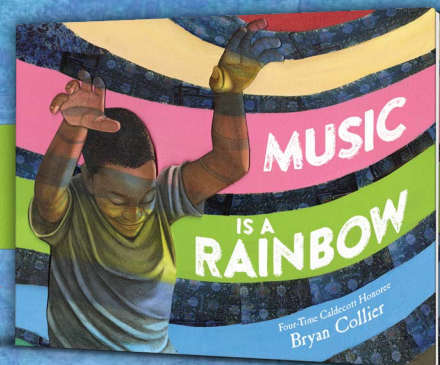


MUSIC IS A RAINBOW

By Bryan Collier

Teaching Tips



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Readers respond in multiple ways including: making connections to themselves, their families and communities, and their literacy experiences; pursuing their curiosity through discussion, inquiry, and self-expression; and changing their attitudes and behaviors. This guide provides suggestions and resources for supporting and extending students' authentic reading responses. Select activities and resources that best meet the needs and interests of your students.

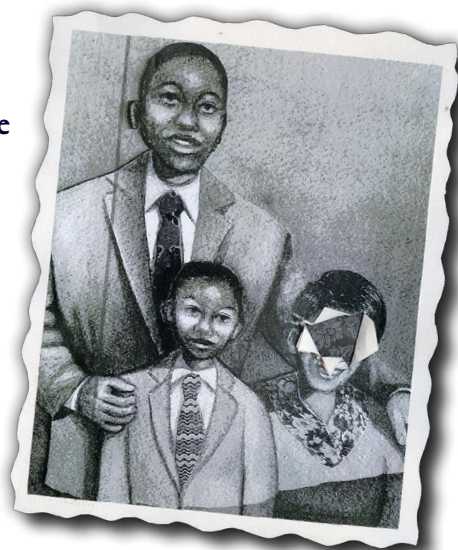
READ AND DISCUSS

Read *Music is a Rainbow* aloud and discuss the book with students. What ideas or themes stood out? What questions do they still have or what do they want to learn about now. Collect students' questions and ideas on chart paper or online platforms like Flipgrid or Seesaw, and/or invite students to record their thinking in notebooks or by drawing. Students' questions and a list of accessible resources provide a foundation for deeper inquiry and focused interdisciplinary connections. Consider reaching out to your school librarian/media specialist or local public children's librarian to help build a list of websites, books, school library databases, organizations, and other specialists in your community.

If you need guidance or suggestions for discussing trauma with young people and trauma-informed classroom strategies and practices, start with the [National Child Trauma Stress Network for Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators](#) and [Responding to Trauma in Your Classroom](#) from [Learning for Justice](#).

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS – CLASSROOM DISCUSSION & ACTIVITIES

1. *Music is a Rainbow* focuses on trauma as a result of poverty, medical crisis, family separation, and neglect; common behavioral responses; and coping strategies. Invite students to write in their notebooks about moments in their lives when they felt overwhelmed, upset, sad, or stressed because of events around them. What events have caused them stress? How did that event affect them? What has helped them reduce stress or develop a more hopeful outlook? Who do they turn to for support? Share one or two experiences of your own and invite a few students to share if appropriate. Focus the discussion on strategies and resources that help students overcome stressful situations and traumatic events—not students' stories of hardship or trauma. Model and set expectations for inclusivity and acceptance of all families and life experiences—recognizing that many young people can feel uncomfortable sharing opinions, preferences, or experiences that reveal differences or struggle. Encourage interest and respect for each other.



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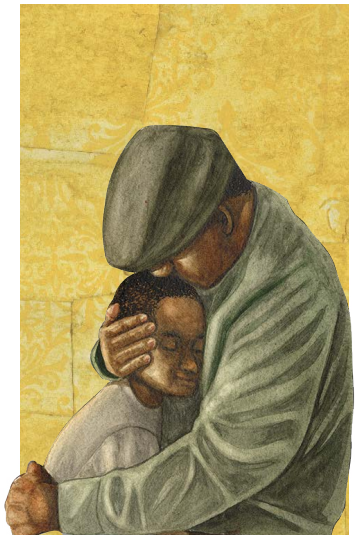
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2. Explain to students how illustrations work with text to tell a story, and that close observation and inference can reveal details about the story and its characters. Ask students what details they observe in the kitchen spread. What elements were included to give readers a sense of setting and time (clock, calendar, breakfast)? Have students observe other details in the illustrations and make inferences about the character's home (sharing a wall in an apartment), interests (boxing gloves), and where characters get together and how they express their love for one another (in the kitchen). Using the questions from [Visual Thinking Strategies](#) read and compare home scenes in other books to think about how illustrations give us a sense of family culture, traditions and rituals, and memories. Have students think about things in their own homes that might show what is important to their family (eg. photos, decorations). Ask students, even though the book is set in a different period of time, are there things that are the same in their families and homes?

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

1. Accessing community support and resources helps people to cope with hardship and difficult situations. Invite community members who provide health and safety services such as counselors or social workers to talk with students about ways to support a trauma-informed school community. What kinds of tools can you use to help feel calm when hard things happen? What tools does our community use to foster empathy for each other?
 - Learning for Justice offers a [webinar](#), [lesson plans](#), and [activities](#) for teaching students about empathy and perspective taking.
2. While it is important to use illustrative clues to draw conclusions about characters and their motivations, recognize that limited exposure to books with Black characters, and particularly Black joy, may lead students to make correlations that are based in stereotypes and bias. It is important to name both stereotypes and the complexities of expressions of love, joy, and pain in the boy's family (i.e. comparing the illustrations of the boy and his mother and the photograph when the mother's face is cut out). Use the text to have students think about what life is like for the boy, how he feels, and what things might be influencing his family situation that readers can't see. Use the opportunity to talk about family structure and think about reasons and situations where children are separated from their parents. As an extension, read other books from the Additional Resources section and *Ten Beautiful Things* by Molly Beth Griffin. Have students think about reasons why the girl is going to live with her grandmother. Ask students to self-interrogate how they related to the characters' experiences to understand how they may feel.



INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

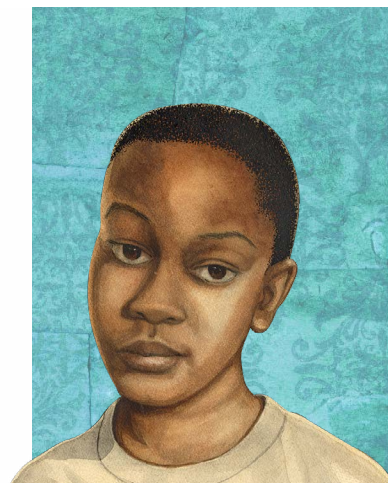
1. In the book, there is a powerful correlation between color and sound to bring calm and cope with trauma. When the boy is about to "get into trouble" with his friends, music causes him to pause but only temporarily. Ask students to think about why

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it doesn't last longer and how these times differ from the ending when he finds his rainbow. Why was the calm it brought him more permanent? The boy can, "relax in the blue and green. He could shine in the yellow and red, and he could dream in the purple and pink." Have students think about what the phrase "finding his rainbow" means and what might have happened if he wasn't lucky enough to find his rainbow.

Look at the ending spread focusing on the collage and the boy recalling his father's words "broken is beautiful." Point out how all the images in the collage are pieces of the boy, the boy's life, and the things that bring him joy. After thinking about what brings them joy and peace, have students make their own rainbow collage. Have students present to the class or community or write a reflection about what pieces of them make up their rainbow.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES – BOOKS

Absent/Sick Parents:

Mommy Sayang by Rosana Sullivan

The Invisible String by Patrice Karst, Joanne Lew-Vriethoff

Mango Moon : When Deportation Divides a Family

by Diane de Anda, Sue Cornelison

Love by Matt de la Peña, Loren Long

Carmela Full of Wishes by Matt de la Peña, Christian Robinson

Knock Knock: My Dad's Dream for Me by Daniel Beaty, Bryan Collier

Visiting Days by Jacqueline Woodson, James Ransome

Mama's Nightingale: A Story of Immigration and Separation

by Edwidge Danticat, Leslie Staub

Walk with Me by Jairo Buitrago, Rafael Yockteng

Salma the Syrian Chef by Danny Ramadan, Anna Bron

Far Apart, Close in Heart: Being a Family When a Loved One is

Incarcerated by Becky Birtha, Maja Kastelic

Creativity as a Response to Adversity:

Ada's Violin: The Story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay

by Susan Hood, Sally Wern Comport

Radiant Child: The Story of Young Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat

by Javaka Steptoe

Milo Imagines the World by Matt de la Peña, Christian Robinson

Older books:

Land of Cranes by Aida Salazar

When Stars Are Scattered by Victoria Jamieson, Omar Mohamed,

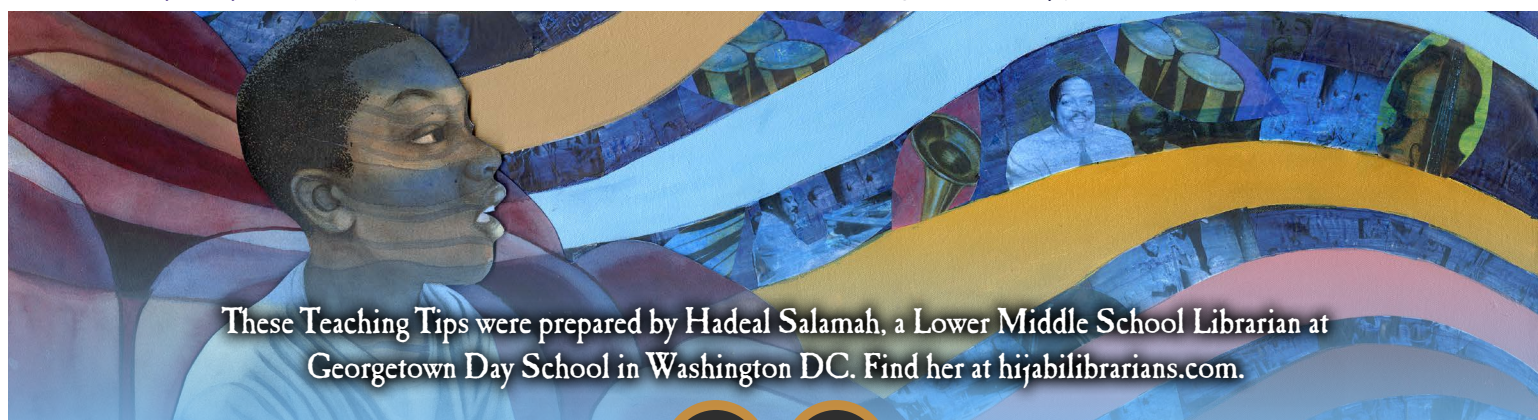
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From the Desk of Zoe Washington by Janae Marks

All Rise for the Honorable Perry T. Cook by Leslie Connor

Born Behind Bars by Padma Venkatraman

Carry Me Home by Janet Fox



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