

SOUL, SOUND, AND VOICE

THE ART OF JERRY PINKNEY



TEACHER RESOURCE

WOODMERE

**THE ERIC CARLE MUSEUM
OF PICTURE BOOK ART**

SOUL, SOUND, AND VOICE

THE ART OF JERRY PINKNEY

TEACHER RESOURCE

LESSON PLANS

God Bless the Child 5
Grades 2–5
Lakisha Coppedge

The Grasshopper and the Ants 23
Grades K–5
Waleska Santiago-Centeno

The Little Mermaid 33
Grades 2–4
Keisha Hutchins Hirlinger

The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus 45
Grades 3–5
Amy Diaz-Newman

Sweethearts of Rhythm 59
Grades 6–12
Michelle Podulka

A Place to Land 77
Grades 6–12
Lya Rodgers, Hildy Tow, and Courtney Waring

HOW TO USE THIS TEACHER RESOURCE

This Teacher Resource was created by a team of educators who combined their creativity and commitment to provide meaningful learning experiences for students through the art of Jerry Pinkney. All six lessons align with K–12 National Standards in social studies, music, art, and language arts.

Instructions for Using the Resource:

Each lesson includes hyperlinks, which are indicated by underlined words (for example, Primary Document 1). Click to activate the links.

Scan the QR code at the end of each lesson to access links, image cards of selected illustrations, and other items designed to engage students and enhance classroom learning.

Support for this teacher resource is provided by Debbie Brodsky on behalf of the Julian A. and Lois G. Brodsky Foundation, National Endowment for Arts (NEA), the Philadelphia Activities Fund, and the Terra Foundation for American Art.



Jerry Pinkney, 2020. Photograph by Darryl Moran.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Jerry Pinkney (American, 1939–2021) was a renowned illustrator and author, celebrated for his contributions to children’s literature and his virtuosity as a watercolorist. Born in the Germantown neighborhood of Philadelphia, Pinkney made illustrations for over one hundred books during a career that spanned over six decades. His work often drew inspiration from African American culture and the beauty of nature, exhibiting a deep respect for storytelling traditions and interpreting history for young audiences.

Pinkney received numerous prestigious awards and honors. In 2010, he was awarded the Caldecott Medal

for *The Lion and the Mouse*, a top honor from the American Library Association for the most distinguished American picture book for children. He was a multiple recipient of the Coretta Scott King Award, which honors outstanding African American authors, and in 2016 he received the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award from the American Library Association for his significant and lasting contribution to children’s literature and illustration. The American Society of Illustrators bestowed their Lifetime Achievement Award on Pinkney, and Woodmere, The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, and numerous other museums have organized exhibitions to celebrate the artistry of his drawings and watercolors.

Pinkney believed in the power of storytelling and visual art to inspire hope, resilience, and understanding. His concept of the “arc of promise” pervades his many projects, looking back at the pain in American history, but also to a future of greater justice and empathy. Pinkney encouraged perseverance and faith in humanity’s potential, inspiring readers and artists, young and old. Through his remarkable work and inspiring ideas, he remains a towering figure in American art, illustration, and children’s literature.



Front Cover, from *God Bless the Child*, 2004 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)



Chicago, from *God Bless the Child*, 2004 (Courtesy of R. Michelson Galleries)

Celebrating Self in *God Bless the Child*

WRITTEN BY BILLIE HOLIDAY AND ARTHUR HERZOG, JR.;
ILLUSTRATED BY JERRY PINKNEY (HARPERCOLLINS, 2005)

LESSON PLAN BY LAKISHA COPPEDGE

GRADES 2–5

EXHIBITION THEME

A Chorus of Voices: Honoring Black History

"Whole families picked up and moved, taking only what they could carry, bundle into their wagons, or tie on their automobiles. They fled failing crops, exploitation, and unrealized dreams with unwavering hope for a better life. . . . Music followed them, too. People packed up spirituals and folksongs like valued possessions and carried them along as nourishment for their souls."

JERRY PINKNEY, ARTIST'S NOTES

MATERIALS

- Copies of *God Bless the Child*
- Colored pencils, crayons, etc.
- Recording of “God Bless the Child”
by Billie Holiday
- Paper

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will reflect on the courage and resilience of families who moved during the Great Migration, carrying not only their belongings, but also hope, music, and dreams of education for the next generation.

Students will practice close-looking strategies to analyze the meaning of the images and their connection with the words of the song “God Bless the Child.”

ESSENTIAL/FOCUS QUESTIONS

- How can the theme of resilience connect to children’s lives? How can children learn that the emotional resilience needed to overcome adversity comes from recognizing when to ask for help, and the value of support from others to overcome challenges.
- How do the illustrations by Jerry Pinkney and his interpretation of *God Bless the Child* as a story of the Great Migration help us understand the experiences of people during this historical event, the role of family, and the perseverance needed to keep striving for a hopeful future?

NATIONAL STANDARDS

VISUAL ARTS

UNDERSTANDING AND EVALUATING HOW ART CONVEYS MEANING

VA: Re.7.1.Pka-2a: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

VA: Re.8.1.Pka-2a: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

VA: Re.9.1.Pka-2a: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

RELATING ARTIST IDEAS AND WORK WITH PERSONAL MEANING AND EXTERNAL CONTEXT

VA: Cn.10.1.Pka-2a: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

VA: Cn.11.1.Pka-2a: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

SOCIAL STUDIES

4. Individual Development and Identity:

Personal identity is shaped by family, peers, culture, and institutional influences. Through this theme, students examine the factors that influence an individual's personal identity, development, and actions.

VOCABULARY

Resilience: The ability to cope with challenges and adapt when faced with setbacks or adversity. It means recognizing that asking for help and accepting support builds confidence in one's abilities.

Self-control and self-care: The ability to manage thoughts, feelings, and actions, especially in challenging situations.

Perseverance: Learning to keep trying and not giving up when facing struggles and disappointment, even if something takes a long time. It's practicing repeatedly, finding new ways to navigate through problems to reach a goal.

The Great Migration: A time period from 1916–1970 when more than six million Black Americans from the rural South migrated or moved to cities in the North, Midwest, and Western United States. They left their homes because of segregation policies and laws, poor working and housing conditions, in hope of finding find better opportunities for work and their families.

NOTE TO TEACHERS: NAVIGATING THE USE OF THE WORD “GOD”

It’s important to proactively acknowledge potential concerns surrounding the use of the word “God.” The lesson avoids referencing or associating the word with specific religious teachings.

SUGGESTIONS

Contextual framing: Position *God Bless the Child* as a tool for character education, values-based learning, or emotional intelligence—not as a religious text.

Clarify intent: Clearly state in your lesson that the word “God” is not used in a doctrinal or instructional context. Instead, it reflects the family’s faith and belief in God as a source of strength, comfort, and hope. This is illustrated in the opening image of the family gathered together and reading the Bible. Explain that its inclusion reflects diverse perspectives and mirrors language children may hear at home or already encounter in broader society or literature.

Offer alternatives: Prepare talking points or alternative wordings if needed for classroom discussion, allowing flexibility while maintaining the integrity of the material.

LESSON STRUCTURE

DURATION

Two to three 30–45 minute sessions with a potential extension.

WARM-UP

Hold up the book *God Bless the Child* and show the cover to the class. Notice the cover. What do you see? Let’s look closely at the main character—this is who we’ll be following throughout the story. Pay close attention to his clothes, colors, and things in the background. This is a story about a family who is moving from the South to a new home in a city in the North during the Great Migration.

Introduce students to the Great Migration as a period that began over one hundred years ago when many Black American families left the South and moved to the North in search of better opportunities.

Invite students to “read” the illustrations and discover how the characters, actions, and settings are shaped by this historical event. Encourage them to look closely, using the prompts and questions on the following pages, at how the family’s surroundings change, from open fields and rural or countryside communities, to busy city streets; to notice how the parents’ work shifts from working outside farming cotton to factory jobs in the city; how their home shifts from a house to an apartment. As we read the story, track the character and pay close attention to what he is doing as his environment changes.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION

When reading *God Bless the Child*, use intentional pauses to track the main character, his actions, the setting, and what we think he may be feeling.

Let's look at the main character.

What is he doing? What is he holding in his hands?

He is wearing a hat. As we read through the book, you'll see that he always wears a hat when he is outside.

What colors pop out to you? How are the colors of his clothing and the objects around him different from the background colors?

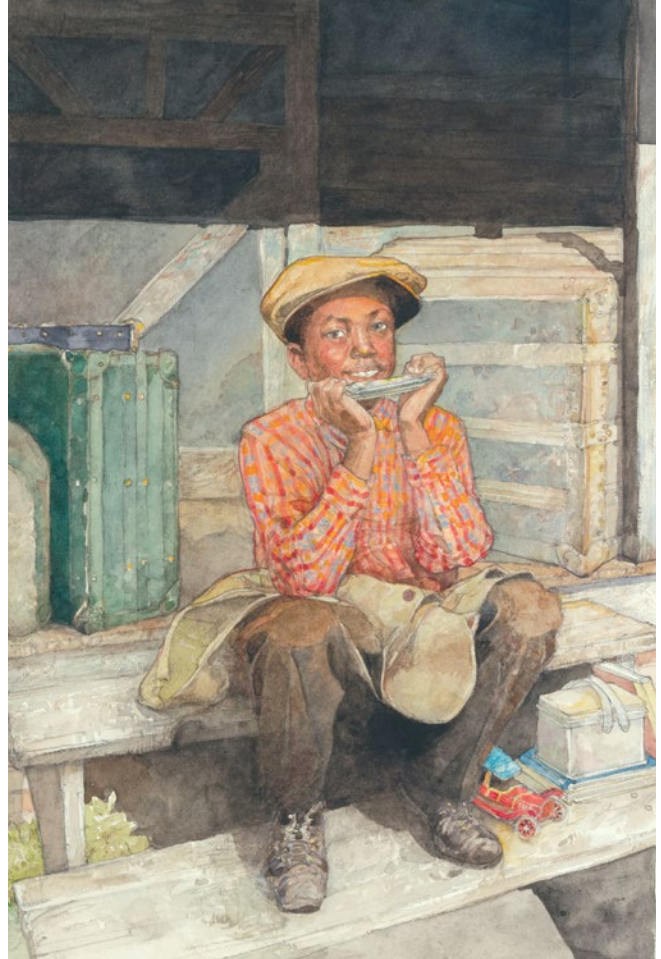
The artist, Jerry Pinkney, draws our attention to specific details in this image through his use of color: the character's red-orange shirt and the toy car at his foot, his yellow hat, and the green suitcase by his side. Even the silver-gray harmonica is highlighted by its contrast with the other bright colors. These details encourage us to look closely and wonder about the story they tell.

Notice the way he is sitting or looking. What do you think he is feeling in this moment?

Ask students to share connections to their personal lives.

Explain to the students that this story is being told both through images and the words of the song, "God Bless the Child," first sung in 1942 by a famous jazz singer named Billie Holiday. "We will listen to the song later. For now, let's listen to the words and look at the images."

Students should identify the main character and observe how he spends time with his family. Teachers can prompt them with looking questions that draw attention to details in the images of family life in the South, such as children helping their parents with the hard work of farming and preparing cotton, traveling by horse and wagon, and children playing outdoors.



Front Cover (detail), from *God Bless the Child*, 2004 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

ACTIVITY

After reading the book, project the following sequence of images on a whiteboard or hand out photocopies to the students from the *God Bless the Child* Image Card. Teachers provide students with a Close-Looking Graphic Organizer for them to record their observations of the main character, his actions, and his surroundings. This will lead them to building an interpretation. Importantly, when students listen to others' observations and ideas, different perspectives are considered, which can inform their own thinking and deepen the discussion.



But God Bless the Child, from *God Bless the Child*, 2004 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

ILLUSTRATING RESILIENCE

But God Bless the child/That's got his own!

Find the main character. Describe what he is wearing. (A red shirt; the yellow cap, which some may recognize because of the goggles as an aviator's cap. The boy's cap could be for play or warmth. In the 1930s and 1940s, airplane travel was on the rise and aviator caps became popular among children.)

Here we see him outside on a city street. What is he doing? (Point out the brush he is holding and the wooden shoeshine box.) Explain that these boxes had a footrest on top where the customer put their foot while their shoe is being shined. Why do you think the young boy is shining shoes?

Notice the other young boy standing nearby with a shoeshine box. It was common during this time period for some children to work shining shoes. Children were expected to earn money to help their family and shining shoes was one way for them to do this in cities. They often worked on busy sidewalks and street corners where many people passed by.

Think about the words from the song for this image are "But God Bless the child/That's got his own!" How do the words connect to this image of the young boy shining shoes? Think about how he is earning money to help his family and for himself, and the pride he may feel in doing so.

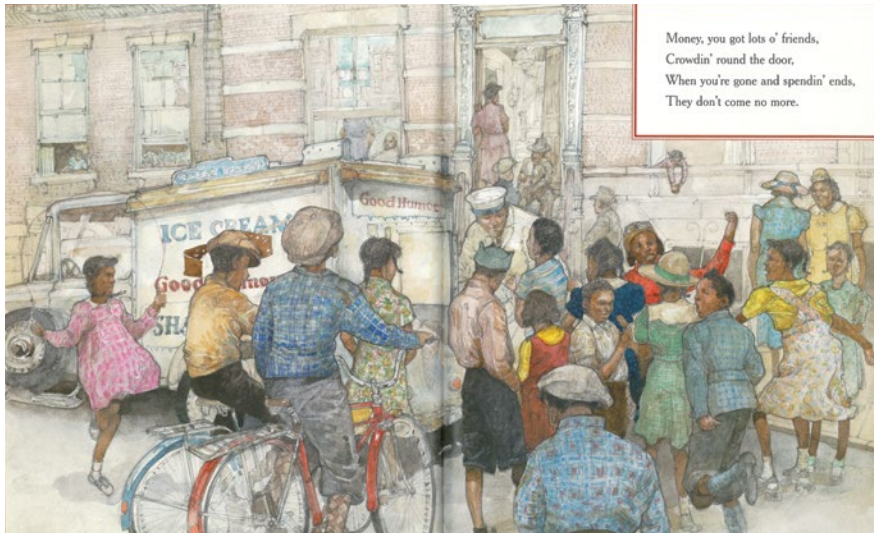
Money, you got lots o' friends

What do you see? Why are all the children gathered here?

Find the main character. Notice he is wearing the same yellow cap and the red shirt he wore shining shoes. Look closely at his raised arm and hand. Think about why he is making this gesture to the other children.

The words to the song on this page may be a clue:

"Money, you got lots o' friends/Crowdin' round the door..."



