

## A Teachers' Guide for WHO SAYS WOMEN CAN'T BE DOCTORS?

### *Who Says Women Can't Be Doctors?*

#### *The Story of Elizabeth Blackwell*

Written by Tanya Lee Stone

Illustrated by Marjorie Priceman

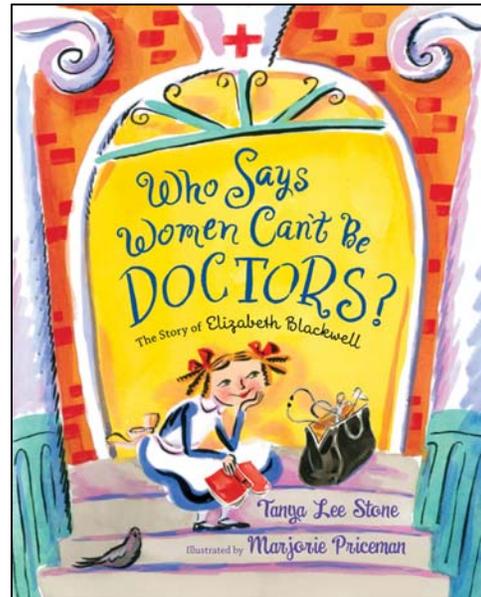
Christy Ottaviano Books,

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For ages 5 to 8

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Today, more than 50 percent of doctors in America are women. But that was not always the case. In *Who Says Women Can't Be Doctors?*, author Tanya Lee Stone takes readers back to a time in the 1840s when women were mostly expected to be wives and mothers. Career options were few. There were certainly no female doctors. In this book, Stone tells the story of a brave and curious girl named Elizabeth Blackwell who refused to accept these common beliefs and would not take no for an answer. This inspiring story of the first female doctor in America shows how one strong-willed woman opened the doors for all the female doctors who followed.

### **Before Reading**

1. Look at the art on the front and back cover of the book, as well as the spot art on the title and dedication pages. What do you think the book might be about, based on just the art? What do you think might be happening in the art on the back cover?
2. In what time era does the book take place? Why do you think so? Support your answer with specific examples from the book.

3. Think about the doctors you have met. Were any of them women? What qualities make a good doctor? (Create a list.) Do you see anything on the list that has to do with being male or female? (Read the text on the second spread that begins, “Back in the 1840s...”) Imagine growing up at this time and wanting to do something that other people say you couldn’t do. What might you do then?

### **General Discussion Questions**

1. Was life better for boys when Elizabeth was young? Why or why not? Do you think any of your reasons are still true today?
2. Why might Mary Donaldson have “much preferred being examined by a woman?” Today, people often have the choice of going to a male or a female doctor. Do you think it is better to have that choice; why?
3. Mary Donaldson put the thought of being a doctor in Elizabeth’s mind. Has anyone ever suggested that you try something you might not have thought of trying before?
4. How did Elizabeth earn the money to pay for medical school? Have you ever wanted something badly enough to find a way to earn the money to pay for it?
5. The author writes that Elizabeth “was as stubborn as a mule. Quite rightly!” What does the author mean by this? How many letters did Elizabeth receive telling her she did NOT get accepted to medical school? Have you ever tried to do something and did not succeed at it? What did you do? Did you keep trying?
6. The author writes: “Soon the boys wanted to know what Elizabeth thought about this or that.” Why do you think the boys changed their opinions about Elizabeth?
7. Why do you think the male doctor said, about Elizabeth’s graduating from medical school, “I hope, for the honor of humanity, that [she] will be the last?” Do you think other people felt that way as well, and why? How might Elizabeth’s success have paved the way for other women?

## Common Core State Standards English Language Arts Discussion

### Questions

#### CCSS Reading Standards for Informational Text K-5

##### STANDARD 1

**Key Ideas and Details** (for Standard specifics, go to [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org))

Author Tanya Lee Stone describes Elizabeth Blackwell's actions as a young girl in order to define her personality. (Grades K-2) What key details does the author use to tell you what kind of person Elizabeth was? (3-5) Refer to specific passages in the book that tell you the kind of person Elizabeth was as a child. (4-5) Does the author name all of Elizabeth's personality traits explicitly or must you draw inferences about some of them? (5) Quote the text accurately in offering examples to answer this question.

