

*Can a Dream ever die?*

A burst of sun replies:

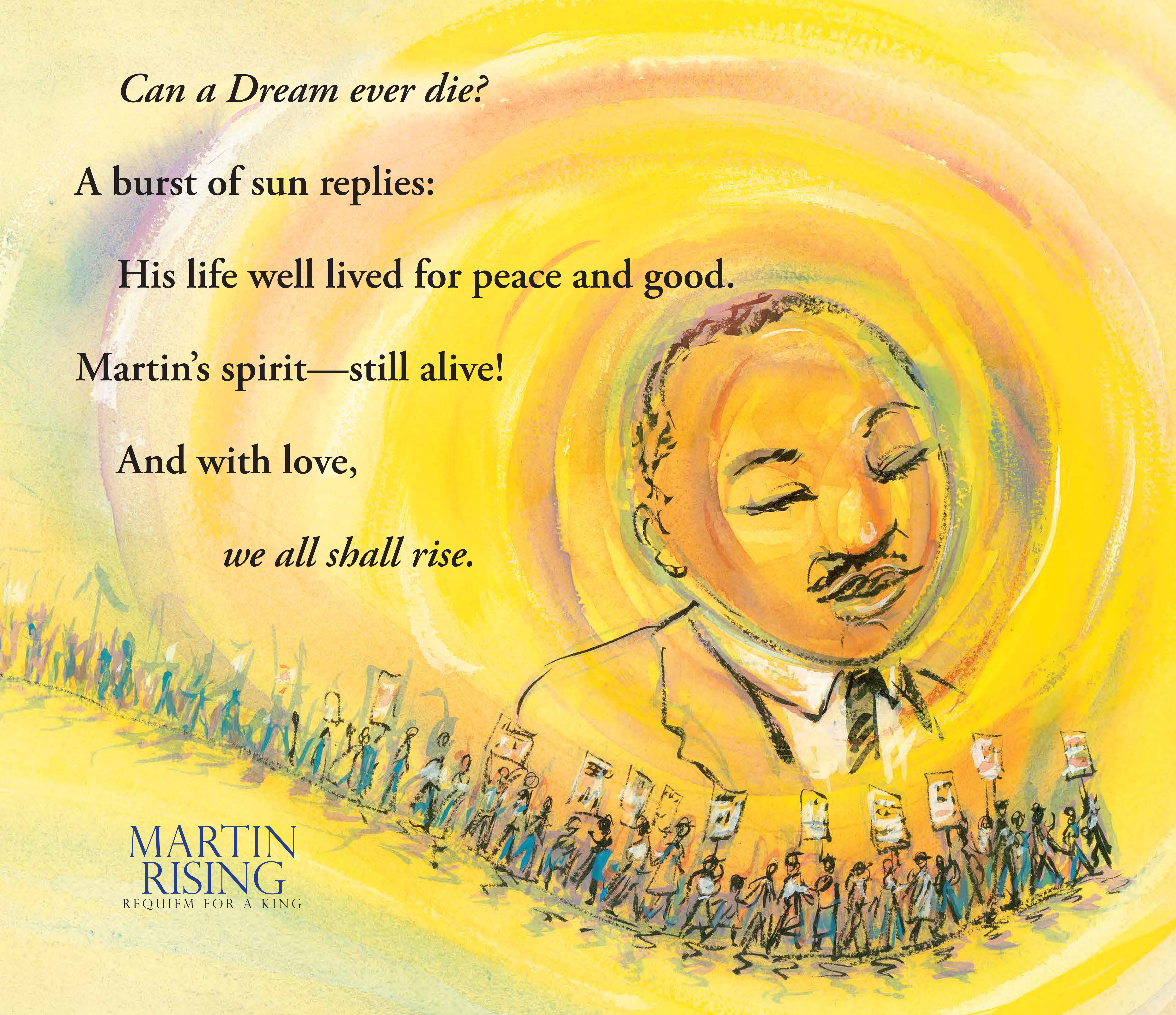
His life well lived for peace and good.