Money, You Got Lots o' Friends, from *God Bless the Child*, 2004 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)



Money, You Got Lots o' Friends (detail), from *God Bless the Child*, 2004 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)



When You're Gone and Spendin' Ends, from *God Bless the Child*, 2004 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

When you're gone and spendin' ends/They don't come no more

Where is the main character now? Notice now he is wearing a green shirt over the red one, and the same cap. What does that tell you?

Who else do you notice is on the ladder?

Look closely at his face. What feelings can you see there?

What does he see on the street below? Notice that most of the children have left. How do the words from the song, "When you're gone and spendin' ends / They don't come no more," show how he might be feeling or what he is thinking?

Playing music

What is the main character doing now?

Look at the family: What is everyone else doing?



Playing Music, from *God Bless the Child*, 2004 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

Look at their faces and the way they are looking at one another. In particular, notice the young boy and his father, and how their eyes meet.

What do you think each person is feeling right now?

How do you think the young boy is feeling as he plays his harmonica?

We see the young boy playing his harmonica for the first time since leaving the South. He is fully engaged and enjoying sharing music with his family. What do you think has made his feelings change?

Let's remember that the young boy has left his home in the South and gone through many difficult changes in his life. Resilience means being able to keep going, adapt, and find strength even when things are hard. What has given him strength? The joy of music, along with the love and support of his family, has helped him recover from his sadness. It reminds us that resilience often comes from holding on to what gives us hope and connection.

ILLUSTRATING PERSERVERANCE

Let's continue looking closely at more images.

Yes, the strong gets more

Find the main character by the car door. Look carefully and describe what his hands and feet are doing. Notice his eyes. Who is he looking at and what may he be thinking?

Who else do you see in the picture? How are they spending this time together?

Look closely at his father and mother. What are they doing?

What do you notice piled up on the car? (The green suitcase from the opening image, some trunks, a guitar, a bag, ropes tied to hold everything on.)

Why do you think they are bringing so many belongings?

How is the family's clothing different from what we've seen them wear before? What does this suggest about the kind of journey they're preparing for?

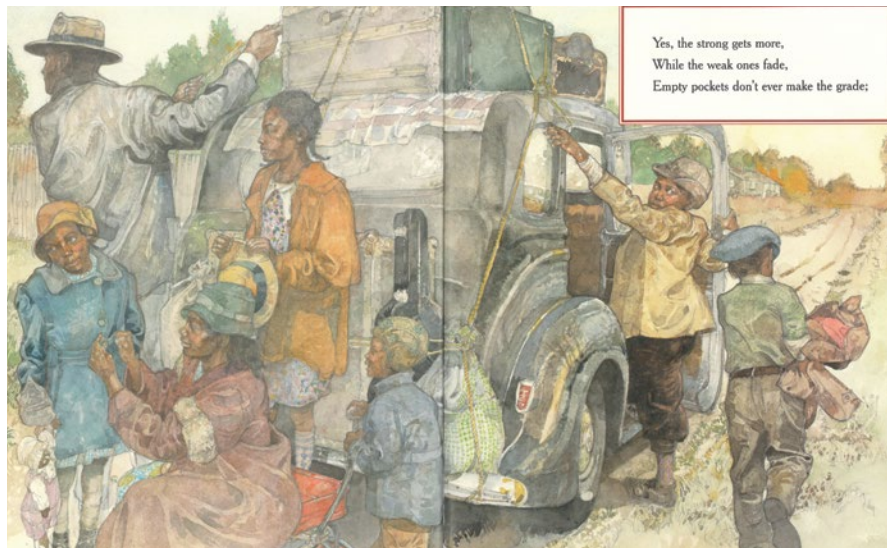
Based on all that you see, the main character by the car, his brothers and sisters, his parents' actions, all the belongings, and the clothing, what do you think is happening in this image?

Everything suggests that the family is leaving their home in the South to move somewhere else and start a new life.

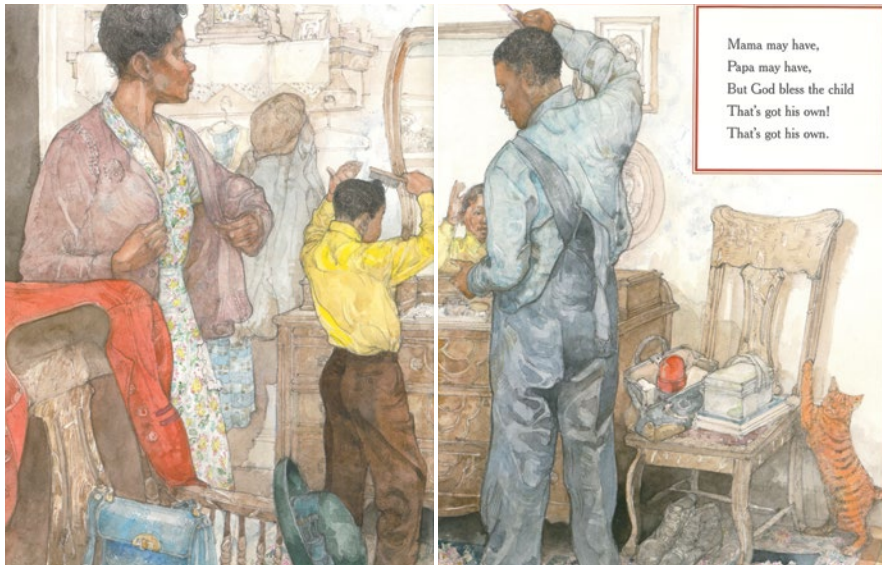
If you were this family, what would you be thinking as you got ready to leave home?

What do the song's words suggest about this image?

"Yes, the strong gets more,/While the weak ones fade,/Empty pockets don't ever make the grade;"



Yes, the Strong Gets More, from *God Bless the Child*, 2004 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)



Mama May Have, from *God Bless the Child*, 2004 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

Mama may have, Papa may have,

Where do you see the main character? What is he doing?

Look carefully to find someone else combing their hair.

Notice how the father is wearing overalls just like he wore when farming, though now he works in a factory.

What is the mother doing? Where is she looking?

What objects and details do the bright colors make us notice? (Red jacket and blue purse on one chair and the thermos in the father's blue bag on the other.) What is the one detail that is orange?

Where do you think everyone is going?

Artist's Note

Where does this scene take place? What do you see that makes you say that?

What is the main character doing? Look at his face. What might he be thinking and feeling?

Notice the teacher and her hands. What is she doing?

Both are very engaged in their conversation. How do you think the young boy feels being in school?

We have seen the family persevering through many changes and challenges. The child's parents have sent him to school to get an education, which they hope will give him a chance to live a life full of choices and opportunities. Who can describe what it means to persevere?

Perseverance means not giving up, even when something is hard, and keep trying to reach a goal.

It was very important for the artist, Jerry Pinkney, to end the story with the child going to school. He states: "The story ends in a classroom. At the time the song "God Bless the Child" was written, education was largely a privilege of the wealthy. Children of the poor were expected to work alongside their parents to put food on the table, and for a child of the Great Migration, going to school would have seemed like a dream come true. Free public education was prized as the great equalizer—the stairway out of poverty for those with the courage and opportunity to climb it."

Ask the students to share ideas about how this family persevered and how this image shows the child's own perseverance.

Think about the phrase "God bless the child/That's got his own."



Artist's Note Illustration, from *God Bless the Child*, 2004 (Courtesy of R. Michelson Galleries)

REFLECTION

What does it mean for the child to have something that is "his own?" Does it refer to the money he has earned, his efforts to help his family, or his resilience and perseverance?

While many children are helped by adults and others, having some measure of their own skills and a sense of trust in themselves builds strength, confidence, and the ability to keep trying, even when life feels hard.

LESSON 2

WARM-UP

Students use their Close-Looking Graphic Organizer to reflect on the story, *God Bless the Child*, discussing what they observed about the main character, his actions, and his surroundings.

PART 1

"We're going to listen to a very famous song called 'God Bless the Child,' sung by Billie Holiday during the time of the Great Depression from 1929 to the 1940s, when the country went through very hard times with many people losing their jobs, their homes, and had little food or money.

People listened to this song. It gave them strength and hope." Play a recording of the song.

After listening to the song, remind students of the key phrase: "God bless the child that's got his own."

What do you think the singer means? What does "have your own" mean to you? Is it your family? Your courage and resilience? Your hope and dreams? Your ability to persevere? What are your strengths, and what makes you proud of yourself? How can these qualities help you when things feel hard?

Listen to the song again.

REFLECTION

Students reflect on a personal experience when they faced a challenge and recognize the strengths or resources that helped them persevere. Have students think about a time they felt resilient, when they kept going even when something was difficult, or a time they felt proud of something they accomplished.

PART 2

WARM-UP DISCUSSION

Can you remember a time when something was hard, but you kept going? What helped you (asking for help, practicing something over and over, relying on family and friends, or using a special skill)?

ACTIVITY

On paper (using crayons, markers, or colored pencils), students will:

Draw or write a symbol of resilience or hope (examples: a stairway, a sunrise, a traveling wagon, a book, music notes, a sport, etc.)

Add a word or short phrase describing a dream they hold for their future; something they hope to learn, achieve, or contribute.

Students create a **Collective Art Wall: “We have our own DREAMS!”**

This collective mural shows how each child’s resilience and hope connect to a larger story of progress and possibility.

REFLECTION

How did it feel to think about your own resilience?

What symbols of hope did you include, and why?

How can education, music, family, or friends help us keep moving forward toward our hopes and dreams?

What did you learn about yourself from this experience?

How did it make you stronger?



Playing Music (detail), from *God Bless the Child* (detail), 2004 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

ASSESSMENT

Assess for the following criteria:

Symbol of hope: Drawing/writing

Creativity/use of materials

Dream statement: Word/phrase

Sharing and listening during reflection

LESSON EXTENSIONS

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Students will explore the Great Migration, understand why people moved, and reflect on its cultural impact. Students use Google maps and choose a Southern town or city to find a path to a Northern or Midwestern city, such as Chicago, where the story leads. Research and report on:

- The number of hours it would take to get to this city
- The amount of mileage
- The cost of a gallon of gas in the early 1940s
- Towns, cities, and communities they would pass through
- Where they might stop to rest, eat, or sleep along the way
- What challenges might they face (weather, car breakdowns, etc.)

Older students can research the challenges of segregated facilities and safety concerns for Black Americans traveling in the South during this time.

Additional resources: [Great Migration Maps](#); [Great Migration Primary Sources](#)

JOURNAL PROJECT

Journal Entry: Preparing for the Trip

Students imagine they are a child about to move with their family during the Great Migration. In their journal, they draw or list the five most important things they would pack in their suitcase. Teachers ask them to write or explain why they chose these items and discuss why these things are important to them.

Journal Entry: First Day in a New and Different Place

Students imagine and record the challenges they face on the first day living in a new and different place. Describe where they are, what they are doing, and how they feel. They should think about what might be hard or unfamiliar. Students may include their thoughts about what they might do to make things easier, the kinds of support they would want, and the people or places that could help them feel at home.

Pre-School Students

- Students are instructed to do age-appropriate tasks, like drawing a picture of themselves, zipping up a jacket, or building blocks into a tower. Afterward, they talk about what happened: Did anything feel tricky? How did they figure it out? Did someone help them and how did that help? What made them feel proud?
- Celebrate every attempt: Have the children applaud each other and celebrate all efforts, however small, and those that require some assistance. Remind them that it's okay to ask for help and to be proud how hard they tried and how much they were able to do by themselves.
- Introduce more challenging tasks:
 - Swaying to the beat of the song "God Bless the Child."
 - Playing Simon Says or participating in a Seek and Find.
 - Finishing an age-appropriate jigsaw puzzle.
 - Learning to write their name.

VISUAL LEARNERS: Provide visuals that guide the child through the task in small steps (e.g., a visual sequence of each task)

KINESTHETIC LEARNERS: Have the child perform the task under physical guidance and direct participation (e.g., walking on the balance beam and holding someone's hand).

AUDITORY LEARNERS: Guide the child through the steps of the task verbally using key action terms like "up, down. . ."

ABOUT THE EDUCATOR

Lakisha Coppedge is the associate executive director of Center-Based Programs at Girls Inc. of the Valley. A proud Springfield, MA, native with more than thirty years of experience in early childhood education, she has deep roots in her community and an unwavering commitment to equity, education, and transformative leadership. She is guided by the principle that every child, educator, and community deserves access to inclusive, high-quality opportunities to thrive. She leads with a trauma-informed, equity-centered lens, intentionally dismantling systemic barriers and fostering environments where diversity, inclusion, and belonging are not just valued, but embedded in policy, practice, and culture.

APPENDIX OF RESOURCES



Please scan this QR Code to have access to all of the *God Bless the Child* links, image cards, and other helpful items to engage with this lesson.



Mama may have,
Papa may have,
But God bless the child
That's got his own!
That's got his own.

Mama May Have, from *God Bless the Child*, 2004 (Courtesy of the Gloria Jean Pinkney)



Why Work So Hard?, from *The Grasshopper and the Ants*, 2015 (Courtesy of R. Michelson Galleries)



Snow Angels and Snow Hoppers, from *The Grasshopper and the Ants*, 2015 (Courtesy of R. Michelson Galleries)

Exploring Image and Text in *The Grasshopper and the Ants*

WRITTEN BY JERRY PINKNEY (LITTLE, BROWN BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS, 2015)

LESSON PLAN BY WALESKA SANTIAGO-CENTENO

GRADES K–5

EXHIBITION THEME

Ballads: Folktales and Fables Reimagined

"... *The Grasshopper and the Ants* is an homage to nature and the awe I feel every time I enjoy the sights and sounds of the woods surrounding my home."

JERRY PINKNEY

MATERIALS

- Copies of *The Grasshopper and the Ants*
- Index cards
- Colored pencils, markers, or crayons

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will strengthen their visual literacy skills through close looking and analysis of picture book art with their fellow classmates.
- Students will make observations to infer clues and make predictions throughout the reading.
- Students will describe the cause and effect of a particular action or event during story time.
- Students will support ideas with details and examples.
- Students will learn that the moral of this fable is the value of cooperation, teamwork, empathy, and kindness.

ESSENTIAL/FOCUS QUESTIONS

- How do pictures and words work together to tell a story?



Why Labor So Long?, from *The Grasshopper and the Ants*, 2015 (Courtesy of R. Michelson Galleries)

NATIONAL STANDARDS

VISUAL ARTS

VA:Cr2.1.Ka–Cr2.1.5a: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

VA:Cr3.1.Ka–Cr3.1.5a: Refine and complete artistic work.

VA:Pr5.1.Ka–Pr5a: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

VA:Re.7.1.Pka–:Re.7.1.5a: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

VA:Re8.1.Ka–Re8.1.5a: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

SOCIAL STUDIES

4. Individual Development and Identity:
Personal identity is shaped by family, peers, culture, and institutional influences. Through this theme, students examine the factors that influence an individual's personal identity, development, and actions.

