

# Coretta Scott King

## 2021 DISCUSSION GUIDE

American Library Association

Ethnic and Multicultural  
Information Exchange Round Table

Coretta Scott King Book Awards Committee



**ALA**  
DIVERSITY, LITERACY  
& OUTREACH SERVICES

American  
Library  
Association

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# American Library Association

## Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table

### Coretta Scott King Book Awards Committee

The Coretta Scott King Book Awards Discussion Guide was prepared by the 2021 Coretta Scott King Book Award jury: LaKeshia Darden, Jason Driver, Jewel Davis, Maria Estrella, Shelia Geraty, Maegen Rose, and Susan Polos.

The activities and discussion topics are developed to encompass state and school standards. These standards apply equally to students from all linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Students will demonstrate their proficiency, skills, and knowledge of subject matter in accordance with national and state standards. Please refer to the US Department of Education website, [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov), for detailed information.

The Coretta Scott King Book Awards seal was designed by artist Lev Mills in 1974. The symbolism of the seal reflects both Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s philosophy and the award's ideals.

The basic circle represents continuity in movement, revolving from one idea to another. Within the image is an African American child reading a book. The five main religious

symbols below the image of the child represent nonsectarianism. The superimposed pyramid symbolizes both strength and Atlanta University, the award's headquarters when the seal was designed. At the apex of the pyramid is a dove, symbolic of peace. The rays shine toward peace and brotherhood.

The Coretta Scott King Book Awards seal image and award name are solely and exclusively owned by the American Library Association.

The discussion guide has been generously provided by Penguin Young Readers.



# The Coretta Scott King Book Awards: A Living Legend

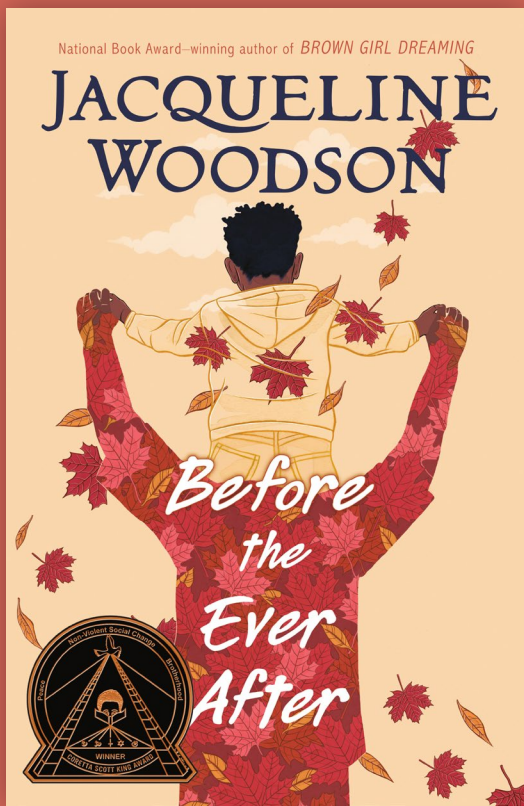


The Coretta Scott King Book Awards have grown since their conception in the late 1960s. At a dinner gala of the New Jersey Library Association in May 1970, Lillie Patterson was honored for her biography *Martin Luther King, Jr.: Man of Peace*. In 1972, the first Coretta Scott King Book Awards breakfast was held at an ALA conference site. Official affiliation with the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) came in 1980, and in 1982, the American Library Association recognized the Coretta Scott King Book Award as an association award. During the 2003 ALA Midwinter meeting, the Coretta Scott King Task Force joined the Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT). The affiliation with EMIERT gave the group a new name: the Coretta Scott King Book Awards Committee. Success of the committee can be attributed to the work of tireless volunteers and visionary founders. For a more complete history, consult *The Coretta Scott King Awards Book: From Vision to Reality*, edited by Henrietta M. Smith, American Library Association, 1994; and *The Coretta Scott King Awards: 1970–2009*, fourth edition, by Henrietta M. Smith, American Library Association, 2009.

