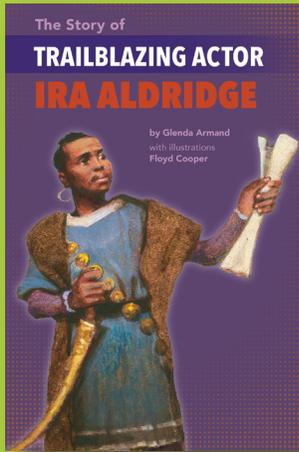


# TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

## The Story of Trailblazing Actor Ira Aldridge

written by Glenda Armand, illustrated by Floyd Cooper

### About the Book

Genre: Nonfiction Biography

\*Reading Level: Grade 5

Interest Level: Grades 4–8

Guided Reading Level: X

Accelerated Reader® Level/  
Points: N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

\*Reading level based on the ATOS  
Readability Formula

Themes: Biography/Memoir, Dreams & Aspirations, History, Identity/Self Esteem/Confidence, Nonfiction, Overcoming Obstacles, United States History, African/African American Interest

### SYNOPSIS

Ira Aldridge dreamed of being on stage, performing the great works of William Shakespeare. He spent every chance he got at the local theaters, memorizing each actor's lines for all of the great plays. Ira knew he could be a famous performer if given the chance. But in the early 1800s, only white actors were allowed to perform Shakespeare. African American actors had to play in musicals at the all-black theater in New York City.

Despite the discouragement of his teacher and father, Ira determinedly pursued his dream and set off for England, the land of Shakespeare. There he honed his acting skills and eventually performed at the acclaimed Theatre Royal Haymarket. Through perseverance and determination, Ira became one of the most celebrated Shakespearean actors in Europe, and a public supporter of the abolitionist movement. This chapter book edition includes black-and-white illustrations as well as sidebars on related subjects, a timeline, a glossary, and recommended reading.



## BACKGROUND

### The Story Of Series

*The Story of Trailblazing Actor Ira Aldridge* is part of LEE & LOW’s *Story Of* series. Every title in our *Story Of* chapter book line introduces independent readers to a diverse historical figure with a powerful life story. All books in this series include informative sidebars, highlighted vocabulary words, a timeline, a glossary, photographs and images with captions and labels, a bibliography with complete sources, and recommended reading.

### Nonfiction Text Features

*The Story of Trailblazing Actor Ira Aldridge* has different nonfiction text features that readers need to be aware of. The chart below lists the nonfiction features that readers will find. Consider printing or enlarging this chart for students to refer to in your classroom or library.

See the section titled, “Nonfiction Text Features: *The Story of Trailblazing Actor Ira Aldridge*” for details on how to teach these features with specific information in the book.

Types of Print	Words that are darker are called <b>bold</b> and words that are slanted are called <i>italics</i> , which point out specific information.
Sidebar	Additional information about a person, time period, or subject that is helpful to understand the story.
Table of Contents	A list of the book’s sections that says what information is in the book.
Timeline	A lists of the dates and years when events happened.
Glossary	An alphabetical list of vocabulary words mentioned in the book and their definitions, located in the back of the book.
Captions	A line underneath a photograph or image that describes what’s in the picture.
Text Sources	A list of the books, images, photographs, and other forms of information that the author used to write the story.
Title	The name of the chapter (that’s usually larger in size and in a different font) that describes the text and information that follows.
Label	A word that tells the name of the part of the photograph or image.
Key	A guide to understanding the symbols within a photograph or image.