LANGUAGE ARTS

CCSS.ELA–Literacy.CCRA.SL.1.2:

Comprehension and Collaboration: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA–Literacy.RL.5: Reading Key

Ideas and Details: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA–Literacy.CCRA.SL.K–5: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

VOCABULARY

Visual storytelling: Using visuals like images, videos, illustrations, and infographics to tell a story or convey a message; using visual communication to create a narrative that engages the audience and leaves a lasting impression; using the details of an image to help tell a story.

Fable: A short story, typically with animals as characters, conveying a moral lesson.

Moral: A lesson about how to treat other people; a lesson concerned with the principles or rules of right conduct or the distinction between right and wrong.

Illustration: A picture that communicates a thought or a story; an interpretation of a text, concept, or process.

Empathy: The ability to understand and share the feelings of another person; the ability to put oneself in another's shoes and see the world from their perspective.

Elements of art: The visual components artists use to create an artwork, most commonly line, shape, texture, form, space, color, and value.

Verbal communication: Using words to convey ideas, information, and feelings.

Body language: A key aspect of nonverbal communication, using physical behaviors like facial expressions, body movement, posture, gestures, eye contact, touch, and spatial relationships to convey a message.

LESSON STRUCTURE

This lesson is structured in three parts.

PART 1: WHAT IS A FABLE?

WARM-UP

The teacher will start the lesson by asking the students, “What are different types of stories that you know?” Examples include fiction, nonfiction, fantasy, mystery, and so on. Record the students’ answers on a whiteboard or chart paper. Review the types of stories listed and inform the students that today they are going to learn about fables. Allow the students to share ideas that they have about what fables might be.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION

The teacher will share an anchor chart with the definition of fable ([Fable Anchor Chart](#)). The chart can be modified for different age levels.

ACTIVITY

The students will explore different fables. The teacher can do a picture-read of other fables with younger students, while offering older students text sets for further exploration. As students read other examples the teacher will encourage students to reference the [Fable Anchor Chart](#).



Why Toil So Steady?, from *The Grasshopper and the Ants*, 2015 (Courtesy of R. Michelson Galleries)

PART 2: READING THE FABLE

DIRECT INSTRUCTION

Read *The Grasshopper and the Ants*. During the reading, ask the students to look closely at the illustration(s).

Explain to students that they will do a reading of the written word and a visual reading. Through visual reading, everyone discusses how the artist's choices of color, shape, space, etc. inform how we read and comprehend the story. A visual reading also provides an understanding of the characters' body language (gestures, facial expressions).

Sample questions and prompts to engage the students:

- Who do you see in this picture?
- What are the characters doing? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Where do you think the story takes place?
- What time of day or season(s) do you see? What visual clues (colors, shapes) help tell you what time of day or season it is?
- Who or what stands out in the illustrations? Why?
- Let's look at how Jerry Pinkney used colors to move our eyes throughout the illustration.
- How might the characters be feeling? Why do you think that? What do you see that gives you that impression?



Page 34–35, from *The Grasshopper and the Ants*, 2015 (Courtesy of R. Michelson Galleries)



Snow Angels and Snow Hoppers (detail), from *The Grasshopper and the Ants*, 2015 (Courtesy of R. Michelson Galleries)

REFLECTION

Display the two images below on a whiteboard to use as an example of empathy in the story.

The teacher will ask students what the body language of the grasshopper and the ants tell us throughout the book. The students will also be asked what the grasshopper and the ants feel about each other, and compare those feelings at the beginning of the story and the end of the story. The teacher will explain the term *empathy* and as a class they will discuss examples of empathy in the story, and how they have experienced it in their lives.

If Only Someone Would Join Me, from *The Grasshopper and the Ants*, 2015 (Courtesy of R. Michelson Galleries)



A Cup of Tea?, from *The Grasshopper and the Ants*, 2015 (Courtesy of R. Michelson Galleries)



PART 3: HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE AND REFLECTION: EMPATHY AND PROMISE

After reading *The Grasshopper and the Ants*, the teacher invites students to think about the story's lessons of empathy, kindness, resilience, and hope.

Each student will receive an index card and colored pencils. On the card, they will:

Write a **word or short phrase** that describes how they can practice kindness today, and/or a promise they hold for the future in a world where everyone is showing empathy and kindness.

Examples:

Word: share

Phrase or short sentence: I will share with my friends.

Hope/promise for the future: I hope to live in a world where everyone shares what they have with others who do not have as much as they do.

Make a picture showing yourself acting out the word, phrase, or sentence that you wrote. For example, if you chose sharing, draw a picture of yourself sharing a snack with your friends.

At the end of the lesson, the teacher will collect the index cards and, with the help of students, create a **Promises of a Kinder World** wall that creates a collective visual story of how small acts of empathy and big hopes for the future connect us all.

REFLECTION

Students reflect on the ways hope is shown at the end of the story and how the Queen Ant shows empathy for the grasshopper, who is cold and alone in the snow. When he knocks at the ants' door, they hesitate to let him in, remembering he spent his time playing while they worked and prepared for winter. As he begins to walk away, the queen ant goes outside to offer him a cup of tea, inviting him inside. The ants welcome him, and together they play and enjoy his music. The ending shows how kindness and empathy can turn loneliness into belonging and reminds us that small gestures of compassion have the power to change someone's life.



Snow Angels and Snow Hoppers (detail),
from *The Grasshopper and the Ants*, 2015
(Courtesy of R. Michelson Galleries)

ASSESSMENT

Students' responses in their index cards will be used to determine their understanding of images and text to convey ideas or messages.

LESSON EXTENSIONS

For older students, have them research other animals (or people) and how they care for one another (expanding their understanding of empathy and learning about emotional intelligence).

Continue learning about fables by reading other fables adapted by Pinkney, such as *The Little Red Hen*, *The Lion and the Mouse*, and *The Tortoise and the Hare*.

Read (or have students read) Pinkney's homage to nature in the book's Artist's Note—this could be a prompt for students to go out in nature and use it as inspiration for their own work of art (poem, writing, art, etc.).

Compare other versions of the fable *The Grasshopper and the Ants*, particularly Aesop's Fables, to compare with Pinkney's adaptation and ending of the fable.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For a list of other Aesop fables, visit <https://read.gov/aesop/001.html>.

ABOUT THE EDUCATOR

Waleska Santiago-Centeno is a librarian at Crocker Farm Elementary School in Amherst, Massachusetts. She has twenty years of experience as a librarian there and in other districts.

Her library practice focuses on engaging students in age-appropriate and meaningful conversations about the world in which they live. Those conversations draw from fields such as children's literature, art history, museum studies, visual culture, ethnic studies, cultural studies, and social justice and equity. In addition, she believes in whole-person librarianship: acknowledgment that students come to school with different backgrounds, experience, beliefs, and family histories.

APPENDIX OF RESOURCES



Please scan this QR Code to have access to all of *The Grasshopper and the Ants* links, image cards, and other helpful items to engage with this lesson.



She Opened her Mouth, and Such a Beautiful Song Came Out That the Coral Sprang Back to Life . . . , from, *The Little Mermaid*, 2020 (Collection of The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Gift of Gloria Jean Pinkney, 2023)

Finding Your Voice

THE LITTLE MERMAID, BY JERRY PINKNEY
(LITTLE, BROWN BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS, 2020)

LESSON PLAN BY KEISHA HUTCHINS HIRLINGER

GRADES 2–4

EXHIBITION THEME

Ballads: Folktales and Fables Reimagined

“I wanted our heroine to realize the power of her voice
and embrace her strength, and to bring the story full
circle back to family.”

JERRY PINKNEY, ARTIST'S NOTES

MATERIALS

- Copies of *The Little Mermaid*
- Pencils
- Paper
- Markers
- Optional: Drums, egg shakers, tambourines, scrape instruments, or finger cymbals; found sound instruments, such as spoons (mallets), tissue boxes (drums), rice or dried beans in jars (shakers), plastic, metal, or wood bowls (drums); body percussion (claps, pat laps, stomp your feet); mouth sounds (beatboxing)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will reflect on personal experiences of inclusion and exclusion.
- Students will interpret the meaning of the themes in *The Little Mermaid*.
- Students will synthesize their experiences to use in their original songs.
- Students will use the themes in the book to inform their original songs.
- Students will create original songs about standing up for themselves and others.
- Students will utilize the melodies of social justice songs and songs about inclusivity, friendship, and kindness.

ESSENTIAL/FOCUS QUESTION

- How can we use our voices to stand up for ourselves and others?

NATIONAL STANDARDS

LANGUAGE ARTS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1: Comprehension and Collaboration: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Reading Key Ideas and Details

2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

SOCIAL STUDIES

4. Individual Development and Identity: Personal identity is shaped by family, peers, culture, and institutional influences. Through this theme, students examine the factors that influence an individual's personal identity, development, and actions.

MUSIC

GRADE 2

MU:Cr2.1.2a: Demonstrate and explain personal reasons for selecting patterns and ideas for music that represent expressive intent.

MU:Cr3.2.2a: Convey expressive intent for a specific purpose by presenting a final version of personal musical ideas to peers or informal audience.

GRADES 3–4

MU:Cr2.1.3a: Demonstrate selected musical ideas for a simple improvisation or composition to express intent, and describe connection to a specific purpose and context.

MU:Cr3.2.3a: Present the final version of personal created music to others, and describe connection to expressive intent.

VOCABULARY

Upstander: A person who speaks or acts in support of an individual or cause, particularly someone who intervenes on behalf of a person being attacked or bullied.

Social justice: Equal treatment under the laws of society regardless of race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, age, wealth, or status. All humans deserve equal economic, political, and social rights and opportunities. This means no human being deserves better than another.

Resilience: The capacity to withstand or to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.

Sacrifice: An act of giving up something valued for the sake of something else regarded as more important or worthy.

Power: The capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events.

Courage: The quality of mind or spirit that enables a person to face difficulty, danger, pain, etc., without fear.

Verse: The part of the song that tells the story. For example, the songs “This Little Light of Mine” and “Sing When the Spirit Says Sing” only have verses.

Chorus: The part of the song that repeats; also known as the “hook.” For example, the song “With My Own Two Hands” uses the title of the song as the hook, “With my own, with my own, two hands.”

Bridge: A part of the song that serves as a connector or “bridge” between two other parts of the song. For example, the song, “Lean on Me” has a bridge that connects a verse and a chorus. This is the section that begins, “You just call on me, brother, when you need a hand. . .”



She Shouted with a Strength She Never Knew She Had: 'NO!', from *The Little Mermaid*, 2020 (Collection of The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Gift of Gloria Jean Pinkney, 2023)

LESSON STRUCTURE

DURATION

Three to four days, with options to extend.

DAY 1

WARM-UP: FINDING YOUR WORDS

Write the following questions on the board for students to see. Read the questions aloud first. Make sure everyone understands what is being asked. Choose students to answer the questions. This can be done as a full group activity or an individual activity. For individual activity, cut-and-paste questions into a document that can be distributed to students.

- Think about a time when you felt like you were part of a group. What are three to five words you can use to describe how you felt?
- Think about a time when you felt excluded. What are three to five words you can use to describe how you felt?
- Think about a time when a person made you feel included or stood up for you. What are three to five words you can use to describe how you felt?
- Think about a time when you stood up for someone else. What are three to five words you can use to describe how this made you feel?
- Think about a time when you felt hesitant or conflicted about standing up for yourself or others. What feelings arose for you at that moment? What are three to five words you can use to describe what you felt?

Record answers on your Student Guide.

As Her Scales Fell Away, from *The Little Mermaid*, 2020 (Collection of The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Gift of Gloria Pinkney, 2023)



DAY 2

DIRECT INSTRUCTION

Read *The Little Mermaid* by Jerry Pinkney.

DISCUSSION

We just read the story of *The Little Mermaid*. In the story, we learn that Melody's voice has power. It is so powerful, in fact, that the witch wants it to gather more strength to take over the merfolk kingdom.

What makes Melody's voice so powerful (beauty, healing, resistance, etc.)? As you reflect on the story, think about our warm-up questions. How would you answer them when you think about Melody?

- When does Melody feel included?
- When does Melody feel excluded?
- When does someone stand up for or understand Melody?
- What will happen if Melody decides to stand up for herself and go back to the ocean? Why does this make it hard for Melody to decide to stand up for herself?
- When does Melody stand up for others?

Write the answers to these questions on the board as a full group. Record answers on your Student Guide.



Now Melody's Family Listened Eagerly as She Told Them about the World of People. . . , from *The Little Mermaid*, 2020 (Collection of The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Gift of Gloria Jean Pinkney, 2023)



Zion Ran to Her House and Returned Holding a Glass Jar with a Strange Object Inside (detail), from *The Little Mermaid*, 2020 (Collection of The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Gift of Gloria Jean Pinkney, 2023)

ACTIVITY 1: WHAT DO YOU HEAR?

Students will listen to **three** songs from the list below about resistance, hope, and resilience.

- “My Own Two Hands,” performed by Ben Harper and Jack Johnson
- “Lean on Me,” performed by Bill Withers
- “You Gotta Sing,” performed by Raffi
- “Put a Little Love in Your Heart,” performed by Al Green and Annie Lennox
- “This Little Light of Mine,” performed by Raffi
- “We Shall Overcome,” performed by Uplift Kids
- “Nothing More,” performed by the Alternate Routes
- “Something Beautiful,” performed by Lexi Murdoch

After listening to each song, reflect as a group about what was heard. Use the questions below to guide your conversation:

- What is the song about?
- How is this song helpful?
- How does this song make you feel?

A Note from the Artist, from *The Little Mermaid*, 2020 (Collection of The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Gift of Gloria Pinkney, 2023)



DAY 3

ACTIVITY 2: WRITE YOUR SONG!

This activity should be done with the whole class first, with the option to extend the activity by doing it in small groups. The teacher will choose one song from the karaoke list below and have the students sing along to become familiar with the structure of the song. Students will then create their own lyrics to perform.

Using the [Student Guide](#), create your own song about standing up for yourself and others. Use [Rhyming Desk](#) to help find rhyming words for your songs.

Feel free to manipulate the guide to fit your song. You might want to cut out parts of the song structure and allow students to arrange them based on their song. For example, the song template includes sections for verses, the chorus, and a bridge (if the song has one), for students to write their own song based on the structure of one of the songs. Students can write an abbreviated version of their song.

Karaoke/Sing-along Tracks

- [“My Own Two Hands”](#)
- [“Put a Little Love in Your Heart”](#)
- [“Lean on Me”](#)
- [“This Little Light of Mine”](#)

REFLECTION

We learned through Melody’s story that our voices and our words have power. To have power is to be able to make an impact on something or someone and create change. We saw how Melody used the power of her voice to stand up to Ursula.