For more than fifty years, books by African American writers and artists have been honored by receiving the Coretta Scott King Book Award. This award promotes understanding

and appreciation of African American culture and the culture of all peoples. The award is designed to commemorate the life and works of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and to honor Mrs. Coretta Scott King for her courage and determination to continue the work for peace and world brotherhood. The multidimensional characteristics of the authors' and illustrators' works reflect the African American experience from both the historical and contemporary perspectives. Opportunities to celebrate the rich and powerful experiences depicted in these books lie in the hands of the adults in children's and young adults' lives.

This discussion guide is, therefore, dedicated to those teachers, parents, librarians, booksellers, and caregivers who are committed to enriching the lives of children and young adults through quality literature. Among their many other functions, book awards provide a simple means for casual browsers in bookstores, libraries, and schools to find material that is engaging, well crafted, and satisfying both emotionally and intellectually. The Coretta Scott King Book Awards particularly introduce the best in African American literature to all children. The award now graces dozens of titles, from picture books for the smallest children to novels and nonfiction for teenagers. In this guide, we have examined some of these titles from different angles and perspectives.



## 2021 Author Award Winner *Before the Ever After*

Written by  
**Jacqueline Woodson**

Published by Nancy Paulsen Books,  
an imprint of Penguin Young  
Readers, a division of Penguin  
Random House



**H**earbreaking yet hopeful, Woodson's novel-in-verse eloquently explores how ZJ deals with the symptoms CTE gives his father and how the family tries to cope with the disease's effects. As ZJ struggles with his ever-changing relationship with his father, he is surrounded by the love and support of his family and friends. The reader goes on a painful journey with ZJ and experiences through a child's eyes how it feels to lose the one person who is the center of your world.

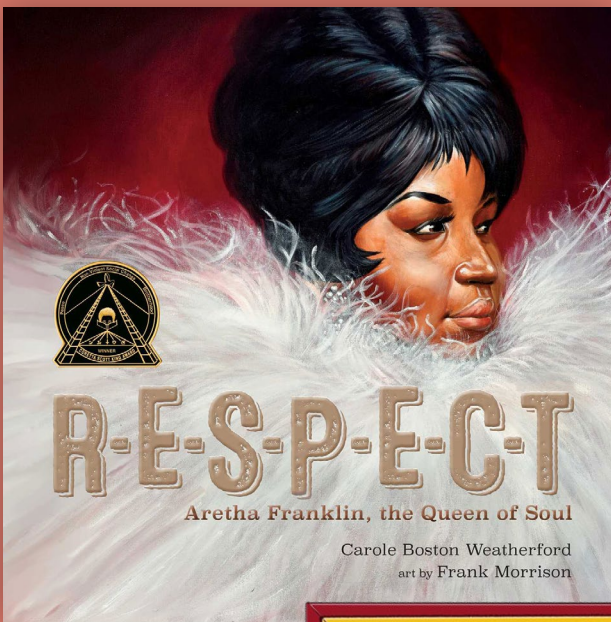
- This book reveals that athletes often return to the game after an injury before they are actually fully healed, due to the pressure from society that often builds up and positions professional athletes as superhuman. Why is this dangerous?
- This novel is written in verse, meaning the narrative is told using poetry. Consider a tradition of your family to share with others. Retell that tradition in verse.

### Activities and Discussion Questions

- In *Before the Ever After*, ZJ's father experiences life-altering mental-health issues that are a consequence of CTE. What is CTE? What do we know about the disease now that we didn't know in the 1990s, which is when the book takes place?

### Related CSK Titles

*Brown Girl Dreaming*, written by Jacqueline Woodson, published by Penguin Random House; *The Crossover*, written by Kwame Alexander, published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Books for Young Readers; *When I Was the Greatest*, written by Jason Reynolds, published by Simon and Schuster



2021 Illustrator  
Award Winner  
**R-E-S-P-E-C-T:**  
**Aretha Franklin,**  
**the Queen of Soul**

**Written by**  
**Carole Boston Weatherford**

**Illustrated by**  
**Frank Morrison**

**Published by Atheneum Books for**  
**Young Readers, an imprint of Simon &**  
**Schuster Children's Publishing**



**M**orrison's rich, vibrant, and grand depictions capture the essence of Aretha Franklin and give the Queen of Soul the R-E-S-P-E-C-T she is due. Morrison's skillful composition captures Aretha's likeness from childhood into adulthood, and masterfully pays homage to her contribution to the Civil Rights Movement.