Martin's spirit—still alive!

And with love,

*we all shall rise.*

MARTIN  
RISING  
REQUIEM FOR A KING

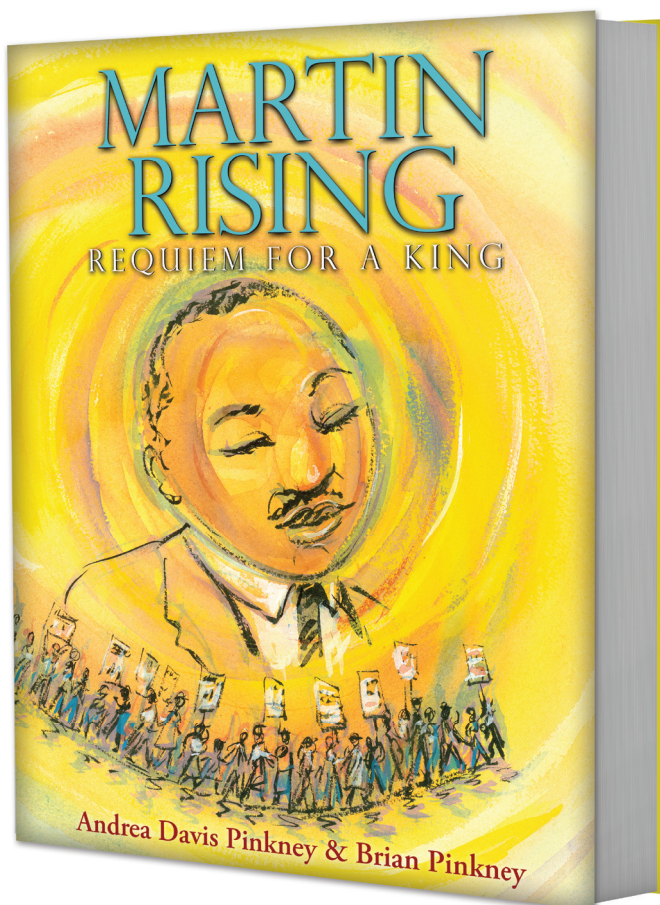




BONUS  
POSTER  
INCLUDED  
ON BACK!

# MARTIN RISING

## REQUIEM FOR A KING



128 pages • Ages 9 to 12, Grades 4 to 7

Hardcover ISBN: 9780545702539 • \$19.99

Ebook ISBN: 9780545702546 • \$12.99

*Martin Rising* is a stunning, poetic presentation of the final months of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life—told in a rich embroidery of visions, color, musical cadence, deep emotion, and multiple layers of meaning.

Against the backdrop of the sanitation workers' strike in Memphis, Tennessee, the book builds to its rousing crescendo as King delivers his "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech—where his life's commitment to peaceful activism and his dream of equality ascend to their highest peak.

The Pinkneys' powerful and spiritual look at King's legacy celebrates the courage and moral conviction of a man who changed the course of history forever. And even in the face of searing tragedy, he continues to inspire, transform, and elevate all of us who share his dream.

★ "Soars when read aloud." —*Booklist*, starred review

★ "Spiritually vital." —*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ "A unique and remarkable resource."  
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ "An exceptional classroom tool for civil rights lessons." —*School Library Journal*, starred review

### ABOUT THE CREATORS



Photo Credit: Christine Simmons

**Andrea Davis Pinkney** and **Brian Pinkney** have made an outstanding contribution to the field of children's literature both as individuals and as a team. Between them, they have published more than seventy children's books that have received the highest awards and accolades, including Caldecott Honors, Coretta Scott King Honors, NAACP Image Award nominations, and the May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture Award, to name a few.

