



Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair

written by Lisa D. Brathwaite
illustrated by Lynn Gaines

About the Book

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Interest Level: Grades 1–8

Guided Reading Level: T

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
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Lexile™ Measure: N/A

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: African/African American Interest, Courage, Diversity, Dreams & Aspirations, Identity/Self Esteem/Confidence, Leadership, Nonfiction, Optimism/Enthusiasm, Overcoming Obstacles, Persistence/Grit, United States History, Weather/Seasons/Clothing, Women's History

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/miles-of-style

SYNOPSIS

Eunice W. Johnson believed in the power of fashion and beauty to inspire people. After she and her husband, John H. Johnson, founded *EBONY* magazine, it quickly became the premiere lifestyle publication for mid-century Black readers. Among the many hats she wore, Eunice delighted in writing a fashion column describing the latest styles.

In 1958, Eunice launched a project that would change fashion forever- the EBONY Fashion Fair. In towns and cities across the United States, Black models walked the runway in the freshest trends that season and Black attendees got to see people who looked like them in bright colors and haute couture.

To make the Fashion Fair happen every year, Eunice negotiated with snobby fashion houses in Europe and navigated racism back home in the US, to acquire the most show-stopping styles for her show. Decades later, her name remains a watchword for glamour and elegance in the Black community. Winner of Lee & Low's New Voices Award, *Miles of Style* celebrates a visionary who used her influence to showcase the strength and beauty of the Black community.

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

BACKGROUND

Author's Note from Lisa D. Brathwaite

Eunice Walker Johnson was someone whom today we would call an “influencer”—a person who used her prominence in the media to influence popular tastes and culture. In her day she was best known for directing the EBONY Fashion Fair and for her featured column in EBONY magazine. But “Mrs. Johnson,” as she was reverently referred to by all, was an extraordinary lifestyle expert across many fields. Fashion, beauty, travel, art—Mrs. Johnson introduced the Black community and wider American society to these topics through a melanated lens, extending an invitation to come along for the VIP experience.

She was best known for her influence in fashion, where she had an eye for picking superstars early in their careers. Through the EBONY Fashion Fair, she elevated the profiles of Black designers like Stephen Burrows, B Michael, Patrick Kelly, and Willi Smith. She supported and befriended young designers long before they built iconic brands like Valentino, Cavalli, Pierre Cardin, and Yves Saint Laurent. In the end, more than four thousand EBONY Fashion Fair shows in the United States and the Caribbean lifted audiences to a higher fashion consciousness.

Mrs. Johnson brought her same eye for talent and beauty to interior design and to visual art. She minored in art in college and studied interior design in Chicago. She later put those skills on full display in outfitting the Johnson Publishing Company headquarters at 820 S. Michigan Avenue. The headquarters featured many pieces from Mrs. Johnson’s broad art collection. Legendary EBONY Fashion Fair commentator Audrey Smaltz recalled being introduced to artist Pablo Picasso by Mrs. Johnson on one of their many European buying trips. The building that houses the headquarters was designated a Chicago landmark in 2017.

When something that was necessary for beauty didn’t exist, Mrs. Johnson created it. She was appalled when she discovered her EBONY Fashion Fair models had to mix foundation shades not suited for their skin tones to make up their faces for the runway. She went to cosmetics companies to make a case for a solution. When they didn’t move fast enough, she and Mr. Johnson gathered their own team of experts and launched Fashion Fair Cosmetics, providing yet another way for Black models—and the people they inspired—to authentically look their best. At its peak, it was the largest Black cosmetics line in the world.

Mrs. Johnson championed beauty as well as brilliance. She believed that success in life began with a good education and this philosophy was a central pillar in her work. Under her tutelage EBONY Fashion Fair models, staff, and crew members went on to build successful careers and leave their own mark in fashion and other related sectors like film, television, print media, and production.

During its five-decade long run, the EBONY Fashion Fair raised more than fifty-five million dollars making scholarships possible for countless students. Mrs. Johnson received many awards acknowledging her innumerable contributions to institutes of higher learning—including a Lifetime Achievement Award from UNCF (the United Negro College Fund) and honorary degrees from Shaw University and her alma mater Talladega College.

