



*Cécile™ &
Marie-Grace™*
**Curriculum
Guide**

Learn about diversity,
community, and point
of view through the
stories of Cécile and
Marie-Grace, set in
New Orleans in 1853.



 **American Girl®**



Cécile & Marie-Grace



About the Cécile™ & Marie-Grace™ Books

Marie-Grace Gardner is newly arrived in New Orleans and shy. Cécile Rey comes from a well-known family of free people of color in the city and carries herself with confidence. But when the girls meet, they discover that they share an adventurous spirit and are more alike than they are different. Their friendship deepens when they volunteer at a local orphanage. Then a devastating yellow fever epidemic strikes New Orleans, putting people they love in danger and threatening their city. Marie-Grace and Cécile must find the courage and compassion to help each other and their families make it through the epidemic. And when the crisis finally ends, they put their own special gifts to use to help their beloved city recover.

Cécile and Marie-Grace demonstrate friendship, community service, and appreciation of those who are different. Through their stories, readers learn to form opinions of others based on personal relationships rather than on stereotypes. As the characters grow in confidence and altruism, they motivate readers to bridge differences and work together to help others and their community.

The six books of the core series alternate between Marie-Grace's and Cécile's perspectives:

Book 1: *Meet Marie-Grace*

Book 4: *Troubles for Cécile*

Book 2: *Meet Cécile*

Book 5: *Marie-Grace Makes a Difference*

Book 3: *Marie-Grace and the Orphans*

Book 6: *Cécile's Gift*

Instructions for Teachers

Assign or read aloud to your students all six books in numerical order. As needed, print copies of each work sheet you would like to use in class. Before assigning the work sheets to your students, consider the talking points and discussion questions for each work sheet provided below.

Talking Points and Discussion

Point of View

Though they share many events together, Cécile and Marie-Grace experience and react to those events in different ways. *Discussion questions:* What is a point of view? What are some reasons that people's points of view might differ?

Diversity and Community

Cécile and Marie-Grace are different in obvious ways: color, economic status (Cécile's family is wealthier than Marie-Grace's), and cultural identity (Cécile is a French-speaking native of New Orleans; Marie-Grace is an English-speaking "American"). Yet despite their differences, the girls forge a true friendship. They discover that the qualities they share—a good heart, an adventurous spirit—make them more alike than different. They also discover that their differences enrich their friendship and help them grow. *Discussion questions:* What is prejudice? Have you ever experienced or observed prejudice?



Cécile & Marie-Grace



Helping During Hard Times

Marie-Grace and Cécile are driven by their desire to help during the yellow fever epidemic, and their efforts aren't limited to the people they know. Both girls are proud to live in a community of people who help each other. *Discussion questions:* What cities and countries have experienced major disasters in your lifetime (e.g., earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, volcanoes, flu or other epidemics)? How did people help?

Answer Key

Point of View

1. Responses will vary but may include: Differences—the characters' contrasting responses to Lavinia's behavior and costume and to the segregated Children's Ball events. Similarities—the characters' shared excitement and desire to dance.
2. Responses will vary.

Diversity and Community

1. Responses will vary.
2. Responses will vary.
3. Students might mention that Marie-Grace feels like an outsider on the first day of school, when her classmates laugh at her because she doesn't know French (*Meet Marie-Grace*, pp. 45–47) and when Lavinia and her friends exclude her from their bench during lunch (p. 48). Students might also mention the Children's Ball, when Lavinia warns Marie-Grace not to dance because "dancing is really only for families who are part of society and know just what to do" (p. 74).
4. Responses will vary.

Hard Times and Community Service

1. Responses will vary.
2. Responses will vary.
3. Students might mention volunteering at local shelters, churches, or organizations; donating blood, clothing, or food; giving money to charity; and spreading awareness in your community.

Crossword Puzzle

Answers are located at the bottom of the work sheet.



