



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
AND HUMAN ECOLOGY

Mirrors and Windows...

LITERATURE WHERE CHILDREN SEE THEMSELVES AND OTHERS

BOOK DESIGN PART 3: THE TITLE PAGE

In this newsletter, I focus on the title page as an element of picturebook design. Lawrence R. Sipe (1998) wrote, "Every part of the picturebook is meaningful, from front to back cover. If we simply begin to read where the story begins without examining its cover, dust jacket, endpages, title page, and other front matter, we miss much meaning" (p. 66). Picturebook title pages usually contain the full title, the author's and illustrator's names, and the publisher. Before the title page, some picturebooks also have a half-title page, usually featuring the title and an illustration. Picturebooks have a limited number of pages to tell the story, so picturebook creators use every page thoughtfully and intentionally.

Several picturebook creators provided insights on the function of title pages. Vice President and Publisher Neal Porter (the editor of *Giant Squid* and *Watercress*) views them like "the credits that appear before most movies...a signal...that the show is about to begin." Likewise, Vice President and Executive Director Maria Modugno sees "the title page as the introduction...presented in the form of a marquee," and for Executive Art Director Nicole de las Heras, "the title page is...like the opening title sequence of a movie." Editorial Director Rotem Moscovich sees

different ways to use a title page: sometimes as a direct part of the narrative, where the story's action is truly starting visually..., [or] as a small spot that points to a motif or small object that may have significance later in the story.

Senior Executive Editor Sara E. Sargent likes the title page "to highlight a great piece of spot art," "capture the personality and essence of the character" in a character-driven story, or "capture the [book's] overall feel." For Executive Director Victoria Stapleton, "a title page...can set up an expectation of what's to follow," and Illustrator Oge Mora uses the title page to set the book's overall tone, as "the early morning" before the story begins. Art Director Cara Llewellyn designs "title pages that interact with the rest of the book" and loves when one "quietly adds backstory...through the illustration."

Regarding the inclusion of a half-title page, Designer Taline Boghosian "consider[s]... whether the book's pagination leaves room for [one that]...can offer...a hint of the story to come, allowing the main title spread to...expand into a full two-page piece of art with more context." Some of the picturebooks featured in this newsletter have a half-title page and a title page, whereas others only feature a title page. Sometimes, the title page appears after the text begins. I invite you to read the picturebooks featured in this issue and look across them to see the different ways the title page is used.

REFERENCE

Sipe, L. R. (1998). Learning the language of picturebooks. *Journal of Children's Literature*, 24(2), 66–75.



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My name is Jonda C. McNair, and I am the Charlotte S. Huck Endowed Professor of Children's Literature at The Ohio State University. I specialize in literature intended for youth, and I am pleased to create this

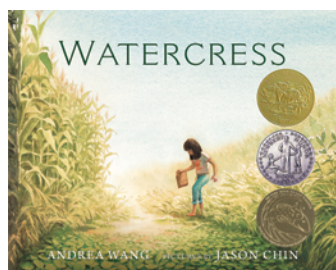
newsletter with the purpose of promoting and featuring high-quality, culturally diverse books for children in grades kindergarten through 5. In an article titled "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors," Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) wrote,

Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books. (p. ix)

As a doctoral student at The Ohio State University, I had the privilege of being mentored by Dr. Bishop. Her commitment to equity issues in relation to children's literature has significantly impacted my scholarship. I titled this newsletter *Mirrors and Windows...* because it is my intention to provide children with opportunities to see images of themselves and others—and walk through sliding glass doors—in the featured books. This means paying attention to various intersecting identity markers (e.g., race, class, gender, disability, nationality) that make each of us who we are. In addition, I make a conscious attempt to include books across various genres, such as poetry, fantasy, informational text, biography, historical fiction, and contemporary realistic fiction. This newsletter is created mainly with the assistance of undergraduate and graduate students at The Ohio State University, although on some occasions, I may invite guest reviewers with expertise in children's literature. The intended audience is parents, teachers, librarians, booksellers, and interested others in the State of Ohio and beyond.

