

The BLACK B C's

BY LUCILLE CLIFTON
ILLUSTRATED BY DON MILLER

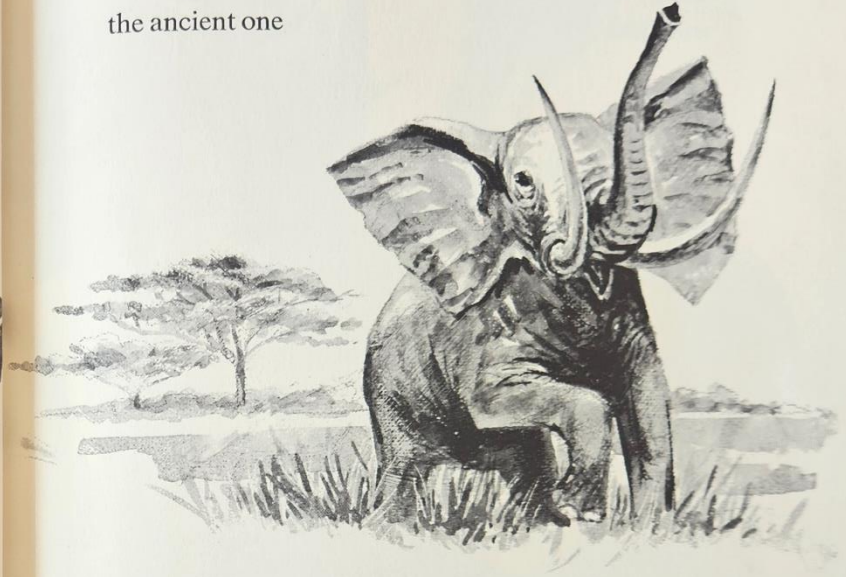


Dutton
Lifetime
Library
Binding



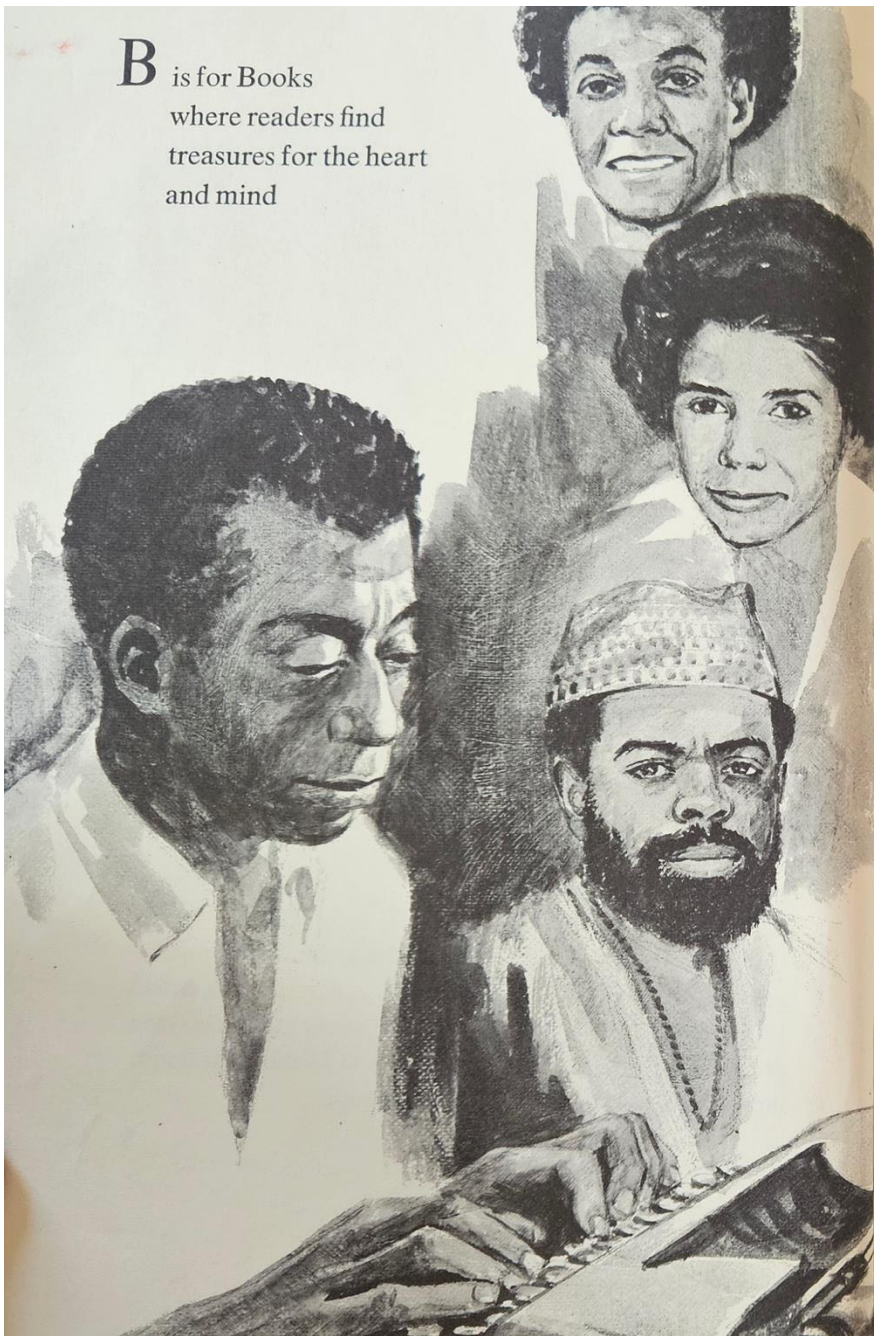


A is for Africa
land of the sun
the king of continents
the ancient one



Many different countries are located on the continent of Africa. It is the second biggest of the world's seven continents; only Asia is bigger. It covers as much land as the United States, Western Europe, China, and India put together. Africa is the land of the biggest desert in the world (the Sahara), the longest river in the world (the Nile), the greatest variety of wild animals, at least 16 different major languages, and about 225 million people.

B is for Books
where readers find
treasures for the heart
and mind



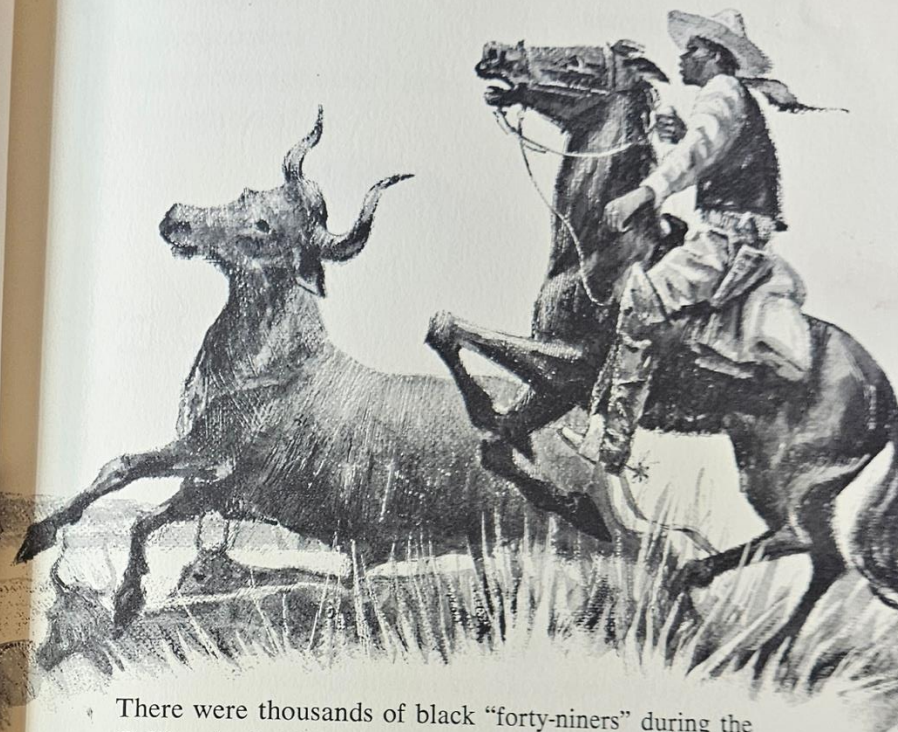
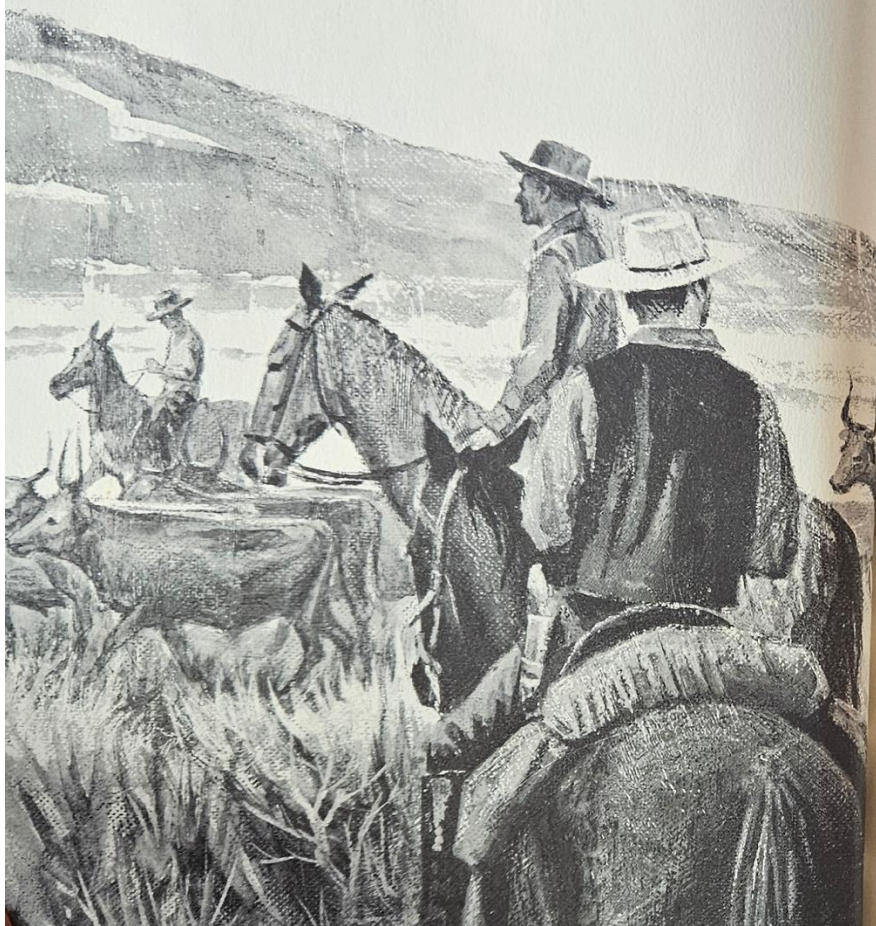
The first poem by a black American dates back to 1746. It was written by a Massachusetts slave girl named Lucy Terry. The first published example of black American poetry was written by Jupiter Hammon and printed in 1761. Ten years later Phillis Wheatley began her literary career. She was internationally known, and hailed as a poetic prodigy. The first novel (1853), play (1858), and travel book (1852) written by a black American were by the same man: William Wells Brown.

There are many other famous black literary names. Among the best-known contemporary ones are:

James Baldwin
Gwendolyn Brooks
Eldridge Cleaver

Lonne Elder III
Lorraine Hansberry
LeRoi Jones
Ted Shine

C is for Cowboys
kings of the West
some of the black men
were some of the best



There were thousands of black “forty-niners” during the California Gold Rush.

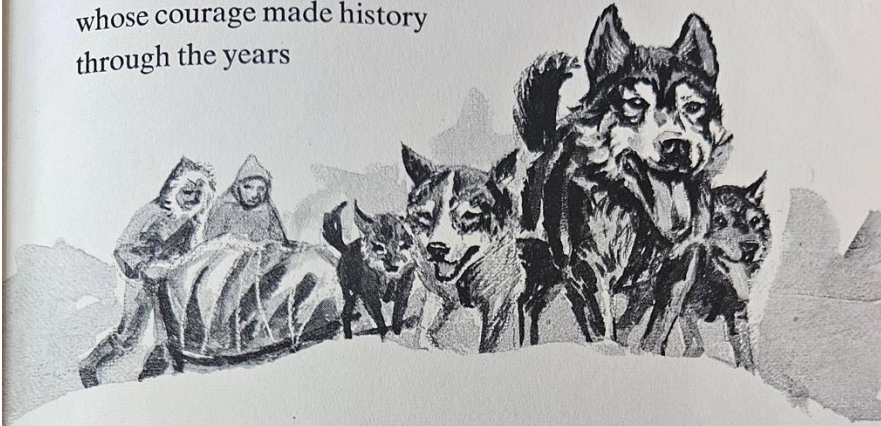
The only known male survivor of the Alamo was a black man named Joe.

A black cowboy named Bill Pickett invented the rodeo art of bulldogging.

Isaiah Dorman was an interpreter for General George Custer; they both died at Little Big Horn.

Other famous black cowboys who were scouts and traders were Jim Beckwourth and Nat Love.

E is for Explorers
brave pioneers
whose courage made history
through the years



The first man to ever stand at the North Pole was a black man, Matthew Henson. He explored the Arctic with Admiral Robert E. Peary and reached the North Pole before the rest of the party on that historic occasion.

