's disappointments in life? Explain.
35. It seems that most of Truly's acquaintances are aware of what Clarice is like. Even Mr. Kingsley notices Clarice's suitcase and asks if she's going somewhere. In your opinion, why haven't they done more to confront Clarice about her treatment of Truly?

Chapters 23 and 24

36. How did you feel when you read "Until Clarice drove up in her old beater" (p. 158)?
37. What do you think Raymond, Esther and Clarice talked about in the trailer? Write a brief "play" of their discussion, the way you imagine it happened. Use script format and include stage directions where needed.
38. Mr. Kingsley came through again to save the day. Do you believe music can change a mood or make a person feel better? Why or why not?

Chapters 25, 26 and 27

39. When Truly finds out Clarice has stolen her savings, why do you think it's the fact that Truly can't afford to find her dad that bothers her the most?

40. Why is Truly so convinced Clarice will be back? Do you think she's right? Explain.
41. Why might Social Services not allow Andy El to keep taking care of Truly? How do you feel about this?

Chapters 28, 29 and 30

42. What does Andy El mean when she says, "Truly, you got a family already, right here, don't you see that" (p. 175)?
43. Do you think Elvis just went over to see the puppies, or do you think he had an ulterior motive in mind? Explain.
44. In chapter 30 we see a new side to Andy El. She is determined to fight to keep Truly safe and under her care. Are you surprised that Andy El is so aggressive and fired up? Why or why not?
45. What do you think of the big reveal at the end of chapter 30?

Chapters 31 and 32

46. Raymond has a lot to tell Truly in chapter 31. What does he share with her, and how do you feel about his actions?
47. When Mr. Kingsley pulls up at the lemonade stand, the story comes full circle. How are things different from the start of the book? Create a graphic organizer of your choice to show the many things that have changed through the course of the book.
48. Mr. Kingsley – Elvis – shares some great advice with Truly before he leaves. What does Truly realize after speaking with him?

Chapter 33

49. Why has Truly not named her puppy before now?
50. How do you feel about Truly's choice of name for the puppy? What would you name him? Why?

Discussion Questions

These questions can be used for whole class discussion or for independent work (e.g., "reading response," "reflections," literature circle prompts, etc.)

- a) Truly's mother has hardly been a mom to Truly at all. What kinds of things could have made things different in Truly's life?
- b) The author has taken the real historic event of Elvis' death, and some contemporary issues in our world (teenage pregnancy, child abandonment) and used them in the story. Does including real events in books, and reflecting on real issues in society, make books better? Explain.
- c) Family is a huge theme in this novel. How does the author play with the concept of family, both literally and figuratively?
- d) What things are different between the setting of the book (1970s) and today? What are some key differences?

Other Culminating Activities

Give students the opportunity to make connections to the world and themselves, as well as to other texts, and to choose their own way of demonstrating them. Here are some other activities to consider at the end of the novel:

Research Roundup

Think about the various topics introduced in the book. These could include life in the 1970s, Vancouver Island, Elvis Presley, popular music in the 70s, mobile homes, record players and vinyls, etc. Where would you find information about these topics? What would be interesting to share with others?

Research a topic introduced in the novel, independently or in groups. Then present your learning and research through an infographic or other creative presentation model of your choice.

Costume Party:

Who doesn't love costume parties? Think about what you know of the 1970s. Do some research to get an idea of the style of clothing that would be popular in this period. What colours? What patterns? What accessories would be "cool" in this era?

Now think about what you would choose to wear if you were a friend of Truly's in the time of the book. Describe in detail the outfit you would wear to school, and then what you would choose for a special occasion. What costume would you select for your friend or an adult in your life? How would you feel about dressing like this?

Costume Party Part 2:

Follow the Costume Party instructions (above), but instead of just writing your explanation, create a visual representation of you and one other person in your 1970s "costumes." You can do this by drawing or using technology, or even creating a "paper doll" or model of yourselves in your outfits. Be prepared to explain orally to the class why you selected your choices.

Elvis the Movie Star:

Elvis made 31 movies in his lifetime. Today there are also quite a few movies about the King, both fictional and documentaries. Research Elvis' movies, starting with this website: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/elvis/epfilms.htm> If possible, watch one or more movies with your class.

What do you notice about the types of movies in which Elvis starred? What do you think of his acting? If you were able to watch one of his movies, write a review of it, or discuss your observations with a friend or the class.

Exploring the Same Themes in Different Texts:

After reading *Elvis, Me, and the Lemonade Stand Summer*, consider reading *Firefly* by Philippa Dowding (978-1770865983), *I'm Good and Other Lies* by Bev Katz Rosenbaum (978-1770866324), or *Elliot* by Julie Pearson (978-1927485859). How are some of the same themes repeated in these stories? How are they handled differently?

Elvis the Cultural Appropriator?

There has been some debate in the media in recent times regarding whether Elvis appropriated music from other groups, most notably the Black community. Elvis made no secret of the influences on his music, but when does appreciation become appropriation?

Consider some of the resources below. Then discuss your thoughts with peers or the whole class. Alternatively, divide the class into two sides and debate the issue, using these resources and others, and your own ideas.

<https://theconversation.com/champion-or-copycat-elvis-presleys-ambiguous-relationship-with-black-america-82293>

<https://bigthink.com/culture-religion/would-elvis-be-considered-a-cultural-appropriator-today/>

<https://elvisbiography.net/2020/02/12/elvis-presley-and-the-black-community-dispelling-the-myths/>

<https://shadesofnoir.org.uk/appropriation-authorship-elvis-presley/> (NOTE: Swear word in referenced lyrics, so read aloud, don't share a copy with students.)

Was Elvis "Too Hot to Handle?"