## Additional LEE & LOW titles in The Story Of series:

***The Story of Movie Star Anna May Wong*** written by Paula Yoo, illustrated by Ling Wang  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-movie-star-anna-may-wong>

***The Story of Tennis Champion Arthur Ashe*** written by Crystal Hubbard, illustrated by Kevin Belford  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-tennis-champion-arthur-ashe>

***The Story of Olympic Swimmer Duke Kahanamoku*** written by Ellie Crow, illustrated by Richard Waldrep  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-olympic-swimmer-duke-kahanamoku>

***The Story of World War II Hero Irena Sendler*** written by Marcia Vaughan, illustrated by Ron Mazellan  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-world-war-ii-hero-irena-sendler>

***The Story of All-Star Athlete Jim Thorpe*** written by Joseph Bruchac, illustrated by S. D. Nelson  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-all-star-athlete-jim-thorpe>

***The Story of Civil Rights Hero John Lewis*** written by Jim Haskins & Kathleen Benson, illustrated by Aaron Boyd  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-civil-rights-hero-john-lewis>

***The Story of Car Engineer Soichiro Honda*** written by Mark Weston, illustrated by Katie Yamasaki  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-car-engineer-soichiro-honda>

***The Story of Banker of the People Muhammad Yunus*** written by Paula Yoo, illustrated by Jamel Akib  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-banker-of-the-people-muhammad-yunus>



## VOCABULARY

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

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.

### Content Specific

Park Theatre, spellbound, Shakespeare, Hamlet, actors, thine, enslaved, African Free School, founded, Danish, American Revolution, Manumission, penmanship, arithmetic, scripture, carpentry, benefactors, Baltimore, American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and Improving the Condition of the African Race, dignitaries, Marquis de Lafayette, George Washington, engraver, Patrick Henry Reason, James McCune Smith, minister, playacting, passerby, melodic, wares, African Grove, whitewashing, England, pleasure gardens, William Brown, playwright, steward, voyage, Charleston, auction block, stagestruck, errands, James and Henry Wallack, valet, Romeo and Juliet, working-class, the Bowery Theatre, the Chatham Garden Theatre, understudy, The Merchant of Venice, Elizabethan, hornbook, quill, Stratford-upon-Avon, players, makeshift, Othello, “out of thin air,” eulogized, tragic, extenuate, ovation, Moor, Shakespeare Memorial Theatre

### Academic

magnificent, barreled, contemplating, beaming, momentous, liberated, accomplishment, segregated, inferior, distinction, instilling, rigorous, curriculum, prejudice, reputation, recitals, alumni, foolishness, hopeless, recreation, premier, venues, harassed, ruckus, fearful, spared, agony, scolding, auditioned, rehearsing, strutted, entrepreneur, combustible, hazard, precarious, discouraged, portray, recounted, preached, aspects, prolific, misfortune, universal, appeal, legacy, stirring, adoring, remorse, exaggerate, recognition, triumphant

## 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:

1. What do you know about texts that are biographies? What are some typical features of biographies? Why do authors write biographical stories? How do you think their reasons differ from authors who write fiction?
2. What does an actor do? What are different types of performances that actors can be a part of?
3. Have you ever seen a play? What are the different elements of a play? What are some examples of plays, if you know about any? Why do you think people like reading or attending plays? Share a memory that you have about going to a play. Where was it? What was it about? How did you feel when watching it?
4. What do you know about William Shakespeare and his plays? Why do you think his works are still so popular today?
5. What is persistence? What do you think it means to be persistent? Share a time you demonstrated persistence. What was your goal? What challenges did you face? Who helped you along the way in achieving your goal? How did you stay motivated?
6. What do you know about American history during the early 1800s? What do you know about slavery in the United States? Why might African American in the early 1800s want to live, study and work in New York City rather than the South?

### 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)

1. **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book, *The Story of Trailblazing Actor Ira Aldridge*. 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?

2. Read Glenda Armand and Floyd Cooper's biographies: Read about Glenda Armand and Floyd Cooper on the back page of the book.
3. 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.
4. Have students quickly write a feeling in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote that feeling down 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:

- who Ira Aldridge is and why he's an important historical figure to learn about
- who and what inspires Ira Aldridge to pursue his love of acting
- how loved ones can help in times of stress and need
- how Ira demonstrated persistence and courage in the face of racism, prejudice, and other obstacles
- how Ira channeled his drive and dedication through acting and performing
- why Ira Aldridge's legacy is inspirational today

Encourage students to consider why the author, Glenda Armand, would want to share with young people this story about Ira Aldridge and his acting career.