Cécile & Marie-Grace

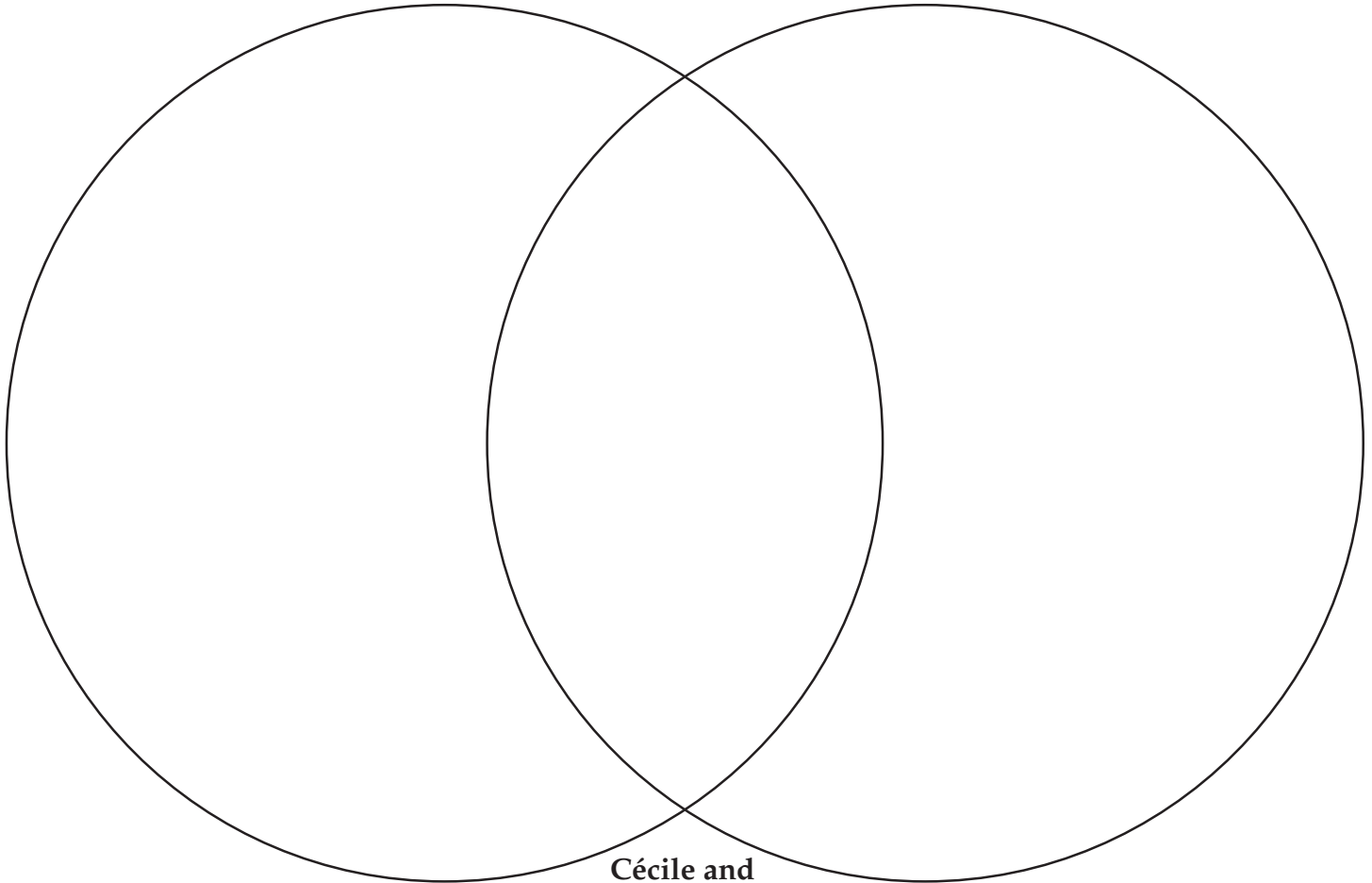


Point of View

1. Compare the Children's Ball scene in *Meet Marie-Grace* (pp. 70–84) to a similar scene in *Meet Cécile* (pp. 57–72). How were Marie-Grace's and Cécile's experiences similar and how were they different? Write the experiences that only Marie-Grace had on the left and those that only Cécile had on the right. Write the experiences they had in common in the area where the circles intersect.