- How do you think your song reflects the power of your voice?
- How do you think you will use the power of your voice to make change and stand up for yourself from now on?
- How can your voice make a difference with family, friends, or community?



She Opened her Mouth, and Such a Beautiful Song Came Out that the Coral Sprang Back to Life. . . (detail), from *The Little Mermaid*, 2020 (Collection of The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Gift of Gloria Jean Pinkney, 2023)

ASSESSMENT

- Students create a song with at least one verse and one chorus of original text drawn from the warm-up and lessons above.
- Students perform these songs for an audience of their peers.
- Students demonstrate their understanding of the assignment by clearly explaining their word choices and the meaning of their song.

LESSON EXTENSIONS

- You can do this activity again with small groups of students. Each group will choose a song from the list and sing along to become familiar with the structure of the song. Student groups will then create their own lyrics to perform for the class.
- Students can add their own extensions to the songs: instrumental solos, beatbox breaks, and so on.
- Students can choreograph a dance or a short skit/live music video to go with their song.
- Older students can mentor younger students by doing an abbreviated version of this activity with younger students/grade partners.

DIFFERENTIATION

For students who are English language learners

- Take time to explain the structure found in many English-language pop songs:
 - Verse:** The part of the song that tells the story. For example, the songs “This Little Light of Mine” and “Sing When the Spirit Says Sing” only have verses.
 - Chorus:** The part that is repeated throughout the song; also called the hook.
 - Bridge:** The part that “connects” to part of the song (either verse to verse or chorus to verse or verse to chorus, typically). For example, the song “Lean on Me” has a bridge that connects a verse and a chorus. This is the section that begins, “You just call on me brother when you need a hand . . .”
- Do this as a full group activity creating an accompanying vocabulary list that will help them to write their song lyrics.
- Pictorial representation of song lyrics: instead of words, use pictures to represent lyrics of the song. Do this as a whole group activity.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS

<i>The Day You Begin</i> , by Jacqueline Woodson	<i>No Voice Too Small</i> , by Lindsay H. Metcalf
<i>We Shall Overcome</i> , by Bryan Collier	<i>Say Something</i> , by Peter H. Reynolds
<i>Child of the Civil Rights Movement</i> , by Paula Young Shelton	<i>Bully</i> , by Patricia Polacco
<i>We March</i> , by Shane W. Evans	<i>Big Umbrella</i> , by James Bates

ABOUT THE EDUCATOR

Keisha Hutchins Hirlinger is a classically trained musician at the Oberlin Conservatory, a singer-songwriter, and a teacher of music at Abington Friends School. A past recipient of a Leeway Foundation Art and Change grant, she uses her platform as a performer and educator to bring attention to social justice issues in collaboration with artist-activists from Philadelphia and surrounding areas. Her commitment to creating music experiences for all her students led to her selection as a music workshop facilitator for ARTZ Philadelphia, an organization that provides arts experiences for people living with dementia and their care partners. She also leads the ARTZ Notes program.

APPENDIX OF RESOURCES



Please scan this QR Code to have access to all of *The Little Mermaid* links, image cards, and other helpful items to engage with this lesson.



Alone with Her Relics of the World Above. . . , from *The Little Mermaid*, 2020 (Collection of The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Gift of Gloria Jean Pinkney, 2023)



Why Guinea Fowls Are Speckled, from *The Last Tales of Uncle Remus*, 1994 (Courtesy of R. Michelson Galleries)

Puppets on the Scene: Oral Traditions and Visual Arts Play

WITH *UNCLE REMUS: THE COMPLETE TALES*, RETOLD BY JULIUS LESTER,
ILLUSTRATIONS BY JERRY PINKNEY (DIAL BOOKS, 1999)

LESSON PLAN BY AMY DIAZ-NEWMAN

GRADES 3–5

EXHIBITION THEME

Ballads: Folktales and Fables Reimagined

*"In *The Tales of Uncle Remus* . . . I wanted the animals to be more anthropomorphic and struggled with achieving the results I was after. After a number of preliminary drawings, I realized that the answer was for me to model and pose as the animals. And that's what I did. I got dressed up in vests and baggy pants and I took on the posture and attitude of whatever that animal might be. I think it worked out very successfully from that point of view."*

JERRY PINKNEY

MATERIALS

- Copies of *Uncle Remus: The Complete Tales*
- Pencils and pens
- White sketch paper
- Tracing paper
- Scissors
- Tape
- Single-hole punch (several, if possible)
- Black or white card stock or poster paper
- Crayons, colored pencils, or watercolor paints
- Metal paper fasteners
- References for animal drawings from online sources, books, and magazines
- Optional: glue gun and thin sticks or wooden coffee stirrers to attach to arms for movement

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand the importance of oral tradition in African American culture. They will connect the traditions of West African storytelling (as exemplified by Ananse) with the oral tradition of the Uncle Remus tales, considering their uses as survival texts.
- Students will analyze the techniques for personification used in Pinkney's illustrations.
- Students will first imagine and later render original animal characters with human-style traits.
- Students will devise and craft 2D paper puppets for use in original storytelling, with an emphasis on humor and survival skills.

ESSENTIAL/FOCUS QUESTIONS

- How can tale telling and art making give people tools to navigate obstacles they might face?
- How can we help keep oral traditions alive through creative tale telling?

NATIONAL STANDARDS

SOCIAL STUDIES

1. Culture: Through the study of culture and cultural diversity, learners understand how human beings create, learn, share, and adapt to culture, and appreciate the role of culture in shaping their lives and society, as well the lives and societies of others.

2. Time, continuity, and change: Through the study of the past and its legacy, learners examine the institutions, values, and beliefs of people in the past, acquire skills in historical inquiry and interpretation, and gain an understanding of how important historical events and developments have shaped the modern world.

4. Individual development and identity: Personal identity is shaped by family, peers, culture, and institutional influences. Through this theme, students examine the factors that influence an individual's personal identity, development, and actions.

VISUAL ARTS

VA:Cr1.1.3-8a: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

VA:Cn11.1.3-8a: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

VA:Cr2.1.3-8a: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Brer Bear and Brer Rabbit Take Care of Brer Fox and Brer Wolf, from *Further Tales of Uncle Remus*, 1990 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)



FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

The tales of Br'er Rabbit, Br'er Bear, and company were brought to the Western hemisphere by enslaved West Africans who preserved elements of their original cultures, despite being separated from their home countries. The animal characters in the stories often find themselves in dangerous circumstances, where they must use their wits, humor, persuasion, and situational awareness to stay safe. The spider Ananse (West African), the rabbit Waikaima (West African), and Br'er Rabbit (American) are famous for their ability to outwit bigger, more powerful creatures, reminding readers that even those without many resources can prevail.

The oral tradition is deeply valued in West African communities, as it is in traditional communities all over the world. A *griot* is someone with the esteemed role of passing on important songs, poems, histories, proverbs, and tales to the community. This person is both a performer, who can keep the audience engaged, and a source of wisdom. When Africans were brought to America, their reverence for and reliance on oral history was not destroyed. Enslaved people were usually denied access to reading and writing, so the oral tradition was a vital form of literacy and creativity. A tale teller usually adds a little element from their own imagination and personality, even if it is just the gestures and tones they use to tell the story. In this way, even very old stories live on and on without becoming stale or irrelevant.

BACKGROUND

The person who first collected and published the Br'er Rabbit stories was Joel Chandler Harris, a Southern journalist, who published them in book form as *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings: The Folk-Lore of the Old Plantation* (1881). According to Julius Lester, who first retold the tales with illustrations by Jerry Pinkney in 1985, Harris showed great care in compiling them from African American storytellers. He often listened to several versions of the same tale before selecting one, and if he doubted a story's origins, he left it out. Harris also sought to remain faithful to the language and voices of the storytellers themselves.

Lester noted that Harris's work was "the most conscientious attempt to reproduce how [the enslaved] talked" and praised his integrity in recording the tales. However, Harris's books have also been the subject of debate and concern. While the stories draw on African American oral traditions, Harris's presentation reflects the racial attitudes of his time.

The character of Uncle Remus is portrayed as having, in Harris's words, "nothing but pleasant memories of the discipline of slavery." This portrayal fostered a harmful stereotype, representing enslaved people as accepting the values of their enslavers, and sadly validating a narrative of white superiority and justifying prejudiced views of Black inferiority.

Lester also observed that Harris's tales preserved the culture, and without them Black folk traditions might not have endured. Believing the storyteller to be as vital as the story, Lester created his own Uncle Remus, and with Jerry Pinkney produced a retelling that updates the dialect and settings while affirming the tales' authenticity in the African American community.

VOCABULARY

Oral history: A community's poems, stories, histories, and songs that are passed on over time through spoken words from one person to another. They are shared face to face, rather than written down.

Proverb: A wise saying, usually a piece of advice or an important lesson in right and wrong.

Personification: The act of giving human characteristics (traits, psychologies, emotions, clothing, tools, etc.) to nonhuman creatures or objects.

Articulated: In reference to movable puppets, having parts that can move in different directions while staying attached.

Br'er, also brer: Originated as the written form of a spoken alteration of the word "brother" used in the South by African American storytellers in the nineteenth century. The Oxford English Dictionary states that the earliest known use of Br'er is in 1878, in the writing of Joel Chandler Harris, who collected the stories that became known as the *Tales of Uncle Remus*.

Brer Wolf Gets in More Trouble, from *The Tales of Uncle Remus*, 1987 (Courtesy of R. Michelson Galleries)



LESSON STRUCTURE

This lesson is presented in three parts: a warm-up lesson to introduce the cultural context for *Uncle Remus: The Complete Tales*, an activity for exploring Pinkney's illustrations, and a creative project inspired by Pinkney's text and illustrations.

WARM-UP

Note to teacher: Pinkney's illustrations and Julius Lester's retelling of these tales bring them to life today while honoring their traditional origins. When introducing them, emphasize (age appropriately) their roots in African American culture and the complexities of their publication. Encourage students to see how stories can be told, retold, and reimagined over time, and discuss the tales' lessons about the benefits of resourcefulness, understanding consequences, fairness, respect, and common sense.

SAMPLE TALES

Ananse and the Pot of Wisdom (5 minutes): How could a community use the proverb taught in the Ananse story to overcome obstacles?

How Br'er Fox and Br'er Dog Became Enemies (5 minutes): How did Br'er Rabbit use his wits to protect a neighbor? Have students describe how the animals in each tale were "personified." What human traits did they possess? What human behaviors did they show?

Explain to students that you will read the story Brer Rabbit, King Polecat, and the Gingercakes, as told by Julius Lester. Tell them that you will read the story aloud in the spirit of the oral tradition, and that they should listen closely and picture it in their imagination.

After the reading, display the illustrations Br'er Rabbit, King Polecat, and the Gingercakes, found in Uncle Remus image cards on a whiteboard. If a whiteboard is not available, photocopy the illustration and distribute it to students. Ask them to identify which part of the story the illustration represents. What details in the illustration help you identify this part of the story? How do the characters' expressions, actions, or the setting give you clues?

BEGINNING THE ART ACTIVITY

Have each student match a human trait with an animal, e.g., Greedy Cat, Generous Duck, Shy Opossum, etc. If students have a rich knowledge of animals, encourage them to generate the ideas independently. If support is needed, the teacher could “gamify” this step by having a stack of trait cards and a stack of animal cards (prewritten index cards) that students could randomly choose.

Students then create a pencil or pen sketch of their personified animal character. (See Lesson Extensions for simple ways to help students draw an animal.) Students may draw in any style that feels comfortable for them. Encourage them to consider how clothing, accessories, poses, and props can communicate their personification. Stress that these sketches are playful warm-ups to making more developed characters.

ACTIVITY

The teacher may have access to several of Pinkney’s books (see Lesson Extension section) or one copy of *The Tales of Uncle Remus*. Consider making copies of the most engaging illustrations.

As the students view Pinkney’s illustrations, consider the entertaining and creative visual ways that he gives animal characters human traits. Can you find:



Cover Illustration, from *More Tales of Uncle Remus: Further Adventures of Brer Rabbit, His Friends, Enemies, and Others*, 1988 (Collection of The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art: Gift of the artist, 2012)

- An animal in a very human-like pose? What is it?
- An animal using a human tool? Explain.
- An animal dressed in a very old-fashioned outfit? Describe.
- An animal doing a human job? Explain.
- An animal expressing a human emotion? Describe.

ART-MAKING PROJECT

Activate students' memory of the illustrations by asking them to describe some memorable examples of personification, and perhaps any other notable reflections they have. What was surprising? What was funny? What was sad? (Five-minute class discussion)

Teacher Demonstration of Student Activity

Teachers can distribute [a Step-by-Step Puppet Activity](#) handout, via the QR code at the end of the lesson in the Uncle Remus links, to the students.

Explain that students will be designing and creating an articulated puppet in the "shadow puppet" style. This means that the parts of the puppet are flat pieces of paper, joined with paper fasteners that enable the puppet to move. Show a teacher-made example of the puppet project.

Have students choose an animal to use as their puppet. If they would like to base their character on *The Tales of Uncle Remus*, they could consider Rabbit, Fox, Bear, Wolf, Opossum, Toad, Goose, Alligator, etc. The teacher might mention that these are all common animals in the Mississippi Delta and swamplands of the Southern US. If they wish to use a different kind of animal, they could consider what is native to their own region, or what kinds of domesticated animals they have encountered.

Students will decide on the character's human-like traits. Are they a hero? A villain? What are their strengths and abilities? What are their personalities like? How will their facial features convey an emotion or expression? Teachers can suggest students look in a mirror and take note of the features that change, such as the shape of the mouth, eyes, or eyebrows with different expressions. They can then apply these observations to drawings to give their animal characters human traits and show emotions. What visual clues will the students add to communicate the character's traits: clothing, accessories, props, tools?

Students will use visual references to make a **detailed drawing** of their character. Which features need to be drawn in order for the viewer to recognize the animal being shown? For example, Bear needs a large, rounded body, small ears, and a long snout. Draw your animal's clothing, shoes, tools, glasses, or props that show its personality, job, or hobbies. These drawings should be roughly 5" x 8" with flexibility allowed. Smaller drawings will be challenging to use in the next steps. (If a student makes a drawing that they love, but it's too small, the teacher could enlarge it on a photocopier.)

When students have a drawing that they like, they will use tracing paper to break the figure down into parts. See QR code at the end of the lesson with Digital Image cards for examples of a detailed drawing of the opossum and the Puppet Parts.