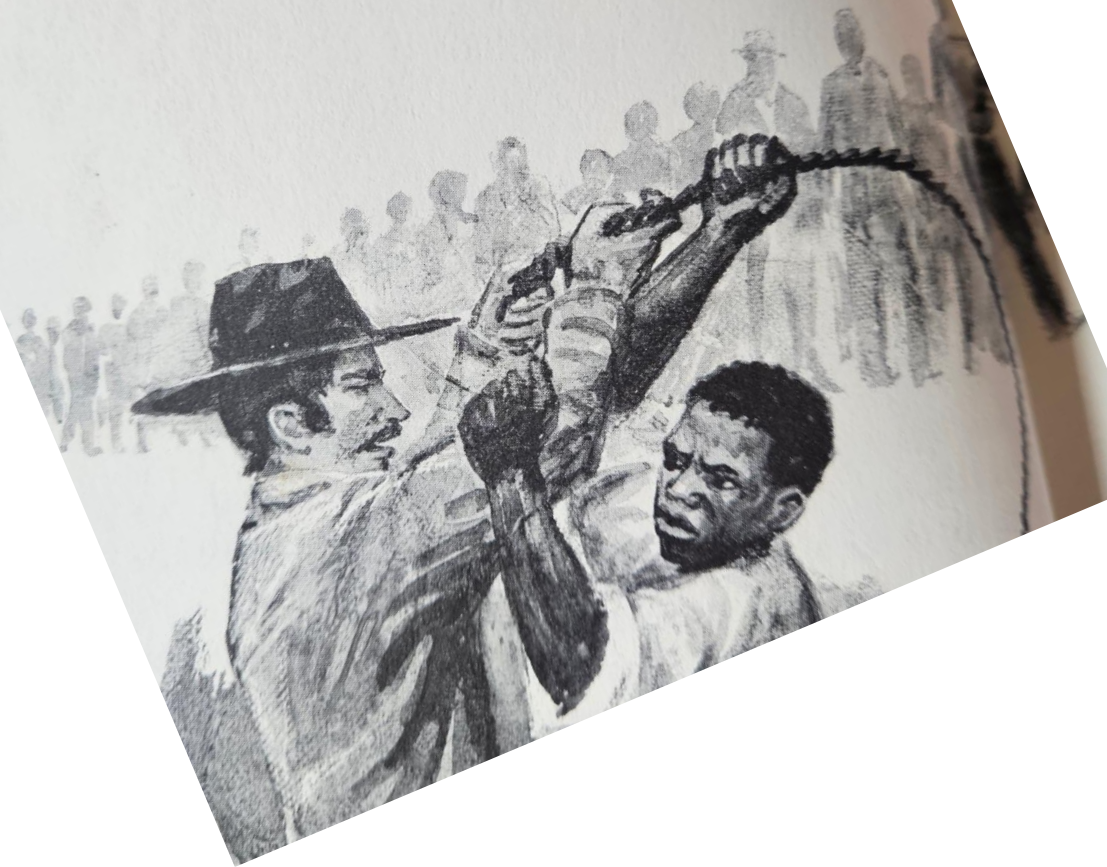
The first building in the area that is now Chicago was the home of a black man named Jean Baptiste Pointe Du Sable. He became an Indian trader who traveled the Mississippi River region before establishing the trading post and settlement that became Chicago.

Thirty black men were with Balboa in 1513 when the Pacific Ocean was discovered.

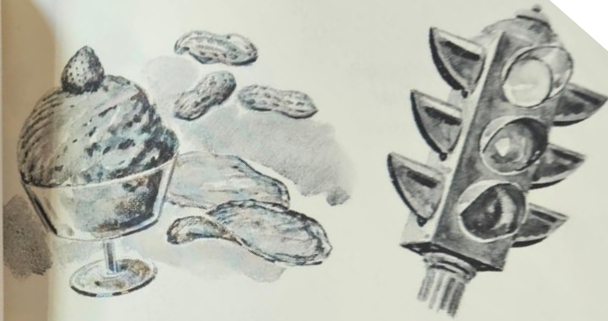
York, a black scout, helped to guide the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

There was at least one black man with Columbus when he reached the shores of America.

F is for Freedom
whatever folk say
whoever can give it
can take it away



I is for Inventors
who try to do
things that are different
and new



Among the inventions credited to black people are:

potato chips	Hiram S. Thomas
ice cream	Augustus Jackson
breathing mask and traffic light	Garrett A. Morgan
sugar-refining process	Norbert Rillieux
shoe-lasting machine	Jan Matzeliger

Among the scientific contributors are:

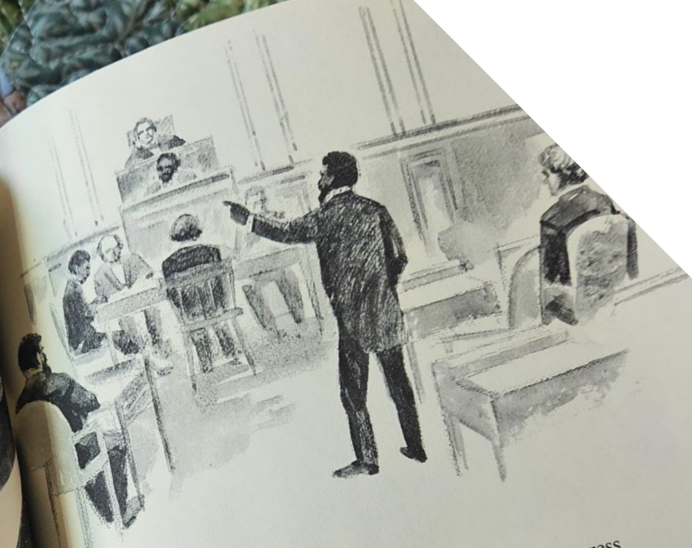
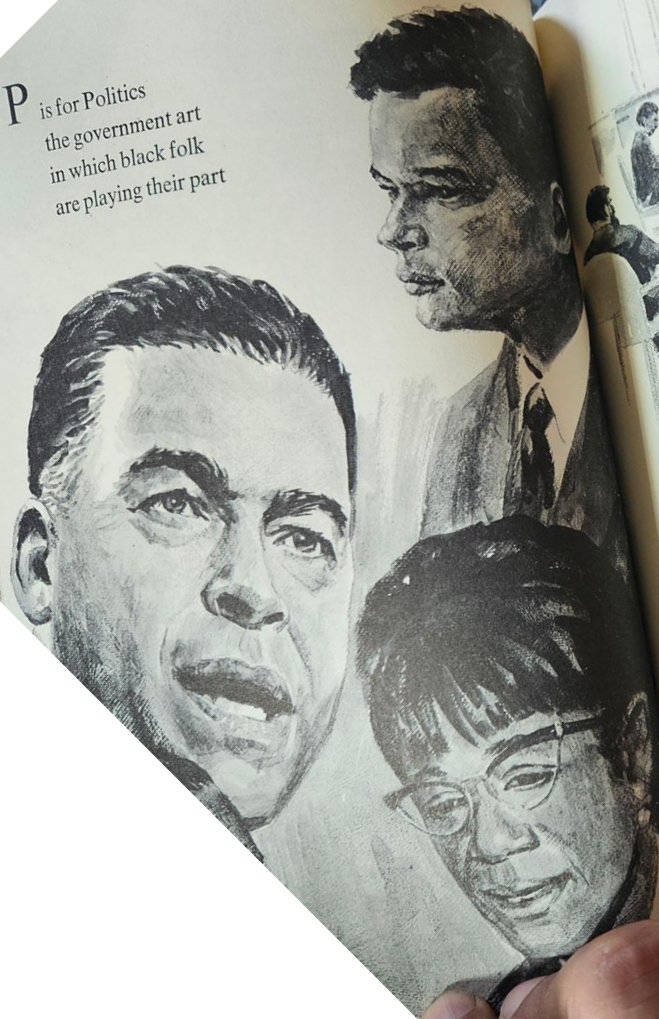
George Washington Carver, who created more than 300 synthetic materials from the peanut alone
Benjamin Banneker, who made the first wooden clock and helped to survey and plan the nation's capital
Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, who performed the first successful open-heart operation
Dr. Charles Drew, who set up the modern blood bank
Dr. Percy Julian, who developed drugs to relieve inflammatory arthritis, rheumatic fever, and glaucoma

M is for Middle Passage
the route of the slave
what peace they knew
the waters gave



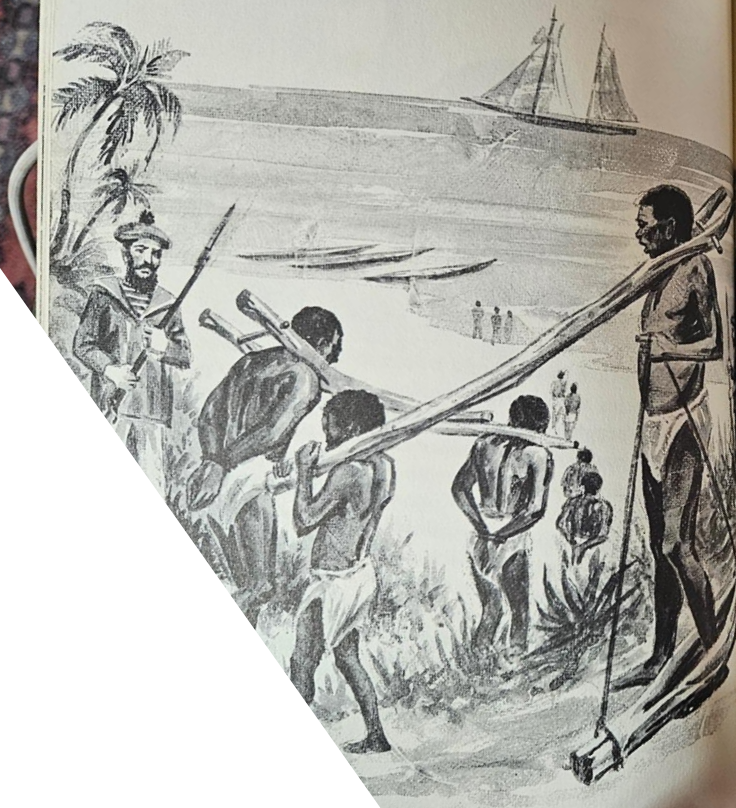
The
sage
both
of 250
World

P is for Politics
the government art
in which black folk
are playing their part



One of the first black men elected to the U.S. Congress served in the House of Representatives from the state of South Carolina for ten years. His name was Joseph H. Rainey and he was elected in 1869. Hiram R. Revels, the first black Senator, took office in 1870. In 1966 Edward W. Brooke of Massachusetts became the first black U.S. Senator since 1881. As black people are able to see the importance of voting and the many bars to their participating in the vote are removed, many more black people are being elected to local and national positions. Among them are Carl B. Stokes, Jr., Mayor of Cleveland, Ohio; Julian Bond, state senator in Georgia; and Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman elected to the U.S. Congress.

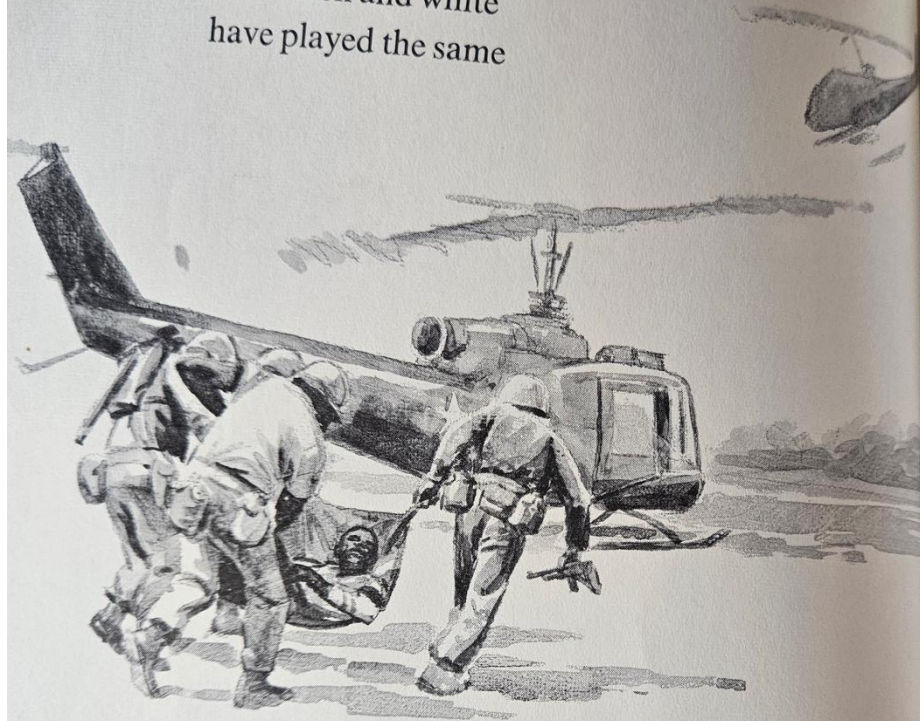
S is for Slavery
who can own a man?
men own themselves
no one else can



The beginning of the most extensive and profitable periods of human slavery can be dated to 1442. In that year Portuguese traders brought the first Africans to Europe as slaves. By 1540 ships were carrying more than 10,000 slaves a year to the West Indies. American slavery is said to date from 1619. By 1860 the slave population in America was more than 4 million.

It has been estimated that there were more than 250 slave revolts during the years before the Civil War. The three best-known revolts were led by Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner.

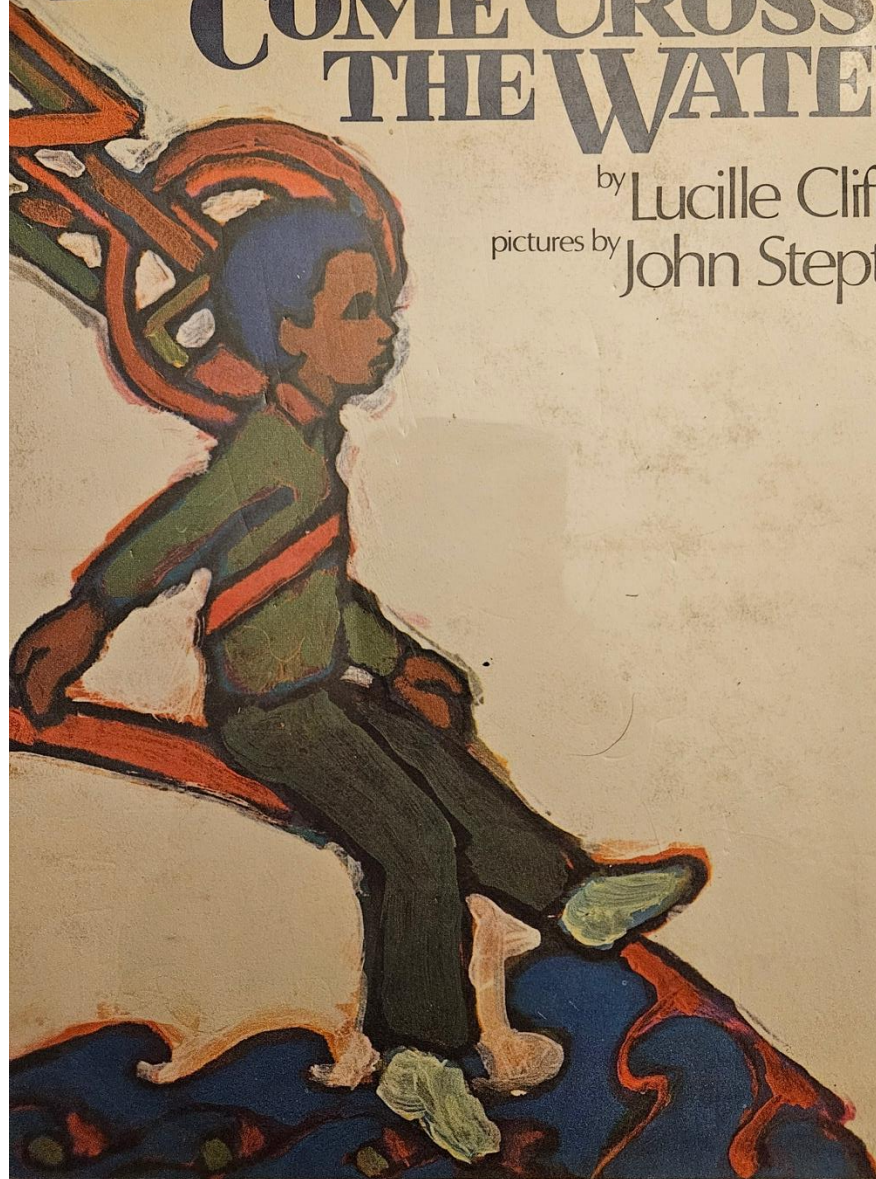
W is for War
the terrible game
that black and white
have played the same



