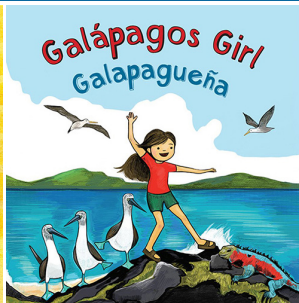
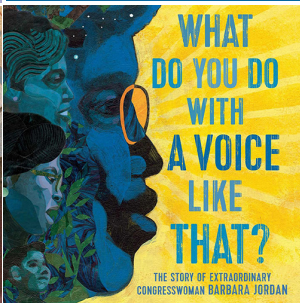
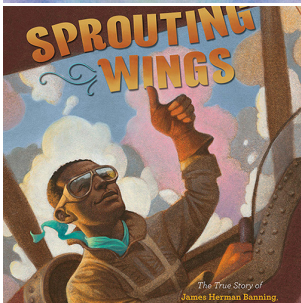
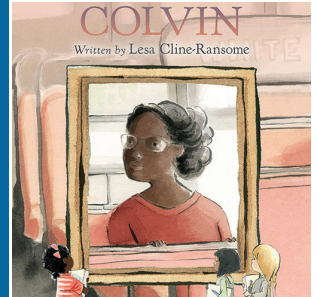
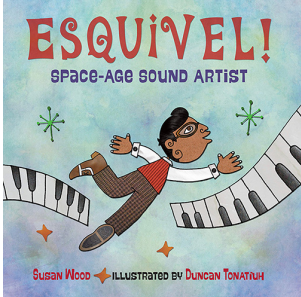



Meet the Trailblazers

Remarkable women and men of color who helped shape our world

Picture book biographies, reflection questions, hands-on activities, and writing ideas for kids 6-12 years old



Brought to you by Start with a Book with support from the Park Foundation





Trailblazers

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Credits: Lead writer and editor: Eileen Hanning (Read Learn Reach)



Trailblazers



Trailblazers go places. Trailblazers explore uncharted areas. They do things first.

Trailblazers are bold, brave, and persistent. They are creative, confident, and strong.

Despite challenges, trailblazers move forward. They mark the way. Others follow.

As trailblazers, the men and women of color featured in this collection of picture book biographies faced unique obstacles. They pursued their passions despite racism, prejudice, poverty, and injustice. Many were born disadvantaged, lacked opportunity, or had limited access to educational opportunities. Yet, they excelled. They were scientists, writers, poets, athletes, pilots, activists, dancers, musicians, inventors, astronauts, and more.

With faces to the wind, they met their goals despite walking through a cultural landscape that was often hostile towards them. They blazed the way.

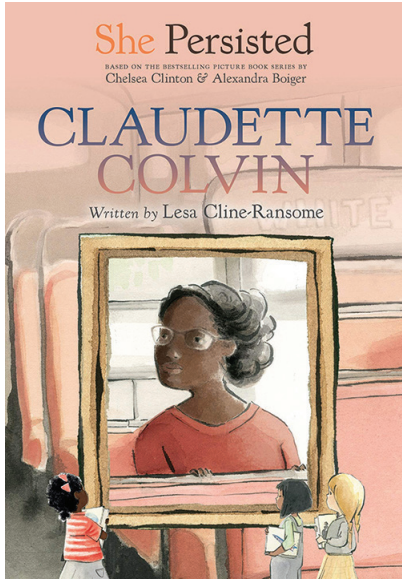
There's a bright light shining out from these real-life stories. We hope they will inspire the young learners in your life!

For each featured book, we provide reflection questions, hands-on activities, and writing prompts — to jump-start conversations, curiosity, and exploration.

You'll notice that we've [highlighted selected words, people, or places](#) throughout this guide. These are terms you may want to talk about as you start on these activities.

To find many more picture book biographies about trailblazers, visit:

www.startwithabook.org/booklists/trailblazers



She Persisted: Claudette Colvin

By Lisa Cline-Ransome

Illustrated by Gillian Flint

Ages 6-9

Reflection questions

- When Ms. Colvin was on the bus and decided not to give up her seat, she described how she felt like this: "*Harriet Tubman's hands were pushing down on one shoulder and Sojourner Truth's were pushing down on the other...I couldn't move.*" Who are Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth and why did Ms. Colvin feel like they were guiding her? Have you ever felt like someone was guiding you in a difficult or scary situation?
- Claudette Colvin's best friend was her sister, Delphine. Do you have a best friend? What makes someone a good friend? How do friends help each other? How did Delphine and Claudette help each other?
- Ms. Colvin asked lots of questions. She asked about [fairness](#) and [justice](#) and why all people weren't treated the same. How did other people react to her questions? Her teachers? Her family? The people on the bus? What result did Ms. Colvin's questions lead to?

Hands-on activities

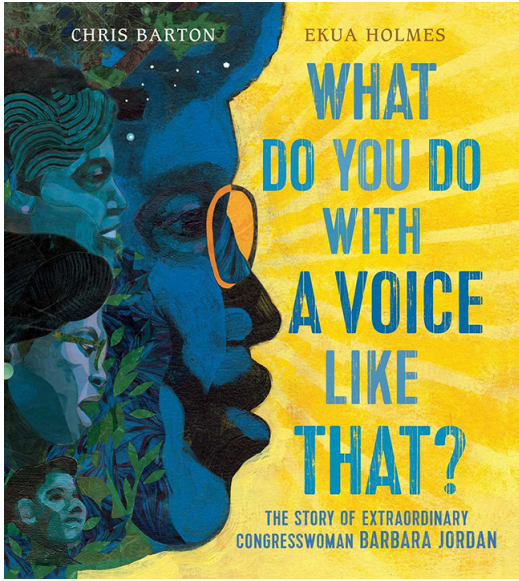
Put on a spelling bee. Claudette Colvin loved learning and loved spelling bees. Have a spelling bee using words from the book to experience one of Claudette's favorite things.

- 7 games for National Spelling Bee Week: <https://tinyurl.com/4jkumftp>

What I believe. Ms. Colvin stood up — or sat down— for something she believed in. What is something important to you? Think about what is important to you and why. Then write down your thoughts. Then share or read your thoughts to the group.

Writing idea

When Ms. Colvin got arrested, Reverend Johnson said, "*I think you just brought the revolution to Montgomery.*" He meant that, by refusing to give up her seat, Ms. Colvin did something very brave to stand up for the rights of Black people. Can you think of a time when you were brave? What was the situation? How did you feel? How did it all turn out? How did you feel when it was over?