Example of a puppet getting ready for bed

- Head and body
- Left leg
- Ears
- Left arm
- Right leg
- Tail
- Right arm
- Wings

Have students cut out their tracing paper parts. Now, they will trace the pieces onto the final cardstock or watercolor paper. If the teacher is using black cardstock, details can be drawn on the paper with light-colored crayons or colored pencils. If the teacher is using white cardstock, all colors can be added.

Be sure to lengthen any piece that will be attached from the back of the puppet. For example, look at the opossum puppet. The arm with the toothbrush attaches from behind the body. If you only traced the arm from the detailed drawing, it would be too short to connect. That's why you need to lengthen the arm shape on your traced paper so it can overlap enough to accommodate a hole punch and attach securely to the body with a fastener. The teacher should demonstrate this process for students.

Students cut out the parts of their puppets.

Students (with the teacher's supervision) will then overlap the arm and leg pieces with the trunk and punch holes at each connection, so a metal paper fasteners can be inserted. This ensures that the arms and legs are articulated.

Optional: a stick, such as a bamboo skewer or wooden coffee stirrer, can be glued behind the body and on the two arms for easy manipulation as a puppet.

FOLLOW-UP

A natural next step after the students have completed their individual puppets is to engage the class in small group story development, where the puppets are used to act out tales. These could be based on traditional fables from *The Tales of Uncle Remus*, or original tales. If time is not available for play-development, each student could be filmed demonstrating their puppet, using dramatic voices, gestures, etc.



Brer Wolf Gets in More Trouble (detail), from *The Tales of Uncle Remus*, 1987 (Courtesy of R. Michelson Galleries)

REFLECTION

How did our connection to our character grow as we worked? What was satisfying and what was difficult about the process? Besides the use of puppets, what other aspects of tale telling grab our attention and enrich the experience? Who else could we share our puppets with to participate in oral tradition?



Brer Fox Wants to Make Music (detail), from *Further Tales of Uncle Remus*, 1990 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

ASSESSMENT

Successful students will achieve the following:

- They work through a creative process where they imagined and experimented with their ideas through sketching and brainstorming.
- Their puppet demonstrates recognizable animal characteristics.
- Their puppet includes multiple details (such as drawn clothing, accessories, props, poses, etc.) that connect to human traits.
- They demonstrate strong craftsmanship when drawing, cutting, and coloring their puppets.
- They can use their puppet dramatically to perform a tale, or simply to demonstrate a characterization.

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Have students identify the books in which Pinkney personifies animals (*The Tales of Uncle Remus*, *The Grasshopper and the Ants*, *The Nightingale*, *The Lion and the Mouse*).

If the students' enthusiasm for the puppets lasts, the work of creating a multisensory dramatic presentation can engage students in robust collaboration, planning, creative writing, acting, and music making.

There are many interdisciplinary connections with social studies and literacy. Student productions could incorporate historical scenes, demonstrate specific knowledge of the daily experiences of enslaved people, and incorporate African American heroes of the Antebellum era like Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, David Walker, Paul Cuffee, Absalom Jones, Henry Highland Garnet, Martin R. Delany, William Wells Brown, and Crispus Attucks.

Students may feel personally engaged to collect folktales, fairy tales, or even family stories that have been favorites in their homes. This could introduce an intergenerational element that goes to the heart of the oral tradition.

DIFFERENTIATION

Younger students or those that are struggling with drawing their animal can use tracing paper to trace from an animal image.

Younger children and children with developing small motor skills may need support with cutting out puppet parts. If the process of articulating the limbs is frustrating, the puppets could be made with fewer parts, or even as one piece attached to a paint stirring stick.

Older students and students with advanced motor skills can use X-Acto knives and cutting boards to cut out the pieces, resulting in more finely detailed shapes. Students can cut out interior details, like eyes, for a more sophisticated puppet.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Balinese shadow puppets are inspiring examples of sophisticated puppet making.

Storyteller Diane Ferlatte is a professional storyteller specializing in African American oral tradition. She performs several Br'er Rabbit stories with music, dance, and a lot of humor.

Students and teachers can access information about African American heroes of the Antebellum period on the Library of Congress website.

ABOUT THE EDUCATOR

Amy Diaz-Newman has been teaching visual art in school, camp, and private settings in the Philadelphia region for twenty-three years. Her current position as visual art instructor at Abington Friends Upper School allows her to use drawing, painting, printmaking, and ceramics to create community and encourage self-expression. She looks for moments when students can team up to create exciting events and moments together. She also loves to guide students in deep dives of personal and idiosyncratic interests through the development of art theses. In her Quaker school, community is seen as a vital human need, which is supported by art making in interdisciplinary settings.

APPENDIX OF RESOURCES



Please scan this QR Code to have access to all of the *Uncle Remus: The Complete Tales* links, image cards, and other helpful items to engage with this lesson.



Illustration for King Lion and Mr. Man, from *Further Tales of Uncle Remus*, 1990 (Courtesy of Paul Gulla)



Brer Rabbit, King Polecat, and the Gingercakes, from *The Last Tales of Uncle Remus*, 1994 (Courtesy of R. Michelson Galleries)



Front Cover,
from
*Sweethearts
of Rhythm, The
Story of the
Greatest All-Girl
Swing Band
in the World*,
2009 (Courtesy
of Gloria Jean
Pinkney)



Back Cover,
from
*Sweethearts
of Rhythm, The
Story of the
Greatest All-Girl
Swing Band
in the World*,
2009 (Courtesy
of Gloria Jean
Pinkney)

Pictures, Poems, and Progress in *Sweethearts of Rhythm*

WITH *SWEETHEARTS OF RHYTHM, THE STORY OF THE GREATEST ALL-GIRL SWING BAND IN THE WORLD*, WRITTEN BY MARILYN NELSON, ILLUSTRATED BY JERRY PINKNEY
(DIAL BOOKS, 2009)

LESSON PLAN BY MICHELLE PODULKA.

GRADES 6–12

EXHIBITION THEME

A Chorus of Voices: Honoring Black History

“They spoke through their horns a message of hope,
and beat out marching orders on their drums to resist
the evils of intolerance and war.”

JERRY PINKNEY, ARTIST'S NOTES

MATERIALS

- Copies of *Sweethearts of Rhythm*
- Computers
- Notebooks
- Easel paper or large white board
- Pens
- [Sweethearts of Rhythm Graphic Organizer](#)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will interpret the poetry that accompanies the images.
- Students will summarize how the images connect with the poems.
- Students will analyze primary sources to research historical events.
- Students will explain the shift of racial and gender roles within the context of World War II.
- Students will synthesize their interpretations of poems, illustrations, and primary documents to conclude that the Sweethearts of Rhythm demonstrated resilience in overcoming the many challenges they faced.

ESSENTIAL/FOCUS QUESTION

How do the illustrations from *Sweethearts of Rhythm* capture the social dynamics of the 1930s and 1940s, in particular racism, sexism, and the effects of World War II?

How did the International Sweethearts of Rhythm show resilience despite the challenges they faced?

NCSS C3 FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL STUDIES STATE STANDARDS

MIDDLE SCHOOL

D2.His.2.6–8: Classify series of historical events and developments as examples of change and continuity.

D2.His.14.6–8: Explain multiple causes and effects of events and developments in the past.

D2.His.15.6–8: Evaluate the relative influence of various causes of events and developments in the past.

D2.His.16.6–8: Organize applicable evidence into a coherent argument about the past.

HIGH SCHOOL

D2.His.2.9–12: Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.

D2.His.14.9–12: Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of past events.

D2.His.15.9–12: Distinguish between long-term causes and triggering events in developing a historical argument.

D2.His.16.9–12: Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

NATIONAL STANDARDS

LANGUAGE ARTS

CCSS.ELA–Literacy.CCRA.R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and make logical inferences; cite specific textual evidence

CCSS.ELA–Literacy.CCRA.R.2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize supporting details

CCSS.ELA–Literacy.CCRA.R.4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining figurative and connotative meanings; analyze how word choice shapes meaning or tone

CCSS.ELA–Literacy.CCRA.R.5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, stanzas, or sections relate to each other and the whole

CCSS.ELA–Literacy.CCRA.R.6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style

VOCABULARY

Jim Crow: State and local laws enacted primarily in the American South from the 1870s to the 1960s that enforced racial segregation, or the separation of Black and white people. These laws promoted the idea of “separate but equal.” However, they created a system where Black citizens were given inferior facilities and rights.

Rosie the Riveter: A term that referred to female factory workers across the country during World War II to support the war effort, riveting metal plates onto planes and ships and doing other jobs to produce the tools and supplies needed for the war. As a cultural icon, she represented the strength and patriotism of these women and helped change perceptions about what women could achieve, proving they were capable of doing difficult, traditionally male jobs.

Swing: A style of jazz that grew from African American roots and the 1930s–40s big band traditions in Chicago, Kansas City, and New York. Swing is known for its special rhythm that makes the music feel bouncy and a beat that makes people want to clap, tap their feet, or dance.

Jazz: A style of music that grew out of the African American community in the turn-of-the-twentieth-century New Orleans. It is known for improvisation, where musicians create music as they play, as well as for syncopated rhythms, call-and-response patterns, and a wide variety of sounds. Jazz draws from African and European musical traditions and has grown into many styles, including swing, bebop, cool jazz, and fusion.

Resilience: The capacity to withstand or recover from difficulties; the strength to keep going, and to learn and grow from tough experiences.

Bugle Call Rag,
Nova Lee McGee
on Trumpet, from
*Sweethearts of
Rhythm, The Story
of the Greatest
All-Girl Swing Band
in the World*, 2009
(Courtesy of Gloria
Jean Pinkney)



LESSON STRUCTURE

This lesson consists of five or six sequential sessions. These lessons can be adjusted for middle and high school students, with additional activities provided to extend the learning experience for upper grades. Each lesson will take 45 to 60 minutes.

DAY ONE: INTRODUCTION



Sweethearts, from *Sweethearts of Rhythm, The Story of the Greatest All-Girl Swing Band in the World*, 2009 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

ACTIVITY 1: WARM-UP (7 MINUTES)

Use this video as an introduction to this lesson on the International Sweethearts of Rhythm musicians: [Video](#)

ACTIVITY 2: DIRECT INSTRUCTION (30 MINUTES)

- Use the book *Sweethearts of Rhythm* to explore how gender and racial experiences were redefined during World War II. Explain that the book, *Sweethearts of Rhythm*, written by Marilyn Nelson and illustrated by Jerry Pinkney, is an homage to the women in the band in the video. Tell the students you will play the video again, and that they should watch carefully and make notes on what they think is important or what surprises them.
- Play the video again. (7 minutes)
- Have students pair up to share. (10 minutes)
- Have students share with the whole class. (10 minutes)
- Gather students' ideas on a board or on a large easel pad so the whole class can see.

ACTIVITY 3: CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

- Ask the students what questions they have.
- Gather their questions on another sheet of paper. Explain to students that as a class over the next few days they will be exploring this time period using primary sources and the text and images in *Sweethearts of Rhythm*. We will be answering many of these questions.

DAY TWO: BUILDING FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

REVIEW THE MAIN IDEAS OF THE UNIT

Sweethearts of Rhythm is based on the true story of an all-women swing band during the 1930s and 1940s. The members were originally Black women; later Mexican, Native American, and white women joined the band. The images and the lives of these women illustrate the barriers they surmounted while performing.

Have students read [International Sweethearts of Rhythm Jazz Band](#) and take notes. Younger students can do this as a class, with the teacher modeling how to extrapolate important information. Older students may be able to do this on their own.

Important information should include:

- The International Sweethearts of Rhythm band was formed in the South in 1937.
- It was a mixed-race band during the time of Jim Crow.
- Jim Crow is a term used to identify the racial segregation laws and practices at that time.
- Performing as an interracial band in the South violated Jim Crow laws. The challenge of racial norms and laws were compounded by the fact that there were mixed-race and white members of the band.
- Review the students' notes. Be sure to fill in any missing information. Ask students what they are thinking at this time. Do they have questions or reflections? Try to make space for all reactions.

DAY THREE: DIGGING DEEPER

DIRECT INSTRUCTION (5 MINUTES)

- Ask students what they remember from the last class.
- Explain that during the last class they discussed the women in the International Sweethearts of Rhythm band and that today they are going to take a closer look at the illustrations and the text.

ACTIVITY 1 (5 MINUTES)

"Today, I'm going to demonstrate the close looking process that you will follow with independent exploration of the illustrations."

Teacher Modeling: How to Generate Knowledge

Observation-Thought-New Learning = Knowledge

Looking Together: *White, Colored* from *Sweethearts of Rhythm*



White, Colored, from *Sweethearts of Rhythm, The Story of the Greatest All-Girl Swing Band in the World*, 2009 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

Step 1: Observe the image. (Show *White, Colored*.)

- What do you see?
- What do you notice about the two water fountains?
- What details do you see that are important. Let's list them.
- Direct students' attention to the power cord next the the sign, "WHITE." What does that suggest to you?
- Compare the colors of the walls, piping, and objects inside with the color of the vehicle outside the window. Notice how the artist uses this contrast to draw our attention to the cab, a focus that is further emphasized by the window's central placement.

Step 2: Thoughts

- Can you make any connections from what you observe in this image to what we learned last class period?
- How does this relate to the historical events of the time?

Step 3: New Learning

- Let's look at Primary Document 1 of a photograph from this time.
- What have you learned from this image now that you see it juxtaposed with an actual photo from that time?
- In what ways can artwork be considered a primary document of a time period, and what can it tell us about the society and experiences of people living then?

DAY FOUR

Let's follow this process again and look at another image. Now we will also explore the corresponding poem written by Marilyn Nelson. (Show *She's Crazy with the Heat*.)

Step 1: Observation



She's Crazy with the Heat, from *Sweethearts of Rhythm, The Story of the Greatest All-Girl Swing Band in the World*, 2009 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

- What do you notice in this image?
- What similarities and differences can you identify between these two women?
- What does the artist achieve by separating the two figures by a strip of music with the colors red, white, and blue? In what ways could the use of red, white, and blue connect the two women to one another, or to a larger idea?
- What details do you see in this illustration that provide information about these women? List them. (Students should notice that one is a welder and the other is ready to play her trombone. If it isn't brought out, the teacher should emphasize that these were not professions that women were able to have, especially Black women, before World War II.)

Step 2: Thoughts

- Can you make any connections from what you observe in this image to what we have learned so far?
- How does this relate to the historical events of the time?

Step 3: New Learning

Hand out copies of the poem *She's Crazy with the Heat*. Read the poem for the whole class. Have students underline words or concepts (such as Rosie the Riveter) that are unfamiliar to them. Make a list of these. (If students are in grade 6, define the words on sentence strips and put them up where students can see them for reference. Older students should be able to find the definitions on their own; however, the teacher should be sure to check definitions for accuracy.)