Aretha, including experiences in her youth, her formal and informal musical training, her early success singing in churches, her shift to R&B, her political activities, and her many achievements. Choose one of these topics to explore in more detail and present your findings in a multimedia presentation.

### *Activities and Discussion Questions*

- After reading the book, why do you think Aretha Franklin was called the "Queen of Soul"?
- Listen to a few of Aretha Franklin's songs. Draw images to describe how her music makes you feel.
- In the back matter, Carole Boston Weatherford provides more detailed information about

### *Related CSK Titles*

*Let the Children March*, illustrated by Frank Morrison, written by Monica Clark-Robinson, published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company; *Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer, Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement*, illustrated by Ekuia Holmes, written by Carole Boston Weatherford, published by Candlewick Press; *JOSEPHINE: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker*, illustrated by Christian Robinson, written by Patricia Hruby Powell, published by Chronicle Books LLC

# 2021 John Steptoe New Talent Author Award *Legendborn*



**Written by  
Tracy Deonn**

**Published by Margaret K. McElderry  
Books, an imprint of Simon &  
Schuster Children's Publishing**



**S**truggling with the loss of her mother, grieving sixteen-year-old Bree leaves home to attend early college at UNC Chapel Hill. On the first night of her stay, Bree witnesses a supernatural demon attack and subsequently discovers the Legendborn, a magical secret society with members descended from the Order of the Round Table. Seeking to uncover connections between her mother's death and the Legendborn, Bree joins the society and finds she has her own ancestral legacy of magic and power. Exploring power, racial prejudice, and healing, Tracey Deonn's fast-paced fantasy narrative centers Black girl magic and serves as a counterstory that reclaims and infuses Black legacy into Arthurian legend.

## Discussion Questions

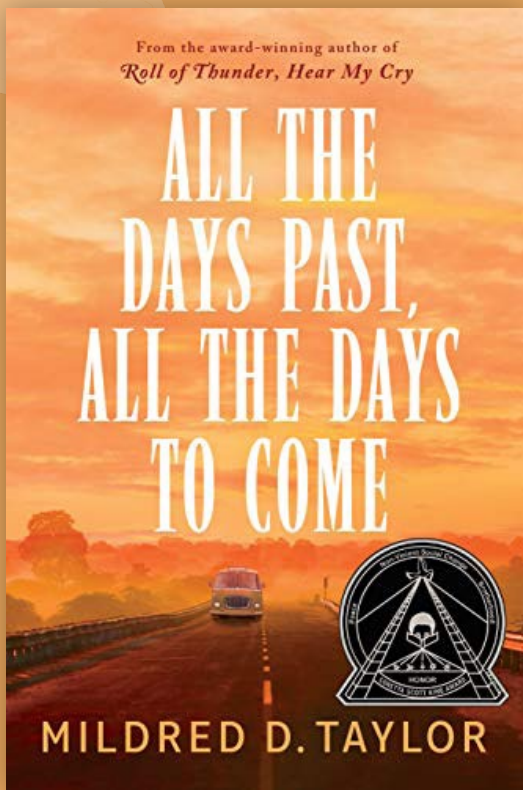
- Explore the characterization of Bree as she deals with her grief, learns about her family's past, and navigates her position in a setting full of racial prejudice. Discuss how Bree navigates magic, power, and privilege, and compare Bree's journey to the challenges found in a traditional hero's journey.
- *Legendborn* rewrites the history of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table by including voices left out of the narrative. Discuss the concept of legend and what makes a person legendary. Write

about a person in your family whose story you want remembered and retold.

- In setting *Legendborn* on the campus of UNC Chapel Hill, a southern predominantly white institution (PWI), Tracy Deonn explores the less acknowledged history of Black labor and racial discrimination at southern institutions of higher education. Research the historical contributions and impact of African Americans at a PWI near you.
- Bree explores Rootcraft, a fictional magic system inspired by the various traditional spiritual practices of African Americans. Research the history of rootwork, Hoodoo, and African American folk healing practices.

