

Going with the Flow:

Pacing & Rhythm in Picture Books

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Pacing is the heartbeat of your story.

Pacing is the combination of flow, balance,
and rhythm. The fluency.

Pacing controls the tempo at which a story
unfolds, from leisurely to lightning fast.

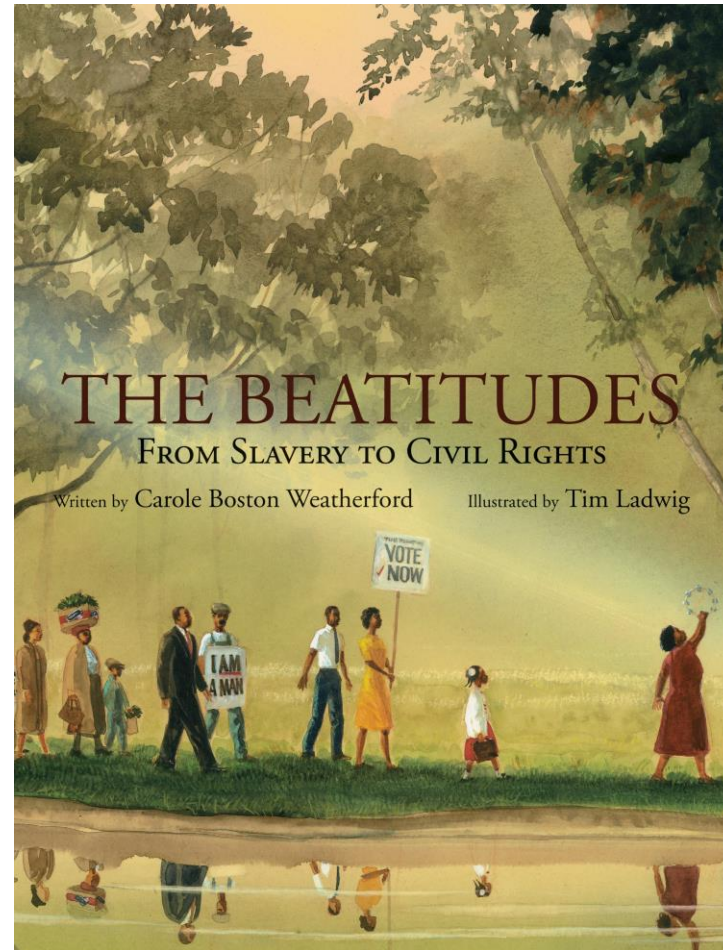
Pacing is key to reader engagement and
immersion.

CHECK THE PACING

For a 32-page picture book, you will have 28 pages or 14 spreads for the text. Thus, you will need a minimum of 14 distinct scenes.

1. Note page numbers/breaks in the margins of the manuscript.
2. Create a thumbnail layout.
3. Create a paper dummy.
4. Read your manuscript aloud.

Page Breaks: Backstory



PAGE TURNS

1. Cliffhangers in the action/plot
2. Questions and answers
3. Cause and effect
4. Key transition words
5. Ending a page mid-sentence
6. Ellipsis

Exercise 1—Heart. Breaks.

Write a one-sentence story statement that gets to the heart of your story. Center the main character. You might phrase the statement as a question.

If you have not done so already, indicate your page breaks in the margins.

SLOW DOWN

1. Remove unnecessary adverbs and adjectives.
2. Use the passive voice.
3. Write in past tense.
4. Show the setting and background through detailed description.
5. Engage in exposition (telling).
6. Use long sentences and/or paragraphs.
7. Use interactive elements.
8. Break the 4th wall.
9. Develop multiple characters.
10. Use introspection.
11. Weave in flashbacks.
12. For the contemplative narratives or nonfiction.

Exercise 3—Slow Down

- From your manuscript, choose a scene to revise and slow down.
- Employ longer sentences, more details, the active and passive voice, some adjectives and adverbs, introspection, fragments, imagery and dialogue.
- Show the setting through the characters' interaction with it.
- Write in third person past tense.

SPEED UP

1. Show rather than tell.
2. Use shorter sentences and paragraphs.
3. Remove unnecessary adverbs and adjectives.
4. Use the active, rather than passive, voice.
5. Use precise language: vigorous verbs and specific nouns.
6. Use snappy dialogue.
7. Use fragments.
8. Write in present tense.
9. Show the setting through the main character's interaction with it, rather than through description.
10. For action/adventure stories.

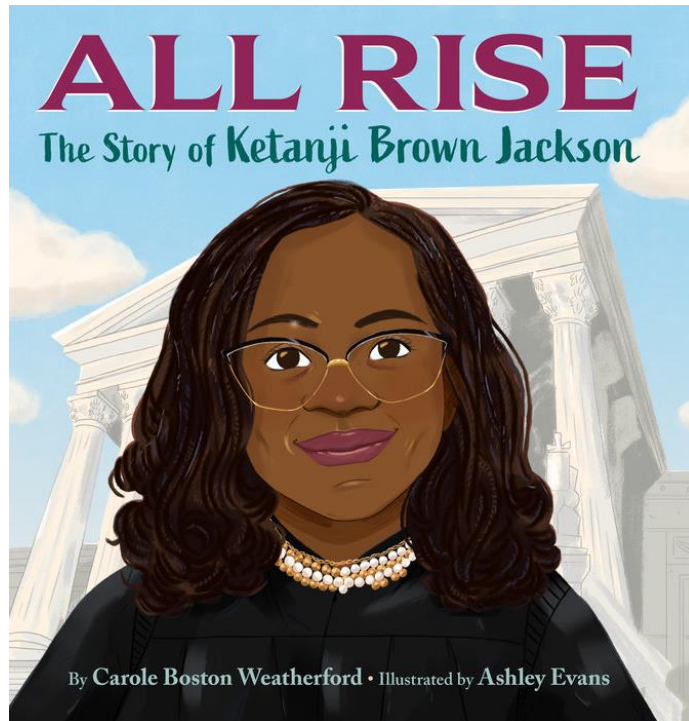
Exercise 2—Speed It Up

- From your manuscript, choose a scene to revise and speed up.
- Employ short sentences, the active voice, fragments, imagery and dialogue.
- Show the setting through the characters' interaction with it.
- Cut unnecessary adjectives and adverbs.
- Write in third person present tense.

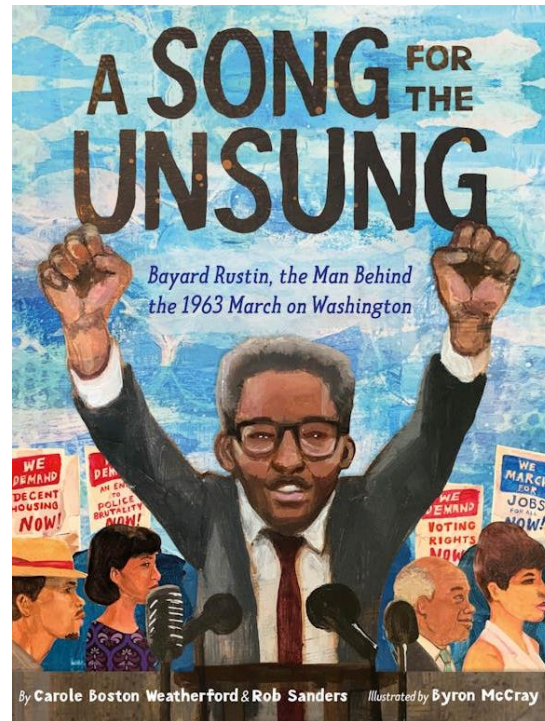
ADD RHYTHM

1. Use repetition and refrains.
2. Use rhyme.
3. Choose musical language.
4. Vary sentence length.
5. Use typography and design.
6. Incorporate predictable elements.

