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*Maryellen 1954*

## A Teacher's Guide to The One and Only

A Maryellen Classic

Includes  
Common Core  
State Standards  
Correlations



## About the Book

Maryellen Larkin is almost ten and in the fourth grade when her life begins to change. She wants to be appreciated within her large family and doesn't like being lumped in with the little kids, but she often makes decisions that go awry. When her big sister Joan tells her that girls can't be friends with boys in fourth grade, Maryellen wonders if that will end her friendship with the boy next door, Davy. It seems that Joan is right when Davy shows up with an obnoxious friend, Wayne the Pain, who teases Maryellen. At school, Maryellen's poor penmanship lands her in the Lunch Bunch along with Angela, a new girl from Italy who is learning English. The two girls become friends. When Maryellen's other friends display jealousy and prejudice against Angela because "Italians were our enemies" in World War II, Maryellen must make a difficult choice. There is a courageous adventure, plenty of humor and family love, and a romance for Joan that pleases Maryellen. Through it all, there is never a dull moment in the large and often rowdy Larkin family.

## About This Guide and the Common Core Standards

Reading Maryellen's story gives elementary students a grasp of family life in the 1950s. The essay at the back of the book, "Inside Maryellen's World," sets the stage for this time in America's history. While Maryellen's suburban family life is fun and familiar in many respects, the polio epidemic was still a threat to children and the Cold War was in the news. Students learn about these issues in the context of the story.

This guide encourages students to be careful readers without jeopardizing the pleasure they get from reading. It is recommended that students read the entire book before engaging in a detailed novel study. The layered discussion questions deal with the themes of family, individualism and conformity, friendship, teasing/bullying, and courage. "Thematic Connections" ask readers to think about how the Larkin family and friends live, work, and play. There are natural connections to the language arts, social studies, science/health, math, and art curricula. Some activities take longer than others, and a teacher should feel free to use only those activities that meet the learning needs of most students in the class.

This guide notes whenever an activity helps students achieve specific Common Core State Standards. **A key to the standards referenced is provided at the end of the guide.**

## Pre-Reading Activity

With the class, watch the video entitled "1950's" at [www.history.com/topics/1950s/videos](http://www.history.com/topics/1950s/videos). Then ask students to read "Inside Maryellen's World" (p. 210). Discuss the influence of television on daily life. Tell students to think about the TV shows they watch and the advertisements, too, and then ask them, "What differences do you see today between life as it's shown on TV and real life?" If this is done as a writing assignment, have students share their answers with the class.

*Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 3-4.1; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-4.1.*

## Thematic Connections

### Family

Describe the Larkin family. What does Maryellen find frustrating about being the middle child of six siblings? Give examples from the story. Debate the pros and cons of life in a large family. Discuss Maryellen's logic that she should share a room with Joan and Carolyn. Why is Joan against the idea? How does Maryellen convince Joan that such an arrangement might work? Describe Maryellen's special bond with her grandparents. What does Maryellen learn when she goes to her grandparents' home for Christmas? Ask students to consider holiday traditions in their own families, and whether they would take a trip alone over the holidays to visit favorite relatives such as grandparents or cousins.

### Individualism

Maryellen's mother tells her, "I understand that in a big family like ours, it's hard to get your fair share of attention." (p. 43) How is it difficult to be an individual in such a large family? Make a list of Maryellen's many efforts to stand out or be unique. How does she finally prove to her family that she is a unique individual? Why does Maryellen call Mrs. Humphrey a "hand-me-down teacher"? Debate whether it is fair for Mrs. Humphrey to compare Maryellen to her older sisters. At what point does Mrs. Humphrey realize that Maryellen is a unique individual?

### Conformity

Sometimes Maryellen wants to stand out—but she also wants to fit in. Describe the ways Maryellen tries to fit in or conform. Are her efforts successful? Ask students if they feel there is still pressure to conform today, and have them give examples. Debate whether it is harder to conform or to stand out from the crowd.

### Friendship

Discuss the qualities of a true friend. Describe Maryellen's friendship with Davy. How does their relationship change when they enter fourth grade? Maryellen is so proud of her new poodle skirt that she shows it to the Karens before school starts. How does she feel when Karen Stohlman wears the identical skirt on the first day of school? Is it wrong for friends to copy each other? Maryellen becomes friends with Angela, a new girl from Italy. Why are the Karens upset with Maryellen for befriending Angela? How does Maryellen react to their behavior? Who do you think is right or wrong in this situation? Discuss the moment when the girls become friends again. What causes the two Karens to finally accept Angela as a friend?