Mrs. Johnson was an exemplary fashion and philanthropic pioneer. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City planned a tribute luncheon in her honor to be held in January 2010. Regrettably, Mrs. Johnson died on January 3, 2010. However, the luncheon was still held just over a week later. Her daughter, Linda Johnson Rice, and granddaughter, Alexa Christina Rice, joined A-list dignitaries, fashion luminaries, and other celebrities in reflecting on Mrs. Johnson's fifty-plus years of contributions to American culture and society.

In 2013, the Chicago History Museum debuted *Inspiring Beauty: 50 Years of Ebony Fashion Fair*, a special exhibition built around a curation of Mrs. Johnson's vast couture clothing collection that showcased the history and substance of the traveling tour. The showing was eagerly anticipated and attended by throngs of participants, many of whom shared recollections of their show experiences. As with the EBONY Fashion Fair, demand for the exhibition grew, resulting in its traveling to additional museums across the United States.

After some financially turbulent years, *EBONY* magazine was purchased in 2020 by former NBA basketball player Ulysses "Junior" Bridgeman. A successful businessman, Bridgeman expressed the feelings of many when his new ownership was announced: "When you look at *EBONY*, you look at the history not just for Black people, but of the United States. I think it's something that a generation is missing and we want to bring that back as much as we can."

I carry fond childhood memories of thumbing through the magazine's issues that graced my family's coffee table. I'd mimic the models, holding my head high. I'm hopeful *EBONY*'s cultural legacy built by John H. Johnson and Eunice W. Johnson will continue to flourish and inspire future generations.

Selected Bibliography from the Backmatter

For additional resources that informed the writing of *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair*, consult the videos, books and articles listed in the Author's Sources in the back of the book.

Additional Information about Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair

To read more about Eunice W. Johnson and her legacy, consult The New York Times article detailing her incredible accomplishments and involvement with the EBONY Fashion Fair and *EBONY* magazine (<https://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/10/business/media/10johnson.html>) and NPR's obituary featuring Eunice Johnson (<https://www.npr.org/2010/01/07/122320864/in-memoriam-ebony-matriarch-eunice-w-johnson>). The North Carolina Museum of Art also has a video dedicated to Eunice Johnson's fashion visions and achievements (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKVUXYv4Y8U>). *EBONY*'s article about the Metropolitan Museum of Art honoring Eunice Johnson also provides additional context about Eunice's incredible career (<https://www.ebony.com/the-metropolitan-museum-of-art-salutes-eunice-w-johnson/>).

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- What do you know about fashion? What kinds of things do you like to wear? How do you like to express yourself with your clothes?
- Do you know any fashion designers or models? Who are they? What are they known for?
- Is there a family member or friend that helped to encourage you to pursue your hobby and/or interests? What did they do to support you? Why were they helpful?
- Why is it important to be proud about who you are? How can you show confidence in yourself? When you're feeling down, what are ways that make you feel better?
- How do you like to express yourself? What are some ways that you like to show people who you are?
- How can we share our confidence and the love for ourselves with others? What are some ways that you can show to your friends and family what you love about yourself?
- What does it mean to be persistent? How do you demonstrate persistence even though something may be challenging? Why is it important to be persistent? Do you think persistence can be learned? How so?
- How does someone make a difference? What do you think making a difference means?
- Was there a time when you took a chance on something? What did you do? What was the end result? Was it worth taking a chance? How are taking chances important in your life?
- What does it mean to stand up for what's right? What are some instances in history where people had to stand up for what they believed in even though they encountered opposition?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book, *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair*. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
- **Read Lisa D. Brathwaite's Biography:** Read about Lisa D. Brathwaite on the jacket back flap. Encourage students to think about what it was like for Lisa to write her first picture book, and what could have been her inspiration for writing *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair*. Read more about Lisa at her website: <https://www.lisadbrathwaite.com>.

com/.