REFERENCE

Bishop, R. S. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom*, 6(3), ix–xi.



WATERCRESS

*Written by Andrea Wang.
Illustrated by Jason Chin. Neal Porter Books/Holiday House, 2021.*

\$18.99, Grades 3–5

Through autobiographical verse, Wang delivers “both an apology and a love letter” to her

parents, her younger self, and any diasporic child who may resonate with her story of memory. Chin introduces a sprawling watercolor backdrop with a half-title page, on which a single car stands out, a tiny red beacon among the earth tones that give the story life. The following title page highlights this old, rusty Pontiac and the family inside, studying their surroundings of corn and green. The car stops when Andrea’s parents spot an unexpected piece of home: watercress. While the family is driven by purpose and memory to gather watercress to eat, Andrea fumbles through water and mud, ducking from any passerby who may recognize her and begrudgingly harvesting the plant. Once home, she carries with her the phantom weight of a sopping paper bag of watercress and shame, refusing to eat the cooked plant. Her mother then shares a photograph of Andrea’s uncle, who passed away during a famine in China. This shared memory immediately connects Andrea to her parents’ unspoken histories—her own history. With newfound understanding, she savors the watercress and creates a new memory with her family. Bridging a deeply personal story to a universal experience for many immigrant children, *Watercress* offers readers gentle forgiveness for the shame of feeling ashamed, and hopeful encouragement: Remember your roots and create new memories from those you inherit. —Adriana Clagg



GIANT SQUID

*Written by Candace Fleming.
Illustrated by Eric Rohmann.
Neal Porter Books/Roaring Book Press, 2016.*

\$19.99, Grades K–5

Enter the cold, dark, strange, and mysterious world of *Giant Squid*. This delightful, award-winning book tells a story about the giant squid, a creature that remains “one of the most widely discussed yet little understood

animals found on land or in the sea.” Anticipation builds when instead of a typical title page at the beginning, tentacles emerge from the bottom of the pitch-black pages. Above are stark white words telling readers they are entering the ocean’s depths where something fearsome is lurking that has rarely been seen. The tentacles grow larger and larger on these opening pages, intensifying the mystery of the creature. The words and images offer tiny clues that put readers into the shoes of the scientists who hunt for clues about the strange creature. Then, suddenly, the title page spread appears, with the sun illuminating the water from above and tentacles stretching across the pages, giving readers light before revealing more information about this fearsome creature. This informational and fast-paced picturebook about the giant squid makes discovering more about this sea creature an exciting experience for any reader. The book ends

with a fantastic surprise that spans over four pages of a stunningly illustrated gatefold. Perfect for a read-aloud in a science class, this picturebook is a must for all STEM educators and for readers who love learning about the ocean and its creatures. —Kristen Foss



R-E-S-P-E-C-T: ARETHA FRANKLIN, THE QUEEN OF SOUL

*Written by Carole Boston Weatherford. Illustrated by Frank Morrison.
Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2020.*

\$18.99, Grades K–5

Gifted, blessed, and respected, Aretha Franklin was born to sing like a queen. The rhythmic verse in this Coretta Scott King Illustration Award-winning picturebook mirrors the musicality that encompassed Aretha, one of the world’s best-selling music artists. The titles of Weatherford’s verses, such as “R-I-G-H-T” and “P-R-O-U-D,” serve as thematic signposts, encapsulating core themes or qualities associated with Aretha’s life and career. The hyphenated presentation visually mimics a musical rest note, which invites readers to take a moment to closely examine the vibrant artwork. In the textured illustrations, Morrison employs a range of perspectives, including compelling close-ups of the characters, and the warm, lush colors featured on each double-page spread evoke a sense of positivity and hope. Notably, unlike other double-page spreads in this picturebook that feature character illustrations, the title page spread exhibits a pink Cadillac, an emblem associated with Aretha’s beloved R & B song “Freeway of Love” from her 30th album, *Who’s Zoomin’ Who?* The presence of the luxurious pink Cadillac convertible on the title page not only performs as a symbol of Aretha’s iconic career but also embodies her noble soul, unwavering activism, and the profound love and admiration she inspired in others. Through the dramatic page turns, these sophisticated artistic choices seamlessly harmonize with the text, enabling readers to deeply understand the characters’ emotions and fostering a stronger connection with the life and legacy of a true legend. This visually and audibly appealing picturebook biography captivates young readers with Aretha’s golden legacy. —Yueyue Li



POLAR BEAR'S UNDERWEAR

Written and illustrated by Tupera Tupera. Chronicle Books, 2015.

