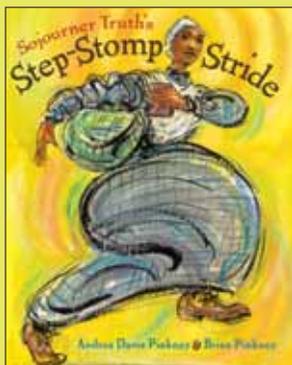


This guide was created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and children's author. Visit her Web site, www.tracievaughnzimmer.com, to find hundreds of guides to children's and YA literature.

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SOJOURNER TRUTH'S
STEP-STOMP STRIDE

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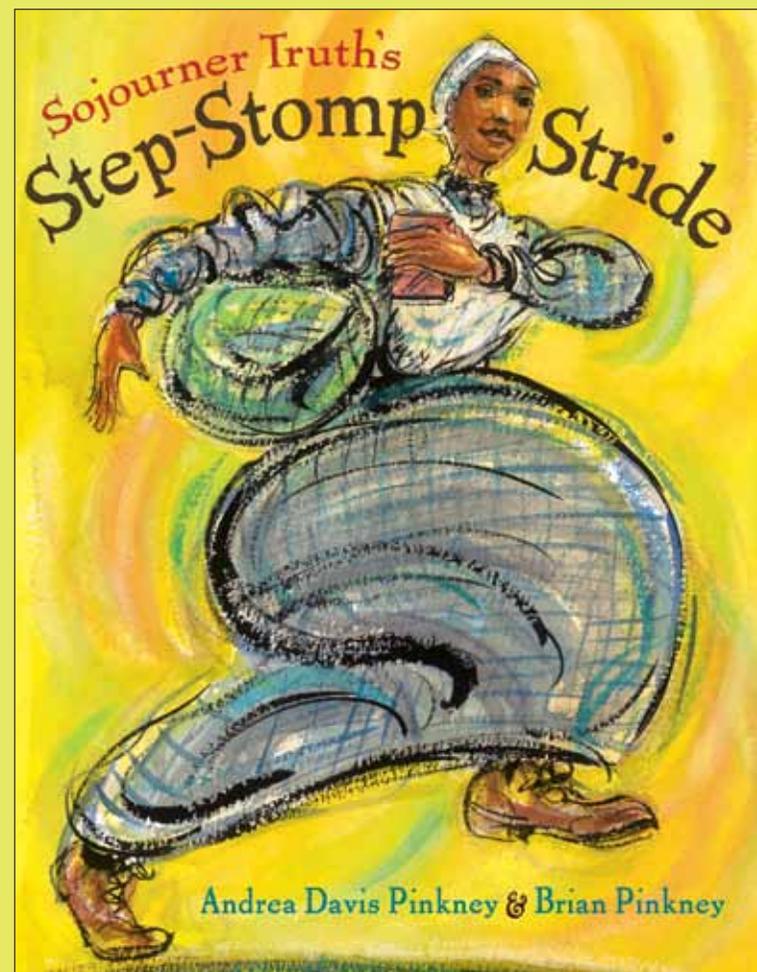
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DISCUSSION GUIDE

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Sojourner Truth was as strong and tall as most men. She was big, black, and so beautiful. Born into slavery, Sojourner ran away as a young girl. She cherished her freedom, and believed it should be granted to everyone. But she didn't fight for it with her mighty fists, and she didn't stomp for it with her giant boots. Sojourner spoke the truth, and struggled against injustice with her brave, beautiful words. With lyrical text and spirited illustrations, the award-winning team of Andrea Davis Pinkney and Brian Pinkney brings one of America's greatest heroes to life. Following Sojourner from her courageous plantation escape to her meeting with Abraham Lincoln, this is a stirring portrait of a woman who pulled herself up by her great big bootstraps. A warrior for justice above all else, Sojourner allowed no bias to cross her path without a fight.

PRE-READING

Have you ever heard of Sojourner Truth? She was a famous American who lived long ago. What do you think she is remembered for?