- Read Lynn Gaines' Biography: Read about Lynne Gaines on the jacket back flap as well as on her website <https://www.lynnainesdesign.com/>. Have students look at her illustrations for other books and compare her style across books. How are her illustrations among the books similar? How are they different? Does it seem like the subject matter of a book influences the style of her illustrations? Why do you think so?
- Encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.
- Have students quickly write a feeling in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote down that feeling and have them write a journal entry about it.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- how Eunice's childhood influenced her fashion career
- why Eunice became interested in fashion
- who helped and motivated Eunice during her fashion and beauty career
- how Eunice demonstrated persistence and resilience despite obstacles throughout her life
- how Eunice exhibited problem solving skills when she was confronted with challenges
- how Eunice left a lasting impact on the fashion and beauty community and the world
- why Eunice is considered a trailblazer in the fashion world how her legacy is important today

Encourage students to consider why the author, Lisa D. Brathwaite, would want to share with young people this story about Eunice W. Johnson and her legacy in the world of fashion and beauty.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Many words can be found in the glossary at the end of the book, but there are also some that are not included. Students could be encouraged to create a log of these words—they will not be listed here.

Content Specific

Selma, Alabama, broad oak, chinaberry, flair, fashion, collars, seams, tailoring, Alabama's Talladega College, sociology, Loyola University in Chicago, social work, Chicago, the Johnson Publishing Company, Negro Digest, *EBONY*, ebony, "Fashion Fair", Jessie Covington Dent, fashion show, show circuit, "Americana," show crew, designers, Paris, showstoppers, Diamond Beach Club, Wildwood, New Jersey, Greyhound bus, style-seekers, gymnasiums, ballrooms, launch, charities, scholarships

Academic

elegant, stately, birthright, sew, designing, impressed, groundbreaking, gleaming, fetching, alluring, inspiring, achievements, stunning, shuttled, fascinating, profitable, buzzed, decked out, strutted, poise, precision, pulsed, delighted, produce, magnificent, rejection, sensational, jaw-dropping, borrowed, cross-country, sashayed, fluttered, beckoned, blazed, zigzagged, renovated, glamorous, reception, the South, glimpses, pranced, posed, triumphant, testament, culture, consciousness, elegance, influence

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Where was Eunice born?

2. Who raised Eunice at home? What was her home like?
3. What did Eunice love to do when she was a child?
4. Who did Eunice make clothes for?
5. What happened when Eunice was in high school? How did she continue to get better at sewing?
6. What did Eunice receive when she graduated high school?
7. Where did Eunice attend college?
8. Who did Eunice meet in college?
9. What did Eunice and John notice back in Chicago?
10. What happened when John tried to get a bank loan to advertise the magazine?
11. How did the Johnson Publishing Company begin?
12. What profession did Eunice have during the day while she and John ran the Johnson Publishing Company at night?
13. What was the name of Eunice and John's first magazine?
14. What kinds of images did Eunice and John show in *EBONY*?
15. What was Eunice's fashion column called? What did Eunice write about and show in her column?
16. What did Jessie Covington Dent, a friend of Eunice and John's, ask them to do?
17. How did Eunice and the *EBONY* staff prepare for the fashion show?
18. How did people react to the fashion show?
19. What was the result of the fashion show?
20. How did the EBONY Fashion Fair begin? Where did Eunice and John travel?
21. How did Eunice produce the fashion shows? What was her mission?
22. How did people welcome Eunice at the fashion shows? How did this make her feel, and what did she do?
23. What were "showstoppers?"
24. What happened in September 1963?
25. What was the EBONY Fashion Fair "Americana" tour like? What were the different elements of the show?
26. How many cities were part of the Fashion Fair?
27. What was life like on the road traveling for the Fashion Fair?
28. When was the last stop on the Fashion Fair? Where did they stop?