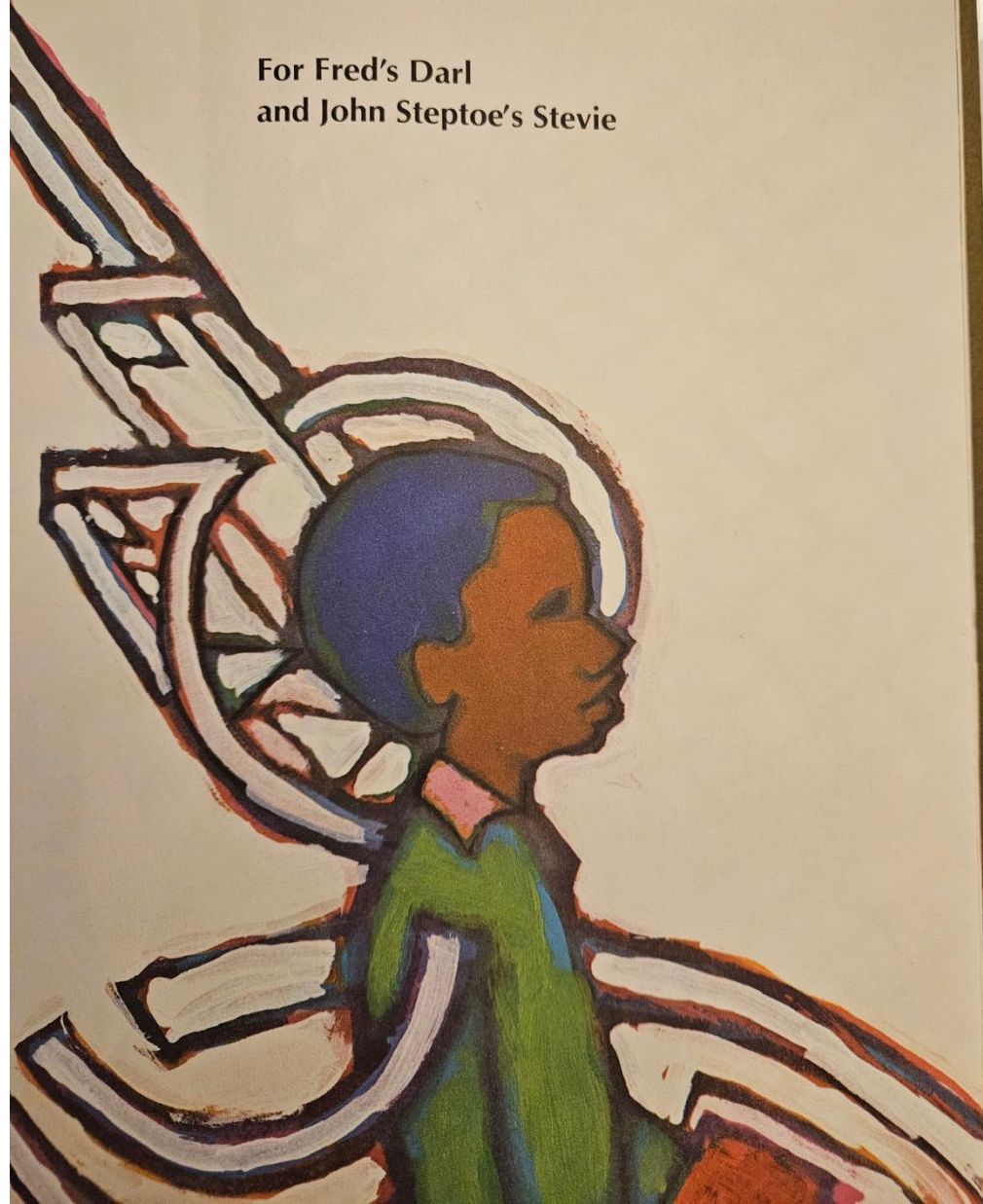
The United States has fought in eight major wars and black soldiers have fought and died in all of them. As early as 1652 Massachusetts passed a law requiring Negroes to train for defense of the Bay Colony. The first man to fall in the Revolutionary War was a runaway slave, Crispus Attucks. In every subsequent war, black men have been commended, decorated, and saluted for their valor.

ALL US COME CROSS THE WATER

by Lucille Clifton
pictures by John Steptoe



For Fred's Darl
and John Steptoe's Stevie



I got this teacher name Miss Wills. This day she come asking everybody to tell where they people come from. Everybody from over in the same place suppose to stand up by theirselves. When it come to me I don't say nothing so she get all mad, cause that make all the other brothers not say nothing too.

"Won't you please cooperate with us, Jim?" she say. I didn't say nothing cause my name is Ujamaa for one thing. So when the bell ring she ask me to stay a little after, so we can talk.

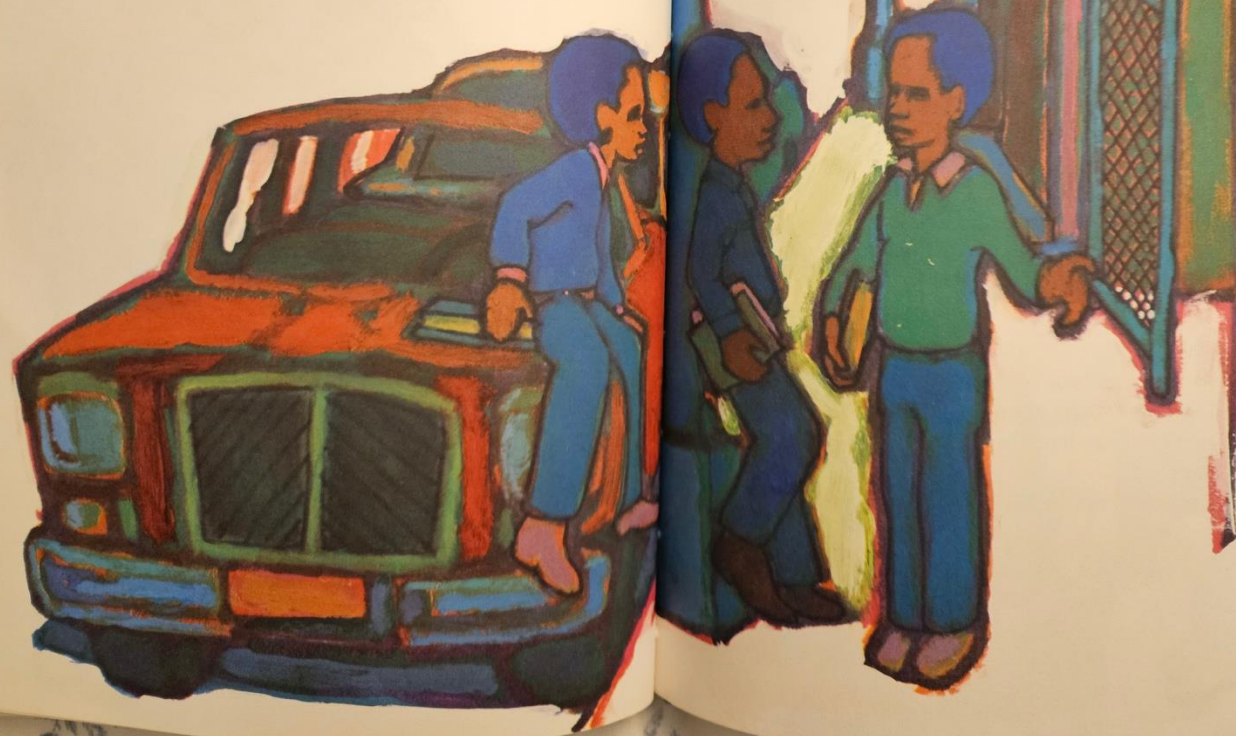
"We must not be ashamed of ourselves, Jim," she say. "You are from a great heritage and you must be proud of that heritage. Now you know you are from Africa, don't you?" she say.

I say, "Yes, mam," and walk on out the place.



First thing, my name is Ujamaa and also Africa is a continent not a country and she say she want everybody to tell what country. Anyhow, I left. The other brothers waiting for me by the light.

Malik say, "That woman is crazy. She get on my nerves."
Bo say, "How come we didn't stan up, Ujamaa? We from Africa!" I just go on home. Bo don't know nothing.



I got a sister name Rose. She studying to be a practical nurse. When she get home I ask her, "Rose where we from?" She come talking about, "Mama was from Rome, Georgia, and Daddy from Birmingham."

"Before that," I say.

"Mama's Daddy from Georgia too."

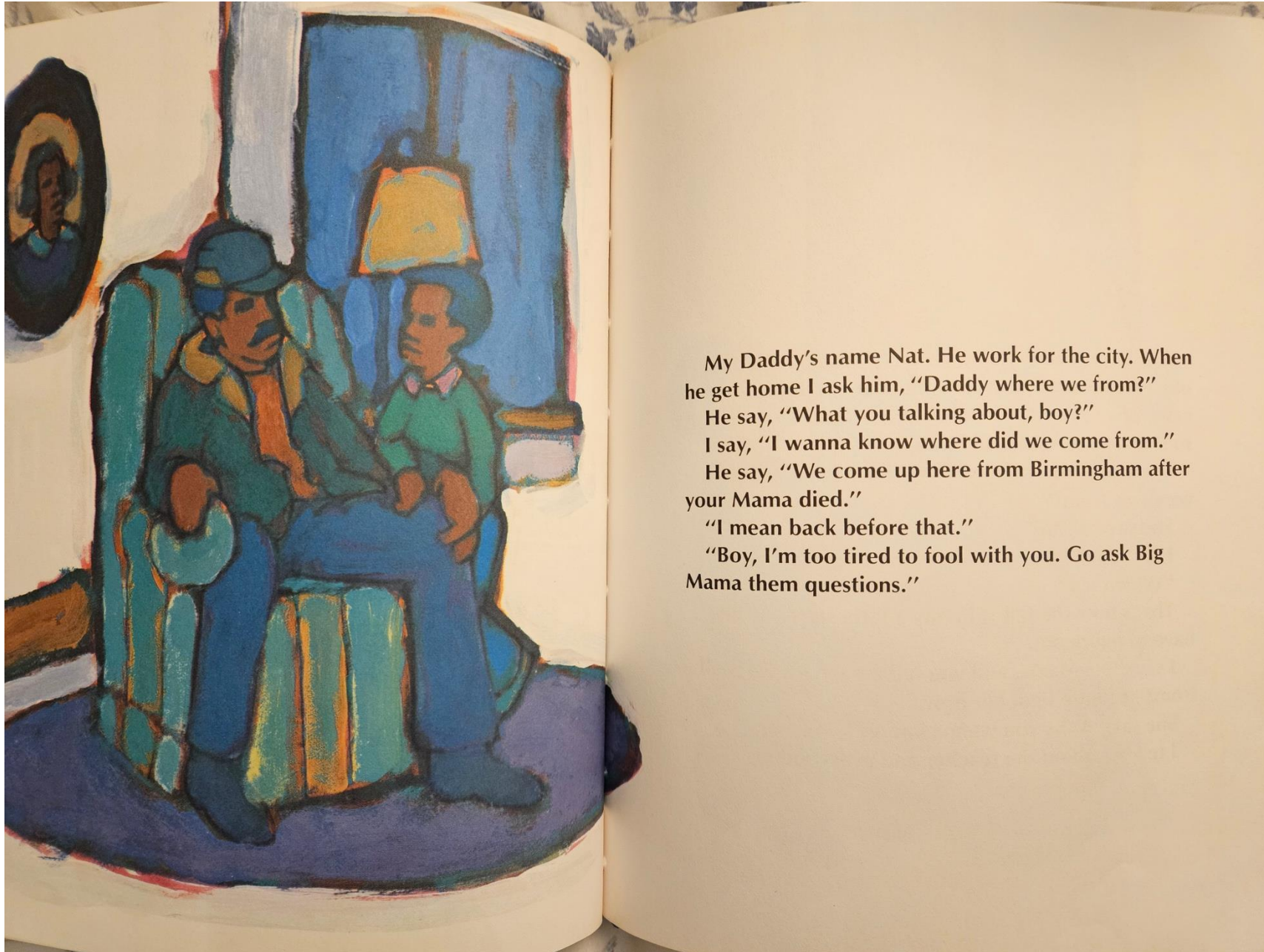
"I mean before that too, way back before that."

She come laughing talking about,

"They wasn't no way back before that. Before that we was a slave."

I could a punched her in her face. Rose make me sick.





My Daddy's name Nat. He work for the city. When
he get home I ask him, "Daddy where we from?"
He say, "What you talking about, boy?"
I say, "I wanna know where did we come from."
He say, "We come up here from Birmingham after
your Mama died."
"I mean back before that."
"Boy, I'm too tired to fool with you. Go ask Big
Mama them questions."

Big Mama is my Mama's Mama's Mama. She real old and she don't say much, but she see things cause she born with a veil over her face. That make it so she can see spirits and things.

I go up to her and I ask her, "Big Mama, where we come from?"

She say, "Who?"

I say, "Us."

"Which us?"

That's how she talk. She say a lotta stuff you just have to figure out.

I say, "Big Mama, will you tell me where we is all from?" I figure I got her now.

She say, "Why you wanna know?"

I tell her about the teacher and everybody.



She say, "My Mama say her and her Mama was brought from Whydah in Dahomey in 1855." She say, "My Mama was nine years old."

"That mean I'm from Whydah?"

She look at me then.

"Nat's people look like Ashanti people. They come from south in Ghana."

"That mean I'm from Ashanti people?"

She say, "Who are you, boy?"

I say, "I'm Ujamaa."

Shoot, she know who I am, it was her give me my name.

She say, "Go on now then. I'm through."

That's how she is.



