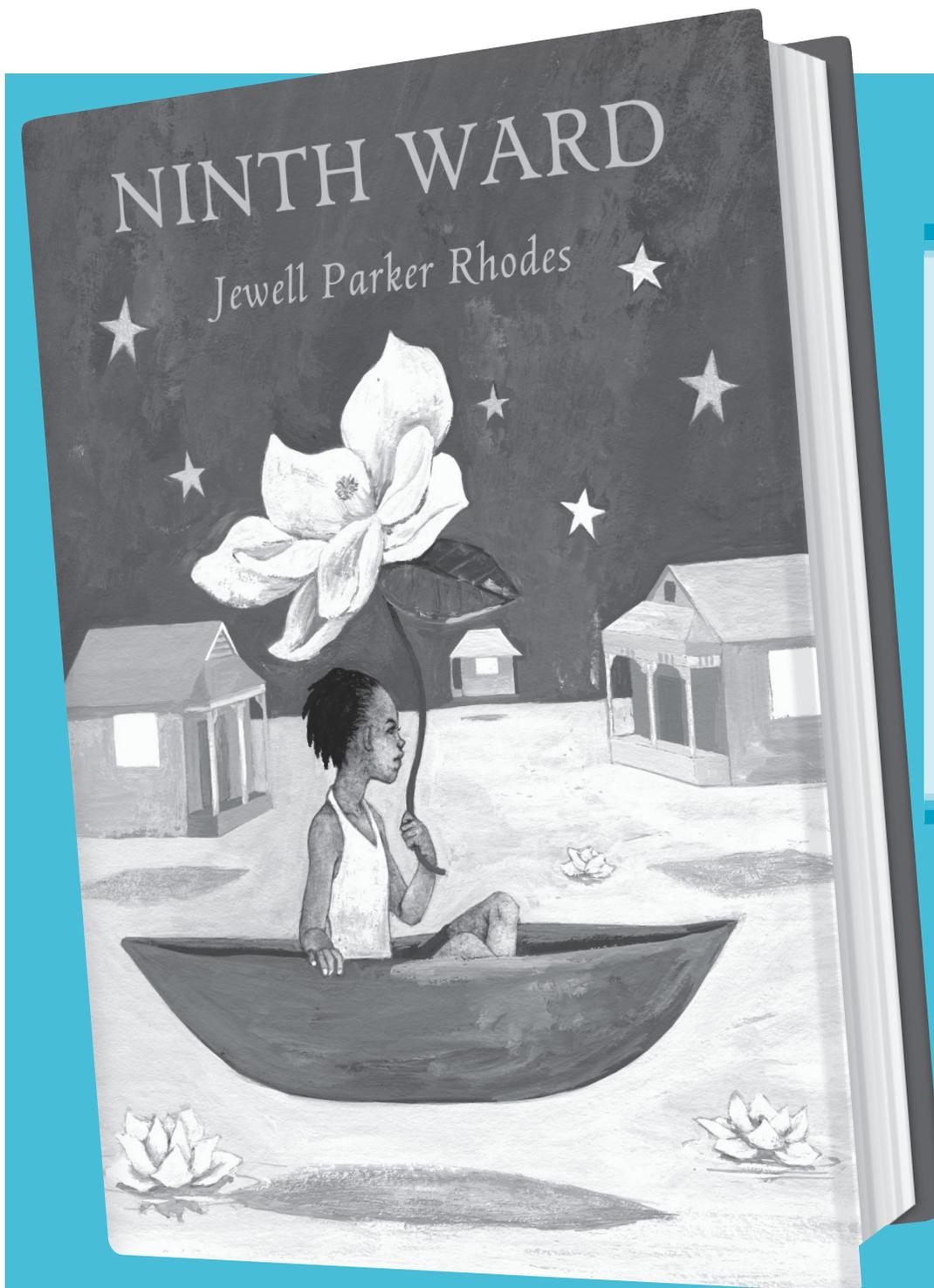


# NINTH WARD



## curriculum connections

- ❖ Reading: Discussion
- ❖ Writing: Vocabulary
- ❖ Math
- ❖ Science
- ❖ History

Ages: 8 – 12

by Jewell Parker Rhodes

## READING DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. After reading the first 10 pages of the novel discuss Lanesha's life with Mama Ya-Ya in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans. What have you learned about her?
2. How is Lanesha treated at school? Who else is treated as an outsider?
3. Lanesha says, "I need all the signs. Dreams. Words. Word problems. Math. Like air, they make my mind breathe." (p. 31) What does she mean by this? What do you need to make your mind breathe?
4. What is special about Lanesha? What gifts do you have that are unique in your family or neighborhood?
5. Why does Lanesha get involved when there is a fight? Who were the bullies picking on? Why? How is she rewarded for standing up for what is right? How do you handle bullies in your school or neighborhood?
6. What is an ordinary day like in the Ninth Ward? How does it compare to an ordinary day in your own neighborhood?
7. Who is Ginia? Why hasn't Lanesha accepted her invitations to be together after school? How does that change? How do new friendships start? How do they get better over time?
8. Why is Ms. Johnson Lanesha's favorite teacher? Who is your favorite teacher? What makes a good teacher? What does she give Lanesha that is so special? How has a teacher encouraged you to do more?
9. Is Mama Ya-Ya Lanesha's real grandmother? Why could this be an important detail? Why did her rich family not accept Lanesha? Mama Ya-Ya says, "Love is as love does." What does this mean? How does Mama Ya-Ya show love?
10. Why don't Lanesha and Mama Ya-Ya leave New Orleans with the impending hurricane? Why do some people stay while others evacuate?
11. Why is Mama Ya-Ya so nervous and agitated about the hurricane? What does she ask Lanesha to do for the first time? Who does Lanesha appeal to for an answer? How would you feel if you had Lanesha's gifts?
12. As the storm approaches, how does Lanesha turn the tables and take care of Mama Ya-Ya? What does she do to prepare for the storm? Does doing all these things prove she is growing up or is the work itself making her grow up? Why do you say so?
13. How does the author use poetic elements such as metaphor and simile to bring the storm to life for the reader? What can you do in your own writing to make it feel this immediate and intense?
14. What does Mama Ya-Ya tell Lanesha about her life? Why has she held on all these years? Would it be better to know that you might lose someone and be able to say everything first or would you rather it be a surprise to lose someone suddenly? How do Mama Ya-Ya and Lanesha say goodbye?
15. Why does TaShon show up at the house? How do they prepare for the rest of Mama Ya-Ya's predictions? Describe how they survive the flood. What would be the most difficult part for you? How does Lanesha save the day with her mathematical thinking? Who else helps Lanesha to survive?

## READING: CHARACTER

Create a character web for Lanesha after reading the first 10 pages of the novel. Try to fill in bubbles with as much detail as possible about her and her life with Mama Ya-Ya.

WRITING: VOCABULARY