In collaborating on *Martin Rising*, the Pinkneys drew from their vast experiences in the worlds of theater, fine art, and music to craft this nonfiction narrative that is deeply personal and metaphorical. They live in Brooklyn, New York, with their two children.

## A NOTE FROM ANDREA DAVIS PINKNEY

I was still a schoolgirl when Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. The magnitude of Martin's death sounded a loud, ominous bell in our home. My parents had been active members of the NAACP and the National Urban League, and were participants in many civil rights marches and rallies. My father, one of the first African American student interns to work in the US House of Representatives, attended the March on Washington, where he listened to Martin Luther King, Jr. deliver his landmark "I Have a Dream" speech on the great lawn in Washington, DC.

As a little girl, hearing news reports about Martin's death was very upsetting. I was also confused by Martin's assassination. I kept wondering, "Why would someone kill Martin Luther King, Jr. if he was such a good man?"

None of it made sense to me. I was also frightened by the event—and felt powerless over its effects. Martin's youngest daughter, Bernice, was my same age. In my young mind, I could not help but worry, "Would a sniper come after my daddy, too?"

Thankfully, my parents were very comforting and had a gentle way of explaining the tragedy. They told me about Martin's devotion to peace principles, and talked about how important it was to believe that although Martin was no longer with us, the intent behind his actions was still very much alive. Mommy and Daddy also reminded me that even as a little girl I could carry on Martin's legacy by taking a kindly view of each and every person I knew, even those who had been mean to me or would wrong me in the future.

Because of my parents' involvement in the NAACP and the National Urban League, I had a rudimentary understanding of civil rights. Soon after Martin's death, my father organized a procession at our church in honor of Martin. My father told our fellow parishioners everything he'd told me about Martin's beliefs—that love's abiding presence would heal the world, and it was now up to all of us to carry on in faith. Services ended with the chorus filling our church with the warmth of their voices. I remember my mother's singing being among the sweetest on that morning.

This book is dedicated to Martin's legacy and to that very special memory of my parents, whose small, important actions in the wake of Martin's death, brought me great comfort.

## A NOTE FROM ILLUSTRATOR BRIAN PINKNEY

As an artist, I often express my feelings through drawing and painting. This has been true of me ever since I was a child, and I realized that emotions can be poured into pictures.

When I began the images for *Martin Rising*, I was flooded with emotions—powerful, angry, sad. I wanted to convey these through my renderings. I didn't want to illustrate the actual events surrounding the tragic event of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s death, but instead I sought to enhance the photographs by expressing what photos don't fully convey—the metaphorical.

In my mind's eye, I saw images of Martin rising above the marchers, and, at the same time, embracing them.

I then started creating visual metaphors to symbolize how Martin, a devoted father and husband, embraced his own family with his love, a love that started in Martin's own heart, was shared in his home, and ultimately cast its luminescent power throughout the world.

The book's prose poem narrative underscores the various weather patterns that happened in the days surrounding Martin's assassination. This provided another vehicle for the arch symbol—a means by which the paintings could frame each day's unique weather variances that happened during the strikers' marches and during Martin's speeches and travel.

## PRE-READING BACKGROUND RESOURCES

The story told in *Martin Rising*—that of King’s final months, weeks, days, hours, and beyond—sheds light on one of the most important figures of the twentieth century. Students may be familiar with some of the details of King’s life, but may likely be unfamiliar with the context and circumstances of what is popularly known as King’s “Mountaintop” speech, or what he was doing in Memphis.

In addition to the excellent resources provided at the end of *Martin Rising*, here are other sources online that are appropriate for children, teachers, and parents:

**King for Kids** (Stanford University, The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute)  
<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-kids>

This website from the home of Dr. King’s papers is a portal to numerous resources for children, including other books for kids, historical documents, and an animated version of “I Have a Dream.”