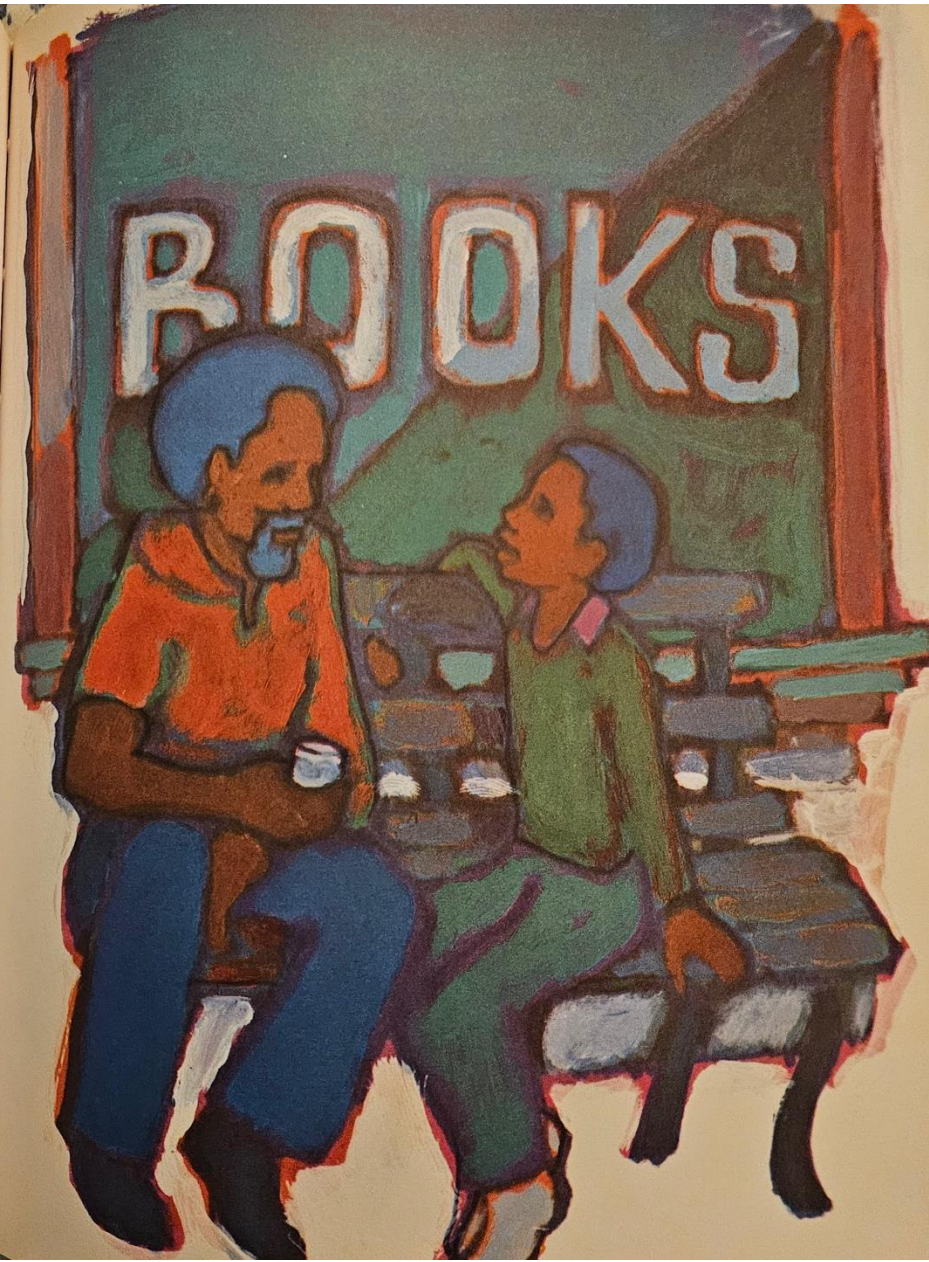
I got a grown man friend over to the Panther Book Shop. Everybody call him Tweezer. We talk about things sometime and I tell him what I'm gonna be and all that. He always say, "Just you be a good brother, Ujamaa." Anyhow, I thought I'd go on over and talk to him about things and everything. I waited till after dinner cause we had red beans which I love. Rose don't like old Tweezer much so when she ask me where am I going I tell her over to Bo's. She remind me to be home when the lights go on.

Tweezer sitting out in front of the store, got his wine in a paper cup. He old but not as old as Big Mama. People talk about he used to run on the road and before that he went to college. He real smart. He know it too always talkin about he a juju man, know all about magic and stuff like that. He see me coming down the block and wave.

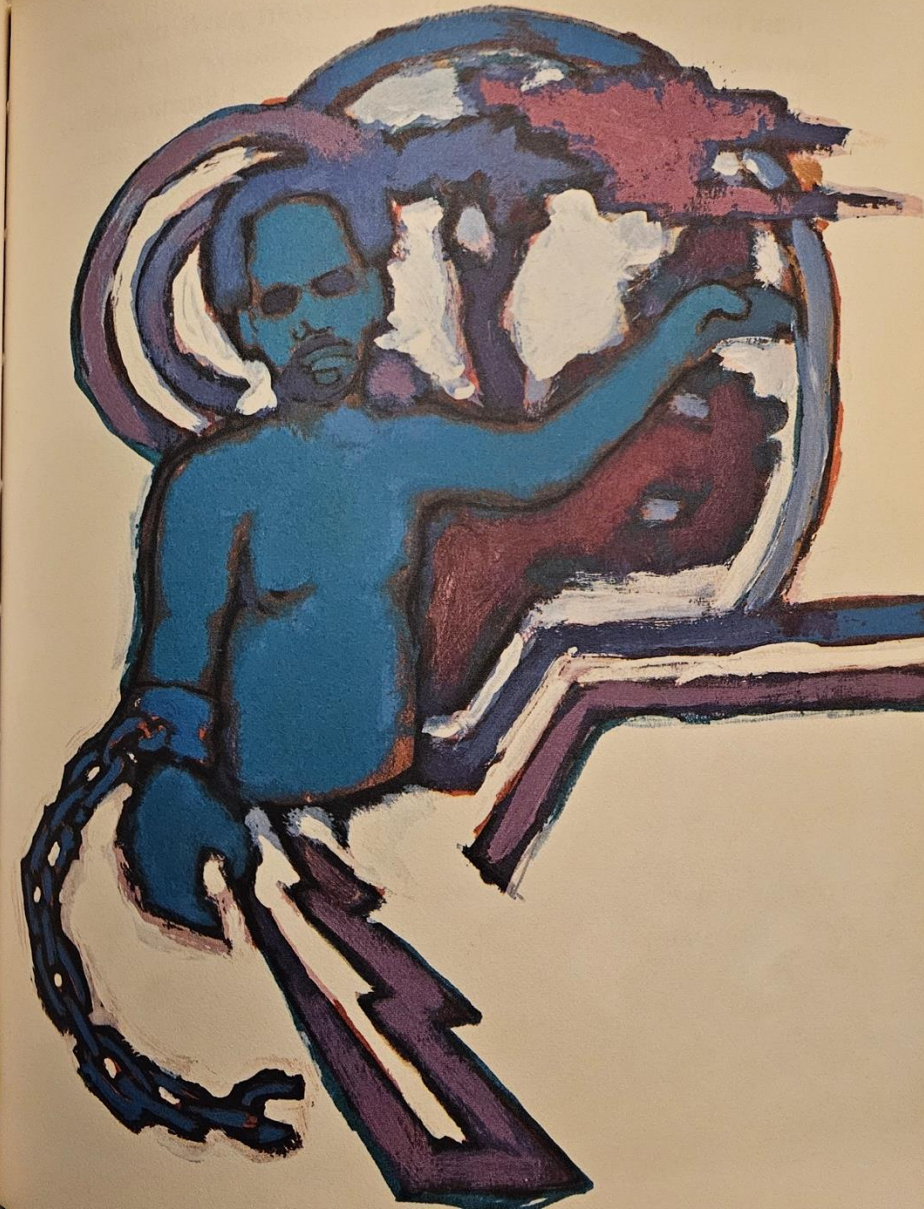
"Hey, Ujamaa," he kinda grinned.

"Hey, Tweezer," I grinned back.

When I got up to the store he made room for me on the bench. He didn't say nothing. He never do start first.



I say, "What's your real name, Tweezer?"
He say, "I don't know."
"How come?"
"It got left."
I say, "Where?"
He say, "In Africa."
"What you mean?"
"When they stole my Daddy's Daddy to
make him a slave they didn't ask for his
name and he didn't give it."
"Well what did they call him?"
He say, "Whatever he let um. Reckon he
figure if they ain't got his name they ain't
really got him."
I say, "Big Mama give me my name. It mean Unity."
He smile then. He start really talking.
"Long as your own give you the name you know it's yours.
We name us. Everybody else just calling us something,
but we name us. You named a good name."



I ask him, "Tweezer, we from all different parts of Africa,
how we gonna say what country we from?"

Tweezer say, "We from all them countries, Ujamaa. All
off the same boat."

I say, "Some people tell me we wasn't all slaves."

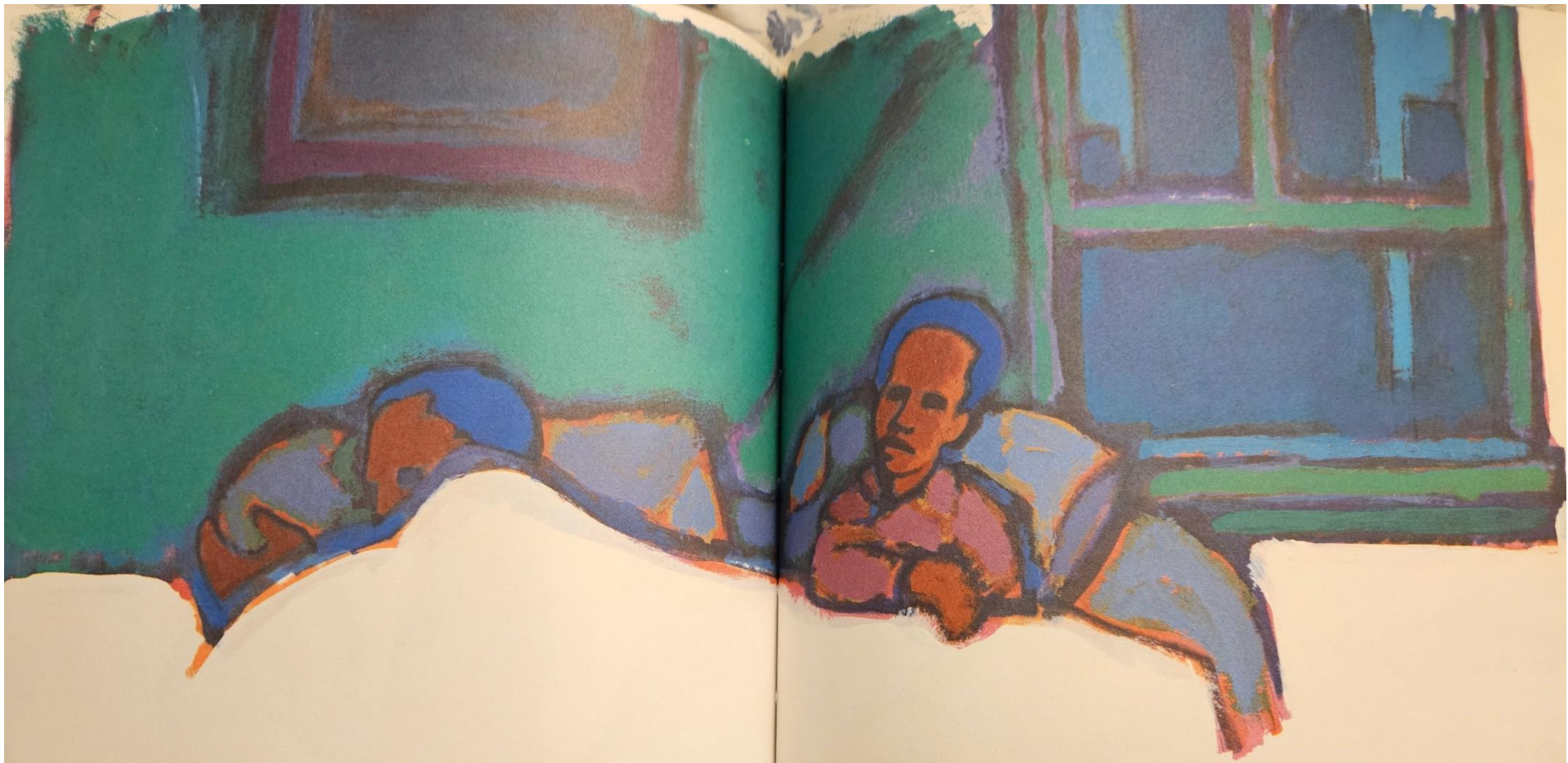
He say, "Wasn't none of us free though. All us crossed
the water. We one people, Ujamaa. Boy got that name
oughta know that. All us crossed the water."

The lights had to come on just then.

I told Tweezer, "See you later."

"Just be a good brother, brother," Tweezer told me.



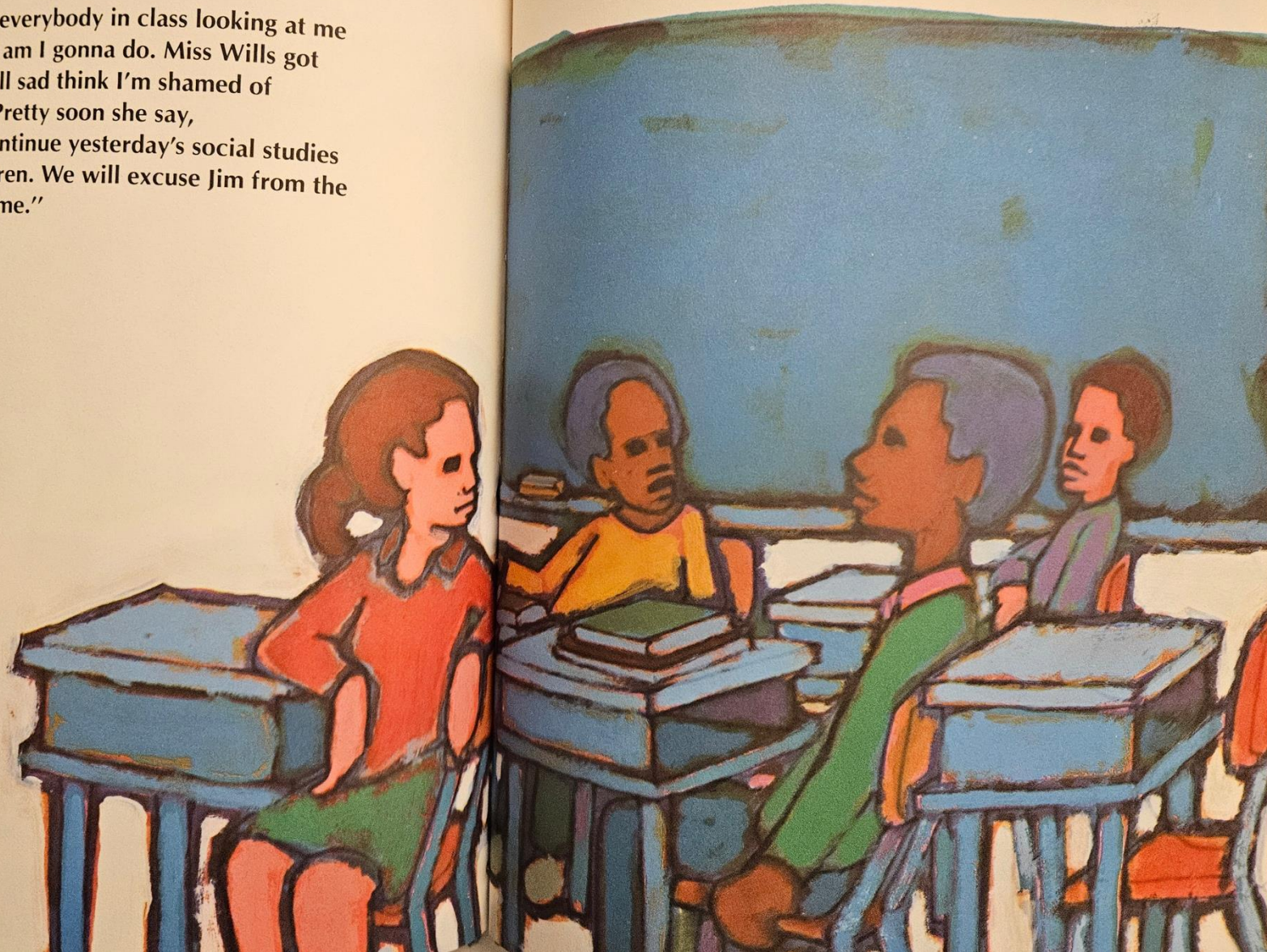


Man, I had a whole lot to think about! I'm suppose to lay real still cause I sleep with my Daddy and he got to go to work but Man my mind was going to town. Thing was, what I mostly ended up thinking about was ol Bo and ol Malik and how they didn't even know what was the matter but they went right along with me on the not standing up cause we brothers. And Bo ain't even lived