\$16.99, Grades K–2

Oh no! Polar Bear has lost his underwear! Before the title page even appears, Tupera Tupera introduces readers to Polar Bear's plight. Fortunately, Polar Bear is joined by his friend, Mouse, who offers to help. The title page features Polar Bear carrying Mouse above his head and appearing to walk into the

story, inviting readers to join these two characters as they search for the missing pair of underwear. Throughout this delightful picturebook, the two animal friends encounter a variety of vibrantly patterned underwear belonging to other animals. Tupera Tupera uses a collage style coupled with varying textures and colors to present a variety of animals with a wild assortment of underwear. The book makes use of clever die-cut windows in the shape of underwear that invite readers to participate in a guessing game to figure out who each pair of underwear belongs to. One page shows a rainbow pair with the caption "Whose underwear is it?" Turning the page reveals "It's Zebra's underwear!" accompanied by a zany image of Zebra standing in his favorite pair of underwear. Tupera Tupera's attention to little details, such as making the book's dust jacket the shape of Polar Bear's underwear, creates clever ways for readers to engage with the story. The book's silly writing and crafty visual gags will elicit laughs from readers young and old. —T. Jace Brown



JUST LIKE GRANDMA

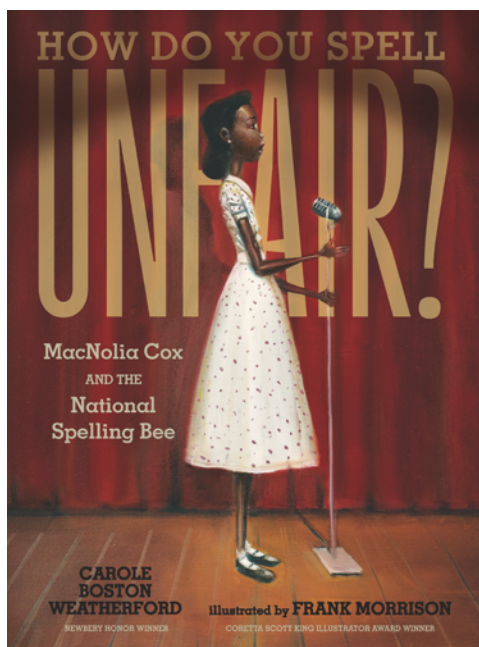
Written by Kim Rogers. Illustrated by Julie Flett. Heartdrum/HarperCollins, 2023.

\$17.99, Grades K–3

In this lyrical picturebook, Rogers tells the heartwarming, intergenerational story between a young girl and her beloved grandmother. The front cover shows Grandma and Becca pressing their cheeks

together with warm smiles on their faces as the sun sets behind them. The title page mirrors the front cover but with Grandma and Becca snuggling under a blanket, their backs now turned while they watch the sunset together. "More than anything, Becca wants to be *just like Grandma*," a refrain that repeats as Becca admires her grandmother, watching her as she beads buckskin moccasins, performs the Fancy Shawl Dance, and paints a magnificent sunrise. Every time, Becca asks to join in, and Grandma teaches her. The two of them bead, dance like beautiful butterflies, and paint "until the sun dips below the treeline." Grandpa is always there in the background, nourishing the family with traditional dishes such as

corn soup, fried chicken, fry bread, and to:kic, a Wichita meat dish. A touching twist happens halfway through the book when the story shifts to Grandma's point of view, as she watches Becca play basketball: "More than anything, Grandma wants to be *just like Becca*." Just as the older lady taught her granddaughter, Becca teaches Grandma her basketball moves. *Just Like Grandma* celebrates the special bond between grandchild and grandparent and shows that regardless of age, we can all learn from one another. Flett provides minimalist, warm-hued illustrations that feel like a sunset, with pops of red standing out in small places, such as butterflies, Grandma's regalia, and her artwork. The book concludes with a letter from Cynthia Leitch Smith about role models, an author's note, information about the significance of beadwork to the Native Nations, and a glossary. —Jessica Empe