Marie-Grace

Cécile



**Cécile and
Marie-Grace**

2. Think of an event you have experienced that someone else may have experienced from a different point of view. Describe your experience of the event and then try to describe how someone else might have experienced it differently. For example, you could describe your first day of school and then think about how the day might have been different for your teacher.



Cécile & Marie-Grace



Diversity and Community

1. Below is a list of some of the diverse cultures and communities in New Orleans in 1853. Make a list of the different types of people in your community in the column on the right.

New Orleans, 1853	Your Community Today
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • French-speaking people • Spanish-speaking people • Free people of color • Enslaved people of color • People from other parts of the U.S. • Native Americans • Immigrants from other parts of the world (Europe, Caribbean) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • • •

2. *Prejudice* means having a bad opinion of someone based on his or her race, religion, or nationality. In *Meet Cécile* (pp. 25–28), Cécile experiences prejudice firsthand when she and her grandfather are at the candy shop and the Americans treat them with disrespect. What would you do if you saw someone being prejudiced toward one of your friends?

3. Sometimes when you're new to a community, it can take a while to feel as if you belong. After reading *Meet Marie-Grace*, describe a moment when Marie-Grace felt like an outsider.

4. Describe a time or situation when *you* felt like an outsider.



Cécile & Marie-Grace



Hard Times and Community Service

1. Cécile and Marie-Grace experience a disaster when a yellow fever epidemic sweeps through New Orleans in *Marie-Grace and the Orphans*, *Troubles for Cécile*, and *Marie-Grace Makes a Difference*. Has your community ever experienced a disaster or hard times? (Examples: tornado, earthquake, illness, people losing their jobs, etc.) Describe what happened.

2. When the yellow fever epidemic hits New Orleans, Marie-Grace and Cécile volunteer at local orphanages to offer care and support to children whose parents have died. If something terrible happened in your town, like an epidemic or a natural disaster, what kinds of things could you do to help your community?

3. Have you ever done any volunteer work? If so, what did you do? What did you like about it? If you haven't volunteered before, what kinds of volunteer work do you think you'd like to do?



Cécile & Marie-Grace

Crossword Puzzle



Across:

- Marie-Grace's Uncle Luc was a _____ pilot on the Mississippi River.
- During the terrible yellow fever epidemic, many people went to the _____ to pray for their loved ones.
- Horses pulled _____ through the streets of New Orleans.
- Cécile's brother, Armand, was expected to become a stonemason like his father, but he wanted to be a _____ instead.

Down:

- New Orleans is famous for its food and its _____.
- New _____ is the place where both Cécile and Marie Grace were born.
- Mademoiselle Océane was an _____ singer who taught singing lessons to Cécile and Marie-Grace.
- Marie-Grace and Cécile often volunteered at the _____ to play with the children who had lost their parents.
- Cécile's greedy pet _____ was named *Cochon*, which is the French word for "pig."

The crossword puzzle grid consists of white squares for letters and black squares for empty space. The starting points for the clues are as follows:

- 1: Down, top-left corner.
- 2: Across, second row from top, starting at the second column.
- 3: Across, second row from top, starting at the eighth column.
- 4: Across, fifth row from top, starting at the first column.
- 5: Down, fifth row from top, starting at the tenth column.
- 6: Down, sixth row from top, starting at the seventh column.
- 7: Down, sixth row from top, starting at the eighth column.
- 8: Across, sixth row from top, starting at the fourth column.
- 9: Across, tenth row from top, starting at the first column.

Word List

- orphanage
- parrot
- steamboat
- music
- Orleans
- carriages
- cathedral
- painter
- opera

- Answers:**
- music, 2. steamboat, 3. Orleans, 4. cathedral, 5. opera, 6. orphanage, 7. parrot, 8. carriages, 9. painter