**SILHOUETTED BY THE BLUE**

**By Traci L. Jones**

**LOUISIANA YOUNG READERS CHOICE NOMINEE 2014**

**GRADE 6-8**

*Submitted by: Melodie Franklin, Youth Services Librarian, Lafayette Public Library, Lafayette, LA.*

**TITLE: Silhouetted by the Blue**

**Author: Traci L. Jones**

**Publisher: Farrar Straus and Giroux**

**Pages: 200**

**SUMMARY**

Serena’s life seems like a typical middle school kid’s life from the outside but it is anything but from her standpoint. She’s just recently lost her mom in a tragic car accident. Since her mother’s death her father has lived in a semi-catatonic state making her, it seems the primary care giver to Henry, her little brother as well as having all the grown up responsibilities of taking care of a household. Although her home life is a wreck her academic life is soaring. She’s just landed the lead in the school play, “The Wiz” and is drawing the attention of an admirer, Elijah Mills. The book is very well written and keeps readers hanging on to find out what eventually happens to Serena and Henry and their clinically depressed father. She may just need to realize that becoming more self-confident and being mature means admitting that she can’t do it all on her own and that asking for help does not necessarily show weakness.

**AWARDS**

Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe New Talent Awards

**AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY**

Traci L. Jones grew up in Denver, Colorado in the same house she lives in today with her husband Tony and their four kids, Desiree, Andrew, Isaiah, and Brooke. She has been awarded the Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe New Talent Awards for the two other titles she has written; *Standing Against the Wind* and *Finding my Place*. More information about the author and her other titles can be found at her official website; traciljones.com.

**OTHER TITLES BY AUTHOR**

*Standing Against the Wind* (2006)

*Finding my Place* (2010)

**RELATED TITLES**

* *The Higher Power of Lucky* by Susan Patron. Atheneum, 2009. 144 p. Winner of 2007 Newbery Award.
* *After Tupac and D Foster* by Jacqueline Woodson. Putnam Publishing Group, 2008 151 p. 2009 Newbery Honor Book.
* *Ninth Ward* by Jewel Parker Rhodes. Little Brown and Co., 2010
* *Moon Over Manifest* by Clare Vanderpool. Delacourt Books, 2010. 368 p. Winner of 2011 Newbery Award.
* *Waiting for Normal* by Leslie Connor. Katherine Tegen Books, 2008. 290 p.

**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

**English/Language Arts**

Serena lands the lead in the school play The Wiz.

* A classroom production of The Wiz.

<http://www.myteacherpages.com/webpages/klessard/dramaclub5thgrade.cfm?subpage=1533457>

* Drama Activity: Acting and Emotions school lesson plan idea

<http://www.brighthubeducation.com/middle-school-lesson-plans-the-arts/13061-teaching-drama-acting-and-emotions/>

**Social Science/Health**

There are several websites offering worksheets and lesson plans dealing with feelings, grief and loss. Please find those listed below.

* What is self esteem?

<http://ofcn.org/cyber.serv/academy/ace/misc/cecmisc/cecmisc074.html>

* Friendship chain

 <http://ofcn.org/cyber.serv/academy/ace/misc/cecmisc/cecmisc073.html>

* Free printable worksheets and activities for feelings

<http://tabstart.com/directory/education/free-printable-middle-school-feelings-worksheets-1492>

* Peer pressure

<http://www.thecoolspot.gov/Documents/2PeerPressureBagofTricks%20FINAL%20Edits%2010-31-07MG.pdf>

* Grief

<http://www.scholastic.com/childrenandgrief/pdfs/Educators/Educator_Guide.pdf>

* Grief and loss

<http://www.lessoncorner.com/Health/Mental_Health/Grief>

**DISSCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. At the beginning of this story, Serena has two “besties,” Kat and Nikka who have ideas other than school on their minds. What are these ideas? How would you handle peer pressure of the type Kat and Nikka put on Serena? Who in the end is the better friend, Kat or Nikka?
2. Elijah and Serena took a class together, what was that class? Who was the better student in that class and why do you think they were better?
3. Serena took care of her younger brother Henry. Do you think it was fair for Serena to have to take care of him?
4. What did Serena’s father do for a living?
5. What happened to Serena’s mother?
6. Serena had just gotten the lead in her school play. Which play was it?
7. Serena finally decided that taking care of Henry, her father and the household was too much for someone her age. Who did she finally call for help?
8. Why do you think it took so long for Serena to reach out for help?