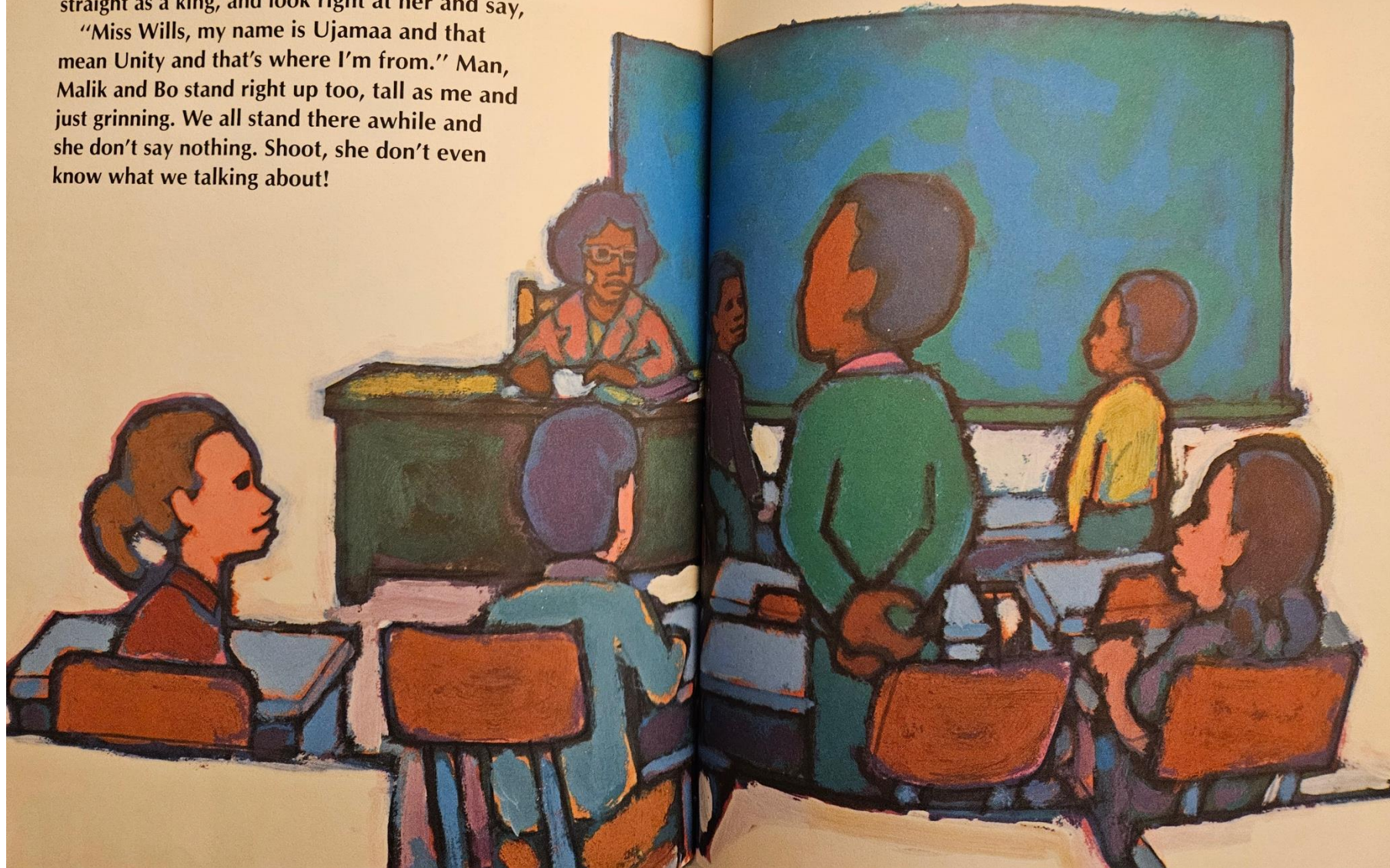
in this block that long and his Mama is from a island but we all brothers anyhow. I thought about Tweezer and him and me being brothers too. All us come cross the water. Somebody name Ujamaa oughta know that. I went on to sleep.

Next day everybody in class looking at me
seeing what am I gonna do. Miss Wills got
her mouth all sad think I'm shamed of
something. Pretty soon she say,

"Let us continue yesterday's social studies
lesson, children. We will excuse Jim from the
lesson this time."



Just when she say that I jump up and stand straight as a king, and look right at her and say, "Miss Wills, my name is Ujamaa and that mean Unity and that's where I'm from." Man, Malik and Bo stand right up too, tall as me and just grinning. We all stand there awhile and she don't say nothing. Shoot, she don't even know what we talking about!



Darl

by Fred J. Clifton

September —

Dear Mister Milton:

Thank you for your letter about the field trip. I enjoyed it too. However, I am a little bit disturbed about how you took things. You don't seem to have a clear idea of the purpose of a museum. You see, a museum is a place where our heritage is preserved. All those things you saw there have a greater symbolic value with every passing day. For example, the large American flag—the one with the water stains on it—do you realize how old it is? And the armaments—they won and saved the freedom of our country. With each addition, our tradition grows stronger; God bless our land!

Linda Smith

October —

Dear Miss Linda,

I didn't understand your last letter. I told you exactly what I thought about the museum because that is what it meant to me. You wrote back talking about what the *purpose* is. That old man wiping the glass on the cases where the flags were didn't say nothing about that. He was just wiping glass and he liked it. And he knew all the flags. I know because he told me. And about that other stuff: Freedom and winning wars—it don't mean nothing to me.

Sorry if you don't understand.

DARL

October -

Dear Mister Milton:

I didn't mean to say that everybody in America has everything he needs. Why, who could forget those poor Appalachians and the Negroes in the slums? What I meant was that even when things are not perfect, it's still better here than any other place in the world.

Don't you agree?

(Miss) Linda Smith

October —

Dear Miss Smith,

No, I don't agree. Did you ever hear about Denmark and Sweden? You ought to read something about them. They don't have no people who don't have what they need. Seems like that could happen since you say it's so great.

DARL

P.S. Black people don't call themselves Negro no more.

October -

Dear Darl,

I apologize for using the wrong word. And you're right about those countries, but that is a form of socialism. Here in America we have a free enterprise—where competition helps to improve the quality of every thing we do and where everybody has a chance to excell. Freedom and competition and free enterprise go together.

(Miss) Linda Smith

P.S. Do all Negroes call themselves black?

October —

Dear Miss Smith,

Read the P.S. first.

Nothing is wrong about the word. It's just that it's something somebody else made up to call somebody. People can call themselves whatever they want to. That's the point.

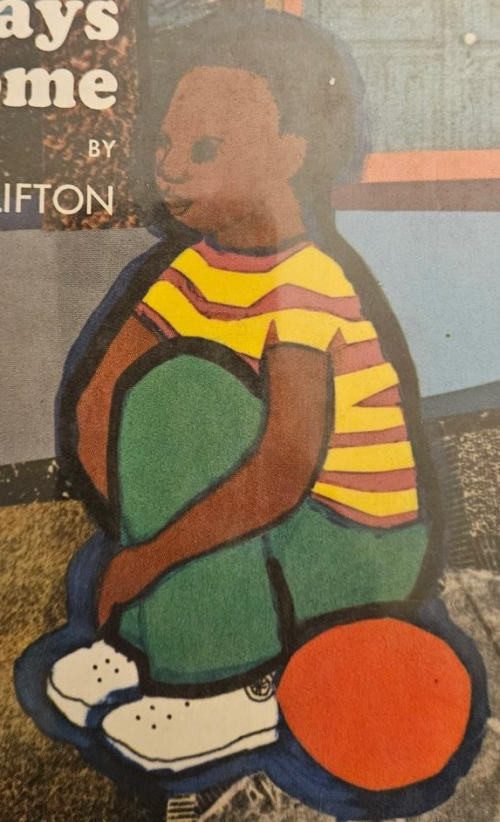
Now about everybody having a chance and all that... I don't believe that. I know it's not true.

DARL

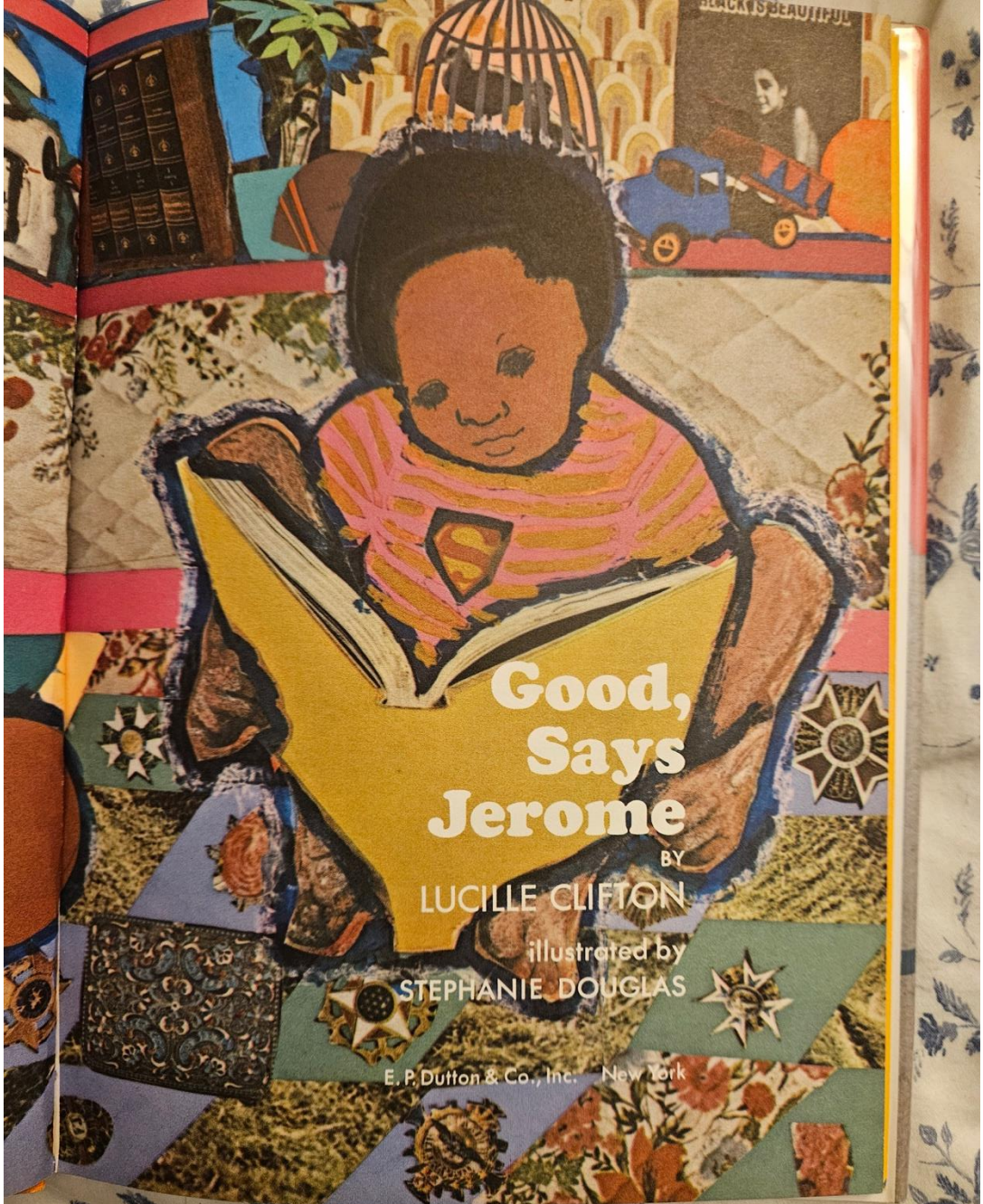
P.S. I didn't say nothing about that, but don't you mean do all black people call themselves black?

Good, Says Jerome

BY
LUCILLE CLIFTON



illustrated by
STEPHANIE DOUGLAS



**Good,
Says
Jerome**

BY
LUCILLE CLIFTON

illustrated by
STEPHANIE DOUGLAS

E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc. New York

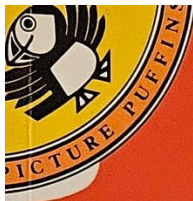




What's black?

Oh Jerome,
says Janice Marie,
black is a color
like yellow or white.
It's got nothing to do
with wrong or right.
It's a feeling inside
about who we are and
how strong and how free.