HOW DO YOU SPELL UNFAIR? MACNOLIA COX AND THE NATIONAL SPELLING BEE

Written by Carole Boston Weatherford. Illustrated by Frank Morrison. Candlewick Press, 2023.

\$18.99, Grades 3–5

Can you spell *remarkable*? Eighth grader MacNolia Cox certainly can. After spelling her way through the competition in Akron, Ohio, she earns a spot in the National Spelling Bee. The train ride to Washington, DC is exciting, but troubles along the way foreshadow difficulties to come. Morrison uses color to match the tone of the story: bright greens and golds for times of joy and darker hues of gray and blue for moments of difficulty. Each painted two-page spread sets the scene, allowing readers to join MacNolia and her mother on the train as they travel to the National Spelling Bee and stand with MacNolia on the street for her triumphant return home. Readers also see dictionaries, beloved by the young girl, decorating the title page and in the hands of other Black children as the spelling champion returns home from her trip to the National Spelling Bee. *How Do You Spell Unfair?* makes a great bibliographical read-aloud for younger readers and covers important text features. Older readers can spell along with MacNolia during this engaging read or use the story to facilitate discussion on topics of discrimination, perseverance, and equity. —Kate Shilling

FRANK MORRISON is an award-winning illustrator of children's books. Some of the titles he has illustrated are *R-E-S-P-E-C-T: Aretha Franklin, the Queen of Soul*, *How Do You Spell Unfair?* MacNolia Cox and the *National Spelling Bee*, *Standing in the Need of Prayer: A Modern Retelling of the Classic Spiritual*, *The Roots of Rap: 16 Bars on the 4 Pillars of Hip-Hop* (all four written by Carole Boston Weatherford), *Little Melba and Her Big Trombone* (written by Katheryn Russell-Brown), *Let the Children March* (written by Monica Clark-Robinson), *Jazzy Miz Mozetta* (written by Brenda C. Roberts), and *Uncle John's City Garden* (written by Bernette G. Ford). His most recent books are *Breaking to the Beat!* (written by Linda J. Acevedo) and *Harlem at Four* (written by Dr. Michael Datcher). *My Block Looks Like* (written by Janelle Harper) is forthcoming in early 2024. Morrison has received a number of accolades for his picturebook illustration work, including Coretta Scott King Illustrator Awards for *Standing in the Need of Prayer* and *R-E-S-P-E-C-T*, Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honors for *Let the Children March* and *Little Melba and Her Big Trombone*, and a Coretta Scott King–John Steptoe Award for New Talent by an Illustrator for *Jazzy Miz Mozetta*.

Morrison began his career in art by spray painting graffiti on walls in New Jersey; in fact, some of his picturebooks feature his signature graffiti artwork. He later became a breakdancer and had the opportunity to travel all around the world. While on tour dancing with a music artist, he visited the Louvre Museum in Paris, France, and realized that art was his real passion. Artists whose work has inspired him are Ernie Barnes and Annie Lee. Morrison's hobbies are painting and finding art books to reference in his work. He has fond memories of hanging out with his dad under the hood of his father's 1968 Thunderbird while tinkering with the engine and listening to the lyrics of Aretha Franklin's chart-topping song "Freeway of Love." Morrison lives in Atlanta, Georgia, with his wife and five children.

