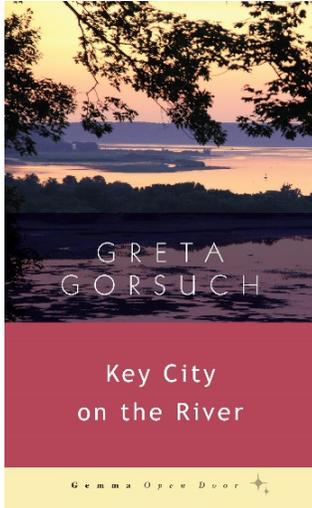




Sample lesson planning

Key City on the River



Based on history, **Key City on the River** explores what it means to start a new life in a land full of dangers and opportunities. Formerly enslaved people join a group that leaves Kentucky to travel north and west into the Iowa Territory. In 1833, Iowa is not yet part of the union, and no one knows if it will enter as a free state or not. The brave band crosses the Mississippi unsure of the future, but full of hope.

Read out loud!

The teacher can model by reading the first paragraph of a chapter. Then, students can read one at a time or in groups, a chapter at a time. This can take several classes or sessions. AND an audiobook helps with fluency and retention.

You will encounter some **vocabulary** that you can discuss ahead of time:

Iowa Territory	lead mines	mosquito
ferry	log cabin	freedom
wagon	workhorse	sewing
bluff	cornmeal/ cornbread	stone mason
Land Office	turtle	priest
the Sauks	shawl	toothache
the Foxes	scarf	tornado
chimney	slavery	rejoice
cholera	rifle	celebration

Here are **sites** that illustrate some events outlined in the book, to inspire discussion. There are lots of great resources at iowapathways!

- A page with some history and a short video on lead mining:
<https://www.iowapbs.org/iowapathways/mypath/lead-mining>
- A page on Iowa's path to statehood and its relationship to slavery:
<https://www.iowapbs.org/iowapathways/mypath/path-statehood>

Class **activities and discussions:**

Geography:

There is a map in the beginning of the book. It shows the Iowa Territory. Can the students find the state of Iowa now? Use a U.S. map for these activities:

1. Locate these places on the map. What do they mean in the story? Which characters come from each of these places?

Virginia	
Mississippi River	
Iowa	
Illinois	
Ohio	
Maryland	
Kentucky	
New York	
Missouri	

2. Draw a route map from the beginning of the story to the end. What do you think the trip was like?
3. Where do you think Key City is located? Look at the Author's Note at the end of the book for clues.

History questions:

1. Does the book describe what is a territory and what is a state? Can you?
2. How did Iowa address slavery?
3. When was your state or country formed?

Character

Greta's character development helps students understand the narrative arc and the structure of a story. Ask students to talk about each character:

1. What is his or her relationship to the other characters?
2. Where does he or she come from?
3. What is he or she looking for in Iowa?
4. What qualities does the character display?

Personal Stories

If students have come from another country, state, or city, they may have a story about their own experience. What was it like to leave home? How long did it take to relocate? What was surprising about their new home?

You can use these questions as conversation or writing prompts.



Key City on the River by Greta Gorsuch, read by the author