##### STANDARD 2

**Key Ideas and Details** (for Standard specifics, go to [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org))

What is the main idea of *Who Says Women Can't Be Doctors?* (Grades K-2) Does the title give you any help in deciding on the main idea? What key details support this main idea? (3-4) Cite specific key details and explain how they support this main idea. (4-5) As you recount key details, summarize the text. (5) Often books have more than one main idea. What are the other main ideas in the book? How do key details support these additional main ideas?

##### STANDARD 3

**Key Ideas and Details** (for Standard specifics, go to [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org))

Author Tanya Lee Stone tells us that Elizabeth Blackwell was born at a "time when women weren't *allowed* to be doctors." (Grades K-2) Describe the connection between Elizabeth and Mary Donaldson. What did Mary suggest that Elizabeth should do and why? (2-5) How did Elizabeth confront this belief that women could not be doctors? What did she do, and what happened as a result? Cite specific examples from the text to answer this question. What was the immediate result? What were the long-term results?

## **STANDARD 6**

**Craft and Structure K-3** (for Standard specifics, go to [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org))

(Grade K) Who is the author and who is the illustrator of *Who Says Women Can't Be Doctors*? What did each of them do? (1) Before reading the book, take a picture walk through the book without reading any of the text. Try to tell the story as you understand it from the pictures. Now read the text. What additional information did the text give you? (2) What was author Tanya Lee Stone's main purpose for writing *Who Says Women Can't Be Doctors*? What did she want to describe and explain? (3) What is author Tanya Lee Stone's opinion about women being doctors? Cite specific examples in the text that support her opinion. What is your personal opinion about women being doctors? Does your opinion differ from that of the author?

## **STANDARD 7**

**Integration of Knowledge and Ideas K-2** (for Standard specifics, go to [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org))

After reading the story through one time, read it a second time, paying close attention to Marjorie Priceman's illustrations on each page. (Grades K-2) Describe the relationship between the illustrations and the text that they illustrate. What person, place, thing, or idea in the text does each illustration show? (1) Identify illustrations and their companion text that describe the main ideas of the book. (2) Do any of the illustrations add to your understanding of the text? Would you have been less clear about the author's point without each illustration?

## **STANDARD 8**

**Integration of Knowledge and Ideas** (for Standard specifics, go to [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org))

An author writes an informational book to teach a reader about an unfamiliar subject or to share new information about a familiar subject. (Grades K-2) What important points does author Tanya Lee Stone make in *Who Says Women Can't Be Doctors*? What reasons does she give to support these points? (2) Do these reasons do a good job of supporting Tanya Lee Stone's points? (3) Describe the logical

connection between these sentences from the text. Is author Tanya Lee Stone using comparison, cause/effect, sequence, or some other logical structure?

*Elizabeth thought that at least the students wanted her there.*

*Except they didn't.*

*The teachers had let the students vote on whether or not to allow Elizabeth to come. And the boys, figuring the school would never really accept a girl, said yes. They planned to turn the whole thing into a big joke.*

*But the joke was on them!*

*Their raucous laughter turned to silence as the ladylike Elizabeth took her seat.*

*They wondered what kind of girl she was.*

*The kind of girl who wouldn't take the bait.*

*Some thought a girl wouldn't be able to keep up.*

*Except Elizabeth did keep up, often studying past midnight.*

*Elizabeth proved she was as smart as any boy.*

*And soon the boys wanted to know what Elizabeth thought about this or that.*

(4-5) In the passage above, how does the author use reasons and evidence to support her points? (5) Point to specific reasons and evidence.

### **CCSS ELA Writing Projects**

#### **CCSS Writing Standards K-5**

#### **STANDARD 1**

**Text Types and Purposes** (for Standard specifics, go to [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org))

After listening to *Who Says Women Can't Be Doctors?* read aloud more than once and discussing some of the [General Discussion Questions](#) as well as the [CCSS ELA Discussion Questions](#) above, write (Grade K--and draw) an opinion piece about women working as doctors and in other career positions once denied to them. Be sure to meet the requirements for your grade level.

#### **STANDARD 3**

**Text Types and Purposes 3-5** (for Standard specifics, go to [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org))

(Grades 3-5) After reading *Who Says Women Can't Be Doctors?* and consulting several print and online sources (see recommendations listed in [Websites to Explore](#) and [Further Reading](#), below), compile and chronologically order a list of essential

facts about Elizabeth Blackwell. Then, working to meet the standards for your grade level, use these facts to create a play to be performed for your class or for a group of younger students.