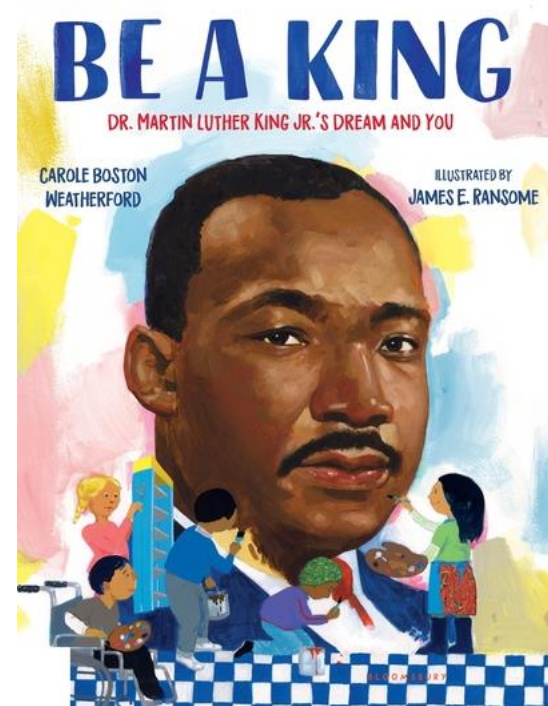
Mentor Texts: Repetition



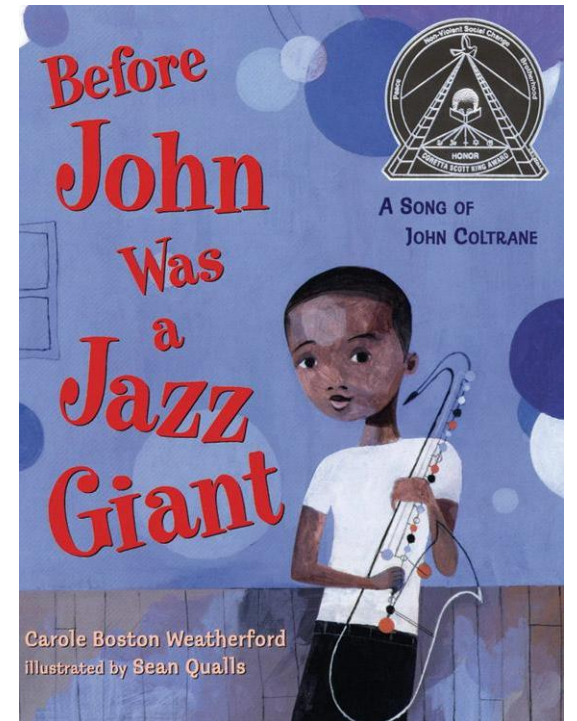
She rose. . .



Sing (song title that meets the moment). . .



You can be a King.



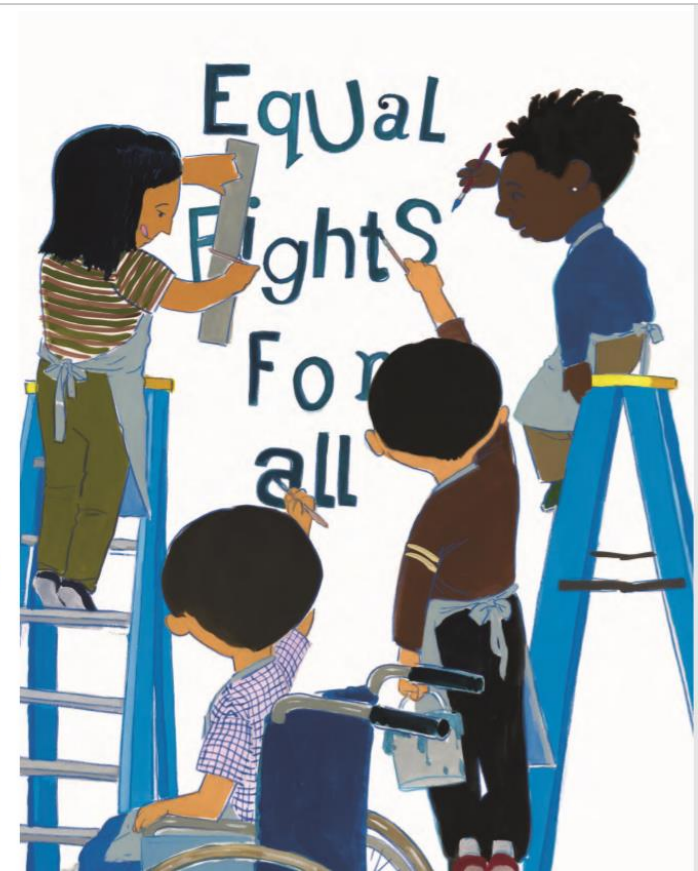
Before John was a jazz giant, he. . .



You can be a King.
Stamp out hatred.
Put your foot down and walk tall.



You can be a King.
Answer your critics.
Believe in your cause and state it plainly.



Sing "Pray On" to call on the hopes of the ancestors.

Born in West Chester, Pennsylvania, in 1912, Bayard had the faith of his grandmother Julia Davis Rustin. She taught young Bayard her Quaker values.

Early on, he learned the church's teachings, including a belief in nonviolence.

Bayard was also learning about the injustices that African Americans faced.

Julia supported the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Young Bayard gave up his bed when well-known NAACP members stayed overnight in the Rustin home.