## 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 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)

#### Chapter One: Young Performer

1. Where did Ira watch Shakespeare's Hamlet? How did he feel? Why did he have to leave the performance?
2. Where was Ira born? What school did he attend?
3. What did Mr. Andrews ask Ira to perform? What were the reactions from the visitors?
4. How does Mr. Andrews respond to Ira's desire to perform Shakespeare at the Park Theatre? What does he suggest instead?

#### The African Free School

5. Who founded *The New York Society of the Manumission of Slaves and the Protection of Them as had been or wanted to be Liberated*? What did the state government pass as a result?
6. What was one of the first tasks of the Manumission Society? What were their other accomplishments?
7. What was the reaction to the African Free School?
8. What was the mission of the African Free School? What was taught there?
9. When did Ira attend the African Free School? How did the school's reputation grow and who were some of the special visitors?
10. Who were some of the distinguished alumni from the African Free School?

**Chapter Two: Waiting in the Wings**

11. How does Ira's father react to Ira's dream to act in Shakespeare plays? What does he want Ira to do instead?
12. What was the African Grove? What did Ira do there?
13. Who approaches Ira and his brother Joshua at the waterfront? What does Ira do?

**The African Grove Theatre**

14. What were pleasure gardens?
15. Who was William Brown and what did he create? What was the reception like?
16. Why did William Brown create the African Grove? How did the African Grove make a difference for African Americans?
17. Where did Ira begin his acting career?
18. What happened when white people attended African grove?
19. What did the owner of the Park, Stephen Price, do to the African Grove? Why did the African Grove have to close?

**Stagestruck**

20. What happened when Ira arrived in Charleston, South Carolina? How did Ira feel when he was there?
21. How did Pa react when Ira returned to New York? What did Ira continue to do?
22. How did people encourage Ira at the African Grove and the Park?
23. What was Ira's first lead role? What did Pa do when he found out?
24. How did James and Henry Wallack advise Ira? What did Ira decide to do and where did they want him to go?

**Theatergoing in the 1800s**

25. How did race, socioeconomic status, and social class affect how people attended the theatres in New York City?
26. How did fires affect the theatres? What were other hazards in the theatres?
27. What did an evening at the theatre entail in the 1800s?

**Following in Shakespeare's Footsteps**

28. How did Ira feel when he arrived in England?
29. What was Ira first hired as? How did people react when he first performed on stage? What did he do in response?
30. How did Ira continue to preach about the injustices of slavery? How did audiences respond?

**William Shakespeare**

31. How did William Shakespeare's schooling influence his plays?
32. When did William Shakespeare first begin to dream about being a playwright? What inspired him?
33. Where did William Shakespeare first work after graduation?
34. What did William and his wife, Anne, decide about William's career in the theater? What did William do?
35. How did William get his start in the London theater scene?
36. How many sonnets and plays did William write? What did he write about?
37. What familial losses did William experience? How did they inspire his work?
38. How did Shakespeare experiment and play with language? What are some examples?
39. What was Shakespeare's legacy?

**Chapter Five: Celebrated Actor**

40. How did Ira's fame grow? What was his most famous role? What did the role typically entail?
41. How did Ira use his own life experiences to inspire his role as Othello?
42. What did Ira realize about his dream?

**Othello, the Moor of Venice**

43. What play was *Othello* inspired by?
44. What is *Othello* about? What are some of the themes and lessons from *Othello*?
45. What does Othello urge others to do when they tell about his life story at the end of the play? Why?