What Do You Do with a Voice Like That? The Story of Extraordinary Congresswoman Barbara Jordan

By Chris Barton

Illustrated by Eku Holmes

Ages 6-9

Reflection questions

- Barbara Jordan stood out her entire life — from her unusual, [booming](#) voice as a child, to being the only woman and only Black person in the Texas State Senate when she was elected in 1966, to being one of only two Blacks elected to the [U.S. Congress](#) from the south in 70 years. How does she handle these situations? How do you feel and what do you do when you stand out?
- Barbara Jordan believed in the power of education and the power of words. She also believed in being a force for change and speaking out for others without a voice. As a student, political leader, and teacher, she believed in [public service](#). How did she put her beliefs into action? What do you believe in? What can you do to put your beliefs into action? How can you serve?
- Barbara Jordan kept her illness, [multiple sclerosis](#), private for many years. She kept working and being a public figure, even after she left Congress. Why do you think she kept the fact that she had this illness private? What were the benefits and drawbacks of doing that?

Hands-on activities

Make a speech! Listen to part of one of Barbara Jordan's speeches.

- 1974 speech about impeaching President Nixon: <https://tinyurl.com/m8fbk8f9>
- 1976 Keynote address at the Democratic National Convention: <https://tinyurl.com/3ht7c952>

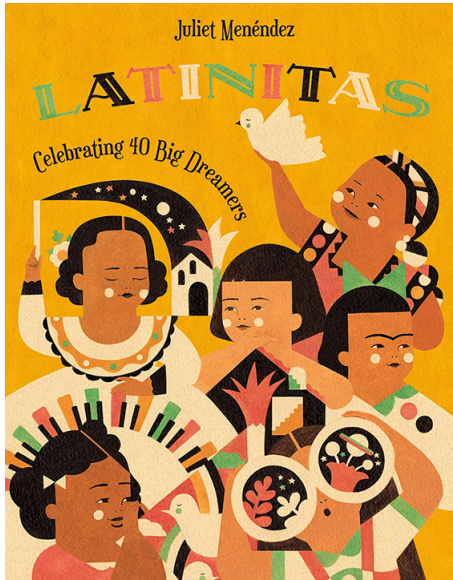
Think about what she is saying and how she says it. Think about her voice and how she uses it. How do people respond to her speech? Now, think about something important to you. Write a short speech about it. Why is it important? What do you want people to know? What can people do to help? Give your speech to the group.

Create a collage. The illustrator, Ekoa Holmes, uses cut paper [collage](#) to make the pictures in the book. She also includes some of the words from Ms. Jordan's speeches. Find a speech or a song you like and make a collage about it. Include both images and words.

- DIY paper collage: <https://tinyurl.com/4vrtxnbp>

Writing idea

"What do you do with a voice like that?" Barbara Jordan had a very unusual voice. Instead of keeping quiet, she decided to become a public speaker and even won [oratory contests](#) when she was in high school. Later, she became an important leader in the [Civil Rights Movement](#) and gave many speeches. Why do you think Ms. Jordan chose to speak out and shine a spotlight on her unusual voice? What is special or unusual about you? What do you do with your unusual quality?



Latinitas: Celebrating 40 Big Dreamers

Written and illustrated by Juliet Menéndez

Illustrated by Gillian Flint

Ages 8-12

Reflection questions

- The author and illustrator of this book decided to show each of the women she spotlights as children. How did these women's experiences as kids shape their futures? Why do you think it was important to her to show these trailblazers as girls, before they changed the world?
- Many of the women in the book are artists: painters, singers, musicians, actors, dancers, writers, poets. Do you like any of them especially? What appeals to you about their story? How do they use their art form to share their experiences with the world? What kind of art could you do to share your experience with the world?
- Some of the women in the story are military and government leaders, revolutionaries, activists, or elected officials. There's even a Supreme Court justice and a spy! For a long time, these jobs were mostly held by men. What did these women do to change the world? Why is having women in roles like this important? How does their experience as Latinas shape their leadership style and impact? If you were to take on a role in politics, law, or the military, what would you do?

Trailblazers: Reflection Questions, Hands-On Activities and Writing Ideas

- This book showcases some Latinas who had or have big roles in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math): [engineers](#), [anthropologists](#), doctors, astronauts, [architects](#), and even an [astrophysicist](#)! How did childhood experiences spark an interest in the sciences for these women? What are curious about?
 - Who is your favorite Latinita? What is her story? Where is she from? Why is she special to you?
-

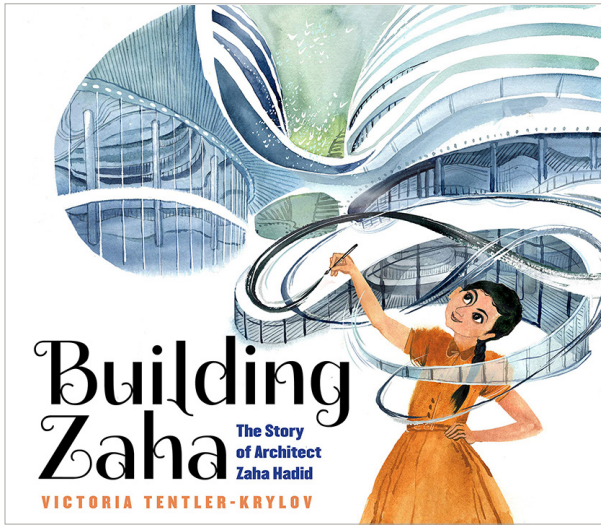
Hands-on activities

Imagine your future. The author and illustrator decided to show all the Latinitas as girls, not grown-ups. She included details in the pictures that show a childhood experience that inspired them or something about their future careers or roles. Think about what you might like to do when you are grown up. Draw a picture of yourself now, like the ones Ms. Menéndez made, showing what you might do in the future.

Latinas in time and space! This book covers 40 women, hundreds of years, and many countries. Get a map of the [Americas](#) and mark the countries the Latinas come from. Mark where you are from, too. Create a timeline on a wall, and put pictures that you have drawn of your favorite Latinitas on it. Add a picture of yourself to the timeline too. For more fun, make little flags for each country (the author includes the Latinitas' flags in the table of contents) and add them to your map and timeline.