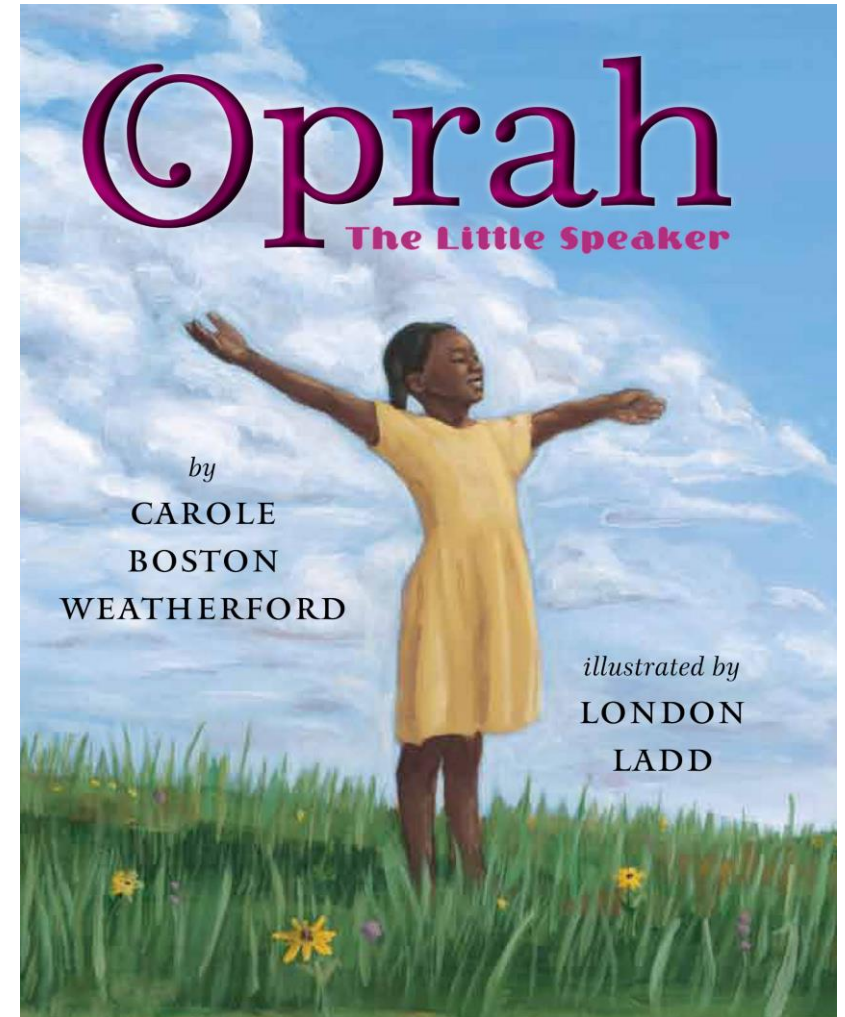
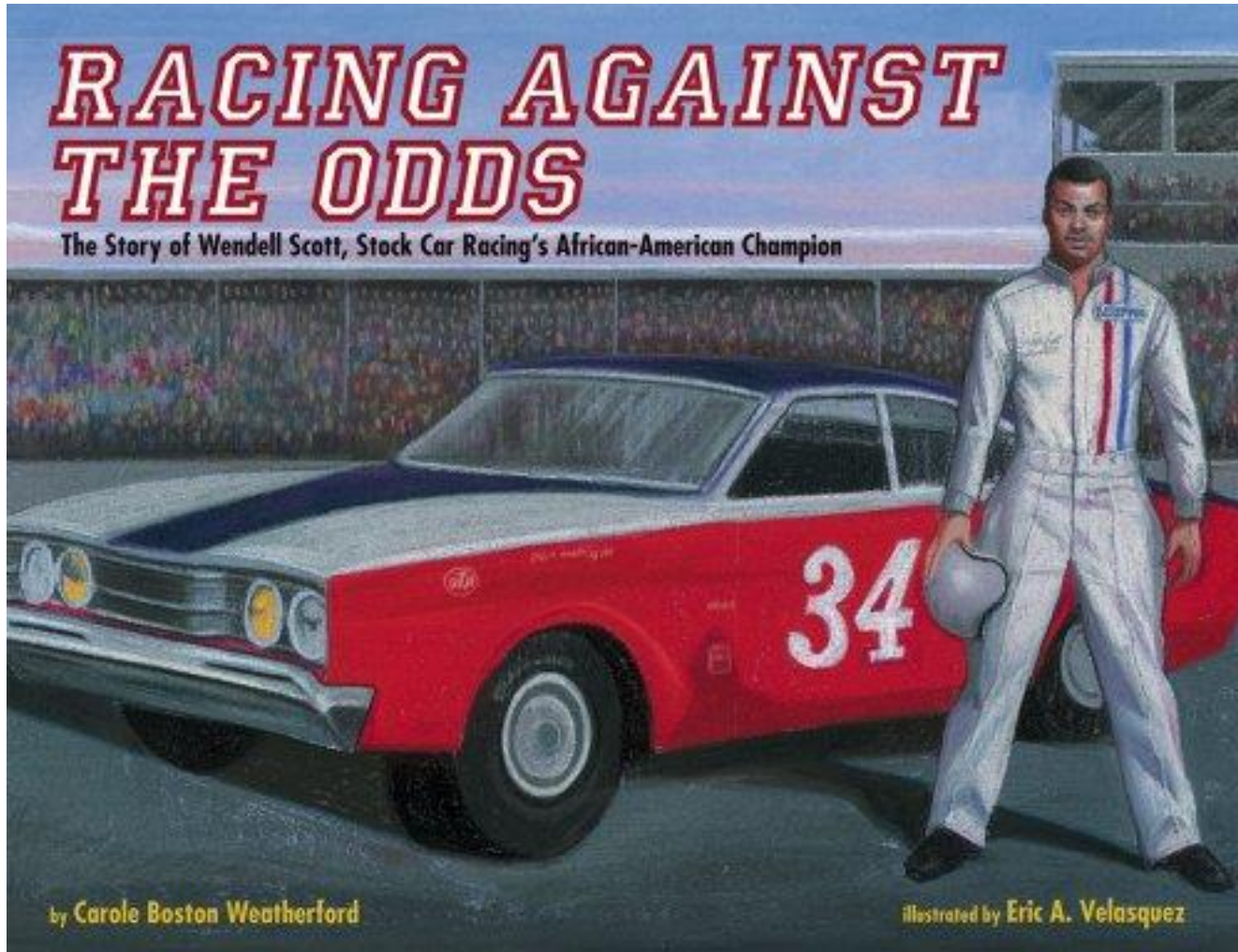
He heard the grown-ups talking late into the night about the civil rights struggle.

Sing "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen" under the burden of racism.

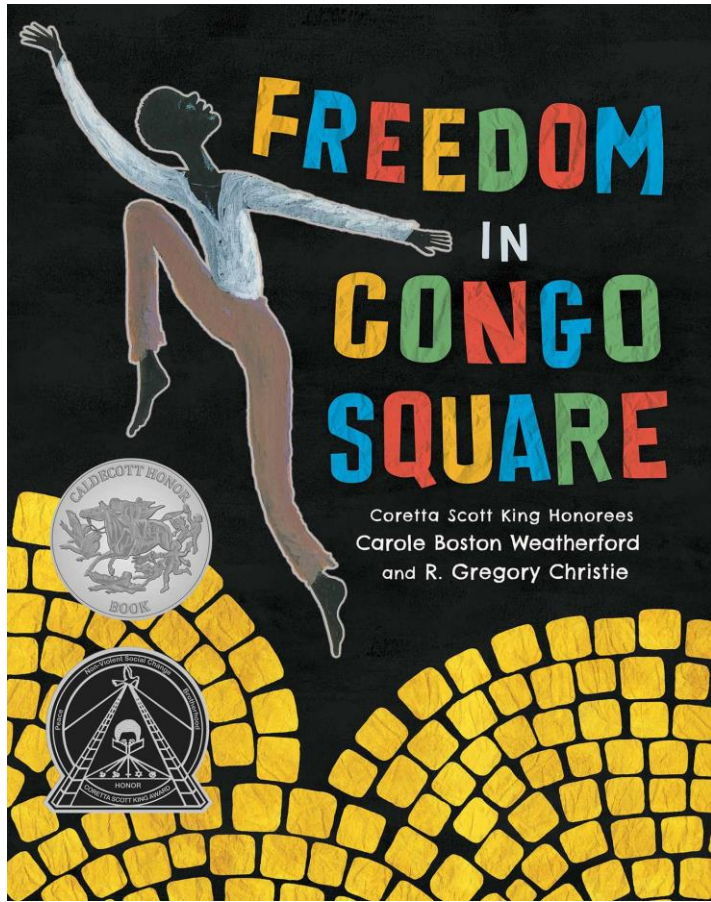
Sing "Lift Every Voice and Sing," the Negro national anthem, to draw on the strength of those freedom fighters.



Mentor Texts: Voice & Diction



Mentor Texts: Predictability & More



STRUCTURE

B-L-E-S-S-E-D

D-E-T-R-O-I-T

M-U-S-I-C

S-T-R-I-F-E

G-I-F-T-E-D

E-X-A-M-P-L-E

T-A-L-E-N-T

D-E-B-U-T

V-O-I-C-E

G-R-O-O-V-E

R-I-G-H-T

G-R-E-A-T

P-R-O-U-D

H-U-M-B-L-E

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

3-line rhyming stanzas
Hyphenated first words/lines
All ending in “ee” sound
Signposts on Aretha’s journey





G-I-F-T-E-D

Young, gifted, black, Aretha hears a melody.
Then she plays the tune by ear—plinking perfectly.