- What do you see in this image that connects with the poem?
- Look at the Primary Document 2 that relates to this illustration. What have you learned from this image now that you see it juxtaposed with the actual picture from that time?

Show the video of Rosie the Riveter. Ask students to share something they learned and to compare the picture *She's Crazy with the Heat* and the video. What is the same? What is different? Confirm that the students understand the takeaways below.

- The image represents Black women in two different fields that were uncommon for women before World War II.
- The poem is told from the point of view of the trombone.

Step 4: Words of Hope

- In the poem, pull out words, phrases, and full lines that reference the idea of hope for the future.

Step 5: Poetry Writing from the Perspective of the Instruments



Piney Woods, from *Sweethearts of Rhythm, The Story of the Greatest All-Girl Swing Band in the World*, 2009 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

- Use the words that you pulled from the poem to create your own poem about hope. You can rearrange the words, and/or add your own.
- Illustrate your poem by sketching your own illustration or describing what you would include if you were the illustrator for the poem.

DAY FIVE: SHARING

This is the closing activity, but the teacher may give additional time if needed. It is better to stretch it out and give students plenty of time at the end for journaling and sharing.

WARM-UP

Summarize the important concepts from the unit such as the social dynamics of the 1930s and 1940s, in particular racism, sexism, and the effects of World War II.

Each student, pair, or group will teach their poem and image to the class by sharing the poem, its meaning, its connection to the image, and the historical context. Then, inspired by the words of hope, they will read their poetry to the class.

FINAL REFLECTION

Invite students to journal about the lesson, what they learned in class and through their own research. Tell students to include emotional responses as well as questions they still have. Give students the chance to share if they choose.

Students reflect in writing:

- What hardships did the Sweethearts face and how did they respond?
- What lessons of resilience can we learn from their story?
- How can their message of hope and courage guide the way we respond to challenges today?

CLOSING CIRCLE (OPTIONAL)

Each student shares one sentence:

- "The Sweethearts remind me that resilience means. . ."
- "Their story gives me hope because. . ."

The Piano Remembers, from *Sweethearts of Rhythm, The Story of the Greatest All-Girl Swing Band in the World*, 2009 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)



LESSON EXTENSIONS

RESEARCH PROJECT FOR UPPER GRADES

DAY ONE

- Explain that today, students will be researching to further expand their knowledge of the time and enrich their understanding of the images. Examples of research themes: racism, sexism, and World War II.
- Pair students to research more about the time.
- Dig deeper into the topics of racism, sexism, or World War II. Use the links below to expand their research and better understand the time period. How does it shape their story? How were women affected by these events? What challenges did they face? Have them take notes and be prepared to share what they learn with their classmates. Students can also expand their research using additional resources.

Racism

- [Race relations in the 1930s and 1940s](#)
- [Jim Crow era](#)
- [Jim Crow Laws](#)

World War II

- [Women in WWII](#)
- [US Homefront during World War II](#)

Sexism

- [Women's Suffrage](#)
- [National Archives](#)

Questions to Consider

- What was it like to be Black in in the 1930s and 1940s?
- How did this shape the band and the women?
- What was it like to be a woman in the 1930s and 1940s?
- Why is this important to the story? How did World War II contribute to and shape the women's journey?
- Ask students to share what they learned. Explain that they will be given more time in the next class to continue their research.

Take the 'A' Train,
from *Sweethearts
of Rhythm, The
Story of the
Greatest All-Girl
Swing Band in
the World*, 2009
(Courtesy of Gloria
Jean Pinkney)



DAY TWO

- Summarize the guidelines for the research and project. Leave room for questions, being mindful to give the students as much time as possible for their work.
- Explain that this class and the next class will be a workshop time for the groups to finish their research and create a way of sharing their information. Students should create a two- to five-minute presentation explaining what they learned. The presentation should include both the book and the additional research.
- Be available for questions and walk around the class to make sure students are on target.

DAY THREE

- Summarize important concepts from the unit. Explain the process for sharing.
- Students will share their work in groups. If there are a lot of students or the projects are particularly long, this may take more than one class period.

DAY FOUR

Poetry Writing Extension

- What are you passionate about? Painting? Running? Acting? Think of a tool of your passion and write a poem from the point of view of that tool.

DIFFERENTIATION

LEARNING CHALLENGES

- Use the text-to-speech feature on a computer to have information read to students; additionally, students can use videos from the Additional Resources section.
- Use speech-to-text to have students write their information.
- Pair stronger students with students who may need extra help.

FINAL REFLECTION

Students reflect in writing:

- What hardships did the International Sweethearts of Rhythm face, and how did they respond?
- How can their message of hope and courage guide the way we respond to challenges today?
- What lessons of resilience can we learn from their story?

CLOSING CIRCLE (OPTIONAL)

Each student shares one sentence:

- "The International Sweethearts of Rhythm remind me that resilience means . . ."
- "Their story gives me hope because . . ."

ASSESSMENT

Rubrics Grades 9-12

Bugle Call Rag,
from *Sweethearts
of Rhythm, The
Story of the
Greatest All-Girl
Swing Band in
the World*, 2009
(Courtesy of Gloria
Jean Pinkney)



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- An in-depth look at the tradition of jazz: [What Is Jazz?](#)
- Documentary about the International Sweethearts of Rhythm: [Sweethearts of Rhythm Documentary](#)
- Smithsonian Women and Jazz series: [International Sweethearts of Rhythm](#)

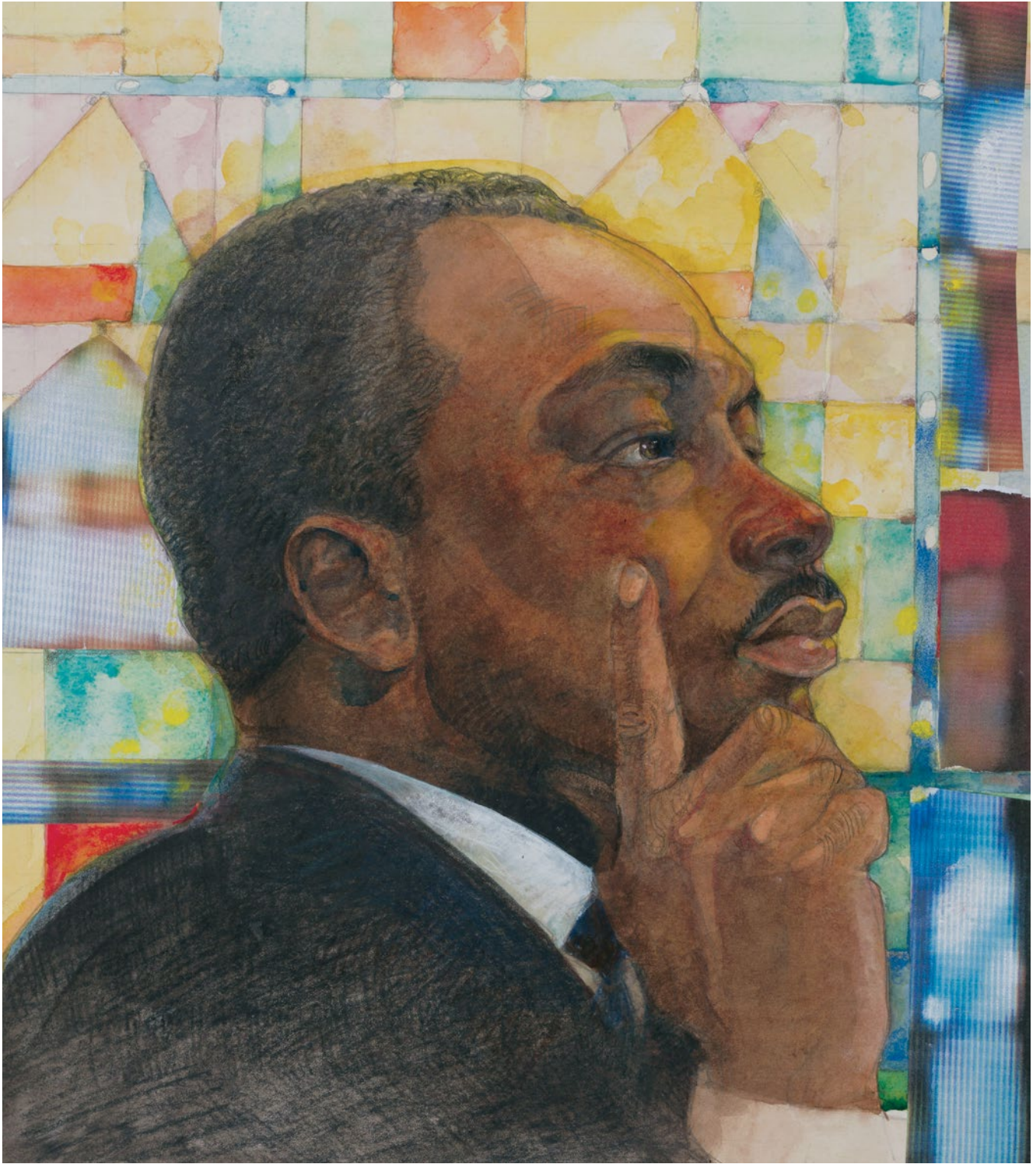
ABOUT THE EDUCATOR

A teacher for over thirty years, Michelle Podulka worked for the Philadelphia School District as well as a suburban Quaker school. Within that time she taught a broad range of students and subjects, including as an elementary classroom teacher, a whole school technology teacher, a middle school classroom teacher, and an upper school teacher on power and identity. Michelle has presented at multiple venues with a focus on diversity, equity, and belonging as well as bias in the education system. A certified SEED facilitator, Michelle believes in the power of learning and is passionate about fair and equitable education.

APPENDIX OF RESOURCES



Please scan this QR Code to have access to all of the Sweethearts of Rhythm links, image cards, and other helpful items to engage with this lesson.



Front Cover, from *A Place to Land: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Speech That Inspired a Nation*, 2019 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

Voices of Civil Rights Visionaries

A PLACE TO LAND: MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. AND THE SPEECH THAT INSPIRED A NATION,
WRITTEN BY BARRY WITTENSTEIN, ILLUSTRATED BY JERRY PINKNEY
(NEAL PORTER BOOKS/HOLIDAY HOUSE, 2019)

LESSON PLAN BY LYA RODGERS, HILDY TOW, AND COURTNEY WARING

GRADES 6–12

EXHIBITION THEME

A Chorus of Voices: Honoring Black History

“Yet I also wanted my art to capture Martin Luther King, Jr.
as a living idea: articulate and poetic orator, truth-teller,
witness to this nation’s injustices, and beacon of hope.”

JERRY PINKNEY, ARTIST'S NOTES

MATERIALS

- Copies of *A Place to Land*
- Computers
- Notebooks
- Pens

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will utilize and explore primary sources and historical information about Martin Luther King Jr. to serve as foundational knowledge.
- Students will analyze Jerry Pinkney's use of watercolor and collage to create the texture, sensation, and documentation of historical events
- Students will analyze and discuss Pinkney's illustrations by practicing careful looking strategies, using evidence from the artwork to build interpretations of Dr. King's thoughts, struggles, and public actions, and by questioning how images can shape our understanding of history.
- Students will explore how effective leadership combines preparation with the ability to respond spontaneously. They will examine how planning, practice, and adaptability work together to inspire and lead others.

ESSENTIAL/FOCUS QUESTIONS

- How can the words and actions of Martin Luther King Jr. and his civil rights movement colleagues from the 1960s inform how we support and advocate for civil rights issues today?
- Looking at the work of Jerry Pinkney, how does his art help us understand people's struggle for racial justice and efforts to use their voices (signs, singing, and chanting) to create change?



Words He Risked
His Life for, from
*A Place to Land:
Martin Luther King
Jr. and the Speech
That Inspired
a Nation*, 2019
(Courtesy of Gloria
Jean Pinkney)

NATIONAL STANDARDS

READING

GRADES 6–8

CCSS.ELA–Literacy.RH.6–8.7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

GRADES 9–10

CCSS.ELA–Literacy.RH.9–10.7: Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.

GRADES 11–12

CCSS.ELA–Literacy.RH.11–12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

WRITING

RESEARCH TO BUILD AND PRESENT KNOWLEDGE: GENERAL STANDARDS FOR K–12

CCSS.ELA–Literacy.CCRA.W.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA–Literacy.CCRA.W.8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

CCSS.ELA–Literacy.CCRA.W.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

VISUAL ART

VA:Re.7.1.6a–Re.7.1.11a: Perceive and analyze artistic work; Enduring understanding: Individual aesthetic and empathetic awareness developed through engagement with art can lead to understanding and appreciation of self, others, the natural world, and constructed environments.

VA:Re.7.2.6a–Re.7.2.11a: Enduring understanding: Visual imagery influences understanding of and responses to the world.

VA:Re.8.1.6a–Re.8.1.11a: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work; Enduring understanding: People gain insights into meanings of artworks by engaging in the process of art criticism.

VA:Re.9.1.6a–Re.9.1.11a: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work; Enduring understanding: People evaluate art based on various criteria.

VA:Cn.11.1.6a–Cn.11.1.11a: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding; Enduring understanding: People develop ideas and understandings of society, culture, and history through their interactions with and analysis of art.

SOCIAL STUDIES

2. Time, continuity, and change: Through the study of the past and its legacy, learners examine the institutions, values, and beliefs of people in the past, acquire skills in historical inquiry and interpretation, and gain an understanding of how important historical events and developments have shaped the modern world.

VOCABULARY

Activism/activist: The action of or a person who campaigns to bring about political or social change.

Changemaker: Someone who works to create positive change in the world by taking action.

Collage: A type of art made by combining different materials (images, papers, or objects) that are layered, and glued onto a surface to create an image.

Discrimination: The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of ethnicity, age, sex, or disability.

Equality: The state of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities.

Segregation: The action of separating people, historically on the basis of race, religion, or gender.

Racism: Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism by an individual, community, or institution against a person or people on the basis of their membership in a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized.

Civil rights: The rights that guarantee all people fair and equal treatment under the law. They protect individuals from discrimination and make sure everyone has the same opportunities, regardless of their race, religion, gender, age, disability, national origin, or sexual orientation. For example, the right to vote, the right to a fair trial, equal access to education, and the right to use public spaces.

Civil rights movement: A period in the 1950s and 1960s when Black Americans fought for equal rights and an end to discrimination.

Civil Rights Act of 1964: A landmark law that outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in the United States. It ended segregation in public places, made it illegal to discriminate in employment, and was a major victory for the civil rights movement.

LESSON STRUCTURE

Note to teacher: This series of lessons was created to support a larger unit on the civil rights movement (1954–1968). It provides an in-depth learning experience specifically focused on the 1963 March on Washington and Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech.