Writing idea

The Latinitas were trailblazers. They helped pave the way for others to follow their dreams. What kinds of challenges did they face as Latinas? How have your [ancestors](#) and women done the same for you? What challenges or advantages did they experience? How can you help pave the way for others to follow their dreams?



Building Zaha: The Story of Architect Zaha Hadid

Written and illustrated by Victoria Tentler-Krylov
Ages 6-9

Reflection questions

- How did Zaha Hadid's experiences as a child impact the [design](#) style of her buildings?
- Ms. Hadid challenged a lot of traditions — like how buildings should look or what people should wear at work. How did that help her and how, sometimes, did it make things more challenging?
- Ms. Hadid met a lot of [resistance](#) to her ideas. She designed buildings for years before any got built. Why do you think people resisted her ideas? Was it because they were so different? Because she was a woman? Because she was so young? Can you think of other reasons? How do you respond when you hit an [obstacle](#)? How can her story help you?

Hands-on activities

Model making. As a child, Zaha Hadid saw an architectural model of her aunt and uncle's house. Try making your own architectural model with recycled materials. A [charrette](#) is a quick model that architecture students make to show an idea. It's like brainstorming in 3D.

- Architecture shape collage: <https://tinyurl.com/4v773rtf>
- Paper bag village: <https://tinyurl.com/4s9k9unf>
- Shoe box city (video): <https://tinyurl.com/4bm4bbj7>
- Build a city: <https://tinyurl.com/45xeephd>
- More activities about builders and buildings at Start with a Book: <https://tinyurl.com/3ushxftm>

Shape hunting. Ms. Hadid was influenced by art and she liked to paint. She was drawn to a kind of abstract art called "[suprematism](#)" that focused on simple colors and basic shapes like squares and circles. Go on a scavenger hunt for shapes you see in buildings and nature. Take pictures or draw what you find.

- Suprematism facts for kids: <https://tinyurl.com/wypd8s3p>
- Suprematism artist Kazimir Malevich: <https://tinyurl.com/2twhpv8t>
- Geometric shapes in buildings: <https://tinyurl.com/2kna78n7>
- Architecture shapes: <https://tinyurl.com/5988yvvnv>

Be a designer. Design a "Zaha outfit" or piece of jewelry that shows your style.

- DIY fashion design: <https://tinyurl.com/2acydjhf>
- Draw like a fashion designer: <https://tinyurl.com/y58usdh9>

Writing idea

Ms. Hadid said, "You really should have a goal. The goal posts may shift, but you should have a goal." What does Ms. Hadid mean when she says, "the goal posts may shift"? How did that happen to her? Has it happened to you? What are your goals?



Jump at the Sun: The True Life Story of Unstoppable Storycatcher Zora Neale Hurston

By Alicia D. Williams

Illustrated by Jacqueline Alcántara

Ages 6-9

Reflection questions

- Zora Neale Hurston had a lot of losses and [setbacks](#). Her mother dies and she is sent to a boarding school. Then her father remarries and she has to come home. By the time she is 14, her stepmother makes her leave. She had to start working at age 14, and for 12 years she traveled around, had lots of different jobs and was in and out of school. How does she respond to these setbacks? How do you respond to setbacks?
- Ms. Hurston was a writer and an [anthropologist](#). She was a storycatcher! She gathered stories, music, and games from Black people all over the south and the [Caribbean](#). What can a community's stories, songs, and games tell us about the people and their lives? What stories, songs, and games are shared in your family?
- When Ms. Hurston moved to New York she became part of the [Harlem Renaissance](#). It was a movement that promoted African American thinkers and artists, musicians, dancers, writers, and political leaders. She became friends with [Langston Hughes](#). How did being in a community of supportive, creative people help Ms. Hurston? How can the people you spend time with help or hurt you?

Hands-on activities

Act it out. Make dolls out of found items like Ms. Hurston did and make up stories about them. Then use the dolls to act out the stories.

- Doll crafts for kids: <https://tinyurl.com/v7hb3mrz>

Hats! Look at all the hats in the illustrations — on the people, animals, and Ms. Hurston’s dolls. How can hats help tell a story? Find and/or make some hats and create a story about the people who wear them.

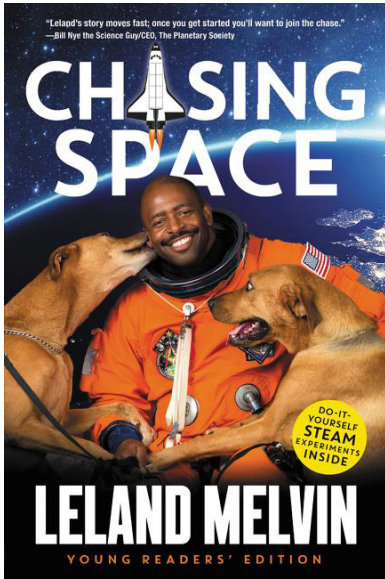
- 10 simple hat ideas: <https://tinyurl.com/3sz57bbh>
- 11 creative hats for National Hat Day: <https://tinyurl.com/8ceakc3j>

Sharing stories. Find some of your favorite folk or fairy tales OR make up your own stories and then tell them to the group.

- Folktales, fairy tales, and myths: <https://tinyurl.com/3dhubphhb>

Writing idea

Ms. Hurston's mother encouraged Zora to jump at the sun, saying that even though she might not land on the sun, at least she'd get off the ground. What did she mean? How did Ms. Hurston jump? How can you jump?



Chasing Space: Young Readers' Edition

By Leland Melvin
Ages 9-12

Reflection questions

- Mr. Melvin didn't plan on being an astronaut, educator, or football player. He wanted to be a tennis player and study science. He did end up studying science and becoming an engineer, but he also was an astronaut and football player and later an educator. How did Leland respond to unexpected opportunities and setbacks? How did he take risks and [persist](#)?
- When Mr. Melvin went into space, he took special items with him, like his Detroit Lions jersey, some jazz music, and his favorite Curious George book. What would you take with you if you went to space?
- Mr. Melvin made a point of including art in space experiences. Instead of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), he focused on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math), working with famous musicians to connect music and science. Why did he do that? How do you think music and other art forms fit into science, technology, engineering, and math? How are imagination and creativity important to both?