G-R-O-O-V-E

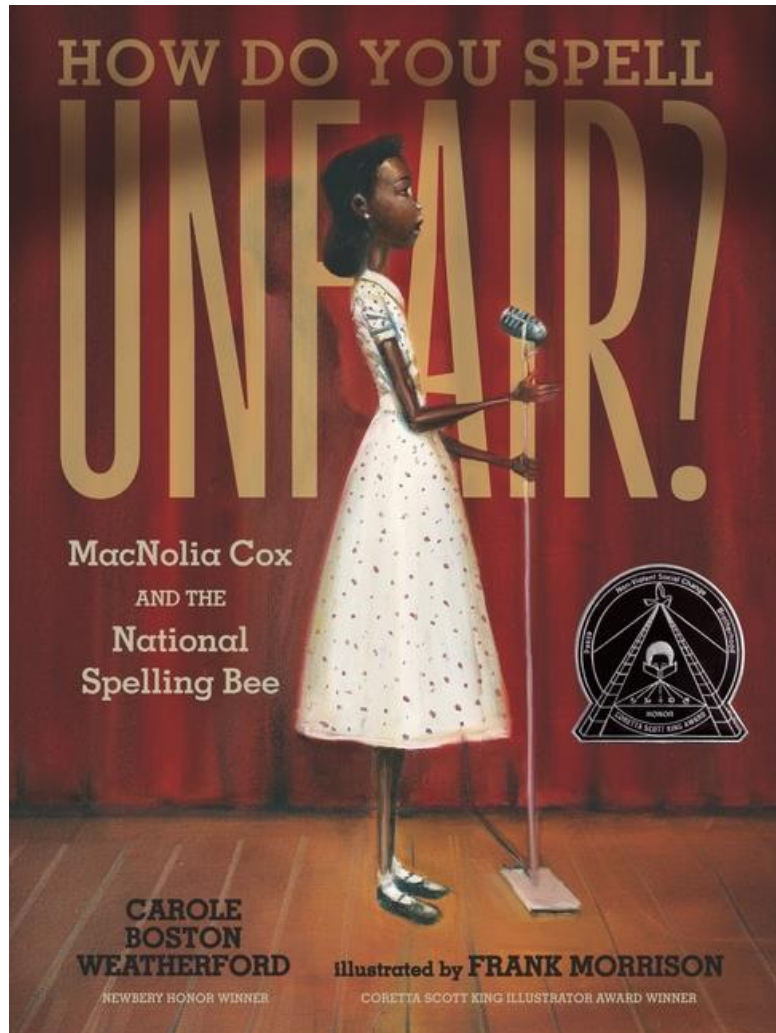
Aretha finds her groove when she's rocking R&B.
No woman of her time has more chart-toppers than she.

R-I-G-H-T

For the civil rights movement for racial equality, Aretha raises funds and gives concerts for free.

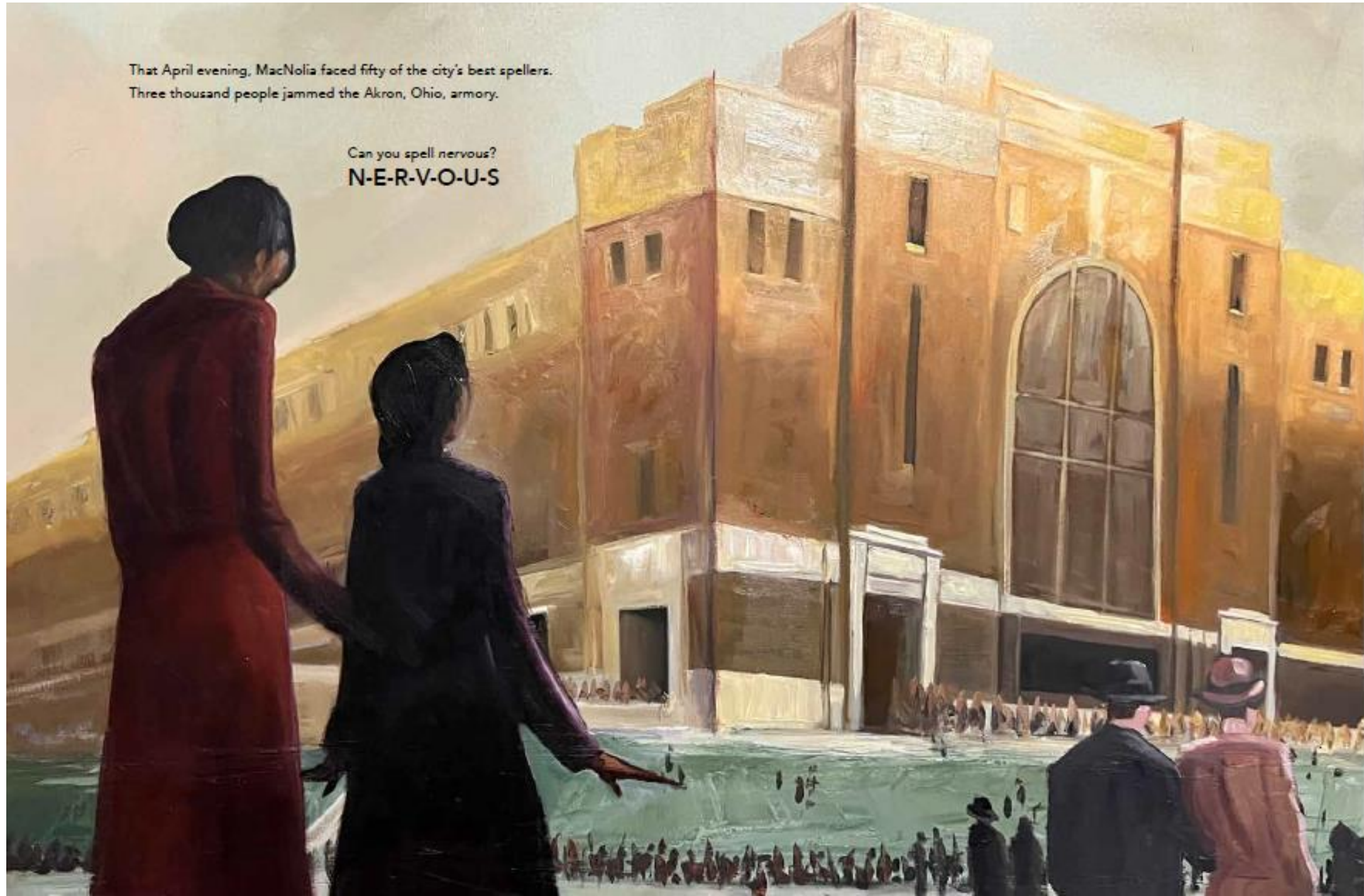


Mentor Texts: Breaking the 4th Wall



That April evening, MacNolia faced fifty of the city's best spellers.
Three thousand people jammed the Akron, Ohio, armory.

Can you spell nervous?
N-E-R-V-O-U-S





But she was about to face some hard truths.

Can you spell *discrimination*?