## Related CSK Titles

*Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky*, written by Kwame Mbalia, published by Disney-Hyperion, an imprint of Disney Book Group; *Hoodoo*, written by Ronald L. Smith, published by Clarion Books, an imprint of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; *The Dark-Thirty: Southern Tales of the Supernatural*, written by Patricia C. McKissack, illustrated by Brian Pinkney, published by Alfred A. Knopf



## 2021 Author Honor *All the Days Past, All the Days to Come*

Written by  
**Mildred D. Taylor**

Published by Viking, an imprint of  
Penguin Young Readers, a division  
of Penguin Random House



In this epic conclusion to the Logan Family Saga, *All the Days Past, All the Days to Come* opens in 1944. Cassie Logan, first introduced in *Song of the Trees* (1975) and *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1976), is now a young woman coming into her own. Cassie evolves as she travels from Toledo to California, Colorado, and Boston, before later returning home to Mississippi. Along the way she experiences tremendous love and loss that shapes her worldview. Through Cassie's story, Taylor seamlessly weaves together an all-encompassing story of the American Civil Rights Movement. From the Great Migration north to segregation to the murders of Medgar Evers and Emmett Till and the rise of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the Logan family's bond, commitment to their land, and fight for justice is a testament of the enduring strength of a Black family.

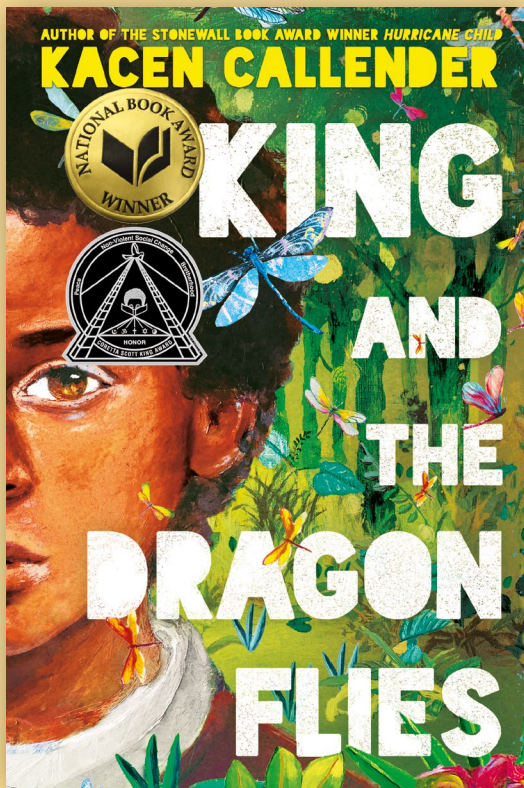
### Discussion Questions

- What are some of the historic events and catalysts to the Civil Rights Movement that Cassie Logan witnesses?
- In literature, conflict is a device defined by the tension between two opposing forces. Conflicts can be internal or external as they advance the narrative. What are some of the prominent conflicts in *All the Days Past, All the Days to Come*? Are they internal or external conflicts?
- As Cassie set out to find her place in the world, she decided to become a lawyer. What events in the novel may have foreshadowed this career decision?

- Considering Cassie's involvement in the voting rights movement, who are historical Black women that may have inspired her activism? Conversely, who are contemporary Black women that could have been inspired by Cassie's legacy? In what ways are their stories parallel?

### Related CSK Titles

*Lifting as We Climb: Black Women's Battle for the Ballot Box*, written by Evette Dionne, published by Viking, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC; *March: Book One*, written by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin, illustrated by Nate Powell, published by Top Shelf Productions; *Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer, Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement*, written by Carole Boston Weatherford, published by Candlewick Press; *The Rock and the River*, written by Kekla Magoon, published by Aladdin, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division; *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963*, written by Christopher Paul Curtis, published by Delacorte; *The Land*, written by Mildred D. Taylor, published by Phyllis Fogelman Books/Penguin Putnam; *Mississippi Challenge*, written by Mildred Pitts Walter, published by Bradbury; *The Road to Memphis*, written by Mildred D. Taylor, published by Dial; *Let the Circle Be Unbroken*, written by Mildred D. Taylor, published by Dial



## 2021 Author Honor *King and the Dragonflies*

**Written by  
Kacen Callender**

**Published by Scholastic Press,  
an imprint of Scholastic Inc.**



*King and the Dragonflies* is a magical coming-of-age tale that masterfully introduces young readers to difficult subjects of racism, intersectional identity, toxic masculinity, grief, the stigma of seeking therapy, and child abuse. Kingston “King” Reginald James obtains emotional support in the most unlikely place—he believes his older brother, Khalid, has transformed into a dragonfly that helps him process and reconcile with who he is rather than what society wants him to be.