When Elvis performed, he had some particular moves which are now considered his "trademark." When he was first developing his style, however, his hip motions and pelvic thrusts were far from what was normally seen on TV or movies. Elvis was essentially "censored" when he appeared on a popular American TV show for the third time, as he was only filmed from the waist up!

Using the links and other resources, discuss whether you think Elvis would be censored today. Do you agree with them censoring him at the time? People were especially concerned about the effect Elvis' gyrating hips would have on his *female* fans. How do you feel about gender-specific censorship? Why?

<https://elvisbiography.net/2020/09/09/why-elvis-presley-was-censored-on-the-ed-sullivan-show/>

<https://interviews.televisionacademy.com/news/if-hips-could-kill-elvis-lower-half-is-censored-on-the-ed-sullivan-show>

<https://startsat60.com/media/opinion/elvis-presley-police-investigation-memory>

Vancouver Island and The Coast Salish

Andy El is Coast Salish, and Truly's father is believed to be as well. Truly knows very little about her traditional roots, yet embraces the culture as she learns about it from Andy El.

Think of what we learn about the Salish Peoples in the story. What do we learn about their community and their part of Vancouver Island in the 70s? Do you think this would still be the same today?

If your class is not doing independent research on the Coast Salish and their traditional lands in which the story is set, consider doing this as a class. It may be beneficial to explore Vancouver Island and its geography today, perhaps using GoogleEarth. See what you can discover about the Salish Peoples in the 70's, as well as today.

An Interview with the Author:

Martha: This is your first book (though I'm sure it won't be your last!) When you first started writing the novel, did you have any idea how successful it would be?

Leslie: I had absolutely no idea. I simply sat down and feel as though the story wrote itself.

Martha: Where did you get the idea for Truly's name?

Leslie: I wanted a name that symbolized a lack of caring on Clarice's part; the mistake on the birthday certificate and that she simply shrugged it off and using the wrong name for Truly really represented that to me. Truly as a name means 'Honestly', and I think that reflects Truly's character well.

Martha: What was your process for writing it? Where did you start?

Leslie: I started with a question: would a child understand the idea of an Elvis Impersonator, or would they think that it is really Elvis? (I know what the answer is, but I leave it up to the reader to decide.) I began with the vision of a girl sitting on the side of the road, bored and waiting for something or someone. I sat down to write and asked her why she was there, and she began to tell me her story.

Martha: Did you know where the story was going to go from the start? Or did Truly take you on her own journey?

Leslie: I had a general plan, but the story really developed as I wrote it. Truly took me where the story needed to go.

Martha: I was also an eleven-year-old in 1978, and I have to say, your description of the time and its whole vibe was spot on. How much did your own experiences influence Truly's story?

Leslie: I am actually older than you and Truly; but I remember the time period very well, and took memories from my school days in my own community to create details of the story. Life didn't change as quickly as it does now, so using my own memories of being an eleven-year-old worked in this instance.



Martha: One of the things I really loved about the book was that you created all the characters around Truly in the trailer park as good, kind people. You gave her a lovely universe where she could be protected and safe. Did you consciously set out to do that?

Leslie: Absolutely. It was important to me that I buffer all of the harsh neglect in Truly's life with a great deal of kindness and compassion that she was surrounded with, even though she didn't see it. I felt that in order to balance the story she needed that in her life.

Martha: The way you wrote Clarice was interesting too. You didn't vilify her – though you certainly could have. Instead, you gave your readers enough of her backstory to allow them to empathize with her, even while they hated what she was doing to Truly. Was that hard to do?

Leslie: I felt that I needed to answer the 'why' question that a reader might have to explain Clarice and her actions. When I began to write the story, I knew that both Clarice and her mother, Mrs. Bateman, were going to be unlikeable characters. I felt that it was important to explain a bit of Clarice's history, so it wasn't too difficult for me to create her back story in the end.

Martha: Some authors have a playlist as they're writing, and you are a successful songwriter and musician. Are there any songs you found inspirational as you were writing the book? (Dare I suggest Elvis? <grin>)

Leslie: I did listen to a few of Elvis's older songs to give me some inspiration. 'All Shook Up', 'Love Me Tender' and 'Heartbreak Hotel' were heard more than once at our house!

Martha: Have you considered writing some songs "for" Truly and the characters in the book?

Leslie: Yes, I have considered writing a song or two for Truly. I am getting ideas for a sequel for Elvis, and it will involve more music. I am toying with ideas for a song that Truly could have written, for example. And perhaps one from Clarice's perspective as well.

Martha: What do you hope to inspire in your readers as they turn the last page?

Leslie: I really hoped to convey the message that there is always hope, and there is someone who cares about you, even though you may not see it. Never give up.

I also wanted readers to think about prejudice, and bullying, and how that can impact people.

Once of the most powerful experiences that I had recently was when an adult reader told me that the book had made them rethink some deeply ingrained 'preconceived ideas' that they'd had for years about Indigenous people. So, if this story helped just one person realize that they have been holding on to a level of prejudice, then I achieved my goal!

About Leslie Gentile

Leslie Gentile is a singer/songwriter of Northern Salish, Tuscarora, and Scottish heritage. She performs with her children in The Leslie Gentile Band, and with one of her sisters in The Half

White Band. Gentile currently lives on Vancouver Island with her husband. *Elvis, Me, and the Lemonade Stand Summer* is her first novel.

Awards and Recognition for *Elvis, Me and the Lemonade Stand Summer*

Nominee, 2022 Silver Birch Award, Ontario Forest of Reading

Winner, 2021 Victoria Childrens' Book Prize

Finalist, 2022 Rocky Mountain Book Award

Related Weblinks and Resources for Further Learning

<https://bookcentre.ca/publications/newsletter/february-2022> ("Author Corner" interview)