29. After the first tour, what did Eunice continue to do?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What does the title *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair* mean to you after reading the book? Why do you think the author chose this specific title?
2. How did Eunice's childhood, particularly her home, influence her future career? Why did she think "that beauty and dignity were things everyone should experience?"
3. Why did Eunice's passion for sewing showcase her flair for fashion? What did Eunice like about sewing?
4. Why did Eunice's father want her to continue to get an education after high school? Even though Eunice wanted to sew and become immersed in fashion, why do you think continuing education is important?
5. How did Eunice and John use what they noticed in magazines and newspapers in Chicago and channel it into their idea for a magazine?
6. In what ways did Eunice and John experience racism while they were developing their magazine?
7. What was the meaning behind *EBONY*? Why did Eunice choose this name for their new magazine? How was it important to the Black community?
8. What was important about the types of images they displayed in *EBONY*? How did these images differ from the newspapers and magazines that Eunice and John saw on newsstands?
9. How was the invitation from Jessie Covington Dent about organizing a fashion show inspiring to Eunice? Why did she decide to move forward with the event? What kind of energy did Eunice want to create at the show?
10. Why was the EBONY Fashion Fair important for charities? How did Ebony ensure that they were engaging and fun for their audiences across the country? How was the relationship between the fashion fair and charities influential for Black charities and scholarships?
11. How did Eunice research and study fashion for the fashion shows? Where did she travel, and why did she do this type of work to execute the shows? What was the result of the shows?
12. What was life like for Eunice and her staff while they traveled for the Fashion Fair? How was racism a daily part of life for Eunice? How did these hardships affect, and inspire, Eunice?
13. How did the fashion fairs influence Black women across the country? How was the tour received by Black people, particularly Black women?
14. How did Eunice use persistence and determination to achieve her goals? What lessons did Eunice learn along the way that influenced both her personal and professional life? How did she confront racism and discrimination, and use it to continue the *EBONY* legacy of the magazine and fashion fairs?

15. Read the dedications in the front of the book. Why do you think Lisa D. Brathwaite chose these dedications? Why do you think they chose to tell this story about Eunice W. Johnson?
16. How were Eunice's mother and father influential in Eunice's life and career? How did they play a significant role in her development as both a well-rounded person and fashion ingenue? What were some of the ways that they helped Eunice, both in her personal and professional lives?
17. In what ways did Eunice overcome the many different obstacles in her life, starting at an early age? What were the different techniques and ways that Eunice overcame barriers that she often faced?
18. How did Eunice confront adversity? What were the techniques that she used to achieve her dream of being a part of the fashion world? How is Eunice an inspiring and influential person to this day?
19. How would you describe Eunice W. Johnson to a person who had never heard of her? What are some of the qualities you would use to describe her? What are the most important things to say about Eunice and her life and legacy?
20. Explore the structure of this text. Does the story describe events chronologically, as comparison, cause and effect, or problems and solutions? Why do you think the author structured the text the way she did? How does this story compare to other texts you have read?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. **Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. What is one big thought you have after reading this book? Think about Eunice W. Johnson's legacy as a leader in the fashion and beauty world. What is your takeaway from this book? What would you tell a friend about this book?
2. What do you think is Lisa D. Brathwaite's message to the reader? Think about possible motivations behind Lisa's intentions for writing the book. What do you think she wanted to tell her readers?
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kinds of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What do Eunice's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make between this book and what you have seen in the world, such as online, on television, or in a newspaper? Why did this book make you think of that?
6. What does making a difference mean to students after reading? After reading *Miles of Style:*

Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair, what does the idea of making a difference mean to you? Why?

7. What does resilience mean to you after reading this book? How did Eunice's passion for fashion fuel her success? Why is resilience important? How do you demonstrate resilience in your own life?
8. How has a teacher or other person close to you impacted your life? Eunice's parents inspired her to persevere in her fashion career. Have you had a parent, teacher, caregiver, or other person who really changed your life? What were some things that teacher or person did that were significant to you?
9. Why is Eunice W. Johnson an essential person to learn about? How did Eunice lead the way for women and people of color in fashion and beauty?

ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading: 1) Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing. 2) Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about how Eunice's story inspired them and how she demonstrated her dedication to her work in the fashion and beauty industry.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose ML Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. Eunice W. Johnson experienced racism and prejudice because of her race. How do you respond to racism or discrimination when you experience it yourself and/or when you see it happen to others?
2. Eunice experienced adversity during her life—from being dismissed at Paris fashion shows, to having to eat on the bus during the fashion fairs. How does Eunice demonstrate resilience in *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair*? What are the different strategies that she uses when she's feeling defeated? How does she use courage to achieve her goals?
3. Which illustration in *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair* best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it shows. How does the image portray that emotion?
4. What gives Eunice confidence throughout the story? How did she develop a positive self-esteem, even though she encountered obstacles and racism along the way?
5. Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, hope, perseverance, and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair*.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Use *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair* along with *Stacey Abrams: Lift Every Voice* (www.leeandlow.com/books/stacey-abrams), *She Was the First! The Trailblazing Life of Shirley Chisholm* (www.leeandlow.com/books/she-was-the-first), *Seeds of Change* ([leeandlow.com/books/seeds-of-change](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/seeds-of-change)), *Midnight Teacher: Lilly Ann Granderson and Her Secret School* (www.leeandlow.com/books/midnight-teacher), *In Her Hands: The Story of Sculptor Augusta Savage* (www.leeandlow.com/books/in-her-hands), *Rise!: From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/rise>) and *Marvelous Mabel: Figure Skating Superstar* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/marvelous-mabel>) to show students powerful Black women in history.** Use a graphic organizer to compare Eunice W. Johnson, Stacey Abrams, Shirley Chisholm, Wangari Maathai, Lilly Ann Granderson, Augusta Savage, Maya Angelou, and Mabel Fairbanks. How do these women inspire you to follow your passions and fight for what you believe in? Have students write a reaction after the graphic organizer exercise about these important Black women in history to address how and why they changed the world. Why is it important to learn about these critical historical figures?
- **Read other books about Black beauty standards, including *Magic Like That* ([leeandlow.com/books/magic-like-that](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/magic-like-that)).** Have students compare the texts: how do the main characters feel about themselves? How does Black beauty play a role in the story? What kind of language and imagery does the author use to describe Black beauty? How do the authors portray the characters in these books? Afterwards, students can write in an essay about how they related to the books, what they learned about Black beauty standards, and how it's important to have books like *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair* and *Magic Like That* in the classroom.
- **Have students come up with a list of questions to ask author Lisa D. Brathwaite.** What do students want to know about the process behind writing a children's book? How did Lisa come up with the idea to write *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair*? What was it like to write her first picture book? Why did she choose Eunice W. Johnson to write about? What did she like about writing a book? What was challenging? Consider contacting Lisa D. Brathwaite and inviting her to your school, library, or other relevant setting for an author visit.

- **Write a critical essay about how Eunice W. Johnson paved the way for Black women and women of color in fashion, using evidence from the texts and additional articles and resources from the back of the book.** Have students refer to the articles, books and resources in the back of *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair* for further research and to inform their writing. What racism and discrimination did Eunice W. Johnson face in her life? What was she denied throughout her career? How did she overcome these obstacles and continue to pursue her goals in the fashion and beauty industry? How is she an inspirational figure today? What kinds of gaps did she recognize in the fashion industry, and how did she use that knowledge to support and promote Black women in fashion?
- **Students can write a piece about a hobby that's meaningful to them.** Do students have a hobby, such as a sport or another activity, that their family members or friends do that is also important to them? Eunice loved to sew as a child, and her passion for fashion and beauty began at a young age. Did students ever struggle with their hobby in the beginning, or feel embarrassed about it? Students can write a small moment piece or another reflection on their hobby, how it makes them feel, how they practice, and why it's meaningful to them. If possible, students can show off the hobby to the class or bring in an artifact that demonstrates their hobby to the class.
- **Consider using *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair* as an anchor text to teach students about biography writing.** ReadWriteThink's "Writer's Workshop: The Biographical Sketch" has tips and step-by-step instructions on how to ease students into writing biography and the different techniques and strategies that are used to make engaging and informative stories (<https://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/writers-workshop-biographical-sketch>). Afterwards, have students select a picture book biography in their classroom and create their own book about that historical figure. Have students conduct a research study about their own historical figure from a picture book of their choosing to simulate the process behind *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair*. Have students identify the different features in *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair* that would help to inform their own book about their historical figure. What kinds of information do they need to research? How should they present it in the book? What images, diagrams, or photographs would be helpful to their reader?
- **Have students think about expository nonfiction versus narrative nonfiction.** How was reading *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair* different from reading a newspaper article about Eunice? Have students read the article from *W Magazine*, "Black Power Dressing" (<https://www.wmagazine.com/story/eunice-johnson-ebony-magazine>). Have students create a Venn Diagram with the headings, "Narrative Nonfiction: *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair*" and "Expository Nonfiction: 'Black Power Dressing.'" Students can compare the different formats of the texts and the information they learn in both. What did they learn from both texts? What was it like to take in information from a picture book about Eunice W. Johnson versus a newspaper article about her?
- **Tell students to imagine they will be interviewing Eunice W. Johnson for a local newspaper or talk show.** Ask students to develop a list of five interview questions they

want to ask. Lead a class discussion, creating a combined list of questions and then narrowing that list down to ten questions. Begin students' brainstorming process with the following questions: what else do they want to learn about Eunice W. Johnson? What questions remained after reading the text?