**Chapter Six: Trailblazer**

46. What recognition did Ira receive for his acting career? What were some of his major roles?
47. What movement did Ira support in the United States?
48. Where was Ira planning to return, and why did he not get to see his plan through?
49. What honors and awards did Ira receive?

**Extension/Higher Level Thinking**

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3; 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 *The Story of Trailblazing Actor Ira Aldridge* mean to you after reading? How did your perceptions of Ira Aldridge change after reading the story?
2. How did the injustices of slavery influence Ira and his career? How did Ira continue to preach about the horrors of slavery while he was acting? Why was this important to him? How did he use the abolishment of slavery as a motivation during his life?
3. How did Ira use persistence and determination to achieve his goals? What lessons did Ira learn

along the way that influenced his personal, academic, and professional lives?

4. In what ways did Ira overcome the many different obstacles in his life, starting at an early age? What were the different techniques that Ira used to overcome barriers in his way?
5. What kind of legacy does Ira Aldridge have? How was he impactful as both an actor and activist for the abolishment of slavery? Why was he honored for his work? What are the different ways that he is admired and acknowledged today?
6. Why was the African Grove School different than the Park Theatre in New York City? How do you think this demonstrates the treatment and perception of African American people in this country? How did Ira work to try and change that?
7. How did Ira channel all of the adversity in his life in his acting career? How did Ira's life experiences affect and influence the roles that he played on stage?
8. What do you think the author meant by the lines, "As he bowed before the adoring crowd, Ira realized that by following his dream, he had also become what Pa and Mr. Andrews had wanted him to be. He was an actor, but he was also a teacher and a preacher"? How was education as well as his childhood important to Ira and his career? How did Ira use what Mr. Andrews and Pa told him about his acting career and channel it into his life on stage?
9. How would you describe Ira Aldridge to a person who had never heard of him before? What are some of the qualities that you would use to speak about Ira? What are the most important things to say when explaining Ira's life and legacy?
10. Explore the structure of the text. Was it written as chronology, comparison, cause/effect, or problem/solution? Why do you think the author



made this choice? How does it 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)

1. What is one big thought or takeaway that you have after reading this book? Think about Ira's dedication to acting and the theatre. Why was Ira such an inspiring and significant actor and historical figure?
2. What do you think the essential message is to the reader? Think about possible motivations behind Glenda Armand's intentions in writing the book. What do you think she wanted to tell their readers?
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What do Ira'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 *The Story of Trailblazing Actor Ira Aldridge*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world, such as on television or in a newspaper? Why did this book make you think of that?
6. How has a specific event or memory impacted your life? Ira was inspired by performances he saw when he was a young boy. Have you felt similarly about something when you were younger? How did it make you feel and affect who you are today?

## 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)

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:
  - Review each chapter and have students summarize what is happening in the chapter, first orally, then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about how Ira's story inspired them and his persistence to continue acting in the theatre despite racism and obstacles along the way.
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 English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, 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. Guide students to the glossary at the back of the book for further definitions.
6. Use the text features to help ELL students make sense of what they're reading. The



table of contents, chapter titles, callout boxes, bolded words, and diagrams are all visual, vocabulary, and content aids in helping students prepare to engage with the text.

7. There are many references pertaining to Shakespearean plays. Create a chart with all of the different plays referenced in the book. Keep the graphic organizer up throughout the course of using the book.
8. There are places that are mentioned throughout the book where Ira travels. For students who may be unfamiliar, consider displaying a map of highlighting the places that Ira travels and lives during *The Story of Trailblazing Actor Ira Aldridge*. Label significant places as your students move through the book. Make sure to mark your students' town/city on the map as well.

## 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)

1. Have students think about if Ira could have done anything to change his father's mind about acting. What was Ira's relationship like with his father? Could he have encouraged his

father to think differently about acting? Why or why not? Write about a time you have tried to change an adult's mind about something. Were you successful? What advice do you have for Ira to help his father understand why acting is so important to him? Write a persuasive essay in response.