### Teasing/Bullying

What is the difference between teasing and bullying? How does teasing sometimes lead to bullying? Debate whether Wayne is a bully. Why is Maryellen so surprised when Davy follows along with Wayne? Cite evidence that Davy isn't completely comfortable with Wayne's behavior toward Maryellen. Does Maryellen realize this by the end of the novel?

### Courage

Define courage. How does it take courage for Maryellen to travel alone by train to visit her grandparents' in Georgia? Give examples of other times when Maryellen shows courage. How does Maryellen's courage change the way others view her?

*Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 3-4.1, 3-4.2, 3-4.3; Craft & Structure RL. 3-4.4, 3-4.5; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-4.1; Knowledge of Language L. 3-4.3; Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 3-4.5; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 3-4.1, 3-4.2, 3-4.3; Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 3-4.6.*

## Curriculum Connections

### Language Arts

Remind students that a metaphor is a word or phrase used to make a comparison between two people, things, or ideas. Discuss how the term “Iron Curtain” is a metaphor. Then have students explain the following metaphor: “It’s like the Karens and I are on different sides of the Iron Curtain.” (p. 118). Ask them to write their own metaphor to describe the relationship between Maryellen and another character in the novel.

*Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 3-4.5.*

### Social Studies

The looming threat of the Cold War created fear. What were people afraid of? Have students read about Senator Joseph McCarthy at <http://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/joseph-mccarthy>. What was his goal, and how did he instill fear in people? Draw parallels with the story: How were the Karens acting a bit like Joseph McCarthy? Then have students write a newspaper article about the Senate hearings that condemned Senator McCarthy. Include who, what, when, where, and why.

*Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-4.2; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 3-4.7, W. 3-4.8, W. 3-4.9.*

Mrs. Humphrey tells Maryellen’s class that they must know geography to understand history and current events. Divide the class into groups and assign each group a geographical region: Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Europe, North America, South America, Central America, and Australia and New Zealand. Have students identify the countries in their region, and then ask each student to select a country and find out more detailed information, such as the capital and major cities, languages, and key geographical or other features. Instruct them to draw and cut out outlines of their country. Then shuffle the cutouts and challenge students to identify each country by its shape in a class Geography Bee. Use the detailed information as hints.

*Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 3-4.7, 3-4.8.*

In class, go to <http://www.thepeoplehistory.com/1954.html> and <http://www.history.com/topics/1950s>. Ask students to take notes on the way people lived in Maryellen’s time. Then have them write a brief paper titled “If I lived in 1954.” Tell them to include the things they would have liked or disliked about life in that era. Allow time in class to share their responses.

*Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 3.4.1, 3-4.2, 3-4.3; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RI. 3-4.7; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 3-4.1; Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 3-4.4; Writing: Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 3-4.7, W. 3-4.8.*

### Music

Ask students to use the Internet to identify popular songs of 1954. If you have access to YouTube, listen to “The Top Hits of 1954 Part 1” at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLabilGXcys>. Then play “Rock Around the Clock” and “Shake, Rattle and Roll” by Bill Haley and “That’s Alright” by Elvis Presley. (You can also borrow CDs of 1950s hits from the library.) Have students compare the first batch of pop songs (slow ballads) with the rock ‘n’ roll songs, and write a paragraph on why they think rock ‘n’ roll became so popular!

*Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-4.1; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 3-4.7, W. 3-4.8.*

## Science/Health

Because Maryellen had polio when she was little, one of her legs is weaker than the other. Have students use books in the library or these websites to learn about the causes, symptoms, and lasting effects of polio: <http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetailsKids.aspx?p=335&np=285&id=2876> and <http://amhistory.si.edu/polio/>. Assign students a one-page paper explaining why people were afraid of polio and telling about the contributions of Dr. Jonas Salk and Dr. Albert Sabin in ending the polio epidemic. Encourage peer editing for clarity, spelling, and grammar.

*Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-4.2; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 3-4.5; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 3-4.8, 3-4.9.*

## Foreign Language

Maryellen and Angela are in Mrs. Humphrey's Lunch Bunch. Maryellen needs to work on her handwriting and Angela is learning English, so Maryellen labels the things in the classroom to help Angela learn the words. Divide the class into groups and ask them to use foreign-language dictionaries or websites to make labels for common classroom objects in Italian, Spanish, French, and German. Encourage students to learn the pronunciation of each word and share with the class.

*Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 4.4c.*

## Vocabulary/Use of Language

The vocabulary in the novels isn't difficult, but students should be encouraged to jot down unfamiliar words and try to define them using clues from the context. Such words may include *ceremoniously* (p. 2), *modestly* (p. 2), *frustrating* (p. 8), *persnickety* (p. 14), *indignantly* (p. 14), *finicky* (p. 14), *harried* (p. 20), *exuberantly* (p. 25), *unerring* (p. 37), *distraction* (p. 38), *wrath* (p. 39), *cowed* (p. 41), *dignified* (p. 41), *inadequate* (p. 44), *humbling* (p. 49), *fervently* (p. 57), *impulsively* (p. 69), *scrutinized* (p. 74), *cacophony* (p. 79), *salvage* (p. 84), *inconspicuously* (p. 89), *offended* (p. 101), *earnestly* (p. 105), *luscious* (p. 129), *oafish* (p. 149), *gravelly* (p. 160), *escapades* (p. 163), *subdued* (p. 181), *imperious* (p. 181), *intimidated* (p. 184), and *forlorn* (p. 198).

*Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading Literature: Craft & Structure RL. 3-4.4; Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 3-4.4.*

## Internet Resources

- <http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/what%20was%20the%20cold%20war.htm>  
This site explains the Cold War to elementary students.
- <http://www.thepeoplehistory.com/50smusic.html>  
This site lists some of the top music artists of the 1950s and also describes the social context.



## About the Author

Valerie Tripp says that she became a writer because of the kind of person she is. She says she's curious, and writing requires you to be interested in everything. Talking is her favorite sport, and writing is a way of talking on paper. She's a daydreamer, which helps her come up with her ideas. And she loves words. She even loves the struggle to come up with just the right words as she writes and rewrites. Ms. Tripp lives in Maryland with her husband.

## More Stories About Maryellen

- *Taking Off: A Maryellen Classic, Volume 2*—Find out what happens after *The One and Only*.
- *The Sky's the Limit: My Journey with Maryellen*—A modern girl travels back in time to Maryellen's world in this multiple-ending book.
- *The Finders-Keepers Rule: A Maryellen Mystery*—A suspenseful adventure for slightly more advanced readers. Available in March 2016.

## Key to Common Core Standards Referenced in This Guide

### Reading Literature

#### Key Ideas & Details

RL. 3-4.1—Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RL. 3-4.2—Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

RL. 3-4.3—Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text.

#### Craft & Structure

RL. 3-4.4—Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text.

RL. 3-4.5—Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

### Reading Informational Text

#### Key Ideas & Details

RI. 3-4.1—Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RI. 3-4.2—Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.

RI. 3-4.3—Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

#### Integration of Knowledge & Ideas

RI. 3-4.7—Use information gained from illustrations (photographs) and the words in the text to demonstrate understanding of the text.

### Language

#### Conventions of Standard English

L. 3-4.1—Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

#### Knowledge of Language

L. 3-4.3—Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

#### Vocabulary Acquisition & Use

L. 3-4.4—Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade-level reading and content.

L. 4.4c—Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation and determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases.

L. 3-4.5—Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meaning.

## Speaking & Listening

### *Comprehension & Collaboration*

SL. 3-4.1—Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade-level topics and texts with peers and adults in small and large groups.

SL. 3-4.2—Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

SL. 3-4.3—Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.

### *Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas*

SL. 3-4.4—Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.

SL. 3-4.6—Speak in complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.

## Writing

### *Text Types & Purposes*

W. 3-4.1—Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

W. 3-4.2—Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

### *Production & Distribution of Writing*

W. 3-4.4—Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W. 3-4.5—With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

### *Research to Build & Present Knowledge*

W. 3-4.7—Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

W. 3-4.8—Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.

W. 3-4.9—Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

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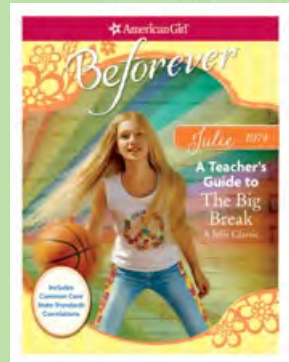
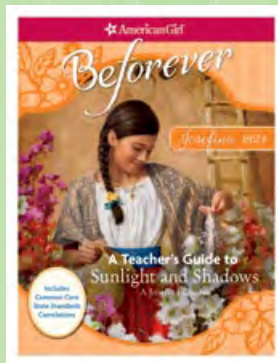
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# BeForever™

BeForever is American Girl's line of historical fiction for young readers. Originally conceived and developed by a former classroom teacher, the books are grounded in thorough historical research and bring history to life for children.

BeForever is about making connections. It's about giving young readers opportunities to explore the past, find their place in the present, and think about the possibilities the future can bring. And it's about seeing the common thread that ties children from all times together. The BeForever characters stand up for what they care about most: helping others, protecting the earth, overcoming injustice. Through the characters' stories, young readers today discover how staying true to their own beliefs will help make their world better today—and tomorrow.

Find Teacher's Guides to all the BeForever characters at  
[www.americangirl.com/guides](http://www.americangirl.com/guides)



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