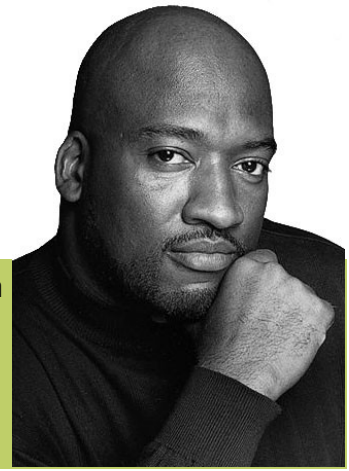


Telling Stories: Bryan Collier

Thursday, October 16, 2009

11 a.m.–12 p.m. ET

Grades 4–6



When viewing *Telling Stories: Bryan Collier* and participating in this guide's suggested activities, the following language arts standards sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association will be addressed: 1, 2, 3, 7, 11, & 12 as are the following National Standards for the Arts: 4, 5, & 6.

Inspired Early

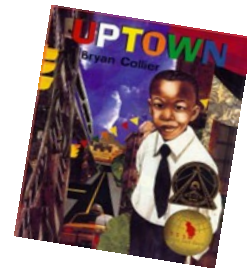
Bryan Collier was born and raised in Pocomoke on Maryland's Eastern Shore, the youngest of six children. Reading was encouraged in his family and so Bryan was exposed to books early on. Imaginative picture books inspired Bryan, an influence he still recalls.

Bryan's unique style of art won accolades from the beginning. As a young artist in 1985, his work won first place in a Congressional Competition and was showed in the U.S. Capitol Building. The same year, he won a scholarship to the Pratt Institute in New York City where he graduated with a degree in fine art.

During his years at Pratt, Bryan started volunteering at the Harlem Horizon Studio and the Harlem Hospital Center where he later became the program's director. It was a time during which Bryan saw firsthand the power in positive images created by and for young people. He decided that illustrated books would provide a forum for his images.

Moving into the Book World

It took seven years to find a publisher who would take a chance on an unknown artist. The result was a book both written and illustrated by Bryan, *Uptown* (Holt). The collage illustrations for this boldly illustrated book provide a tour of Bryan's Harlem. The book won a Coretta Scott King Award and was given the Ezra Jack Keats Award for Best New Illustrator.



Since the publication of *Uptown*, Bryan's work continues to receive prestigious awards including the Coretta Scott King Award and two Caldecott Honors.

Bryan has developed a distinctive style of collage, blending original watercolor paintings and cut outs from various sources. For him, "Collage is more than just an art style. Collage is all about bringing different elements together. Once you form a sensibility about connection, how different elements relate to each other, you deepen your understanding of yourself and others."

Though he now illustrates full-time, Bryan continues to work with young people directly while balancing being the father of a young child.

About the Program

Bryan Collier feels strongly that young people need to see themselves and the diverse world in which they live in books. He will discuss his art and some of the influences on it as well as his books, artistic techniques, and what he views as the role of illustrated books in a visual society.

The discussion will focus viewers to examine Collier's books in greater detail with an emphasis on the imagery in *Martin's Big Words* and *Rosa*. Other titles to be discussed include *Uptown*, *John Lennon*, and *Barack Obama*.

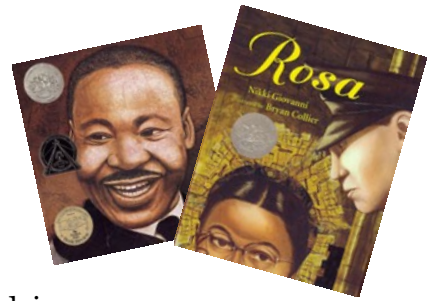
Instructional Activities

Reading/Writing

Read *Martin's Big Words*. What are the “big words”? Why do you think they are important? How do they relate to the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.?

Use one of the quotes from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a prompt to write about what real event the quote reflects.

Identify someone in your community who has done something that you think is significant. Find out more about them and write a biographical essay. Research techniques may include interviewing the person or someone who knows (or knew) them; doing an Internet search; and visiting the local library.



Compare your techniques to those used by Bryan Collier after learning how he researches his books.

Research/History

Rosa Parks, a contemporary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. played a significant role in the Civil Rights movement. Find out about the period in which Mrs. Parks and Dr. King lived. Why was the Montgomery Bus Boycott so critical? Do you think it was more difficult to cope with such a boycott in the 1950s?

Uptown provides a “tour” of a boy’s town. Create a historical glimpse of where you live. Try to learn how your community has changed. How is it different than 10 years ago? 25 years ago? 100 years ago? Try to find early pictures of your community. What else might you use if you can’t find pictures (photographs or paintings)? Use words or images to show your findings.

Learn about collage as an artistic technique. What are its origins? Who is credited with making it a respected medium? What distinguishes it from other media?

Visual Arts

In an illustrator’s note in *Martin’s Big Words*, the artist discusses the use of stained glass windows as metaphor. Why was this image chosen? How and where else is stained glass used in the book? What other visual metaphors can you identify?

Rosa Parks appears to have a halo, called a “nimbus” in Collier’s book with the same title. Why do you think he uses it for Rosa Parks? What does a nimbus symbolize? How else is it used? What other images are likely to include a nimbus?

Visit a local or an online gallery to see an exhibit of artwork. What techniques can you find? Were there any collages? What creates the variation in techniques, styles, and tone of different artists?

Resources

Internet Resources:

Create Your Own Collage: <http://www.nga.gov/kids/zone/zone.htm>

American Memory project of the Library of Congress: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aohtml/exhibit/aopart9.html>

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Center: <http://thekingcenter.com/>

Select Books by Bryan Collier:

Barack Obama: Son of Promise, Child of Hope, words by Nikki Grimes (Simon & Schuster, 2008).

Doo-Wop Bop, words by Roni Schottner (Amistad, 2008).

John’s Secret Dreams: The Story of John Lennon, words by Doreen Rappaport (Hyperion, 2004).

Lincoln and Douglass: An American Friendship, text by Nikki Giovanni (Holt, 2008).

Martin’s Big Words: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr., words by Doreen Rappaport (Hyperion, 2001).

Rosa, words by Nikki Giovanni (Holt, 2005).

Uptown, words & illustrations by Bryan Collier (Holt, 2000).