### *Activities and Discussion Questions*

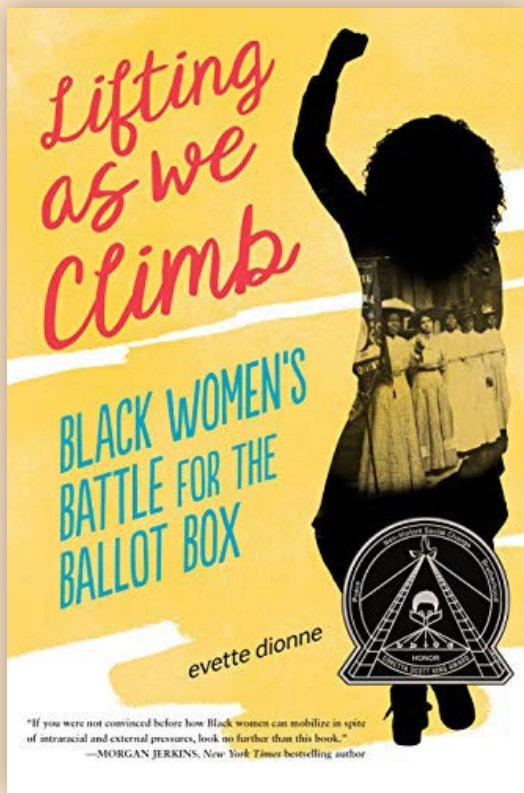
- Do you think Khalid’s dreams are tickets to magical worlds or premonitions to prepare King for his sudden death? Is there evidence within the book that can back up your opinion?
- Although King rejected Sandy Sanders’s friendship for liking boys, why do you think he still bestows compassion when he realized King is grieving? Please elaborate on how you would react.

- The book beautifully links magical elements within the story and utilizes the dragonfly as a spiritual symbol of change, transformation, and self-realization. Do you think the dragonfly is truly Khalid guiding King through his journey? Why or why not?
- How can young readers begin and/or continue the conversation of stopping toxic perspectives regarding racism and the LGBTQIA+ community? Please elaborate on how you could create a platform of acceptance.

### *Related CSK Titles*

*From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun*, written by Jacqueline Woodson, published by Puffin Books; *The Skin I’m In*, written by Sharon Flake, published by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers; *Bronx Masquerade*, written by Nikki Grimes, published by Dial Books; *Darius & Twig*, written by Walter Dean Myers, published by Amistad Press





## 2021 Author Honor *Lifting as We Climb: Black Women's Battle for the Ballot Box*

Written by  
**Evette Dionne**

Published by Viking, an imprint of  
Penguin Young Readers, a division  
of Penguin Random House



*Lifting as We Climb* depicts the exploits of little-known African American heroes of the suffrage movement. With the impetus emanating from the abolitionist movement and drawing inspiration from Hillary Clinton's historic run for the American presidency in 2016 and the resulting wave of feminism surrounding this event, Dionne beautifully delves into the seemingly invisible lives of America's lost heroes. Told in rich, clear, and concise text with supporting photos, historical notes, background, source notes, and endpapers, this compendium of heroes is sure to add depth and weight to any school unit about the Black suffrage movement.