2. Provide students with the opportunity to reflect on how Ira Aldridge experienced racism and discrimination in theatre and how actors experience it today. Students can chart the different instances of racism throughout Ira's theatre career and examples that they find from actors today in a graphic organizer with two columns: present-day and Ira's experiences. Example articles of how actor endure discrimination today include (<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/oct/04/director-euzhan-palcy-ideas-hollywood-too-black>) (<https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/collection/how-camera-sees-color>). Students can then transfer their findings into a comparative essay.
3. Read *Ira's Shakespeare Dream* ([www.leeandlow.com/ira-s-shakespeare-dream](http://www.leeandlow.com/ira-s-shakespeare-dream)), the picture book version of *The Story of Trailblazing Actor Ira Aldridge*. Students can compare and contrast what it was like to read the picture book versus the chapter book version. What were the experiences like? What did they learn from the picture book that they didn't learn from the chapter book, and vice versa? How did it make them think about what it would be like to write a picture book versus a chapter book about a historical figure? Have students write a comparative essay and then share their thoughts with a partner or the whole class. Students can also examine how both picture books and chapter books are important for reading and learning.
4. Conduct a biography unit featuring Lee & Low's books on performers. Titles include *Baby Flo: Florence Mills Lights Up the Stage* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/baby-flo>), *Knockin'*



*On Wood: Starring Peg Leg Bates* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/knockin-on-wood>), *Little Melba and Her Big Trombone* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/little-melba-and-her-big-trombone>), and *Shining Star: The Anna May Wong Story* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/shining-star>). Students can examine the following questions during the unit and chart their findings in a graphic organizer or visual presentation format of their choosing with photographs, newspaper articles, and other documentation about the person: Who was this person? What was their impact? Why was this person important for art and society? What was their legacy and how is it relevant today? Then students can investigate how the performers' experiences were similar, what hardships they experienced along the way, and how their goals motivated them to pursue their artistic visions.

5. Encourage students to select a resource from the Text & Sidebar Sources from the back of the book. 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 to develop the book.
6. Have students think about expository nonfiction versus narrative nonfiction. How was reading *The Story of Trailblazing Actor Ira Aldridge* different from reading a newspaper article about Ira? Have students read excerpts from The Smithsonian article, "The 19th-Century African-American Actor Who Conquered Europe" (<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/ira-aldrige-black-actor-shakespeare-african-american>). Have students create a Venn diagram with the headings, "Narrative Nonfiction: *The Story of Trailblazing Actor Ira Aldridge*" and "Expository Nonfiction: "The 19th-Century African-American Actor Who Conquered Europe." Students can compare and contrast the different formats

of the texts and the information they learn in both.

7. Have students think about the main idea and details for a chapter of their choosing. Looking at the table of contents, have students pick a chapter that interested them. Then, have students write three key details, the most important information, in that chapter. Students can then generate the main idea, or what the chapter was mainly about. Finally, have students form small groups with each student representing a different chapter to share their results.

Details:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
Main Idea: _____
_____
_____

### Social Studies/Geography

(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)

1. Pair *The Story of Trailblazing Actor Ira Aldridge* with the primary source document, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July," by Frederick Douglass (1852). (<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/what-to-the-slave-is-the-fourth-of-july/>) EDSITEMent, from the National Endowment for the Humanities, has prepared a lesson plan for this speech including questions and historical context. (<http://edsitement.neh.gov/launchpadfrederick-douglass-what-slave-fourth-july>). Consult the lesson plan and



Frederick Douglass's document and connect findings to Ira's experiences in *The Story of Trailblazing Actor Ira Aldridge*.