Lanesha loves words and the subtleties of their meanings. As you read the story find the following words in their context and try to figure out what they mean by how they are used. Sometimes Lanesha gives you the definition exactly, but other times you can probably figure it out. If not, check your hypothesis by looking it up in a dictionary (just like she would do).

Vocabulary word:	Sentence it's found in:	Hypothesize meaning from context:	Dictionary definition (if necessary)
Fortitude			
Quantity			
Suspension Bridge			
Unfathomable			
Exasperated			
Anxious			
Evacuate			
Loitering			
Omen			
Devastating			
Vacuum			
Perpendicular			

## MATHEMATICS

Lanesha becomes intrigued with the engineering required to build bridges. Research the four main types of bridges (beam, arch, suspension/cable, and cantilever) and then build at least one out of materials found around your house. Keep a log of your attempts and what you learned in the process of creating the bridge. Create a pamphlet or powerpoint presentation about what you learned.

## SCIENCE: HURRICANES

Cooperative learning is a great way to get kids to learn a broad range of information about a topic without having to spend vast amounts of classroom time to get through it. Divide students into small groups and explore the following topics concerning hurricanes and their aftermath. Each group must provide a page of guided notes for the class to fill in as they present.

**How do hurricanes form?**

**How large and fast are hurricanes?**

**Where do hurricanes occur across the globe?**

**What have been the most devastating hurricanes in history?**

**Why can't forecasters predict exactly where and when the hurricane will strike?**

**What is a storm surge?**

**What are levees and why are they important during hurricanes?**

**How long do hurricanes last and what is the eye of a hurricane?**

**What should people do to prepare for a hurricane?**

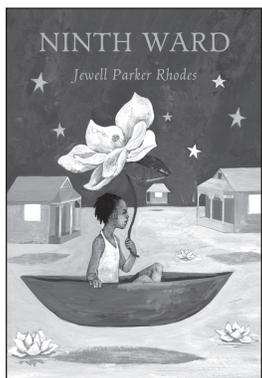
## HISTORY:

Create a timeline of the history of New Orleans. What are the most important things to know about this city? What type of food and music is it known for? Why is the geography of this city so unique? How is it a true melting pot of American cultures?

## about the author



Jewell Parker Rhodes is an award-winning author of adult fiction. Her books have won awards such as the American Book Award and the Black Caucus of the American Library Association Award for Literary Excellence. She is the Piper Endowed Chair and founding artistic director of the Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing at Arizona State University.



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Twelve-year-old Lanesha lives in a tight-knit community in New Orleans' Ninth Ward. She doesn't have a fancy house like her uptown family or lots of friends like the other kids on her street. But what she does have is Mama Ya-Ya, her fiercely loving caretaker, wise in the ways of the world and able to predict the future. So when Mama Ya-Ya's visions show a powerful hurricane—Katrina—fast approaching, it's up to Lanesha to call upon the hope and strength Mama Ya-Ya has given her to help them both survive the storm.

*Ninth Ward* is a deeply emotional story about transformation and a celebration of resilience, friendship, and family—as only love can define it.