DISCUSSION GUIDE

- 1 Describe Sojourner. What did she look like? Act like? Say? How would someone describe you?
- 2 What does it mean to be “meant for great things?” What great things are you meant for?
- 3 Why did Sojourner have several names? Who gave her each of the names she had? Which one was most important to her? Why?
- 4 What happened to Belle when she was only nine years old? Why was she considered valuable? How does this make you feel?
- 5 What had John Dumont promised Belle? Did he keep his promise?
- 6 How did the Quaker couple help Belle? What did she do with her new freedom?
- 7 What did freedom mean for Sojourner? What did she decide to do?
- 8 Why couldn't Sojourner read or write? What was she really good at despite not being able to read?
- 9 What did Olive Gilbert help Sojourner do with her story?
- 10 Do you think Sojourner was brave to speak out against slavery? How did she react to threats?
- 11 How did Sojourner stomp-stomp-stomp all over the stupidity of speeches she heard in Akron, Ohio? What do you think it was like in the church after she stepped, stomped, strided right out of there?

PROJECTS

READING

As you read the story of Sojourner Truth, write down at least one fact, one question, and one response (a connection, thought, or feeling inspired by what you read) in the following chart and then discuss with your reading partner.

FACTS	QUESTIONS	RESPONSES

WRITING

Pretend that you were in the audience at that church in Akron, Ohio, listening to those preachers discuss women's rights. Write a letter home to someone describing what you heard and saw that important day.

HISTORY

Create a time line of Sojourner Truth's life. Have at least five important dates on your time line and illustrate it with drawings of your own.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR



ANDREA DAVIS PINKNEY has written several acclaimed picture books, works of nonfiction, and novels. Her titles for middle-grade readers include *Solo Girl*, *Raven in a Dove House*, *Silent Thunder*, and *Let It Shine: Stories of Black Women Freedom Fighters*, a Coretta Scott King Award Honor winner. She is also the author of the picture books *Alvin Ailey*; *Duke Ellington* (a Caldecott Honor Book and Coretta Scott King Honor Book); and *Ella Fitzgerald*, each illustrated by her husband and frequent collaborator, Brian Pinkney.

BRIAN PINKNEY is the illustrator of many highly praised books for children, including the Caldecott Honor Books *Duke Ellington* and *The Faithful Friend*, and the Coretta Scott King Award winner *In the Time of the Drums*. He is a graduate of the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and holds a master's degree in illustration from the School of Visual Arts in New York City.

Andrea and Brian live in Brooklyn, New York.

AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR INTERVIEW

1 *Can you describe your process of working together on a book like Step-Stomp Stride?*

Sojourner Truth was a woman of great power and beauty. While her story has been told before, we wanted to introduce her to young readers in a new way. One of the most intriguing aspects of Sojourner's life and times is that she was such an iconoclast—she stepped beyond the conventions of the day. With bravery and grit, she walked over so many obstacles, and stomped on anything that blocked her path to freedom and to helping others. And her name—Sojourner, which means “one who travels”—underscored all of this so well.

When we began our research about the enslaved girl named Belle (the name Sojourner's master gave her), we were immediately struck by her commanding size and gorgeous complexion. She was six feet tall while still a child; she had size twelve feet and she was the color of mahogany.



For us, these physical attributes offered a great springboard for telling Sojourner's story, both narratively and visually. Coupled with her unflagging and articulate commitment to civil rights, she was a force of nature, not to be trifled with. A lady in a class all by herself. That's where the “step-stomp stride” idea came in. We wanted to present Sojourner Truth in a way that is accessible but that also depicts her strength and offers young readers a way to understand and internalize the contributions she made. The “step-stomp stride” alliteration is the narrative hook for children.

The illustrations for this book are rendered in watercolor and India ink, and are drawn expressively to show Sojourner's height and heft. Then, too, Brian wanted show that this lady covered a lot of ground in her life and travels. To do this, he studied the masters of American landscape painting, which inspired the sweeping, bucolic landscapes shown in the book. We also took several trips to the regions of upstate New York where Sojourner Truth traveled. We walked where she walked so that we could figuratively “step-stomp” in her shoes. This is when our collaboration really took hold, and we worked as a team to marry the concepts of “step-stomp stride” and America's rich visual history.

2 *What is the best part of writing and illustrating for children? What do you wish all kids knew about bookmaking?*

For us, the best part about creating books for children is that we have the opportunity to stir up something we like to call “Book Magic.”