Hands-on activities

Get active! Before Mr. Melvin became an astronaut, he was a football player. Play some touch or flag football. Catch a pass and feel what it's like to be Leland. (Or you could play tennis. He loved tennis, too!)

Rocket launchers. Build a rocket and launch it. See the STEM activities at the end of *Chasing Space* for ideas.

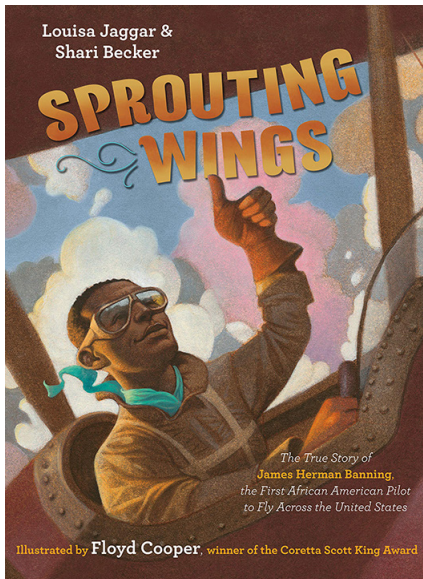
- Paper straw rockets: <https://tinyurl.com/ryxa4j4u>
- NASA rocket projects for kids: <https://tinyurl.com/39ac9z53>
- More rocket projects at Start with a Book: <https://tinyurl.com/ht7w3u8e>

Train like an astronaut. Mr. Melvin had to spend hours training to do his job in space and then had to do special exercises to keep his body strong while he was in space. Try some of these activities and exercises.

- Train Like an Astronaut (NASA): <https://tinyurl.com/crz5b5dr>

Writing idea

Mr. Melvin said: *"It has often been said that the two most important days in your life are the day you were born and the day you find out why."* Leland Melvin took a long and crazy path to becoming an astronaut. It took him 10 years from starting his training as an astronaut to finally get to go to space. And before that, he explored a career as a professional football player and an engineer. How did Mr. Melvin find his "why" or his purpose? Who helped him? What do you think you'll do as an adult? How will you make a difference?



Sprouting Wings: The True Story of James Herman Banning, the First African American Pilot to Fly Across the United States

By Louisa Jaggar and Shari Becker

Illustrated by Floyd Cooper

Ages 6-9

Reflection questions

Watch this [barnstorming](https://tinyurl.com/4m27saxh) video: <https://tinyurl.com/4m27saxh>

- For years, Mr. Banning wanted to learn to fly, but no one would teach him because he was Black. How did Mr. Banning react to this [injustice](#)? How did he find a way to learn to fly?
- Mr. Banning and his mechanic, Thomas Allen, didn't get along, but they shared a dream of flying across the US. They called themselves "The Flying [Hobos](#)" because they had to stop along the way to raise money for each leg of their trip. What was it like for them to work together? How did the community help them?
- "I have sprouted wings!" That's what Mr. Banning said when he finally was able to fly [solo](#). How was James feeling when he said that? Have you ever worked for a long time toward a goal the way James did? How did that feel? If not, what's something that you would work a long time to achieve?

Hands-on activities

Build, test, fly! Create different kinds of different paper airplanes. Test them to see which ones go the farthest or fly best in a straight line. Refine your designs and test again to see if

Trailblazers: Reflection Questions, Hands-On Activities and Writing Ideas

(Continued from previous page)

you can create a paper airplane that can fly both straight and far. Can you make a paper airplane that can do tricks? OR make a cardboard airplane that fits you!

- Paper airplane designs #1: <https://tinyurl.com/5fybu72m>
- Paper airplane designs #2: <https://tinyurl.com/2awdjfda>
- "Hoopster" paper airplane: <https://tinyurl.com/265j2h6j>
- Cardboard airplane: <https://tinyurl.com/p5muhcbr>
- More flight projects at Start with a Book: <https://tinyurl.com/ht7w3u8e>

Let's go fly a kite! *Sprouting Wings* starts with Mr. Banning flying a kite. Make a kite and fly it like James did when he was a kid.

- 10 kite crafts: <https://tinyurl.com/ns94vxmd>
- More flight projects at Start with a Book: <https://tinyurl.com/ht7w3u8e>

Cub reporter. Watch videos of air shows and pretend to be a reporter. Write a story about what you saw.

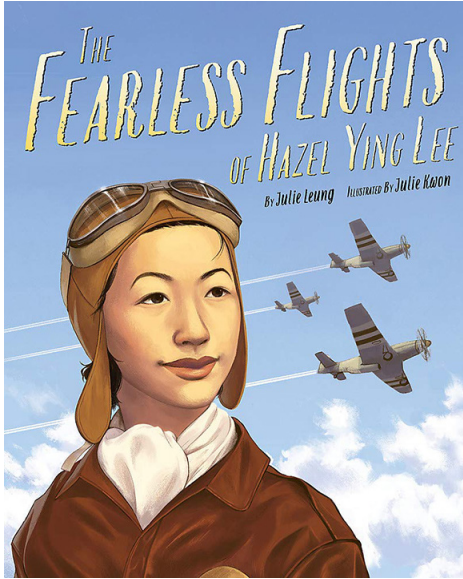
- Air show compilation: <https://tinyurl.com/567wj5r9>
- Paris air show highlights (2019): <https://tinyurl.com/u9rc7hkc>
- Barnstorming in the 21st century: <https://tinyurl.com/4m27saxh>

Going to the source. The author of this book used primary sources like newspaper articles written about Mr. Banning and Mr. Allen. Research primary sources about a topic and create a story to share what you found.

- Engaging students with primary sources: <https://tinyurl.com/t2kysedm>

Writing idea

Even though Banning and Allen were making history, the big newspapers, owned and read by white people, didn't cover the story, more than 200 African American papers, did. Imagine you are a reporter for one of those papers and you see Banning and Allen fly to your town. They need to repair their engine and they need help. What would you write?



The Fearless Flights of Hazel Ying Lee

By Julie Leung

Illustrated by Julie Kwon

Ages 6-9

Reflection questions

- Ms. Lee took a job as an elevator operator to pay for flying lessons. It was one of the only jobs a Chinese girl was allowed to at the time. What did Hazel mean when she called it "an invisible job"?
- Ms. Lee knew as soon as she rode in an airplane that she wanted to learn to fly. Have you ever had an experience like that? What are you passionate about? What things do you want to do?
- Ms. Lee's family had to fight to be able to bury her in the cemetery of their choice. What did they do? Why was it important to them? Have you ever had to fight for something important to you?