**Martin Luther King’s “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” speech**  
<http://www.americanrhretoric.com/speeches/mlkivebeentothemountaintop.htm>

**Remembering MLK’s Prophetic “Mountaintop” Speech** (NPR)  
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=89326670>

**Teaching *A People’s History*** (Zinn Education Project)  
<https://zinnedproject.org/tag/dr-martin-luther-king-jr/>  
<https://zinnedproject.org/materials/hidden-in-plain/>

The Zinn Education Project’s goal is to introduce students to a more accurate, complex, and engaging understanding of United States history. While many of the lessons are designed for grades 6–12, elementary teachers may wish to adapt these resources for lessons and activities about King’s later years.

**Martin Luther King, Jr.** (National Geographic for Kids)  
<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/history/martin-luther-king-jr/>

*National Geographic for Kids* provides a pictorial overview for very young readers who may be completely unfamiliar with the life and legacy of Dr. King.

**How to Talk to Your Kids About Martin Luther King Any Day of the Year** (*TIME*)  
<http://time.com/3673613/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-martin-luther-king-any-day-of-the-year/>

This article from *TIME* magazine features age-appropriate ways for parents, guardians, and others reading *Martin Rising* to discuss Dr. King’s life, death, and enduring significance to the United States and the world.

## DURING READING: TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In the Author’s Reflections (p.116), Andrea Davis Pinkney writes about the character of Henny Penny, more commonly known in some parts of the United States as “Chicken Little.” Some readers may not know the character of Henny Penny. Review the places where she narrates, on pages 8, 30–31, 58, 88–89, and in the Afterword, then find and share versions of this folktale with your students so that they can draw comparisons with the themes in *Martin Rising*. What motifs or symbols repeat in the art? Discuss with students how understanding the significance of Henny Penny and her story affects their understanding of the meaning of the poetry in *Martin Rising*.
2. “Sparkling-Eyed Child” (p.14) foreshadows the arc of the newborn King’s life and the influence of four world figures—Lincoln, Thoreau, Tolstoy, and Gandhi. Assign students to research one or all of these figures using text and online sources. After exploring the lives and legacies of these historical figures, ask students to write about how they directly influenced King and the civil rights movement.



## DURING READING: TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION CONTINUED

3. As you and your students read the book—either together or separately—make sure they are aware of the Afterword and timeline on pages 118–124 so they understand the full arc of King’s life and are prepared for the focus on his work and activism during his last few months. Have your students note where the chapters fall on the timeline. Ask students to reflect on what time periods are represented in the book and what time periods are not. What conclusions can your students draw about why the author chose to focus on certain times and events? How is the book divided? How are the times of day relevant to the story?
4. The balance of the beautiful poems in the Daylight section (pp. 20–58) use a number of literary allusions to describe the context of King’s activism during the Memphis sanitation workers’ strike of 1968. In addition to the pre-reading activity to provide the historical background, it may be helpful to review the history of the strike.

The following are further background resources for the Memphis 1968 strike:

**Sanitation Workers Remember King’s Last Stand** (NPR)

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=89361277>

**1968 AFSCME Memphis Sanitation Workers’ Strike Chronology** (AFSCME)

<https://www.afscme.org/union/history/mlk/1968-afscme-memphis-sanitation-workers-strike-chronology>

**Why He Was in Memphis** (*Huffington Post*)

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-dreier/why-he-was-in-memphis\\_b\\_5088614.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-dreier/why-he-was-in-memphis_b_5088614.html)

**Committee on the Move for Equality Letter** (Wayne State University Digital Library)

<https://digital.library.wayne.edu/iamaman/items/show/166>

You may also wish to pull up visuals of the famous “I Am a Man” signs that the strikers wore and carried during the strike.

Ask students to reflect on the history, words, and images that they have found during their research. How does their enhanced understanding of the strike, the speech, and the movement affect their understanding of this section of the book?

5. Ask students to identify elements of foreshadowing about King’s impending assassination and its aftermath in the poems of the Darkness section (pp. 62–107). In this section there are a few poems about Martin Luther King’s “Mountaintop” speech, the final speech of King’s life (pp. 70–77). Share the pre-reading resources found in this guide with your students so they can watch and/or read the speech and reflect on its legacy.