D-I-S-C-R-I-M-I-N-A-T-I-O-N

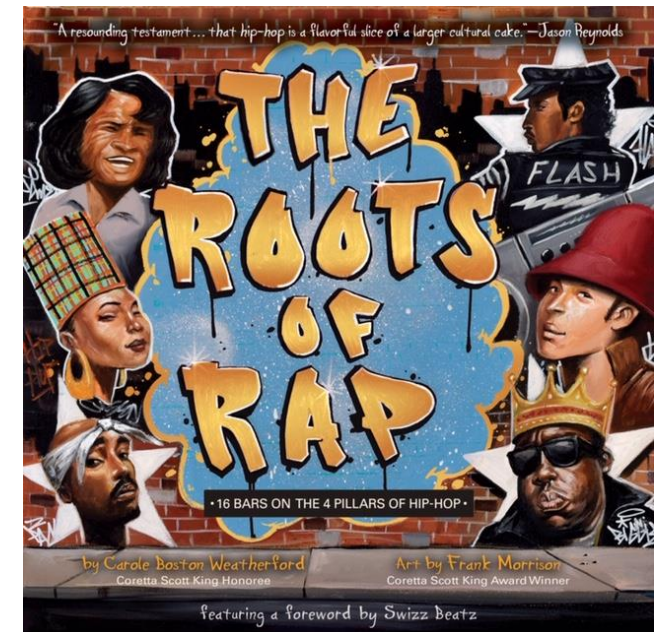
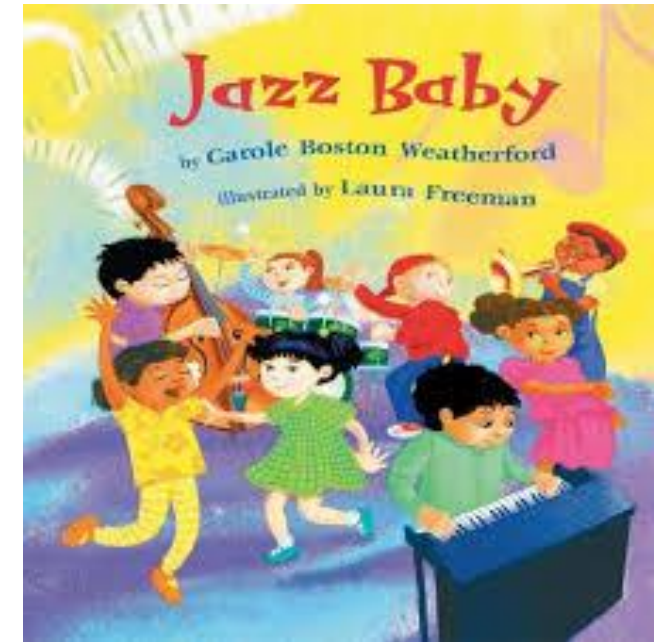
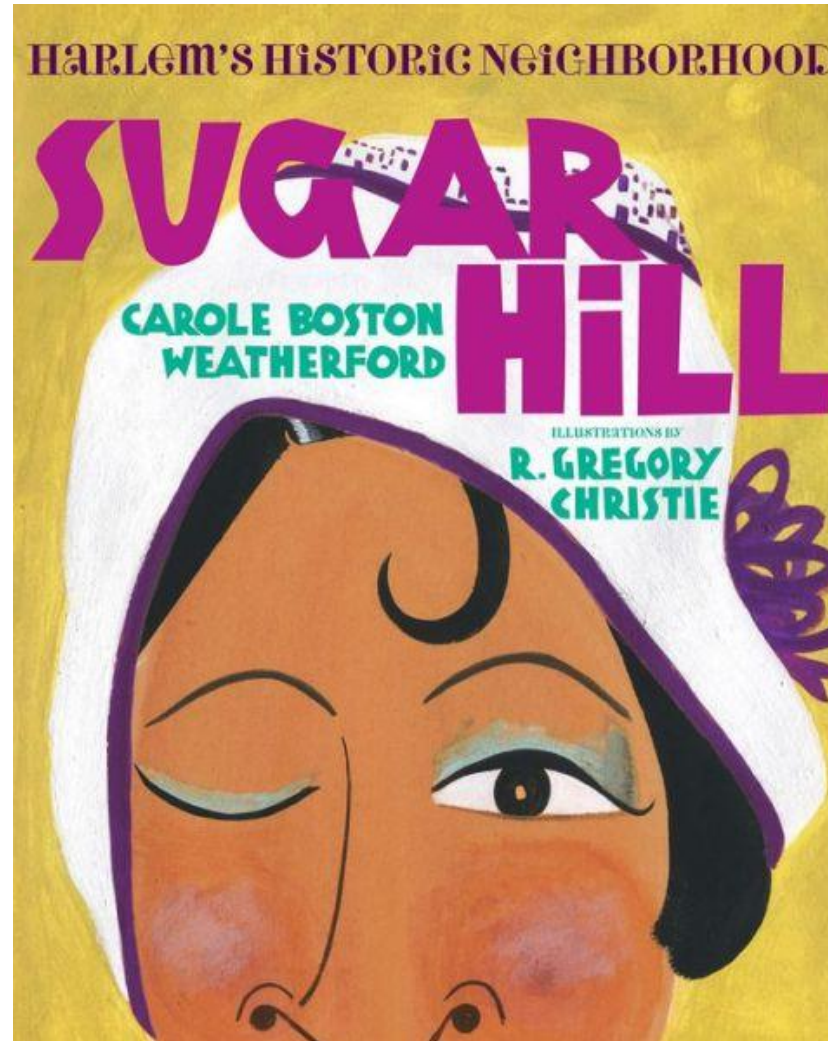
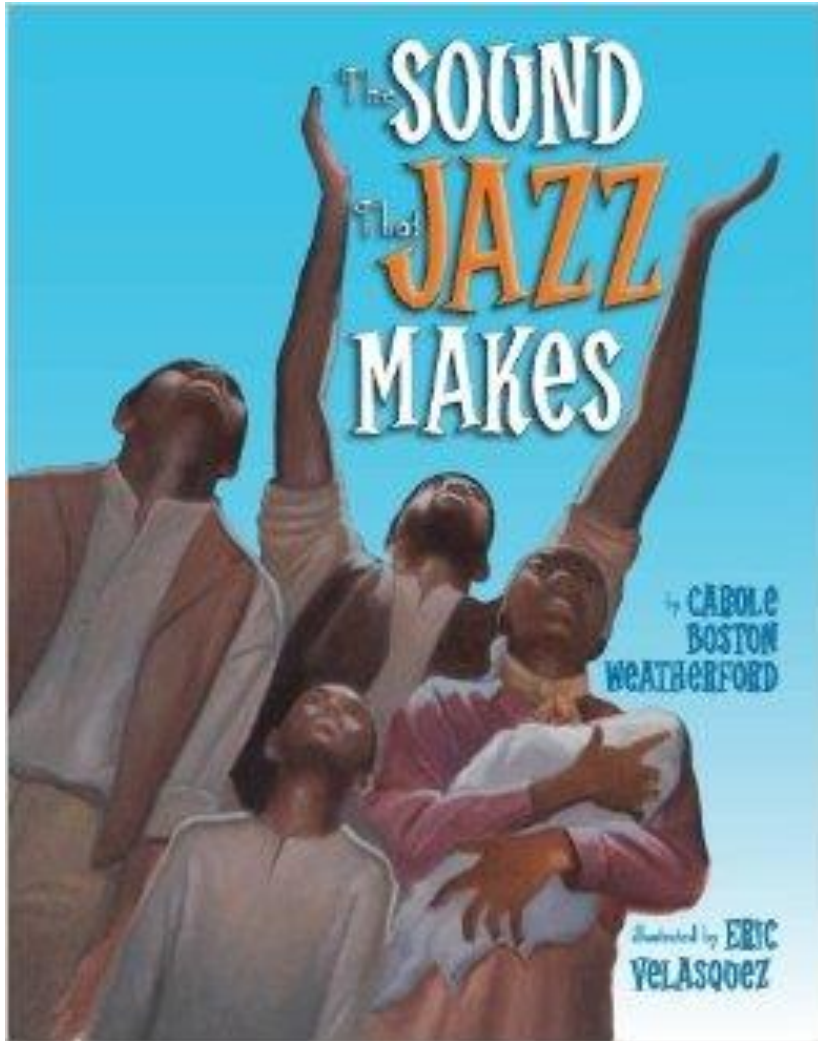
Do you even know what it means?

MacNolia would soon find out. Firsthand.