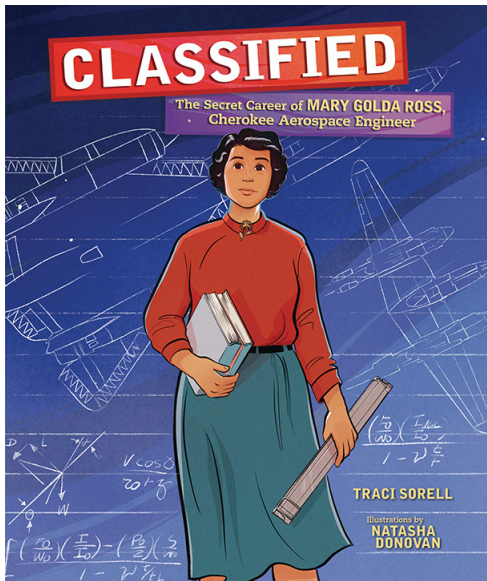
Hands-on activities

Build, test, fly! Create different kinds of paper airplanes. Test them to see which ones go the farthest or fly best in a straight line. Refine your designs and test again to see if you can create a paper airplane that can fly both straight and far.

- Paper airplane designs #1: <https://tinyurl.com/5fybu72m>
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- "Hoopster" paper airplane: <https://tinyurl.com/265j2h6j>
- More flight projects at Start with a Book: <https://tinyurl.com/ht7w3u8e>

Writing idea

Frances Tong, Hazel Lee's sister, said about Hazel's love of flying: "*She didn't care if it was ladylike or not. She enjoyed the danger and doing something that was new to Chinese girls.*" Hazel Lee faced two obstacles to achieving her dream of being a pilot: she was a woman and she was Chinese. No one like her had yet to become a pilot in the United States. How did Hazel Lee overcome these obstacles? What obstacles to your dreams do you face? What can you do to overcome them?



Classified: The Secret Career of Mary Golda Ross, Cherokee Aerospace Engineer

By Traci Sorell

Illustrated by Natasha Donovan

Ages 8-12

Reflection questions

- Ms. Ross spent a lot of time in schools as a student and as a teacher. What do you think drove her to want to learn so much? She was often the only girl in her classes, and not accepted by the boys. How do you think that felt? How did she react? How do you feel about school and learning? How do you react when other people aren't welcoming to you?
- Ms. Ross put a lot of effort into encouraging girls to study math and science and go into related careers. What are some ways Ms. Ross helped? How did she set an example? How did she increase others' knowledge? What other ways did she support women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math)?
- The [Cherokee values](#) Ms. Ross was raised with shaped her career. Other cultures might think that working [cooperatively](#) with others and remaining [humble](#) when people recognize your talents would make you less successful. Ms. Ross thought otherwise. Not only did she place an emphasis on gaining skills in all areas of her personal life, she also strived to ensure that others received equal education and opportunity as well. What are some examples of Ms. Ross living these values? How did they support her success? Can you think of examples of living these values in your own life?

Hands-on activities

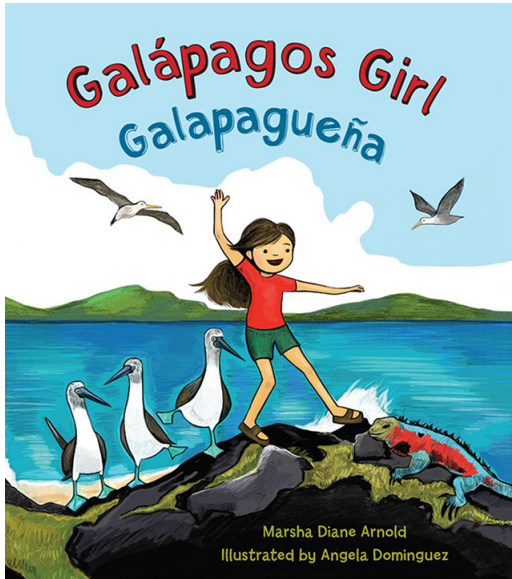
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Picturing our values. Four Cherokee [values](#) were very important to Ms. Ross. What are four values important to you? Create a single phrase that describes each one. Create and draw a symbol to represent each one. Think of an example for each one in your own life.

Writing idea

"Do the best that you can and search out knowledge and build on it. I started with a firm foundation in mathematics and qualities that came down to me from my Indian heritage."
How did Ms. Ross build on her knowledge of math? How did her values guide her? What are you interested in? How can you build your knowledge in the area? What values guide how you act?



Galápagos Girl / Galapagueña

By Marsha Diane Arnold

Illustrated by Angela Dominguez

English and Spanish edition

Ages 6-9

Reflection questions

- The book focuses a lot on Valentina Cruz's senses: what she could see and touch. How do all your [senses](#) help you learn about a place?
- Ms. Cruz had to leave her island, home, and family to go away to school. How do you think she felt? Have you ever had an experience like that? How did you feel?
- Ms. Cruz's whole family worked to care for the island, its plants and animals. Is there something that your whole family cares about or likes to do?
- The book shows lots of interesting animals that live only in the [Galápagos Islands](#). Which ones do you think are the most interesting? Why?
- This book is written both in English and in Spanish. If you understand both languages, how does it feel to see both languages side by side? If you speak other languages, how often do you get to see both languages in the same book? Write your own story or poem in more than one language.

Hands-on activities

Neighborhood field guide. When Ms. Cruz came back home after college, she worked as a nature guide, showing visitors about the plants, animals, and [geology](#) of the Galápagos Islands. Pretend you are a nature guide. Bring a pad of paper and a pencil with you as you explore your neighborhood. Make notes and draw pictures of the plants and animals you see. If you want to, add color to your pictures. When you are done, put your pages together to make a field guide.

- DIY field guide #1: <https://tinyurl.com/2vnrw3td>
- DIY field guide #2: <https://tinyurl.com/4e993f79>

Volcano eruption! The Galápagos Islands were created when a volcano exploded. Make your own volcano with baking soda and vinegar to see how [lava](#) flows up from inside the volcano and down the sides.