In the poems about the “Mountaintop” speech have students indicate what portions are taken directly from King’s speech and what were written by Pinkney. How do Pinkney’s original writings help enhance or elucidate what was happening in the speeches for readers who may not have had the opportunity to read or watch the speech?

## FEATURES OF VERSE TEXTS

As Sylvia Vardell observed in a *Booklist* article about books in verse, “Many writers, like [Jacqueline] Woodson [author of 2014 National Book Award–winning verse novel *Brown Girl Dreaming*], have found poetry to be the ideal vehicle for sharing memories and particularly for exploring issues of culture, ethnicity, and race.” Words and images can be used to powerfully tell stories about history, culture, race, identity, society, and power.

As your students read *Martin Rising*, you may wish to call their attention to the generic features of verse texts:

- The entire story is told in the form of non-rhyming free verse.
- Very often each section is less than a page in length and only rarely more than two or three pages.
- Usually each of these sections is given a title to orient the reader, which may indicate the speaker, or contextualize the content, or point to the core theme.
- The form lends itself to building each section around a single perspective, thought, voice, or incident.

Adapted from Joy Alexander, “The Verse-novel: A New Genre.” *Children’s Literature in Education* 36.3 (2005): 269–283.

## FEATURES OF VERSE TEXTS CONTINUED

Here are some prompts to use for talking about the features of poetry in *Martin Rising*:

- Literary techniques are used by writers to produce special effects. Ask your students to define the following terms and find examples within the book: alliteration, allegory, anthropomorphism, consonance, epilogue, foreshadowing, imagery, internal rhyme, metaphor, mood, and onomatopoeia.
- Text placement. Throughout the book, line breaks and text placement on the page are used intentionally—how do they affect the way the verses sound when read aloud? What kinds of cues about oral and silent reading are provided through line breaks? What effect does it have when a word or passage is indented or on the right side of the page rather than the left side? What would *Martin Rising* be like without these features?
- Spoken word. In *Martin Rising*, there are passages that are in italics and quotation marks which are taken from speeches. How does each quote enhance or change the focus of the poem?
- Description. Techniques used by poets writing verse differ from those used by those writing prose. What makes poetry different from prose? Find metaphors, similes, and descriptive passages. How would these passages be similar or different if written in prose?
- Perspective. The author chooses to alternate among many different perspectives, although an omniscient perspective is predominant. How might the book have differed if told from the perspective of only one of the characters—Dr. King; his wife, Coretta Scott King; King’s best friend, Ralph Abernathy; one of the Memphis sanitation workers; or one of Dr. King’s children? Explain what might be gained from a single-perspective narrative and what might be lost. Have your students choose a poem within *Martin Rising* and rewrite it from another character’s perspective.
- Peritext. Brian Pinkney’s illustrations throughout *Martin Rising* help to expand meaning beyond Andrea Davis Pinkney’s verses. This is the peritext—the features of a book that are not the actual words of a book’s text, but supplement it. How do the illustrations and other supplemental parts of the book, such as page turns and design, work alongside the verse to tell the story of King’s final days?

## FEATURES OF ILLUSTRATED TEXTS

Use the terms identified below to talk about the people, places, and events that are represented visually in *Martin Rising*. Then in pairs, in groups, or as a whole class, invite students to create questions about the illustrations in the book.

**Border:** A plain or decorative frame around text or art.

**Case cover:** The bound cover of the book beneath the dust jacket, sometimes featuring embossing or illustrations, which can differ from those on the dust jacket.

**Climax:** The most important or emotionally charged moment in the plot.

**Continuous narration:** A pictorial device that tells a story within a single picture using several separate illustrations on the same page (a montage) that indicate motion, action, or the sequence of time.