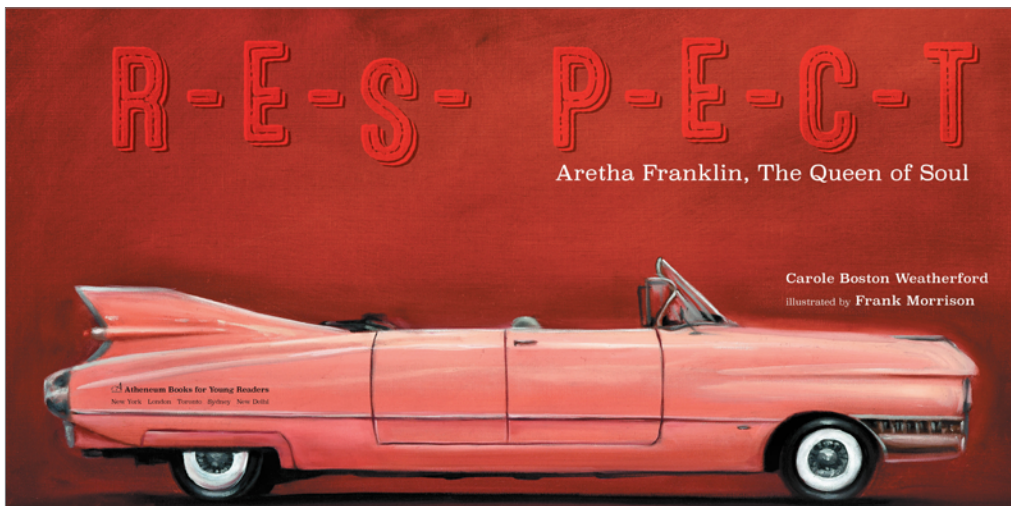
For more information about Frank Morrison, visit his website:

<https://morrisongraphics.com>.



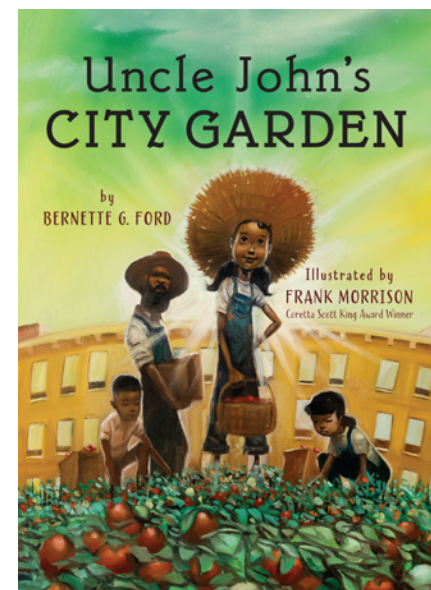
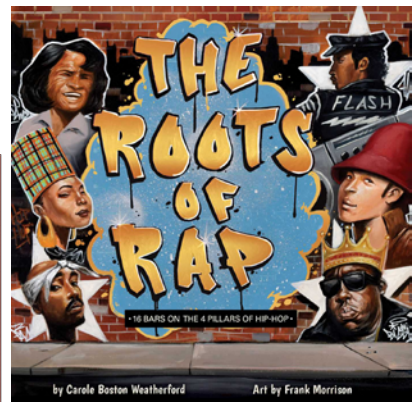
"Morrison strives to capture people as they are, translating emotions through his paintings and leaving a memoir of our life and times today. His work depicts African-American livelihood in a way that is both familiar and comforting to those who often feel histories have been forgotten and culture has been usurped."