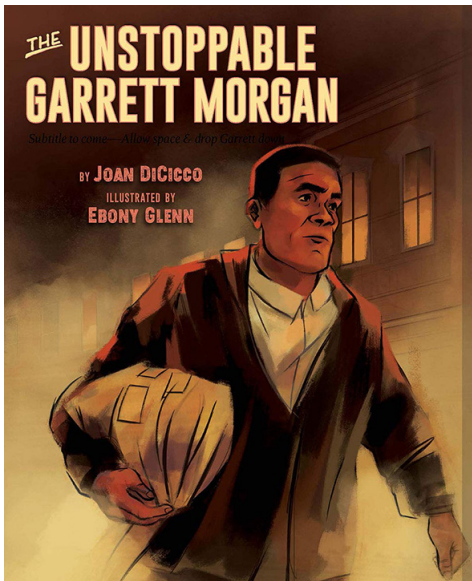
- How to make a volcano #1 (video): <https://tinyurl.com/jtbpmvvz>
- How to make a volcano #2: <https://tinyurl.com/3pre7ssk>

Act it out. Play Galápagos animal [charades](#). Read the information about the animals in the back of the book. Do more research about them if you want to. Then write the names of the animals on pieces of paper. Have one person draw a piece of paper and act out the animal without talking. Everyone else has to guess which animal it is.

- How to play charades with kids of all ages: <https://tinyurl.com/5543uu8m>

Writing idea

Ms. Cruz told the Galápagos animals, *"I will not forget you. And I will help to keep you safe."* What can you do to help keep animals and the earth safe? Draw or write your ideas.



The Unstoppable Garrett Morgan

By Joan D'icicco

Illustrated by Ebony Glenn

Ages 6-9

Reflection questions

- As a child, Garrett Morgan helped put out fires in neighbors' homes and learned how to fix tools and machines to help his family. How did Morgan's experiences when he was a kid impact what he did with his life?
- Mr. Morgan invented life-saving things like the stop light and his fire safety hood. Because he was Black, people refused to try or use his safety hood, even though he'd proven that it worked. When his safety hood saved lives in a mine fire, he wasn't given recognition along with the white rescuers. How did he react to this racism?
- How did Mr. Morgan use his [imagination](#)? How did it shape his life? What do you think was more important in his life — imagination or formal education?

Hands-on activities

Get the local scoop! Garrett Morgan created a newspaper for the African American community in Cleveland, OH, because there was no newspaper reporting news important to that community. Create a newspaper for your community — your family, your class, or your camp — and collect stories from members.

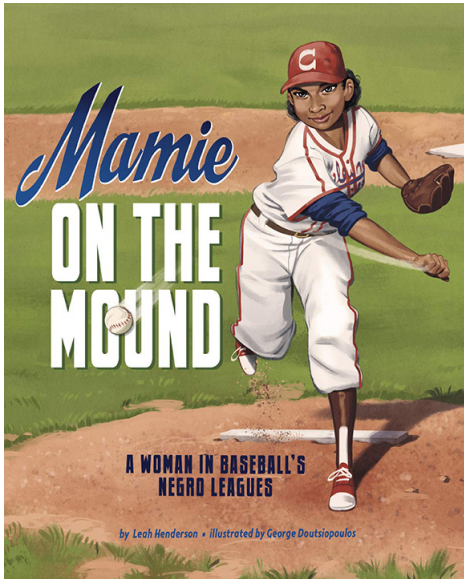
- Create a family newspaper: <https://tinyurl.com/scxd39xh>
- Kid-made newspaper: writing with real-world context: <https://tinyurl.com/4fzjdz5w>

Think like an inventor. Mr. Morgan invented a lot of things. He used his imagination to solve problems. He saw how something worked in one situation and changed it for another situation. Brainstorm problems that need a solution. Then imagine an invention that can help solve one. Draw it, write about it, make a model of it. Create an ad to sell it like the ads for Morgan's stoplight and safety hood.

- Activities for young inventors at Start with a Book: <https://tinyurl.com/jsav8nx4>

Writing idea

"If a man puts something to block your way, the first time you go around it, the second time you go over it, and the third time you go through it." What did Mr. Morgan mean when he said this? What are the [obstacles](#) he overcame? What does it mean to you? Can you think of times when you went around, over, or through an obstacle?



Mamie on the Mound: A Woman in Baseball's Negro Leagues

By Leah Henderson

Illustrated by George Doutsopoulos

Ages 9-12

Reflection questions

- Mamie Johnson's nickname was "Peanut." How did she get that name? How do you think she felt about it? Do you have a nickname? If you do, how did you get it and how do you feel about it? If not, what would you like your nickname to be and why?
- Mamie Johnson wanted to play baseball, but she said she had "two strikes against her." She was a girl and she was Black. When she was growing up, white women and Black people weren't allowed to play in professional baseball leagues with white males. How do you think she felt when white women didn't want her to try out for the women's professional team? How did she feel when she was welcome to try out to play with the men's [Negro leagues](#)? Have you ever been turned away where you thought you'd be welcome? Have you ever been welcomed when you thought you'd be turned away? How did that feel?
- Mamie Johnson had [confidence](#) in her ability to play baseball as well as anyone else. How and when did her confidence help her? What do you feel confident about?

Hands-on activities

Play ball! Mamie Johnson loved to play baseball. Play a game of baseball with your friends! Take turns being the pitcher so you can be like Mamie.

- How to throw a curve ball (and other pitches): <https://tinyurl.com/jz8epsnj>
- More baseball and other sports activities at Start with a Book: <https://tinyurl.com/vyfp9z2s>

Dream team. Ms. Johnson played three seasons for the Indianapolis Clowns. If you could create your own baseball team, what would you call it? What would the mascot be? What would their uniforms look like? Draw your dream team!

Writing idea

"I was a ballplayer. This is what I was and this is the way I want to be known, a ballplayer."
Ms. Johnson loved baseball. She worked hard and took risks to be able to play. What kinds of things did Mamie do to make her dream come true? How did her efforts pave the way for others?