“Book Magic” is the exact moment when a child becomes fully engaged in a book. It's when something in a story or in a book's illustrations grabs a young reader by the collar, and won't let go. Then, like magic, the child has slipped into a new world. As we are creators of nonfiction, “Book Magic” holds a special power for us. It's our chance to present young readers with a slice of history (in the case of Sojourner Truth —HERstory) in a way that we hope is

compelling and memorable. Some children are reluctant readers who shy away from a book's narrative. For these kids, a picture book's illustrations play an important part. It's especially gratifying to know that a child can "read" one of our books through his or her own visual literacy, drawing inferences and information through pictures. That's magical, too.



Lots of people think writing and illustrating books is easy. Bookmaking is fun, but it requires a lot of hard work! A book can take years to create, beginning with Andrea's manuscript, which must be written and revised and researched and fact-checked and rewritten and edited and revised again and again. Then come Brian's illustrations, which start with up to fifteen different sketches for each picture that appears in the book. Those sketches must then be reworked and refined and painted and repainted until they're just right.

So—like an athlete or ballerina, we work at our craft every single day to develop and improve our agility and artistry as children's book creators.

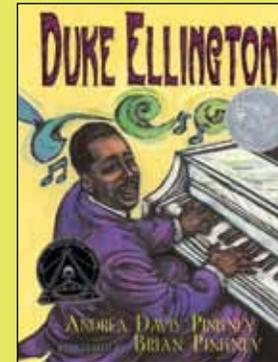
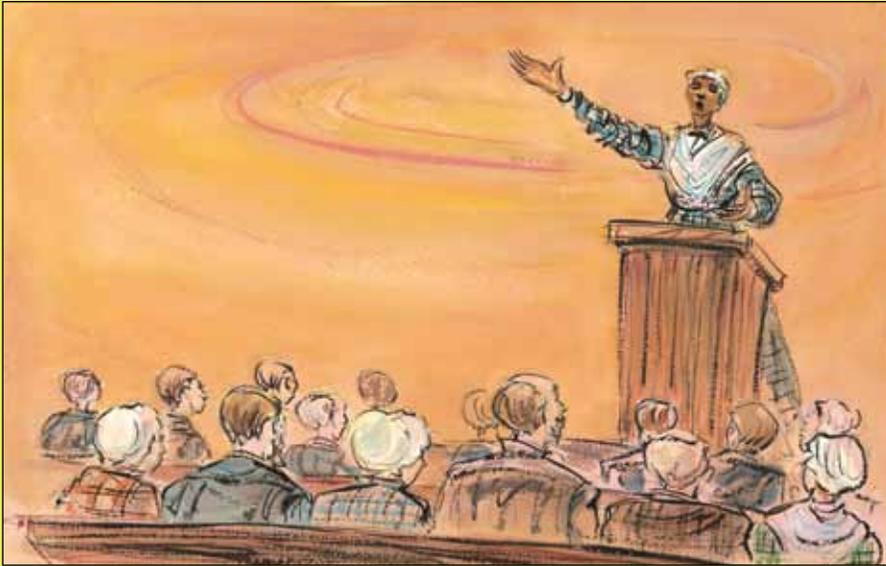
3 *Where do you find inspiration?*

Inspiration can come from anywhere, any time. Here is a list of things that spark our imagination and give us ideas for books. (You, too, can make your own inspiration list):

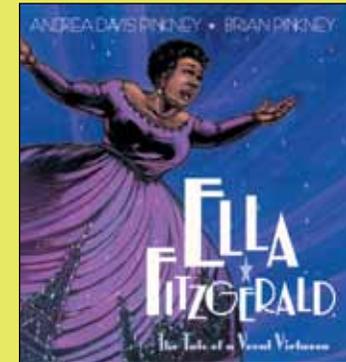
- Dreams
- Nature
- Music
- Friends
- Books
- Exercise
- Family
- Animals
- Museums
- Kids
- Movies
- Food
- Dancing
- Breathing slowly



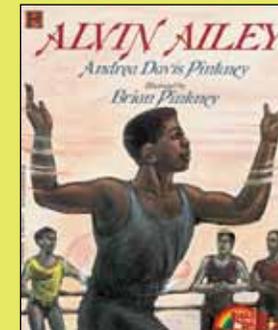
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