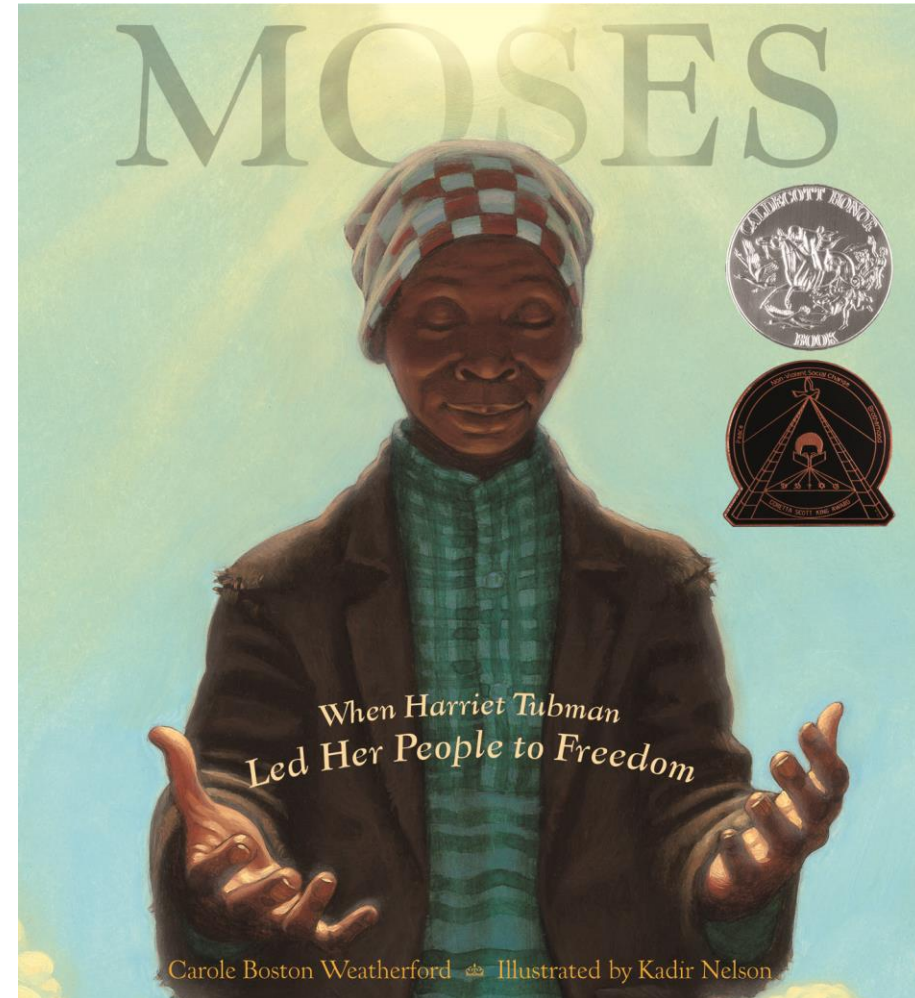
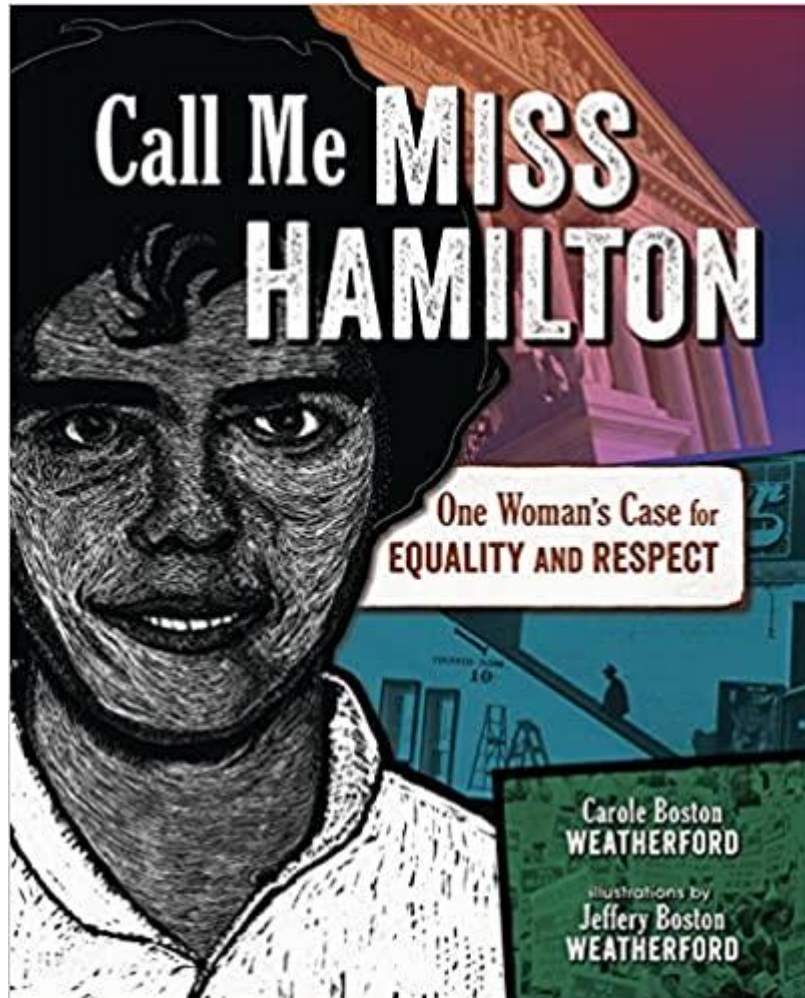
On the train, MacNolia sat in a coach open to Black and white passengers.

But when the train reached the Maryland state line, she and her mother were forced to move to the Blacks-only car. Back then, segregation was the law in the South.

Mentor Texts: Rhyme



Mentor Texts: Typography & Design



On a summer night, Harriet gazes
at the sky and talks with God.

*I am Your child, Lord; yet Master owns me,
drives me like a mule.*

*Now he means to sell me south in chains to work cotton,
rice, indigo, or sugarcane, never to see my family again.*

God speaks in a whip-poor-will's song.