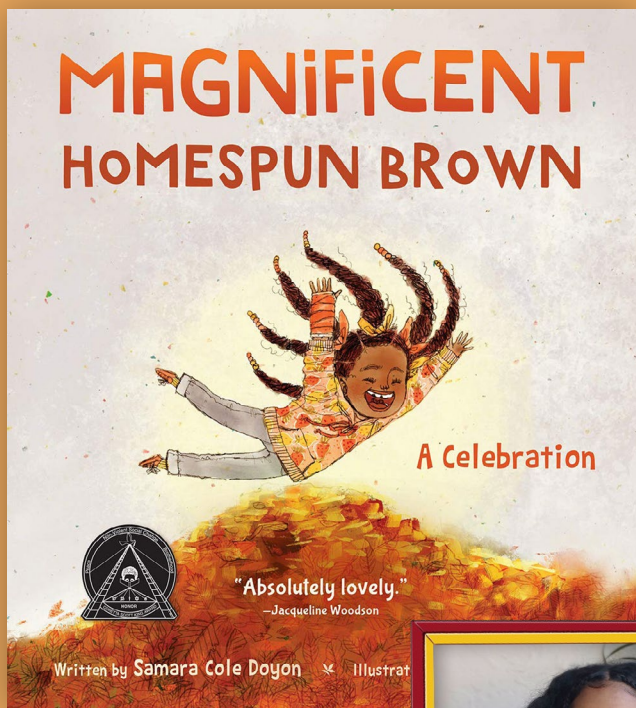
### *Activities and Discussion Questions*

- Why do you think there were so many Black women pioneers in the abolitionist and suffragist movements?
- What similarities do you see in Black women's liberation movements of nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the Black Lives Matter movement of today?
- What are some of the biggest challenges facing Black women today?

- Stacey Abrams is a modern-day hero for her efforts to stem voter suppression in Georgia. Which historical suffragist(s) would you compare her to? Why?
- Why was education so important to suffragists? How did their efforts impact history and what has been their lasting legacies?

### *Related CSK Titles*

*A Few Red Drops: The Chicago Race Riot of 1919*, written by Claire Hartfield, published by Clarion Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; *Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hammer: The Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement*, written by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Ekua Holmes, published by Candlewick Press; *Mary Mcleod Bethune*, written by Eloise Greenfield, illustrated by Jerry Pinkney, published by Crowell; *Let It Shine: Stories of Black Women Freedom Fighters*, written by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Stephen Alcorn, published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; *Only Passing Through: The Story of Sojourner Truth*, written by Anne Rockwell, illustrated by Gregory R. Christie, published by Dell Dragonfly Books



## 2021 Illustrator Honor *Magnificent Homespun Brown: A Celebration*

Written by  
**Samara Cole Doyon**

Illustrated by  
**Kaylani Juanita**

**Published by Tilbury House Publishers**



*Magnificent Homespun Brown: A Celebration* is a picture book that captures the multitude of ways young girls delight in connecting with their families throughout the seasons and the way in which they gather these ordinary and yet special moments in a tapestry that becomes the fabric of their own identities.

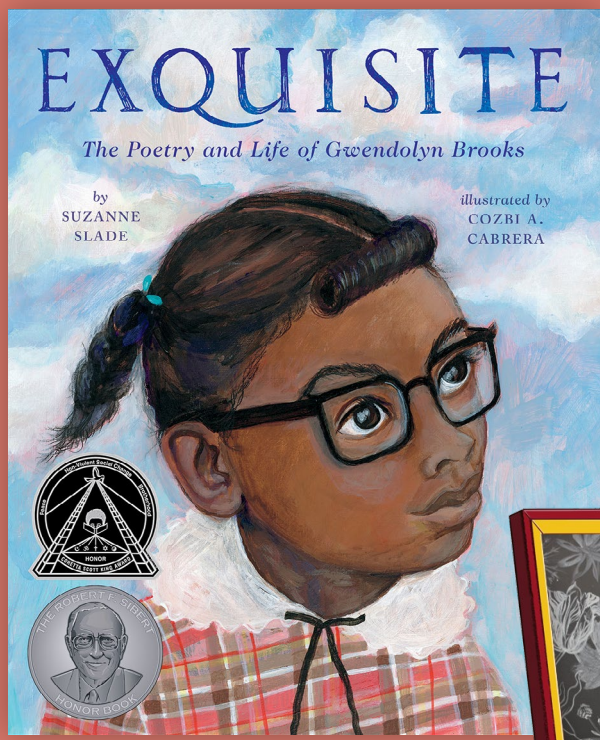
### *Activities and Discussion Questions*

- What are some of the adjectives used to describe the color brown in this story? How does the author bring each shade of brown to life?
- Select an illustration and share what you are able to observe in the illustration that might surprise you or seem different from other illustrations in picture books you're more used to seeing.