<https://morrisongraphics.com/pages/about-frank-morrison>



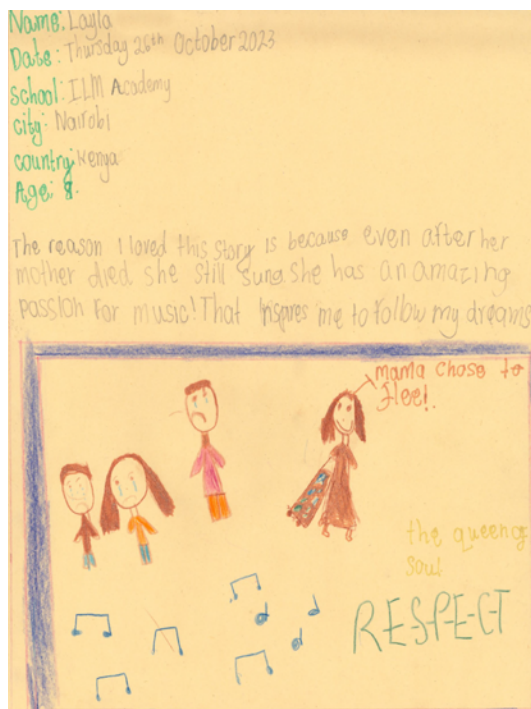
On August 31, 2018, over a hundred pink Cadillacs lined the streets of Detroit, Michigan, on the way to Aretha Franklin's funeral service. She "had a soft spot for pink Cadillacs: 'We goin' ridin' on the freeway of love in my pink Cadillac,' she sang in her 1985 single 'Freeway of Love.' The Cadillac tribute... was inspired not only by that evocative lyric, but also by the manner in which police cars line streets to pay respects to their own fallen."

<https://time.com/5384067/aretha-pink-cadillacs/>



CHILDREN'S RESPONSES

R-E-S-P-E-C-T: Aretha Franklin, the Queen of Soul,
written by Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrated by Frank Morrison



Layla A., 8
Nairobi, Kenya

Layla enjoys reading, playing outside on the swing, and swimming.



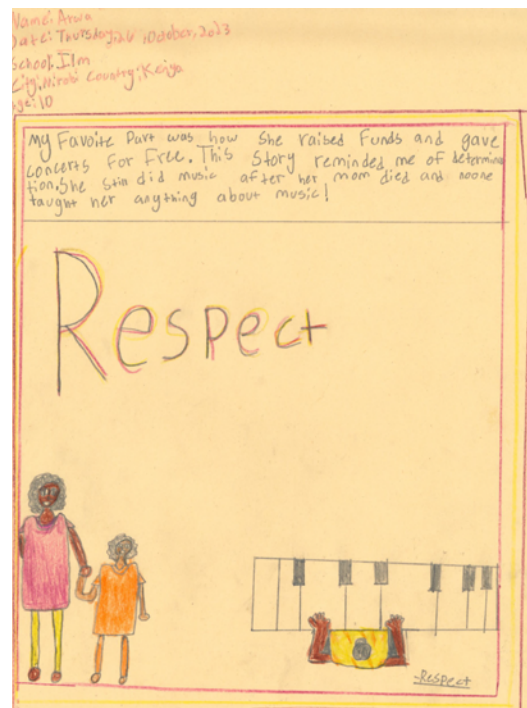
Salman M., 9
Nairobi, Kenya

Salman enjoys reading and soccer.



Yasir A., 11
Nairobi, Kenya

Yasir enjoys swimming, drawing, and soccer.



Arwa R., 10
Nairobi, Kenya

Arwa enjoys drawing and swimming.

Mirrors and Windows...

FALL 2023

Featured inside:

Book Design Part 3:
The Title Page

Profile of children's
book illustrator
Frank Morrison

CHILDREN'S ART—SUBMISSIONS

In this issue, I am proud to feature the pictures and writing created by four children in response to Carole Boston Weatherford and Frank Morrison's book *R-E-S-P-E-C-T: Aretha Franklin, the Queen of Soul. Mirrors and Windows...* features children's art/writing in each issue. If children draw pictures or write in response to any of the books featured in this newsletter—and mail their products to me—I will provide them with a complimentary copy of a children's book. Please mail art and/or writing—along with contact information—to the address at right:

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or mcnair.7@osu.edu if you
have any questions.*

CREDITS

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I offer a special thank-you to Drs. Rudine Sims Bishop, Violet J. Harris, Dianne Johnson-Feelings, and Linda Leonard Lamme. My passion for and knowledge about children's literature is because of you. Thanks for passing it on.

author/illustrator Jon Klassen
Profile of children's book

Book Design Part 4:
Book Size, Shape, and Orientation

Coming Spring 2024

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