

CHILDREN'S STORY HOUR

'I'm going to read someday'

By Janaan Manternach
NC News Service

This story is about Mary McCleod Bethune, who was born more than 100 years ago in South Carolina — in the year 1875, as a matter of fact.

"Put that book down!" the little girl shouted at Mary McCleod Bethune. "Black people can't read."

Mary held the book carefully in her hands. All her life she wanted to learn to read.

She did not put the book down but asked the two white girls, "You can read, can't you?"

"Of course we can," one answered. "But you can't. So close that book and put it down!"

"Please show me how to read," Mary asked.

"We told you no," one girl said. "Go home now. Your mother is here with the laundry."

Mary's mother did the laundry for the family who lived on the big farm. She also cleaned their house.

Mary ran outside to wait for her mother. She sat down on the back steps and cried.

"What's wrong, child?" her mother asked when she came by. "Why are you crying?"

"They made me put their book down," Mary sobbed. "They said black people can't read."

Mary's mother felt sad. She could not read. Mary's father couldn't read. Neither could her brothers and sisters.

"I am going to learn to read," Mary insisted as she and her mother walked home. "I don't know how, but I'm going to read someday."

Not long afterward, a church opened a school for black children. The teacher came to the cotton fields to find students. Mary's mother and father decided to let Mary go to the new school. Mary's dream was going to come true.

Soon Mary could read. She read the Bible out loud in the evenings to her family. They were very proud of her.

Mary did so well in the school

that she was able to go on to a bigger school. The more Mary read the more she thought of her people in the cotton fields. "I want to help more of my people learn to read," she decided. So she became a teacher.

She started her own school for black children in Florida. She was a good teacher. She hired other good teachers. More and more children and young people came to her school.

Mary Bethune became well known for her work as a teacher. Then the president of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, called her to Washington. He put her in charge of a national organization to help black people get better educations and better jobs. She was the first black woman to be in charge of a federal agency.



By the time she died thousands of people were able to get good educations, all because one day this daughter of former slaves made up her mind that she would learn to read.

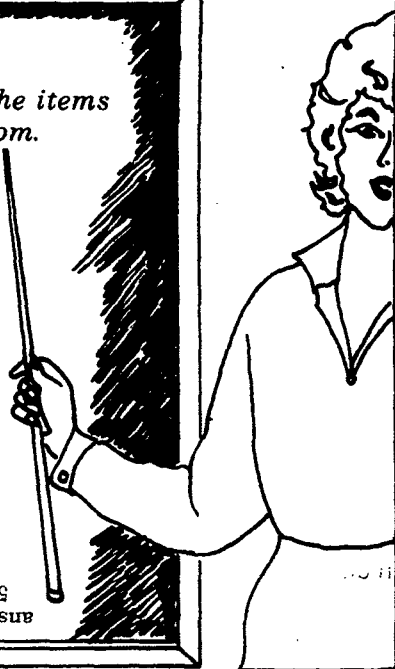
(Ms. Manternach is the author of catechetical works, scripture stories and original stories for children.)

School Words

Fill in the missing letters. All the items can be found in your classroom.

1. ch__lk
2. cr__y__n
3. d__sk
4. p__p__r
5. b__ks
6. t__ch__r
7. fl__g
8. bl__ckb__rd
9. p__nc__ls
10. b__ll__t__n b__rd

answers: 1. chalk, 2. crayon, 3. desk, 4. paper, 5. books, 6. teacher, 7. flag, 8. blackboard, 9. pencils, 10. bulletin board.



HOW ABOUT YOU?

- Did you ever make up your mind that there was something you wanted to learn to do, the way Mary Bethune does in this week's story? What did you want to learn?
- What made Mary cry in the story?

Children's Reading Corner

"The Terrible Thing That Happened at Our House," by Marge Blaine, begins with a little girl wistfully saying, "My mother used to be a real mother." She goes on to describe how her mother was home to get lunch and to read stories and to take her to the park. Then her mother went back to work, which meant everyone in the family had to make some big adjustments. It was a big change. The little girl gets so miserable about all the rushing around everyone does that one night at dinner she yells, "No one cares anymore in this house!" The book tells how the family members decide what they can do to make the situation a little bit easier and a little bit happier. (Parents' Magazine Press, New York, N.Y. 1975. Hardback. \$4.95.)



Discovery

Guiding children along the road of Christian discovery is the highest priority of Father Forest McAllister, O.F.M. With funding from the Catholic Church Extension Society, he serves the spiritual needs of those who live in isolated communities high in New Mexico's mountainous terrain.

Father McAllister is one of a team of home missionaries who, in partnership with Extension, pursue the vital and urgent task of evangelization here in the United States. But the team is too small to do the job without help. It

needs new members. It needs you.

Join us. Become a member of the Extension team. Although you won't be present in the home missions personally, your impact will be felt in this holy effort. Together we will bring Christ to those living in the home missions.

Write for a free subscription to Extension magazine today and discover the difference you can make. Together, and with God's grace, we can achieve His missionary goals here in our own beloved country.



The Catholic Church
EXTENSION Society

35 East Wacker Drive • Room 400 • Chicago, Illinois 60601