Digging for Words: José Alberto Gutiérrez and the Library He Built

By Angela Burke Kunkel

Illustrated by Paola Escobar

Ages 6-9

Reflection questions

- José Gutiérrez loves books. All kinds of books. Some of the stories are special, like the first book he found on his garbage route. It was *Anna Karenina*, a famous Russian novel. Do you have a special or favorite book? What is the title? What is it about? Why is it special to you?
- Little José waits all week to visit Mr. Gutiérrez's book collection. It's something he looks forward to. Is there something you love that you look forward to?
- Mr. Gutiérrez had to stop going to school when he was a child because his mother couldn't afford to send him. He loved reading and continued to read his whole life. He went back to school when he was more than 50 years old and it took him 3 years to earn his high school diploma. Why do you think graduating from high school was so important to him? What is important to you?
- People laughed at Mr. Gutiérrez when he started his library, but it didn't stop him. Can you think of a time when you people laughed at you or didn't believe you would succeed? How did you feel? What did you do?

Hands-on activities

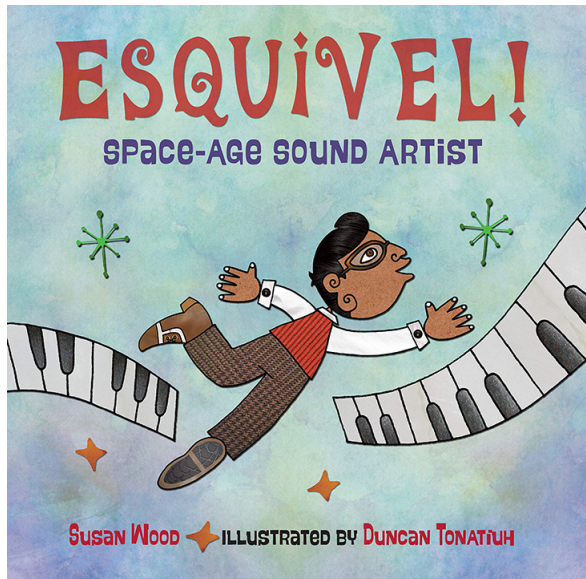
Imagining stories. Both Mr. Gutiérrez and Little José love stories because they can [imagine](#) the places in the books. The book shows how they imagine scenes from the stories they read. Read a book you like or imagine a favorite story and draw how you imagine the story.

Here comes the bookmobile! Mr. Gutierrez dreams of having a truck full of books that he can drive all over [Colombia](#). Draw or make a model of his [bookmobile](#).

- Milk carton school bus (adapt for a bookmobile): <https://tinyurl.com/zjpjksxs>
- Bookmobile template #1 (print and fold, or use the shape as a template for kids to illustrate): <https://tinyurl.com/6xsr8hzk>
- Bookmobile template #2 (print and fold, or use the shape as a template for kids to illustrate): <https://tinyurl.com/33demvw4>

Writing idea

Mr. Gutiérrez created a library for his community because it didn't have one. He loved books and reading. He wanted to share the books he found with his neighbors. His dream is to travel the country giving away books. What do you love? What would you like to create and share with your neighbors? What is your dream?



Esquivel! Space-Age Sound Artist

By Susan Wood

Illustrated by Duncan Tonatiuh

Ages 6-9

Reflection questions

- Juan García Esquivel liked to [reimagine](#) familiar songs in new ways. He slowed them down, sped them up, added different sounds to them, or played them on entirely new instruments. Why would someone want to reimagine or reinvent something?
- The illustrations in the book (by Mexican-American artist Duncan Tonatiuh) combine something old with something new — the 14th century [Mixtec](#) Codex style of drawing with people in [profile](#), along with people in modern clothes, computer-assisted [collage](#), and handwritten text. How are the illustrations like Mr. Esquivel's music?
- Mr. Esquivel and his musicians performed at the Stardust hotel for 14 years in a row. Would you like to perform in the same place for 14 years? How do you think Mr. Esquivel kept from getting bored?
- Mr. Esquivel uses lots of sounds in his music like car engines, waves crashing, and bells chiming. Are those sounds really music? What is music?
- Juan Garcia Esquivel became known by just one name — Esquivel! (with the exclamation point). A mononymous person is an individual who is known and addressed by a single name, or [mononym](#). Who else can you think of who is known by just one name — artists, musicians, politicians, or public figures? (Prince, Cher, Beyoncé, Usher, Oprah, Ellen, Pele, Ronaldo, Shakespeare, Plato ...)

Hands-on activities

Imagining stories. Listen to some of Esquivel!'s music. See how many different sounds you can hear. Make a list: different instruments, people's voices and what they are saying (are they saying words or sounds like *zoo zoo zoo?*), other sounds like bells, scraping or rattling sounds. Make instruments out of recycled materials. Rework a familiar song using your instruments like Esquivel!.

- Hits by Esquivel!: <https://tinyurl.com/5n6ka36v>
- Make your own musical instruments, with these activities from Start with a Book: <https://tinyurl.com/mcxx4xsh>

Experiment with stereo sound. Esquivel! was a pioneer in [stereophonics](#). That's where sound is separated and can come from the left side, the right side, or from both at once. Break into two groups and move to two sides of the room. Sing a familiar song together. Then break it up into parts where one side sings and the other is quiet and then the other side sings and the first side is quiet, and finally, both sides sing together.

Writing idea

Esquivel! is sometimes called The King of Space-Age Pop. He composed, arranged, and conducted music in a completely new way. At the same time, the [space race](#) between the United States and the Soviet Union was going on (1955-1975). In the space race, scientists were taking old ideas like airplanes and thinking about them in new ways. They created new technologies and made lots of discoveries. How is Esquivel!'s music — using new technology — like the big discoveries made in the space race? How does art reflect what is happening in the world?

Trailblazers: finding connections

The Trailblazer books featured in this guide explore some big social issues, such as prejudice and inequality. These are issues that many families and communities are thinking about and talking about today.

There are also lots of themes embedded in these books — ranging from citizenship and civil rights to science, the environment, sports, art and music, and more. The trailblazers featured here overcame obstacles in many different professions, achieved great things in their fields, and made change happen.

The ideas and questions provided here may help you as you explore some of these big issues and themes in the books.

Prejudice, racism, and sexism

All of the trailblazers experienced some form of prejudice, racism, or sexism in their lives.

What is prejudice? Prejudice involves holding a negative view or prejudging people adversely without actually having any real knowledge about them. This negative bias is formed out of ignorance and is often based on stereotypes about people from different races, cultures, or religions. Prejudicial statements often include negative talk with statements like “You know how it is with those people.”