- Why do you think the author chose *Magnificent Homespun Brown: A Celebration* as the book's title? What does "homespun" mean in this context?

### *Related CSK Titles*

*The Blacker the Berry*, written by Joyce Carol Thomas, illustrated by Floyd Cooper, published by Joanna Cotter Books, HarperCollins; *Brown Honey in Broomwheat Tea*, written by Joyce Carol Thomas, illustrated by Floyd Cooper, published by HarperCollins; *Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut*, written by Derrick Barnes, illustrated by Gordon C. James, published by Bolden, an Agate Imprint, a Denine Millner Book



## 2021 Illustrator Honor Exquisite: The Poetry and Life of Gwendolyn Brooks

**Written by Suzanne Slade**  
**Illustrated by Cozbi Cabrera**

**Published by Abrams Books  
for Young Readers**

Hailed as one of the most influential poets of the twentieth century, *Exquisite: The Poetry and Life of Gwendolyn Brooks* chronicles the struggles of her early life, transition to adulthood, and writing achievements that led to her becoming the first Black person to win a Pulitzer Prize, awarded for poetry in 1950. Slade's lyrical storytelling coupled with snippets of Brooks's poem "Clouds" highlights themes of poverty, gender, and race frequently found in Brooks's work.

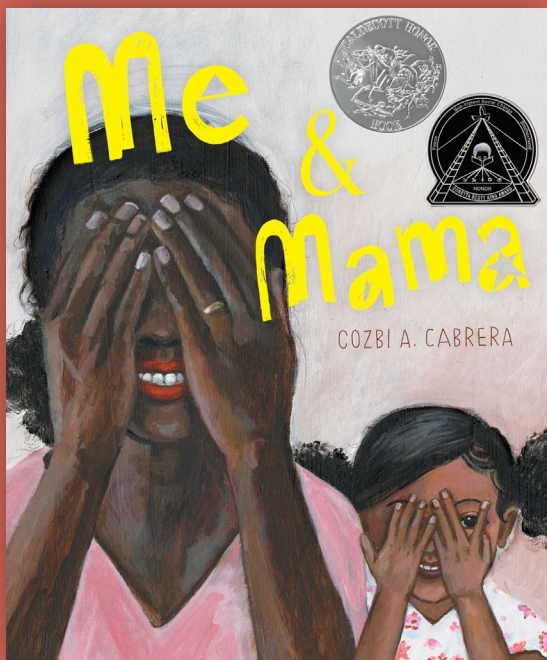
### Activities and Discussion Questions

- At what age did Gwendolyn begin writing poetry?
- Despite significant financial hardship in her childhood and as a wife and mother, Gwendolyn continued writing poetry and submitting it to contests. Using examples from the text, why do you believe she did this?
- Using the timeline at the end of the book, identify some of Gwendolyn's other achievements.

- Gwendolyn was known for writing poems in various poetic styles, such as sonnets, free verse, and haikus, that detailed life on Chicago's South Side. Pick a poetic style and write a poem describing your community.

### Related CSK Titles

*I, Too, Am America*, written by Langston Hughes, illustrated by Bryan Collier, published by Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division; *The Great Migration: Journey to the North*, written by Eloise Greenfield, illustrated by Jan Spivey Gilchrist, published by Amistad, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers; *The Blacker the Berry*, written by Joyce Carol Thomas, illustrated by Floyd Cooper, published by Joanna Cotler Books, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers; *Ashley Bryan's ABC of African American Poetry*, written by Ashley Bryan, published by Jean Karl/Atheneum



## 2021 Illustrator Honor Me & Mama

**Illustrated and Written  
by Cozbi A. Cabrera**

**Published by Denene Millner Books/  
Simon & Schuster Books for Young  
Readers, an imprint of Simon &  
Schuster Children's Publishing**



Cozbi A. Cabrera creates a loving homage to a young girl and her mother. Vibrant textured illustrations rendered in royal blue, greens, pinks, gray, and brown tones further the intimacy and camaraderie as the duo enjoy their daily routines. Childlike words accompany the stunning illustrations depicting two cups—one Mama-sized and one child-sized—on facing pages: “This is Mama’s cup. This is my cup.” Mama- and child-sized toothbrushes, rainboots, oatmeal bowls, and more further the maternal/child connection. Cabrera’s lyrical text and masterful command of color and texture make for a luscious picture book experience.

child’s favorite book, or Mama’s favorite flower near her child’s favorite flower, Mama’s ice-cream cone next to her child’s. See the book’s end pages for inspiration.