### **STANDARD 7**

**Research to Build and Present Knowledge** (for Standard specifics, go to [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org))

(Grades 3-5) After reading *Who Says Women Can't Be Doctors?* and consulting several print and online sources (see recommendations listed in Websites to Explore and Further Reading, below), compile and organize a list of essential facts about Elizabeth Blackwell to present as an oral or written biography of the first female medical doctor in the United States.

After reading *Who Says Women Can't Be Doctors?*, select from the following list of additional well-reviewed recent picture book biographies of famous women who broke down barriers:

- *Art from her Heart: Folk Artist Clementine Hunter* by Kathy Whitehead
- *Ballots for Bleva: The True Story of a Woman's Race for the Presidency* by Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen
- *The Bravest Woman in America* by Marissa Moss
- *The Daring Miss Quimby* by Suzanne Whitaker
- *Elizabeth Leads the Way: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Right to Vote* by Tanya Lee Stone
- *Harlem's Little Blackbird* by Renee Watson
- *Helen's Big World: The Life of Helen Keller* by Doreen Rappaport
- *Hiromi's Hands* by Lynne Barasch
- *Mama Miti: Wangari Maathai and the Trees of Kenya* by Donna Jo Napoli
- *My Name is Gabriela: The Life of Gabriela Mistral* by Monica Brown
- *Phillis's Big Test* by Catherine Clinton
- *Sacagawea* by Liselotte Erdrich

- *Sarah Emma Edmonds Was a Great Pretender: The True Story of a Civil War Spy* by Carrie Jones
- *Side by Side: The Story of Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez* by Monica Brown
- *Skit-scat Raggedy Cat: Ella Fitzgerald* by Roxane Orgill
- *Sojourner Truth's Step-Stomp Stride* by Andrea Davis Pinkney
- *Summer Birds: The Butterflies of Maria Merian* by Margarita Engle
- *Tillie the Terrible Swede: How One Woman, A Sewing Needle, and a Bicycle Changed History* by Sue Stauffacher
- *The Watcher: Jane Goodall's Life with the Chimps* by Jeanette Winter

(Grades K-2) Listen to the selected titles read aloud and join your classmates in gathering pertinent facts before you create a book of famous women with illustrations and text. (3-5) Choose one of the picture book biographies above and conduct further research about the subject of the book in collective biography books or online (at a site such as *Women in History* <http://www.lkwdpl.org/wihohio/index.html>). When you have recorded all of the interesting information you can find on this person, write a short paper or deliver a speech about this famous woman.

### **About the Author**

Tanya Lee Stone loves to write about people who push boundaries in books like *Elizabeth Leads the Way: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Right to Vote*, *Almost Astronauts: 13 Women Who Dared to Dream*, and *Courage Has No Color, The True Story of the Triple Nickles: America's First Black Paratroopers*. Stone's books have won many awards including the NCTE Orbis Pictus Honor, Jane Addams Honor, YALSA Nonfiction Finalist, *Boston Globe-Horn Book* Honor, the Bank Street Flora Straus Steiglitz Award, the SCBWI's Golden Kite Award, and the American Library Association's Robert F. Sibert Medal. Learn more about her at her website:

[www.tanyastone.com](http://www.tanyastone.com)

### **About the Illustrator**

Marjorie Priceman has twice received Caldecott Honors, one for her illustrations in *Zin! Zin! A Violin!* and the other for *Hot Air: The (Mostly) True Story of the First Hot-Air Balloon Ride*, which she both wrote and illustrated. Her more recent books are *Paris in the Spring with Picasso* and *The Ride*. She lives in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.

### **Websites to Explore**

“Elizabeth Blackwell,” *GALE CENGAGE Learning: Women’s History*  
[http://www.gale.cengage.com/free\\_resources/whm/bio/blackwell\\_e.htm](http://www.gale.cengage.com/free_resources/whm/bio/blackwell_e.htm)

“That Girl There Is Doctor in Medicine’ Elizabeth Blackwell, America’s First Woman M.D.,” *U.S. National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health*  
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/blackwell/index.html>

### **Further Reading**

Boyd, Julia. *The Excellent Doctor Blackwell: The Life of the First Female Physician*. The History Press, 2006.

Kent, Deborah and Luft, Eric. *Elizabeth Blackwell: Physician and Health Educator*. Child’s World, 2003.

Olson, Nathan. *Elizabeth Blackwell: America’s First Woman Doctor*. Capstone Press, 2007.

Sabin, Francene. *Elizabeth Blackwell: The First Woman Doctor*. Troll, 1998.

Thimmesh, Catherine. *Girls Think of Everything: Stories of Ingenious Inventions by Women*. Sandpiper, 2002.