- **Have students write an essay or reaction to the influence of *EBONY* magazine in the fashion industry.** What was it like to read about Eunice's impact on the fashion industry, starting with *EBONY* magazine? How do they think Black women were influenced by *EBONY* magazine during Eunice's time period, and today? How did Eunice influence Black women in the fashion industry? How does Eunice's work inspire you to pursue your own passions and interests?
- **Have students write an essay or reaction to the Author's Note from *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair*.** Afterwards, have students reflect on the following guiding questions in an essay: What did they learn from this section after reading *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair*? What additional information did they learn that was new about Eunice W. Johnson? How did this affect what they thought about the book? Why do you think author Lisa D. Brathwaite decided to include this Afterword featuring more details about Eunice W. Johnson?
- **Encourage students to unpack Lisa D. Brathwaite's quote: "Beauty was Eunice's birthright, and she grew up believing that beauty and dignity were things everyone should experience."** What do you think Lisa D. Brathwaite meant by this? Why was beauty important to Eunice? How did this mentality influence Eunice's career and future in fashion? Students can write a critical essay with their findings.

Social Studies

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Have students conduct a research project on Black women in fashion.** Students can focus on the following questions: what women did they learn about? How did these women make changes in the world of fashion? How did they influence the fashion world at large? How are Black women critical to the world of fashion and beauty? How did these Black women make a difference in the world of fashion? Resources online include:
 - *Essence*: <https://www.essence.com/fashion/black-women-in-fashion-that-are-making-waves/>
 - *Marie Claire*: <https://www.marieclaire.com/fashion/g33337334/black-fashion-designers/>
 - *The Root*: <https://www.theroot.com/15-black-women-who-changed-the-game-in-fashion-1850173240>
 - *BET*: <https://www.bet.com/photo-gallery/vv4bjc/10-historical-black-women-in-fashion/023bry>

- WhoWhatWear: <https://www.whowhatwear.com/black-designers>
- Black in Fashion Council: <https://www.blackinfashioncouncil.com/about>
- **Similarly, students can conduct a study on how Black women have impacted and influenced fashion.** How do Black women influence trends and the world of fashion today? What Black fashion icons did students learn about? How are Black women integral to fashion trends and the fashion industry at large? Students can create informational posters to showcase their findings. Resources online include:
 - *Medium*: <https://medium.com/the-baldwin/oped-the-influence-of-black-women-in-fashion-and-beauty-75daf338b2d1>
 - The National Museum of African American History and Culture: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/you-should-know-black-fashion-icons>
 - *Time Magazine*: <https://time.com/5233414/black-women-american-style-beauty/>
- **Conduct a research study on racism against Black people and the history of fashion.** What did students learn about racism against Black people in fashion? What are some of the racism and discrimination that Black people in the world of fashion and beauty face? What are people doing to combat the racism and discrimination in fashion and beauty? How are Black fashion designers and beauty experts speaking out? Students can put together their findings in a critical essay and relate what they learned to *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair*, and how Eunice was fighting for these issues during her lifetime. Resources online include:
 - *The New York Times*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/04/style/Black-representation-fashion.html>
 - *InStyle*: <https://www.instyle.com/fashion/clothing/state-of-the-arts-streetwear-history>
 - DePauw University: <https://scholarship.depauw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1179&context=studentresearch>
 - *The Cut*: <https://www.thecut.com/2018/08/what-its-really-like-to-be-black-and-work-in-fashion.html>
 - *Byrdie*: <https://www.byrdie.com/black-women-luxury-fashion-5186116>
 - *Elle*: <https://www.elle.com/uk/fashion/a45699908/older-black-women-fashion-campaigns/>
- **Have students present information about Black-owned fashion brands.** What kind of Black-owned fashion brands did they find? Who own those Black-owned fashion brands? How many brands were owned by women? How is that Black-owned fashion brand important in the fashion world? What is their area of expertise? Students can demonstrate what they found through posters with images and information on where to find more information about that brand. If possible, students can reach out to the Black-owned fashion brand to learn more and to conduct an interview with questions they're wanting to learn about how the brand was created and what their influences are. Resources online include:

- *Essence*: <https://www.essence.com/fashion/25-black-women-owned-brands-you-should-know/>
- *Cosmopolitan*: <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/style-beauty/fashion/g32733776/black-owned-clothing-brands/>
- **Encourage students to select a resource from the “Author’s Sources” section at the back of *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair*.** Students can examine the piece, whether it’s a book, video, photograph, or website, and write a reaction to how they think the author and illustrator were informed by this information and how it helped develop the story. Have students consider what kind of resource it is, how they know that it contains accurate and correct information, and why research is critical in developing a book. The Library of Congress has a lesson plan for further information about teaching students about using primary sources (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/>).
- **Have students create a timeline of Eunice W. Johnson’s life from the biography and elaborate on the events that happened during the time period.** To help students understand the historical context of Eunice’s life, encourage them to research the events in the book by gathering photographs and other primary source documents about the particular events mentioned and creating a timeline. Display both enlarged timelines in the front of the class so that students have easy access to both the dates and events. Students may work in groups in different years (i.e. 1930-1940) and then add their events and findings to the class timeline.

Art/Media

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Have students view the exhibit on the Ebony Fashion Fair, “Inspiring Beauty: 50 Years of Ebony Fashion Fair”** (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/reliving-ebony-fashion-fair-runway-one-couture-dress-time-180962987/>) (<https://museum.gwu.edu/inspiring-beauty-50-years-ebony-fashion-fair>). Students can reflect on the following questions as they examine the photographs and videos from the *Smithsonian* magazine and the George Washington University Textile Museum: what do they notice about the fashions featured in the fashion fair? What did the fashions look like? How did the models look when they were wearing the fashions? How do you think the fashion fairs influenced people across the country? Students can reflect on what it was like to look at these photographs with a partner or small group.
- **Organize and put on a fashion show in the classroom.** Using inspiration from the text, students can create their own fashion fair, using their own clothing or props from the classroom. What kinds of clothing do students want to showcase? How can they use the passion and vision from Eunice W. Johnson in their own fashion show? If possible, consider having students work with a local nonprofit organization or charity, like Eunice W. Johnson, to raise money. For additional ideas and lesson plans on how to execute a classroom show, look

to the PBS' Kids Go Green Eco-Fashion, where students had a fashion show featuring clothing and designs made from recyclable materials (<https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/ee18-sci-fashion/raising-environmental-awareness-through-fashion/>).

- **Encourage students to watch the video featuring Eunice W. Johnson, "Vision of Eunice Johnson" from the North Carolina Museum of Art** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KVUXYv4Y8U>). What did students learn about Eunice W. Johnson from watching this video? How was Eunice W. Johnson instrumental in the field of fashion? How did she pave the way for the future of Black fashion designers and influencers in this country? Who is featured in the video, and why do you think they were chosen to speak about Eunice? Students can write a reflection essay about what it was like to watch this video in conjunction with reading the picture book, *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair*.
- **Have students create a drawing, painting, or other visual representation of a passion or hobby that they care about.** Eunice loved to sew at an early age. What do students love to do? Why did students choose this hobby? Students can create posters, paintings, or other visual representations of their hobby that they're passionate about, and then display their work in small groups or for the whole class to see.
- **Consider having students conduct an illustrator study about Lynn Gaines.** Visit Lynn's website for a complete list of all her children's books (<https://www.lynngaindesign.com/>). If possible, display the books for students to examine the illustrations, and have students brainstorm how Lynn's illustrations are similar across the books, or how they differ per book.
- **As a follow-up activity, have students come up with questions to interview Lynn Gaines.** What is her process behind creating the illustrations for a children's book? What medium did she choose to create the illustrations? Why? How did she capture Eunice's passion for fashion and beauty in her illustrations? Consider contacting Lynn Gaines for a school visit (<https://www.lynngaindesign.com>).
- **Encourage students to select the illustration that resonated with them the most from *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair*.** Have students write a reflection about the illustration. What stood out to them? How did it make them feel? What did it make them think about?
- **Write and design a commemorative plaque for Eunice W. Johnson.** What would you want to say about Eunice W. Johnson in a paragraph? What were the most important parts of her life, and what would you want to share with visitors? What was Eunice passionate about, and what is her legacy? Why should people learn about Eunice W. Johnson? Students can create artwork for their plaque to display around the classroom.
- **Ask students to create portraits of people who are their personal role models in their passion or hobby they enjoy through drawing, collage, or photograph.** In writing, students should describe what actions and qualities they admire about this person. How do they relate to this person? What do they admire about the way they pursue and achieve their goals?