2. Pair *The Story of Trailblazing Actor Ira Aldridge* with *Etched in Clay: The Life of Dave, Enslaved Potter and Poet* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/etched-in-clay>). Ira visits South Carolina in the text. African Americans in the New York City and South Carolina had many different experiences and opportunities in the nineteenth century. Have students compare the lives of Ira Aldridge and Dave the Potter. Using a Venn diagram, encourage students to explore how each man used art to express himself, the rights and privileges they had (in their states and in the United States in general), their level of education, and their ability to make choices about their lives. Create a timeline for this period with events and moments from Ira Aldridge's and Dave the Potter's lives and careers along with major national events such as the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln's election, and the Emancipation Proclamation. Use different colors to designate Ira's and Dave's events.
3. Have students investigate the role of African Americans in theater. Students can consult online resources and references for more information and a list of prominent shows over the course of history (<https://www.nypf.org/blog/2016/02/26/african-americans-broadway>) (<http://www.playbill.com/article/pivotal-moments-in-broadways-black-history-com-342101>). What challenges have African American theater actors faced due to the color of their skin? What contributions have they made to theater? As a case study, have students compare the life and legacy of another significant Othello actor, Paul Robeson, (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/paul-robeson>) to Ira Aldridge.
4. Have students examine the timeline in the back of the book and elaborate on the events that happened during the time period. In order for

students to understand the historical context of Ira's life, encourage students to research the events in the timeline by gathering photographs and other primary source documents about that particular event. Display both enlarged timelines in the front of the class so that students have easy access to both the dates and events. Students can work in groups for different year increments and then add their events and findings to the class timeline, located below the enlarged timeline from the book.

5. Provide students with a world map. Help students identify and label the places featured in the book: the countries of England and the United States and the cities of London and New York. Students should label the ocean separating England from the United States. Encourage students to mark their location on the map. Discuss what a compass rose is and the purpose it serves on a map. Students may also build their own maps at National Geographic Education's MapMaker (<http://mapmaker.nationalgeographic.org/>).

### Arts/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)

1. Have students research different interpretations and adaptations of Othello over the course of history. Students can document their findings with photographs, pictures, and other information that they can add to a visual presentation format of their choosing. In small groups, extend the activity by encouraging students to look at other Shakespearean plays and how they have been used over time and in what capacities. What movies, television shows, or other plays have been inspired by Othello and Shakespeare's other works? What



makes these plays so timeless and compelling for audiences?

2. Have students create a drawing, painting, or other visual representation after reading *The Story of Trailblazing Actor Ira Aldridge*. Encourage students to think about how the story impacted them and why it motivated them to create this particular art piece.
3. Invite an actor or a director from a high school, local college, or community theater program to your classroom. Before the visit, encourage students to brainstorm questions to ask this person about theater and acting. How can someone become an actor? What kind of training do actors need? What are some responsibilities actors have? What challenges has this person faced (discrimination, lack of encouragement, low self-esteem, lack of resources, etc.) in the pursuit of her or his goal? How has this person persisted? What are the differences among acting in theater, film, and television?
4. Encourage students to look up Ira Aldridge's playbills and other theatre posters and compare them to ones used today (<https://transcription.si.edu/project/8842>). Students can compare and contrast their findings in a Venn diagram and examine the following questions: What information is presented? What artwork is shown? How is the play described? What kinds of catchy words or phrases are used? Students can share their findings with a small group or the whole class.

### 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)

1. If possible, provide students with a copy of *Ira's Shakespeare Dream* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/ira-s-shakespeare-dream>).

[com/books/ira-s-shakespeare-dream](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/ira-s-shakespeare-dream)).

Encourage family members to read the picture-book version of *The Story of Trailblazing Actor Ira Aldridge* at home. Have students and their families talk about what hard work, dedication, and persistence means to them. Students can also examine the illustrations and how they are meaningful in each of the books.

2. Encourage students to interview their parents, grandparents, or guardians. Ask them to describe a time when they performed in front of a large crowd. What activity were they doing (sports, art, music, theater, comedy, debate, dance, etc.)? How did they prepare and practice? Who helped them practice? How did their families feel when they performed this activity? How did they themselves feel about the whole experience? Have students write down their interviewee's answers to bring to class. Ask students to reflect on these answers and write what they learned from this interview.