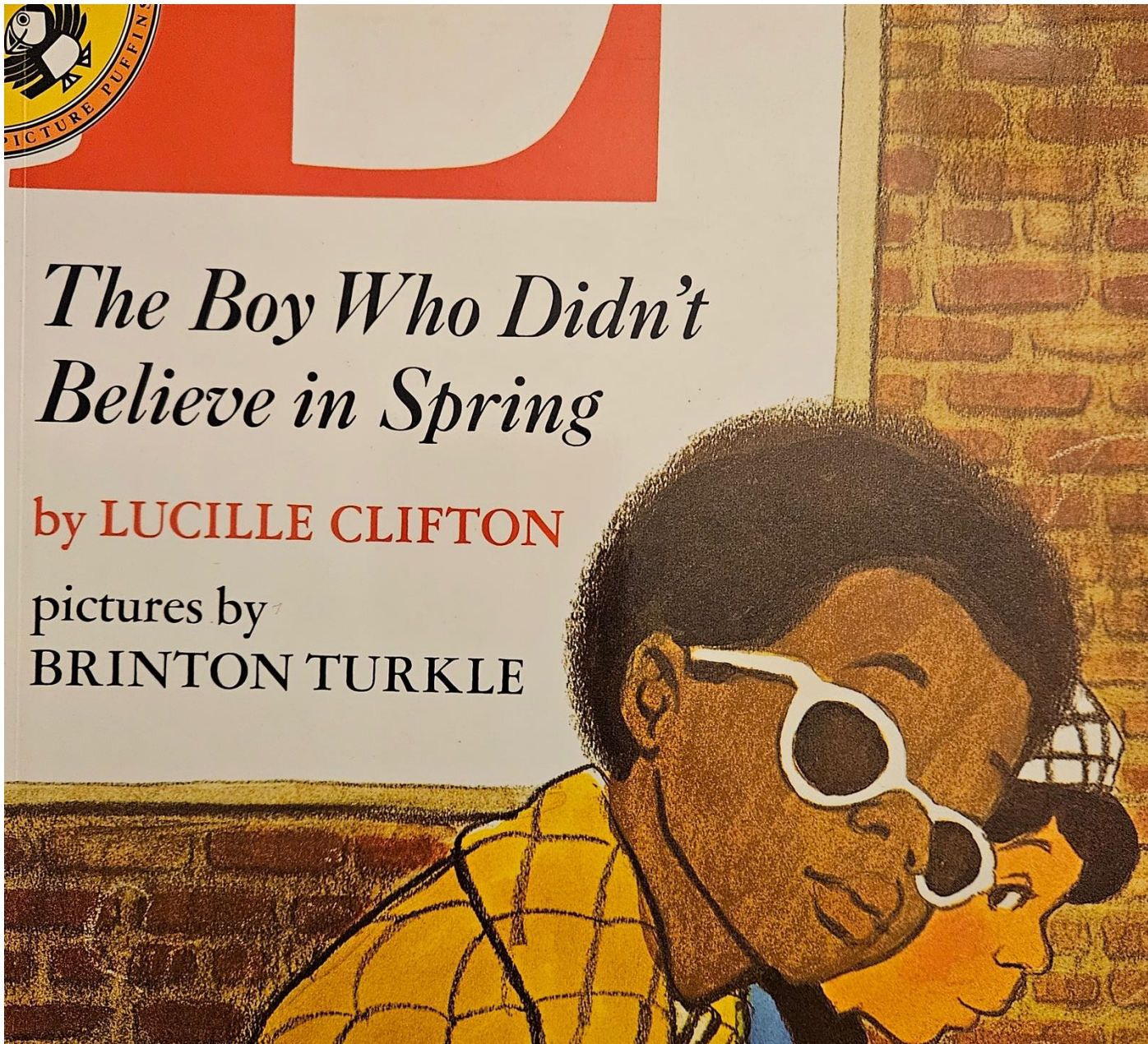
Good
says Jerome
that feels like me.



*The Boy Who Didn't
Believe in Spring*

by LUCILLE CLIFTON

pictures by
BRINTON TURKLE





“Where is it at?” he would holler every time his Mama talked about Spring at home.



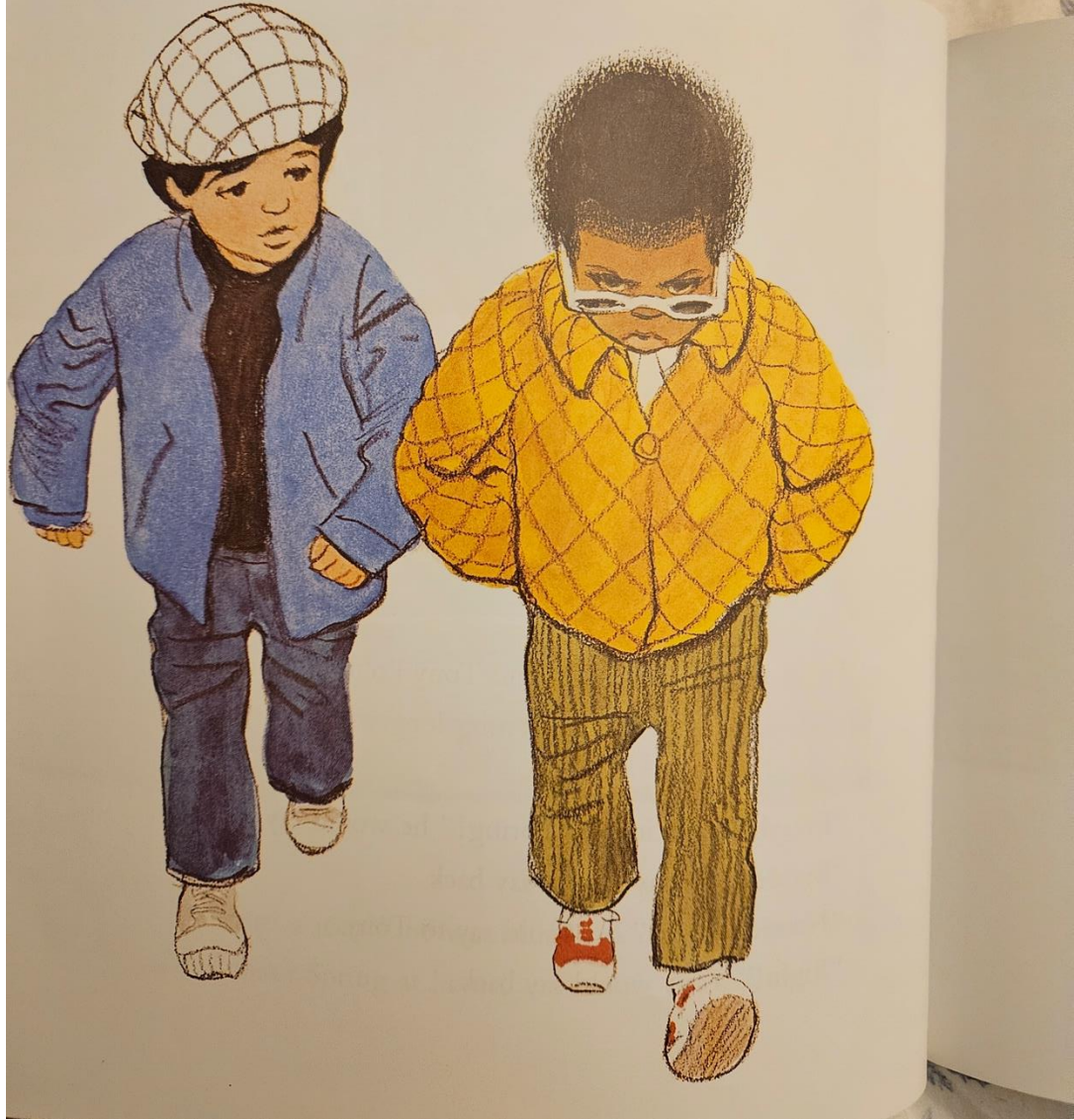
He used to sit with his friend Tony Polito on the bottom step when the days started getting longer and warmer and talk about it.

“Everybody talkin bout Spring!” he would say to Tony.

“Big deal,” Tony would say back.

“No such thing!” he would say to Tony.

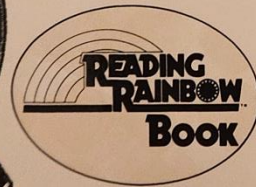
“Right!” Tony would say back.