**Double-page spread:** An illustration that extends across both pages of an open book.

**Dust jacket:** The outer, detachable cover of a book, printed with the title and an image that represents the book; folded flaps secure it around the book and provide information about the book and its authors.

**Endpapers:** The first and last pages binding the interior pages to the cover; sometimes made with illustrated or colored stock paper.

**Gutter:** The middle line of an open book where the pages are bound.

**Motif:** Recurring thematic element in the illustrations or text; a dominant idea or central theme.

**Page break:** The end of text on a page. This can intentionally create a dramatic effect.

**Spot art:** An image that simply appears on a page with no background; can be surrounded by text.

**Typography:** The style or placement of the typeface or font used in the book.

## AFTER YOU READ: THINKING ABOUT THE ROLES OF DIVERSITY, DIFFERENCE, AND POWER IN *MARTIN RISING*

After reading *Martin Rising*, invite your students to think about the ways that the author chose to tell the story of King's life, death, and legacy. (This activity is especially recommended if you used the suggested pre-reading activities.)

- What views of the world, culture, background, or kinds of behaviors are presented as standard in the narration and perspective of *Martin Rising*? What points of view are represented, and which are not?
- What makes verse in *Martin Rising* a powerful vehicle to tell this story? How else could it have been written? How would the story be different if told in another form?
- What moral or political themes can you identify in *Martin Rising*? What are the cultural and social contexts for Martin's political position? How does the sanitation workers' strike represent democracy and the idea of strength in numbers?

Adapted from Maria José Botelho & Masha Kabakow Rudman, *Critical Multicultural Analysis of Children's Literature*, Routledge, 2009, p. 4.

## WRITING & ART PROJECTS TO CONSIDER FOR YOUR STUDENTS

### Poetry Out Loud: Group Recitation

*Martin Rising* narrates the end of King's life using vivid and descriptive language. While narratives can be read silently or performed publicly, group readings aloud will let readers experience history in the making as well as its emotional depths. Wonderful classroom plays of *Martin Rising* can be performed by using the "Now Is the Time" history on pages 118–121 as narration—and adding selected poems from the book to tell the story.

### Poetic Inspiration

Invite students to write poetry of their own that is meant to be read out loud. It can be about the events in *Martin Rising*, their own celebrations for the King holiday, or about whatever they wish.

### The Sound of Color: Writing Poetry About Art

Andrea Davis Pinkney uses colorful and evocative language throughout *Martin Rising* to tell the story of the Memphis sanitation workers' strike, how King helped, how he lost his life, and what happened in the days afterward.

Either individually or in groups, invite students to write poetry of their own inspired by the art in the story, or a piece by one of the artists that inspired Brian Pinkney, Marc Chagall or Norman Lewis. Encourage them to use some of the language or motifs from the text and incorporate the concepts identified in the Features of Verse Texts listed in this guide.

### Make a Change

Have students identify a current cause or social injustice. If King were here today, what could he do? Inspired by the sanitation workers' strike, ask students how they would create a movement to protest something they are not happy about. How would they make change happen?

Have them write poetry or create art reflecting some aspect of this imagined social movement. Encourage students to try out various styles (sequential art, picture book, digital story, etc.) and multiple media, including drawing, painting, calligraphic word art, photography, digital media, and collage.

### About the author of this guide:

Dr. Ebony Elizabeth Thomas is Assistant Professor in the Division of Literacy, Culture, and International Education at Penn GSE. Her program affiliation is Reading/Writing/Literacy, and her work synthesizes postcolonial, critical, and critical race theory with data from her empirical research in classrooms to examine the ways that literature, media, and culture are positioned in schooling and society today. Dr. Thomas has written articles that appear in multiple journals as well as books, including the forthcoming *The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination in Youth Literature, Media, and Culture*. She has received multiple awards and commendations for her work, and also has served as consultant for multiple organizations, including the Southern Poverty Law Center and the National Council of Teachers of English.