What is racism? At the heart of racism is the belief that people should be divided into groups or races determined by things like skin color, language, or origin of birth. People who are racist believe that their group is better than any other group. They believe that people outside of their group have inherent negative traits and ignore any evidence that suggests their belief is wrong. Some even justify acts of brutality and inhumanity toward other races, believing that those injured come from a race beneath their own. Science and our own experiences tell us that humans are more alike than different. We all belong to the human race — a diverse, global family.

For family resources on how to talk with children about racism, visit our sister site, Colorín Colorado: <https://tinyurl.com/b45tpfbp>

What is sexism? Sexism is prejudice or discrimination based on sex or gender, especially against women and girls. It is tied to the belief that one sex is superior to or more valuable than another sex. It imposes limits on what men and boys can and should do, and what women and girls can and should do.

Qualities of a trailblazer



What do the trailblazers have in common? How are their experiences different? What do you have in common with them? How does creativity and problem-solving help trailblazers?



Danger / risk-taking

Some of the trailblazers did dangerous things. James Banning, Hazel Ying Lee, Garrett Morgan, Leland Melvin, and Juana Azurduy, Policarpa Salavarrieta, the Mirabela Sisters, and Sylvia Mendez took big risks to follow their dreams.

Can you find anything these brave people have in common? What makes someone willing to do dangerous things?

Education

These trailblazers had different experiences with education. Some went to college and graduate school. Others didn't even finish middle school.

Garrett Morgan had only a 6th grade education, but continued his education with tutors and on his own. Zora Neale Hurston's education was interrupted many times. She finally graduated from high school at age 28, and then went on to college. José Gutierrez graduated from high school in his 50s. James Banning could only go to college for a year because of lack of money.

Mamie Johnson earned a nursing degree after her baseball career. Mary Golda Ross graduated from high school at 16 and from college at 20. Leland Melvin earned a master's degree while he was playing professional football. James Banning and Hazel Ying Lee had to be very creative to find people who would teach them to fly. Esquivel! never studied music formally.

Why do you think so many of the trailblazers fought so hard to get an education? What obstacles did they face?

Some of the trailblazers made educating others an important part of their life's work. Leland Melvin became an educator as an astronaut. Mary Golda Ross taught science and

math and made a point of encouraging girls to go into STEM fields. Barbara Jordan taught for years after she left Congress. Valentina Cruz became a naturalist and guide so she could teach others about the Galapagos. James Banning worked at flight school for Black people. Latinas Rosa Peña de González and Gabriela Mistral founded schools and taught, too.

Why was it so important to them to teach? How did they make education and their fields more accessible to people of color and women?

The power of words

Many of the trailblazers believed words were powerful. Garrett Morgan created an African American newspaper when none existed and the white papers didn't report news about the African American community. Zora Neale Hurston gathered and shared stories from people of color and wrote many books. Barbara Jordan made important speeches, speaking up for people and issues that were often overlooked. Many of the women featured in *Latinitas* were writers, elected officials, and activists who used their writing and speeches to change the world. José Gonzalez created a library for his community where there was none.

How did these trailblazers use words to empower and uplift others?

War

How did war sometimes create opportunities for these trailblazers? What happened when the wars were over? Did those opportunities remain? Had peoples' attitudes about race or women changed?

Civil rights

Barbara Jordan, Claudette Colvin, and several women featured in *Latinitas*, like Sonya Sotomayor and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and other activists and elected officials, fought for civil rights for women, people of color, and others.

How did these trailblazers' life experiences inspire them to fight for civil rights? What obstacles did they face as women? As people of color? How did other people support them and how did they support other people?

Women

Think about the women trailblazers. *When they faced prejudice, was it because of their race or ethnicity or because they were female? Or was it both? Which women were able to be fully accepted by their male colleagues in their lifetime? Why was that possible for some but not all of the female trailblazers? How was the experience of women from different ethnic groups different or the same?*

Personal relationships

For their period in history, both Garrett Morgan and Barbara Jordan had personal relationships that weren't accepted by our society. Garrett Morgan married a white woman. Barbara Jordan's life partner was a woman. Garrett Morgan's marriage was public. Barbara Jordan's partnership was private.

Why do you think they took the public or private path with their relationships? How have attitudes about mixed-race marriage or same-sex relationships changed or stayed the same over time?

Libraries and access to books

José Gonzalez built a library because his community in Bogota, Colombia didn't have one. James Banning got to go to the library twice a year when his parents made a special trip to the first Black library in Oklahoma created out of people's discarded books. Pura Belpré was a bilingual librarian in the New York City public library and started a program to bring Latin American folktales and poems to the library.

Why are libraries so important in communities? What role do they play? Why were libraries or stories reflecting their cultures missing for Mr. Gonzalez, Mr. Banning, and Ms. Belpré? What does it feel like to see your experiences or familiar stories reflected in a book you read?

Sports

Do you love sports? Look at the stories of Mamie Johnson, Leland Melvin, Laurie Hernandez, and Marta Vieira.

Do they have any experiences in common? How did they pursue their dreams? What challenges did they face? What did they do (or do they plan to do) when they stop playing sports?

Flight

James Banning, Hazel Ying Lee, and Hermelinda Urvina loved flying.

What obstacles did they face? How did they overcome obstacles to achieve their dreams? What experiences (both flying and in the rest of their lives) did they have in common? (You'll have to research Hermelinda Urvina to find her answers to these questions.)

Space

Mary Golda Ross worked to design spacecrafts. Leland Melvin, Serena Auñón, and Ellen Ochoa were astronauts. Wanda Diaz-Merced is an astrophysicist. They were sometimes the only people of color or women working on projects in this very specialized field.

What experiences did they have that sparked their interest in space and science? What obstacles did they face? How did other people support their interest in space?

Science

Valentina Cruz, Mary Golda Ross, Leland Melvin, and many of the women featured in *Latinitas* had careers in science. Some of them were sometimes the only people of color or women working on projects in their field.

What sparked their love of science? What obstacles did they face? What new knowledge were they able to contribute to their fields? How did other people support their interest in science?

Art

Esquivel! and many of the women featured in *Latinitas* were artists of some kind. Leland Melvin made a point of bringing music and space exploration together. Zaha Hadid used painting and her interest in abstract art (suprematism) to inspire her architectural designs.

What kinds of childhood experiences did these artists have that sparked their interest in art? What obstacles did they face and how did they overcome them? Who helped or mentored them? How did their art change the world? What role can art play in helping communities and cultures understand each other?

For more reading, writing, and learning resources, visit www.StartWithABook.org