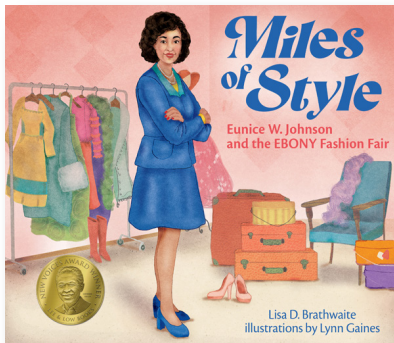
School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **If accessible, have students and families research other titles featuring historical Black people the fashion industry.** How did they shape history? How did they react to and handle the situation when they were faced with obstacles? How did they make an impact on the fashion and beauty world? Consult the resources used in the English and Language Arts and Social Studies section of this guide for more information online about Black women and people in the fashion industry.
- **Students can ask a family member: how has a family member or friend close to you impacted your life?** Eunice's mother and father encouraged her to pursue her dreams, but also influenced the way she viewed fashion and the finer things in life. Have you had a family member or other person who really changed your life? What were some things that person did that were significant to you? Students can write a poem, essay, or display their work in any other visual format that works best for their learning needs featuring what they learned about their family member they chose to interview.
- **If possible, have students create their own fashion fair with their family at home.** If students and caregivers want to create their own fashion fair, using their own clothing or different props at home. Who did students involve in their fashion fair at home? What did they want to use for their fashion fair? How did students feel putting on their own fashion fair at home? Students can share their findings with the class.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lisa D. Brathwaite is a purveyor of creative self-expression. She loves playing dress-up (still!), her family, finding herself in art spaces, and writing whatever suits her in a given moment. *Miles of Style: Eunice W. Johnson and the EBONY Fashion Fair* is her debut children's book. Lisa studied family and community development at the University of Maryland at College Park, graduating with a degree in Community Studies and a concentration in public policy and the Black community. She is a New Jersey native and has been designing her adult life in Atlanta, GA. Find out more at lisadbrathwaite.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Lynn Gaines loves creating characters, storytelling, and picture making. Born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, she spent her childhood drawing and making doll clothes--following in her mother's footsteps, as she was an artist and seamstress herself. A graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Art, Gaines has been illustrating for more than thirty years. When she's not working, she is looking for a beach, baking, sewing, or roller skating! She lives in Cleveland with her husband, Mel, and her two fur kids, Harry and Charlie.

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REVIEWS

"Eye-catching illustrations on each page featuring Black women of various skin tones and body types showcase the many inspiring outfits that made the Fashion Fair tour famous...This informative biography will be an excellent addition to Black history collections, the fashion shelves, or any celebration of innovators of the 20th century."
 –*School Library Journal*

"Brathwaite's wonderfully researched picture-book biography introduces elementary audiences to the impressive life and achievements of Eunice W. Johnson, a pioneer of Black fashion and cofounder of *EBONY* magazine. . .Gaines fills the pages from top to bottom with color, pattern, and texture--well suited to the topic at hand." –*Booklist*

"Brathwaite's account of Eunice Johnson's impact on Black culture is charming and straightforward, and her determination to help her community is palpable throughout. Gaines' digital illustrations are bright and colorful enhancements for the text...A compelling tale of an intriguing subject who left an indelible mark on fashion and culture." –*Kirkus Reviews*

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