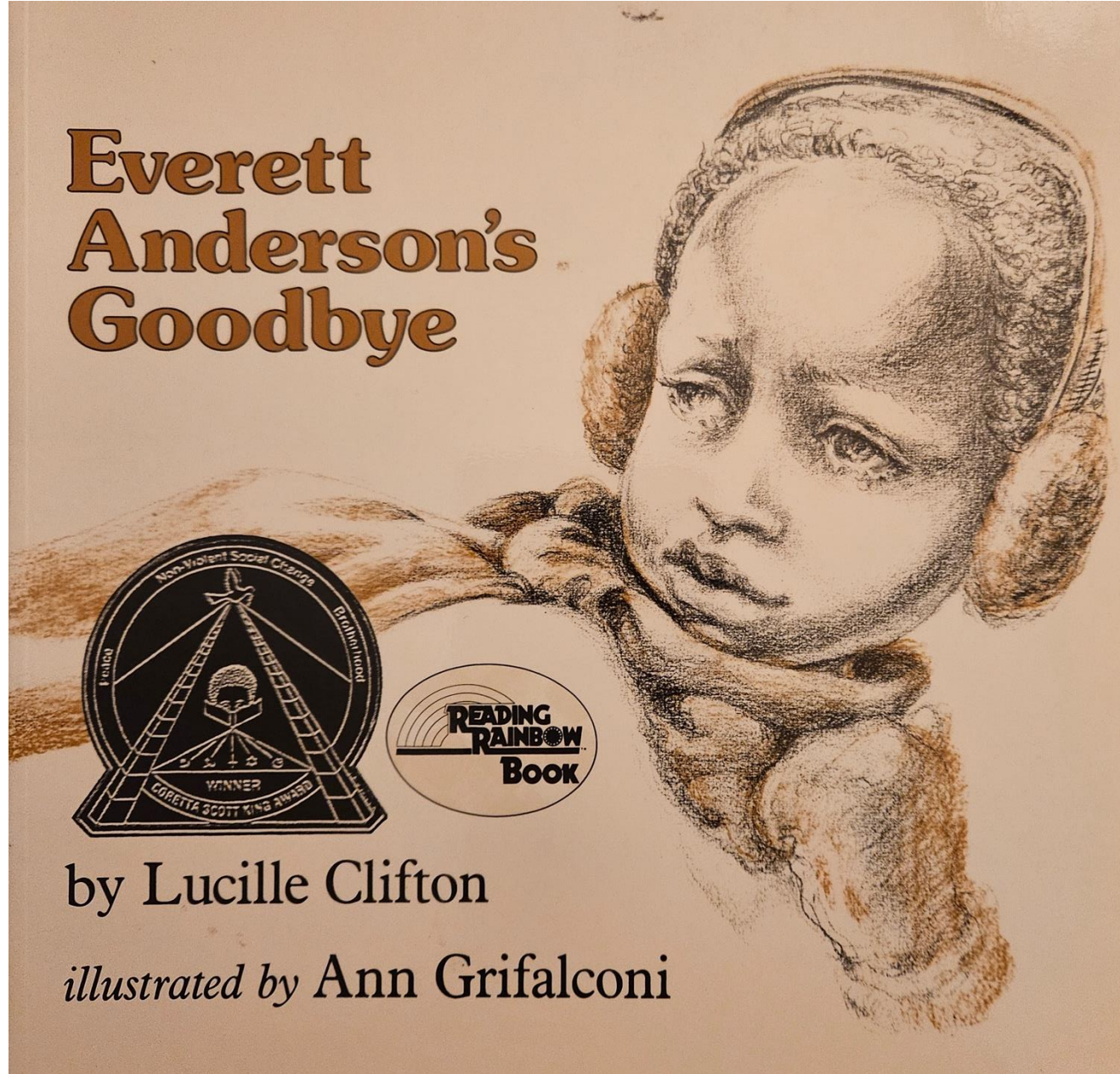


Everett Anderson's Goodbye

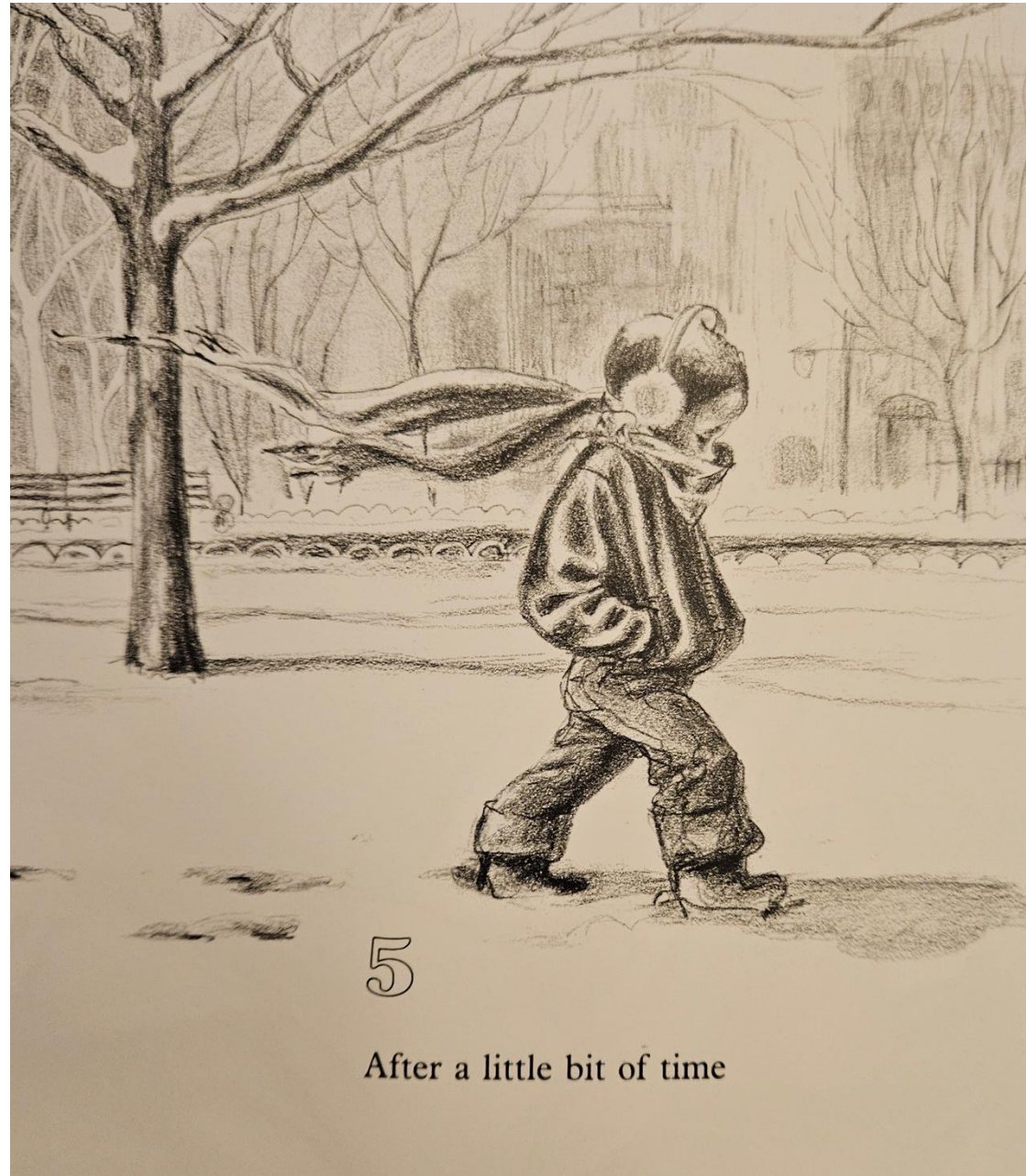


by Lucille Clifton

illustrated by Ann Grifalconi







5

After a little bit of time

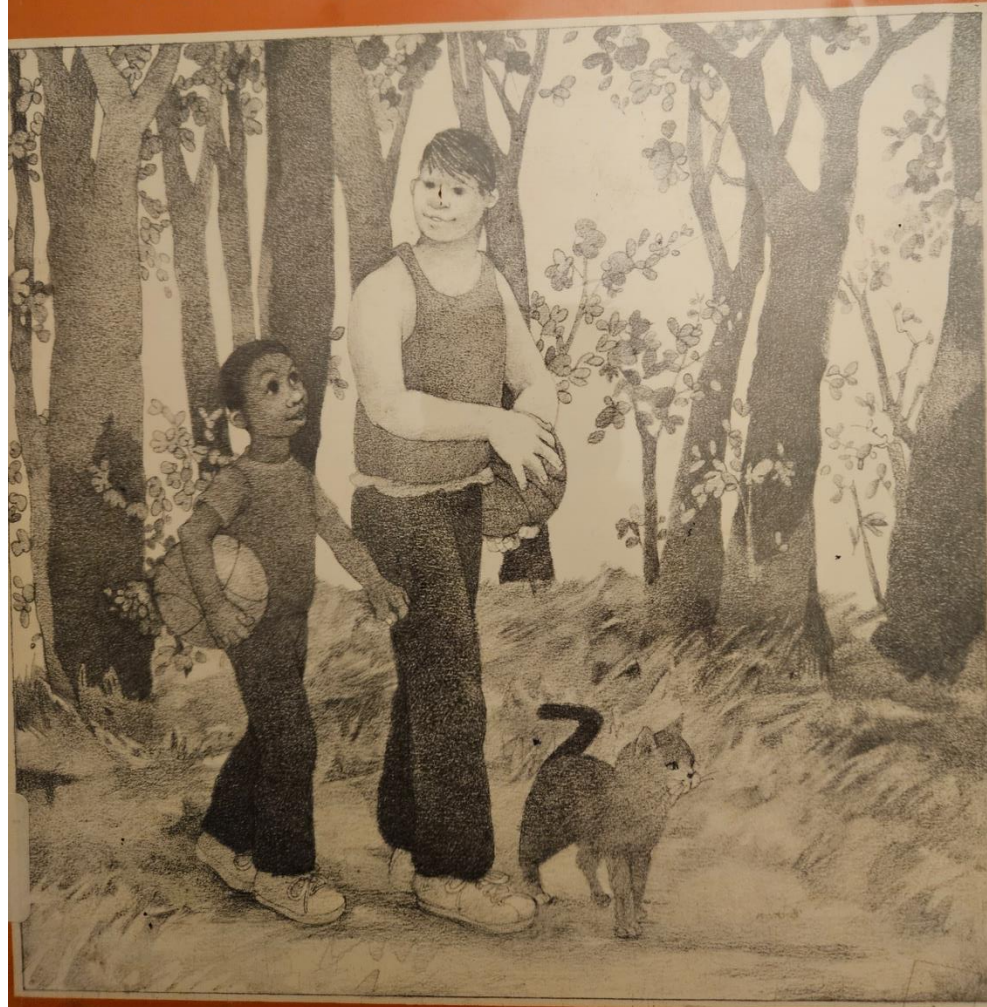
Everett Anderson says, "I knew
my daddy loved me through and through,
and whatever happens when people die,