*I SET THE NORTH STAR IN
AND I MEAN FOR YOU TO BE*

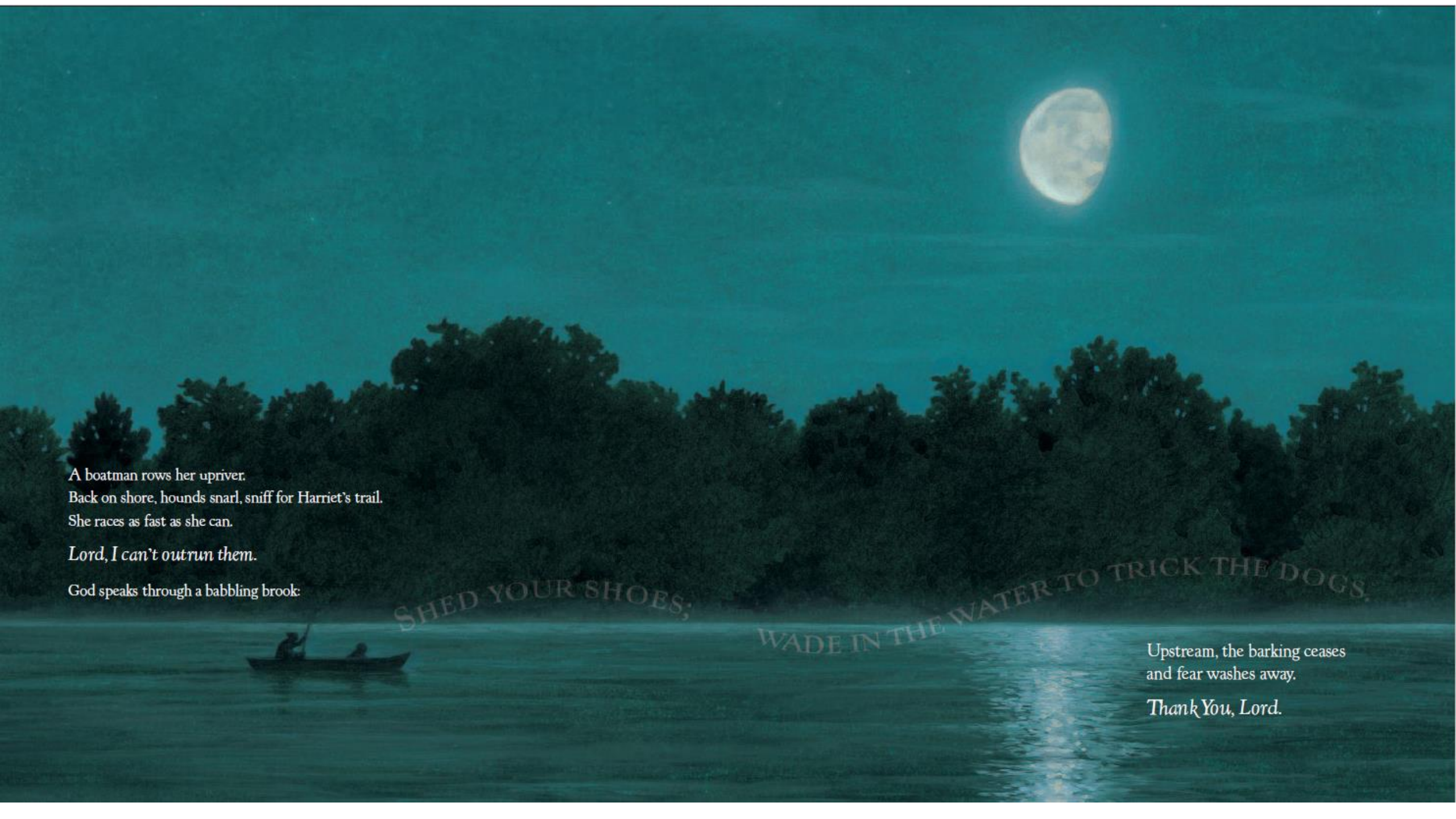
Harriet sees the star twinkling.

My mind is made up. Tomorrow, I flee.

God wraps her in the blanket of night,
and she returns to the cabin,
sleeps beside her husband one last time.

*THE HEAVENS
FREE.*



A night scene on a river. A full moon is in the dark sky. A boatman is rowing a boat on the water. The background is a dense forest of trees.

A boatman rows her upriver.
Back on shore, hounds snarl, sniff for Harriet's trail.
She races as fast as she can.


Lord, I can't outrun them.

God speaks through a babbling brook:

SHED YOUR SHOES;
WADE IN THE WATER TO TRICK THE DOGS.

Upstream, the barking ceases
and fear washes away.

Thank You, Lord.



Harriet's feet bleed and her gut churns.
Under the stars, she draws near to God.

*Lord, don't let nobody turn me 'round;
I'd rather die than be a slave.*

HARRIET, KEEP GOING. YOU HAVE ALREADY GLIMPSED
THE FUTURE.

She recalls dreams where she flew like a bird,
sank and was lifted by ladies in white who pulled her north.

FLY, HARRIET.
YOUR FAITH HAS WINGS.

Down south, the Freedom Riders' courage was tested.

They saw the color line with their own eyes.

In town after town: "colored" drinking fountains, restrooms, waiting rooms, and entrances; and whites-only restaurants,

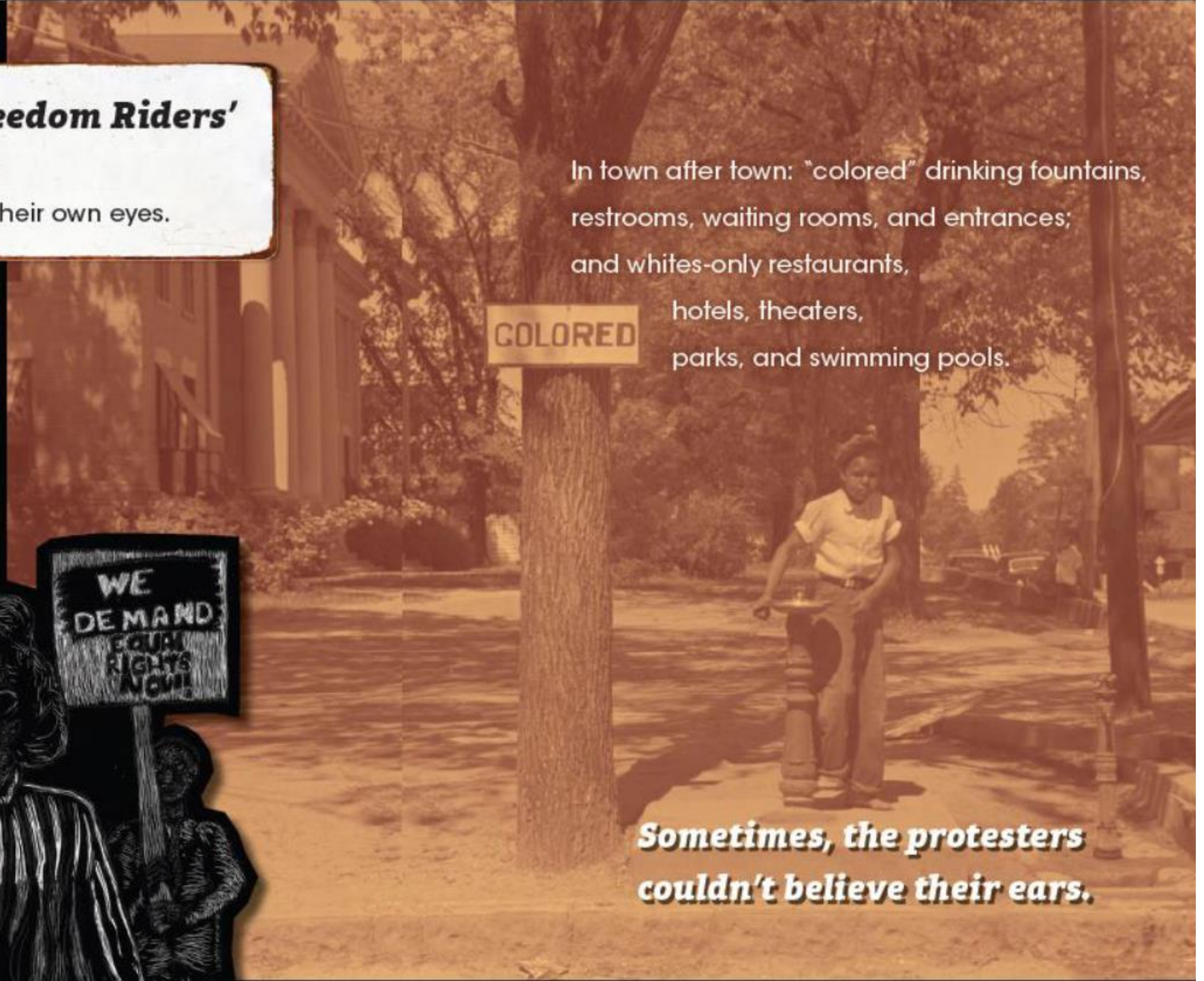
hotels, theaters, parks, and swimming pools.

COLORED

Sometimes, the protesters couldn't believe their ears.

EMPLOYMENT
EQUALS
FREEDOM

WE
DEMAND
EQUAL
RIGHTS
NOW!



Without so much as a second thought, whites called African Americans "out of their names," addressing grown men as "boy" and women as "girl" or "auntie," rather than **Miss, Mrs., or Mr.**

And African Americans were expected to answer.