This resource consists of three 60-to 90-minute lessons:

LESSON 1: Then examines the historical context of the civil rights movement and events that lead to the March on Washington and Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech.

LESSON 2: Now explores the modern-day connections to the civil rights movement and the contemporary activists that are living out King’s dream.

LESSON 3: Next reflects on past and present civil rights movements to inspire personal growth emotionally and intellectually.

LESSON 1: THEN

WARM-UP

Explain to students that they are beginning a journey to explore the historical significance of Martin Luther King Jr. and the 1963 March on Washington utilizing the text and artwork from *A Place to Land*.

To get started, students will work in groups and collaboratively complete the K (know) and W (wonder or want to know) sections of your K-W-L chart.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION

Today you will learn through stories, photographs, videos, and various other resources about the events leading up to the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963.

The objective of today’s lesson is to provide background information on Martin Luther King, Jr. and events that led up to the March on Washington. This will serve as an introduction to *A Place to Land* using the Background Information organized in a PowerPoint presentation. This is presented in a timeline format leading up to the events in *A Place to Land*. Notes from the PowerPoint can be used as a Teacher’s and Students’ Reading Guide. As the PowerPoint is being presented to the class, students will complete the L (Learn) section of their K-W-L chart.

PART 1

Read through *A Place to Land* with the entire class.

Teachers can present the [Music Video of *A Place to Land*](#) (35 minutes), a multisensory video that includes narration of the text, all illustrations, and music.

After the initial reading or viewing of the video, teachers should select specific images to demonstrate close looking and discuss students' ideas and perspectives. This will serve as an example of what the students will be doing in their groups later in this lesson.

Use the QR code at the end of the lesson to access illustrations in [A Place to Land image cards](#). These can be projected on a white board or photocopied and distributed to students.

Here are examples of looking questions that focus on a progression of images of Dr. King to guide students in this process.

Frontispiece (opening illustration)

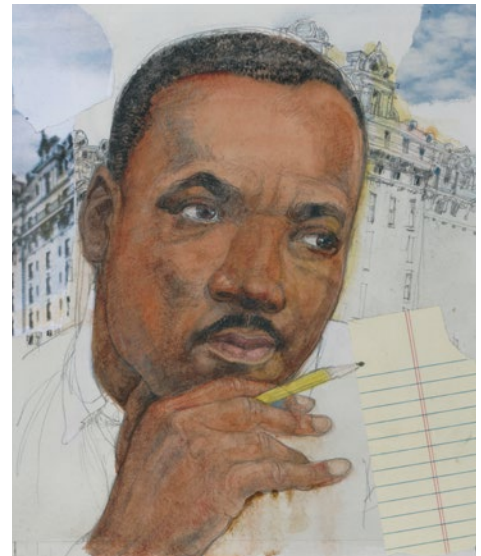
Here we are introduced to Dr. King.

What is he holding?

What might he be thinking?

In the background is the Willard Hotel where Dr. King and other civil rights leaders gathered prior to the March On Washington. Dr. King is there to write his speech for the March.

Focus on his eyes and his hand. What is your impression of what he may be thinking and feeling?



Frontispiece, from *A Place to Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech That Inspired a Nation*, 2019 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)



But on Aug. 27th . . ., from *A Place to Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech that Inspired a Nation*, 2019 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

But on Aug. 27th

What is Dr. King doing? Describe his facial expression and pose. He is surrounded by civil rights leaders. Look at their hands and gestures. What do they appear to be doing?

What color pops out? What effect does it have and how does it guide your eye through the image?

(The next illustration shows the faces and hands of Dr. King's advisers giving him different suggestions for the speech. See Lesson Extension for a project related to these civil rights leaders.)



For Two Hours, from *A Place to Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech that Inspired a Nation*, 2019 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

For two hours

Notice the changes in Dr. King's pose, facial expression, and even his shirt sleeves and tie. What is he holding? How do these changes indicate what Dr. King may be feeling?

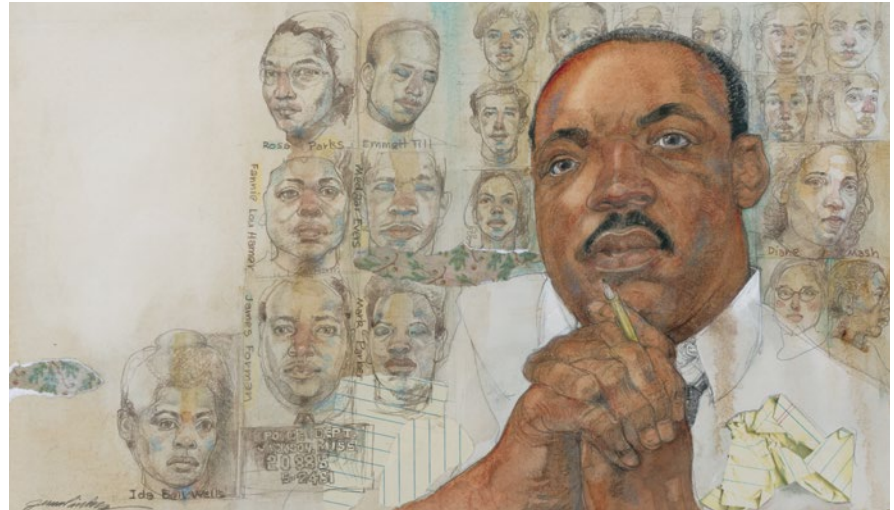
Why do you think it was important for Dr. King to get input from his advisors?

Note that Dr. King had limited time to prepare a speech that would receive national attention at what would be a pivotal moment in the civil rights movement.

Guide students to follow the changes in Dr. King's facial expressions and body language across these pages. Notice what his hands are doing and how they change from one image to the next. Have students **pay attention to the collaged photographs and objects in the images** and think about the effect of these collage elements and what the artist, Jerry Pinkney, might be trying to show or help us feel by including them.

Upstairs, alone in his suite

Notice Pinkney's use of color in Dr. King's skin tones. How do the background faces differ from his? How does this color contrast help you understand what Dr. King may be thinking and what his emotions might be in this moment? Are there names that you recognize in the background? If so, share your knowledge. What could be a reason the artist included these faces?



Upstairs, Alone in His Suite, from *A Place to Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and The Speech That Inspired a Nation*, 2019 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

Midnight

What do you see? What is happening between Dr. King and Andrew Young? (Notice the image of Langston Hughes looking at them. Hughes was a poet and writer who spoke about the lives, dreams, and struggles of African Americans.) How do you think Dr. King feels in this image? What do you see that makes you think so?

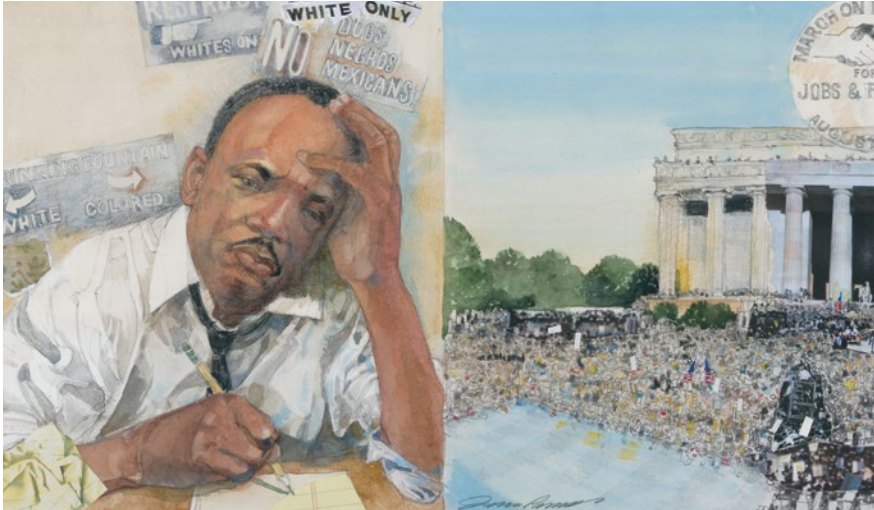
Notice the collaged objects in this image. Compare what appears to be "real" with what is painted and drawn. How does the combination affect the way you see the scene?



Midnight, from *A Place to Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech That Inspired a Nation*, 2019 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

2:30 P.M. and Approaching 3:30 P.M.

Take a close look at these two images that face each other side by side. Their titles indicate moments in time. What do you see in each image? Dr. King is depicted close-up. Invite students to mirror Dr. King's pose and expression and reflect on what he may be feeling at this hour.



2:30 P.M. and Approaching 3:30 P.M., from *A Place to Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech That Inspired a Nation*, 2019 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

In the other image, a crowd gathers in the distance. Notice how an imaginary horizontal line seems to connect Dr. King's head and hand with the Lincoln Memorial. What do you think the artist might be suggesting by linking Dr. King to the Lincoln Memorial and the crowd assembling outside? How do the words in these images shape your understanding of Dr. King's thoughts and struggles about the day's events?

The images on this page and the next focus on the actual events of the March on Washington. Continue having students look carefully and move from observation into interpretation.

While at the same time . . .

What do you notice first in this image and why? What makes the young man stand out and what does that suggest about his role or importance? Read the newspaper headlines and notice the collaged maps of different cities.

What emotions do you think the young man experiencing and what do you see that makes you think that?



While at the Same Time. . ., from *A Place to Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech That Inspired a Nation*, 2019 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

Examine the background. What building do you recognize? Compare the young man to the collage of people on the steps. What effect does this contrast create?

How do these visual elements work together to tell the story of what is happening on this day?

What words describe the mood of this scene?

8:00 A.M. and Noon

Pinkney juxtaposes two different groups of people in this double page spread. Describe who you see in each image. What details are emphasized? What is different? What do they have in common? Why do you think armed soldiers were at the march?

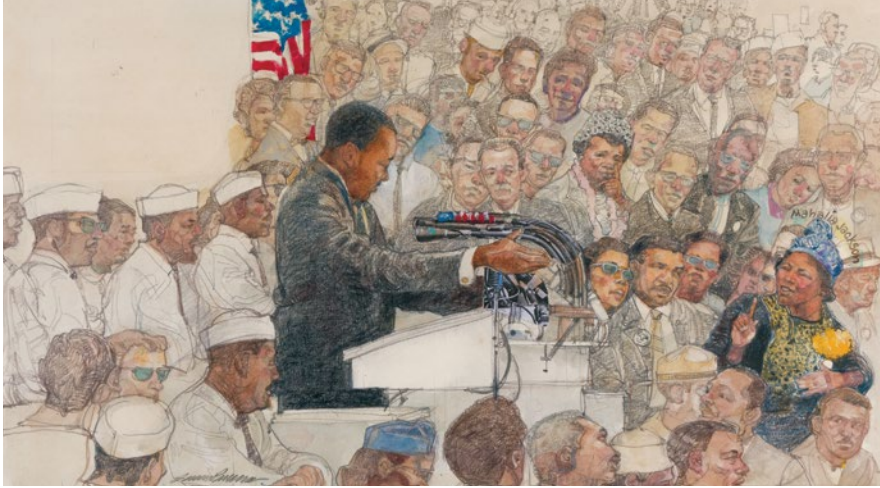
Notice the collaged map in the bottom center that connects the two images. It depicts a map of the National Mall in Washington, DC. What could be a reason Pinkney includes this map?



8:00 A.M. (left) and Noon (right), from *A Place to Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech That Inspired a Nation*, 2019 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

What is the effect of titling the images with different times of the day?

What does the sequence of images we've discussed add to the story?

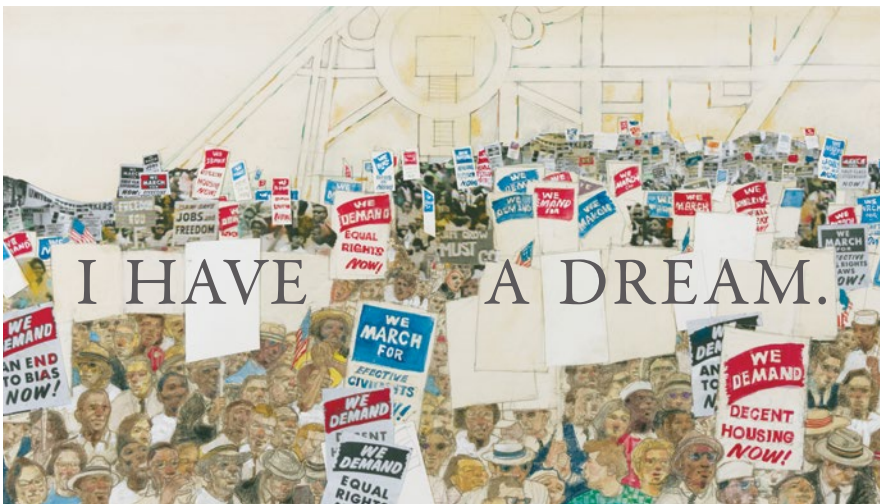


He Paused, from *A Place to Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech that Inspired a Nation*, 2019 (Courtesy of Gloria Pinkney)

He paused

Let's explore how Pinkney draws our attention to Dr. King and gospel singer Mahalia Jackson in this image. Notice the faces in the crowd. Where are they looking? How do the colors and details in them stand out from the rest of the crowd? Look closely at their hands and describe what you see. Both are looking at each other. What do their gestures and eye contact suggest about their connection?

This image shows the moment when Mahalia Jackson called out, "Tell them about the dream, Martin!" Dr. King paused, set aside his prepared notes, and used the words he had spoken earlier in sermons and speeches, and began to talk about his dream—a vision filled with hope, freedom, justice, and a better future for everyone. In his speech Dr. King said: "I have a dream that my children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." What do you find most important and meaningful about these words?



Four Words, from *A Place To Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech that Inspired A Nation*, 2019 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

Four words

What sounds might you imagine hearing in this image? Pinkney chose to replace some signs with the four words Dr. King repeated in his speech. How does this decision connect the power of the words with the audience? Pinkney also depicts the signage people carried that day. How do these signs connect with Dr. King's dream? What does this image express to you?

PART 2

Students will work in small groups to continue looking carefully at the illustrations, connect the text by Barry Wittenstein, and reflect on how Pinkney chose to illustrate the words and their meaning. Each group should focus on the historical events in the following sections:

Before: Events portrayed in the book leading up to the March on Washington (Students can revisit [Background Information](#))

During: Events that took place during the March, including the "I Have a Dream" speech

After: Events following the march

Each group will look closely at Pinkney's artworks and collaboratively explore the following topics:

Notice, identify, and interpret: While looking closely at your assigned pages, identify and categorize the various collaged elements, i.e., signs, maps, photos, musical notes, historical documents.