- Explore different shapes by tracing Mama’s and child’s hands and feet. Draw each other’s eyes, noting similarities and differences in shape and color.
- Visit a local library and select books that Mama and child will enjoy reading together.
- Fold laundry together and notice the different-sized clothes and sort accordingly.

### *Activities and Discussion Questions*

- Using *Me & Mama* as a touchstone text, craft a multimedia book using photographs, watercolor paintings, collage, and written words to pay tribute to mothers, grandmothers, or special friends. Like the illustrations in the book, show the pairing of objects, one belonging to the adult and the other to the child.
- Stage a photo or create a drawing that juxtapose mother’s and child’s personal objects that connect to everyday routines or family hobbies. For example, Mama’s favorite book next to her

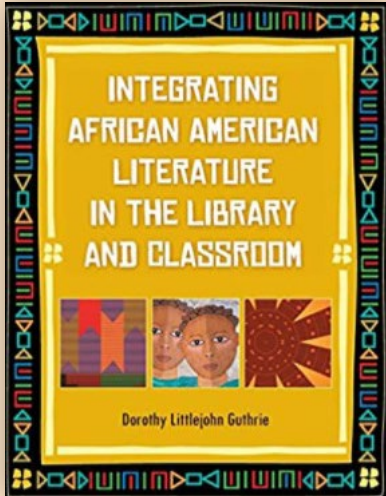
### *Related CSK Titles*

*Magnificent Homespun Brown: A Celebration*, written by Samara Cole Doyon, illustrated by Kaylani Juanita, published by Tilbury House Publishers; *Thank You, Omu!*, written and illustrated by Oge Mora, published by Little, Brown Young Readers; *Last Stop on Market Street*, written by Matt de la Peña, illustrated by Christian Robinson, published by G. P. Putnam’s Sons, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group; *Exquisite: The Poetry and Life of Gwendolyn Brooks*, written by Suzanne Slade, illustrated by Cozbi A. Cabrera, published by Abrams Books for Young Readers



## 2021 Coretta Scott King Virginia Hamilton Award for Lifetime Achievement (Practitioner)

# Dorothy L. Guthrie



Dorothy L. Guthrie is an award-winning retired librarian, district administrator, author, and school board member. A respected children's literature advocate, Guthrie promotes and affirms the rich perspectives of African Americans. She infuses Coretta Scott King Book Award-winning books into programs that engage libraries, schools, and communities. Her work *Integrating African American Literature in the Library and Classroom* connects educators with African American literature. Guthrie founded the first African American museum in her home of Gaston County, North Carolina. Her enthusiasm and creativity for connecting her community with African American books is uniquely inspiring. Through exemplary programs she elevates awareness of diverse literature both locally and nationally.

## About the Coretta Scott King - Virginia Hamilton Award for Lifetime Achievement

The Coretta Scott King - Virginia Hamilton Award for Lifetime Achievement is named in memory of beloved children's author Virginia Hamilton. The annual award is presented in even years to an African American author, illustrator, or author/illustrator for a body of their published books for children and/or young adults, and who has made a significant and lasting literary contribution. In odd years, the award is presented to a practitioner for substantial contributions through active engagement with youth using award-winning African American literature for children and/or young adults via implementation of reading and reading related activities or programs.



Virginia Hamilton was an award-winning author of children's books. She wrote more than thirty-five books throughout her career, including *M. C. Higgins, the Great*, for which she won the 1975 Newbery Medal. During her lifetime, Hamilton received numerous awards including the Coretta Scott King Book Award, the Edgar Allan Poe Award, the *Atlanta Globe-Horn* Book Award, and the Hans Christian Andersen Award.