### Nonfiction Text Features

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

Types of Print	Point students to the words that are darker in the book, such as <b>stagestruck</b> . Why do they think those words are darker, or in bold? What can they use to figure out what the word means if they do not know the meaning? Encourage students to look at the rest of the sentence, and if they still don't know the word's meaning, then point them to the glossary.
Sidebar	When students see: "The African Free School," why do they think that the text and format look different from the text on the first few pages in Chapter One? Why do they think that there are these specific parts in the book? What is the point of sidebars? What kind of information can they learn from sidebars?
Table of Contents	Point students to the Table of Contents prior to reading. Why do they think a Table of Contents exists? Why is a Table of Contents important?
Timeline	Show students the timeline in the back of the book. Encourage students to think about why timelines are important. After reading, make photocopies of the timeline and then cut up the different events. Have students rearrange and place the different events in order.
Glossary	Prior to reading, show students the glossary in the back of the book. Why do students think that there is a glossary? What can you find in a glossary? When students read and encounter a bold word, have them go to the glossary and read the definition.

Captions	Ask students why they think there is a line of text next to a photograph, illustration, or diagram. What is the purpose of that line of text, or a caption? How would it be different if there was no caption? Have students look at a photograph with the caption covered. Then uncover the caption. Have students describe what they see with the additional knowledge of the caption. How do their feelings about the photograph change? Use the caption and the rest of the page to describe the photograph in more detail.
Text Sources	Have students look at the text sources in the back of the book. Why do you think the author chose to include these? Why is it important to show the sources that you used in your writing? Have students select one of the web links (or books if available) and have them look for information that the author could have used in writing the book.
Title	Show students the text that comes after the chapter number. Then, have students read the title of that chapter and make a prediction from the words about what the chapter is going to be about. How does the title of the chapter help them to think about what they're about to read?



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Glenda Armand**, winner of Lee & Low's New Voices Award in 2006, worked for many years as a teacher and school librarian in Los Angeles, California. Glenda loves reading about history and is passionate about sharing the stories of enslaved African Americans and little known historical figures. She lives in West Covina, California. Glenda can be found on the web at [glenda-armand.com](http://glenda-armand.com).

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Floyd Cooper** has been honored four times for his illustrations by the Coretta Scott King Award. Born and raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma, he received a degree in fine arts from the University of Oklahoma. In 1984 Cooper came to New York City to pursue a career as an illustrator of books, and he now lives in Easton, Pennsylvania, with his family.

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

**LEE & LOW BOOKS** is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at [leeandlow.com](http://leeandlow.com).

## ORDERING INFORMATION

### On the Web:

[www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering](http://www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering) (general order information)

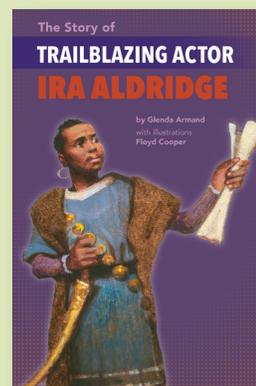
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-trailblazing-actor-ira-aldrige> (secure online ordering)

**By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25 | **By Fax:** 212-683-1894

**By Mail:** Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

## Book Information for

*The Story of Trailblazing Actor Ira Aldridge*



\$8.95, PAPERBACK

9781643790084

96 pages, 5-1/2 X 8-1/4

\*Reading Level: Grade 5

Interest Level: Grades 4–8

Guided Reading Level: X

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:  
N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

**THEMES:** Biography/Memoir, Dreams & Aspirations, History, Identity/Self Esteem/Confidence, Nonfiction, Overcoming Obstacles, United States History, African/African American Interest

### RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-trailblazing-actor-ira-aldrige>

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