Motivation: Pinkney did a lot of research for his projects. Describing how he decided to incorporate collage into his illustrations, Pinkney wrote: "I felt a heightened enthusiasm for how I could make my artist practice do justice to such a monumental figure and such a potent time in American history With so many sources, I knew early on that I would use collage as a way to reinforce place." (Artist's notes)

By looking at specific images, students will explore the decisions Pinkney made in depicting these scenes.



But Now Was Not the Time for Congratulations, from *A Place To Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech that Inspired a Nation*, 2019 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

But now was not the time for congratulations

We see President Kennedy and Dr. King shaking hands. Look closely and describe what you see on the button Dr. King is wearing. Why do you think Pinkney added this detail?

Notice and describe the collage of the White House in the lower left. How does the image of the White House shape or add to your interpretation of the scene?

What questions come to mind?

(See the Social Studies Lesson Extension about this meeting between President Kennedy and Dr. King.)

REFLECTION/CLOSURE

During today's lesson, you learned about many historical events surrounding Dr. King's March on Washington.

Choose one of the following options to reflect on your new learning by exploring a different point of view. Focus on the fact and the feelings of today's lesson to complete your closure activity:

Martin Luther King's point of view: Write a journal entry from Dr. King's point of view the night before the March on Washington. Complete an Open-Mind Portrait by drawing pictures illustrating what was on King's mind the night before, labeling the drawings with words.

Mahalia Jackson's point of view: Gospel singer Mahalia Jackson was both a friend and spiritual inspiration to Dr. King. Her powerful voice often uplifted and encouraged his message. Write a letter to Dr. King explaining why she told him to talk about the dream.

ASSESSMENT

Students assess if or how the collaged elements add to the "energy and sense of urgency of the day."

Students explore events and conditions that led up to the 1963 March on Washington, and assess the changes or lack of changes in racial justice they see in the contemporary world.

Students will be assessed on inclusion of historically accurate information from the lesson.

LESSON 2: NOW

WARM-UP

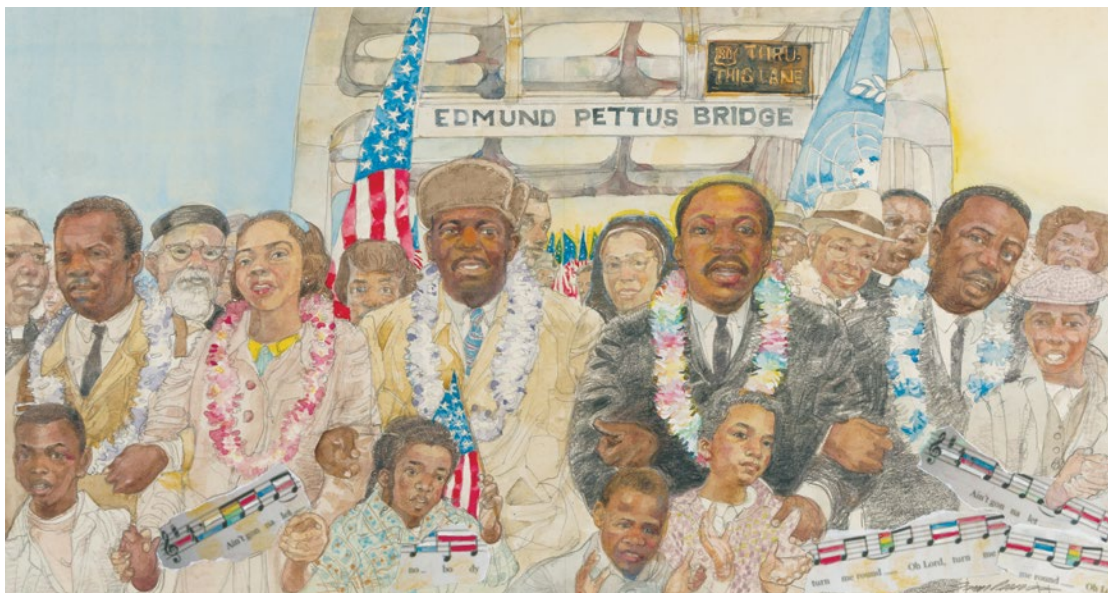
To start today's lesson, read this quote by Martin Luther King Jr. and do a quick write about what this means to you: **"We are not makers of history. We are made by history."**

From a sermon in 1963, these words remind us that our present and future are shaped by the actions and struggles of those who came before.

Students can share their thoughts and feelings for the start of today's lesson.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION

"During the last lesson you learned about the historical facts and significance behind the civil rights movement and how various figures worked together to elicit change. Today, you will focus on making connections with contemporary activists who were inspired by movements of the past."



They All Knew More Battles Lay Ahead, from A Place to Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech That Inspired a Nation, 2019 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

ACTIVITY

Today, you will work in small groups of four or five on a research project. Follow the research project steps. Decide on a rights issue for your project focus:

- Women's rights
- LGBTQIA+ rights
- Age-related rights, i.e., youth or aging populations
- People with disabilities
- Fair housing rights
- Climate movement
- Other teacher-approved option

Conduct research to identify current groups and movements connected to this issue. Find names of leaders, groups, and associations. When researching and using search engines, use specific phrases, not questions. Use the words that you are looking to find.

While researching be sure to find out who inspired these leaders to become activists. Try to find various types of media, including interviews, videos, etc.

Ask the students to consider: what is the goal of activism? What is it that the activists you've researched want to achieve? Do you agree with these goals?

Once you've finished researching, plan how your group will share this information by creating an infographic poster. Each poster must contain the following:

- At least one contemporary activist or group
- Three paragraphs summarizing the information you found during research, including sources
- Make the connection to a rights group from the past to this contemporary activist or group
- Include three types of media/art, e.g., portraits, posters, photos, artwork from *A Place to Land*
- One direct quote from Martin Luther King Jr. that resonates with the contemporary activist or group

Provide ample time for students to complete their research projects before continuing to Lesson 3.

LESSON 3: NEXT

WARM-UP

"Over the last few classes you have been learning about various civil rights activists of the past and today. Each group will display their infographic posters in the classroom to create a gallery for the next part of this lesson. You will learn from your peers about what they have researched."



And Those Battles Continue, from *A Place to Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech That Inspired a Nation*, 2019 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

ACTIVITY

Students will complete a gallery walk around the classroom to learn from their peers' posters. Each student will receive a [Gallery Guide Handout](#) to record important information from two posters they have chosen.

REFLECTION

"Let's take some time to take it all in . . ."

Students should be led by the teacher in an extended discussion about the revelations that the students have had during the lessons: what did you learn that surprised you? What made you happy, proud, frustrated, and so on?

CLOSING

Prior to the students writing their final reflections, have them read, Notes for the Author and Artist.

Today, write a personal reflection on this lesson and any self-discovery that may have happened. Have you been inspired to act differently by Martin Luther King Jr. or the contemporary activist or group that you learned about? It does not need to be anything earth shattering, just write with the intention of sharing personal growth.

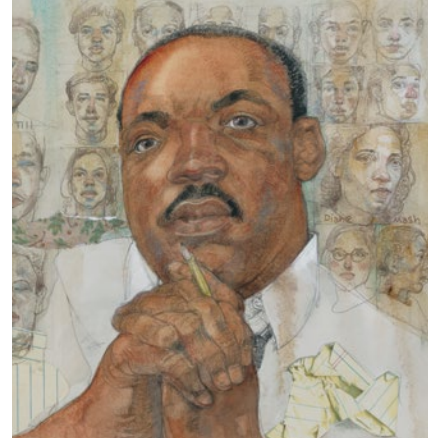
Modification: Give a framework with sentence starters below if students are having difficulty:

I used to think . . .

Now I think . . .

Close the lesson by having a few students who are comfortable share their ideas with the class.

"As we reflect on the voices and visions of civil rights leaders of the past and present, let's carry forward their legacy by using our own voices, creativity, and actions to stand up for justice and imagine a better future."



Upstairs, Alone in His Suite (detail), from *A Place to Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and The Speech That Inspired a Nation*, 2019
(Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

LESSON EXTENSIONS

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Pinkney used collages of maps, newspaper headlines, and photos of people and objects in his illustrations. What other kinds of imagery can you use to tell a story: to convey the “realness” and energy of the March on Washington? Inspired by his work, students create a collage that tells the story of an event from the civil rights movement and use drawing and watercolor paint and colors to convey the time of day, mood, and atmosphere.

Students create a playlist of songs that they feel best connect to the stories, messages, legacy, and impact of the civil rights movement.

Students explore music as an instrument of social change and the impact it had on the civil rights movement. Discuss how music was a unifying element that brought hope by exploring the music and the role of musicians such as Mahalia Jackson, Sam Cooke, Nina Simone, Pete Seeger, and others who supported the movement and spread its message.

Students create portraits highlighting their heroes, accompanied by a presentation or essay explaining why they are heroes. Portraits can be drawn, painted, collaged, or a combination of all.

Students create signs/posters they would bring to a protest on topics shown in *A Place to Land* (such as decent housing and equal rights) or those specific to the present day.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Students choose an event or time in the civil rights movement or issues that are important to them. They design and create a collage watercolor image inspired by Pinkney’s illustrations to reflect the place, time, and mood of the event.

Students write a journal entry from Martin Luther King Jr.’s point of view, describing the night before his “I Have a Dream” speech (inspired by pages 1–12 from *A Place to Land*).

Students write a short essay about a person or group of people who give them hope for the future and why.

Students create a presentation on the songs performed at the Lincoln Memorial before and after King’s speech with performances by Mahalia Jackson, Joan Baez, Marian Anderson, Bob Dylan, Odetta, and Peter, Paul, and Mary. Students will select a song included in the march and share its lyrics, history, message, and impact.

Students explore King’s use of songs, hymns, and spirituals in his “I Have a Dream” speech, such as “We Shall Overcome,” “My Country ‘Tis of Thee,” “Free at Last,” or others, and write an essay on their meaning, symbolism, and emotional connection.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Students research and present on some of Martin Luther King Jr.'s heroes mentioned in *A Place to Land*, including Medgar Evers, Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Emmett Till.

Students research and present on contemporary civil rights activists, including those highlighted in *A Place to Land*, such as Shirley Chisholm, John Lewis, and Barack Obama.

Students watch the video [Pinkney Video: Revising the Ending](#) (6 minutes, 23 seconds) to hear the artist's personal reflections about Dr. King, the March on Washington, and our current time. They research a figure from the civil rights movement who faced significant obstacles in the fight for racial justice, and explore who or what helped them remain committed and maintain hope in the face of adversity.

Students research the background behind the meeting between President John F. Kennedy and Dr. King after the March on Washington. Why did the president ask the leaders of the march to cancel the event? What does this reveal about the president's early approach to the civil rights movement? In what ways did his views shift over time?

Inspired by the March on Washington, students work in groups to plan a protest or march addressing a current social injustice. They describe the nature of the injustice, their target audience for change, potential speakers or performers and their roles, strategies for outreach, and the obstacles they may face.

Students read aloud the "[I Have a Dream](#)" speech and reflect on their feelings about the words.



Through the Crowd,
from *A Place
to Land: Martin
Luther King Jr. and
the Speech That
Inspired a Nation*,
2019 (Courtesy
of Gloria Jean
Pinkney)

DIFFERENTIATION

GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

Frayer Model for Vocabulary Study

INFOGRAPHIC PROJECT STUDENT CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to make sure your group is on track:

We chose a specific rights issue for our project.

We researched a modern-day activist or group.

We learned who or what inspired this activist or group.

We made a connection to a historical rights movement.

We wrote three paragraphs that summarize our research.

We included our sources.

We added at least three types of media or art (photos, posters, artwork, etc.).

We included one quote from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that connects to the issue.

Our information is organized and easy to understand.

Everyone in our group contributed to the project.

Martin Luther King Jr. from *A Place To Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech That Inspired A Nation*, 2019 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)



ABOUT THE EDUCATORS

Lya Rodgers is the assistant curator of school and family programs at Woodmere, where she designs and leads inclusive educational initiatives for children, families, and schools. With over a decade of experience as an educator in both US and international schools, teaching students from pre-K to high school, she brings a global perspective and a deep commitment to community-centered programming.

Hildy Tow is an artist and educator who has been teaching for many years and currently serves as the Robert L. McNeil Jr. Curator of Education at Woodmere. She oversees the museum's education programs, including lectures, music performances, film, studio classes, school and adult tours, teacher workshops, and docent training. She is passionate about creating meaningful experiences with art for people of all ages and believes in its power to inspire, connect, and enrich our lives.

Courtney Waring is the executive director of Island Readers and Writers in Southwest Harbor, ME, where she advances the organization's mission to connect children and communities through books. Formerly the director of education at The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, she brings deep experience in literacy and arts education. She is passionate about fostering curiosity, creativity, and a lifelong love of learning, and she firmly believes in the power of stories to open minds and bring people together.



Again, She Shouted,
from *A Place to Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech That Inspired a Nation*, 2019 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

VIDEO

Martin Luther King, Jr.

["Always Fight with Love": In Rare Footage, A Young Martin Luther King Jr. Launches the Montgomery Bus Boycott](#)

["I Have a Dream" Speech Full Video](#)

[A Place to Land Interview with Jerry Pinkney](#)

[Artist Jerry Pinkney Discusses Illustrating His Latest Book about MLK, Jr.](#)

[Music Narrative Video of A Place to Land](#)

AUDIO

[Meet the Illustrator](#)

[Read Aloud Version of A Place to Land](#)

PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

["I Have a Dream" speech](#)

[March on Washington Program](#)

EXTRA RESOURCES

[March on Washington](#)

[Learning and Living the Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)

[March on Washington; History Explained](#)

[A Place to Land](#)

[Martin Luther King Jr.; NAACP](#)

[Martin Luther King Memorial in Washington, DC](#)

APPENDIX OF RESOURCES



Please scan this QR Code to have access to all of *A Place to Land* links, image cards, and other helpful items to engage with this lesson.



Woodmere receives state arts funding support through a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

©2025 Woodmere The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission of the publisher.

Catalogue designed by Barb Barnett and Kelly Edwards, and edited by Gretchen Dykstra, with assistance from Irene Elias.

All artwork shown is by Jerry Pinkney unless otherwise noted.

Photography by Jack Ramsdale, unless otherwise noted.

FRONT COVER: **Front Cover**, from *Sweethearts of Rhythm, The Story of the Greatest All-Girl Swing Band in the World*, 2009 (Courtesy of Gloria Jean Pinkney)

WOODMERE

9201 Germantown Avenue,
Philadelphia, PA 19118
woodmereartmuseum.org

**THE ERIC CARLE MUSEUM
OF PICTURE BOOK ART**

125 Bay Road,
Amherst, MA 01002
carlemuseum.org