My Friend Jacob

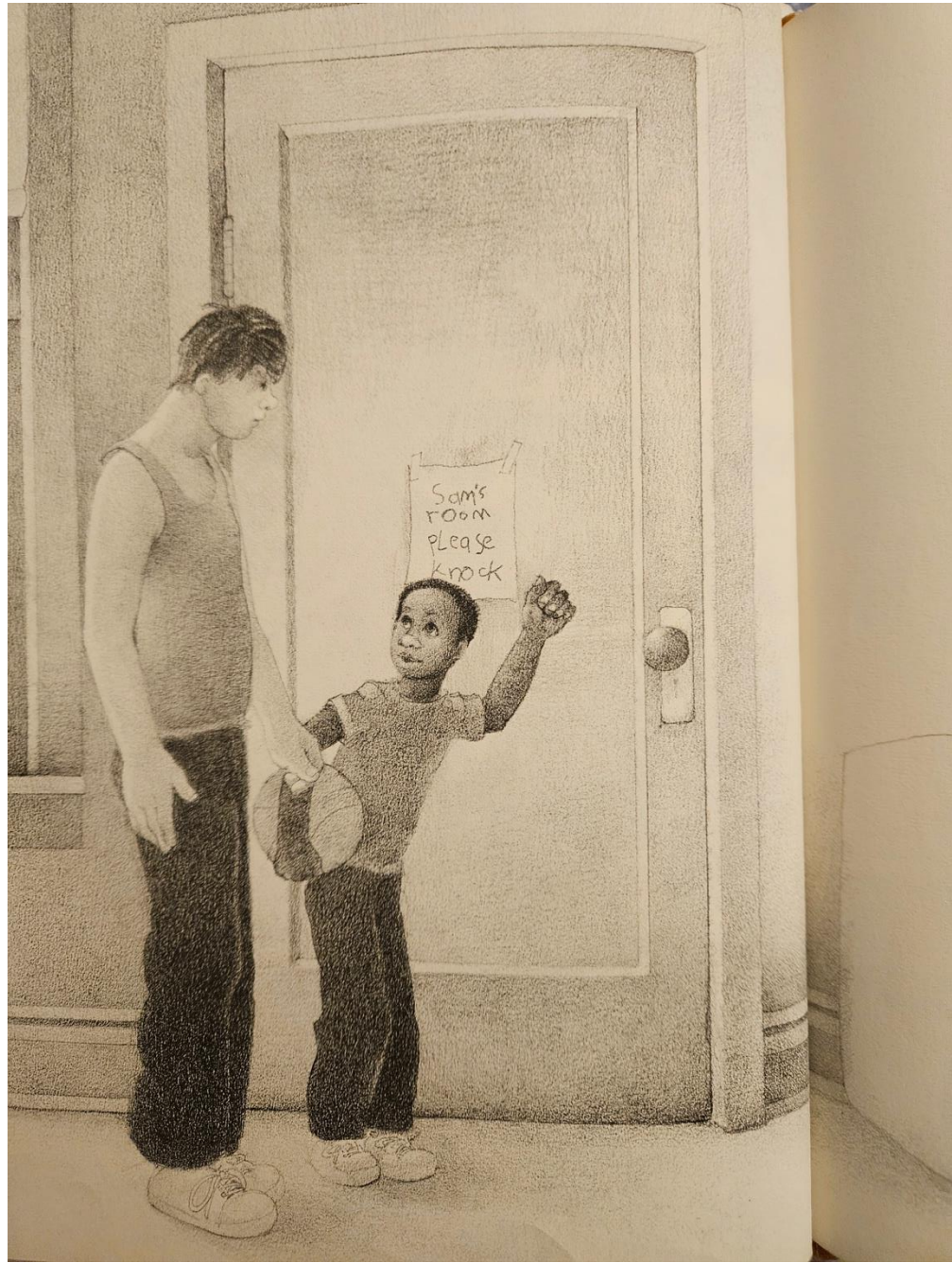
by LUCILLE CLIFTON

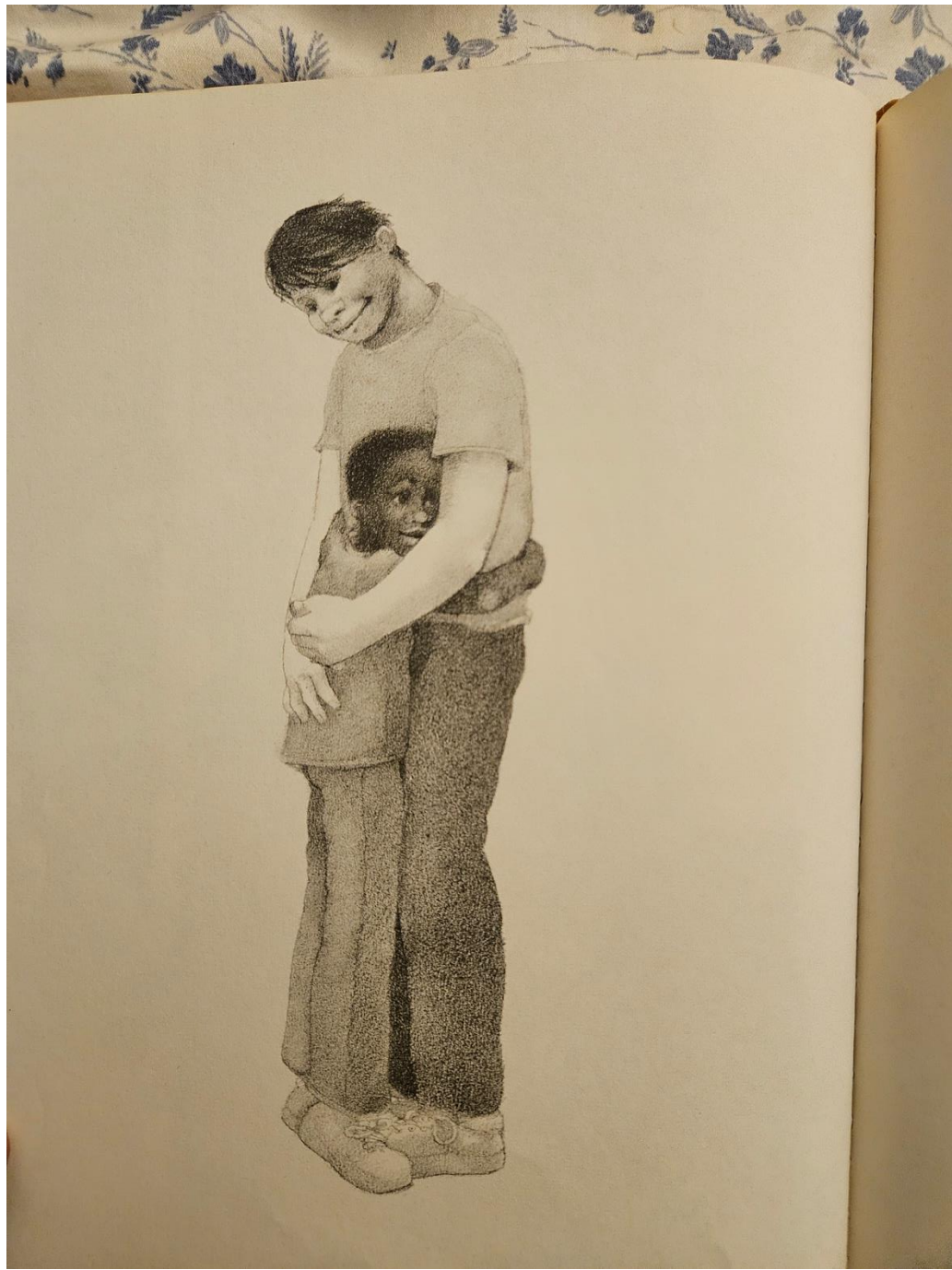
illustrated by THOMAS DI GRAZIA





of
d
n
d
t

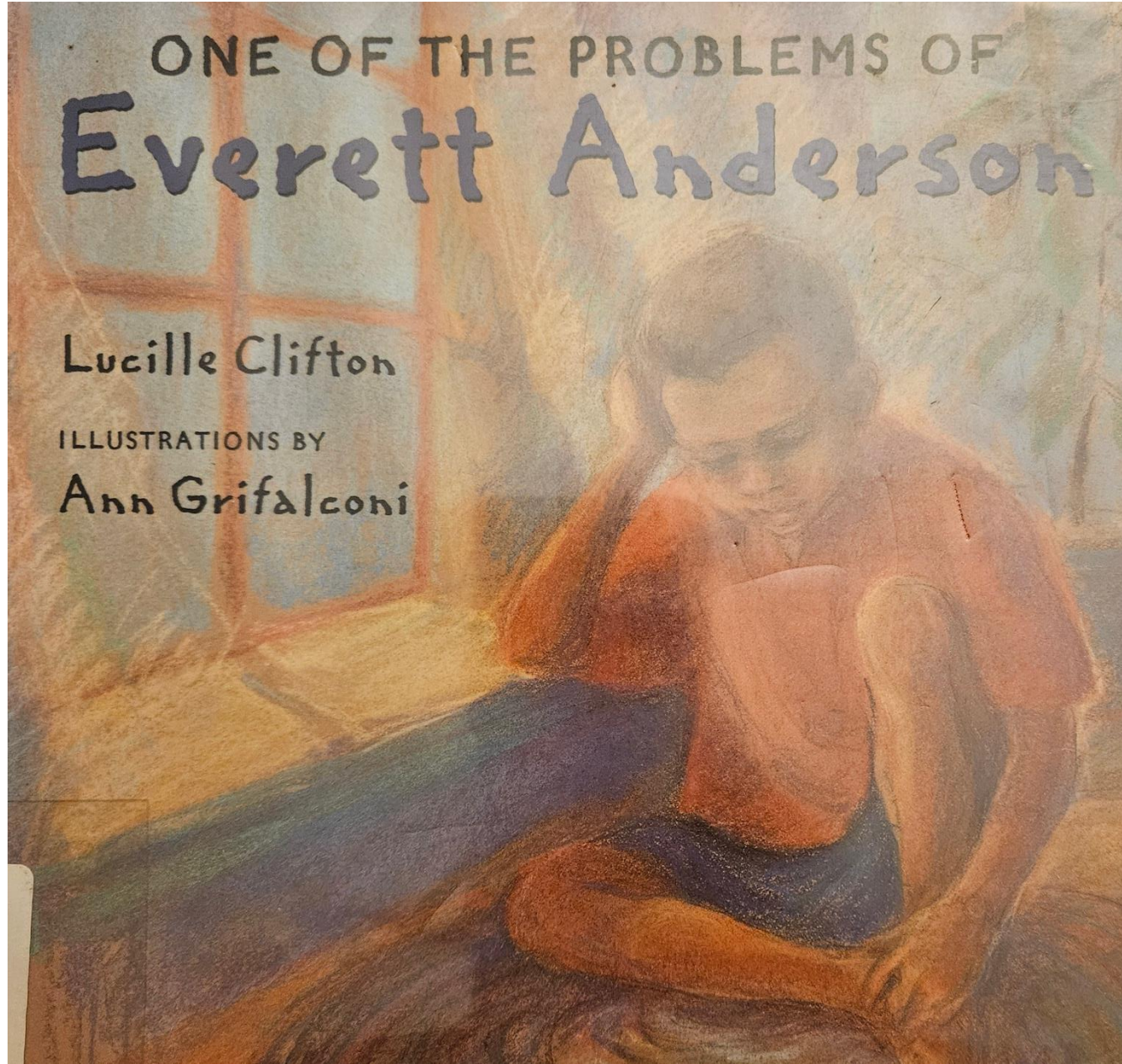




ONE OF THE PROBLEMS OF
Everett Anderson

Lucille Clifton

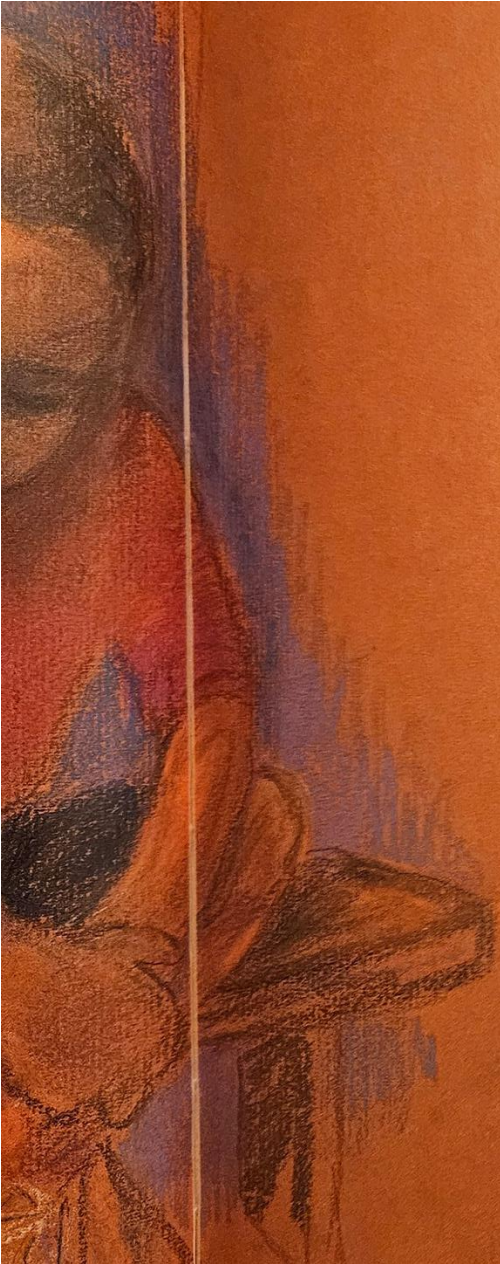
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
Ann Grifalconi



To all those who need a friend, speak!

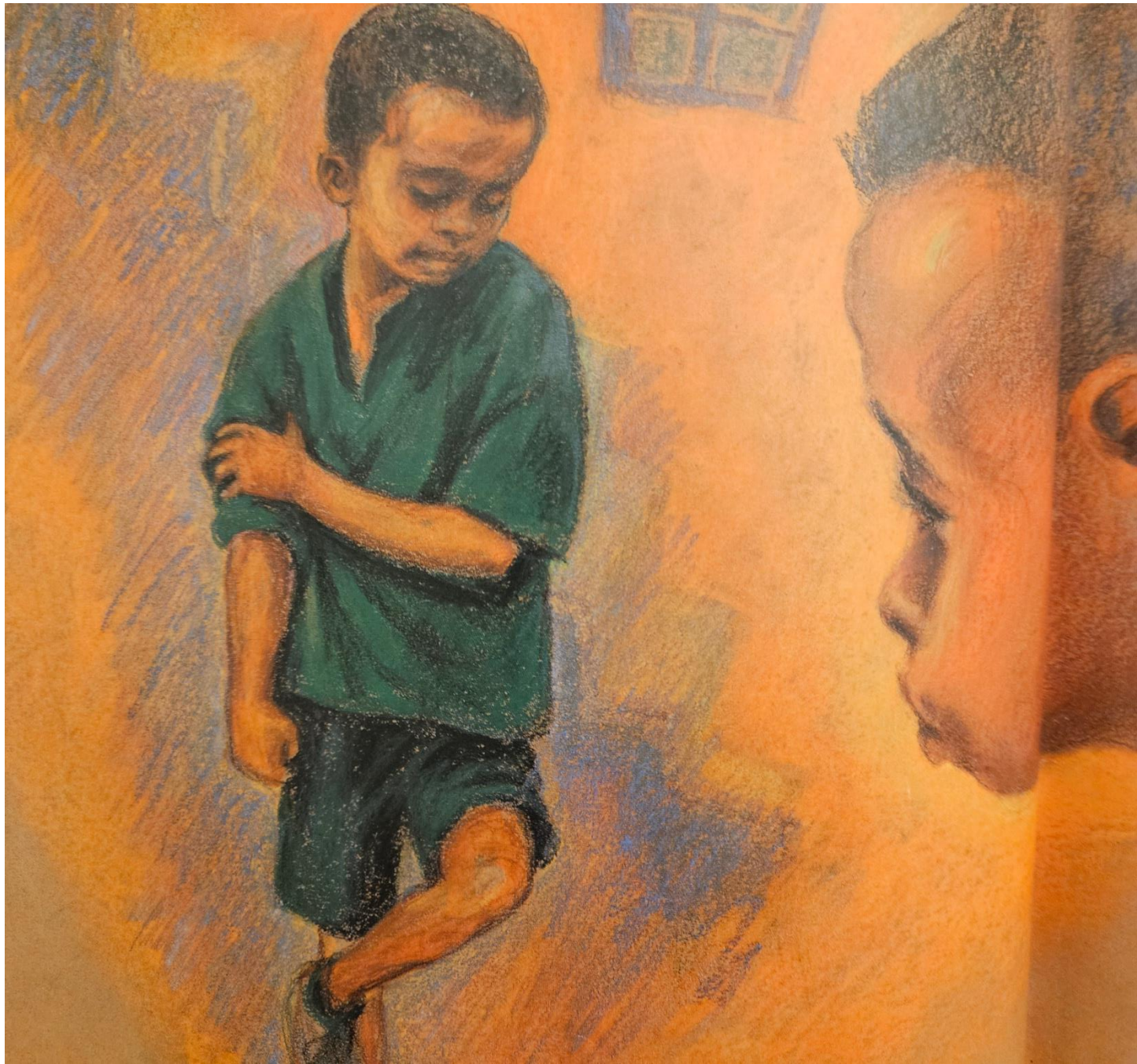
-L. C. and A. G.

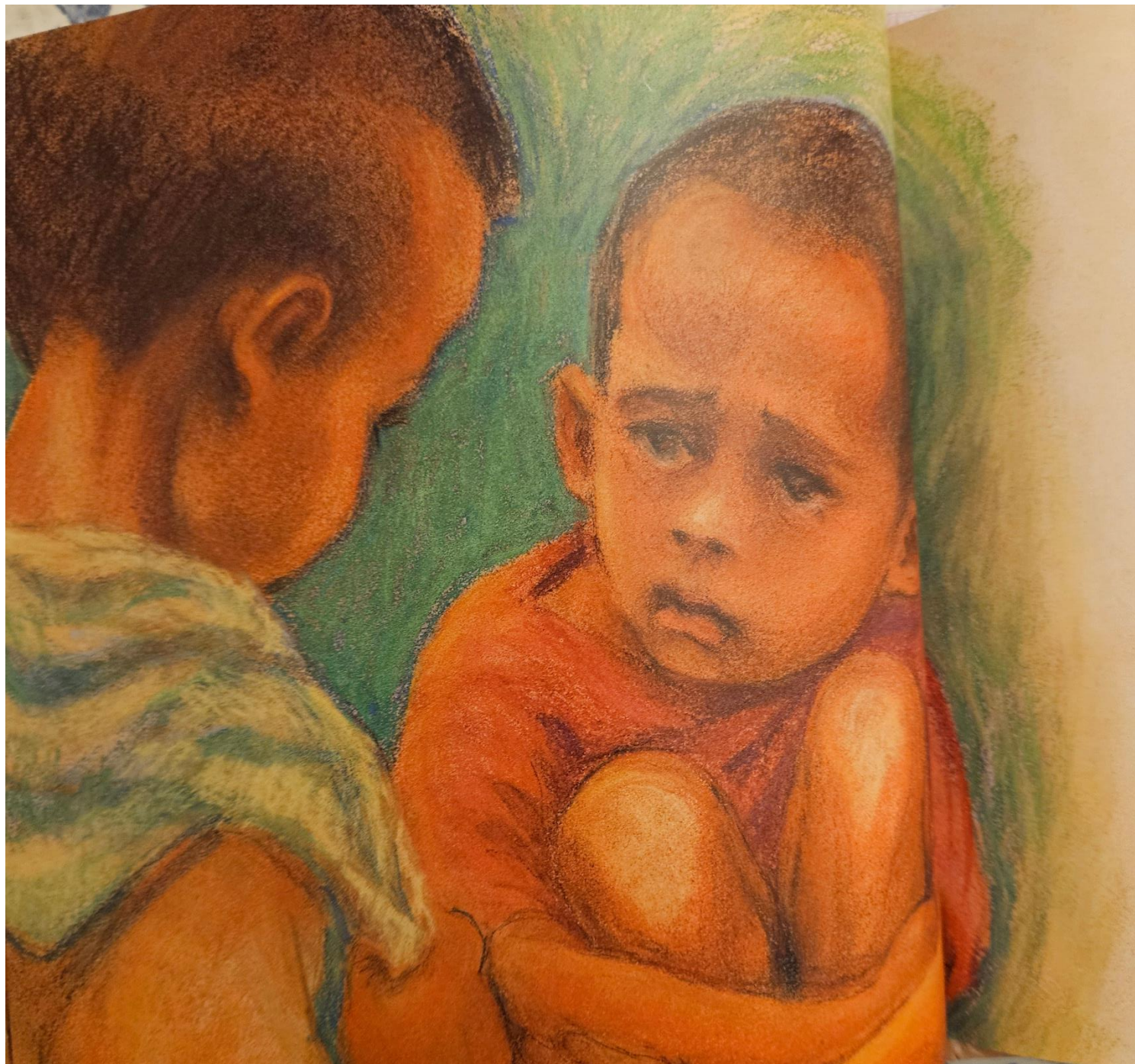




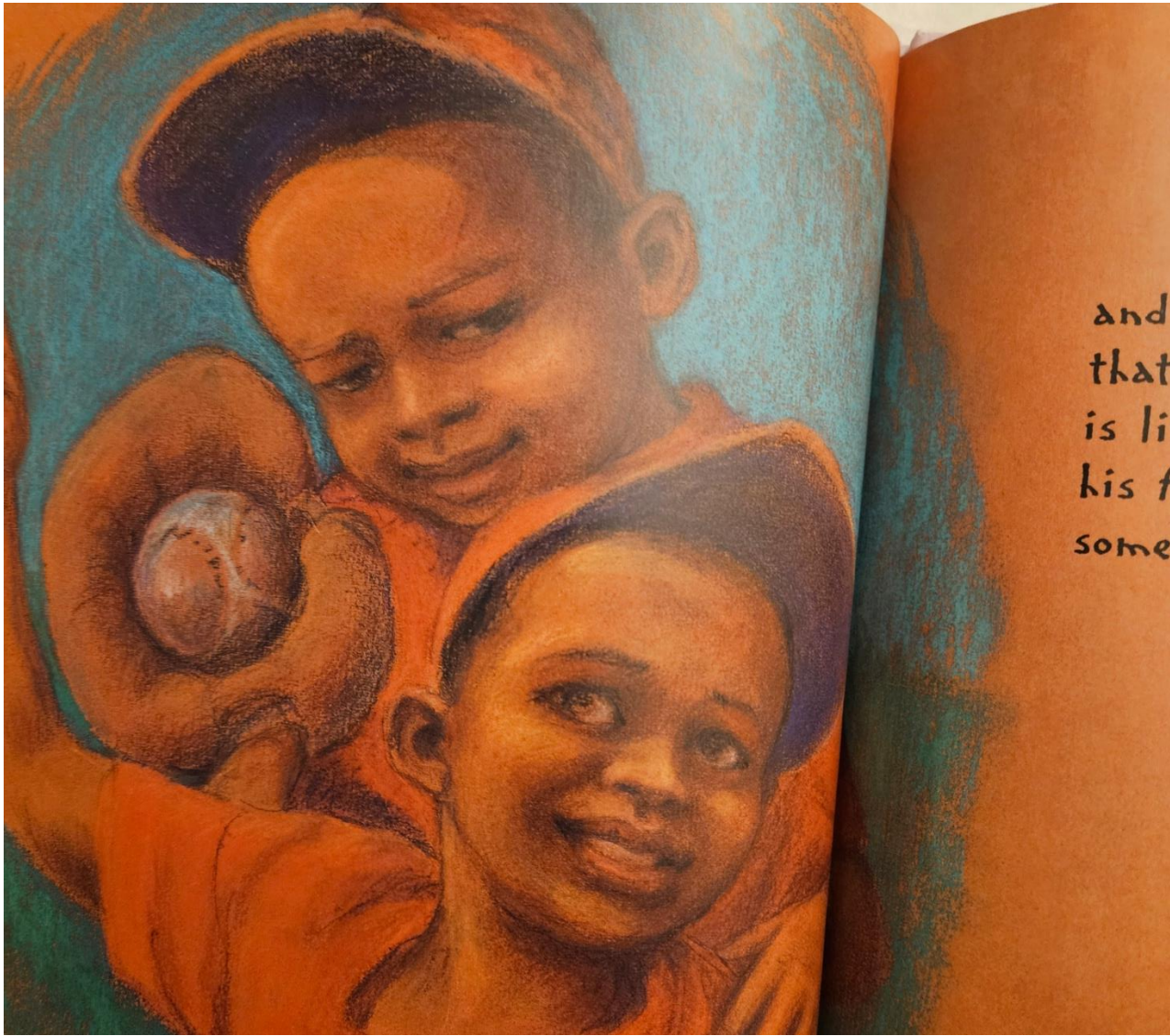
A room can be lonely
when a boy, not grown,
every day sees his new friend Greg
with a scar or a bruise mark on his leg.

"Maybe he really falls down stairs,
but every day could he be stumbling
and nobody ever notices Greg
being clumsy or slipping or tumbling?"





and Everett tries to understand
that one of the things he can do right now
is listen to Greg and hug and hold
his friend, and now that Mama is told,
something will happen for Greg that is new.



and
that
is li
his f
some