Hecklers called the protesters even worse—*names too hateful to print.*



**Could Black
passengers**

***really sit where
they pleased?***

**Was the
law worth**

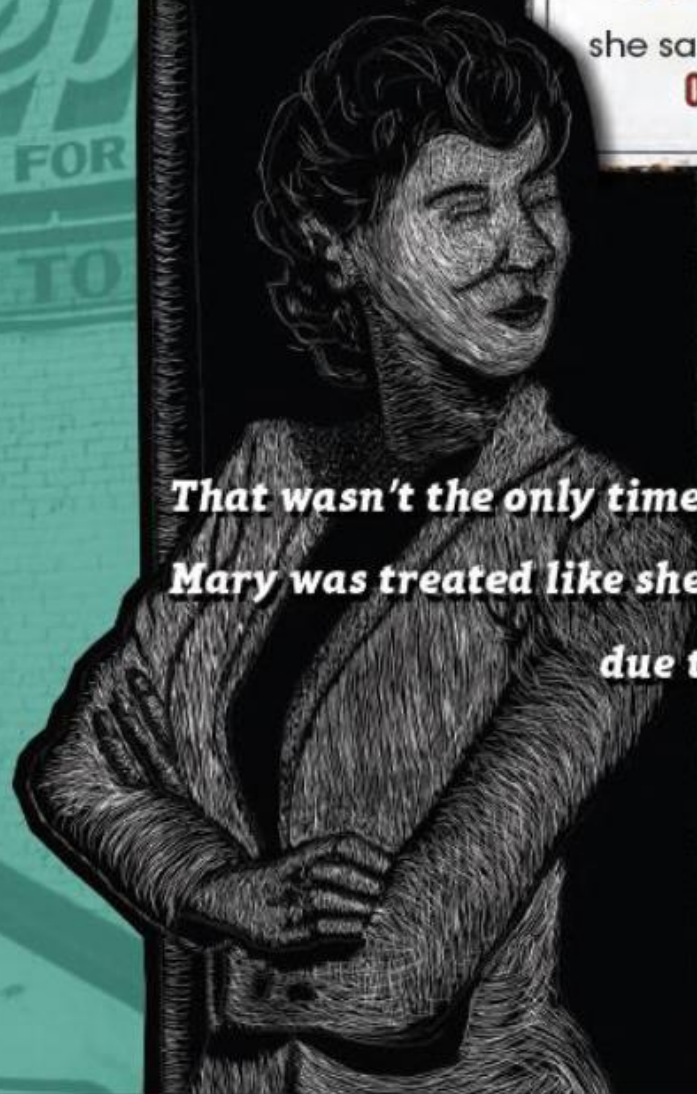
***the paper it was
printed on?***

In Tennessee, Mary was arrested again—
this time for picketing a theater
that made Black moviegoers sit in the balcony.
When the mayor came to the jail
and called her Mary, she demanded
that he call her "Miss Hamilton."



*That wasn't the only time
Mary was treated like she was second class
due to her skin color.*

**"IF YOU DON'T KNOW HOW
TO SPEAK TO A LADY,"
she said, "THEN GET OUT
OF MY CELL."**

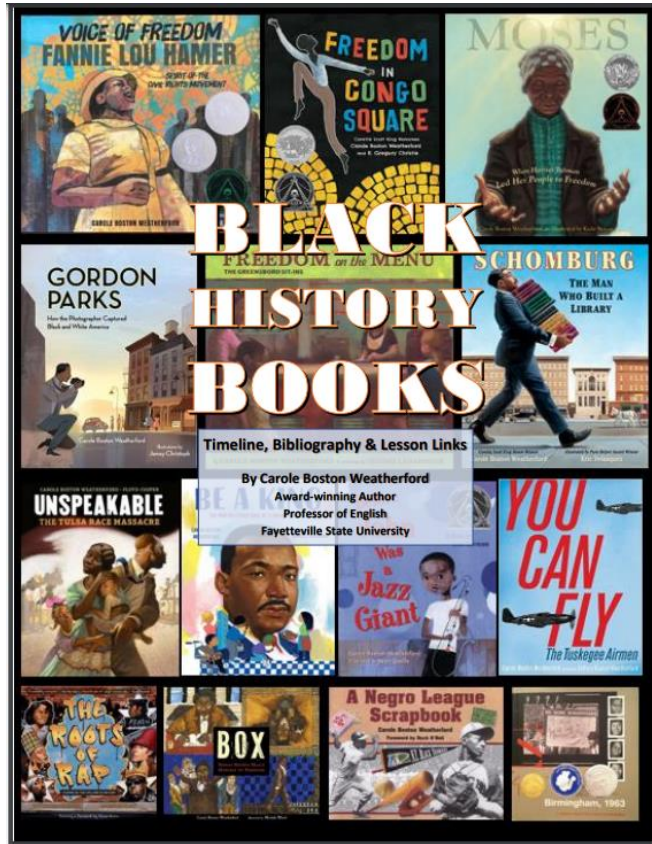


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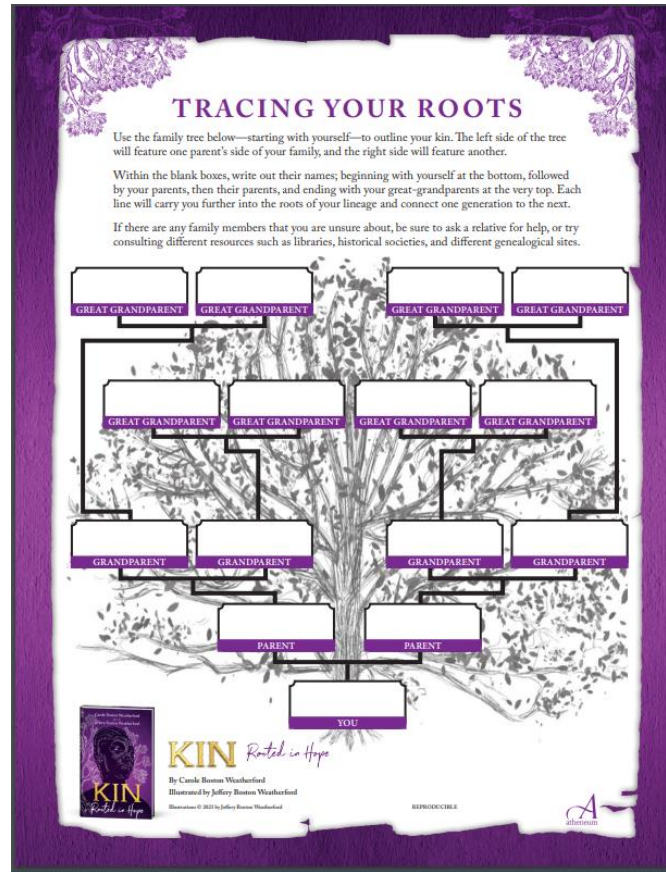


Exercise 4—The Ears Have It

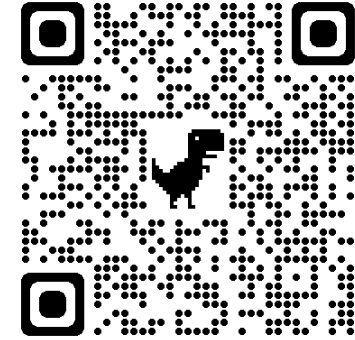
- Read your manuscript aloud to determine the flow.
- Ask yourself:
 - Do I have too many adjectives and adverbs?
 - Am I using the active voice?
 - Do I have enough dialogue?
 - Am I doing more telling than showing?
 - Does each scene advance the plot?



Annotated Bibliography



Visits Guide



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e



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